

STAFFORD BOROUGH LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

MEETING BETWEEN DEFENCE ESTATES AND STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

DATE OF MEETING – 25 FEBRUARY 2008

Officers in Attendance

Mark Limbrick	-	Defence Estates, Head of Planning & Construction
David Boyd	-	Defence Estates, Senior Planning Officer
Rob Sanderson	-	Defence Estates, Senior Planning Officer
Alex Yendole	-	Stafford Borough Council, Principal Planning Officer

Details

- Defence Estates is currently considering the British Army's future requirements in the West Midlands including the Ministry of Defence land at Stafford. A Ministerial announcement in January 2008 regarding the BORONA Programme confirmed that 2 units returning from Germany will move to RAF Cosford. Therefore other land requirements in the West Midlands will need to be considered, to meet the Army's future requirements.
- An initial feasibility study has been completed examining the potential to accommodate a medium sized brigade in the West Midlands region. A medium brigade is made up of around 10 units, with a total of around 5,000 military personnel. The initial study identified that the baseline land requirement for a medium brigade is considered to be in the order of 136 hectares, which includes around 1,800 Service Family Accommodation dwellings. Although this is the total demand for the brigade this amount of land might not necessarily be required in one location.
- The initial study identified that the Ministry of Defence land at Stafford currently has 502 Single Living Accommodation (SLA) and 228 dwellings for Service Families Accommodation (SFA). An assessment by Defence Estates has identified that the buildings in Stafford are fair to poor in quality and have less than a 20 year lifespan.
- The options for Stafford are either to retain the existing occupiers and accommodate some brigade units or vacate this site of existing occupiers to provide maximum capacity for the brigade.
- Option 1 of the initial study identified that the developable area for Stafford, should existing occupiers remain, is 61.4 hectares. Under this option, 5 units could move to Stafford alongside the existing occupiers but an additional 10 hectares of land would also be required.

- Option 2 of the initial study was the development of a vacant site, which would provide 115 hectares of land (a deficit of 21 hectares). This option could provide land at Stafford for 8 of the 10 units with no new land being required. However, the other two units would have to be located elsewhere. No new land would be needed at Stafford in this scenario. Alternatively if the full medium brigade was located at the Ministry of Defence land at Stafford an extra 18 hectares of land would be required, primarily for Service Families Accommodation (SFA). The calculation for SFA requirements assumes a density range of approximately 30 - 35 dwellings per hectare.
- Defence Estates has been approached by a local agent, acting for an adjacent landowner.
- Across the West Midlands region the following other options have been considered:

Whittington Barracks, near Lichfield;
 Copthorpe Barracks, Shrewsbury;
 RAF Cosford, Shropshire;
 Donnington, near Telford;
 Ternhill, Shropshire.

- The initial study identified an average new build cost of around £100 million per unit.
- A report will be prepared for the Army Basing Strategy Group which will be considered in May 2008. This will set out the preferred option for the further development of the Army estate in the West Midlands. If the Army Basing Strategy Group agree with this preferred option it will be put forward for inclusion in the Defence Estates Development Plan. This will allow more detailed planning to commence. From the Ministry of Defence perspective it may be helpful for the Local Development Framework process to exercise a brief pause of six months until final decisions have been taken. This would enable a more co-ordinated approach to implementation and delivery of new development at Stafford to occur. The end date for the brigade to be located in the West Midlands, if the preferred option is delivered, would be 2035 although the re-location could begin as early as 2012 - 2013.
- Additional land of approximately 260 hectares may also be required to the east of Ministry of Defence land at Stafford to provide a backdoor training area which would be used jointly with existing agricultural uses. The area would be made available through licence so that joint use can continue and existing Rights of Way are unlikely to be affected. Mitigation measures would be required on the Ministry of Defence land which currently has flooding issues although the area is limited on the Stafford site. Land quality assessments will need to be carried out.
- Land being promoted for employment to the east of Stafford is not likely to raise concerns for the Ministry of Defence.

- It is anticipated that the existing site would provide income generation up to 2012 through short term leases to other MOD related users.
- David Kidney MP has shown an interest in the future of Ministry of Defence land at Stafford and wishes to be involved in future working.
- Land north of Stafford between the A34 and the Ministry of Defence land to the east could be incorporated into a wider future housing allocation including for SFA, potentially by using a private financial initiative approach. There are unlikely to be any issues with the new Ministry of Defence housing being incorporated into future market housing areas through an appropriate housing mix.
- The requirements for travelling families accommodation of 70 new pitches by 2026 was raised by AY. Consideration was given in terms of a potential new site near to the Ministry of Defence land at Hopton.
- AY identified that Staffordshire Police had identified a requirement for a new 50 metre firing range and that links could be established in order to share the use of this facility.
- AY identified that 1,800 Service Families Accommodation dwellings would likely generate the requirement for a new primary school. There could also be traffic implications for the area which would need to be incorporated into a wider transport model for Stafford. Support was given to the eastern and southern distributor roads by Defence Estates.
- No Ministry of Defence land will be released at Stafford for alternative uses. The previous representation concerning land at Stafford should be deleted.
- Swynnerton site is to be retained in the short term to medium term for training purposes, which would allow the preferred option for Stafford to use this facility in the future.
- Requirements for military housing (SFA) in the Stafford Borough area should be considered outside of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) housing requirements for the District. Military housing is not specifically referred to within the RSS.
- Date of Next Meeting – June / July 2008 following the Army Basing Strategy Group meeting in May 2008.