

Response of Councillor Peter Fielding to the consultation on the applications relating to site MU1 (2021/1089 and 2021/1090)

The sheer size and number of application documents

It is clear that this is a very complex development and consequently a huge number of documents and plans have been published as part of the consultation process. It is almost impossible for anyone to read and comprehend all of these documents in the short time allowed for consultation so I doubt that the comments received fairly reflect the scale of the true concerns of residents.

In the recent residents survey by Cllr Wray and myself about the pre-planning consultation by the developer, 77% of respondents said they did not feel well enough informed to make meaningful comments, partly due to the difficulty in downloading information on the Barnsley West web site. I believe Cllr Wray has included this survey document with his comments on this consultation.

I think more could and should have been done by the developer to ensure that residents had a full understanding of the development proposals to enable fully informed comments to be made.

Environmental Damage

The developer makes the claim that this development is capable of delivering environmental benefits for Barnsley.....

They then explain how trees will be removed from the site with the exception of two wooded areas and that all hedgerows will be removed although some of the species rich hedgerows will later be moved elsewhere on the site.

All wildlife will be driven from the site during the earthworks and it is hoped that it will be encouraged back by the creation of greenspaces and wildlife corridors.

The ES says that there will be significant adverse effects on the landscape during construction and operation, at years 1 and 15.

There can be no credence to the developers claims of environmental benefit when they also admit to such widespread environmental damage.

It is hard to see how the planned areas of strategic landscaping will compensate for the loss of 140 acres of established green space.

I would like to see more convincing evidence of any environmental benefit from this development.

Residential Amenity

It is a concern that the earthworks alone for this development will last for 8 years and according to the developers own statement there will be adverse effects on visual and landscape amenity on community receptor groups in Higham, Gawber and Pogmoor for 15 years.

I want to see how these adverse effects can be better avoided for existing residents.

Buffer Zones

The buffer zones between this development and existing houses are disappointingly small for the residents I have spoken to and smaller than they were led to expect during the Masterplan consultation.

I would like to see these increased to provide a meaningful separation distance. I believe this can be achieved by realigning some of the green corridors into these buffer zones and by reducing the housing figure from the applied for 1760 to the local plan figure of 1700.

The relative height of neighbouring buildings is critical to protecting the amenity of existing homes. There should be no new homes higher than the neighbouring existing homes and the height of the employment units should as far as possible render them invisible from neighbouring homes. This will be difficult for homes on Harden Close where the neighbouring employment land is already elevated but considerate landscaping could minimise its impact.

Dust

The likelihood of dust emissions affecting residents, particularly during the earthworks is a cause for concern especially given the nature of the material being moved around. As this is a former opencast site, the presence of coal dust in the material is inevitable and it would be unacceptable to expose residents to the inhalation of coal dust for 8 years or more. A practicable strategy for preventing dust emissions is needed and not just a theoretical approach to minimising emissions.

Noise

Residents are only too aware that the Masterplan promises to provide noise mitigation at any new junction to existing highways did not materialise at the southern roundabout and so want to see clear evidence of effective mitigation for both construction and operational noise.

Any acoustic barriers provided need to be of the highest practicable standard and not compromised for other operational reasons as they were recently at Penny Pie Park.

I would want to see some guarantees about the adherence to the CEMP given the frequent breaching of the similar agreement at Penny Pie Park where night time working in front of residential homes has been a frequent occurrence of late.

AQMA

The southern edge of the development site is in an Air Quality Management Area and I am not convinced that enough consideration has been given to avoiding a worsening of air quality

within this AQMA. I would like to see a clear explanation as to how air quality will not be adversely affected in the AQMA and the methods used to achieve that.

Link Road

It is very disappointing to see that this proposal is only to develop the northern portion of the link road during phase 1. This means that the link road will not be completed for at least 8 years, consequently increasing construction and early operating traffic on existing highways such as Higham Common Road.

This is not acceptable and a way must be found to bring forward the completion of the link road as early as possible within phase 1.

Flood Risk

There is a good deal of narrative about the mitigation of flood risk and there seems little doubt that the development site itself will be well protected from the increased flood risk due to climate change. However, there is little real assurance that the increased run off from this development will not create any increased risk of downstream flooding.

Most developments base their attenuation volumes on a 1 in 100 year flood risk plus 30% for climate change. What is not clear is what would happen downstream if this volume was found to be insufficient due to an even higher level of rainfall occurring than had been calculated for. This must be set out clearly along with the safeguards for such an event.

Climate change

It is difficult to see anything about this proposal that is in line with the Councils Zero45 ambitions.

The ES demonstrates that the construction alone will be responsible for over 100,000 tonnes of CO2. The 1760 houses are intended to be built with the minimum permitted insulation standards (compliance with building regulations). Trees are to be felled and hedgerows destroyed. Traffic is predicted to increase. Attracting logistics companies into the employment units will generate many more vehicular journeys. Every building in the development is proposed to be connected to a mains gas supply.

The worst aspect of this development in relation to climate change however is the stated potential to take advantage of opportunistic coal extraction during the earthworks phase for what can only be financial rewards. This is completely untenable with the Councils climate change policy.

I would like to see this development making a substantial contribution to zero45, not hindering that ambition.

Miscellaneous Issues

1. The community was led to believe that the intention on MU1 was to attract high quality jobs and employment opportunities. The developer could not be clearer in this application that they expect to predominantly attract storage and distribution to this

employment zone. Smaller employment units would surely stand more chance of attracting the higher quality, higher tech, green jobs that we need.

2. I am concerned that the overall development will require a high level of maintenance of its public green space and that this significant and unregulated financial burden will fall on unsuspecting purchasers over the life of the development. It also needs to be made clear where the financial burden for the maintenance of the SUDS system will fall going forward. I would like to see the Council applying any controls it can during this planning process to protect future occupiers.
3. The developer states that the closure and alterations to Hermit Lane was made clear during the Masterplan process and in the application for the Southern Roundabout. I don't recall that this was the case so residents have not had a fair opportunity to comment on this significant proposal.
4. There is persistent reference by the developer to complying with the 'wider principles of the Masterplan Framework'. Where are these principles set out? I believe that most residents would expect adherence to the detailed proposals set out in the Masterplan Framework. This should be clarified.
5. I welcome the reference to setting up a local liaison group but no detail is given as to the composition of this group save to limit the wider public access to it. If it is properly constituted to represent the community and give the community a meaningful voice, then I could support this proposal.
6. The developer makes it clear that later phases of the residential development will come forward as the market allows. With current economic forecasts of higher interest rates, the housing market could be significantly slowed down, making it possible that not all of the proposed residential development will come forward. If all the earthworks and platform building have been carried out, along with removal of trees and hedgerows what will be required of the developer to leave the site in an acceptable condition if some areas are not developed as proposed.
7. Is the greenspace on the site to be 30% of residential area OR 30% of development area? Both figures are quoted in the developers documents.
8. The changes to PROWS and their inevitable temporary closure is a concern if the duration of the earthworks is for 8 years. Some protections for local residents must be put in place to retain equivalent access to countryside during this process.

Cllr Peter Fielding

29/10/2021