

Joe Jenkinson
Head of Planning & Building Control
Economic Regeneration Service
Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Westgate Plaza, PO Box 604,
Barnsley, S70 9FE

11th May 2016

Dear Mr Jenkinson,

BARNSELY LOCAL PLAN – PROPOSED EMPLOYMENT ALLOCATION - BLACKMOOR BUSINESS PARK – SHEFFIELD ROAD, OXSPRING

I write on behalf of my client Yorkshire Land Limited (YLL) to provide you with details of their proposals to deliver high quality B1 & B2 employment facilities at the former petroleum storage and distribution site located to the south of Sheffield Road, Oxspring. A proposed development which would be referred to as Blackmoor Business Park.

YLL request that their proposals are considered by Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council (BMBC) as an employment land allocation within the next version of the Barnsley Local Plan (BLP). The reason why the site is being submitted at this point, and not previously, is that the site has only recently been decommissioned. Presently the land is owned by the Crown and on account of the Government's proposals set out in recent public statements that they wish to maximise the redevelopment of previously developed sites owned by Governmental departments we are confident that the land will be disposed of shortly. YLL have instructed agents in an attempt to secure the site.

As BMBC are aware, YLL has successfully developed land in and around Oxspring, Penistone and the wider Western Rural Area of the Barnsley Borough for over 27 years. Bringing tens of millions of pounds of investment to the area. This includes the redevelopment of a number of previously developed sites in the area, including the former "Cammell Laird Foundry" in Penistone. Their focus has been to provide tangible benefits to enhance the local environment as part of their development schemes without the receipt of grant funding of any type.

For the avoidance of doubt my client requests that this proposal is considered entirely separately and in isolation from their Oxspring Fields proposals.

The purpose of this representation is to provide BMBC with information in respect of the site's history; my client's proposals for the site; and our initial thoughts in respect of how the development of the site would align with BMBC's economic strategies. It is our intention to provide further, more detailed, information in due course to demonstrate the deliverability of the proposals and to outline the number of benefits that it can deliver to the Western Rural area of the Borough.

The allocation of the site for employment purposes will act as a catalyst to enhance the prospect of the site's development in the future. Following your review of the initial information provided within this letter we hope you will agree that the site's allocation would deliver substantial benefits to the Borough through the delivery of a high quality employment site; situated in a sustainable location; by a developer with a successful track record in redeveloping previously developed sites.

History of the Site

The site is a previously developed site located within the Green Belt.

The site extends to approximately 10.1 Hectares (25 acres) and was initially constructed in the mid 1950's by the Military of Defence (MoD) as a component of its Petroleum Storage and Distribution Network. It was then used privately from the 1970's until 1997 by 'ConocoPhillips' and 'Murco' for the

distribution of fuel utilising a fleet of large petroleum tankers. Approximately seventy staff were employed at the site in various roles throughout this period, including but not limited to office based Admin staff, Garage Mechanical/Maintenance Staff and Petroleum Tanker Drivers. The MoD out sourced the maintenance of the (mothballed) site from 1997 until 2015, when decommissioning works commenced.

The redevelopment of the site as a modern high quality employment facility will re-establish the site's employment activity. Through the proposed delivery of high quality B1 and B2 employment uses, it is our view that the site's redevelopment would have less of an impact on the local environment and infrastructure than the site's previous use.

Proposed Development

YLL believe that the site would be suitable as a high-quality business park serving to meet the needs of Penistone and the Western Rural Area, which geographically forms approximately half of the Barnsley Borough.

As alluded to above we consider the most appropriate employment uses for the site to be B1 and B2 uses. More specifically: -

- Offices;
- Research & Development of Product or Processes;
- Light Industrial; &
- General Industrial

The site can accommodate small starter units through to larger premises for established businesses.

The proposals will focus on providing high quality employment facilities for BMBC's identified priority employment sectors as set out within the Draft BLP. They will enhance the sustainable growth of Penistone, whilst also contributing to maintaining sustainable rural communities and viable villages in the Wester Rural Area of the Borough.

It is proposed that the development would be delivered to a very high standard, using a palette of natural materials where possible, to ensure that it is in keeping with the surrounding area. Building heights will be sympathetic to the surrounding landscape and green belt to ensure the openness of the area is not harmed. They will be modelled on the many examples around the country of attractive and successful rural business parks.

Existing road access is provided by the B6462 'Sheffield Road' which has proven suitable to accommodate Heavy Goods Vehicles, with a fleet of large petroleum tankers having previously operated from this location, as set out above. A photograph of the site's existing vehicular entrance is enclosed.

The site benefits from the presence of strong defensible landscape belts located on the northern, eastern and southern boundary. These features would be retained and enhanced where possible. The site's southern boundary is formed by the Trans Pennine Trail P which provides an excellent pedestrian/cycle connectivity and a strong defensible boundary from the Green Belt beyond. An aerial photograph of the site is enclosed with this letter on which the aforementioned features can be seen.

The proposed site lies within the Barnsley Green Belt Review General Area 'Pen 11'. As the enclosed aerial photograph demonstrates, the land to the south of the Trans Pennine Trail has completely different characteristics to the land north of the Trans Pennine Trail, which includes this proposed employment site. Importantly, Arup (who undertook the Green Belt Review) identified within their report on General Area 'Pen 11' that the Trans Pennine Trail within a dismantled railway could provide a strong internal boundary, should the General Area (PEN11) be considered for sub division. Arup also identified

that the site's large wooded areas could reduce the existing level of openness and that the large sewage works at cheese bottom (which directly abounds this site to the south east) reduces the rural character.

Employment Need

The Council's adopted Core Strategy at section 7 (Spatial Portrait) sets out in paragraph 7.79 the need to provide between 4.5 and 6.5 hectares of Employment Land in Penistone over the Core Strategy Plan Period (2008 to 2026). The Local Plan Period now extends to 2033 and therefore a proportionate amount of additional employment land (approximately 2.52 hectares) will be required to ensure that needs will be met over the extended plan period.

In the Sites and Places DPD of 2012, the Council proposed two potential employment sites to meet the needs of the Principal Town of Penistone these being: -

- P1 - Land South of Sheffield Road (Penistone) - 1.29 Hectares; &
- P2 - Land North of Sheffield Road (Oxspring) - 3.27 Hectares

Site Ref. P1 was the subject of a successful appeal allowing planning consent for residential use. Therefore, the only proposed site identified within the Draft Barnsley Local Plan (November 2014) to meet the employment land needs of Penistone is Site Ref. P2, which is located to the north of Sheffield Road, Oxspring. Site P2 is a Greenfield site located within the Green Belt.

On the basis of the above it can be considered that the reduction in employment land allocations to meet the needs of Penistone and the surrounding Western Area of the Borough between the Core Strategy/Sites and Places DPD and the Draft BLP is associated with the lack of available, deliverable, employment land within the area, rather than a reduction in employment needs overall.

As stated above the proposed employment Site Ref. P2 is a Greenfield site located within the Green Belt. Unlike the proposed 'Blackmoor Business Park' which is categorised as a previously developed site, albeit within the Green Belt.

Whilst site Ref.P2 will go some way towards meeting the area's employment needs, there are a number of factors which will affect the scale of development at the site, including the presence of two large electric pylons carrying high voltage cables which hang low over the site. In addition, we are also aware of one other key restriction associated with the development of Site Ref.P2 related to the accessibility for high sided delivery vehicles. Penistone is restricted by a number of low bridges including those located on Bridge Street, Green Road and at Sheffield Road in Oxspring which have height limits ranging between 10 feet 9 inches to 14 feet 9 inches (please see the photographs enclosed).

By way of example, a small printing business employing perhaps twelve staff, may have its paper delivered by a vehicle undertaking multiple drops around the country, very often the delivery vehicle may be a high sided lorry which would be unable to access the employment facilities at site reference P2, north of Sheffield Road, Oxspring. This is a major consideration for any business considering business premises in the area. Furthermore, an increase in commercial vehicular traffic through the centre of Penistone would be detrimental to the Town.

The location of the 'Blackmoor Business Park' ensures that any associated commercial vehicular traffic does not have to travel through the centre of Penistone and is not affected by the low bridges in the area.

We are not aware of any other current employment land allocations or employment sites having been proposed in the Penistone area capable of meeting the area's identified needs. Furthermore, a number of employment sites which were identified in the adopted Unitary Development Plan (Volume 12 Penistone Community Area 'Policy PE4' December 2000) to be protected for employment use have since been developed for residential purposes.

Accordingly, the allocation of the Blackmoor Business Park could help to meet the deficit in employment land created by the development of Site Ref. P1 for residential use, the extended time period of the Development Plan for the Borough, and any additional deficit as a result of complications associated with the development of Site Ref. P2. Whilst also delivering additional very high quality employment facilities on a previously developed site which is situated in a sustainable location.

The employment land requirements identified in the Draft BLP should be considered a minimum and where deliverable sites are proposed by developers with a track record of delivery they should be encouraged wherever possible.

The Draft BLP states that 180ha of land is to be removed from the Green Belt to deliver the Borough's employment land needs. Whilst the site's allocation would "technically" increase this figure, it would not involve the release of land that meets the identified purposes of the Green Belt on account of it being previously developed.

Sustainable & Deliverable

The site is located within a sustainable location and there are no technical constraints that would preclude the development of the site.

The site is easily accessible to public transport with an existing bus stop located immediately adjacent to the site on Sheffield Road. There are direct local bus services to Penistone, Barnsley and Sheffield, and the nearest rail station is only a couple of miles away at Penistone, with direct, hourly services to Huddersfield, Barnsley and Sheffield.

The site is located within close proximity of the settlements of Penistone and Barnsley and within commuting distance of Sheffield, Wakefield, Leeds and Manchester (all within 30 miles).

As set out above, the Trans Pennine Trail forms the sites South Western boundary and this provides access to and from Penistone for those on foot or cycle. It would take approximately 10 minutes to cycle from the centre of Penistone to the proposed Business Park on a safe, flat and dedicated route.

The site's location on the eastern edge of Oxspring adjoining the B6462 'Sheffield Road' (close to the A629) would mean that work-related trips to and from places such as Barnsley, Sheffield, Leeds and Huddersfield can access the wider highway network (including the M1 Motorway which is only 10 minutes' drive away) without the need to utilise narrow country lanes or travel directly through much of Oxspring or Penistone. Thus helping to reduce the level of congestion currently witnessed on a daily basis in Penistone.

With regards to technical matters, this previously developed site is already served by mains services, including foul and surface water drainage.

There are no vehicular access restrictions, including restrictions associated with low bridges as referenced above. The site will be designed sympathetically to ensure that existing features of environmental value are protected or enhanced where possible. In addition, the development of the site will also include the remediation of any areas of contamination caused by the site's former use.

We believe that the site is well suited to a sensitive redevelopment of a range of very high quality B1 and B2 employment units of variable size. The site is highly accessible to a large number of future employees and employers. It can importantly provide new employment opportunities to help sustain the proposed housing growth of Penistone and the wider Areas of the Borough.

National & Local Planning Policy Support

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) identifies that the Government is committed to securing economic growth in order to create jobs and prosperity, making it easier for jobs to be created in cities, towns and villages. A core planning principle of the document is to proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs.

With regard to the Blackmoor Business Park proposals, the NPPF identifies that allocations of land for development should prefer land of lesser environmental value and encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed. Guidance that can be used to argue that the site is more preferable than Site Ref. P2 when considered against national planning policy.

The NPPF promotes the creation of employment opportunities in rural areas, identifying the desire for Local Plans to promote a strong rural economy through supporting the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings.

Finally, and specifically in relation to the site's location within the Green Belt, the NPPF identifies that the complete redevelopment of previously developed sites, whether redundant or in continuing use, is not considered to be inappropriate development within the Green Belt where it would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development. The description of the site provided above and the enclosed aerial photograph provide evidence of how the site can be developed without having an impact on the openness of the surrounding Green Belt.

At the local level, the Draft BLP identifies the need to grow Barnsley's economy in order to benefit local people and maximise its contribution to the Leeds and Sheffield City Region economies. It identifies the need to support economic growth by providing a range of new employment sites and premises in order to attract new investment and support the growth of indigenous business.

The Draft BLP states that 180ha of land is to be removed from the Green Belt to deliver the Borough's employment land needs. Whilst the site's allocation would "technically" increase this figure, it would not involve the release of land that meets the identified purposes of the Green Belt on account of it being previously developed.

Furthermore, and again as identified above, the proposals will focus on providing very high quality employment facilities for BMBC's identified priority employment sectors as set out within the Draft BLP. Enhancing the sustainable growth of Penistone, whilst also contributing to maintaining sustainable rural communities and viable villages in the Wester Rural Area of the Borough.

We know there is strong political support to increase employment opportunities within Penistone and the Western Rural Area of the Borough. The proposed allocation of greenfield sites located within the Green Belt provides clear evidence of the lack of available previously developed sites to meet the future employment needs of Barnsley. Which is why the proposed development of the Blackmoor Business Park stands out as a development opportunity which should be seized upon by BMBC. The site's development would meet national planning guidance along with Barnsley's economic strategies as set out within the Draft BLP.

We trust that this information will be reviewed prior to the release of the next version of the Draft BLP. We understand the tight timescales associated with the proposed Cabinet meeting of the 18th May and hope that the inclusion of the site will be given serious consideration in advance of that meeting. However, given the site's previously developed character we would also welcome some initial feedback from BMBC as to whether an immediate planning application could also prove acceptable.

As always should you wish to discuss the content of this letter further then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Paul Butler', with a stylized flourish at the end.

PAUL BUTLER
Director