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Your Ref:
Our Ref: PINS/F2360/429/2
Date: 9 December 2014

Dear Ms Hockenhull

South Ribble Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD Policy C4 – Cuerden Strategic Site

Thank you for forwarding the consultation responses to the further modification to the above policy.

It is clear that there is a level of outstanding objection to the initial proposed modification. Whilst these were not received at the expected stage in the process, they nevertheless require consideration as the examination is still in progress. These objections raise concerns regarding the potential for unrestricted retail use at Cuerden.

I think it fair to say that it was never the Council's intention to create a retail allocation at the site. The modifications were put forward in the first instance with the aim of recognising the potential need for high value uses in order to achieve the funding for substantial infrastructure requirements. This aim is also set out in the draft Masterplan which I have now had the opportunity to view.

I am currently considering whether there is a need to hold a further hearing session in order to fully examine the outstanding objections. However, this would of course result in further delay to the adoption of the Plan. Therefore, before I reach a conclusion on that point, I would ask you to consider whether there is any merit in a further modification to the Plan in order to try to overcome the representors' concerns.

This modification would be along the following lines:

Policy C4 – Cuerden Strategic Employment Site

Planning permission will be granted for development of the Cuerden Strategic Site subject to the submission of:

- a) an agreed Masterplan for the comprehensive development of the site to provide a strategic employment site, to include [delete retail]**

- employment, commercial, industrial and Green Infrastructure uses;**
b) [unchanged wording]
c) [unchanged wording]

Alternative uses, such as retail, leisure and housing may be appropriate where it can be demonstrated that they [delete 'may'] help deliver the strategic employment aspirations for the site. Any proposed main town centre uses must satisfy the sequential and impact tests set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), relevant policies of the Core Strategy and this Local Plan.

This may overcome the concerns expressed by the outstanding representations whilst acknowledging the potential for higher yielding uses to come forward if demonstrated to be necessary. This would also remove any potential for unintended consequences regarding side-stepping the need for sequential and impact tests.

Clearly, if the Council accepted this option, this in itself would require a further 6 week consultation. However, this may be the most pragmatic and timely way in which to resolve the difficulty, as it would be unlikely that a hearing session could be arranged before March 2015 at the earliest.

If the Council agree to this course of action, I would suggest that, in the next week, the Council writes to all parties who have an interest in the site (including the site promoters). They should be invited to comment on the modified policy wording no later than 5 January 2015. Having received these further comments, I would be in a position to determine whether a further hearing session is necessary or whether the Council should proceed to consult upon the above modification.

I would be grateful if you could respond, indicating whether you are happy with the suggested course of action, **by Friday 12 December**. I appreciate that this is a short timescale, but it is important that we are able to reach a conclusion as to the most appropriate way forward as soon as possible, given the Christmas period and my limited availability in January due to other work commitments.

Yours sincerely

Susan Heywood

Senior Housing and Planning Inspector