Examination Statement

Land at Redhill Aerodrome

Thakeham Homes

Tandridge District Council – Local Plan 2033

Examination in Public

Matter 5 - Employment Land Provision
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1. Introduction

1.1. This Examination Statement is submitted by Savills on behalf of Thakeham. Thakeham is the sole promoter of Land at Redhill Aerodrome alongside development partners Quintain.

1.2. Prior to the submission of the Local Plan by Tandridge District Council (TDC) to the Planning Inspectorate for examination, Thakeham and their consultant team have participated in the formal consultations of the Local Plan at Regulation 18 stage in December 2016 and September 2017 and to the Regulation 19 stage in September 2018. In addition, the site has been submitted to relevant call for sites for the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) and Thakeham and their consultant team have met with Planning Policy Officers throughout the process to discuss the strategic opportunity at Land at Redhill Aerodrome.

1.3. Thakeham made a number of objections to the Regulation 19 consultation of the Local Plan, which should be read alongside this Hearing Statement. It is our view that the Local Plan as submitted is not sound on the basis of legal compliance including Duty to Cooperate, the evidence base including Viability and Sustainability Appraisal and the allocation of South Godstone as a Garden Village.

1.4. The Land at Redhill Aerodrome is located across the administrative boundaries of both TDC and Reigate & Banstead Borough Council (RBBC) and therefore Thakeham has also been engaging with RBBC as part of the preparation of their Development Management Plan (DMP).

1.5. The location of the site, its surroundings and the vision for the Garden Village at Redhill Aerodrome were set out in detail in the representation to the Regulation 19 Local Plan Consultation and have therefore not been reproduced in this statement.
2. Response to the Inspectors Questions

2.1. Thakeham has informed the Programme Officer that they wish to participate at the hearing sessions relating to Matter 5 and will be represented by Savills at this Hearing.

Matter 5 - Employment Land Provision

ISSUE: Is the plan positively prepared and would it be effective in providing for enough employment land to meet objectively assessed needs?

Q.5.2 Will the provision of the employment land proposed improve the ‘self containment’ of the District in terms of the commuting patterns of residents?

2.2. No.

2.3. The proposed provision of employment land will not improve the ‘self-containment’ of the District in terms of the commuting pattern of residents. As part of Thakeham’s Regulation 19 representation a Viability and Employment Need Consideration Report (VENCR) (September 2018) was produced and submitted to TDC. This report provided a review of the Tandridge Economic Needs Assessment (ENA). It concludes that the ENA presents a realistic assessment of the District’s employment market, describing it as small in comparison to nearby areas, suitable only for SME’s that serve the needs of the local population. The ENA continues that the M23 corridor is the economic powerhouse of the region (central to the Gatwick Diamond).

2.4. The ENA highlights that there is a high level of out commuting in the District to access higher-skilled, higher paid jobs outside of the District. The proposed strategy to combat the historic trend of high levels of out commuting is to effectively maintain the same supply of sites that have failed to compete with other employment areas historically. The exception to this is the employment land proposed as part of the South Godstone Garden Community, which, for reasons explained in the VENCR (September 2018), Thakeham’s Regulation 19 representation and set out in Thakeham’s Statement for Matter 6, is not considered to be viable and therefore is unlikely to be delivered. Clearly, this is an ineffective strategy which is unlikely to improve the self-containment of the District.
2.5. A more appropriate strategy would be to develop a new business park along the M23 corridor which is identified as the economic powerhouse of the region, such as within the Redhill Aerodrome site. Such an approach would create a regionally significant employment location which would not only stifle the established out commuting pattern within the district by providing an area for desirable and highly skilled companies to base themselves, but it would also result in in-commuting to the District, and the associated economic benefits that this would bring with it.

2.6. In summary, the approach taken forward in the Local Plan is not markedly different to the historic approach taken in the District and therefore is unlikely to yield different results and reduce out commuting. The creation of a new economic / business hub along the M23 corridor is considered to be a far more appropriate way to combat out commuting and improve the self-containment of the District.
3. **Conclusion**

3.1. As set out in the comments made above in respect of the Inspector’s Main Issues and Questions Thakeham, and its development partner Quintain raise concerns regarding the effectiveness of the plan in meeting objectively assessed employment needs.

3.2. A heavy reliance is placed upon delivery of employment floorspace at South Godstone. Thakeham’s evidence submitted at Regulation 19 stage, with particular reference to the VENCR highlights that South Godstone is a poor location for employment land, with low rents and values which renders employment development within the area unviable, particularly given the significant contribution that will be required to the costs of upgrading Junction 6 of the M25. It is important that the employment strategy considers not just land capacity but also whether the land allocated is in the right place and therefore attractive for the market to invest in. Development of employment land in the wrong location will not address employment needs in the District, simply resulting in costly provision that is not utilised.

3.3. Given the plan’s heavy reliance on South Godstone for economic development, despite its poor viability in relation to employment land, it is considered that the plan is not positively prepared, justified or effective and therefore is not sound.

3.4. In order to make the plan sound it will be necessary for major modifications to be made, notably the removal of South Godstone as a strategic location for growth and its replacement with a more viable location for employment growth, most likely along the M23 corridor which is a much more desirable location for employment land, such as Redhill Aerodrome. Should major modifications not be progressed then the plan should be found unsound.