

GIR Scrutiny Committee meeting on Thursday 19 December.

Dear Committee Members,

I wish to raise a question to the Committee regarding employment opportunities to match the ill-judged plan to consider 2285 new dwellings at St George's Barracks. The Government legislation dictates that jobs should be made available before any consideration to house building is contemplated. Having had considerable experience in this area with a large national Employers' Organisation with a regional base until recently in Rutland (6,500 member companies nationally), I can advise that nurturing and encouraging business into the area takes considerable time and effort to attract international and UK businesses to move to the area. Government and local authority grants and easement on business rates and help with training and language institutions are all necessary to enable this to become a reality. The lead time for this to be brought to fruition can take years. Apart from some feeble statements about the Ashwell Prison and King's Centre projects which have hardly increased employment numbers by more than a few score at most then there has been little evidence provided to date that RCC and its consultants have taken any steps to tackle this?

My question is therefore what evidence can RCC show that they have taken measures to encourage employment into the area in the numbers that Government would demand to ensure that the Rutland growth plan satisfies the legislation that sufficient employment opportunities should be made available before any new dwellings are built at SGB? If RCC say that these plans have been made then could they please identify where that evidence can be found and why in all of the documentation provided for councillors and the public this was not made more accessible?

If no such plans have been made, then can the Scrutiny Committee please advise how they will ensure that they hold RCC to account to ensure that this is put in place and if they cannot and RCC does not make such plans then can RCC report how they intend to persuade any Inspectorate of their current or revised Local Plan or any scrutiny by Government Departments that they are entitled to proceed with the SGB Plan as it currently stands?

I await your early responses.

Les Allen

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Response

The Council is not aware of the legislation referred to by Les Allen which “dictates that jobs should be made available before any consideration to house building is contemplated”.

Our approach in the Local plan will be compliant with national planning policy and guidance. In particular, relevant sections of the NPPF are:

“20. Strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development, and make sufficient provision for:

- a) housing (including affordable housing), employment, retail, leisure and other commercial development;
- b) infrastructure for transport, telecommunications, security, waste management, water supply, wastewater, flood risk and coastal change management, and the provision of minerals and energy (including heat);
- c) community facilities (such as health, education and cultural infrastructure); and
- d) conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure, and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation.

“Chapter 6. Building a strong, competitive economy

80. Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future. This is particularly important where Britain can be a global leader in driving innovation, and in areas with high levels of productivity, which should be able to capitalise on their performance and potential.

81. Planning policies should:

- a) set out a clear economic vision and strategy which positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth, having regard to Local Industrial Strategies and other local policies for economic development and regeneration;
- b) set criteria, or identify strategic sites, for local and inward investment to match the strategy and to meet anticipated needs over the plan period;
- c) seek to address potential barriers to investment, such as inadequate infrastructure, services or housing, or a poor environment; and

d) be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan, allow for new and flexible working practices (such as live-work accommodation), and to enable a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances.

82. Planning policies and decisions should recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors. This includes making provision for clusters or networks of knowledge and data-driven, creative or high technology industries; and for storage and distribution operations at a variety of scales and in suitably accessible locations.

Our approach in the Local Plan is supported by evidence on employment land which is available on the Council's website.

In respect of the St George's proposal we have commissioned a high-level piece of work to inform the proposed Growth Funds bid. This has reinforced the RegenCo work on behalf of the MOD which showed that there is a latent demand within Rutland, primarily for light industrial space (B1) in the first instance with the potential for office space in the future (B1).

There is positive market sentiment amongst agents for bringing forwards an employment zone as part of the St George's garden community and it is considered that "St George's is very well placed to become a central location for rural innovation over the Local Plan period"