

Meeting Note

Present:	Councillor Richard Turner	- Eden District Council, Chair
	Councillor Glenys Lumley	- Eden District Council
	Roger Hopcraft	- Eden District Council
	David Coy	- Eden District Council
	Alan Houghton	- Eden District Council
	Suzanne Kidger	- Eden District Council
	Stephen Prince	- CPNHSFT
	Chris Smith	- Carigiet Cowen Chartered Surveyors
	Peter Winter	- PFK Planning Penrith
	Bob Taylor	- Taylor & Hardy, Carlisle
	Ron Kenyon	- Saints & Co
	Graham McWilliam	- Invest in Cumbria
	David Ingham	- Cumbria County Council
	Mark Goodwill	- Cumbria County Council
	Graeme Innes	- Cumbria County Council
	Winston Collinge	- Cumbria Green Fuels
	Bob Clark	- CREA
	Brendan Lithgow	- North West Regional Dev. Agency
	Richard Brown	- Drivers Jonas LLP
	Alex McCallion	- Drivers Jonas LLP

From : Alex McCallion

Date : Wednesday 11 November 2009

Eden District Council – Employment Land Study Stakeholder Workshop

Action

1. Councillor Turner opened the meeting and asked parties to introduce themselves.
2. Richard Brown of Drivers Jonas LLP gave a short presentation to introduce the Employment Land Study and the purpose of the finished document. Following the presentation Richard Brown introduced the key issues which would form the agenda for the workshop discussion.

Question 1 - What are the broad opportunities and constraints to promoting economic growth in the area?

3. A conversation ensued regarding the geographical position of Penrith. It was agreed that Penrith offered potential for a number of uses and it was noted that distribution was one such potential use.
4. It was advised that there was very little new stock on the market for much larger

organisations to take up.

5. It was advised by a delegate that distribution business was better served from Carlisle where rents were approximately £1 psf compared with between £3-4 in Penrith. Given this difference in cost, it was suggested that the Kingmoor Industrial Estate in Carlisle was ideal as a national distribution hub when compared to Penrith which may be more appropriate for local distribution.
6. It was noted by a delegate that they did not agree that Carlisle was better placed for B8 distribution when compared to Penrith and went on to suggest that Penrith was ideally placed being close to the M6 and both the A66 and therefore A1 (M). They felt that it was the lack of availability in Penrith which compounded the shortfall in requirements.
7. Further, the delegate felt that the lack of land, notwithstanding Eden Business Park compounded the lack of take up. They felt that, given the opportunity, people would look at Penrith as a strategic location. The delegate advised that he was involved with the Eden Business Park from an early stage where the Environment Agency relocated from Carlisle to Penrith and cited location as a key factor in this transfer noting that Penrith was geographically central in Cumbria.
8. It was noted that the M6 corridor provided opportunities in Penrith which were key. The delegate went on to agree that land was simply not available, but if it was that Penrith was the right location and would compete with Kingmoor Park in Carlisle. The delegate used the example of South Lakeland where no land had been allocated and therefore the district was affectively stifling its own development.
9. A conversation ensued regarding the business profile of small businesses in Penrith. It was agreed that the study needed to look district wide. At present, businesses need to look to Kingmoor Park to expand therefore it is essential to provide the right size of units in the right location. It was agreed that a range of accommodation across the district was key.
10. It was noted that it was easy to look at Penrith but asked people not to forget the other settlements which need to be included in the study. Kirkby Stephen and Appleby were cited as all having land available to fulfil growth in these rural towns.
11. It was advised that the strategic road network was there to support growth but noted that junction 40 was close to capacity and may constrain opportunities and raised that issue of access from J41.
12. Continuing on this theme, it was noted that traffic congestion at junction 40/A66 (east) was a major constraint. It was advised that the Highways Agency was not happy about large scale developments unless this issue was sorted. A new link at junction 41, therefore, may be the focus that is needed to address this issue.
13. Moving back to the issue of Penrith District, it was advised that Alston had a number of redundant buildings which offered huge possibilities for employment use but acknowledged the quality of infrastructure and isolated location.
14. It was suggested that it was necessary to get small businesses out of buildings which were not fit for purpose and into buildings of good quality, and which offered flexibility to allow small/new businesses to grow. The delegate stressed the need to support small businesses through realistic rents to maintain viable and profitable businesses in the district.
15. The links between housing and employment growth were noted.
16. The issue of National Parks was raised and it was suggested that a coordinated

response was required. In addition it was advised that the National Park Authority was carrying out a similar study and suggested that there should be synergies between the two studies.

17. The issue of sustainable communities was raised, with particular reference to the mixes of uses i.e. residential and commercial and the need to minimise the need to commute. Further it was noted that there was a strong manufacturing business community in Penrith, particularly those whom supplied parts to other manufacturing businesses. It was suggested that whilst this was small scale the district has an 'above average' manufacturing base compared to other parts England.
18. It was recommend that higher GVA businesses should be encouraged. Further, it was noted that there are occasions in the district where these have been pushed aside. It was noted that whilst Penrith has a number of strategic advantages, it was never going to be a Silicone Valley and therefore the ambitions of the Employment Land Study need to be put into context of the district it is serving. If there was going to be extreme competition for space then stricter criteria could be applied, if not, policies should be flexible to support growth.

Question 2 - Where should the main focus of economic growth be? For example, significant focus in and around Penrith or a more dispersed pattern of growth across the District?

19. It was noted that demand in the smaller centres, in broad terms, was far less than Penrith because of the advantages Penrith has in respect of population and strategic location. With regard to the types of employment use outside of Penrith, it was advised that often it was a one person business.
20. It was noted the take up at Redhills and Hackthorpe Hall was good with both developments finding tenants reasonably quickly with predominantly public sector organisations.
21. The conversation then focused on the draft Core Strategy, particularly the extension to Gilwilly Industrial Estate. On behalf of the Council, Roger Hopcraft advised that the Inspector needed to be persuaded that Eden District Council was not putting all its 'eggs in one basket' with the allocation of land at the Gilwilly extension. The Inspector specifically wished to see why the Council had discounted other major locations in Penrith. In commissioning the Employment Land Study the Council will be providing a robust evidence base which can also be used in the future to support funding bids to Government on infrastructure and flood risk alleviation measures. Roger Hopcraft noted that if people felt that the Council were indeed putting all their eggs in one basket that they should raise this now.
22. It was suggested that it would be important to get a handle on the quantum of development proposed. The Core Strategy proposes 50 hectares of employment land, as well as 60% of the total housing provision in Penrith. The 2005 Gilwilly report looks at the extension and how land may be brought forward. There is a danger that in relying on Gilwilly, that if this land did not come forward for development this could cause a problem with employment opportunities. It was advised by a delegate that they had not seen evidence on why other sites had been discounted.
23. Roger Hopcraft advised that the Council had indeed looked at alternatives and that it was agreed that there were no serious contenders to this strategic site.
24. A delegate raised their concern that with 60% of the residential housing allocated in Penrith, if the Gilwilly Industrial Estate extension did not come forward, this may cause problems with the residential growth forecast and therefore puts the Council's policies in

jeopardy to some degree.

25. It was advised that the economy of Eden was made up of many micro businesses. It was suggested that very often these were located where they were because of the local labour force and it would therefore be very disruptive to move these businesses to Penrith. It was noted that often, the market of these small businesses may just be a few parishes where they are located and therefore if they were to outgrow the local catchment, they may need to move outside of these areas if premises are not available. It was stressed that these businesses help sustain local communities although they are not big GVAs.
26. A delegate queried why Penrith was so attractive? Why not Appleby, Kirkby Steven etc. These towns need to be kept attractive and sustainable communities by ensuring appropriate employment uses are available.
27. Moving on, the issue of contaminated land and the lack of contamination remediation grants was raised. Heavily contaminated sites may therefore be unviable in redevelopment terms. Justification is required to secure money from the Government to allow development to come forward.

Do you consider there to be any quantitative, qualitative and spatial gaps in the District's current employment land supply? If so, what do you think needs to be done?

28. On behalf of the Council, Alan Haughton noted the qualitative/quantitative conundrum. The range of provision in the district was limited with lack of available space on a general basis being an issue. Availability of space was acute outside Penrith.
29. Alan Haughton referred to the example of the former Appleby Creamery site which he felt had the potential to accommodate a variety of uses which could be in the high GVA brackets. At present, Alan felt that there was not enough space of the right quality or premises available.
30. On behalf of the NHS Trusts, Stephen Prince noted that there was not enough quality space for them to buy/lease. Whilst he acknowledged that Hackfield Hall had been successful he suggested that this may have been influenced by the lack of alternatives available in Penrith. Stephen Price added that the NHS had been unable to secure quality space with sufficient parking in Penrith.
31. Finally, Stephen Prince advised that the Primary Care Trusts cannot develop the existing hospital and is looking for alternatives sites around Penrith.
32. It was noted that the County Council were looking at the feasibility of moving their administrative operations to Penrith but there is no space available. On behalf of the County Council, David Ingham noted that the County Council was carrying out a general review of its premises with a view to better use of its property assets. In this regard the County Council has recently placed an OJEU notice in connection with looking at a new HQ in Carlisle.

Is an extension to the Gilwilly Industrial Estate (Eden Business Park) in Penrith the optimum solution for meeting future employment land needs?

33. It was advised that there was developer intent at Eden Business Park which was not brought forward which proposed a mixed development of sizeable office space, similar to South Lakeland. Further, it was noted that the infrastructure around Gilwilly has put developers off in the past. It was felt that until this issue is addressed, developers will not be attracted and therefore an independent access from J41 access is key.

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34. It was noted by a delegate that they did not feel that occupiers wished to drive through an industrial estate to get to the new business park and that a new junction at J41 of the M6 was necessary to open this land up and attract developers.
35. It was advised that small businesses with a low net profit will not have the funds available to rent a 1000 sq ft unit in Gilwilly as rents eat into the profit and therefore reduce the capacity to employ more staff. A delegate advised that unless the Council procure a number of incubation units then the larger businesses cannot grow. Again the delegate advised that it is easier to rent in Carlisle compared to taking property in Penrith.
36. A delegate queried whether the Council wanted a quality industrial estate or business park to get quality businesses into the area. He suggested that we do in fact need a quality business park.
37. A delegate queried whether there were any alternatives? Roger Hopcraft advised that alternative locations had been considered to the west of the motorway in Penrith. These are already occupied by development at Redhills and the Auction Mart. There did not appear to be any further practical alternatives mainly due to topographical factors (to the east and south.)
38. The issue of the extension to junction 41 was raised. It was felt by some that providing a dedicated access would create demand.
39. Again Roger Hopcraft raised the issue of Phase 2 and whether this was expanded from the south or from a new junction at 41. If junction 41, this could facilitate new B8 development.
40. A point of concern was raised that the discussion had not given sufficient focus to climate change. It was noted that Eden District has the biggest carbon footprint in Cumbria given the reliance on cars. Further, it was felt that whilst Eden Business Park might be the easiest solution it was not the optimum due to the reliance it would place on commuting and the negative impact it would have on maintaining sustainable communities.
41. It was suggested that incentives to land owners in villages should be offered to encourage development of land for employment use rather than residential use may be required.
42. A delegate reminded the group that the former railway depot was currently used for incubation units and rented at a low cost to allow small businesses to enter onto the market and stressed the need to provide accommodation for new small businesses.
43. It was agreed that the key is providing a range of accommodation to ensure that small businesses grow.
44. The conversation returned to the point raised at paragraph 40, a delegate having not understood the comment fully. It was clarified; that unless employment opportunities were provided throughout the district people would need to commute into Penrith.
45. It was noted that conversely people would also need to travel into rural areas. It was agreed that infrastructure was key as well as good public transport links.
46. Councillor Turner closed the meeting and reminded parties that if they have further input, to forward these directly to Drivers Jonas. Finally Richard Brown advised that a draft employment land study would be available two weeks before the resumption of the hearing on 18 December 2009.

Meeting Note
Drivers Jonas LLP
November 2009

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