

Duty to Co-operate - Foulness & Shoeburyness
Copy of Email on 05.06.20

Dear [REDACTED] and Mr Sheppard,

Thank you for your respective emails and letters (email from Rochford DC copy below and letter from Southend-on-sea BC, copy attached). As you know the MODs landholdings are within both Council areas and given the work both authorities are undertaking on your emerging local plans and the South Essex Joint Strategic Plan we consider it beneficial to respond to both of your requests within one reply.

Both authorities wish to engage with the MOD and the MOD would be pleased to take you up on your offer to open a dialogue. Clearly the current situation with COVID-19 makes arranging a face-to-face meeting difficult in the immediate future.

MOD Shoeburyness is owned by the MOD and operated by QinetiQ Ltd under a Long-Term Partnering Agreement (LTPA). MOD Shoeburyness offers a broad array of weapon and military equipment test, evaluation and training over land and firm tidal areas.

The Range covers a land area of 7,500 acres with 35,000 acres of tidal sands. MOD Shoeburyness consists of 21 operational firing areas and unique capabilities for Demilitarisation and Environmental Testing of Live and Inert stores. This unique terrain enables the over-water recovery of munitions up to a range of 22km, ground-to-ground firings of up to 27km, long-range direct fire up to 3.5km, sea danger areas up to 35km, and large radial safety areas for explosives trials.

MOD Shoeburyness is a centre of excellence for environmental testing of Ordnance, Munitions and Explosives (OME) and houses the largest Environmental Test Centre in the UK for the testing of Live stores as well as some unique demilitarisation facilities.

60% of MOD Shoeburyness's 7,500 acres is made up of eight farms and 74 residential properties (let to civilians) in two hamlets and is required to support the operational areas and outputs through the provision of a safe area in which Test & Evaluation activities can be conducted.

The MOD has an enduring requirement for the operational outputs delivered at Shoeburyness and other than Potton Island and Rushley Island, which have both recently been declared surplus to requirements, there are no current plans to change the department's landholdings in the area. The MOD and its partner, Qinetiq, will continue to engage with relevant Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) regarding specific future operational developments when the need arises.

The MOD is committed to reducing its carbon footprint and is endeavouring to be carbon neutral by 2030. It is also looking at how to make its sites operate in the most efficient way and undertake future developments sustainably. This is likely to result in small-scale development projects across MOD Shoeburyness and Foulness Island in the short and medium term. Where these works fall outside of those permitted under Part 19 (Development by the Crown) of the Town and Country General Permitted Development Order 2015, the MOD would wish to work in a positive and proactive way with the relevant LPA and engage in pre-application discussions where necessary.

While these projects are currently being developed, given their likely scale, we do not consider discussing those in detail here would be of benefit to the strategies of the emerging local plans. Both authorities will be aware of paragraph 95 of the NPPF in regard to planning policies promoting wider security and defence requirements by supporting development required for operational defence and security purposes and ensuring that operational sites are not affected adversely by the impact of other

development proposed in the area. Based on the MODs future intentions for this estate it would be sustainable if both authorities considered whether specific local policy designation for the site would be beneficial to support on-going operational military requirements during the plan period(s). This approach has been used by other local authorities in the country. We would be pleased to engage further on this point.

The Councils will be aware of the provisions of The Town and Country Planning (safeguarded aerodromes, technical sites and military explosives storage areas) Direction 2002 (Circular 01/2003). Safeguarding zones have been designated at MOD Shoeburyness to safeguard its capacity as a military technical site/explosive storage area and maps have previously been issued by Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government to the Council. Within these designated areas the MOD is a statutory consultee and would expect to be consulted on planning applications. For the avoidance of doubt please find attached the latest safeguarded areas (a copy of the GIS data can be provided upon request). In accordance with Circular 01/2003 the outer boundary of safeguarded areas should be indicated on proposals maps accompanying local plans and the plan should state why the area has been safeguarded.

The Councils may consider it prudent (considering the paragraph 95 of the NPPF) to propose a combined policy for MOD Shoeburyness and Foulness Island that provides and protects both on-going and future operational defence needs for the site and serves to ensure that any neighbouring development does not adversely impact upon these operations or, in turn, would be affected by the established use.

Due to the ongoing operational need of the estate and the associated activities the landholding would not be suitable for any public access over and above that currently permitted by the existing public rights of way. The MOD is aware that part of the estate is either directly within or adjacent to Foulness SSSI, Foulness Ramsar and Foulness SPA designated sites and recognise that restricted public access assists with conservation of these areas. The MOD is cognisant of its stewardship obligations in regard to the management of these designated sites and it works closely with Natural England, the Environment Agency, tenant farmers, the RSPB, Foulness Area Bird Survey, and other members of the MOD Shoeburyness Conservation Group to ensure that key habitats and species on the site are monitored, maintained, and where appropriate, enhanced. Accordingly, these areas of the MODs landholdings are being managed for environmental benefit.

The MOD also acknowledges the presence of Churchend Conservation Area and listed buildings within its landholdings and any future developments would be considerate of the significance of these designated heritage assets.

It is noted in the Issue and Options report Southend-on-sea are to engage with both the MOD and Homes England regarding MOD land within Southend. The MOD would wish to be involved with any discussions the Council has with Homes England in this regard.

I hope the above is of assistance and reflects the MODs position at the time of this letter. Should you need any further clarification please do not hesitate to contact me. We would be pleased to be included within any further consultation events at the plan(s) progress.

Regards

Paul Hinton | BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI | Senior Town Planner | Estates |
Defence Infrastructure Organisation