

**TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990**  
**FLEETWOOD - THORNTON AREA ACTION PLAN**

---

**CLOSING REMARKS**  
**BY WYRE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

---

### **Introduction**

1. The coming into force of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the changes to national policy associated with it have sought to change the practice of land use planning to one of spatial planning; a key component of which, is the integration of the full range of policies at all levels of government. The 2004 Act requires Local Planning Authorities to produce a Local Development Framework for their area. The LDF is intended to provide a spatial planning strategy for promoting and managing change.
2. The Local Development Scheme that was adopted in March 2007 identified the requirements for the AAP to be prepared in advance of the Core Strategy. It would normally be expected that the Core Strategy would be produced first. In this particular case because of the physical, social and environmental characteristics of the AAP and Wyre generally it was considered that the early production would neither prejudice nor pre-empt the options and potential policies of the Core Strategy. A key consideration being that the vast majority of the brown field resource available to Wyre BC lies within the AAP. This approach by Wyre BC is regarded by GONW as justified.

### **Locational Characteristics**

3. The locational characteristics of the AAP present something of an anomaly. The salt marshes and mudflats immediately adjacent to the AAP are of great ecological significance for their vegetation and bird life. That significance is recognised in the international, national and regional nature conservation designations that are of application.

4. Conversely the AAP covering an area of over 500 hectares encompasses a number of urban land uses including extensive tracts of vacant, derelict and seriously contaminated land. A legacy of the heavy industrial use of the area is the contamination of large parts of the AAP.
5. It is this land that provides the majority of the brown field land available within the Borough as a whole. In accordance with national and regional policies it is prioritised for redevelopment over the release of green field sites. In Wyre Borough the choice is a relatively stark one. Unless the AAP land is deployed to meet the development needs for the future recourse would be likely to green field sites. RSS requires the majority of new development to be accommodated on brown field land. In particular, in terms of residential development some 65% is required to take place on previously developed sites. Both in Wyre Borough itself and the Fylde coast area generally it is recognised as being essential that the sites within the AAP are brought forward for development.

### **Policy Context**

6. The redevelopment of the area encompassed by the AAP has been a priority at regional and local level for a significant period. The area was included as a Strategic Location for Development (SLD) in the Joint Lancashire Structure Plan and in the Wyre Borough Local Plan (1999). The strategic importance of the regeneration of the site for both housing and employment purposes has long been recognised.
7. However, the position has been that the land within the area has developed in a piecemeal manner. Without any underpinning strategic objective the consequence has been that much of the development has been uncoordinated.

8. Consequently the underlying aim of the AAP is to provide a comprehensive vision and spatial planning framework for the area as a whole that is intended to achieve:
  - Recognition for and protection of the environmental asset;
  - Build confidence in the area;
  - Guide investment to appropriate locations;
  - Secure developer contributions to essential infrastructure
  - Support future planning decisions in a consistent and transparent manner.
9. In the course of its preparation various development scenarios were considered. The AAP adopts the “maximum development” as it was this opportunity that was potentially the greatest in terms of delivering benefits and maximising the use of brown field land.
10. The evidence to the examination has demonstrated considerable and widespread support for that approach in principle.

#### **Viability and Implementation of the AAP**

11. Government guidance emphasises that a key feature of the AAP should be its focus upon implementation. In short, the plan will need to be realistic in terms of the delivery of development.
12. At the heart of the AAP is an evidence base whereby the key test of realism was assessed by the Council’s own professional officers and with the benefit of outside consultants in specialist areas of practice.
13. The viability of the proposals has been fully tested. The key conclusions of the assessment include:

- (a) There are two main employment locations in the AAP area: Fleetwood Docks and Hillhouse International. Hillhouse is a regionally important site due to the specialist nature of its offer associated with the chemical industry. The site is currently attracting significant levels of investment. The offer of the Fleetwood Docks area is complementary.
  - (b) Residential values in the area have historically been buoyant. The local housing market is currently affected, together with the rest of the country, by the lack of available credit. However, over the plan period it can be expected that the housing market will revive.
  - (c) There is a clear need for affordable housing. The 40% target for affordable housing must be regarded as aspirational and the viability assessment has adopted realistic albeit pessimistic assumptions. A more detailed viability appraisal will be required in order to justify departure from the 40% target figure for affordable housing on a case by case basis. The AAP will be able to provide a flexible approach to development in the economic downturn whilst ensuring a higher level of provision in other market conditions.
14. The key aspect of the optimism that can be deployed for the securing of development within the AAP rests with the recognition that most of the major development sites are within single ownership and do not require complicated site assembly. The development proposals in the AAP are a consequence of extensive consultation with key landowners and reflect their intended individual asset development strategies.
15. A consequence of the development proposals is the need to address the implications of such development on the highway infrastructure. In this regard the Borough Council and its consultants

have worked closely with the Highways Agency and the Highways Authority to prepare a Sustainable Transport Strategy to address developer contributions and ensure that demand management techniques are put in place. The strategy aims to co-ordinate contributions in lieu of individually implemented sustainable measures and highway improvements. There would be two streams of contribution:

- (i) Those required to provide sustainable access to and from each development; the "Sustainability Contribution"; and
- (ii) Improvements to the highway network; the "Highways Contribution".

16. The funding for necessary infrastructure improvements to facilitate the development of the main AAP site will be through developer contributions secured as part of the development control process primarily through planning obligations under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

17. It is intended that the implementation strategy will provide:
- Clarity and certainty for developers regarding the scale of planning contribution;
  - Fairness for all developers who will contribute the appropriate share of infrastructure costs;
  - Economies of scale by the "pooling" of appropriate contributions;
  - Certainty for existing local residents and businesses that new development will make an appropriate contribution towards minimising the detrimental impact of schemes on amenity and the environment;
  - A range of essential infrastructure and community facilities appropriately timed in the implementation of any development proposal.

18. Emphasis should be made to the enthusiasm that the Council as a corporate body, its officers and population embrace the concept of urban regeneration within the AAP. There are real problems associated with the existing state of the AAP; including:
- Social deprivation;
  - Worklessness;
  - Absence of opportunities;
  - Contamination;
  - Quality of accommodation.
19. The AAP will make significant contributions in providing the confidence, certainty and deliverability of the jobs, homes and infrastructure required to address the problems exhibited within the AAP. In accordance with the spatial policies of RSS it represents a marrying of opportunity with need.

### **Conclusions**

20. It is submitted that the Fleetwood-Thornton AAP is “sound” .
21. In particular, Wyre Borough Council consider that the AAP:
- Has been prepared in accordance with the correct legal and policy procedures;
  - That it conforms with a range of other plans and policies at national and regional level;
  - That it is coherent, consistent and effective;
  - That there are clear mechanisms for implementation and monitoring;
  - That it is reasonably flexible in order that it can deal with changing circumstances.

**JOHN BARRETT**

March 2009