

JB/1282/sf

6 October 2017

Mrs S Tiley
Planning Policy and Implementation Manager
Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
The Campus
Welwyn Garden City
AL8 6AE

Dear Mrs Tiley

Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan: Birchall Garden Suburb

I refer to our meeting on 31 August and to the discussion that took place regarding the proposed allocation of the land to the south east of Welwyn Garden City (Birchall Garden Suburb) for development.

Our clients Gascoyne Cecil Estates (the Estate) and others continue to have considerable and serious reservations over the suitability of allocation in view of previous landfill operations in the area, the uncertainty over the nature and stability of the fill material, and the proximity to and impacts on designated heritage assets of the highest significance. Our clients have made representations on these points and continue to have fundamental concerns.

We would therefore urge the Borough Council to obtain further information, either by conducting its own investigations, or securing further information from the land promoters, to ensure that the land is suitable for development and capable of delivering the social and physical infrastructure required to serve a large-scale allocation given the clear constraints that exist. To date there does not appear to be sufficient information in the public domain to allay the concerns previously expressed.

For example, the Cole Green Preliminary Site Characterisation and Generic Qualitative Risk Assessment, which relates to the southern area of the proposed allocation, refers to a desk based assessment having been undertaken in January 2013. It indicates that it was submitted to the Borough Council but this does not appear to have been placed in the public domain. In addition, the report refers to further work being programmed for May 2014 (after its submission in April 2014) but it is not clear whether this work was ever completed and if so whether the findings were made public.

The Estate considers that it is in the public interest to ensure that a thorough and rigorous assessment is undertaken to ensure that the draft Local Plan can be delivered and is ultimately found to be sound. The Estate through its review of public records considers that a substantial amount of doubt exists in relation to the suitability of the proposed allocation for development and is in the process of preparing a report to highlight these concerns which we are hoping to share with you. Based on our findings it may be appropriate to enter into a Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) with the Council.



We consider the Inspector would be greatly assisted if it were possible to prepare a SoCG in relation to the factual baseline information available for the Birchall Garden Suburb allocation. We should be grateful for your confirmation that you would be prepared to enter discussions with us to produce such a document.

I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely



John Boyd
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cc Anthony Downs – GCE
Colin Haigh – WHBC
Claire Sime – EHDC