

CHAPTER 15: COUNTRYSIDE AND THE RURAL ECONOMY

RE/2 – Countryside Around Towns

Objection: 98/32 Countryside Agency North West

Key Issue:

- **should the policy make specific reference to the environmental and economic significance of urban fringe land in the Borough?**

Inspector's Reasoning:

15.1 As with a number of other Agency objections, the modification it seeks to the UDP is far from clear. The policy addresses countryside around towns. I share the view of the Council in paragraph 15.5 of the plan that the phrase "urban fringe" can have negative connotations - but far from justified, as I saw, by most of the countryside about the towns of the Borough. The policy intent is clear - this to sustain and regenerate countryside in and around main urban centres. I support it, no further reference to "urban fringe" being necessary. Having recorded that, I really must "flag-up" with the Council that the wording of the policy - through use of words like "supported", "help", "sympathetically protect", "particularly welcomed" and "encourage" - together, represent an aim/objective rather than a development plan policy indicating the type(s) of development that would be permitted. While not the subject of specific objection, the Council is advised to revisit the policy in this respect.

Recommendation:

15.2 I recommend that:

- **No modification be made to the plan in response to this objection, but the Council is advised to consider the last 2 sentences of paragraph 15.1 above.**

RE/3 – Development Involving Agricultural Land

Objection: 98/33 Countryside Agency North West

Key Issue:

- **does the policy reflect the need to support agricultural and rural communities?**

Inspector's Reasoning:

15.3 The Council reasonably seeks to protect the best and most versatile agricultural land within the Borough, limited in supply. It would not prejudice, in my opinion, either, rural diversification - dealt with primarily at Policy RE/4 - or, the needs of rural communities.

Recommendation:

15.4 I recommend that:

- **No modification be made to the plan in response to this objection.**

RE/4 – Diversification of the Rural Economy

Objection: 37/14 North West Tourist Board

Key Issue:

- **would the policy be prejudicial to rural economic activity?**

Inspector's Reasoning:

15.5 Outside the Defined Urban Area (DUA) established in the plan, most of the remainder of the Borough is defined as Green Belt in the adopted plan and carried forward into the UDP. With one limited exception, I shall not be recommending any modifications to Green Belt boundaries. Other than the Green Belt, remaining land outside the DUA is Protected Open Land - the principle of which I support. Control within approved Green Belt land is a long established element of national planning policy and I have dealt with a similar objection by the Tourist Board to Policy D/4 at Chapter 7 of my Report. The policy adopts a generally permissive approach to proposals for farm diversification - albeit I draw the Council's attention to the use of the word "supported" on the second line of the policy. "Permitted" would be preferable.

Recommendation:

15.6 I recommend that:

- **No modification be made to the plan in response to this objection.**

RE/5 – Access to the Countryside

Objection: 60/2 Ramblers Association, Rochdale Group

Key Issue:

- **are motor vehicles/trail bike riders incompatible with quiet recreation?**

Inspector's Reasoning:

15.7 On the basis of a letter dated 24 September 2003 from the objector, the only issue before me is that set out above. While not the subject of objection, I draw the Council's attention to the wording of the policy - this an aim/objective rather than a statement of the type(s) of development that would be permitted. Nonetheless, the purpose of the policy is to increase access to the countryside where the needs of a range of users need to be accommodated. The objector has not drawn to my attention any statement of national planning guidance that seeks, specifically, to prevent motorist access to the countryside - not least as visitors by this mode may use cars to access walking routes. Similarly, trail-bike riders are legitimate users of the countryside, subject to any control in specific locations. The policy, including its reasoned justification, seeks to recognize these and other needs - subject to appropriate management. Any illegal use would be able to be dealt with by the relevant statutory regime.

Recommendation:

15.8 I recommend that:

- **No modification be made to the plan in response to this objection, but the Council is advised to consider the wording of the policy reflecting paragraph 15.7 above - this to establish a policy that would indicate the type(s) of development to be permitted.**

RE/6 – Recreational Rights of Way

Objection: 418/9 Littleborough Civic Trust

Key Issue:

- **does the plan need to give further recognition to the role of the Standing Conference of South Pennine Authorities (SCOSPA) and the South Pennine Association (SPA) in a move to regional park status?**

Inspector's Reasoning:

15.9 No. The reasoned justification already refers to the work of SCOSPA, the Countryside Agency and others in pursuing a recreational network. I see no need to give SCOSPA and the SPA either, any further recognition or, to record their efforts on other policies of the plan - an overly detailed UDP resulting. Both are non-statutory organizations and, on the basis of the evidence before me, neither appears to be formally committed to regional park status.

Recommendation:

15.10 I recommend that:

- **No modification be made to the plan in response to this objection.**

RE/6 f) – Recreational Rights of Way

Objection: 446/2 Lancashire County Council

Key Issue:

- **should the UDP include a map showing the main cross-border recreational rights of way?**

Inspector's Reasoning:

15.11 The reasoned justification to the policy at paragraph 15.23 acknowledges the existence of cross-boundary links. Such routes do not respect local authority boundaries. Their recognition in the UDP would result in a more “user-friendly” plan. In response to this Deposit Draft objection, the Council indicated its intention to address this. I agree. In my opinion, this would best be achieved by an additional annotation to the Proposals Map.

Recommendation:

15.12 I recommend that the plan be modified along the following lines:

- **At adoption, the Proposals Map should be modified to indicate the main cross-border strategic recreational routes.**

RE/7 – Recreational Management Areas (RMAs)

Objections:	308/10	Federal Mogul T & N Limited
	344/2	National Farmers Union, North West Region

Key Issues:

- **does the policy adequately safeguard the interests of adjoining sites/uses?**
- **should the reasoned justification indicate that, in some of the defined areas of the policy, it would be possible to accommodate noisy sports and activities for which there is a demand?**

Inspector's Reasoning:

15.13 Objection 308/10 relates to the Healey Dell Local Nature Reserve and environs [RE/7 b)], extensive and close to the objector's factory complex at Rooley Moor Road (partly contaminated) - an Area of Opportunity at Policy R/4(j). In my view, the development of a recreational facility can lead to a substantial increase in activity, but this would be fairly addressed by the policy. There, activities should not conflict with other land management interests and have regard to the effect on surrounding uses. The Council intends to work with landowners and other parties. The objector has not disputed the evidence of the Council that areas sensitive to visitor access would be controlled. The Council's intentions embody sufficient safeguards. The UDP does not list specific proposals for any of the 11 Recreational Management Areas. Any arising at the nature reserve would be assessed against the policy as a whole.

15.14 As to the other objection, RE/7 lists 11 areas, shown on the Proposals Map, where the Council intends to develop their recreational potential. The NFU has not objected to the principle of the policy. The second paragraph of the policy indicates that this will include specialist sports and active outdoor pursuits. The principle of those supported by the objector would not be discounted. Recreational activities would, however, be subject to what I consider to be reasonable tests - primarily that they are consistent with the local landscape, are not detrimental to the amenity or character of the area, and do not conflict with other recreational or land management interests. Proposals for motor sports and war games would be assessed accordingly. The policy does not list specific recreational activities and, as they are potentially numerous, I see no need for a listing - including those supported by the objector - through any addition to the reasoned justification.

Recommendation:

15.15 I recommend that:

- **No modifications be made to the plan in response to these objections.**

RE/7 j) – Recreational Management Areas

Objection: 388/1 Queen's Park Restoration Group

Key Issue:

- **should the BMX track, boating lake and lower field at Queen's Park be included under UG/3, rather than this policy?**

Inspector's Reasoning:

15.16 I visited Queen's Park on a number of occasions. The 3 areas, while functionally part of the park, are within the RE/7 j) RMA to the west of Rochdale Town Centre, consistent with that designation and outside the Defined Urban Area. They are part of the approved Green Belt. The objector has not disputed the evidence of the Council that there is no intention to remove the land from the park boundaries. Sufficient control on development would be established and the aspiration(s) of the objector would not be prejudiced. I see no convincing reason to include the land under UG/3.

Recommendation:

15.17 I recommend that:

- **No modification be made to the plan in response to this objection.**

RE/8 - Countryside Visitor Facilities

Objection: 89/2 Mr T Seed

Key Issue:

- **would the policy provide for suitable car parking if countryside facilities were to be extended - as at Littleborough and Hollingworth Lake Country Park?**

Inspector's Reasoning:

15.18 Littleborough and Hollingworth Lake are both popular visitor attractions. I have no reason to doubt - and the Council has not disputed in its evidence - the view of the objector that this has resulted in parking difficulties - not least for local residents. Reasonably, that would also be likely to apply to other countryside facilities covered by the policy. Here, any proposal arising for the extension of a facility would be assessed against the criteria in the policy. Criterion c) refers to car parks. Any reasonable local planning authority would assess a proposal accordingly. Sufficient control would be available. The enforcement of existing parking restrictions is a matter for the relevant agency.

Recommendation:

15.19 I recommend that:

- **No modification be made to the plan in response to this objection.**

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