Examining in Public – Core Strategy and Accrington AAP.

Hyndburn Borough Council


Welcome and Introductions

First of all I would like to welcome everyone to Accrington and the Examination in Public of the Core Strategy and next week the Accrington Area Action Plan. Today is the start of an important two weeks, during which the soundness of these documents will be tested. I will introduce you to the team that will be here over the next fortnight:

- Simon Prideaux
- Joanne Macholc
- Farooq Rafiq, and
- Ursula Reilly who will be taking notes.

- Cllr Bernard Dawson, Chair of Planning Committee, is also here this morning to welcome everyone.
- Cllr Miles Parkinson, Leader of the Council
- Cllr Harry Grayson, local councillor in Rishton

It is important that Hyndburn has a sound set of planning policies in place that can be used to guide development to the right locations and ensure that we achieve consistently high standards of development across the Borough. The Core Strategy takes a positive approach to new development, recognising the need to widen the choice of housing available and provide sufficient land for new employment development. However, it also recognises the need to protect and enhance the heritage and environment of the Borough and address cross-cutting issues like health and education where planning can play a role.

Although the Core Strategy has been prepared in the context of national, regional and sub-regional policy context, it is primarily about Hyndburn and presents a policy framework that will seek to address the issues faced by Hyndburn. There is a strong relationship between the Core Strategy and the Sustainable Community Strategy for Hyndburn. The Council believe the Core Strategy to be sound and supported by evidence.

Although many parts of the Borough will witness incremental change over the period of the Core Strategy, the Council recognised that Huncoat was an area where more fundamental change was likely to take place. Planning is about people and the Council were keen to engage with local residents and developers with a view to developing a strategy for Huncoat that the majority of local residents supported which was consistent with higher tier policy. Further, more detailed consultation was undertaken in Huncoat and the planning team at Hyndburn worked with local
residents to ensure that the housing and employment needs of the Borough could be met in a way that was broadly supported by local residents and developers.

The Council believe that the development needs of Great Harwood and Rishton can be met within the existing urban boundary, without the need to change the boundary of the Green Belt. The Core Strategy does propose a number of changes to the Green Belt elsewhere. Most of the land that is proposed to be removed from the Green Belt is land that has previously been developed; however, some land is also required to meet the needs of a particular business in Altham.

The Core Strategy recognises the importance of the role played by town centres. Accrington is the administrative centre of Hyndburn and the importance attached by the Council in developing and maintaining a healthy town centre is demonstrated by the Area Action Plan that has been prepared for the town centre.

The Area Action Plan proposes a more detailed set of policies and allocations for the town centre that will assist in its continued regeneration. Although much work has already been done, there is much that remains to be done and the AAP sets out how this will be achieved. The AAP, and the masterplan which went before it, have been subject to extensive consultation and I am pleased to say that the majority of the issues raised have now been addressed. The team has worked hard over the past two months to reach agreement with the Environment Agency on issues associated with flooding that had not been addressed in the level of detail required.

Over the next two weeks the team will be aiming to provide the Inspector with the information that he needs to form a view on the soundness of these two documents.

The Core Strategy is only part of the local development framework. The Council has already started work on a draft Development Management DPD and work has already commenced on a series of site allocations DPD’s that will be in the format of neighbourhood plans. The footprint of these will reflect the spatial components that have been identified by the Core Strategy and the administrative arrangements that exist in the townships. These will be developed in consultation with the communities in those areas over the next 12 months.

I will end by thanking everyone that has come today and who has participated in the process. Over the past few weeks the Council has engaged with a number of organisations with a view to addressing some of the outstanding issues. Without exception, a positive and co-operative approach has been taken that has helped to clarify the matters and issues being discussed. I would particularly like to thank the Inspector for the useful advice and suggestions that he has provided and the Environment Agency for the way in which they have guided the team and enabled the Council to address the issues associated with flooding in the town centre.