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Warrington Borough Council

Local Plan

Preferred Development Option

Regulation 18 Consultation

Standard Response Form

July 2017

2: Questions

Question 1

Do you have any comments to make about how we've worked out the need for new homes and employment land in Warrington over the next 20 years?

Response:

We support the aspiration of the Council to deliver an additional 31,000 jobs between 2015 and 2040. This level of jobs growth results in the requirement for a minimum of 1,113 dwellings per annum. Warrington clearly benefits from an excellent location in terms of transport infrastructure and is located between two significant City Regions, Warrington is therefore well placed for the level of economic growth that is proposed. To ensure success of this strategy a review of existing employment areas should be undertaken in advance of the pre-submission stage to identify employment sites where there is no reasonable prospects of a site being used for that purpose, and alternative uses should be incorporated to their applicable policies.

The housing requirement should however be considered as minima rather than maxima to ensure that additional sustainable growth can come forward where appropriate over the life of the plan – additional housing above and beyond the requirement identified would also allow the faster delivery of affordable homes which would assist in reducing the backlog that otherwise would not be achieved for at least 20 years.

Since the Preferred Development Option has been published, the Government has issued a consultation document 'Planning for the right homes in the right places' which relates to a standard methodology for assessing housing need. It is noted the current consultation document does allow for deviation from the approach set out where there are specific circumstances that would justify this. It is our view that given the growth potential for the area and its position between the two City Regions, there would be justification for deviating from this methodology if necessary.

Question 2

Do you have any comments to make about how we've worked out the number of homes and amount of employment land that can be accommodated within Warrington's existing built up areas?

Response:

Whilst the overall objective of maximising development from within the urban area is appropriate, it is our view that to deliver around 10,000 dwellings from the urban area within the first 10 years will be extremely challenging given that some of the inner sites are currently occupied by alternate uses, furthermore, significant infrastructure will need to be in place before much of this potential could be realised. It is therefore our view that the Council should be working with Developers to ensure that barriers constraining these sites can be overcome, where possible, to ensure delivery against the policy aspirations set in the Preferred Development Option approach.

For example, the Site subject of these representations, the Alcan Factory, Thelwall Lane (SHLAA reference 1521) is constrained by virtue of it being an existing employment designation. As the employment use has ceased on the Site, the policy constraint can be relaxed to allow the Site to come forward for delivery in the early years of the emerging plan period.

Question 3

Have we appropriately worked out the amount of land to be released from the Green Belt, including the amount of land to be 'safeguarded'?

Response:

No observations

Question 4

Do you agree with the new Local Plan Objectives?

Response:

We agree with the Council's strategic objectives in terms of opting for a jobs growth strategy and in turn the uplift in housing requirements.

To ensure the continuing economic success of the Borough focus of employment development should be at the strategic locations identified in 5.19 of the Preferred Development Options Consultation document (Birchwood, Omega and Woolston). Policies in the Submission draft relating to existing employment uses in secondary locations, such as the Alcan Factory, which are constrained in terms of highways access should adopted a flexible approach to their redevelopment in accordance with paragraph 22 of the NPPF.

Question 5

Do you have any comments to make about how we've assessed different 'Spatial Options' for Warrington's future development?

Response:

No observations

Question 6

Do you have any comments to make about how we've assessed different options for the main development locations?

Response:

Detailed policies should ensure to prioritise previously developed sites within the urban boundary to ensure accordance with the sustainable development principles as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

In most cases this will also ensure delivery against the ambitious development targets in the early stages of the plan, as PDL sites such as the Alcan Factory already benefit from the infrastructure needed to support the development.

Question 7

Do you agree with our Preferred Development Option for meeting Warrington's future development needs?

Response:

We strongly support the principles of the Preferred Development Option. This approach provides the opportunity to provide for significant employment growth which will assist Warrington in enhancing its position between the two City Regions.

There is a need for refinement as the plan moves forward and this should be undertaken in conjunction with land owners, promoters and other key stakeholders to ensure the objectives of the plan can be realised. This approach will be critical to ensuring that constrained sites can come forward, and in general timely delivery of development overall.

Question 8

Do you have any comments to make about our Preferred Development Option for the City Centre?

Response:

No observations

Question 9

Do you have any comments to make about our Preferred Development Option for the Wider Urban Area?

Response:

The site being promoted by Morris Homes Ltd as part of these representations is located within the 'Wider Urban Area'. Given the scale and location of the Site limited infrastructure is required to support the redevelopment of the Site, with access to be provided through Morris Homes Ltd's adjacent Edgewater Park scheme.

The Site has been categorised as being 'constrained' in the SHLAA 2017, and therefore not included in the housing land supply as currently proposed, however the Site is 'to be reviewed on an annual basis'. From review of the SHLAA 2015 site proforma this is largely down to the Site not being available at the time of the assessment. The Site is however now vacant and ready for redevelopment, and in planning terms should be classified as being available.

In preparation of the Submission Draft, which it is noted will include site specific detail, we would welcome further discussion with the Local Authority to ensure that the deliverability of the Site is properly assessed. It is our view that the Site could be included in the early stages of the emerging Local Plan.

Question 10

Do you have any comments to make about our Preferred Development Option for developing the Warrington Waterfront?

Response:

No observations

Question 11

Do you have any comments to make about our Preferred Development Option for the Warrington Garden City Suburb?

Response:

No observations

Question 12

Do you have any comments to make about our Preferred Development Option for the South Western Urban Extension?

Response:

No observations

Question 13

Do you have any comments to make about our Preferred Development Option for development in the Outlying Settlements?

Response:

No observations

Question 14

Do you agree with our approach to providing new employment land?

Response:

Yes, although detailed policies should allow for the redevelopment of existing employment sites for alternative uses where there are no reasonable prospects of them coming back into employment uses.

Secondary existing employment areas, such as the existing employment areas at Thelwall Lane should be afforded more flexibility, to support the approach of focussing new employment development on better connected key employment areas at Omega, Birchwood and Woolston, an approach which we support.

Question 15

Do you agree with our suggested approach for dealing with Gypsy and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople sites?

Response:

No observations

Question 16

Do you agree with our suggested approach for dealing with Minerals and Waste?

Response:

No observations

Question 17

Having read the Preferred Development Option Document, is there anything else you feel we should include within the Local Plan?

Response:

No observations