
Greenham Business Park Local Development Order – Summary Report

Committee considering report: Council on 6 December 2018

Portfolio Member: Councillor Hilary Cole.

Date Portfolio Member agreed report: 22ND November 2018.

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Forward Plan Ref: C3417

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in 2012 and the revised version in July of this year, has placed considerable emphasis on promoting employment development in the UK, in order to improve prosperity, and economic growth remains one of the key objectives of sustainable development set out in the NPPF. The NPPF of 2018 now actively encourages Local Planning Authorities to consider the adoption of Local Development Orders (LDOs) and Officers and Members have expressed support for the principle of using LDOs in order to support appropriate areas for economic development within the District. Greenham Business Park has been recognised as an opportunity for the Council to work with the Park's Management team to implement an LDO and provide some Planning certainty, beyond Planning Policy commitments, with regard to assumptions that can be made about future development at the site.
- 1.2 A Local Development Order (LDO) provides a streamlined planning process that Local Planning Authorities (LPA) can adopt to boost development in their areas. The National Planning Policy Framework encourages LPAs to use LDOs to effectively grant advance planning permission in suitable locations. This deals with all the key planning issues and sets out development parameters or 'ground rules', for example maximum building height, but leaves considerable flexibility over exactly how and where new buildings can be developed within the agreed areas of the site.
- 1.2 The advantage of an LDO over the normal planning application process, or more traditional masterplan, is that it helps existing businesses and potential new investors commit to investing in a property. They know they can develop it to meet their needs within these broad parameters, and without the usual cost, time and potential risk involved in a full planning application.
- 1.3 If an LDO is adopted, proposals that are within the agreed development parameters will be able to proceed following the submission of a pre-development notification to the council, reducing the time it takes for LPAs to process the notification to three weeks. This is a significant time saving compared to normal planning applications. For applicants and the council, it also means significantly less time and cost is involved in preparing and considering an application, as all the key planning issues have already been addressed. The overall effect is a significantly streamlined planning process. Appeals can still however be made under s 78[1] of the 1990 Act.

- 1.4 While the LDO does not relate to a specific project, in practice the first development allowed under the LDO could commence within a matter of a couple of months of its adoption. However, there will be a standard range of conditions which must first be approved by the LPA, before any new building can start.
- 1.3 When the Greenham Trust (the Trust) acquired the USAAF Greenham Base in 1997, it gifted 304 hectares of common land back to the council. The Trust retained the former Technical Area of the air base, now established as Greenham Business Park, for development. The existing planning permission includes a masterplan for the site, but this has proved to be too inflexible to adapt to evolving market demand. Of the permitted 154,000 square metres of development, only around 40% has been used, therefore there remains significant scope for growth.
- 1.5 The Council seeks to encourage the continued regeneration of the former military base into a thriving business park, by the focusing on traditional business uses, including offices, Research & Development, industrial uses and storage and distribution. This will allow for a mix of businesses and complementary uses (including, strictly limited amounts of small-scale retail, car sales and leisure uses).
- 1.6 Approximately 25% of the existing accommodation is new build. Many of the 'legacy' buildings from the air base remain, and these generally achieve lower rental values as they are less fit-for-purpose. The LDO aims to encourage redevelopment with more modern, visually attractive and user focussed accommodation, which should lead to an increase in business rate generation over the coming years. It will also allow the Trust to distribute more funds towards local good causes.
- 1.7 In a competitive economy, the speed and certainty brought by a LDO can prove to be the key issue for businesses deciding whether to invest in the area or go elsewhere. It also benefits the LPA and other local stakeholders by managing the site in a comprehensive and streamlined framework, rather than piecemeal, and reduces the need to repeatedly assess similar planning issues.
- 1.4 This is why the Greenham Business Park LDO has been prepared by the council's planning officers with the involvement of the Trust, and its planning consultant Pro Vision. It has been drafted to cover a period of 15 years, with mandatory reviews every 5 years to ensure it is delivering its objectives, and provides a framework for managing the impacts of development permitted within the park and the surrounding area, particularly on the northern boundary which adjoins the Common, and to the east where there are a number of dwellings. If necessary the LDO can be revoked at any time, but the Council would have to consult on this process.
- 1.8 The document sets out a series of development parameters based on a zonal plan, which includes an overall cap on total floor space within the business park and the land uses that are permitted. The cap is identical to the amount of floor space already permitted under the existing outline and reserved matters permissions on the site. Proposals falling within these parameters can proceed following a pre-development notification to the council. Proposals falling outside of these parameters will remain subject to the normal planning application process. A series of technical studies, including landscape assessment, heritage assessment, ecological surveys and traffic assessment, have informed the development parameters. For example, building heights are restricted on the northern boundary to control the visual impact from the Common. A number of planning conditions are also specified, including, for example those for managing noise impacts and external lighting. All future development proposals [with the exception of minor and

miscellaneous development] will also have to comply with the Design Guidance, which addresses the appearance of buildings and other matters to control the impact of development.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That Full Council formally adopts the Greenham Business Park Local Development Order as appended to this report.

3. Implications

- 3.1 **Financial:** The notification fees will be lower than planning applications fees so there will be some loss of planning fee income; however it is anticipated that officer time and public cost of processing future applications at the Park will fall as a consequence. However assuming the LDO increases local business schemes at the Park, business rates will rise for the Council. There are no implications for the Council CIL charging schedule which remains in force, unaffected by the LDO designation
- 3.2 **Policy:** The LDO accords with policy CS9 in the Core Strategy and with the NPPF2.
- 3.3 **Personnel:** None.
- 3.4 **Legal:** Legal have been consulted on the report attached.
- 3.5 **Risk Management:** It is conceivable that should the LDO be adopted it may be the subject of a legal challenge. Officers have sought to minimise this risk by taking a second consultation round, and by consulting legal colleagues.
- 3.6 **Property:** Nil. The Council has no property holdings at the Park.
- 3.7 **Other:** An equalities impact assessment has been carried out for the LDO proposal.

4. Appendices

- 4.1 Supporting Information – Full Report
- 4.2 Appendix 1 - The LDO—Final version includes conditions, plans and design guidance.
- 4.3 Appendix 2 - Equalities Impact Assessment.
- 4.4 Appendix 3 - Summary of responses received to first consultation round.
- 4.5 Appendix 4 - As above –second consultation round.