

Babergh District Council Core Strategy Development Plan

Examination

Matter 9b: Brantham Regeneration Area

Introduction

The representations submitted on behalf of the St Francis Group in respect of the Brantham Regeneration Area indicated that the Core Strategy was unsound because it lacked flexibility in the delivery of the key regeneration objectives for the site.

St Francis Group focus on problematic sites with contamination and environmental issues. This involves working closely with local planning authorities in the regeneration of sites that otherwise would lie vacant and derelict. The company was established in 1973 and currently controls and manages over 40 sites in the UK. The company purchased the site in 2006 with the benefit of long term rental income. Following purchase of the site the anchor tenant (Wardle Storeys) went into receivership.

Technical studies have been undertaken (see Core Documents J03-J10) which considered the capacity of the site and adjoining land to achieve the aims of the Adopted Local Plan Policy to provide mixed development to include employment, residential and the potential additional green space. The adjoining land is within the control of St Francis Group.

A Statement of Common Ground has been discussed with the District Council and a copy once completed will be presented to the Inspector.

Within the Statement of Common Ground an addition to Policy CS6a is proposed which if adopted by the Inspector would enable St Francis Group to withdraw their objection.

The addition to Policy CS6a reflects the technical work undertaken to date and allows a viability assessment to be agreed between St Francis Group and the District Council. This will enable clear development proposals for the site and adjoining land to be identified. A viability assessment has been prepared by St Francis Group which is subject to discussions with the District Council with the assistance of the Homes and Communities Agency.

Matter 9b

Question 1: General Issues

The five general issues identified in Matter 9a are addressed where relevant in response to the three remaining questions under Matter 9b below.

The regeneration objectives for the Brantham Regeneration Area are appropriate in that they provide for mixed development both in respect of employment and residential and also for the considerable enhancement of the site its setting generally and in respect of ecological and community benefits adjacent to the Stour Estuary.

The technical studies that have been undertaken, together with the discussions concerning the viability assessment with the District Council and the Homes and Communities Agency, all demonstrate a commitment to achieving regeneration objectives. The technical studies have identified the constraints to development and also how such constraints may be addressed. Subject to concluding on the viability assessment, which will identify the amount of housing required as enabling development of the regeneration area, the overall development proposals are deliverable.

Question 2: Viability

The technical studies provided within the Core Library represent new information since the site was allocated in the 2006 Adopted Local Plan. The constraints and opportunities to achieving the regeneration objectives are now known and the site owners St Francis Group are committed, together with the District Council, to ensure that regeneration objectives are achieved. The addition to Policy CS6a will provide the flexibility to ensure deliverability of the regeneration objectives and recognises that development will be necessary on the adjoining land.

A viability assessment undertaken by St Francis Group has shown that development is viable and deliverable in the short term provided residential development takes place on the adjoining greenfield land as set out in the Statement of Common Ground. That assessment and alternative scenarios are the subject of discussion with the District Council and the Homes and Communities Agency to establish the level of housing that is required to ensure the objectives of the regeneration area and the policy as a whole are achieved.

Question 3: Constraints

The proposed Main Modification 22 relating to Policy CS6a sets out clearly the constraints relating to the site. The technical studies within the Core Library includes full Ecological and comprehensive species surveys, a Visual Impact and Landscape Character Assessment dealing with landscape designations and a comprehensive Flood Risk Assessment. The need for decontamination and remediation works has been assessed based on the historical uses of the site and extant information. All of the above studies including the Drainage and Transport Assessment have been carried out in relation to site and the adjoining land by St Francis Group,

Babergh District Council and Haven Gateway. St Francis Group are confident that these matters can be addressed and these matters have been taken into account in the viability assessment.

The revised Policy CS6a will provide the flexibility to ensure that constraints can be satisfactorily viably addressed and delivered.

Question 4: Flexibility

It remains of significant importance that the Brantham regeneration area and its objectives are retained in the Core Strategy. Of equal significance is that the addition to Policy CS6a is adopted to provide the important flexibility in ensuring the regeneration objectives are met. The District Council are committed to development of the site and the range of technical studies undertaken indicate the capacity of the site and adjoining land to provide for development, to enable the regeneration objectives to be achieved.

It is the view of St Francis Group, having regard to the evidence contained in the technical studies and their long established experience of regeneration schemes elsewhere, that the regeneration of Brantham Industrial Estate can be achieved and will provide important new employment opportunities, new housing development and new community facilities.

