

South Ribble Local Development Framework Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document Public Examination

Matter Two

Major Sites Allocation: Cuerden

Statement of Lancashire County Council

1.0 Lancashire County Council's Role & Position

- 1.1 This Statement has been prepared to confirm the County Council's position in relation to the Cuerden Strategic Site and answer the Inspector's questions to inform discussion at the Examination Hearing.
- 1.2 The County Council is the majority landowner of the Cuerden site having acquired 44 hectares of land from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) in January 2012.
- 1.3 The strategic objective of this acquisition is to bring forward infrastructure, development and jobs commensurate with the longstanding policy support for major private investment in accordance Policy EMP2 of the South Ribble Local Plan (adopted February 2000), the adopted Central Lancashire Core Strategy (adopted July 2012), where it is identified as a Strategic Site (see paragraphs 5.33-5.34), and by the former Northwest Regional Development Agency.
- 1.4 The proposed site is also fully aligned with the objectives and actions identified in the County Council's agreed Economic Development Framework, and the agreed priorities of the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (LEP).
- 1.5 On 19th February, the Preston City Deal was recognised by Government as one of 20 City Deals in England. The Preston City Deal, which is infrastructure led, includes Cuerden, and will seek to deliver over 20,000 new jobs over the coming years. Detailed negotiations are now underway with Government to finalise the detail of the Preston City Deal by Summer 2013.
- 1.6 When combined with the Enterprise Zone and other key Lancashire development sites, the Cuerden site will help to create a development offer of strategic importance for new occupiers as well as major indigenous companies seeking to expand and grow in Lancashire. Within this context the Cuerden site has the potential to be a regionally significant employment and economic regeneration hub for Lancashire.

- 1.7 The County Council is committed to achieving these objectives through its land ownership and working in partnership with South Ribble Borough Council. This provides the basis for a deliverable site.
- 1.8 Further background on the Cuerden Site and our acquisition is provided in the supporting statement prepared by our strategic property advisors, Jones Lang LaSalle provided as appendix 1.

2.0 Policy Approach

- 2.1 The County Council supports the Statement of South Ribble Borough Council with regard to the conformity of the policy approach with the Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West of England (September 2008), the Adopted Central Lancashire Core Strategy (July 2012) and the NPPF (March 2012).
- 2.2 The County Council supports the recognition in the DPD of the importance of securing the delivery of the strategic site at Cuerden. Recognition of the strategic site as being capable of stimulating economic growth in Central Lancashire and the wider Lancashire sub region is also supported.
- 2.3 The County Council also supports the wording in C4 that “Alternative uses may be appropriate where it can be demonstrated that they may help deliver the strategic employment aspirations for this site.”
- 2.4 The County Council maintains the view expressed in its response to the consultation that the policy wording should refer to the development being “integrated” rather than “comprehensive”. This does not reflect a different view to the Borough Council about what will be delivered on the site but reflects the need to ensure that the development is deliverable on a phased basis.
- 2.5 The County Council also maintains the view expressed in its response to the consultation that the supporting text to the policy in paragraph 6.31 should refer to “enabling uses” as well as ancillary. Again, this does not reflect a different view to the Borough Council about what will be delivered on the site, but reflects the need to ensure that the development is viable and deliverable.

3.0 Are the requirements for a masterplan clearly set out; is it apparent who is to develop the masterplan and what process this should follow?

- 3.1 The requirements for a Master Plan are clearly set out in Policy C4 based on the criteria set in parts a) – c) and the supporting paragraphs.

- 3.2 Lancashire County Council is committed to the production of a Master Plan for the entire Cuerden site in accordance with Policy C4.
- 3.3 The County Council will produce the Master Plan in consultation with South Ribble Borough Council and other stakeholders and consultees as necessary.
- 3.4 To this end, the County Council is working on the elements required for the Master Plan. This will be brought forward by the County Council for public consultation as part of the pre-application planning process. A programme for this will be agreed in advance with South Ribble Borough Council.

4.0 Is a masterplan necessary?

- 4.1 Lancashire County Council considers that a Master Plan is necessary as it will provide a clear framework for the phasing of the site and to achieve an integrated development which meets the requirements of South Ribble Borough Council.
- 4.2 The Master Plan is a key component of the planning process as it will demonstrate how the scheme can be delivered taking account of the ownership position, existing site conditions, opportunities and constraints. The Master Plan will include a phasing and infrastructure delivery schedule and design code. This will result in an integrated and acceptable scheme which can deliver the longstanding policy objectives.

5.0 Are the infrastructure requirements sufficiently clear and is it clear how they will be met, when and by whom

- 5.1 Cuerden is a 65-hectare greenfield site and will require significant infrastructure to bring forward development (an aerial photograph is attached at appendix 3).
- 5.2 Aecom, Lancashire County Council's retained infrastructure consultants with regard to the Cuerden site, have assessed its infrastructure requirements. A statement from Aecom is provided in appendix 2.
- 5.3 The infrastructure will comprise highways, access and circulation routes (pedestrian, cycle, public transport and vehicular), major services and drainage and green infrastructure. This will be identified and formulated as part of the Master Plan process to include how infrastructure will be delivered and in accordance with the agreed phasing provisions.

- 5.4 The County Council is currently consulting on the Central Lancashire Highways and Transport Master Plan (until the 25th February 2013), within which Cuerden is positioned. The Master Plan presents an evidence base for where future transport investment in Central Lancashire should be made. It links economic development and spatial planning priorities to the wider policy objectives of the County Council.
- 5.5 Included within the Central Lancashire Highways and Transport Master Plan are proposals for the A582 South Ribble Western Distributor, providing a dual carriageway link to the M6 from the A59 past Cuerden. This would provide opportunities for bus corridor improvements linked with the site.
- 5.6 The Cuerden Site will be served from the roundabout close to the M65 terminus. The existing roundabout will be signalised. This access is expected to be of two lanes in each direction on its length forming part of the internal road network. Other future access opportunities also exist with respect to the A49 Wigan Road and from Farington Road via a new road junction with Stanifield Lane, which links to the Central Lancashire Highways and Transport Master Plan. This opportunity could support the longer term changes from the Central Lancashire Highways and Transport Master Plan and that of this site.
- 5.7 In addition, there is also an opportunity for enhancing access to the Cuerden Site via alternative means including a number of pedestrian and cycle access points from all key corridors being Lostock Lane, Stanifield Lane and Wigan Road. The site will therefore be accessible in the short term and long term for all modes. This will also be demonstrated via the Master Plan process.
- 5.8 Delivery of changes to provide access to the highway network and mitigate against its impacts will be through development and, where appropriate delivered by the developer via conditions and Section 106 Obligations and through the Highways Act such as a Section 278 agreement. In doing this the site will be making suitable contributions to the delivery of the Central Lancashire Highways and Transport Master Plan. In addition, as the site directly links to economic development and is a spatial planning priority linking into the wider policy objectives of the county council, other part funding sources may be available to initiate activity and the provision of infrastructure.
- 6.0 How will regard be had to biodiversity in the site's development?**
- 6.1 Biodiversity and green infrastructure provision will be a key component of the Masterplan.

- 6.2 Comprehensive ecological assessments have been undertaken during 2012. These found that the overall ecological value of the site is low and that development of the site will be possible whilst retaining and enhancing much of the site's biodiversity and habitat.
- 6.3 In summary, the development of the site would not affect any statutory or non statutory designated sites. Key species including great crested newts, badgers, otters, water vole and roosting bats are absent from the site.
- 6.4 The findings and recommendations of the assessments will inform the developing Master Plan for the site and will be used in considering individual planning applications and planning conditions. In accordance with the requirements of the NPPF, the master planning process and consideration of planning applications will seek to:
- avoid or minimise impacts on biodiversity in line with advice from Natural England and the Environment Agency and in line with statutory requirements and regulations
 - compensate for any unavoidable impacts including the creation of appropriate replacement habitat
 - deliver net biodiversity gains
 - maintain and enhance habitat connectivity
- 6.5 The developing Master Plan will seek to avoid the loss or fragmentation of habitat. Where such impacts are shown to be unavoidable, compensation will be provided in the form of replacement habitat on and off site. Land owned by the County Council in the immediate vicinity is to be made available if necessary for the purposes of creating replacement habitat. It is intended that the development of the site will deliver overall biodiversity gains.

7.0 Is the Site Justified with Regards to Alternatives?

- 7.1 The County Council supports the statement of South Ribble Borough Council with regard to the consideration of alternatives. The principle of the development of the Cuerden strategic site is long established in statutory and non-statutory policy as set out in paragraph 1.3 above.
- 7.3 Due to its position in the Borough and proximity to the strategic road network, the site has unique strategic importance and is a significant element of the economic planning strategy for South Ribble and the wider sub-region. Based on the County Council's recent acquisition of the site and the majority of it being in our control, this offers the best possible chance for delivery.

8.0 Conclusion

- 8.1 The identification of this site meets all the tests of soundness as evidenced above. It is the opinion of the County Council that the proposed allocation and Policy C4 are sound.



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18 February 2013

Dear Sirs

Commercially Confidential - Cuerden Strategic Regional Investment Site

We refer to the Lancashire County Council's instructions to provide a letter of support in connection with the County Council's submission to the Examination in Public of the South Ribble Core Strategy as this relates to Matter 2 - Major Sites.

Accordingly we set out our supporting statement:

1. Background and Site Description

- 1.1 The Cuerden Strategic Site is situated as a key gateway location within Central Lancashire between Leyland and the City of Preston, immediately adjacent to the intersection of the M6 and M65 motorways. From the north and south the site is accessed via junction 29 of the M6 and M65 (which directly serves the site). The site is approached via Lostock Lane A582 and the A6, Stanifield Lane A5083 runs along the west of the site and Wigan Road A49 to the east
- 1.2 The site has been prioritised for many years by the relevant authorities as a sustainable and strategically significant site, capable of stimulating economic growth in Central Lancashire and the wider Lancashire sub region with the potential of attracting significant inward investment.
- 1.3 The Cuerden Strategic Site covers an area of 65 hectares (of which Lancashire County Council owns circa 44 hectares), which is to be developed with the necessary infrastructure requirements for high quality employment uses including commercial, industrial, retail and leisure uses.
- 1.4 This was reflected in its allocation as a "Major Investment Site" in the South Ribble Local Plan (2000) and identification by the Northwest Regional Development Agency as a site of regional significance.



- 1.5 The majority of the site is in public ownership that transferred in 2012 from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) ownership to the Lancashire County Council. It is the intention of the County Council and South Ribble Borough Council to accelerate the integrated development of this site. The key focus is to bring forward new employment investment and opportunities to the local area and wider sub region.
- 1.6 The majority of the site is currently un-serviced/agricultural land bordered by existing farmland and highways infrastructure. This location and setting has the potential to attract high profile new businesses and to deliver a high quality environment and landscape.
- 1.7 Whilst the allocation will have an employment focus, there may be an opportunity for the provision of high value employment generating uses to enable and .support the comprehensive provision of infrastructure and strategic employment opportunities and help create a more dynamic, vibrant and sustainable place employment and business location.

2. Acquisition by Lancashire County Council

- 2.1 Lancashire County Council secured the transfer of the majority of the Cuerden site from the Homes & Communities Agency in early 2012 (previously within the ownership of English Partnerships who had led upon the promotion of the site as a major investment site for high quality employment uses).
- 2.2 The County Council, in conjunction with South Ribble Borough Council, wish to accelerate a planned, phased development of the site in order that new employment investment and opportunities to the local area and wider sub region can be secured as soon as practicable.
- 2.3 Jones Lang LaSalle (JLL) were appointed by Lancashire County Council as Commercial Development and Occupier Market Advisor in mid 2012 to support the County Council in facilitating implementation of development on the site with the primary objective of creating high quality jobs.

3. The Opportunity

- 3.1 As stated above the Cuerden Strategic Site has the potential to attract high profile new businesses within a high quality environment and landscaped setting.
- 3.2 There are a very limited number of sites of the scale of the Cuerden site within the North West region that benefit from the excellent locational advantages and accessibility characteristics that the subject site has, situated at a key gateway location within Central Lancashire between Leyland and the City of Preston, and being adjacent to the intersection of the M6 and M65 motorways. From the north and south the site is accessed via junction 29 of the M6 and M65 (which directly serves the site). This locational advantage makes the site attractive to a wide range of potential end uses.



- 3.3 The availability of large strategic development sites within the North West is reducing, as a number of similarly located and sized sites have now secured occupier interest and development, is underway or completed. These include Omega North at Warrington, Cuteacre Bolton, Kingsway Rochdale and Buckshaw Village Chorley.
- 3.4 The Cuerden site offers the market a significant development opportunity to deliver high quality employment and alternative uses which will provide substantial employment and investment in line with the longstanding policy objective for the site.
- 4. Deliverability**
- 4.1 The wider circumstances affecting the national economy and its impact upon public sector resources, limit the opportunities in the current market for the public sector to be interventionist in pump priming development through up front as was the case back in the mid 1990's through to 2007/8. As such there is a need to look at alternative mechanisms and opportunities to bring forward the servicing and infrastructure needs of a site such as Cuerden, to ensure that it able to compete in the market to attract high quality employment for the local area and sub region.
- 4.2 The principle of phasing development to meet identified market demand, which could facilitate investment by the private sector in infrastructure and services and release value to enable delivery of future phases of development, is an established way of bringing sites forward for development. This would achieve both economic and employment returns. Such an approach is consistent with Government economic policy with development and economic growth being driven by the private sector.
- 4.3 Despite the current economic climate, current market demand exists for such higher level uses in the site. This interest is confirmed to be in land owned by the County Council and in land accessible from the strategic road network through County Council land.

Please do not hesitate to contact the writer should you have any queries.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Prescott'.

Chris Prescott
Lead Director - Head of Liverpool Office

APPENDIX 2

CUERDEN STRATEGIC SITE; AECOM WRITTEN STATEMENT

This statement concerns the Infrastructure aspects of the site development as envisaged at February 2013 and relates to previous work undertaken by AECOM in their capacity as Cost Consultancy advisors to Lancashire County Council.

Overview of the site and its current infrastructure assets

The SRIS is large in size and currently substantially in agricultural use and un-serviced; its primary access is identified as a well defined main highway. To facilitate the development of the site across a range of end-uses a substantial infrastructure programme will be required to be undertaken.

Description of infrastructure required to enable the site to become a realistic development proposition, in keeping with its status as a strategic site

The infrastructure requirements of a site of this significance could be characterised in three ways. Firstly, it needs to be of the requisite quality to reflect the nature of the importance of the site and to attract appropriate end-users. Secondly, it must be flexible to accommodate the evolving demand from specific end-users. And, thirdly, it must be implemented ahead of known plot developments to signal the site as an attractive location for end-users who have choices of location.

Based upon our experience of other locations in the North West we would envisage the infrastructure requirements of this site to be substantial, perhaps in the order of circa £10m to cater for on and off site requirements.

An assessment as to the deliverability of infrastructure required for the Site

With the likelihood of multiple occupations across the site a phased approach will be required for the site. Moreover a development strategy that envisages the delivery of the completed infrastructure plan for the site at the outset would inhibit the successful and economic delivery of infrastructure to meet emerging occupier needs. The scope and phased approach to the delivery of the infrastructure works will evolve as specific end-users are secured. The knowledge of the phased approach will therefore inform the definition, timing of construction and value for money in the procurement of infrastructure works.

