

JB/1285/sf

3 November 2017

Mrs S Tiley  
Planning Policy and Implementation Manager  
Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council  
The Campus  
Welwyn Garden City  
AL8 6AE

Dear Mrs Tiley

**Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan: Birchall Garden Suburb**

We refer to our letter dated 6 October and to the considerable reservations our clients Gascoyne Cecil Estates (the Estate) and others continue to have over the suitability of the proposed Birchall Garden Suburb allocation. There are serious concerns in relation to previous landfill operations in the area, the uncertainty over the nature and stability of the fill material, and the proximity to and impacts upon designated heritage assets of the highest significance.

You will recall when we met on the 31 August 2017 that we said we were in the process of undertaking a review of the public records that are available on mineral extraction and landfill operations in the area and enclose a Technical Paper on Contamination and Site Suitability. You will note from the information that is presented in the paper that the suitability of the site to accommodate a mixed-use community should be scrutinised very carefully before any irreversible decisions are made on the allocation of the site for mixed use development. To support the Technical Paper, we also attach a report produced by Wardell Armstrong which specifically reviews the reports produced by Royal Haskoning DHV which are in the Examination Library and upon which the Council rely to provide justification for the allocation of this site. It will be noted that the Wardell Armstrong report highlights significant deficiencies in the assessments that have been undertaken to date and question the suitability of the reports as appropriate evidence on which to base the allocation.

In view of the content of both documents we would urgently request a meeting with you to discuss the statement of facts contained in the reports and to seek agreement with you on a way forward that addresses our clients concerns. As you know the Estate are keen to support the Council in moving towards securing a sound Local Plan.

In relation to the Estate's concerns on heritage impacts we also enclose a Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) prepared by Montagu Evans which has raised several concerns that have not be fully addressed in the Beacon Report and which forms part of the Council's evidence base for the Local Plan. It would be helpful to discuss the findings of this assessment when we meet.

To this end, and to assist this process, we are looking separately at the constraints and opportunities provided by the land at Birchall. We are happy to share this work with you to



assist your discussions with Historic England with the aim of reaching agreement on an appropriate mitigation strategy.

It is hoped that with the agreement of all parties a revised allocation can be considered and included in any Modifications to the Local Plan.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



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cc Anthony Downs – GCE  
Colin Haigh – WHBC  
Claire Sime – EHDC  
John Neale – Historic England