

Our ref: Q070160
Your ref:
Email: Stephen.Rose@quod.com
Date: 18 March 2021



Hertsmere Borough Council
Local Plans
Planning Department
Civic Offices
Elstree Way
Borehamwood
WD6 1WA

By Email

Dear Local Plans team

EMPLOYMENT LAND CALL FOR SITES 2021 REPRESENTATIONS ON BEHALF OF RRHE LLP (C/O SELLAR) LAND EAST OF ROWLEY LANE, BOREHAMWOOD

Executive Summary

RRHE LLP (“RRHE”), a subsidiary of Sellar, owns the land east of Rowley Lane, between the Hilton, DoubleTree Hotel, Mimms Hall Brook, Rowley Lane and the A1. This land is undeveloped and is currently safeguarded by the Local Plan for employment uses in the long term. RRHE is responding to the Employment Land Call for Sites 2021 to put this site forward as a potential allocation for employment development in the emerging Local Plan.

The site’s constraints and opportunities have been assessed through the draft Local Plan and the Potential Sites for Housing and Employment document, albeit as part of a wider site. This site merits consideration in its own right as development there could bring significant economic benefits and the drawbacks of developing other parts of the wider site (which lie within the green belt and have poorer sustainability credentials) do not apply. RRHE has undertaken further work on flood risk and transport to supplement the Local Plan evidence base. Assessment of these matters shows that they do not present any significant issues with deliverability of the site.

The site’s current planning status makes it the next obvious location for planned employment development, having been released from the green belt for this very purpose. It should certainly be allocated for such development ahead of any sites that remain in the green belt.

RRHE will be undertaking further assessment work to assess the site’s deliverability and will submit this information through the forthcoming consultation on the draft Local Plan. All the work undertaken to date suggests that this land is suitable, available, and achievable for employment development.



1 Introduction

- 1.1 These representations are made on behalf of RRHE in response to Hertsmere Borough Council's (HBC's) Employment Land Call for Sites 2021. RRHE is a wholly owned subsidiary of Sellar, the award-winning development and design collective responsible for The Shard, Paddington Square, Canada Water and many other developments in London.

2 Site context

- 2.1 The land east of Rowley Lane (referred to as the 'RRHE site' - see Figure 1 below) is located on the eastern edge of Borehamwood between Rowley Lane and the A1 adjoining the Elstree Way Employment Area.
- 2.2 The RRHE site measures approximately 1.91 hectares and is comprised of managed scrubland. It is bound to the north by a development site for new TV and film studios, to the east by the A1; to the south by car parking associated with a hotel (operated by Holiday Inn); and to the west by the A5135 Rowley Lane. A mature tree belt is located along its boundaries.
- 2.3 There are no listed buildings or Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) within the site boundary. The closest TPO is the Regents Shooting Ground, Saffron Green, Arkley¹ approximately 170m to the east of the site, across the A1. The closest listed buildings are the Grade II listed Nelson Cottage and the Grade II listed Gallery Lane Farmhouse, approximately 1km and 1.4km away respectively.

¹ TPO reference TPO/372/1992



Figure 1: Site location plan



3 Policy context

- 3.1 Relevant local planning policy in so far as it relates to the RRHE site comprises the Hertsmere Core Strategy (2013) and the Hertsmere Site Allocations and Development Management ('SADM') Policies Plan (2016).
- 3.2 The policy designations for the RRHE site are as follows:
- Safeguarded Land for Employment Development (Policy SADM9 of the SADM Policies Plan).
 - Northern portion of the RRHE site is located within Flood Zone 3 with the remainder in Flood Zone 1.
- 3.3 Policy CS8 of the Core Strategy states:
- "...a new area of land between the A1 and Rowley Lane, adjoining the Elstree Way Employment Area, will be designated as Safeguarded Land for a mix of phased, B class development."*
- 3.4 The land in question includes the RRHE site. Paragraph 4.21 of the Core Strategy confirms that the purpose of this safeguarding is *"to meet any longer term employment needs and to offset any land lost in existing Employment Areas providing for B class development."*
- 3.5 Paragraph 4.21 also states that HBC considers the land between the A1 and Rowley Lane to represent,
- "the most appropriate location for the provision of additional employment land. In particular, the new safeguarded area has been identified as suitable on account of its immediate proximity to existing employment land and to the primary route network, its limited environmental quality, the extent of existing previously developed land and buildings and the wider importance of the Elstree Way employment area for Borehamwood, which will be accommodating the greatest proportion of new housing in the Borough over the next 15 years."*
- 3.6 Policy SADM9 of the SADM Policies Plan (2016) released the Site from the green belt and re-designated it as safeguarded land for future employment uses, while stating that the former green belt policies should be respected. This safeguarding endures until a review of the Local Plan indicates that there is insufficient suitable land available within the then defined urban area and/or consistent with local and national planning policy, to meet longer term employment needs.
- 3.7 HBC published their Regulation 18² Issues and Options Local Plan for consultation late 2017. It confirmed that HBC:

² Town and Country Planning Act (Local Planning) (England) Regulation 2012



“...have previously identified land on the edge of Borehamwood (between the A1 and Rowley Lane)...for future growth, but we think that some additional land will be needed to attract the extra jobs which are needed to accompany an increasing population and to enable continued economic prosperity...

In total an increase of around 9,000 jobs across the borough is needed. The level of new job creation predicted in Hertsmere remains high.... We know that many of the jobs being created over the next 15 years will be in the service sector, such as in retail, hospitality and leisure but we now estimate that around 10 hectares (25 acres) of extra land will also need to be found for light industry, offices, scientific research, warehouses and other commercial activities”³

- 3.8 In November 2018 HBC published the *Potential Sites for Housing and Employment* document. This identified the RRHE site as part of site EMP3 Land east of Rowley Lane, Borehamwood, as shown in Figure 2, below.

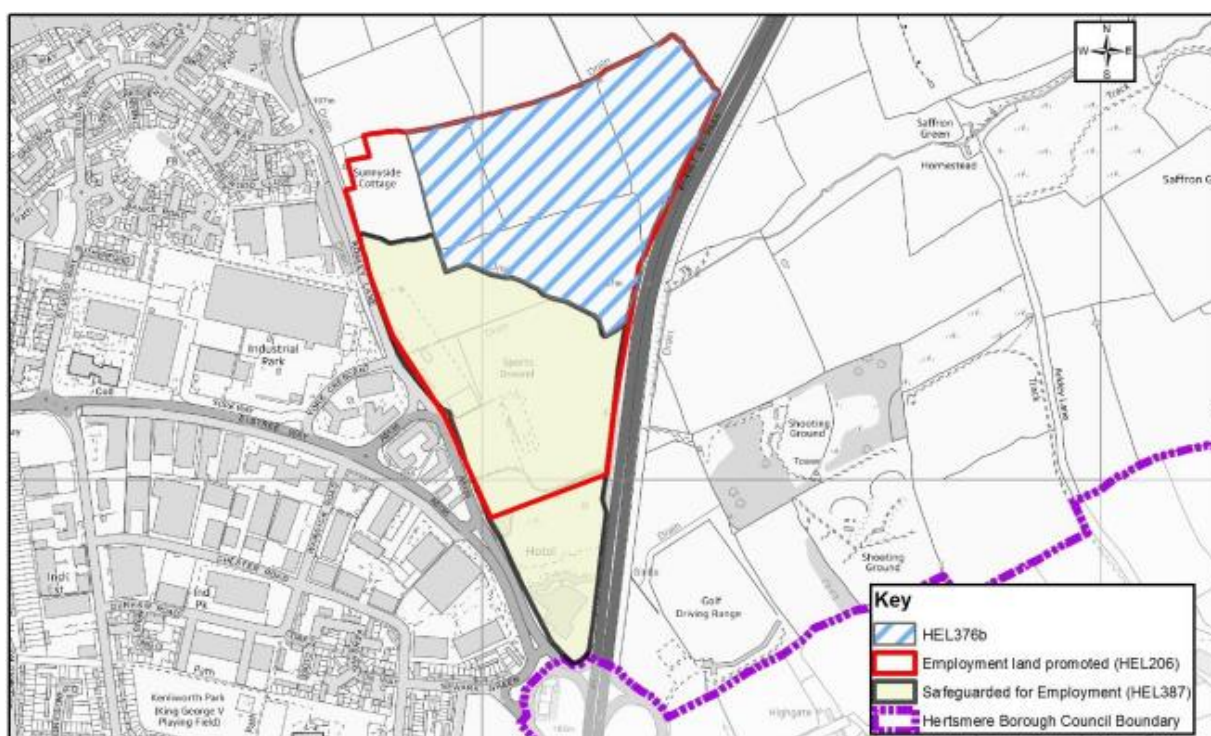


Figure 2: Potential Sites for Housing and Employment site EMP3

- 3.9 The Potential Sites document summarised the benefits and opportunities as well as the challenges and constraints associated with this site, as follows:

³ Page 19 of the HBC Issues and Options Local Plan



Benefits and opportunities	Challenges and constraints
<p>A significant part of the area is already accepted as an appropriate location for economic development following independent examination of current Local Plan.</p> <p>Logical extension of existing industrial estate/employment area bringing inward investment to Borehamwood.</p> <p>Close proximity to A1 and M25.</p>	<p>Local highways impact including cumulative effect of additional traffic onto surrounding roads and A1 junction.</p> <p>Some distance from train station and town centre.</p> <p>Loss of green belt land beyond existing safeguarded employment.</p> <p>Landscape and visual impact beyond the southern part of the site.</p>

3.10 In summary, the site is no longer part of the green belt and is considered by the development plan to be suitable for employment uses. It is safeguarded for that use until a review of the Local Plan concludes that the land is needed. That review is currently taking place and the indications are (based on the comments in the Issues and Options Local Plan and the Potential Sites document) that the land is likely to be required to meet employment needs.

4 Planning assessment

4.1 It is RRHE's view that the site represents a significant opportunity to support employment growth in Hertsmere and for this reason it should be considered for allocation as an employment site in the forthcoming draft Local Plan. Recognition of the site's potential through the Employment Call for Sites 2021 is a step toward that.

4.2 The RRHE site is well-placed to support economic growth. As the Potential Sites document acknowledged, it is a logical extension of the existing industrial area on the opposite side of Rowley Lane. It has good links to the strategic road network, notably the A1 and M25. It is in a single ownership and therefore does not require time-consuming and costly site assembly. Moreover, that owner is an experienced developer with a strong track record in bringing sites forward in support of economic growth. The Core Strategy and Site Allocations documents already acknowledge that it is suitable for employment development, the only question is when it should be released from the safeguarding policy.

4.3 The Potential Sites document lists some challenges and constraints. These are worth addressing in full. The first two relate to transport and accessibility. These are addressed in the enclosed Transport Statement. In summary, the impact on the local highway network is very unlikely to be harmful and certainly does not warrant restricting development of the site. Regarding the site's accessibility, it should be noted that the comment that the site is "*Some distance from train station and town centre*" was made in the context of the overall EMP3 site. This includes a swathe of land to the north, beyond the studios development site that is poorly connected to public transport networks and is further from areas of population. The RRHE site is the most accessible part of the EMP3 site.



- 4.4 The final two challenges/constraints relate to loss of green belt and visual impact. Again, the first of these (loss of green belt) is irrelevant to the RRHE site. The second would need to be assessed but seems to relate much more to the land to the north in the open countryside than to the RRHE site which is surrounded by built development and therefore is highly urbanised.
- 4.5 In addition to the challenges and constraints listed in the Potential Sites summary, there are two further matters that should be addressed. First, although most of the site lies within Flood Zone 1 (low risk) the northern most part of the site around Mimmshall Brook lies within Flood Zone 3 (see Figure 3). The Flood Risk Statement that RRHE has commissioned addresses this issue. In summary, it would be possible to mitigate the risk of flooding through, for example, the raising of threshold levels (with flood compensation areas elsewhere) and/or designing any scheme to avoid placing development in the high risk areas of land. Further modelling would be required but there is no reason at this stage to believe that it would prevent development of the site, particularly for uses considered “less vulnerable” to flood risk such as employment.

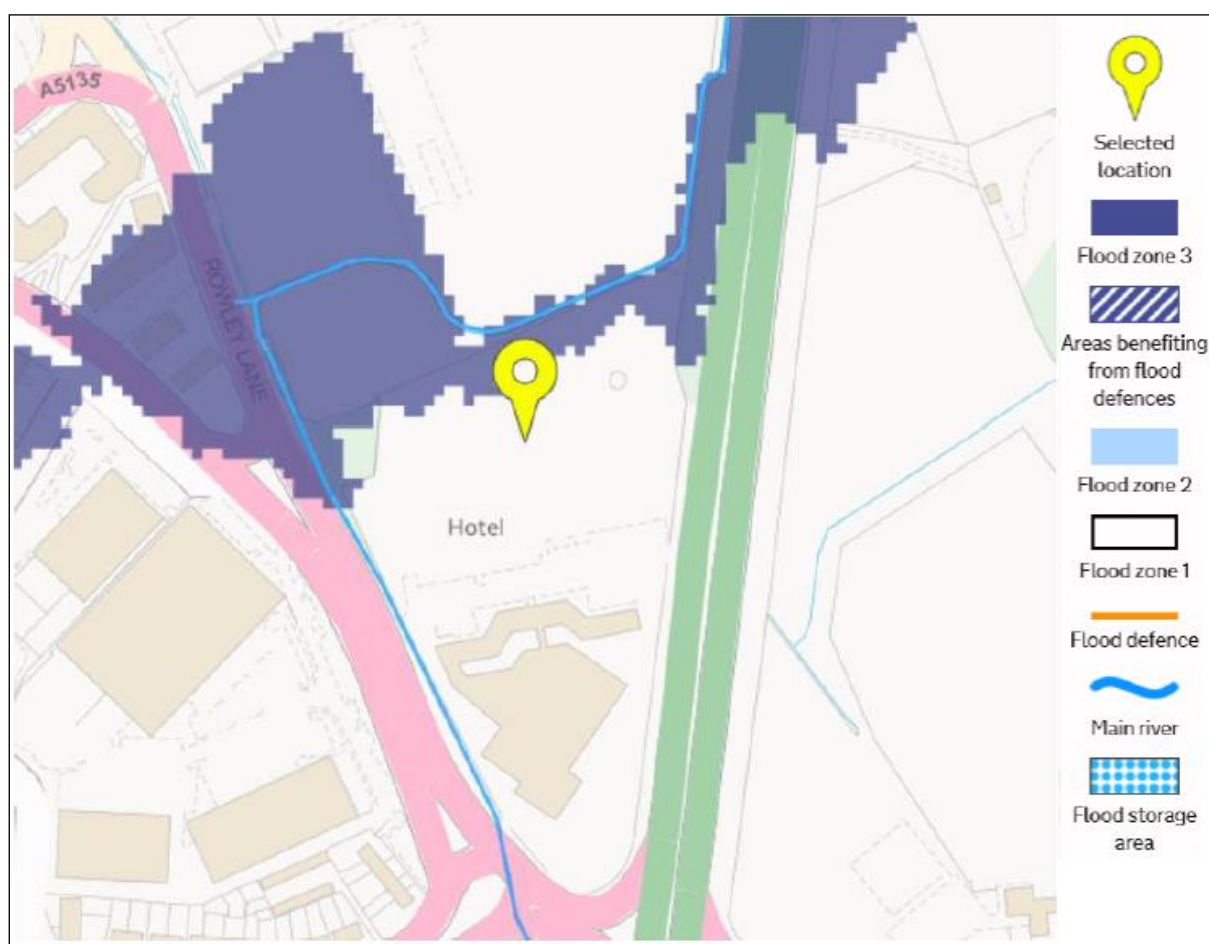


Figure 3: Flood risk map for planning (rivers and seas)

- 4.6 A final issue that would need to be addressed is the presence of a strip of common land between Rowley Lane and the site. This narrow strip of land is shown in green in Figure 5, below. RRHE



benefits from a right of access over this land. It would, therefore, not be an impediment to development of the site.

- 4.7 There are other matters related to deliverability that would need to be addressed before the site could be allocated for development, including ecology, ground conditions and utilities. These matters can be addressed in due course through the Regulation 19 Local Plan consultation or a review of the Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (HELAA). For the purposes of this Employment Call for Sites, it is sufficient to conclude that the site merits further consideration.

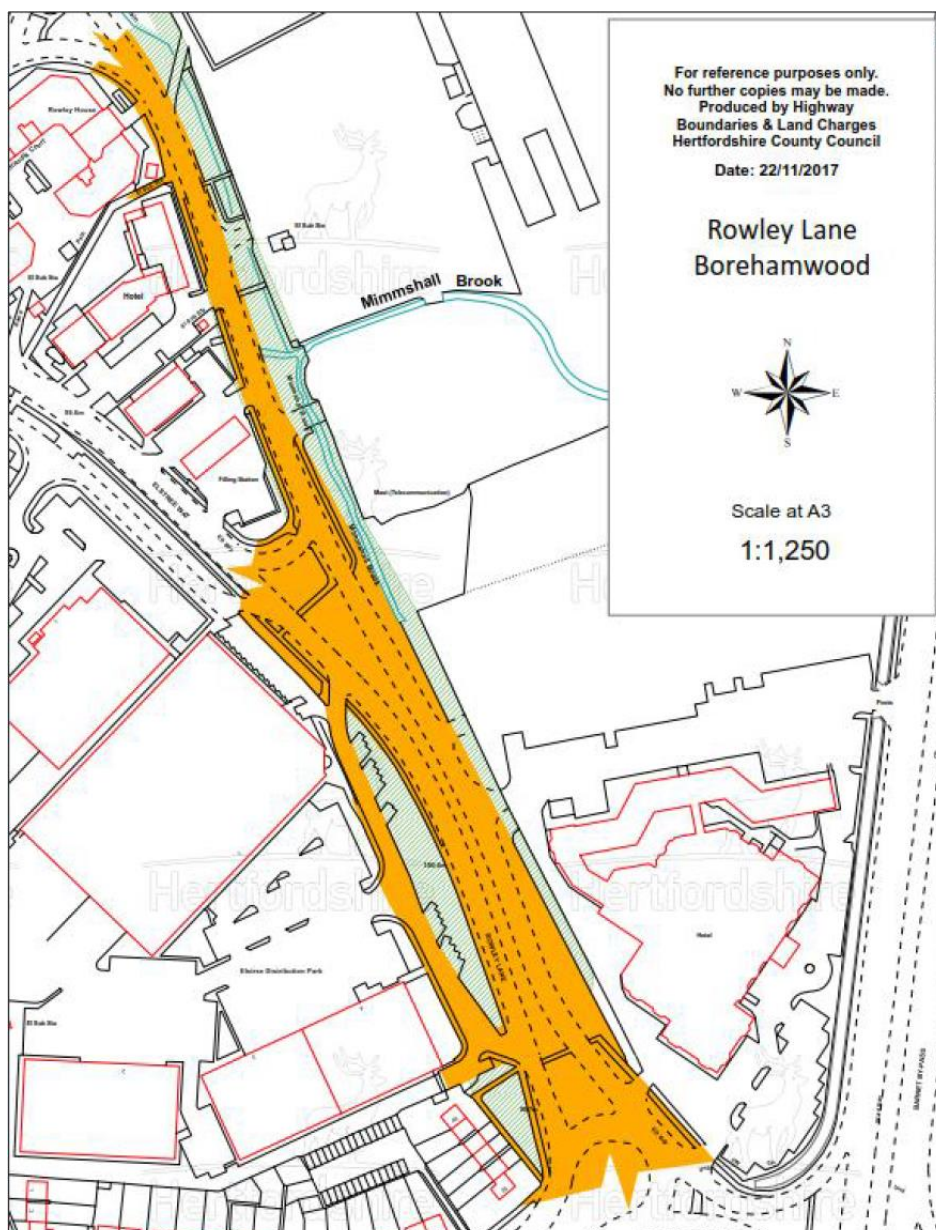


Figure 5: Extent of public highway and common land



5 Prioritising the safeguarded sites before releasing green belt land

- 5.1 The pressure for economic growth in Hertsmere has resulted in several green belt sites coming under scrutiny through the Potential Sites document. “*Exceptional circumstances*” are required to justify the release of green belt land, but no such test applies to safeguarded land such as the RRHE site. It follows that if the Local Plan review concludes that there is a need for additional employment land, the safeguarded sites must be considered ahead of any sites in the green belt.

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 The Employment Land Call for Sites 2021 looks for sites that are available, suitable, and achievable for economic development. The RRHE site is available, being in the hands of a willing developer; suitable, having already been released from the green belt for employment purposes; and achievable, given that its constraints are understood and can be overcome.
- 6.2 The draft Local Plan and the Potential Sites document suggest that further employment land is needed and that the RRHE site (as part of site EMP3) has significant merit in terms of location and deliverability. RRHE LLP’s own work on highways and flood risk suggest that those key issues present no impediment to the site’s development. Other matters remain to be examined but the RRHE site certainly merits further consideration through the draft Local Plan process ahead of other sites, some of which remain in the green belt. RRHE therefore request that the site is given full consideration through the evidence base review including through any update of the HELAA.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Rose
Associate

enc. Site Questionnaire
Initial Transport Statement
Initial Flood Risk and Drainage Feasibility Study

cc. Jamie Trivedi-Bateman – Sellar
John Rhodes - Quod