

**RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

DECISION

meeting date: THURSDAY, 25 AUGUST 2022
title: CONSULTATION ON CUERDALE GARDEN VILLAGE PROPOSAL
submitted by: NICOLA HOPKINS – DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & PLANNING
principal author: COLIN HIRST – HEAD OF REGENERATION AND HOUSING

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To consider the consultation from a Neighbouring Authority on the CUERDALE GARDEN VILLAGE proposal and agree the council's response.
- 1.2 To provide an opportunity to inform members of the key points of the above proposal, highlight potential cross-boundary issues and agree the Council's response in compliance with our general duty to co-operate.
- 1.3 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:
- Community Objectives – To support our key service centres and protect the viability and vitality of our market towns.
 - Corporate Priorities – The Authority has a legal duty to engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis in the context of strategic cross boundary matters.
 - Other Considerations – There is significant local interest in the proposal and is a major development adjacent to the borough boundary which may have implications for the council in relation to the emerging local plan for Ribble Valley

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council has been consulted by South Ribble Borough Council as a neighbouring local planning authority on a major development proposal adjacent to the borough boundary at Samlesbury.
- 2.2 The application (South Ribble application number: 07/2022/00451/OUT) is an outline application with all matters reserved except for access and can be viewed in detail on South Ribble Council's web site using their planning application search and the application number above. Please note that depending upon the available browser the quick links below may not always action in which case it is recommended to use the application search function on the South Ribble web site.
- 2.3 There are a significant number of documents (204) in support of the application however for ease of reference the summary document, which includes illustrative mapping can be viewed via the following link or reference:
- https://publicaccess.southribble.gov.uk/online-applications/files/7A23753AB20CCE68CCCBFD7E310844AC/pdf/07_2022_00451_OUT-SUMMARY_DOCUMENT-277051.pdf
- 2.4 The site comprises some 164 ha of land to the East of Junction 31 of the M6 and includes development adjacent to the borough boundary by the Enterprise Zone and Bae site. The proposal, identified as Cuerdale Garden Village comprises a mixed -

use development of up to 1300 dwellinghouses, up to 164,000 sq. m of employment floorspace and ancillary uses. A park and ride facility (500 cars spaces), outdoor recreational facilities and open space, a local centre, and a two-form entry primary school.

For quick reference the following plan extracts provides an overview of the site location and development context.

Development Parcels

https://publicaccess.southribble.gov.uk/online-applications/files/9B4614461B172779DE884A832F02F342/pdf/07_2022_00451_UT-PARCEL_LOCATION_PLAN-277061.pdf

Illustrative Masterplan

https://publicaccess.southribble.gov.uk/online-applications/files/BFE5E02A2B3131FFE12279CD71C49474/pdf/07_2022_00451_UT-ILLUSTRATIVE_MASTERPLAN-276662.pdf

2.5 The planning statement accompanying the application provides more extensive relevant information and justification by the applicants on the proposal including location and site plans.

2.6 The Planning Statement can be viewed using the link below:

https://publicaccess.southribble.gov.uk/online-applications/files/D932AA5B3D138645DA97520EA83A6144/pdf/07_2022_00451_UT-PLANNING_STATEMENT-278506.pdf

2.7 The scale of development is such that it is an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) development. Details of the assessment are included in the application documents. The aim of the EIA is to ensure that when making a decision the local planning authority can do so having full knowledge of the potential environmental impacts of the project. It has also been identified that the development affects several public rights of way and the setting of numerous listed buildings.

3 DISCUSSION AND RESPONSE

3.1 The proposal has been discussed by the Development Plan working group at its recent meeting held on 10th August where the detail set out in this report was discussed and endorsed. Members are invited to discuss the issues identified below and any wider aspects of the consultation to help inform the preparation of the council's response.

3.2 Responses to neighbouring authority consultations are delegated to Officers and would not normally be considered by members at committee. However, this proposal is significant, has generated substantial local interest and does raise some key planning concerns that warranted the opportunity for detail discussion by the working group especially in relation to implications for the emerging local plan and wider consideration by Committee.

3.3 It is important to bear in mind that the council must consider its response in relation to relevant and sustainable planning considerations where observations or any formal objection is to be submitted.

4 KEY ISSUES

4.1 The proposal raises several important planning considerations.

4.2 A PLAN LED SYSTEM

4.2.1 A fundamental principle of the planning system is that it should be plan led. This principle is at the heart of planning legislation and the national planning policy framework.

4.2.2 As can be seen from the application the scheme is a substantial proposal that would alter the Green Belt and introduce a large amount of development outside the adopted local plan. Such major development should be considered as part of the plan making process to ensure that development decisions can be fully tested in their widest context and that the planning system remains a plan led system as clearly established by legislation and government policy.

4.2.3 The planning system does allow for developments to be considered by way of a planning application but for such significant development the most appropriate route is to consider the scheme through the local plan process.

4.3 GREEN BELT

4.3.1 The site is located wholly within designated green belt which forms part of the strategic Lancashire green belt designation. Members will be familiar with the significance of national and local planning policy that seeks to provide strong, long-term protection to designated green belt and development that is not in accord with policy must be justified based on overriding, justified, very special circumstances.

4.3.2 Development that is not justified risks damage to the integrity of the green belt in the area and precedents in relation to adjoining land comprising Ribble Valleys designated green belt. In essence this is an important planning principle that is being tested here. Members will note from the planning statement (page iv, that the applicant has sought to address the very special circumstances test as part of the application primarily focusing on the need for the development to help address development imperatives in Central Lancashire, and that this site by virtue of its location is best placed to meet them, bearing in mind the links with development aspirations at the Enterprise Zone.

4.3.3 South Ribble can identify a 5-year supply and has addressed its own needs in its local plan. Whilst the proposal is promoted to address wider Central Lancashire needs it does not adequately justify the special circumstances for releasing greenbelt when other locations across Central Lancashire could be capable of meeting those needs. The premise relies on the locational aspects, that is, it would be next to the M6 and the Enterprise Zone which lead to the help address the test of very special circumstances. It is not considered that the application adequately demonstrates the necessary special circumstances to warrant the release of significant designated Green Belt which would be contrary to National Policy and Guidance and would not be in accord with the local plan.

4.3.4 In terms of submitting a response it is suggested that this should be raised at this stage as a point of objection. The Council needs to be satisfied that very special circumstances have been demonstrated and release of green belt is

justified to support this substantive change to Green Belt. The harm is to the long-term stability and integrity of strategic greenbelt which is significant this location.

- 4.3.5 To date there has been some, but limited dialogue with South Ribble Council, and officers have met with the applicants to discuss the scheme further following submission of the application. We will continue dialogue with South Ribble under our ongoing Duty to cooperate commitments as part of the local plan process and this may assist in resolving the green belt concerns. However, at present to protect the councils interests it is considered appropriate to raise these concerns as a formal objection to the application.

4.4 HIGHWAYS

- 4.4.1 Junction 31 of the M6 and the A59 forms a key part of the strategic highway network serving Ribble Valley. This was an important consideration when the proposals to expand the Bae site and the establishment of the Enterprise Zone was implemented. Substantive highway improvements were made to satisfy concerns regarding congestion on the strategic network. The proposed garden village is expected to have implications for these routes.

- 4.4.2 As part of the strategic network that facilitates movement into and out of Ribble Valley the council needs to be satisfied that there will be no adverse impacts upon the network because of the development. Whilst this is largely within the remit of National Highways and Lancashire County Council, Ribble Valleys interests lie on the impact of additional congestion (where it is not mitigated) on future investment decisions with any risk to consequential effects on the local economy.

- 4.4.3 It should be noted that further work has been requested by National Highways to ensure the full highway impacts are understood and we will need to await the outcome of this work to understand the full position. National Highways have issued a direction to South Ribble Borough Council that to enable that work to be completed South Ribble must not determine the planning application before 8th December 2022.

- 4.4.4 Ribble Valley will need to monitor the publication of the additional work and will maintain a dialogue with Lancashire County Council. At this stage the council should raise highway impacts as a concern on the basis that additional information is required. Once received a view can be taken on the Ribble Valley position.

4.5 ECONOMIC

- 4.5.1 The Cuerdale Garden Village scheme is 164 ha compared to 50 ha at the strategic site allocated at Standen which provides a helpful comparison. Provision is also included in the Standen proposal for a new school, local facilities, and open space similar to the garden village scheme. The Garden Village proposal includes many houses (1300) as a context this is 250 more than is planned at the Standen Strategic site at Clitheroe. Growth associated with the Garden Village may increase development pressures on nearby parts of Ribble Valley, but this would be an issue to be addressed in the development of our new local plan. Overall, it may have some impact on housing delivery in Ribble Valley but given the nature of the area is considered unlikely to lead to a significant reduction in delivery or overall housing growth in the valley.

- 4.5.2 The extract below from the Ribble Valley employment land study commissioned for our local plan review identifies that in relation to South Ribble:
- The current draft Central Lancashire Employment Land Study Update identifies a need of 77.66 ha up to 2038 in South Ribble.
 - The Council (*South Ribble*) is satisfied that the Borough can currently meet its own needs.
 - The Council holds regular meetings with RVBC in relation to the Lancashire Enterprise Zone at Samlesbury and the two have a good working relationship.
 - *Key future employment developments/sites include:*
 - (a) Permitted development application 07/2020/00600 for a warehouse building within the Samlesbury Enterprise Zone. This appears to be complete and operational.
 - (b) Farrington Hall Estate in Leyland - Outline planning permission was granted in May 2021 for a large-scale employment development on land to the west of Lancashire Business Park, off Centurion Way in Leyland. As part of the scheme, permission was granted for up to 56,904 sqm of light industrial (E(g) Use), general industrial (B2 Use), storage and distribution (B8 Use) and ancillary office (E(g) Use). A reserved matters application for this site, for 51,793.4 sqm, is currently under consideration.
 - (c) Cuerden Strategic Site (65 ha) – Lancashire County Council are exploring options for this site.
- 4.5.3 The Garden Village scheme proposes 164,000sq m of employment floorspace which would be in addition to the above identified supply.
- 4.5.4 In employment land terms for comparison, The Standen site includes 2 ha of employment land which would typically generate around (80,000) sq meters of floorspace. Whilst our designated strategic site at Barrow offers some 7.74 ha and represents approximately 70% of available employment land in the borough. This site has continued to be challenging in securing its development. There is a concern that additional land release as proposed by the Cuerdale Garden scheme could have consequences on the delivery of the strategic site at Barrow depending on the time frame in which the garden village site came forward.
- 4.5.5 Whilst competition is not in itself a reason for valid objection it remains a consideration for the council where there is a risk of oversupply re-directing and potential risking planned investment. The scale is significant and is really a matter that should be addressed through the local plan.
- 4.5.6 This raises a wider concern about the potential to draw investment away from Ribble Valley, however this must be balanced with the fact that if developed it would need to be recognised that it would also present opportunities for employment locations that would be accessible to our residents and also opportunities for economic growth by way of developing supply chains although this is clearly difficult to quantify.

4.5.7 From an economic perspective there are clearly some considerations both benefits and risks. Evidence from the Ribble Valley Employment land study identifies that South Ribble can demonstrate significant provisions for employment land, and this proposal to release a substantial amount of additional land sits uncomfortably with that position. In those circumstances it does not in our view support a needs case such as to justify “very special circumstances” to release Green Belt. In economic terms it also risks introducing a significant oversupply which may have an impact upon the delivery of existing planned developments contrary to the proper planning of the area through a genuine plan led system. At this stage these are observations that should be drawn to the attention of South Ribble.

4.6 OTHER ISSUES

4.6.1 Discussion at the working group also highlighted concerns about wider environmental impacts given the scale of development including the amount of agricultural land that was affected which was viewed as an important consideration and the underlying loss of open countryside including concerns around the impact upon habitats and biodiversity.

4.6.2 It was also highlighted that concerns had been raised by the Environment Agency in relation to impacts upon ground water resources and that the agency has objected to the application. Further work would be required to demonstrate that the development will not have an adverse impact upon the water resources in the area and the underlying aquifer.

5 SUMMARY

5.1 In summary the proposal raises several concerns, and it is suggested that a holding response is submitted to South Ribble Borough Council to protect this council's interests.

5.2 At this stage it is considered appropriate to object to the proposal in relation to the impact upon the designated Green Belt and that in our view the application has not adequately demonstrated that it has met the test of Very Special Circumstances.

5.3 The response should include observations on the economic impacts and that the council supports the National Highways approach of seeking further highway evidence to be satisfied that there will be no adverse impacts upon the strategic network in relation to Ribble Valley. The Environment Agency objection and its reasons should also be highlighted as a concern given that there is further evidence required to ensure that water resources are protected.

5.4 Officers will continue to develop dialogue with South Ribble Borough Council to ensure the opportunity to fully explore outstanding issues and to address relevant local planning matters.

6.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

6.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- Resources – There is provision within existing resources to work with neighbouring authorities in preparing and responding to emerging Local Plans and consultations.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – Neighbouring authorities have a legal duty to cooperate on any strategic matters

- Political – There is significant interest in any potential development pressures upon existing key service centres, villages, and infrastructure within the Borough. This proposal has generated significant local interest.
- Reputation – Potential additional development pressure may have an impact on issues of significance in the adjoining parts of Ribble Valley and its local community
- Equality & Diversity – No issues identified

7.0 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

- 7.1 Endorse the conclusions set out in summary at section 5 of this report and that officers are instructed to submit a holding objection in response to the consultation reflecting the matters discussed in this report concerning Green Belt and Highway concerns and advising South Ribble Council of the wider concerns held by this Council.
- 7.2 That officers are asked to continue discussions in relating to the wider concerns identified and to keep the Committee informed of progress as any further work that may help resolve those concerns is undertaken by the applicants.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

South Ribble Borough Council Planning application 07/2022/00451/OUT

For further information please ask for Colin Hirst, extension 4503.