

STATEMENT BY MAGNA PARK IS BIG ENOUGH

To all HDC Councillors

HARBOROUGH DISTRICT DRAFT LOCAL PLAN 2011-2031

At the Extraordinary Council meeting to be held on Tuesday 18th December you will be asked to approve changes to the Local Plan 2011-2031 to meet the requirements for soundness as outlined by the Inspector. We detail below why we do not believe that the proposal meets the Inspector's requirements. In particular we do not believe that the evidence presented in relation to need for additional warehouse space at Magna Park is independent (the Savills report for Gazeley) and the evidence is that there is an adequate supply of warehouse space for the period of the plan. We would therefore ask you to consider reducing the figure for warehouse space at Magna Park to 400,000 sq mts, the area already agreed by the Planning Committee.

The Magna Park is Big Enough (MPisBE) campaign is most concerned about Policy BE2 on strategic distribution, with a massive space allocation of 700,000 sq. m. included at a late stage of drafting the submission Local Plan. At its meeting on 13 November the Council's Executive accepted your officers' recommendation that, in order to meet the National Inspector's reservations expressed during his examination of the Plan last October, the site boundary of the expansion proposed by Gazeley in planning application 15/01531/OUT should be defined and allocated as the maximum limit in District's forward planning. This application, however, is currently under appeal against Council's refusal in January this year (on the grounds that the landscape impact is severe and outweighs the economic benefits and also that it is contrary to Policy CS17). That appeal is not due to be determined until Spring 2019.

Your officers' recommendation does not address the issues raised by the Inspector, Jonathan Bore. From attending the final day of the examination hearings on 11 October, we are aware that when summing up his advice he said that:

- Policy BE2 would not withstand the test of soundness and its criteria-based approach was insufficient to determine large development proposals;
- more research work was required to provide evidence of need vs. demand for such large space allocation for strategic distribution, and to make better comparison with allocations to non-logistics development;
- development should be shown to be 'non-harmful' to local residents' interests;
- therefore, more and better information needed to go out to public consultation, with subsequent analyses of responses;
- a revised policy BE2 should be provided for his further advice.

Your officers expressed anxiety about the delay, which would result from the extra work outlined, as they wished to proceed rapidly towards full Council approval, but the Inspector said firmly that he could not advise them on their calendar, and that the work needed to be done. We do not recall the Inspector suggesting Gazeley's application site should be specified as a potential solution and we are therefore surprised that the Council's Executive has approved this option.

We recollect that the Inspector clearly asked for renewed public consultation on any proposed amendments to policy BE2 in order to gauge local residents' views and for the Council then to re-draft and re-submit this policy for his further advice. This requirement must precede the completion

of his examination, but Paper 1 before you for consideration on Tuesday makes no mention of the public being involved in any fresh round of consultation. Is the public to be left out?

Policy BE2 locates an excessive amount of space for growth of strategic distribution in one limited corner of one District, almost four times the projected minimum future space requirement of 185,000 sq.m. for growth *for the whole of Leicester & Leicestershire* by 2031, and does not take into account the scale of pending railhead developments nearby. Neither does it take into account the huge amount of new strategic distribution space approved in the county since forecasts were adopted in 2016 (as shown in our addendum). It deserves more careful evidence-based consideration rather than the “quick fix” now advocated. It would not be proper for Gazeley's application data to be accepted as supporting evidence of need for such a large allocation of distribution space. Demand is not the same as need. Gazeley's application 15/01531 is based entirely on their commercial aspirations for expansion on land on which they have had an option for decades, and for financial gain, regardless of independent evidence.

The way in which this proposal is being brought to Council confirms our fears that policy BE2 was framed specifically to accommodate the huge site identified in that application, which not only consumes yet more productive land in open countryside but leads inevitably to huge increases in both commercial and commuting traffic: it will clearly be harmful to the environment and to local residents' interests, thus failing the Inspector's 'non-harmful' test. The proposed development and its over-provision of additional labour-force, with the wrong jobs in the wrong place, is too big for the surrounding area and its infrastructure. It will bring little benefit the economy of Leicester and Leicestershire for the longer term, particularly as there are more suitable locations both with and without railhead access currently being developed nearby, which are more accessible and which offer much needed employment.

We are concerned that you are advised to adopt the recommendation of the Executive, as a matter of both development principle and poor planning practice. Limiting Policy BE2 to 400,000 sq.m. (approximately area adjoining Magna Park already approved and which cannot be reversed) would more than adequately meet forecasts of future growth requirements and would at a stroke remove any potential obstacle to the Local Plan being approved. We urge you to amend this proposal.

Shiela E Carlton, Chris Faircliffe, Ed Hunt, Maggie Pankhurst, Tim Ottevanger
On behalf of Magna Park is Big Enough

14 December 2018