

STRATEGIC PLANNING, SUSTAINABILITY & TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

MEETING 18TH AUGUST 2015

URGENT UPDATE REPORT

Re Item 19 – Employment Land Allocations

Councillors were sent an email on 13th August by Nick Yandle, Chief Executive of the Gallagher Group, concerning the Waterside Park site. The email is appended to this note.

In addition to the content of the officers' covering report for item 19, I would like to bring the Committee's attention to the following points:

1. The Waterside Park and Woodcut Farm sites were assessed individually and also compared to one another as part of the Strategic Sites' consultation in 2012. Detailed site proformas were completed for each site and were published as part of the Strategic Sites consultation. The assessment of the Woodcut Farm site specifically referred to relevant parts of the KIG Inspector's decision letter. The comparative assessment concluded that Woodcut Farm would be the more suitable of the sites to allocate.
2. The Inspector for the Waterside Park appeals distinguishes between the direct effects on the landscape and the visual impacts of development. In respect of the direct effects, she notes;

In the longer views from the AONB it is true that there is little that is distinctive about the landform of the site and it can only really be identified by reference to the tower of the hotel and the containers on the Biffa site. There seems to me, however, to be precisely why the developments would cause harm to both the visual and landscape qualities of the surroundings. The site does not, at present, draw the eye and is seen as part of a homogeneous wider vista and this would change, as described above, if the proposed developments went ahead. (paragraph 32, emphasis added)

Dear Sir / Madam,

Ref: Waterside Park, Junction 8

We apologise for writing to you further on this subject as you must be receiving a plethora of communication about it, however this is plainly an important subject to many of us for a variety of reasons.

A few days ago dha, our planning consultant, sent you a note with our revised outline proposal for Waterside Park that takes into consideration the Inspector's decision on the recent Appeals.

We have now reviewed in detail the papers going to the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee meeting to be held on 18th August, item 19 of which proposes allocation of Woodcut Farm, an alternative site at Junction 8 on part of what was the KIG site.

The reports give rise to some fundamental points worthy of serious consideration;

1. Woodcut Farm is acknowledged to have virtually all the features of Waterside Park. On the positive side, satisfying the need for employment land and on the negative side having implications on landscape and heritage.
2. The Site Appraisal exercise (see the table in the Report with traffic light colouring) shows scoring for the 2 sites to be identical except for one item where Waterside is better than Woodcut and one where the reverse is true (this pertains to a bus stop which is easily addressed).
3. The report refers to the Council's 2013 Landscape Character Assessment, but fails to note that the area within which Woodcut sits is considered to be of better landscape condition than Waterside Park ('Very Poor').
4. Significant weight has effectively been given in the Report to the fact there has been no recent examination of Woodcut Farm in a planning committee or an appeal (and there is no mention of the KIG decision). There has been no proper consideration of how the conclusions reached by the Inspector at Waterside might then apply to Woodcut Farm. To favour an alternative site simply because it hasn't been tested in the planning process in the fashion that Waterside has is perverse. Our revised proposals positively address the concerns that arise from that test.
5. The report erroneously states that any scheme at Waterside Park would involve "significant alteration to the landform". This is not true – development on the smaller scale now proposed reduces changes in the land form by approximately 85% compared with the previous proposals.
6. The constructive and helpful guidance in appendix B of the Report on how development at Woodcut might be designed and controlled to mitigate the negatives would apply virtually word for word for Waterside Park with one major exception – the revised Waterside proposal is now roughly half the size of Woodcut. Why not carry out the same exercise on Waterside?

It is rather unimaginative to simply dismiss any development at Waterside Park because 2 larger schemes (one supported by Officer recommendation to approve) failed at Inquiry. This misses an

opportunity to develop a different, more palatable scheme that nevertheless goes some significant way to delivering the quality and quantity of employment land shown to be needed.

We reiterate that Waterside cannot creep in size and add that it has the potential to assist with delivery of the Leeds-Langley by pass, should that feature in the Council's strategic planning. The by-pass is of no benefit to us, however some sort of zone for it could be incorporated into the planning of Waterside if the Council considered it appropriate.

Planning is usually a compromise, balancing important competing issues - in this case employment and landscape / heritage, and we hope you would agree that our proposals represent the best and most balanced outcome benefitting from scrutiny at the recent Appeal.

We would be pleased to assist if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely,

Nick Yandle

