



*Real value in a changing world*

Examination in Public Woking Borough  
Council *Core Strategy Supplementary*  
*Submission* - NPPF and Interim Meeting  
with Woking BC 17.4.12

Supplementary Statement submitted on behalf of Stanhope  
Plc and Eurohypo AG

Topic: 'Broadoaks', West Byfleet - Policy CS15 Hearing 3 - Question 5 and  
Question 2

24 May 2012

# 1 Question 5: ‘Broadoaks’ – West Byfleet – Policy CS15 Sustainable economic development

*Is the CS15 sufficiently flexible, particularly in relation to Broadoaks in West Byfleet?*

*Is the CS consistent with the findings of the Employment Land Review?*

## Our Client’s Representation

1.1 The representation drew references from the draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 25 July 2011) in the following ways:

- Planning policies and decisions should make effective use of land, and promote mixed use developments that create more vibrant places (para 19).
- Local planning authorities should prepare Local Plans on the basis that objectively assessed development needs should be met, and with sufficient flexibility to respond to rapid shifts in demand or other economic changes (para 14).
- Planning should be genuinely plan-led (para 19). Local Plans should be aspirational but realistic (para 22).
- Only policies that provide a clear indication of how a decision maker should react to a development proposal should be included in the plan (para 22).
- Local authorities should have a clear understanding of business needs within the economic markets operating in and across the area. They should work closely with the business community to understand their changing needs and identify and address barriers to investment (para 29).
- Local authorities should ensure viability and deliverability (para 39).
- Policies should be flexible enough to accommodate requirements not anticipated in the plan and to allow a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances (para 73).
- Planning policies should support economic development (para 73). Planning policies should avoid the long term protection of employment land or floorspace (para 75).

1.2 The NPPF was issued in final form in March 2012. The above issues are reiterated in the final document and have re-affirmed their significance for the Broadoaks site:

- The NPPF must be taken into account in the preparation of local and neighbourhood plans (para 2).
- At the heart of the NPPF is a **presumption in favour of sustainable development**, which should be seen as the golden thread running through both plan-making and decision taking.
- Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise (para 11).

- As set out above, at the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For plan-making this means that local authorities should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area. Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs, with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change (para 14).
- Policies should follow the approach of the presumption in favour of development so that it is clear that development which is sustainable can be approved without delay (para 15).
- The system should proactively drive and support economic development. Plans should take account of market signals and encourage effective use of land by re-using previously developed land (para 17).
- Councils should take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs (para 17).
- Planning should operate to encourage and not act as an impediment to sustainable growth (para 19).
- Planning policies should avoid the long term protection of sites allocated for employment use where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for that purpose. Applications should be considered on their merits for uses on sites where there is no reasonable prospect for employment development (para 22).
- Local Plans should be aspirational but realistic. They should address the spatial implications of economic, social and environmental change (para 154).
- Only policies that provide a clear indication of how a decision maker should react to a development proposal should be included in the plan (para 154).
- Local Plans should allocate sites to promote development and flexible use of land (para 157).
- Local planning authorities should have a clear understanding of business needs within the economic markets operating in and across their area. They should review the existing and future supply of land available for economic development and its sufficiency and suitability to meet identified needs (para 160).

### **Justification**

- 1.3 Our client's case was that given the significant and numerous viability issues for delivering single B1 use only development at Broadoaks both in the current weak office market but also looking forward, Broadoaks should be given greater policy flexibility across the site including the listed Manor House. It is considered that there is a policy alternative that would have much improved prospects for delivering sustainable development comprehensively on the site, afford greater protection to the future of the listed Manor House and provide for the development needs of the area, fulfilling economic and employment objectives of the Woking Core Strategy.
- 1.4 Our client has explored alternative uses for the listed Manor House and there is significant interest from the care and nursing home sector. The use of the Manor House and its setting for this type of use would be consistent with the heritage aspects of the building and its setting, and would also be complementary to the continued economic aspirations for the remainder of Broadoaks.

### **Meeting with Officers of Woking Borough Planning Department 17<sup>th</sup> April 2012**

- At the Examination, we and the Woking planning officers at the hearing were encouraged to meet again to continue the constructive dialogue that has been ongoing around finding deliverable solutions for Broadoaks and offered that we report back to the Inspector the outcome of the meeting.
- Our Client and advisors met with the Woking Planning Head of the Department, Head of Planning Policy and the Senior Case officer on the 17<sup>th</sup> April 2012 and made positive progress.
- Our client presented new and specific proposals for the Broadoaks site, dealing with the site as 3 potential entities. Whilst not intending to be prescriptive this enabled us to outline alternative scenarios for earlier delivery of sustainable development than our client believes will be possible based on the extant planning position.
- The first 2 entities comprise:
  - (i) The only constructed plot of development ( known as Block C) and
  - (ii) The vacant adjacent plot,

The 3 entities comprise:

  - (iii) The listed Manor House and the Gate House and the associated plot of consented new build development, currently also all vacant.
- On the first 2 plots we discussed flexibility for the interchange of data centre use between Block C and the adjacent vacant plot, depending on end users preferences. That flexibility is regarded as very positive for building the theme of a technology hub at Broadoaks .
- On the remaining 3<sup>rd</sup> entity we discussed opportunities for:
  - (a) Hotel use
  - (b) A care community for older persons use.
- In relation to hotel use our Client had, as had been requested by Woking in a previous meeting between the parties, commissioned a report from market experts Savills into the prospects for hotel development. This concluded the Manor House on its own would be unviable for hotel development.
- The Woking planning officers asked if by including the associated vacant new build plot, a high class hotel with conference facilities would be considered. Our client will look into this although we believe viability may still be questionable. It was understood at the meeting that a budget hotel on the site is not a viable proposition and better suited to other borough locations.
- The care community for older persons proposition was discussed in detail by a representative from Audley, a specialist in this type of development. This included the many planning benefits that would be derived specific to the Broadoaks site. It includes considerable employment benefits, and likely more so than a hotel use. The planning benefits also include the desire to take on and secure the future of the listed building elements on the site. A detailed note on the planning case for Broadoaks as outlined at the meeting is included as Appendix 1.

- We also discussed at the meeting that Audley and our client are confident this use would meet the requirements of Woking's Core Strategy policy CS13 'Older People and Vulnerable Groups' and make a valuable contribution to the acknowledged pressing needs for provision of this type of accommodation in the Borough and again, at sites that work from a viability point of view.
- **At the meeting these alternative use proposals were concluded as propositions the Council would be prepared to consider in the light of the Planning Inspector's recommendation as to the increased flexibility our Client is seeking by way of these representations. As explained by our client at the meeting, this flexibility is key to seeing an early delivery of sustainable development at Broadoaks including finding a satisfactory long term solution for the listed buildings. Without this flexibility the future prospects will remain highly uncertain. Indeed, the site and listed buildings all remain vacant 12 years after the grant of comprehensive planning consent for B1 development in 2000.**

### **Examination Suggested Change**

1.5 It was suggested that consideration be given for the following wording for Broadoaks:

- 'The Council's aspirations for Broadoaks are for a high quality business environment that combines a range of employment uses (not just Class B1), and to provide greater flexibility for the Grade II listed Manor House and related enabling development in terms of use and timing, thereby ensuring its long term occupation and viability.'

1.6 Following a review of the NPPF and our meeting with senior planning officers at the Council, our Client would like to propose more specific revised wording:

**The Council will grant planning permission for proposals that deliver a high quality business environment, combining a range of employment-generating uses (not restricted to Class B1, and including data centre uses).**

**Factors such as market signals, early delivery of sustainable development and securing the long term viability of the listed Manor house with related new build development will be taken into account in positively considering proposals for wider use flexibility throughout the site (including hotel, care home or care communities for older persons).**

## **Appendix 1 - Audley submission of Planning Benefits for use on part of the Broadoaks site for a Care Community for Older Persons.**

The site is in the Green Belt but has been granted planning permission on appeal for employment generating use under class B1.

The site contains a Manor House, Stables and Model Dairy, which are Grade II listed.

It is considered very unlikely that a B1 user can be found to take on the Manor House. This is because there is little demand for this form of office accommodation and current demand for offices is very low, which shows no sign of improving.

Audley suggested that a care community would help satisfy the Council's need for appropriate accommodation for those in need of care and would satisfy many of their aims for the site.

Audley would be able to provide the following:

1. Listed Buildings - Audley provide a good and sustainable future for the listed buildings. They have a proven track record in dealing with difficult listed buildings even at Grade I. They currently have one of their communities in the Grade I Flete House and are redeveloping Binswood Hall and Mote House which are Grade II\*. The listed building will be given a secure future as all the residents will contribute to maintaining the listed buildings.
2. Care - Audley provide all levels of care, including end of life care, to their residents. An Audley scheme at Broadoaks would be able to provide accommodation with care for some 112 residents in approximately 80 units of accommodation. This form of care is actively promoted by Surrey County Council and Woking Borough Council.
3. Employment - Audley employ approximately 55 full-time equivalent jobs in an 80 unit community. In addition to the 55, Audley might employ up to 45 care staff to work out in the local community providing care to local people in their own homes so creating approximately 100 full time job equivalents. The jobs Audley provide are at a range of skill levels and are full and part-time. Audley are also exemplary in the training they give to their care staff with some now taking degrees. A hotel created in a similar sized development would employ some 62 staff.
4. Community - Audley engage with the community and try to avoid creating ghettos for the elderly. A typical Audley scheme would have a pool, gymnasium and exercise rooms, care office and treatment rooms, sitting room, meeting room, library, bar, hobbies room, bistro and dining room. All of these facilities can be made available to members of the public and a number of local authorities have entered into S.106 agreements asking the Audley hold frequent public events at their communities. Many organisations, such as the University of the Third Age, seek to use Audley as their centre using grounds, bar, meeting room and dining room.
5. Public Access - Audley are happy to allow the general public make use of their parkland for recreation in a controlled way between say 8:00am and 6:00 pm. We could also provide some access to the Listed Buildings.
6. Traffic - Audley schemes generate very low car movements and any such movements take place outside peak times. An Audley community at Broadoaks would avoid exacerbating the gridlock conditions on Parvis Road at peak times.
7. Landscape - Audley invests large sums of money in enhancing and maintaining landscapes. These are extremely important to Audley's residents and will enhance the area and the public's enjoyment of the parkland.

8. Sustainability- Audley has adopted a policy which seeks to reduce its carbon footprint. Its most current scheme will obtain in excess of 30% of its energy from low to zero carbon sources and uses a CHP unit to provide electricity and heating. This scheme will be an exemplar of what can be achieved. It will encourage other developers to improve the performance of their schemes. The re-use of the waste heat generated can only be utilised by a limited number of uses, Audley's is one of them with its dining room, 24hr occupation, pool and communal facilities.

Audley have not come across a better site for a care community because large sites that appeal to older people and are close to amenities are very difficult to find and very difficult to purchase in completion with residential developers.

Even if an alternative user could be found to take on the listed buildings, they would not be able to provide the vast majority of the community benefits that Audley can provide over and above the care they give to the rapidly increasing numbers of older people.