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RB/01/n1611

Forward Planning
Planning and Regulatory Services
Ashfield District Council
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NG17 8DA

Sent via email:
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26th January 2024

Dear Sir/Madam

Consultation on the Ashfield Local Plan 2023 to 2040: Regulation 19 Pre-Submission Draft

nineteen47 are instructed by Garner Holdings Ltd ("our client") to submit representations to Ashfield District Council ('the LPA') pursuant to the current consultation on the Regulation 19 (Pre-submission Draft version) of the Ashfield Local Plan (2023-2040). These representations are made within the context of a site ('the Representation Site' or 'the Site') which our client has an interest in 'Land to the South East of Junction 27'. A Site Location Plan is included for your reference.

The Representation Site is currently subject to a hybrid planning application (ref: V/2022/0246) ('the Application') which is under consideration by the LPA. The application seeks planning permission for the following form of development, which is hereby referred to as 'the Proposed Development':

Application Made in Accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations) 2017: Hybrid Planning Application Comprising: Full Application for a B2/B8 Unit with Associated Access, Parking, Drainage Infrastructure and Landscaping; and Outline Application for up to 4no. B2/B8 units (With Point of Access and Scale Included)

The Application demonstrates that the Site is available for development and, as explored later in this representation, is achievable and deliverable.

It will be noted that representations have previously been submitted to the LPA in November 2021 in response to the Draft Local Plan 2020-2038 Consultation (Regulation 18). The points raised in this current response build upon the comments submitted during the previous 2021 Draft Local Plan Consultation.

Site Context

The Representation Site is located to the southeast of Junction 27 of the M1 and south of the A608 (Mansfield Road) in Annesley. The Site comprises approximately 25ha of land and is located entirely within the administrative boundary of Ashfield District Council.

The Site is currently designated as a Strategic Employment Allocation in the Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan under Strategic Policy S6: 'Meeting Future Needs - Strategic Employment Allocations Junction 27, M1 Motorway, Annesley'.

The nearest settlement is Annesley, which is located approximately 2km to the northeast, however between the Site and Annesley is Sherwood Business Park, which is circa 78ha in area and is home to numerous businesses which benefit from easy access onto the M1 at Junction 27.

In terms of the surrounding context, immediately to the west of the Site are open fields, with the M1 running beyond the fields in a north/south direction. To the southwest of the Site is Audrey Wood, with Weavers Lane abutting the Site beyond this along the southeastern boundary and beyond Weavers Lane are further open fields and Felley Woods. To the east, Weavers Lane continues until it joins Mansfield Road (A608). Located to the east of the Site and also fronting onto Mansfield Road is a small cluster of businesses, including Manor Equestrian, America Farm and Inspirational Interiors. To the east of the existing businesses, Chaworth Lodge, a residential property, is located which can be seen from Mansfield Road.

Part of the western half of the Site is currently safeguarded for HS2, to aid the construction process of the line (Phase 2b) and use the land for the storage of materials. However, the Government have recently removed the section of HS2 from Birmingham to East Midlands in October 2023 but has restated its commitment to transportation projects in the East Midlands area. The safeguarded route for HS2 in Ashfield remains at this time.

In terms of access, the Representation Site is currently accessible via a slip lane which leads off from the A608. The Site is also accessible from a field access located off Weavers Lane.

Background and Proposed Development

Garner Holdings Ltd was founded by a local businessman who has successfully started and operated a number of local companies including Eurocell PLC and Liniar, which specialise in extruding and supplying uPVC building products and window systems.

The first company is Eurocell PLC, which is based at Clover Nook Industrial estate in Alfreton. Eurocell employs a total of 1500 people. Formed later is Liniar, which is based in Denby Hall Business Park and employs 600 people. Our client sold Liniar in 2015 and remained as CEO until December 2018.

Garner Holdings Ltd has recently expanded and established a new company, Garner Aluminium Extrusions (Garnalex). Garnalex, is presently based in the Firs Works at Heage. Firs Works is an older industrial site which our client owns. It was formerly a prisoner of war camp and was redeveloped as a business park in the 1950s. Consequently, the industrial buildings are old and generally not fit for purpose for modern manufacturing, having very low eaves heights as well as the surrounding road network being unsuited to commercial traffic. For this reason, this site has been granted planning permission for residential development which offers a more suitable use.

Garnalex was established in 2018 and significant investment has since been made in both state of the art machinery for the business, together with the production of a new range of aluminium windows, doors and building products which offer a much improved thermal performance over any other systems in the UK.

The business started trading in January 2020 and was then forced to close due to Covid. This delayed the launch of the new range of products and the first new window was eventually launched in September 2020. Since then, Garnalex has launched a bespoke new residential window system, a new aluminium lantern roof system and then recently a new bifold door system. The trade extrusion business is supplying a wide range of external customers, and the Sheerline range of products is growing exponentially month by month. The current number of employees stand at 120 and this is planned to grow to over 300 by 2025.

Now that the business has successfully operated for a number of years (even with the Covid-19 and Brexit setbacks) the next investment and expansion of the business, is the provision of a further aluminium extrusion machine and also a vertical paint line. In order to deliver this, plus also the relocation of the original machine, a new purpose-built factory is required.

The Representation Site at Junction 27 is considered ideal for this expansion plan, as it provides sufficient space to accommodate the new purpose-built factory, but will also have space to further expand and consolidate the other operations onto a single site.

The development of the Site at Junction 27 will be split into two phases, with Phase 1 meeting Garnalex's immediate requirements. Phase 2 which will provide land for planned expansion cannot be brought forward until HS2 have removed the safeguarding on the land for Phase 2b of the line which has now been abandoned. Discussions are ongoing with HS2 at this time as to the timescales for this. The Phasing Plan to develop the Site is envisaged as follows:

- Phase 1: Circa 332,000sqft B2/B8 unit
- Phase 2: Circa 4no. B2/B8 units with a maximum combined floorspace of approximately 655,000sqft

Pre-submission Draft Local Plan 2023 to 2040

In the context of the Proposed Development and National Planning Policy, the draft Local Plan has been reviewed and observations have been set out below.

Strategic Policy S4: Green Belt

Policy S4 refers to the Green Belt as shown on the policy maps. The Representation Site is shown as being removed. We agree with this and agree that 'exceptional circumstances' can be demonstrated in this case.

According to the Pre-submission Draft Local Plan, 41% of Ashfield is designated as Green Belt. This is a significant amount of land, and means that the District is severely constrained when it comes to meeting both its housing and employment needs. Modern manufacturing, logistics and distribution businesses require large scale sites to accommodate the buildings and land which they operate within. This makes it challenging to identify suitable sites which could accommodate the Proposed Development, particularly when an area is constrained by a large amount of Green Belt. The land surrounding Junction 27 is a logical location for employment development, as there is the opportunity to capitalise on locational benefits associated with a major transport corridor (the M1).

An Employment Need Review (ENR) prepared by Lambert Smith Hampton was submitted as part of the Application which is currently under consideration by the LPA. The ENR reviews the employment land needs across Ashfield District, as well as the supply. The ENR identifies a total industrial land

requirement for Ashfield District of 118.90ha. Updating this to account for the completions data since the start of this period results in a need for 87.76 ha of industrial land over the period 2021-38.

Ashfield currently has an employment land supply of 41.85ha. This means there is a shortfall in the District of 45.82ha of industrial land for the period 2021-38. The Council cannot demonstrate a sufficient supply of sites to meet the identified needs in the District therefore additional sites will be required to meet this shortfall. In order to meet this requirement, land will need to be released from the Green Belt, particularly in the case of large-scale manufacturing/logistics development which there is a clear demand for in the District.

This shortfall is being felt by existing businesses in the District, as demonstrated by the fact that Garnalex has not been able to find an alternative suitable site for the Proposed Development. The Market Report submitted alongside the Application considers alternative sites within a 15-mile radius of Ashfield and found no sites suitable to meet the requirements of Garner Holdings.

Pages 67 to 70 of Ashfield's Spatial Strategy and Site Selection Paper - Background Paper 1 (October 2023) considers the 'exceptional circumstances' when assessing the Representation Site. Overall, we agree with this assessment, which concludes that there is an urgent requirement for meeting the needs of the Logistics Sector along the M1 corridor in Nottinghamshire. The evidence produced concludes that the Representation Site is in a prime location for strategic distribution uses, and as such the allocation is considered to have a key role in meeting future employment land requirements in Ashfield. Whilst there are other employment allocations near to the M1, the Paper acknowledges that most of these business parks are now largely completed and there are limited opportunities to meet the sector's requirements elsewhere in Ashfield.

The Paper also states that the proposed strategic allocations provide a major economic opportunity for Ashfield, providing investment to boost the local economy and jobs, and helping to address local deprivation issues. It concludes that, on balance, the public benefits of the proposed allocation provide the justification for the allocation to be taken forward in the Local Plan when considered against the heritage and Green Belt constraints of the Site. We agree with this assessment and support the conclusions.

[Strategic Policy S6: Meeting Future Needs - Strategic Employment Allocation at Junction 27 M1 Motorway](#)

Policy S6 states that employment development will be permitted on land off Junction 27. This includes a 20.47ha site to the north east of Junction 27, and a 25ha site to the south east of Junction 27 (the Representation Site).

The draft policy states that the land to the south east is of strategic employment importance given its relationship to the principal areas of growth and its accessibility via the strategic road network. Furthermore, it will create high quality business space that will contribute towards meeting the regional demand for logistics. The site will deliver:

- Development of businesses operated substantially within the logistics sector;
- High-quality sustainable buildings, which are carbon neutral with the design in the form and layout of the buildings and green space, which respond to site levels so as to minimise the visual impact on the landscape;
- A comprehensive package of highway improvements to facilitate the employment site including all necessary transport infrastructure improvements through direct mitigation or

contributions to new and improved infrastructure, informed by National Highways and Local Highways Authority advice;

- An appropriate financial contribution towards extending a high frequency bus service to the site supported by appropriate public transport infrastructure in or close proximity to the site;
- Facilitates and enhances the right of way networking including access from north to south onto Weavers Lane;
- A development that integrates into the landscape to create attractive landscaped edges to the boundaries;
- A scheme of an appropriate scale, layout, form and materials which respects the significance and setting of affected heritage assets, minimising any harm to designated and non-designated heritage assets and their setting;
- The retention, where possible, of existing hedges and trees together with enhancement of boundary hedges and trees;
- Protection and enhancement of existing wildlife areas and create a coherent biodiversity network in accordance with Policy EV4;
- Biodiversity net gain through the delivery of extensive woodland and native scrub planting, wildflower meadows and neutral grassland and reinforcement of hedgerows with native species;
- Minimises the ecological impacts of the amount and quality of artificial light;
- Development which subject to viability, will exceed Building Regulations requirements for carbon emissions in accordance with Policy CC1;
- Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) to retain surface water flows at greenfield rates of run off. SuDS should be integrated into the green/blue infrastructure; and
- Provision for the long-term managements of the green spaces.

We welcome and support Policy S6. It is however recommended that the prescribed Use Class is more flexible in order to appeal to a wider market and to attract more businesses specialising in advanced manufacturing. As such, it is suggested that the specified Use Class is manufacturing/logistics (B2/B8). Our client, who has an interest in this Site, is seeking a B2/B8 use, as his business is primarily in manufacturing, but requires the B8 use as there is an element of logistics in transporting the product. Additionally, the demand is for large units, which whether B2 or B8, these can be easily converted to the user's requirements.

In terms of the requirement for carbon neutral buildings, this is a very strict requirement and it is suggested that the wording be amended in order to be more in line with the NPPF, which states at paragraph 157 that the planning system *'should support the transition to a low carbon future'*. Whilst any future development at the Site will be constructed to modern day standards, it may not be possible to deliver an entirely carbon neutral site. Therefore, we would suggest that requiring 'low carbon buildings' rather than carbon neutral is more consistent with the aims of the NPPF.

We support the requirement for landscaped edges and the retention of boundary hedges and trees. This will help to mitigate the impacts of the development of the Site, whilst also ensuring that the Site can be developed for an employment use that can function and operate properly. The demand at present is for larger commercial buildings, rather than smaller office units which are more readily available. This is again why B2/B8 uses should be supported in this location.

The final matter to highlight is that the Policy refers to the fact that the proposed allocation would not be able to be delivered until later in the plan period because of the impacts of HS2. This aspect of the Policy is however not recognising of the fact that HS2 has been 'abandoned' and that there is significant doubts that it will be delivered. As such, flexibility in the Policy should be brought in to be

reflective of this position. Notwithstanding this, we feel that this aspect of the Policy is unduly restrictive as part of the allocation (the eastern portion) is outside of the HS2 safeguarded area and is able to come forward prior to the completion of this part of HS2. The western portion can subsequently be delivered as soon as the safeguard is lifted.

Strategic Policy S8: Delivering Economic Opportunities

Policy S8 sets out that the Council commit to developing a sustainable, diverse and resilient economy, reducing low wages and improving skill levels. The policy seeks to ensure sufficient and appropriate employment land is available to meeting existing and future needs of businesses and makes provision for up to 81ha of employment land from 2023 to 2040. This will be met through Strategic Policy S6: Strategic Employment Allocation at Junction 27 M1 Motorway and Policy EM2: Employment land Allocations.

We support the overall purpose of Policy S8, which seeks to allocate enough employment land to meet existing and future needs of businesses.

Policy EM1: Business and Economic Development

Policy EM1 states that the Council will give significant weight to proposals for business development, which provide for, or assist the creation of, new employment opportunities and inward investment. It also directs business and economic development proposals towards town centres (where appropriate), employment sites and employment allocations.

We support this policy, as it seeks to encourage new employment opportunities.

Deliverability

As previously mentioned with this Representation, Application Ref V/2022/0246 is currently under consideration by the Local Planning Authority. During the course of the Application, discussions have been ongoing with the technical consultees with no objections raised from Environment Health, Local Lead Flood Authority, Environment Agency, and Natural England. The Application, together with the positive discussions are ongoing with the LPA, specifically to address highway matters, provide a strong indication of our client's commitment to delivering the Proposed Development. Furthermore, recent discussions with Historic England have recently concluded that the proposals will result in 'less substantial harm' which will be outweighed by the significant public benefits (job creation) that the development of the Site will deliver.

Our client has an immediate requirement to accommodate his rapidly growing business and is in a position to deliver the Site as soon as planning permission has been granted. There is therefore a need for the Site to come forward and it is important that this proposed allocation is retained as part of the eventual adopted plan as this will support the Council's economic objectives as outlined in this emerging plan. There is a commercial requirement to deliver the proposals in advance of the plan being adopted, but as it progresses through the consultation stages, further weight can be afforded to it in the decision-making process.

Summary

In summary, in order to support economic growth, the Ashfield Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan proposes to allocate 83 hectares of employment land including Strategic Employment Areas at

Sherwood Park and at Junction 27 of the M1. As set out in the Spatial Strategy & Site Selection Background Paper 1, these Strategic Employment Areas will assist in economic growth, whilst maximising the locational benefits associated with major transport corridors.

Our client has an interest in the 25ha site to the South-East of Junction 27 (Strategic Policy S6) and supports the proposed allocations. The development of the Representation Site would have the following benefits:

- Attracting a major and established employer to the District
- Creating a projected direct 912 - 1,094 jobs with further job retention as well as indirect and induced employment benefits
- Training opportunities for young and local people
- Enabling Ashfield's employment deprivation and income deprivation to be improved
- The clustering and more efficient working practices for existing local businesses
- Enabling an existing business to expand, thrive and improve
- Supporting Brexit and COVID-19 recovery
- Enabling the reduction of carbon production through consolidating an existing business
- A large business moving towards a low carbon economy and achieving a BREEAM Excellent rating which exceeds current planning policy requirements
- The proposal cannot be accommodated elsewhere in the District and surroundings on available non-Green Belt land
- Increased expenditure to support other local businesses
- The development of the site will contribute to the future resilience and sustainability of a key business sector of the local area
- It is an opportunity to maximise the locational benefits associated with major transport corridors; and
- Biodiversity Net Gain of 10%+.

Overall, we support the strategic objectives of the Local Plan and the employment related policies. However, we would recommend that the Policy relating to the allocation of the Site is revised to be more flexible to allow the units to be used for both B2 and B8 uses.

This will allow any future allocation of the Site to be more flexible which would allow the Site to be able respond to changing economic needs and demands. It would also make the allocation more appealing to end users and will maximise the potential of the Site and the excellent transport connections it benefits from.

Finally, we would recommend that the requirement in the Policy for future development on the allocation to be carbon neutral is too restrictive and that the wording of this policy is re-worded to deliver 'low carbon buildings' instead.

Yours faithfully



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