

Alena Dollimore

Subject: FW: Grovefield Way - Response on phasing
Attachments: J Hinton letter.pdf; Letter for Corinthian Park March 17.pdf

From: James Griffin
Sent: 06 April 2017 18:19
To: 'Emma.Pickernell@cheltenham.gov.uk'
Cc: 'Martin.Chandler@cheltenham.gcsx.gov.uk'; Lycia Terry; 'Jon Hinton'; James Hinton
Subject: Grovefield Way - Response on phasing

Dear Emma and Martin,

I write in relation to our recent discussion on the phased delivery of the B-class uses proposed.

During our recent meeting, it was suggested that my client should enter into a legal agreement to ensure the B-class uses are constructed prior to implementation of the non B-class uses proposed. We are able to respond accordingly below whilst also highlighting matters I feel are as important regarding the interpretation of what constitutes employment development.

Phasing

I have discussed your suggestion of phasing in detail with my client. Whilst they are in advanced discussions with a potential occupier of one of office units, they cannot be named due to commercial and staffing sensitivity. It is apparent their interest is a result of the named complimentary uses to encourage office users to the site – this is positive. Yet, unfortunately, from a funding perspective, being forced to deliver the offices first, or within a given time frame, would prove to make the whole scheme un-fundable and compromise investors currently in place. This would effectively jeopardise the delivery of the office units and my client is therefore unable to commit to this at this stage.

Given the nature of the application and uses proposed, I do not consider that such an onerous restriction to fully build the office units would be necessary. Over 5,034 sq.m of the office space proposed is in detailed form – a significantly increased proportion than that of the non-B class uses proposed. In fact, the non-B use classes proposed only amount to approximately 15% of the overall floorspace proposed. The application would still offer a total of 85% of B-class uses for the site. This notwithstanding, Hinton Group (Grovefield Way) Ltd, are able to enter into a legal agreement to ensure that a portion of the office road infrastructure is constructed prior to occupation of the non-B class uses. It is hoped that this will provide more certainty that the offices will be delivered with supporting infrastructure being put in place.

The application format is important and reflects the current market conditions. To assist, I attach letters from two key commercial agents – Colliers International and John Ryde Commercial. These set out, amongst other things, that the gestation period for office enquiries between opening discussions to delivering a completed property is typically far longer than other sectors including retail, industrial and roadside uses. One important consideration that office occupiers consider on a business park is the trade-off between a more open setting against the retail and leisure convenience that a town centre offers. Therefore, providing some on-site retail and leisure provision, as proposed, significantly minimises the impact of this making the site more attractive to office users. With no such complimentary uses on site, it would likely be too big a shift in the environment for many business (including the office occupier represented by one of the agents) and their workforce.

Economic Impact

Notwithstanding the above, it is important to stress that our submissions have drawn attention to the fact that the availability of employment land within the Borough is equally as acute as it was in 2007 when the appeal was

allowed. Attention is drawn to the Joint Core Strategy Employment Land Review (ELR) 2011 which identifies that not only has deficit increased since the time of the 2007 appeal, but the Borough is now also reliant on the application site to meet that deficit.

As recognised by your planning policy team, the JCS ELR report acknowledges that there has been a policy shift recently in relation to what constitutes employment development and what is now regarded as economic growth. The ELR 2011 notes that the shift in national plan policy has sought to no longer restrict the consideration of employment uses to the B use classes only. Accordingly, other non-B class employment generating uses were considered as part of the study – these include current key non-B Class sectors, such as retailing, and notes that in the light of the anticipated changes in employment levels in the various non B-Class sectors, the aforementioned sectors are likely to become more dominant by 2026. The ELR report predicts that around 80% of the anticipated net increase in employment levels between 2006 and 2026 is expect to come forward in non-B class sectors. This has been recognised in the main modifications version of the JCS. Policy SD2 (Employment) states, *inter alia*, that “employment is considered in a wider sense than the traditional industrial, office and warehousing (B1, B2 and B8 uses). For example, uses such as retail, hotels, tourism, leisure facilities, education, health services and residential care, (referred to as non-B use classes) can also be large employment providers. This policy covers job-generating uses such as business, industry and tourism.” SD2 also goes on to state that whilst SD2 is not a retail policy, “retail is part of the wider NPPF definition of employment”. This is also recognised in the Cheltenham Plan which proposes allowing changes to use to other job generating uses on many of the Borough’s B class employment sites.

Thus, as recognised by the main modification version of JCS and its evidence base, the definition of employment land should not just be restricted to B use classes. Weight should be attributed to the non-B class uses which, as evidenced in the Economic Impact Assessment submitted in support of this application, will support economic growth and job creation.

We consider the above should be attributed weight in consideration of the comments regarding suggested phasing.

I trust the above and attachments are of use. Please do let me know your thoughts regarding the suggested obligation offered above.

Kind regards,

James

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