

Report to the Leader of the County Council
Report submitted by: Director of Economic Development
Date: 21 October 2014

Part I

Electoral Divisions affected:
All in South Ribble

Draft Cuerden Masterplan for Consultation
(Appendix 'A' refers)

Contact for further information:
Martin Kelly, 01772 536197, Office of the Chief Executive
martin.kelly@lancashire.gov.uk

Executive Summary

The Strategic Regional Investment Site at Cuerden has long been recognised as being capable of stimulating economic growth in Central Lancashire and the wider Lancashire sub region.

The Cuerden site comprises 65 hectares and has the potential to deliver circa 2 million square feet of commercial floor space and more than 2,500 jobs.

The County Council is landowner for 44 hectares of the site, and has been examining the potential for it to influence and accelerate the delivery of the strategic employment aspirations at this location .

South Ribble Borough Council (SRBC), as the Local Planning Authority (LPA) for the site, has planning policy in place for the site. This policy dictates that a Masterplan for the entire site needs to be approved by the LPA prior to any planning applications being considered.

As the majority landowner at Cuerden the County Council recognises that it is well placed to take a leading role in the preparation of a draft Masterplan for Consultation. A draft Masterplan for Consultation has now been prepared, with the support of an external professional consultant team.

Subject to approval, the Draft Cuerden Masterplan for Consultation will be submitted to SRBC for consideration by its Planning Committee in November 2014. The Masterplan will then be subject to 6 weeks of formal consultation with the Final Cuerden Masterplan for Adoption expected to be considered by SRBC at a Planning Committee in February 2015.

Recommendation

The Leader of the County Council is requested to:

- i. approve the submission of a Draft Cuerden Masterplan for Consultation to SRBC, and
- ii. authorise the Chief Executive and Director of Economic Development, in consultation with the Leader of the County Council, to finalise the Draft Cuerden Masterplan for Consultation to SRBC.

Background and Advice

1. Background

- 1.1. The County Council completed the purchase of 44 hectares of land at Cuerden, South Ribble, in 2012. The total Cuerden site is 66 hectares.
- 1.2. The purchase from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) provides an opportunity to create a high quality employment site, with high standards of design and the flexibility to respond to changing markets.
- 1.3. SRBC, as the Local Planning Authority (LPA) for the site, has always stated in its planning policy for the site that a Masterplan for the entire site needs to be approved by the LPA prior to any planning applications being considered. A revision to the planning policy for the site, set within the Site Allocations Document, is currently being consulted upon by SRBC and the proposed revised policy is set out below:

"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 include retail, employment, commercial, industrial and Green Infrastructure uses;

b) a phasing and infrastructure delivery schedule;

c) an agreed programme of implementation in accordance with the Masterplan and agreed design code.

Alternative uses may be appropriate where it can be demonstrated that they may help deliver the strategic employment aspirations for this 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."

- 1.4. As the majority landowner at Cuerden the County Council recognises it is well placed to take a leading role in the preparation of a draft Masterplan for Consultation. If the County Council did not take on the task of preparing a draft Masterplan there would be a risk that competing Masterplans would be

prepared by the private sector with land interests in the Cuerden site. This would not be in accordance with SRBC planning policy for the site which requires one Masterplan for the whole site to be adopted.

- 1.5. At the end of 2013, the County Council retained an external professional Masterplan consultancy team to support the County Council in the preparation of a draft Masterplan for the site.
- 1.6. A public sector officer stakeholder group was established to approve the consultancy brief and guide the development of the draft Masterplan. In addition to planning, highways and estates officers from the County Council, the stakeholder group also included representatives from the HCA, SRBC and the Highways Agency.
- 1.7. The consultant team also engaged with private sector developers with an interest in the site.
- 1.8. County Council officers have also had regular meetings with SRBC Members and attended a pre-consultation meeting with local residents.

2. The Draft Cuerden Masterplan for Consultation

- 2.1 The Draft Masterplan for Consultation takes the form of two parts:
 - (i) Masterplan report; and
 - (ii) Masterplan consultation materials
- 2.2 The draft Masterplan report is a technical report that will underpin the consultation boards which will be used during the consultation process.
- 2.3 The Masterplan report:
 - (i) sets out the key drivers to guide development at Cuerden;
 - (ii) highlights the indicative strategic highway interventions required to support and sustain development of the whole site;
 - (iii) provides evidence for the need for high value development uses to fund the majority of the infrastructure costs which will open up the entire site;
 - (iv) explains the scenarios which have been considered to arise at a preferred draft Masterplan; and
 - (iv) presents a draft preferred Masterplan for the site.
- 2.4 The key drivers for Cuerden, set out in the draft Masterplan, are summarised below:
 1. A strategically important location bringing important benefits and impacts
 2. Complementary part of a wider area of major change
 3. Key site in the City Deal

4. The scale of the site is a defining opportunity
5. Context introduces a wide variety of character influences
6. Although greenfield, the site is already a 'place' in its own right
7. Development must integrate and complement the wider landscape characteristics
8. Must manage impact on the existing environment
9. Consideration must be given to innovative solutions to a range of environmental issues and sustainable development
10. Development will be subject to the National Policy Planning Framework
11. Highways and its supporting infrastructure has a strong influence over the character of the area
12. Sustainable transport modes and links to the strategic and local highway network are the key strength of the site
13. Existing capacity and constraints on highways around the Cuerden site must inform the Masterplan
14. The local policy context sets specific objectives for the site, but provides a flexible framework for land use mix and occupation
15. Cuerden must continue to be differentiated and unique in the market place, offering a unique selling point that complements 'centres first' policy objectives.

3. Timescales

- 3.1 If the recommendation is accepted, the Draft Cuerden Masterplan for Consultation will be submitted to SRBC towards the end of October and will be considered at SRBC Planning Committee on the 6th November. As the County Council is the applicant, officers will be required to attend the Committee to present the Masterplan. Officers have also been asked to present the Masterplan at a briefing session for the Planning Committee Members on the 4th November 2014.
- 3.2 Subject to agreement by SRBC the Masterplan will then be subject to a 6-week consultation process, concluding on mid-December.
- 3.3 Following the conclusion of the consultation process SRBC will review the representations and a revised Masterplan will be prepared. It is currently anticipated that a Final Cuerden Masterplan for Adoption could be considered by SRBC Planning Committee in February 2015.
- 3.4 It is the role of the LPA to consult on the draft Masterplan and therefore it is not appropriate to include the full draft Masterplan within this report. However there will be opportunity to brief local County Council Members in advance of SRBC putting the draft Masterplan into the public domain.

Consultations

N/A.

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

SRBC have a clear planning policy requirement for a Masterplan to be adopted for Cuerden prior to planning applications being considered. The primary risk of not following the recommendation set out in this report is that development at Cuerden will be delayed.

Financial

There are no financial risks associated with the recommendations set out in this report.

Legal

There are no legal risks associated with the recommendations set out in this report.

Equality

An Equality Impact Report is attached as Appendix 'A'.

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Directorate/Tel
-------	------	-------------------------

Nil.

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A.