

The Plan for Stafford Borough

Hearing on 30th October 2013

Objection on behalf of Mr and Mrs Roly Tonge

Our clients are the owners of land at Hixon Airfield currently designated as Recognised Industrial Estate or RIE.

Our objection concerns Paragraph 9.11 of the Plan which says:

Stafford Borough has a number of significant rural employment concentrations, which provide a focus for new development to support a prosperous rural economy outside of Stafford and Stone. These are identified on the Proposals Map as Recognised Industrial Estates (RIEs) and the precise extent of these areas is defined by a boundary line. The Employment Land Review studies as part of the Local Plan's evidence base identifies potential land for economic uses. Paragraph 22 of the NPPF states planning policies should avoid the long term protection of sites allocated for employment use where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for that purpose. This is the case with a historic Stafford Borough Local Plan 2001 allocation at Hixon Airfield Recognised Industrial Estate (RIE) where an area within the RIE boundary has not been delivered for new employment. Therefore, it is not considered prudent to allocate this employment land at Hixon in the future, although it is important to protect and maintain existing employment development at Recognised Industrial Estates. However two RIEs at Ladfordfields and Raleigh Hall have reached capacity for further development and therefore require opportunities for new investment as well as enabling existing firms to expand during the plan period.

Hixon Airfield is a major employment area which has been developed over a number of years. Our client has played a major part in this past development. The Council's statement is based on incorrect information regarding the availability or otherwise of our client's land and a belief that our client has been withholding this land for development. This is not the case.

The take up of employment land is often not constant and this is particularly the case at Hixon where years of apparent inactivity can be followed by sizeable developments.

I confirm that we are currently instructed to submit an application for a mix of B1, B2 and B8 uses and, following a scoping meeting with the local authority, Royal Haskoning are completing assessments concerning Highway, Drainage and Environmental issues to support the application. We anticipate that this work will be completed and the application submitted within the next four weeks. This cost of this application represents a significant investment by our client and clearly show his intent in bringing development forward.

The need for this land has not changed and there is no valid reason to remove this designation.

Notwithstanding this, we are strongly of the opinion that this allocation should more properly be reviewed as part of the Site Allocation DPD or Hixon Parish Plan whichever comes forward first. We consider that the proposed change in the designation of this land is prejudicial to these plans.

We therefore ask that this paragraph is modified to remove the proposed removal of RIE status from our client's land at Hixon.

Paul Spivey

Director, Applied Planning.