



# Defence Infrastructure Organisation

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## City of York Local Plan Examination

Dear Mr Berkeley and Mr Griffiths

We write to inform you that the Defence Estate Optimisation (DEO) Army Programme has received approval from the Minister for Defence Procurement (MinDP) to retain Queen Elizabeth Barracks (QEB) and Towthorpe Lines at Strensall.

As you will be aware these sites were due for disposal in 2024 in line with plans to optimise the Defence Estate and had proposed allocations at submission stage of the Local Plan (dated February 2018) ST35 and H59 for a combined total of 545 homes at QEB and Site E18: Towthorpe Lines, Strensall for 13,200sqm employment floorspace. You will recall detailed discussions around QEB throughout the Local Plan examination. However, following extensive assessment of alternative locations for the Units, the Army's preferred option is to remain in Strensall; therefore following MinDP's approval, the sites will no longer be sold. QEB and Towthorpe Lines will remain home to 21 Multi-Role Medical Regiment (MMR), who will be joined by 22 MMR, both supporting the deployed force. DIOs position on these two sites has therefore materially changed and it is therefore important to draw this to your attention with immediate effect.

The retention of Army Barracks in Strensall reinforces consolidation of specialist medical capability. The co-location of Multi-Role Medical Regiments will improve training and coherence for medical personnel preparing to deploy on operations to support the Army around the world. The decision to retain QEB and Towthorpe Lines also demonstrates the Ministry of Defence's continued commitment to supporting military outputs in Yorkshire, by

establishing a Brigade-sized group within an existing Defence footprint in the greater York area.

The addition of a further regiment at Strensall will require considerable investment and development activities at the site to enhance defence output. The Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) will be undertaking pre-application discussions with the City of York Council (CYC) in preparation for planning submissions in the near future.

The Inspectors will be aware of DIO's extensive representations throughout the examination process and substantive arguments particularly in regard to the Green Belt boundary and the sites relationship with the Strensall Common Special Area of Conservation and on the Habitat Regulations Assessments.

Whilst MOD's stance on QEB and Towthorpe Lines has changed, importantly the following points set out in writing and orally in relation to Phase 3 Matter 5 of the Examination **remain valid** and relevant to your considerations of the soundness of the York Local Plan:

- the correct approach that should be undertaken in regard to the Green Belt boundary around ST35 and H59. Regardless of the use of the site, our representations to inform the fixing of the Green Belt Boundaries around Strensall and QEB remain relevant.
- our fundamental objection to the addition of policy GI2a, as it is not required to make the Plan sound and arguably not required for compliance with the Habitat Regulations.

In addition, in the light of the decision that has been taken to retain QEB and Towthorpe Lines, their importance operationally, and the investment that is to be made in these sites going forward to increase the MoDs operational output, it is important, in line with paragraph 164 of the 2012 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and paragraph 101 of the 2023 NPPF, that policies in the Local Plan *recognise and support development required for operational defence and security purposes, and ensure that these operational sites are not affected adversely by the impact of other development proposed in the area.*"

For the avoidance of doubt, the MOD remains committed to the disposal of Imphal Barracks and note that the emerging local plan seeks to secure a future use for the site following the vacation of the Army and is fully supportive of a proposed allocation at ST36 for residential development of up to 769 dwellings, in line with our representations on this site, throughout the Examination in Public process to date.

DIO have discussed the contents of this letter with CYC before submission to the Examination, should you have any further queries on the contents of this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

**Paul Hinton**  
Senior Town Planner  
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cc – Neil Ferris, Corporate Director of Place – City of York Council