

Our ref: HTP504le1

Head of Development Services
Warwick District Council
P.O. Box 2178
Riverside House
Milverton Hill
Leamington Spa
Warwickshire
CV32 5QH

26th July 2012

Dear Sirs,

**Warwick Local Plan – Preferred Options
Land adjacent to Tournament Fields, Warwick**

Hancock Town Planning Ltd acts for The Campbell Partnership which owns land within the south-west Warwick development area, adjacent to Tournament Fields.

The Campbell Partnership's land ownership ('the Campbell land') extends to approximately 5 acres, as shown edged in red on the enclosed plan.

My client wishes to **OBJECT** to the non-allocation of its land for residential development within draft Local Plan Policy PO4: '*Distribution of Sites for Housing*'.

Background

The Campbell land forms part of the south-west Warwick development area, as identified in the Warwick District Local Plan 2007 and previously in the 1995 Local Plan. Whilst forming part of a residential allocation in the 1995 Plan, the 2007 Plan identifies the site for employment use. The site has previously been marketed for employment development without success and much of the adjoining employment land within Tournament Fields also remains to be developed.

The Campbell land lies directly opposite housing fronting Goggbridge Lane and which forms part of the Chase Meadow residential estate. It is therefore within easy walking distance of the local centre and adjacent public open space and relates very well to the adjacent residential community.

We understand that District Council officers have previously considered the suitability of re-allocating the Campbell land for housing but were concerned that noise associated from the adjacent A46 might adversely impact upon the suitability of the site for residential development.

Noise assessment

In response to officer's concerns, the Campbell Partnership commissioned Resound Acoustics Ltd to undertake a detailed noise assessment of the noise climate at the site. The key findings are that:

- Taking account of the acoustic screening effect of any houses built on the site, daytime noise levels across the majority of the site are predicted to be below 55dB: this would be consistent with Noise Exposure Category (NEC) A, as defined in the now-withdrawn PPG 24. The former guidance (which we understand the Council is still using as a guide to assessing the impact of noise on development proposals) stated that noise need not be considered as a determining factor in the granting of planning permission where noise levels fall within NEC A.
- Erection a 3 m high roadside noise barrier would further reduce noise levels across the site (see Figure E.5 at Appendix E of the report).
- Taking account of the impact of built development and of an acoustic barrier, predicted night-time levels would fall within Noise Exposure Category B (see Figure E.6). The former PPG 24 stated that residential development should normally be acceptable within NEC B, subject to consideration of appropriate mitigation factors.
- For properties closest to the A46, the necessary night-time sound reduction performance could be achieved through appropriately specified glazing units and, if appropriate, passive ventilation systems.

The report also highlights that residential development of the site would also benefit the existing properties on Goggbridge Lane by creating an improved noise climate for these occupiers.

The full report is submitted as part of this representation.

Drawing together the above points, the report concludes that:

“On the basis of this assessment, and providing the recommended mitigation measures are implemented, it is considered that noise should not pose a constraint to development.”

The District Council should therefore be satisfied that concerns regarding noise should not prevent the allocation of the Campbell land for residential development.

Demand for commercial development

The second issue which arises from our representation is whether the Campbell land is still required to meet the employment needs of the District.

When considering this issue, the correct starting point is the National Planning Policy Framework (the NPPF) which was published in March 2012 and replaced all previous Planning Policy Guidance Notes and Statements. The NPPF makes it clear that local planning authorities should avoid the long-term protection of employment sites where there is no prospect of the site being used for that purpose. Paragraph 22 of the NPPF states:

“Where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for the allocated employment use, applications for alternative uses of land or buildings should be treated on their merits having regard to market signals and the relative need for different land uses to support sustainable local communities.”

The above guidance is applicable to the Campbell land which has lain undeveloped since its first allocation in 1995, some 17 years ago.

We also enclose a letter from Bromwich Hardy, leading local commercial agents, which provides a commentary on the local market for commercial development. The company advises that:

- No speculative commercial development has taken place within the District since 2007 and it is highly likely that there will be in the foreseeable future.
- There is little demand for occupier-led development due to market conditions and the amount of oversupply in the existing stock.
- There has been no Class B commercial activity within Tournament Fields for five years.
- The Campbell land is not particularly well located for commercial development as it is sited immediately opposite housing.

We also note the recent application by Kestrel Properties Ltd, reference W11/1251, for the erection of 91 dwellings on 5 acres of allocated employment and within the adjacent Tournament Fields site. The application was approved, with the Committee report on the application stating:

“It [Tournament Fields] is therefore one of the District’s most important employment opportunities currently available to meet future needs. However, the application site forms a peninsular of land extending outwards into the residential allocation and is therefore only suitable for B1 business development due to the close proximity of the residential houses along two boundaries of the site. The potential for B2 / B8 uses would be significantly reduced as they would be close to noise sensitive residential buildings, and therefore it is unlikely that large scale B2 or B8 uses would be acceptable on the application site. The attractiveness of this site to meet a broad range of future employment land needs is diminished as a consequence, and therefore the argument for its retention to meet future employment land needs is weakened”

The report concluded that the application was justified due to:

- the limited harm caused to employment land supply;
- the size nature and location of the site;
- the contribution that the site would make to meeting the District’s housing needs in a sustainable location;
- the ability to support community infrastructure within south-west Warwick.

Similar considerations clearly apply to The Campbell Partnership’s land which is also unsuitable for B2 / B8 development due to its proximity to housing, and so support the case for its allocation for residential development.

We also refer to paragraph 8.30 of the draft Local Plan. This highlights the deficit in the provision of employment land within the north of Leamington presumably compared to the south of the conurbation. Therefore, if any additional employment land is required, it should surely be located to the north of Leamington, not to the south of the town.

Notwithstanding the above, in the event of the residential allocation of the Campbell land, should the Council seek the identification of additional employment land to offset the theoretical 'loss', then land is available for commercial development to the rear of Campbell House on Stratford Road. This land is the subject of a separate representation.

Reduction in the need for Green Belt release

The draft Local Plan proposes the development of extensive tracts of Green Belt to the north of Warwick and Leamington. The Government's National Planning Policy Framework states that:

*"Once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in **exceptional circumstances**" (paragraph 89, HTP emphasis)*

In our view, it is difficult to argue that Green Belt land which forms a valuable gap between the Warwick/Leamington conurbation and Kenilworth should be developed in the face of vehement local opposition, when available and very well-located non-Green Belt development land exists within south-west Warwick and has lain undeveloped for many years.

Conclusion

We consider that sensitively designed residential development on the Campbell land offers an appropriate way of providing modest additional housing on an available site within a sustainable location.

If you consider it appropriate or useful, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with Planning Officers to discuss the site and any particular issues or concerns you may have.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Hancock". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

Joel Hancock BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI