

Omega inquiry Statement – Cllr Richard McCauley

Good Morning and thank you chair for letting me speak today.

I speak in my capacity as a Ward Councillor in Thatto Heath which is one of the more deprive areas of St.Helens and that of Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Planning.

The Application we are discussing today Im sure you are aware is situated in the Bold ward of St.Helens that boundaries Warrington.

As you have heard sir St.Helens is listed as the 26th most deprived area in the country according to the 2019 indices of deprivation report , within that again as you've heard Bold is one of the more deprived wards in the borough with 4 Acre, North Clock Face and Sutton Mannor (which are all areas within Bold) falling within the most 10% deprived neighbourhoods nationally, South Clock face falling just outside the top 10% and even the least deprived area of Bold (New Bold) is still in the lower half of all neighbourhoods nationally. The site itself is in a Super output Area in the least 20% deprived nationally, My own ward which neighbours bold has very similar figures as have those of Parr and Town Centre wards which are both close by, also worth noting we have pockets of high depravation in most of the wards in St.Helens.

Putting that in terms of Numbers of residents on JSA Plus & those on Universal Credit who are out of work, the claimant count has seen a dramatic increase in Bold (as it is in the borough) since March 2020 and the Ward now has one of the highest claimant counts in St.Helens with the figures nearly doubling in the 6 months March to September 2020. There were 525 claimants in Bold in September an increase of 240 From March 2020 a total of 8.4% of the working age population – St.Helens as a whole as seen a rise from 3.9% to 7.1% of Claimants as a % of population, the actual figure In September 2020 of total claimants in St.Helens was 7,800 – which is up from 4,300, those are the latest figures I could find sir, but I can assure you, its got even worse since then as you would imagine due to the ongoing pandemic. Those are real figures, each one is someone looking for work, currently in hardship, in need of a chance of a job , wanting to get themselves and their families out of the deprivation they find themselves in. And I see it as my responsibility as an elected representative to try to fix that situation and that's why Im here today, its why regeneration is one of our top priorities as a council, Im here to respectfully plead for each one of those on the claimant list be given a chance of a job paying decent money for a well-respected employer. And for those still in education, our young people, who need something to aspire to, and have a chance of work when they leave school, collage ect.

The application before us states that the estimated construction period for the full application is approximately 16 months. There would be approximately 1,267 net construction workers jobs and 845 gross full time equivalent (FTE) annual employment opportunities.

- When operational, there would be an estimated 980 average FTE jobs and 1,103 total net employment. It is expected that Approximately 827 FTE jobs will likely be taken up by residents within St. Helens Borough and 276 jobs by other residents within the North West.
- TJ Morris/Home Bargains', has projected future employment assuming 40% operational capacity in the first year and 100% operational capacity, required to serve over 400 new stores. The number were based on other operational facilities in the north west.
- At 40% capacity the operator predicts a peak 766 FTE jobs and average 686 FTE jobs; and at 100% capacity they predict a peak of 1431 FTE jobs and average 1230 average FTE jobs.
- Salaries will range between £22,000 per annum for Canteen workers to £51,000 for Health and Safety officers with lots of other real job in between.
- The applicant states that Unit 1 will be significantly more automated than the other distribution sites so the

number of high-skilled engineering and machine operator jobs would be significantly higher.

- Overall there would be various roles from supply chain, engineering and technical roles, human resources (HR), HGV drivers to support and administration staff.
- The proposed development would represent an additional £37.9 M GVA to the local economy within St. Helens and £12.65M GVA to the wider North West Economy.

The Owner of HomeBargains Mr Morris came to Planning Committee and stated that they would work with the council in targeting recruitment around our deprived communities especially Four Acre and Clock Face and would pay for a bus service from those communities into the Omega Development and include apprenticeship opportunities for our young people, indeed these were conditions in the plans that were approved by the planning committee.

Without labouring on, given the statistics I mentioned earlier, of high levels of deprivation which are getting worse with the ongoing covid situation, I think the very special circumstances test has been met.

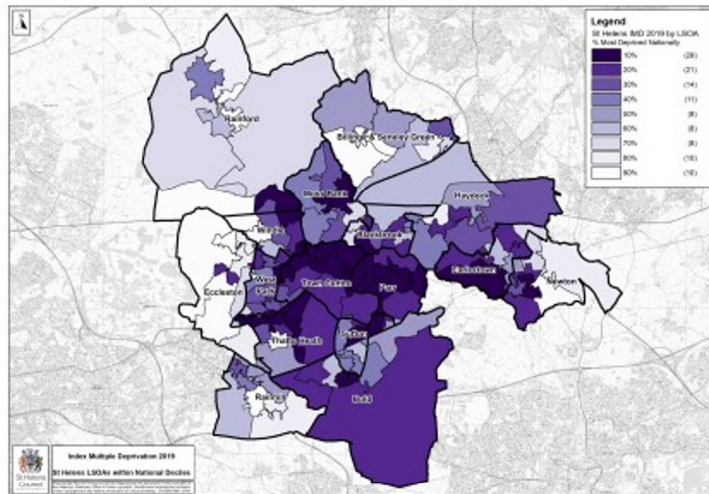
I do accept that harm will be done to the greenbelt which is never an easy decision to grant planning permission on, but I note Paragraph 80 of the National Planning Policy Framework that states that Planning decisions should help to create the conditions in which businesses can invest,

expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.

Here we have an end user, ready to build out unit 1 and the overall proposed scheme is immediately deliverable . Considerable economic benefits for the local economy will be amongst the outputs, including those people I mentioned earlier desperate to get on the job ladder, and move out of deprivation. And an employer who has committed to recruit from our deprived areas. This I believe is to be Building back Better and Levelling up both national priorities, as we emerge from the pandemic and the affects of Brexit, there couldn't be a more deserving time, place or people to do it. As this area has suffered more than most during this awful pandemic.

Amongst the conditions that were approved at committee, was commuted sums of £1.8M secured via a planning contribution to fund infrastructure projects within the Bold Forest Park Area such as Clock Face Country Park, Maypole Farm, Griffin Wood and the links between them, as well and to carry out projects within St Helens for Biodiversity Net Gain to mitigate for the loss of habitat.

Deprivation – understanding deprivation and poverty



In the 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), St Helens is ranked as the 28th most deprived local authority in England out of 317. Its relative position has deteriorated since the 2015 IMD.



A total of **29** lower super output areas (neighbourhoods) are within the 10% most deprived small areas in England.



Almost $\frac{1}{4}$ of St Helens residents live in the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods in the country.

The concept of deprivation is a wide one, covering a broad range of issues. Deprivation refers to unmet needs caused by a lack of resources and opportunities of all kinds, not just financial. It can therefore be defined through issues such as poor housing, homelessness, low educational attainment, lack of employment, worklessness, poor health and high levels of morbidity.



Health Deprivation and Disability, Employment Deprivation and Income Deprivation are the areas of greatest concern locally.



The highest levels of income deprivation affecting children are found in Parr, Town Centre and Bold Wards.



The areas with the highest levels of income deprivation affecting older people are to be found in Parr, Bold, the Town Centre and Earlestown.



ST HELENS
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Conclusion – therefore chair in closing I'd like to suggest respectfully that your recommendation to the Secretary of state is to say that the Very Special Circumstances have been met and to Grant Planning permission with the conditions set out in the Planning Committee Papers.

Thank you for listening, and happy to take any questions.

