



THORP ARCH TRADING ESTATE ACTION GROUP
OBJECTION TO PLANNING APPLICATION 13/03061
2,000 HOUSES ON THORP ARCH TRADING ESTATE

Volume 12 - EMPLOYMENT LAND RETENTION

Contact: Peter Locke, Chairman
14 Thorp Arch Park, Thorp Arch, LS23 7AN



Added congestion



Loss of prime agricultural land



Overwhelming local opposition



Site asbestos contamination



Gridlock on Bridge Rd again



Poor accessibility



Does this look brownfield to you?



Unsuitable re-routing of local traffic



Loss of flora and fauna

Objection on grounds of protecting employment land.

Planning application 13/03061. 2000 houses on Thorp Arch Trading Estate (TATE).

Executive Summary.

- TATE has shown resilience as an employment site despite the long recession.
- TATE is being upgraded, and has an attractive parkland setting. There are strong indications that it could become a successful High-Tech/Science/Health park.
- It is well situated to attract the high income professional, scientific and health staff who would be needed for such a venture – it is centred in the 'Golden Triangle' of Leeds/Harrogate/York, and the surrounding villages already provide very desirable residential accommodation for just such staff. Experience in the USA demonstrates the importance of the social setting to attract the necessary quality of businesses.
- LCC policy is to retain it as an employment site.
- To condense the employment area, removing spare capacity for incoming companies, and losing expansion opportunities would go against LCC policy, and would seriously constrain the employment potential of the site.
- If the contaminated areas are to be left on site, with restricted access (as TAG believe is the current best practice), then it is much safer for this to be in an employment setting, not a residential one.

Narrative.

1.0 History of TATE

The Thorp Arch Trading Estate was originally agricultural land on which the Royal Ordnance Factory Thorp Arch (Filling Factory number 8) was built during the second world war. The factory took 30 months to construct and was completed in 1942 at a cost of £5.9 million (current day equivalent cost approx. £240m).

The ROF produced light, medium and heavy ammunition, land mines and trench mortars for the Army, medium and large bombs for the RAF and 20mm and other small arms ammunition for all three services. Some of these were produced in quantities measured in millions and hundred of millions of items.

From 1945 to 1950 ROF was used to store surplus war materials and re-opened for manufacturing ammunition again for the Korean war from 1950 to 1953.

The site was partially decontaminated by the MOD and finally closed in 1958.

In the early 1960's George Moore, a local business man, bought most of the site and the development of the area as a Trading Estate began.

The estate was later owned by Thorp Arch United Partnership, (85% owned by Hanover Property Unit Trust). In 2001 the Trustees of Rockspring Hanover Property Unit Trust (RHPUT) became the sole owner of TATE.

RHPUT specialise in the management of intensive, high yielding multi-let industrial estates throughout the UK.

TATE totals some 155 hectares (385 acres) and is a well established business location located less than 2.5 miles from the A1(M) motorway at Wetherby and is approximately equidistant between Leeds, Harrogate and York. It is stated by the site owners as "making it the ideal location for carrying out business in Yorkshire, National and International".

TATE is set in a green parkland setting with many of the original ROF buildings and structures remaining to this day. The location setting and versatility that TATE can offer could be said to be unique.

The Commercial Estate is promoted by RHPUT as a well-established business with 185,000 sq metres (2,000,000 sq ft) of commercial property. They claim the site offers:-

- . Industrial, warehouse and office premises.
- . Commercial property available from 19-5,600 sq metres (200-60,000 sq feet).
- . Health and Innovation Park.
- . Building plots for sale.
- . Retail Park, home to a range of national retailers with a fantastic free childrens playground.
- . Abundant free parking.
- . History.
- . Location.
- . Transport.
- . Existing well established businesses

2.00 We object to the application on the following grounds.

2.01 The applicant claims that the site comprises part of the Thorp Arch Trading Estate and relates to approximately 113 hectares of the estate which comprises of predominately under utilised areas. Some of the site is **heavily contaminated**. It includes vacant or redundant units or scrubland.

However the applicant fails to mention that:-

- a) Part of the application site north of Avenue D has planning permission for commercial use and is allocated to be retained for employment in LCC Site Allocation Plan for the Outer North East.
- b) Some 37 hectares (which is approximately 40% of the existing commercial, office and retail land) are included within the site boundary, and will be lost to employment use.
- c) Much of the area proposed for housing development is calcareous grassland which is a national, regional and local BAP (Biodiversity Action Plan) priority habitat.
- d) Much of the land included within the site boundary has never been developed, or has returned to a natural state, and should therefore be considered as "Greenfield".

2.02 The Knight Frank Employment Land Report (item 7.6) highlights that interest in Westminster Yard has been historically low due to its poor condition, the run down appearance of its immediate surroundings, and the fact that this area of land is "**significantly contaminated**". That this combined with the lack of market interest renders any refurbishment works unviable.

The photograph included in Appendix 9 to demonstrate this fact shows a brick built structure which appears to be structurally sound with ample hardstanding. At present several tenants are located within the Westminster Yard.

However this area of "**significantly contaminated**" land forms part of the application which is allocated for residential development. If it can be reclaimed for residential use, then it could be reclaimed for industrial/commercial use. However, the prospect of deliberately making this a residential site with children and other vulnerable people living there seems totally inappropriate.

2.03 The Knight Frank Employment Land Report also highlights the following points. They are highly relevant to TATE being retained for Employment use:-

- a) Thorp Arch Estates continues to attract business and investment into the Wetherby Area, 24 new lettings have been completed in the year ending 30th September 2012 (para 7.11).
- b) Annual average of over 20 new lettings being completed every year for the last five years (para 7.11).
- c) The estate aims to capitalise on its location and its green parkland setting to provide a High tech innovation park focused towards the health sector, known as the Health and Innovation Park. In October 2010 the

estate attracted a company from the Science Park at York University that initially leased 2,703 sq ft which has subsequently expanded into 14,094 sq ft (para 7.14).

- d) In addition to item (c) above the Estate remains on the short list of potential sites for a Leeds based company in the health sector who are currently reviewing their requirements for 120,000 sq ft.

The presence of other companies on the estate including a sterilisation unit for a large private health provider and two companies developing beds for the health sector, adds to the attractiveness of the estate, with such companies wishing to locate together to foster innovation (para 7.14).

This indicates that, even in these most trying and difficult financial times, TATE remains a successful employment site. TATE is a well-established trading estate with few constraints to its commercial development. It is acknowledged in the LCC Site Allocation Plan to be a large employment site and which is appropriate for continued employment.

The applicant acknowledges that there is a distinct lack of supply of industrial premises in the immediate surrounding area of Harrogate, Wetherby, York etc (part 8.5).

It is our opinion that it would be short-sighted to even consider the loss of the employment land and buildings on TATE that fall within the site boundary of the application. TATE is a unique large employment site able to offer a wide range of commercial / retail and office premises and land purchase opportunities. It is fit for purpose.

3.00 Summary and Conclusion

TATE is a site protected by the UDP Policy E7, which seeks to **retain existing and former employment land**.

Policy E7 only allows for alternative uses to be developed where it can be demonstrated that there is no longer any “**need**” for the employment site.

The Government is committed to securing economic growth in order to create jobs and prosperity. Local planning authorities should plan proactively to meet the development needs of business and support an economy fit for the 21st century. (See NPPF sections 18 and 20).

It is acknowledged that the NPPF indicates that planning policies should avoid the long term protection of sites allocated for employment where there is no reasonable prospect of sites allocated for employment use. However the Knight Frank Employment Land Report clearly shows that continued employment uses for the site are fully viable.