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Chris Brown, Sullivan Archer

Development Management / Planning Department
Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council
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Dear Chris and Sullivan,

Cadent Hinckley

As you are aware, Fisher German have been working with Cadent to secure residential redevelopment of the land at Cadent Hinckley. This work has been going on since 2020.

- Initially, Cadent sought a Hybrid planning application (21/00875/HYB) in 2021 to redevelop the northern part of the site for residential, whilst continuing to occupy the southern half of the site.
- This application was withdrawn following political pressure emanating from the Leader of the Council, due to a perceived unacceptability with the usage of St George's Avenue to serve the residential component of the proposal. Following discussions with the Council, it was agreed that the application would be withdrawn, and a comprehensive residential redevelopment would be submitted utilising Coventry Road for vehicular access. The hybrid planning application was withdrawn in March 2023.
- Subsequently, Cadent worked up the comprehensive residential redevelopment proposal, and this was submitted to the Council in June 2024 (24/00610/OUT). Fisher German, as agents for the application have worked with the Council in satisfying all outstanding statutory consultees, which included significant expenditure on highways modelling. Following this, conditions were agreed.
- The only outstanding matter at the time of writing is therefore contributions, getting a resolution to grant and finalising a S106 agreement.

The site is a former gas works and is highly contaminated. Remediation programmes to make the site suitable for residential development are in the millions of pounds. Fisher German submitted to the Council a viability appraisal as the starting point to begin negotiations on reduced affordable housing and S106 costs. This includes significant education contributions. However, when the Council's own consultants, Aspinall Verdi, undertook a viability appraisal of the site, they concluded that the site was fully viable with full affordable housing and S106 costs. This was clearly somewhat of a surprise to Cadent and Fisher German, and the national housebuilder who was in talks to advance the site following the receipt of planning permission.

Fisher German have further updated the viability appraisal to plug in further costs that weren't reflected in the initial viability appraisal submitted. This includes the following comments:

- Based build cost of £135 per ft is almost impossible to achieve – even on a serviced parcel.
- Appears no abnormal allowance has been made for foundations
- No allowance for water treatment plant operation
- No allowance of importing topsoil – there is none on site
- No allowance for clean cover system – this is very likely to be required
- No allowance for upsizing/deepening of drainage infrastructure
- No allowance for a pump station

- No allowance to the entrance road
- No allowance for future homes or BSL
- £3,976m of abnormals that have not been accounted for

The submitted Viability Appraisal has had regard for these costs and updated S106 costs. Essentially this results in a negative land value for the site.

As the Council will be aware, macro-economic factors including inflation, the Iran War, the general stuttering of the economy, etc, means that the housing market is continuing to decline. Taken together, the prognosis for the site is only worsening. This was demonstrated when the major housebuilder, who have an industry reputation for building on brownfield land, stipulated they would be unable to complete any deal for the site for another year, dependent on several factors including further work on remediation strategies, irrespective of a grant of planning permission in the short term.

The development of the site would have significant local benefits, not least the cleaning up of a dirty brownfield site, the delivery of needed housing, improvements to the street scene, new public connections, increased population to support the town centre and local economy, increased council tax revenues, employment, etc.

The updated viability appraisal concludes that the site will essentially be able to make a nil contribution to S106 costs and affordable housing units. Cadent, neither cannot afford for the site to sit unoccupied indefinitely, nor can they justify giving the site away for free. As such, should a suitable agreement not be forthcoming, Cadent will have no choice but to withdraw the Planning Application and consider other, productive uses of the site. These may be temporary in nature, to allow the market conditions to improve, or permanent, but it is essential that the site is brought into productive use and not left vacant where it will be a liability, attract anti-social behaviour, etc. The need for more active use of the site was unfortunately demonstrated last year.

In this context we would ask that the Council request their viability consultants review this updated evidence both in good faith, and with the aim of seeing this site developed. Cadent have spent hundreds of thousands of pounds bring the aforementioned applications forward, clearing the site, etc, to enable the site's delivery for residential uses.

Moreover, given there is over a year of further remediation work to be undertaken before the site can be sold, we are unable to accept a reduced timeframe for submission of Reserved Matters, but clearly this is only relevant if there can be an agreement on the aforementioned reduction in contributions.

Cadent have indicated that they would be more than willing to meet with you both to discuss this matter in person also. Please can you provide the attached to Aspinall Verdi (or whatever consultants you wish to use) as soon as possible. Please do send me costs and I will get you a PO.

Yours sincerely



James Beverley MRTPI
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For and on behalf of Fisher German LLP

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Encs: Updated Viability Appraisal