

Pickerings Farm Planning Inquiry

Statement from Cllr Paul Foster, Leader of South Ribble Borough Council

Thank you for allowing me time to speak at the Inquiry today. My name is Cllr Paul Foster and I am the Leader at South Ribble Borough Council and the Labour Group.

I would like to start by telling the Inquiry that South Ribble Borough Council supports growth. As with many other areas we need new homes especially affordable ones. However this is not at any cost. We expect developments to be in the right locations, sustainable and of the highest standard. What you see before this Inquiry does not meet these expectations.

It is fair to say the Pickering's Farm site is one of the biggest issues the Council and local residents are facing with the prospect of over 1,000 homes being developed on the site.

Whilst the site is allocated in the Local Plan it appears increasingly more difficult for it to come forward in a sustainable manner. This is to the extent I would question its deliverability as a site now at all.

The whole approach of the appellants in developing a masterplan for the site has not met the Council's expectations. Whilst there has been engagement with the local residents in the lead up to the first masterplan their requests have not been accommodated within the submitted master plan. For example placing tall housing units immediately adjacent to their properties shows no sensitivity to the character of the site and the impacts on those residents.

The Council has consistently said to the developer it is disappointed that on two occasions now the masterplan has been submitted alongside planning applications. Submitting the masterplan with the applications shows that the developer has no intention of dealing with the issues facing the site and the comments from local residents and the Council. The approach should be sequential and applications not submitted until we have an agreed master plan. It is only right for a site of this significance to have a proper, well thought through and detailed masterplan.

Quite rightly the Planning Committee of the Council originally refused the submitted masterplan for the site to which the Council sent very detailed feedback on the areas of deficiency. Whilst some of these issues have been dealt with others have not and it appears the developers were in a rush to submit the new masterplan alongside the applications as no further consultation was undertaken prior to its submission. It is these applications which are now before this Inquiry.

The Local Plan is clear that the site must deliver on its infrastructure asks. The submitted planning applications pay little regard to this and there is no clarity or certainty on how the infrastructure will come forward. For instance the applicants suggest they are providing the Cross Borough Link Road. They are not. All we have is a long cul-de-sac serving a development of over 1,000 homes. Such an 'estate road' would be required for a development of this size whether there is a requirement for a Cross Borough Link Road or

not. The previously withdrawn planning applications at least included a detailed scheme for the Cross Borough Link Road that genuinely led from one side of the site to the other rather than this fragmented approach. For some reason, however, that approach has not been followed up in the applications before this Inquiry. Indeed their answer to this infrastructure ask is that the Council should do it.

I wholeheartedly support the concerns being expressed by Lancashire County Council regarding impacts on local highways. The Highways Authority are clearly concerned about the modelling used by the applicants and that the consequential impacts would have a significant impact on the local highway. Furthermore we know that the impacts on air quality are inherently linked to traffic generation. There is very little thought in access strategy as to how this large development will integrate with the local community. All we will have is a single cul-de-sac pumping over a 1,000 homes worth of traffic on to an already over congested A582. That is not well planned sustainable development.

Local residents have provided significant information to the Council and this Inquiry regarding on site circumstances. One area I am particularly concerned with is flooding. This part of South Ribble is very flat and therefore flooding is a key issue in the area. Local residents have shown us photos of large scale flooding events on the site. We note that the submitted masterplan has had to show significant areas for holding surface water way beyond anything else we have seen on sites in this area. As a Councillor I have had to deal with serious flooding issues elsewhere in the Borough where all the technical evidence suggested there was no issue and now we have new homes being flooded regularly which has required further mitigation works to resolve. In some instances there is no resolution and these homes still flood.

In conclusion South Ribble supports well planned, high quality sustainable developments. What is before this Inquiry does not meet these standards. I support the decision of the Planning Committee in refusing these applications and the masterplan and would respectfully request that this Inquiry agrees with the Planning Committee and dismisses these appeals.

Thank you for your time.