



Thorp Arch Neighbourhood Plan
Steering Group,
Peter Smart - Chairman
The East Wing,
Thorp Arch Hall,
Thorp Arch Park,
Thorp Arch,
Wetherby
LS23 7AW

3 October 2012

Mr Phil Crabtree
Chief Planning Officer
Leeds City Council
Leonardo Building
2 Rossington Street
Leeds
LS2 8HD

Dear Sir

PRE-APP/11/00459 – THORP ARCH TRADING ESTATE (TATE)

I refer to the proposals advanced by TATE for the development of 1150 houses on the site, which were the subject of a pre-application presentation on 27th September.

I attach a copy of a letter of 3rd October that I have written to Andrew Birkbeck, the Council's Localism Officer for the East North East area. The letter primarily concerns itself with prospective sites for development within the Thorp Arch Parish boundaries. It also touches on the TATE site and the current proposals, and refers back to the findings of the Inspector at the 2005 Public Inquiry.

The Thorp Arch Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (TANPSG) fully endorses the views on the TATE proposals that were expressed at the pre-application presentation by the clerk to the parish councils of Thorp Arch and Walton, Mr Colin Pool. I understand that a hard copy of Mr Pool's presentation is to be sent to you for your file.

In short, the present views of the TANPSG on the TATE proposals are that:

1. The proposals are opportunistic and premature, cutting across the Core Strategy and undermining the Neighbourhood Planning process which, for most communities has only just begun;
2. There has been no meaningful consultation with the affected communities. Such "consultation" as there has been has been no more than a presentation of TATE's intentions.

There has been no attempt to engage in a dialogue with the communities to achieve any workable outcomes;

3. In particular, no attention has been paid by TATE to concerns expressed by the communities as to the impact on the local infrastructure, particularly on the already inadequate road network. In response to those concerns, TATE have done nothing more than to say that their data suggests that the existing highway network can "cope" with the additional traffic movements, but have failed to give the communities access to any of that data. In response to concerns about the traffic pinch points on the Thorp Arch bridge and the junction with Boston Spa High Street, TATE dismissively states that it will be "self regulating"; meaning that when traffic volumes reach the point of chaos, drivers may look for alternative routes. That is hardly a credible response to a major traffic management issue.
4. There is no compelling evidence of any pressing need for a development of this size in this place. A survey of employees on the estate in 2005 indicated that no more than 5% (just 190 people) might "consider" living on the estate. As the Inspector rightly observed in 2005, the towns and cities of Leeds, York, Harrogate and Wetherby (from which most employees came) offer far greater facilities and community than TATE can ever hope to be able to offer.
5. There is no compelling evidence that the proposals would attract greater employment opportunities to the area. Many of the existing units on the site are empty, and some have been so for some considerable time. Talk of developing part of the site into a Science/Hi tech park is illusory. There are far better, more established and more convenient sites elsewhere.
6. The proposals are ill thought out and piecemeal in nature. A comprehensive long term solution needs to be found for the entire Estate, of which some residential development could form part. Such a review could give proper consideration to the road network, possible means of by-passing affected communities and other infrastructure issues. Put simply, the current half-baked proposals are just not sustainable.

I would be grateful if you could kindly consider these issues and pass a copy of this letter to other appropriate officers.

Perhaps you would also note, that this letter is written on behalf of the members of TANPSG. It is not written on behalf of Thorp Arch Parish Council, which has not had the opportunity to formally approve its contents. However, to my knowledge, members of the council do endorse the views expressed above.

Yours faithfully

Peter C Smart

Chairman

For and on behalf of the Thorp Arch Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.