

INSPECTOR'S NOTE

FORMBY EMPLOYMENT ALLOCATION

1. In my Note dated 18 November 2016 (EX.126) I gave Formby and Little Altcar Parish Councils and Sefton Council the opportunity of making the choice of employment allocation at Formby at a local level via the Formby & Little Altcar Neighbourhood Development Plan. In their responses the Councils have stated that they wish the choice to be made by me in the Sefton Local Plan. I understand these decisions and the reasons behind them, and I thank the parties for giving the suggestion their serious consideration.

2. I have taken into account all the evidence and representations concerning the two sites (North of Formby Industrial Estate and South of Formby Industrial Estate), including the written comments received by the 5 January 2017 deadline. The choice of employment allocation requires a planning judgement to be made involving consideration of the different benefits and impacts of the two proposals having regard to their individual attributes and the main environmental constraints. Dealing firstly with the main differences relating to environmental factors, the North allocation is sequentially preferable in flood risk terms and overall would have less adverse impact on other (albeit less important) constraints. I give significant weight to the clear preference for the North site resulting from the analysis of environmental constraints.

3. Turning to differences in the type of development, the North scheme is promoted as a conventional employment development providing a broadly similar range of uses to those found on the adjacent industrial estate. The South scheme is promoted as a mixed-use development of employment floorspace and a major expansion of the existing sports facilities. I give significant weight to the considerable community benefits of the sports provision. To fund the proposed mix of uses, the South scheme requires cross-subsidisation from more profitable uses; this is likely to include some retail development which would take trade from Formby district centre. I attach moderate weight to the adverse impact of the retail development. I give minor weight to the greater number of jobs anticipated in the North scheme and to the more robust viability/deliverability of the South scheme.

4. Both proposed schemes should deliver an acceptable mix of employment development, which is the main objective of the allocation at Formby. Taking all relevant matters into account, whilst the benefits of the South scheme would be considerable, in my judgement they do not outweigh the significantly greater adverse impacts of the South scheme when compared to the lesser impacts of the North scheme. I consider that the North scheme would be the more sustainable development and would achieve greater consistency with the National Planning Policy Framework.

5. Consequently the allocation of Land North of Formby Industrial Estate (MN2.48), which was included in the 'Proposed Modifications Local Plan' published for consultation in June 2016, will remain in the Plan as the sole strategic employment allocation at Formby in policy MN2, with the site-specific requirements set out in policy MN4. The detailed analysis which has led to this decision will appear in my Report on the examination to the Council.

6. With the decision now made, no further representations on this (or any other) matter will be accepted. I will complete my Report shortly and, following usual the quality assurance and fact check processes, I aim to send it to the Council in March 2017.

Martin Pike

INSPECTOR

26 January 2017