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Labour Councillor Abbey Ward

Your Ref:
My Ref: tp/vr
Date: 27 December 2009

Dear Richard

SITE ALLOCATIONS DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT

In my capacity as the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Transport, my attention has been drawn to apparent mischief-making and rumour-mongering being fomented in parts of Park Ward.

I understand that a claim is being made that *'some of the playing fields behind Thames Valley University on Crescent Road were being earmarked for development in the Council's plan'*. This is simply not true. Let me explain the current position regarding Council consultations on the future development opportunities in the Borough.

In October 2008 the Borough Council produced a Site Allocations document containing over 100 sites which had been proposed to the Council for consideration for allocation either for development or protection. The vast majority of these sites had been put forward by external parties, ie private individuals; developers/agents; organisations/companies; politicians (councillors or MPs) and community groups/interest groups. It was made quite clear on page 42 of the document (copy attached) that the sites *'are not endorsed by the Council either in terms of the sites themselves and/or the specific uses proposed.'*

Amongst the sites put forward to the Council was site SA86, namely Thames Valley University, Crescent Road. This proposal originated from an agent/developer and proposed a mix of uses including the potential for 168 to 315 housing units. A summary of the developer's proposal was given on page 155 (copy attached).

Following the consultations in 2008 the Council has undertaken further work, including sustainability appraisals, and January's Council meeting will be invited to agree a revised draft document for consultation during 2010.

Once this next consultation is completed, the Council will consider whether matters raised mean that no changes are needed, or only minor wording changes, in which case a version incorporating these changes will be submitted to the Secretary of State. Once submitted, the Secretary of State will appoint an independent Inspector to consider whether the '*sites and detailed policies document to 2026*' is sound which means that it should be justified, effective and consistent with national policy.

If more changes are needed, the Council will prepare an amended pre-submission draft for a further round of community involvement.

With regard to the Thames Valley University, Crescent Road campus, can I clarify the Council's position which will be set out in more detail in the draft document to be published next month.

The Crescent Road site has been suggested as a potential development site for uses including residential. However, it is not currently certain that the Further and Higher Education use of the site is likely to become surplus to requirements in the plan period. Let me underline that the Council wishes to ensure that this site is not developed if it would have a negative effect on the provision of education in Reading.

Were the site to become surplus to requirements, and if its loss would not have a detrimental effect on education provision, the site would potentially be appropriate for another education use, or for limited residential development. Neither I nor my colleagues in the administration would support any development for residential which included the adjacent playing fields. This will be made clear in the Sites and Detailed Policies Document (SDPD) which will be considered by Council on 26 January.

As you are well aware the main constraint on development is vehicle access, with Crescent Road posing particular difficulties. Any future proposals for development would therefore need to avoid increasing traffic volumes along Crescent Road.

Whilst it would not be appropriate, nor possible, to remove this site from the SDPD, I hope this letter offers adequate reassurance to any local residents who may have been misled.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of any further assistance.

Yours sincerely

Councillor Tony Page
Lead Member, Strategic Planning and Transport

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