

13 December 2022

Delivered by email

Cotswold District Council
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Ref: RAIS3001

Dear Sir / Madam

FAIRFORD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN REG 16 REPRESENTATIONS

We write on behalf of our client, Rainier Developments Ltd in response to the current consultation on the Regulation 16 Fairford Neighbourhood Plan. These representations are in relation to Rainier's ongoing promotion of the land south of London Road, Fairford for development. Representations have previously been provided to the Regulation 14 consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan and the emerging Local Plan.

Rainier note that the Neighbourhood Plan is largely consistent with that which was consulted on 2020, including in relation to the land proposed under Policy FNP14.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN REPRESENTATIONS

In making these representations we have had regard to the 'basic conditions' (see the Planning Practice Guidance at Paragraph: 065 Reference ID: 41-065-20140306) which must be met if the Neighbourhood Plan can be put to referendum. Unless necessary to do so, we do not repeat the basic conditions.

In addition, and as a consequence of basic condition 'e', we have also had regard to the policies in the adopted Development Plan, namely the Local Plan 2011 – 2031.

In that context, we note that the Local Plan describes Fairford as one of the largest settlements in the District (paragraph 7.6.1), however the Plan also explains that:

"The town has a good range of community facilities and services and has a reasonable employment base with a higher than average proportion of those jobs in growth sectors. Fairford's employment role, however, is in danger of decreasing as there is a poor balance of jobs to workers."

Policy FNP1: The Fairford and Horcott Development Boundaries/ Map B: Fairford Policies Map

We note that the Development Boundary shown in red on Map B is generally consistent with that in the Local Plan Inset 4.

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In any event, for the reasons set out in these representations, Rainier consider that the wider area of land shown land south of London Road, Fairford they are promoting should be allocated for development (residential and employment) and should be included within the defined Development Boundaries.

Policy FNP17: Growing our Local Economy

Given the text within the Local Plan regarding the declining employment role of Fairford, Rainier supported the previous ambitions of the Neighbourhood Plan to support and grow the local economy. However, it now appears as though those aspirations have been diluted as the FNP no longer seems to propose the allocation of land to support the expansion of the Industrial Estate. In contrast, it now only seeks to support the Estate's intensification.

SITE ASSESSMENT

The land promoted by Rainier is considered in the AECOM Site Assessment Report which supported the earlier stages of consultation under references F_39C (that which was previously proposed for employment allocation) and F_52.

Rainier maintain concerns over the manner in which site F_52 is assessed, particularly having regard to the way in which sites F_51B & F_51C are assessed (and which now form the proposed allocation under FNP14). Sites F_52 F_51B & F_51C are each assessed as having 'Medium sensitivity to development' in relation to landscape and townscape considerations. The Site Assessment Report defines a Medium sensitivity as:

"development of the site would lead to a moderate impact on landscape or townscape character due to visibility from surrounding locations and/or impacts on the character of the location."

The analysis in relation to Site F_52 states:

"The site is neighboured by an employment estate to the south, new housing and (currently) an agricultural field to the west and a couple of isolated houses and open countryside to the north and east. However, the site currently acts as a green buffer between the A417 and the new housing and therefore loss of this buffer may alter the landscape character to the east of the town, and impact upon local views. This is considered important to local residents. However, site is screened to some extent by vegetation."

In our opinion, Site F_52 is a wedge between recent housing development to the west and the adjacent industrial estate to the south. The existing vegetation along London Road serves to restrict wider visibility and the site does not intrude into the wider countryside beyond the current limits of development.

In contrast, the analysis for F_51B & F_51C states:

"The site's development would be an intrusion into the open countryside, impacting upon the SLA to the west. The scale of development would be particularly large in the context of the town leading to adverse effects on the landscape character and wider landscape setting."

"However, the site slopes slightly to the south towards the town, limiting long distance views in to and out of the site to the wider landscape. The site is screened by dense vegetation/ trees/ hedgerows, which restricts views into the site, for example from the PRoW along the southern boundary of the site."

In our submission, the analysis of sites F_51B & F_51C demonstrates that they are more likely to have significant landscape implications, for example by the extent of intrusion into the countryside than the land promoted by Rainier and as such it is unclear why the Site Assessment Report concludes that they are both of Medium sensitivity from a landscape and townscape perspective.

RAINIER'S EVIDENCE TO THE EMERGING LOCAL PLAN

The land promoted by Rainier is considered in the District SHELAA 2021 review under references F39C and F52, although the SHELAA document in relation to Fairford considered them in combination and notes the proposal for "Up to 80 dwellings and a community shop / hub, although the site could also deliver 50 dwellings and 2,760sqm/of commercial space (of which 565sqm would be a community shop / hub). Access points from London Road at the north-east corner and onto Trubshaw Way to the west."

The SHELAA Review sets out a series of key actions in relation to the combined site as follows:

- Archaeological investigation;
- Agricultural land use survey;
- Confirmation from Natural England about level of additional development in Fairford and the impact on the nearby Special Area of Conservation;
- Retail sequential test for the shop;
- Preliminary Ecological Assessment;
- Specialist assessment on the removal of trees to provide the access;
- Confirmation that the highway network through the adjacent housing development would be able to support an increase in vehicular movements resulting from the development of this site; and
- Analysis of potential amenity issues (noise and air quality, etc.) from the adjacent Established Employment Site and the proposed employment uses on F39C.

In response to Cotswold District Council's consideration of the land promoted by Rainier through the SHELAA Review 2021, a series of technical reports as follows (and which accompany these representations) were provided in support of representations on the draft Local Plan:

- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (Tyler Grange, January 2022)
- Landscape and Visual Appraisal (Tyler Grange, February 2022)
- Preliminary Arboricultural Appraisal (Tyler Grange, February 2022)
- Highways Response to SHLAA Site Assessment (Jubb, December 2021)
- Groundwater Flood Risk Review (Jubb, January 2022)
- Utility Infrastructure Review (Jubb, January 2022)
- Environmental Noise Assessment (Acoustic Consultants Ltd, February 2022)
- Agricultural Land Classification and Considerations (Kernon, February 2022)
- Geophysical Survey Report (Sumo Survey, December 2021)

In our submission, the enclosed material demonstrates that there are no ‘in principle’ reasons why this site could not be development for the uses proposed by Rainier. Whilst there are technical matters to be addressed, this is common to other sites and can be addressed through Plan-making (and the wording of policies) and the development-management process.

SUMMARY

Rainier consider that the draft Fairford Neighbourhood Plan should propose the allocation of the land south of London Road (reference F_39C as was previously proposed for employment purposes) and also include the additional land referenced F_52. This mixed-use allocation could provide for new employment and residential development and is appropriate for the following reasons:

- It would provide additional flexibility for housing delivery and support economic growth and provide opportunities to remedy the declining employment role of Fairford (as recognised in the Neighbourhood Plan)
- It would deliver housing in a location between housing and industrial uses, screened by vegetation along London Road and without intruding into the countryside. In this respect, the allocation would have a lesser impact on the landscape than the proposed residential allocations in the draft Neighbourhood Plan.

Yours sincerely

David Murray-Cox
Director