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# **Warrington Borough Council**

## **Local Plan**

### ***Preferred Development Option***

### **Regulation 18 Consultation**

### **Standard Response Form**

**July 2017**

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## 1: Contact Details (Compulsory)

Title: Mrs

First Name: [REDACTED]

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Organisation (if applicable): Indigo Planning Ltd

Address: St James' Tower, 8 Charlotte Street, Manchester, M1 4DZ

Phone Number: [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

E-mail: [REDACTED]

**Which best describes you?** (tick ✓ one option only)

Resident in Warrington

Resident from outside of Warrington

Business

Other, please specify

Agent acting on behalf of joint landowners

## 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:**

## **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:**

### **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:**

**Question 4**

Do you agree with the new Local Plan Objectives?

**Response:**

### **Question 5**

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

**Response:**

## Question 6

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

**Response:**

## **Question 7**

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

**Response:**

**Question 8**

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

**Response:**

### **Question 9**

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

**Response:**

## **Question 10**

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

**Response:**

### **Question 11**

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

**Response:**

## **Question 12**

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

**Response:**

### **Question 13**

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

**Response:**

### **Question 14**

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

**Response:**

### **Question 15**

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

**Response:**

### **Question 16**

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

**Response:**

### **Question 17**

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

**Response:**

Warrington Borough Council  
Planning Policy & Programmes  
New Town House  
Buttermarket Street  
Warrington  
WA1 2NH

By email and post  
[ldf@warrington.gov.uk](mailto:ldf@warrington.gov.uk)

29 September 2017

let.012..SB.25900001

Dear Sirs

## LAND OFF HIGHER LANE (A56), LYMM –PREFERRED DEVELOPMENT OPTION REGULATION 18 CONSULTATION

On behalf of the joint landowners of land to the north of Higher Lane (A56) Lymm – [REDACTED] please find enclosed our response to the Preferred Development Option Regulation 18 Consultation on the Warrington Local Plan Review.

Our clients control the whole site which extends to 29.3ha lies on the eastern edge of the settlement of Lymm. The site currently lies within the Green Belt and is being promoted for release and allocation for development through the ongoing Local Plan Review process.

The report submitted addresses each of the questions with the 'Standard Response Form' and provides comment on the preferred development options. A completed Standard Response Form is enclosed as part of the submission.

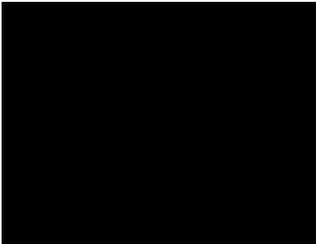
This document further demonstrates the sites deliverability and suitability for residential development. The sites potential was outlined in a Development Statement which was submitted to the council 5<sup>th</sup> December 2016. Accompanying the Statement were a range of technical documents and this submission builds on the information provided within those documents.

We trust that the information contained within the report will be taken into account by the Council when considering the next stage of Local Plan preparation.

As outlined in both this and our previous submission our clients site is more than suitable for release from the Green Belt and to be brought forward for development. Development at the site will address the development needs of the village and provide additional benefits to the existing inhabitants.

Should you have any queries or require any further information on any of the information contained within these representations please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours faithfully



[Redacted]

Enc: Completed Standard Response Form  
Local Plan Review – Preferred Development Option Regulation 18  
Consultation (July 2017)

cc: [Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]

# Local Plan Review

## Preferred Development Option Regulation 18 Consultation (July 2017)

Representations on behalf of the joint landowners of R18/111

indigo.

Local Plan Review – Preferred Development Option  
Regulation 18 Consultation (July 2017)  
Representations on behalf of the joint landowners of  
R18/111

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# Local Plan Review

## Preferred Development Option Regulation 18 Consultation (July 2017)

Representations on behalf of the joint  
landowners of R18/111

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# 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This Statement has been prepared on behalf of [REDACTED] (herein referred to as “joint landowners”) in response to Warrington Borough Councils (WBCs) Regulation 18 Consultation on its Local Plan Review – Preferred Development Option (July 2017) (herein referred to as “the draft plan”).
- 1.2. It sets out those areas of the draft plan where it is considered that further supporting evidence base work and changes to the overall strategy are needed, in order to help ensure that any future draft plan is able to robustly proceed through the plan making process. We have referenced the questions posed on WBC’s Standard Response Form, where necessary.
- 1.3. In summary, our concerns relate to:
  - The extent to which the plan can facilitate higher levels of housing growth above the currently proposed 22,260 figure;
  - The way in which different development options have been considered and assessed;
  - The plan’s reliance on the capacity and delivery of existing sites in the urban area to meet housing needs, particularly in the early years;
  - Similarly, the extent to which the two proposed urban extensions (known as the Garden City Suburb and South West Warrington Urban Extension) can come forward in full in the plan period and, in particular, address housing needs in the early years;
  - The robustness of the Green Belt Assessment (as updated) in underpinning the Council’s preferred development option;
  - The role of outlying settlements (particularly Lymm), in accommodating future growth and their capacity to address local market and affordable housing needs sustainably; and
  - The need for further planned Green Belt release in the plan period and identification of safeguarded land beyond that identified adjacent to the proposed Garden City Suburb.
- 1.4. Considering the overall strategy for housing growth in Lymm (as set out in the draft plan) and in the absence of any detailed proposals concerning how development requirements might be addressed, the joint landowners have prepared further refined proposals for their site (Ref: R18/111 pursuant to the Call for Sites consultation in 2016). Details are provided in Section 7.

# 1. Executive Summary

- 1.5. Overall, this Statement demonstrates why the plan needs to be more flexible to address housing needs across the Borough.
- 1.6. In the context of Lymm, it demonstrates that not only is there capacity to accommodate a greater quantum of development than currently planned but there are a number of locations around the settlement which do not fully meet the requirements for inclusion of land in the Green Belt.
- 1.7. The joint landowners site is a highly suitable development location which makes only a 'weak' contribution to the Green Belt.
- 1.8. Furthermore, its allocation for a residential-led mixed use scheme could deliver a number of localised benefits, including a much-improved access and egress route for the circa 3,000 pupils travelling to/from Lymm High School in peak periods, whilst also satisfying a number of other plan requirements, most notably a need for new market and affordable homes and elderly persons' accommodation. Since our 2016 submission, the masterplanning of the site has been revisited in seeking to deliver a more modest scale of development whilst still realising the overall benefits of the scheme.

## 2. The need for new homes (Question 1)

- 2.1. Paragraph 4.7 of the draft plan confirms WBCs intention to plan for provision of 22,260 new homes during the period 2017 to 2037 (averaging 1,113 per annum). Additionally, a 5% flexibility factor has been added (equating to a further 1,113 homes) as well as an allowance for backlog against the stated Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) figure since 2015 (an extra 847 dwellings). This takes the total stated plan requirement to 24,220 homes (Table 1).
- 2.2. Firstly, this housing requirement should be expressed as a 'minimum' (our emphasis), in order to ensure that there is some flexibility in planned housing delivery and that housing needs, including for more affordable homes, are adequately addressed in the plan period.
- 2.3. Secondly, in deriving a 'policy on' requirement of 1,113 per annum, WBC has sought to align evidence of housing needs with the economic growth ambitions contained within the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Strategic Economic Plan (SEP), notably to deliver 31,000 new jobs by 2040. However, this figure is based on the assumption that overall levels of job growth in the plan period will not match levels achieved in the last 20 years i.e. jobs growth will slow down.
- 2.4. Given the 'New City' ambitions of the Council, underpinned by its regeneration programme 'Warrington Means Business' and supported by other important economic based initiatives across Cheshire including the 'Science Corridor'; 'Mersey Dee Economic Axis'; and 'Constellation Partnership', there is a good chance that job growth could match if not exceed historic levels in the Borough. This would require a proportionate increase in housing delivery in ensuring that the workforce can live locally and that there is a decent supply of homes which are affordable.
- 2.5. The Northern Powerhouse Partnership (NPP) has outlined its vision for the North of England within its 'Powerhouse Report 2050: The North's Route Map to Productivity' - (September 2017). The report states:

*'The Northern Powerhouse Partnership's vision is to create an additional 850,000 jobs and contribute an extra £100bn to the UK economy' and goes on to state that 'The Northern Powerhouse Partnership (NPP) is calling on government and major businesses to come together on major priorities which would transform the North and dramatically increase the contribution the region makes to the UK economy.'*
- 2.6. This vision sits in complete contradiction with Warrington Council's 'Preferred Development Option' which assumes (and plans for) a lower level of job creation in the next plan period in the borough than there has been during the last.

## 2. The need for new homes (Question 1)

- 2.7. The Council's Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) suggests that a higher level of jobs growth would give rise to a requirement for 1,332 homes per annum (26,640 over the plan period).
- 2.8. We believe that the economic strategy is unduly pessimistic, particularly in its assumptions regarding suppressed job growth which conflict with and undermine the initiatives of other agencies. As a result of its assumptions regarding a lower level of future job growth, the Council is adopting an overly constrained approach towards its future housing provision.

## 3. Maximising urban capacity (Question 2)

### Overall delivery

3.1. The draft plan seeks to maximise the capacity of the existing urban area in meeting future development needs, in particular, delivery of housing. The latest Urban Capacity Study (2017) which is underpinned by the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) (2017) suggests that there is capacity for approximately 15,429 dwellings in the urban area, broken down as follows:

*9,721 dwellings (SHLAA sites);*

*7,588 dwellings (proposed masterplan areas); and*

*435 dwellings (small sites allowance 15+ years)*

3.2. A reduction of 2,285 dwellings has been made to avoid double counting of SHLAA sites otherwise forming part of the proposed masterplan areas.

3.3. Of these 15,429 dwellings, approximately 28% (4,298) are forecast to come forward in 0-5 years; 37% (5,687) in 6-10 years; and, 35% (5,444) in 11-20 years.

3.4. Whilst a site having planning permission is not a pre-requisite of being 'deliverable' as defined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2012), as acknowledged in the Council's SHLAA (paragraph 3.12), it does imply a greater certainty that development will take place unless there is clear evidence that schemes will not be implemented within five years.

3.5. It is therefore notable that in the forecast 0-5 year supply which is made up mostly of sites in the urban area, only 1,433 dwellings currently have planning permission (40 sites) (see SHLAA Table 3.3).

3.6. We also have concerns with regards the density and build-out assumptions in the SHLAA and which underpin the assessment of deliverable, developable and available sites able to come forward in the plan period.

3.7. In particular, we note that the Council has assumed that sites above 2 Ha in size will achieve a net developable area of 75%. Whilst this might be achievable on certain sites (i.e. those in the core urban area and which are well placed to tie into existing infrastructure including highways, drainage and open space provision), overall it is far more likely that the net developable area will be much lower, particularly in some of the larger proposed masterplan areas.

3.8. Guidance in relation to the estimation of housing capacities using 'developable area' has been provided by The Planning Advisory Service Local Government Association within their document entitled 'Introduction to Development Economics and Viability' (March 2016). This states:

## 3. Maximising urban capacity (Question 2)

*'In all but the smallest redevelopment schemes, the net developable area (i.e. income generating land) is significantly smaller than the gross area that is required to support the development, given the need to provide open space, infrastructure etc. The net area can account for less than 50%, and sometimes as little as 30% on larger sites, of the site to be acquired (i.e. the size of the site with planning permission). Failure to take account of this difference can result in flawed assumptions and inaccurate viability studies.'*

- 3.9. The use of a lower net developable area will have a direct impact on the levels of development that will ultimately be achieved and extent to which a deliverable five-year supply can be demonstrated on adoption of the plan.

### Spatial concerns

- 3.10. Spatially and in this same period, development is being concentrated into four main areas, namely; the city centre; wider urban area; waterfront; and, proposed garden city suburb. This is a significant level of development in effectively a single core area and therefore there ought to be caution about the extent to which the market can deliver in this way in this time period (setting aside concerns about the absence of 'oven ready' consents and likely lead-in times for getting development underway including dependency on infrastructure delivery).
- 3.11. Additionally, there is currently an absence of supporting information setting out how these core development areas will yield dwellings, particularly in the early years of the plan. Further site specific information ought to be provided (on an annualised basis) to underpin the figures cited in the development trajectory of Tables 13, 15, 17 and 19.

### Proposed buffer

- 3.12. Beyond the planned housing and employment land requirements, the draft plan makes provision for a 5% buffer "to allow for market choice and in the event that specific sites do not come forward".
- 3.13. Whilst the Council's track record of housing delivery against past performance targets is duly noted, the overall level of development (annually) sits significantly below the proposed minimum requirement looking forward and mindful of our comments above with regards the emphasis being placed upon delivery of a few large areas (which will therefore require large annualised delivery), it is likely that development will not come forward as quickly as intended.

### 3. Maximising urban capacity (Question 2)

- 3.14. On this basis, a 5% buffer is insufficient in ensuring adequate housing delivery and sufficient choice and availability in the market, particularly in the early years of the plan.
- 3.15. With regards the narrative at paragraph 4.13 of the draft plan in further justifying the 5% buffer, there is reference to the potential availability of the Fiddlers Ferry Power Station site for housing. Whilst this site might become available during the plan period, there is currently no certainty of this (it is currently owned by SSE and operational) and even if it does become available, it will need to be carefully decommissioned, evaluated (in terms of baseline environmental conditions) and be the subject of a careful planning and design process. To this end, at this stage, there is no robust evidence available to confirm that this site will be suitable (or viable) for redevelopment and able to contribute housing to meet requirements in the plan period, as a contingency.
- 3.16. We note that a 20% buffer is being applied to the planned employment land requirements and question why a consistent approach is not being taken with regards planned housing requirements.

## 4. Safeguarding land (Question 3)

- 4.1. The Council's proposal to identify further safeguarded land for removal from the Green Belt beyond the plan period, is supported. However, we do not agree with how the Council has sought to define the quantum of safeguarded land that ought to be identified for release. In particular:
- Safeguarded land is only identified to serve a 10 year period, not 20 years to mirror the current proposed plan period. Given that any proposed revisions to green belt boundaries should endure well beyond the plan, identification of a larger amount of safeguarded land now would provide further certainty on the proposed locations for growth and development in the future;
  - The Council suggests that the proposed 20% buffer in the employment land requirement could serve to deliver a further five years' worth of housing, however, paragraph 4.16 of the draft plan suggests that this (employment) buffer was included within the calculation to '*reflect the more specific locational requirements of employment development and its greater sensitivity to market conditions*'. It goes on to state that '*Warrington has consistently exceeded its employment land target*'. To this end, there is no reason to suspect that proposals for employment development will not be successful and this land not taken up. On this basis, it is questionable whether the employment land buffer (in its own right) is sufficient and even if it is, this same buffer evidently cannot also act as a contingency for housing delivery beyond the plan period.
  - Finally, the safeguarding land requirement calculation is underpinned by the assumption that there will continue to be a high level of development in the urban area beyond the plan period (64% urban / 36% Green Belt), thereby minimising the amount of development needed in the Green Belt. However, if the Council's proposed planning strategy is effective (i.e. currently available brownfield/urban land is maximised for development), then there is likely to be only a limited amount of brownfield/urban land available beyond the plan period (and mostly on an ad-hoc opportune basis), placing a greater emphasis on the need to look beyond settlement boundaries to the Green Belt, for land to meet future housing needs.
- 4.2. As drafted, the plan fails to identify the basis on which safeguarded land might be released and how its development will be brought forward in the event that planned housing targets are not met.
- 4.3. Any further draft plan will need to consider how and when safeguarded land might come forward, having regard to proposals contained within the Housing White Paper (DCLG, 2017) with regards a housing delivery test.

## 5. Strategic objectives (Question 4)

5.1. We have no in principle objections to the proposed strategic objectives for the local plan as drafted, however, these should make clear the following:

### Objective W1

- existing neighbourhoods both within the core urban area and in the outlying settlements ought to be strengthened (our emphasis); and
- the proposed housing requirement is a minimum.

### Objective W2

- the release of Green Belt is needed to meet development needs from the start of the plan period, not just 'long term'.

5.2. Additionally, there ought to be some reference to the Council's ambitions for growth and development in the outlying settlements, mindful that the existing settlements of Lymm, Culcheth and Burtonwood currently provide for some 9,000+ households and therefore play an important role in the Borough's overall spatial portrait.

5.3. The absence of any reference to the role of the outlying settlements has resulted in the appraisal of options not having due regard to the opportunities they present. Indeed, paragraph 4.48 of the draft plan makes clear that any alternative options other than 'incremental growth' in the outlying settlements, were not considered reasonable and therefore were not taken forward to the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) / Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) stage.

## 6. Development options (Question 6)

- 6.1. A key observation in the Council's testing of development options is the lack of consideration of any real alternatives to 'incremental growth' in the outlying settlements. Indeed, taking together the number of 'Call for Sites' submissions made to the Council in 2016 relating to sites in the outlying settlements, combined with the 'Settlement Profile' analysis undertaken by the Council, it is evident that a large number of sites have been put forward for development and which have the potential to deliver a significant number of homes both in and beyond the plan period. Yet, the principle of development of any scale in the outlying settlements has been dismissed outright, on the assumption that such an approach would undermine the Council's 'New City' vision and direct development efforts away from the urban area.
- 6.2. However, the 'New City' vision is about much more than just the urban core of Warrington and indeed, initiatives such as the Cheshire Science Corridor, the Constellation and Mersey Dee Economic Axis depend upon both a thriving town centre and key service centres, such as Lymm, Culcheth and Burtonwood, which in real terms provide services and facilities to areas beyond the borough boundary.
- 6.3. On this basis, the development options should include an additional hybrid approach (reflective of current options 2 and 3), where a higher level of growth dispersed amongst the most sustainable outlying settlements is considered, whilst still seeking to maximise urban capacity in line with the Council's draft strategic objectives.
- 6.4. Akin to this, paragraph 4.58 of the draft plan effectively 'caps' development in the outlying settlements at approximately 1,000 dwellings and assumes that the balance of development needed to come forward elsewhere in the Green Belt is some 8,000 dwellings (factoring in forecast urban capacity of 15,420 dwellings against an overall plan requirement of 22,260 dwellings).
- 6.5. Again, in light of the evidence put forward through 'Call for Sites' submissions and the high-level settlement profiling exercise undertaken by the Council, it is unclear why a higher level of development in the Green Belt surrounding the outlying settlements, has not been undertaken. If it had, the outcome of the subsequent 'options for main development locations' assessment in terms of the identified components, would have been different as the quantitative requirement for land around the urban area would have been reduced.

## 7. Preferred development option (Questions 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13)

### General comments

- 7.1. The Council's preferred development option is focused on stimulating growth and development in around the town centre and across inner Warrington, whilst allowing the release of Green Belt land to help ensure housing and employment land requirements are satisfied and supporting infrastructure viably delivered. Conversely, development of the outlying settlements is largely being restricted.
- 7.2. A proposed Garden City Suburb of 6,000 dwellings is being planned, alongside a further 2,000 dwelling urban extension to the south of Warrington. These latter proposals relate to land currently designated as Green Belt. A further 1,190 dwellings are planned for release from the Green Belt in the outlying settlements.
- 7.3. The release of Green Belt land will generally be restricted in the first five years of the plan. The Council's justification for this is to reflect the need for the plan to first be adopted and to allow for '*key enabling infrastructure to be delivered*'. It is intended that housing will be delivered at a higher rate over the next ten years of the plan (years 6-15) before reducing towards the end of the plan period.
- 7.4. For the reasons set out above, we have concerns with regards the over reliance on large strategic sites to deliver high levels of housing development in and around the core urban area and in the early years of the plan. Combined with the delays to the release of Green Belt sites, if the Council continues to pursue this strategy it is likely that it will fail to meet housing and employment land requirements, including addressing the current backlog in housing supply. This will only serve to further perpetuate existing demand pressures and affordability, particularly in areas such as Lymm.
- 7.5. Importantly, there is currently an absence of information relating to infrastructure requirements (both boroughwide and with regards the strategic area proposals) and without understanding the potential timing (and funding) of infrastructure requirements either prior to and/or in parallel with new development, this only serves to cast further doubt on the Council's current delivery trajectories for its main development areas and the importance of having a much broader spread of growth locations and contingency sites identified.

## 7. Preferred development option (Questions 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13)

### Proposed safeguarding of land

- 7.6. With regards the identification of safeguarded land and notwithstanding the comments (earlier) with regards the Council's methodology for calculating how much safeguarded land ought to be identified, we note that the only area of proposed safeguarded land is situated adjacent to the proposed Garden City Suburb.
- 7.7. In light of the likely timeframe for bringing forward development in the Garden City Suburb and the overall need to ensure a strong supply of sites which satisfy a mix of housing needs across the Borough (both quantitatively and qualitatively), it is unclear how the release of further land in this location would address wider housing land requirements beyond the plan period. The Council should consider identifying further locations for safeguarded land, including in and around the outlying settlements where there remain continued housing pressures.

### Outlying settlements

- 7.8. For the reasons set out above, it is evident that the outlying settlements have the capacity to accommodate a greater level of development than currently being planned for by the Council and such an option should be appraised before a preferred option is confirmed.
- 7.9. In this regard, we note that the 'Area Profiles and Options Assessment Technical Document' (2017) sets out the assumptions applied in appraising different growth options underpinning the analysis set out in the 'Settlement Profiles' document.
- 7.10. Paragraph 1.10 of the Technical Document defines 'incremental growth' as '*a level of development that could be accommodated by existing infrastructure, subject to minor expansion of that infrastructure, up to 10% of settlement size*'. A 'sustainable settlement extension' is based on '*a new or expanded primary school, taking into account available sites*'. 'Site maximisation' is where 'Call for Sites options and/or Green Belt SHLAA sites' could provide a larger extension.
- 7.11. The proposed apportionment of housing to each of the outlying settlements (set out in Table 22) is based on 'incremental growth' only. Therefore a 'bottom up' approach has been taken to identifying how much development might be accommodated in each area. A total of 1,190 dwellings is afforded to the outlying settlements.

## 7. Preferred development option (Questions 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13)

7.12. As Lymm is the largest settlement (based on existing number of residential addresses), it is allocated the largest quantum of development (500 dwellings), followed by Culcheth (300) and Burtonwood (150), albeit paragraph 5.49 of the draft plan states that these allocations are provisional pending a detailed assessment of potential development sites and their potential environmental impacts including the future permanence of the Green Belt. Based on the availability of evidence thus far and reflective of our earlier comments, there are strong reasons why the apportionment of growth to the outlying settlements should be revisited and the proposed quantum of development increased, including in villages such as Lymm.

7.13. This justification for an increased quantum of development in Lymm is supported by The Mid-Mersey Strategic Market Assessment (2016) which, in singling out Lymm as being the most unaffordable part of the Borough, reported ‘a severe shortage of smaller family houses and bungalows’ together with a strong market demand in the village. The document states:

*‘2.63 The higher price bracket which Warrington falls into is driven by significantly higher house prices in Lymm than in the rest of the Borough.’*

*‘8.50 ..in most locations sales volumes were still below 2006 levels. The main exceptions were Lymm and Stockton Heath’*

*‘8.96 ..data suggests that this village (Lymm) has the highest median prices of all parts of Mid-Mersey...’*

7.14. Given the findings of the Mid-Mersey Strategic Market Assessment in 2016 in relation to Lymm, the Council has not provided robust evidence to demonstrate how the minimal incremental growth it is proposing for the village under its ‘Preferred Development Option’ can be appropriate or justified for the forthcoming plan period.

7.15. We submit that, in terms of its proposed housing provision in Lymm, the Council’s Preferred Option sits in direct conflict with the Framework requirement to significantly ‘boost the supply of housing’ (paragraph 47). Furthermore, it is considered that the Council’s Preferred Option will only serve to constrain the delivery of housing including affordable homes and compound the lack of supply in a village where ‘severe’ shortages of family homes and significant affordability issues have already been identified by the Council.

## 7. Preferred development option (Questions 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13)

### Assessing Lymm's growth potential

- 7.16. The 'Settlement Profiles' document sets out the conclusions of the various growth options in terms of the likely impacts within each settlement.
- 7.17. Firstly, we note that generally, although the definition of the 'Sustainable settlement extension' option refers to 'a new or expanded primary school', only the first part of the option has actually been tested (i.e. a growth scenario of an additional 1,400 extra dwellings underpinned by development of a new Two Form Entry (2FE) primary school). The alternative i.e. an intermediate level of growth linked to expansion of existing schools has not been expressly defined or tested.
- 7.18. Secondly, with regards growth scenario iii) 'extension based on maximising potential of Call for Sites / SHLAA / Green Belt sites', given the overall draft plan strategy to maximise the potential of the urban area in terms of its capacity for growth and new development, it is unrealistic to test a scenario whereby settlements such as Lymm would potentially double in size. The testing of this option has added no real value to the overall assessment on this basis.
- 7.19. Thirdly, when the conclusions of growth scenario ii) i.e. provision of circa 1,400 dwellings are compared against scenario i) i.e. 500 dwellings, there is very limited difference in the assessment of potential impacts.
- 7.20. Taking some of the key criteria in turn:
- **Contribution to 'New City' concept:** neither options are considered to positively contribute to the 'New City' concept, however, as set out earlier, this represents a fundamental misunderstanding of what this is about and how it ties into the LEP's SEP for the wider Cheshire and Warrington area.
  - **Green Belt implications:** scenario i) is favoured by the Council over scenario ii), however, when the evidence about available sites and their location in the Green Belt is considered more closely, it is clear that a higher level of growth could be achieved without detriment to the strategic importance of the Green Belt between Lymm and Warrington and without the need to release the most valued areas of the Green Belt around Lymm.
  - **Supporting role of town centre** (it has been assumed that this actually refers to Lymm village): dependent upon the location of new development, there is scope to ensure that all proposals come forward within close proximity to services and facilities within the village.

## 7. Preferred development option (Questions 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13)

- **Primary school implications:** given the ability to expand Cherry Tree and Statham schools and/or deliver a new 2FE elsewhere within Lymm, both growth options are supported.
- **Secondary school implications:** in respect of both growth scenarios, Lymm High School is identified as having limited potential for expansion without the loss of playing fields. However, the assessment fails to take into account the joint landowners submission and proposals for land north of the A56, Higher Land (Ref: R18/111). Mindful that this site abuts Lymm High School, the proposal expressly offers the potential for Lymm High School to expand its existing site and facilities, enabling further built form close to existing school buildings and the relocation and enhancement of sports facilities, including playing fields and specialist pitches onto land further east resulting in no net loss of facilities.
- On this basis, whilst the school itself (based on current land ownership) might currently be unable to expand, it is misleading for the Council to claim that there are no expansion possibilities in the future when clearly such a detailed and considered proposal has been put forward through the 'Call for Sites' submission process.
- **Health facility implications:** the implications of both growth scenarios require new health provision to be made in some form. Again, the Higher Lane proposal can facilitate additional healthcare provision as part of its overall development.
- **Local and strategic road networks:** again, the implications for either growth scenario (i or ii) are similar. As set out later in this Statement, the Higher Lane proposal provides the opportunity to significantly improve localised access issues associated with Lymm High School.
- **Active travel:** it is recognised that a higher quantum of development would necessitate the need for new direct, attractive and segregated routes for pedestrians/cyclists. Clearly measures such as this are more viable with a larger critical mass of development.
- **Open space, sport and recreation:** incremental growth would require additional localised provision of informal open space, whereas a higher quantum of development would also require new sports pitches and enhancement to public sports facilities currently available at Lymm High School. As set out above, this is not an impediment to development, not least as the Higher Lane proposal makes provision for additional sports provision and large expanses of open land, for use by the school; existing and new

## 7. Preferred development option (Questions 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13)

residents of Lymm; and the local cricket and hockey clubs which have their main practice facilities adjacent to the site.

- **Character and environmental implications:** no significant implications have been identified in terms of potential long term changes to the character or environmental quality of Lymm.
- **Delivery issues:** the assessment positively recognises the potential benefits that would derive from new development of any scale.
- **Overall assessment:** the main difference in the outcome of the two growth scenario assessments relates to the potential impact of development on the overall Green Belt, character of Lymm and secondary school capacity. However, as identified above, when each of these matters are considered in detail, there are no insurmountable differences between each of the options and on this basis, it is evident that a higher quantum of development can be positively realised without detriment to the nature and form of Lymm currently.

### Baseline highway issues in Lymm

7.21. A further point relates to the Council's assessment of baseline highway conditions in Lymm.

7.22. In the overall assessment of Lymm (under the heading 'Local highways network'), the Council claims that there are '*no significant issues during peak hours*'. Whilst this might be the case in terms of general traffic flows in the area, there are recognised localised issues associated with the current access/egress arrangements to Lymm High School in the vicinity of Oughtrington Lane.

7.23. In the joint landowners submission for the Higher Lane site, evidence was provided (including local area photographs and references to Lymm High School's Travel Plan) which demonstrated that during term time, there are recognised highway safety issues surrounding the use of Oughtrington Lane by school buses, involving mounting of pavements and a number of incidents whereby pupils have been involved in a collision with the buses (as pedestrians) given the narrowness of the route.

7.24. Since then, the joint landowners have met with the Council's Executive Member for Highways and the Transport Services Manager to discuss further the issues on Oughtrington Lane. Subsequent correspondence received from the Council (dated 10 February 2017) (see **Appendix 1**) formally acknowledges

## 7. Preferred development option (Questions 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13)

their continued concerns with regards the use of this route by school buses (which cater for over 700 pupils) and importantly, advocates support for the joint landowners' alternative access solution which development of the Higher Lane site could facilitate.

- 7.25. At the least, the Council's assessment of baseline highway conditions in Lymm should recognise this localised issue and the fact that new development adjoining Lymm High School represents a significant opportunity to improve the existing situation, particularly if the school is going to come under increased pressure to expand and improve its current service offering (in terms of leisure facilities) resulting in more school traffic and school children using local routes.

### Identified deficits in Sports Pitches in Lymm

- 7.26. Within the document 'Settlement Profile – Outlying Settlements', it confirms that Lymm has '*significant deficits of pitches in some sports (Both rugby league and union junior; and hockey senior). In addition there is a small deficit of cricket pitch provision for both junior and seniors*'.
- 7.27. Given the Higher lane proposal neighbours the campus which incorporates Lymm High school, Lymm Leisure Centre, Lymm Cricket Club and Lymm's existing Hockey practice facilities, the proposal site is ideally located to respond to this identified deficit.

### Affordable housing need in Lymm

- 7.28. Aside from evidence supporting the appropriateness of a higher apportionment of development to Lymm, the Council's draft plan makes no reference to the need for affordable housing, either Boroughwide or, in particular, in the outlying settlements.
- 7.29. The Mid Mersey Strategic Housing Assessment (2016) confirms Lymm to be one of the most unaffordable areas within the Borough in terms of its high demand, prices and supply shortages. Paragraph 2.64 of the Assessment states '*In 2014 the median sales value in Lymm was £244,950 compared to Warrington Town £150,000*'. Given this, the need for additional housing, including new affordable homes is a critically important consideration underpinning the apportionment of future development, particularly to the outlying settlements.

## 7. Preferred development option (Questions 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13)

- 7.30. Based on a current policy requirement for provision of 30% affordable homes on eligible sites, this could result in a requirement for up to 150 affordable homes in Lymm during the plan period (based on an overall housing requirement of 500 dwellings). Over 20 years, this results in an average of 7.5 affordable homes per annum. It is of concern that this is significantly below the level of affordable housing provision envisaged in the Lymm Village Design Statement (2002) which required '10-15 affordable units per annum between 2002 and 2012'. Clearly, house prices and affordability levels in Lymm have worsened since the Design Statement was prepared and the overarching Mid Mersey Housing Assessment reaffirms the need for increased affordable housing delivery across Warrington looking ahead.
- 7.31. Discussions with the Council have indicated that no up to date housing needs survey has been undertaken in the local area. Before the future housing requirement for Lymm is fixed, this evidence is needed, to ensure that the Council's overall housing strategy makes adequate provision for affordable housing and addresses evidence of local need.
- 7.32. Based on a current policy requirement for provision of 30% affordable homes on eligible sites, this could result in a requirement for up to 150 affordable homes in Lymm during the plan period (based on an overall housing requirement of 500 dwellings). Over 20 years, this results in an average of 7.5 affordable homes per annum. This is significantly below the level of affordable housing provision envisaged in the Lymm Village Design Statement (2002) which required '10-15 affordable units per annum between 2002 and 2012'. Clearly, house prices and affordability levels in Lymm have worsened since the Design Statement was prepared and the overarching Mid Mersey Housing Assessment reaffirms the need for increased affordable housing delivery across Warrington looking ahead.

## 8. Other comments (Question 17)

### Green Belt Assessment Addendum (June 2017)

- 8.1. With reference to the Green Belt Assessment (GBA) Addendum (June 2017), the revised scoring of Parcel LY21 is welcomed. Previously, the GBA scored this parcel of land as making a '*strong contribution*' to the Green Belt, whereas the addendum confirms this has been redefined as having a '*moderate contribution*'.
- 8.2. However, we maintain the view that Parcel LY21 should be revised further and defined as making a '*weak contribution*' on the following grounds:
- The addendum confirms that the degree of openness has been revised down from '*strong*' to '*strong to moderate*' based on the fact that there is only '*moderate vegetation*' within the parcel (and based on less than 20% built form across the parcel). However, the Degree of Openness Matrix at Table 5 of the original Arup Assessment (October 2016) only seeks to categorise openness based on long line views and either '*low*' or '*dense*' levels of vegetation. The term '*moderate*' is not defined. Therefore, applying the guidance contained within this matrix, the level of vegetation clearly leads to the categorisation of openness being no more than '**moderate**' and not '*strong to moderate*' as suggested.
  - In terms of the extent to which the parcel safeguards the Green Belt from encroachment, again the categorisation for this criteria appears to be weighted on the fact that part of the eastern boundary is non-durable, despite the fact that the assessment confirms that the remainder of the eastern boundary is durable, along with the majority of the parcels western, northern and southern boundaries. Our October 2016 submission made clear that more than 85% of the parcel's boundaries are durable and comprise either roads, built form or protected woodland (as defined by Arup). Given this, the only logical conclusion that can be reached is that the parcel makes a '**weak to moderate contribution**' **at best** to Purpose 3.
- 8.3. Applying even a '*moderate*' scoring to Purpose 3, **results in the overall scoring** (pursuant to the guidance contained at paragraph 140 of the October 2016 Arup report) **concluding that parcel LY21 makes an overall 'weak contribution'**. Arup ought to reconsider their rationale for scoring Parcel LY21 stronger than this, in light of these comments and further analysis.

## 8. Other comments (Question 17)

### Green Belt Assessment (Additional Site Assessments) (July 2017)

- 8.4. The Higher Lane site has been assessed by the Council as part of the Additional Sites Assessment (ASA). It is identified as Parcel R18/111 and categorised as making a '*strong contribution*' to the Green Belt.
- 8.5. Unlike the Area and Parcel Assessments undertaken previously, the Additional Sites Assessment has been undertaken by the Council itself and this appears to have led to a significant degree of discrepancy between how areas, parcels and specific sites have been assessed.
- 8.6. In particular, we disagree with the conclusion for this specific site on the following grounds:
- In line with the revised ranking of the Parcel (LY21) assessment, for the same reasons and when professional judgement is applied, this site cannot make more than a 'moderate' contribution to the Green Belt (overall). However, we believe that the ranking is weaker than this.
  - The assessment against Purpose 3 (safeguarding the Green Belt from encroachment) concludes that the site makes a 'strong contribution' in this specific category. However:
    - a. The presence of Lymm High School along the sites' western boundary was cited in the Area and Parcel Assessments as contributing towards a reduction in openness, yet the presence of the school and its adjoining playing fields does not feature in the ASA. The school itself is a durable feature, whilst its playing fields (sandwiched between the school and the site) are a prominent and permeant land feature and therefore ought to also be considered durable.
    - b. The sites' southern boundary is also durable, comprising Higher Lane (a main east-west link into Lymm and Warrington) and existing development in the form of two farmsteads.
    - c. To the east, the site is predominantly bound by protected woodland (Helsdale Wood extending into Newheys Plantation) and therefore also durable, albeit there is a section to the south which is less durable.
    - d. Therefore, it is only the northern boundary which might be considered less durable, however, just beyond this is Lower

## 8. Other comments (Question 17)

Helsdale Wood which would ultimately prevent encroachment of development into the countryside beyond.

- e. The overall landscape setting of the site is naturally contained and therefore whilst some long line views to the east are evident, the site clearly does not support a 'strong degree of openness' contrary to the conclusions of the ASA.

- 8.7. On the basis that the site makes only a 'moderate' contribution to Purpose 3, the overall assessment of the sites contribution to the Green Belt should be downgraded to 'weak' based on the following scoring: no contribution to purposes 1, 2 and 4 and moderate contribution in respect of purposes 3 and 5. **Adopting the guidance contained at paragraph 140 of the Arup (2016) report, this scoring results in an overall ranking of 'weak.'**

### Development potential of Higher Lane site (Ref: R18/111)

- 8.8. Without prejudice to the proposals submitted in response to the Council's 'Call for Sites' consultation in 2016, in light of proposals contained within the draft local plan (2017), the joint landowners have undertaken some further masterplanning work to establish the extent to which the Higher Lane site can support a smaller quantum of development whilst still delivering optimum benefits to Lymm.
- 8.9. Two alternative scheme options have been prepared.

#### Option A

- 8.10. Option A offers up to 275 dwellings (including 30% affordable) alongside an extra care/health facility; new extended sports facilities for Lymm High School (and use by the wider community, as per the existing approach); and, importantly provision of a new school bus drop-off and pick-up zone connecting through to Lymm High School's original (and currently disused) driveway. Combined with the existing route along Oughtrington Lane, this provides a new one-way route for school buses accessing/egressing the school.
- 8.11. It is still proposed that the existing woodland (Newheys Plantation) is extended and that this, combined with the new localised access route through the site, would serve as a new permanent durable boundary.

# 8. Other comments (Question 17)



## Option B

8.12. Option B is similar to option A only that it offers a further reduced scheme of up to 175 dwellings (including 30% affordable).



## 8. Other comments (Question 17)

8.13. Whilst in due course both schemes will be developed further (in terms of their design and layout), these initial plans demonstrate two alternative ways in which the site might come forward and assist in addressing housing needs and other localised highway problems in Lymm.

8.14. Furthermore, the joint landowners are currently in talks with a number of potential delivery partners whom are interested in taking forward both the residential and extra care elements of the scheme. Details of their chosen delivery partner will be confirmed to the Council in due course, however, the level of market interest in the site serves to demonstrate the demand for development in this location and the overall commercial deliverability of the proposal as a whole.

# Appendix 1



# WARRINGTON

Borough Council

Professor Steven Broomhead  
Chief Executive

Cllr H Mundry  
Portfolio Holder (Highways, Transportation &  
Public Realm)

New Town House  
Buttermarket Street  
Warrington  
WA1 2NH

(by email to [REDACTED])

Our Ref:  
Your Ref: STS/320/AJ

February 10, 2017

Dear Sir

### Proposed Development – Lymm

Further to our recent meeting pertaining to your submission to the 'Call for Sites' process for new developments in the Warrington Borough Council area.

I have received details of your proposal, which plans to develop land to the north of the A56 and east of Oughtrington Lane in Lymm. I would like to record that the facility for buses to use the proposed new spine road through your site and board / alight students near the northern end of your proposed development would significantly aid the movement of students, approximately 700 of which are transported via bus services from various parts of South Warrington to Lymm High School. This new road would reduce the traffic levels on the approach to the existing entrance to the school off Oughtrington Lane, particularly at the beginning and end of the school day.

The existing width of Oughtrington Lane does not facilitate two buses (or one bus and another large vehicle) to pass safely and as a consequence vehicles, including 10 double deck bus movements, are regularly mounting the pavements to maintain flows which, in turn, have the potential to increase the safety risk of road users, bus passengers and pedestrians alike.

Yours faithfully

[REDACTED]  
Councillor Hans Mundry  
Portfolio Holder (Highways, Transportation & Public Realm)



Whitelands  
Barthomley  
Cheshire  
CW2 5PL

14<sup>th</sup> March 2018

Dear Mr [REDACTED]

### **Re: Higher Lane Land, Lymm - (R18/111)**

Further to the submissions to the Council made on our behalf by Indigo Planning, I write to you in your capacity as WBC's Planning Policy & Programmes Manager and further to Andy Farrall's suggestion that I contact you and the Local Plan Team. The purpose of this letter is to re-emphasise the seriousness of the highways safety situation that exists on Oughtrington Lane and to reiterate how land we have put forward in response to the Council's 'Call for Sites' process can provide the Council with a solution. The letter also relays comments and statements that have been made by Councillors and others about what is taking place on Oughtrington Lane.

As you are aware, the Higher Lane land occupies the area between Lymm High School and the main A56 and, as a result, offers a number of advantages including the ability to provide a new bus access road to Lymm High school served directly from the A56. The delivery of this infrastructure would enable the Council to address the long-standing highway safety problems inherent with the school's existing Oughtrington Lane route as have been identified by the Council. Having discussed matters with Councillor Rebecca Knowles, who is a Governor at the school, I am also acting upon her advice that we approach the Council about the proposal.

### **Why is a new access route to the school required?**

Oughtrington Lane currently serves as the primary access route to Lymm High School. The Council use the route to transport 700 pupils to and from the school each day using ten double-decker buses. The lane is narrow and only has a small pavement to one side. On the 10<sup>th</sup> February 2017, Councillor Mundry (WBC's Executive Board Member and Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transportation & Public Realm) issued a letter in which he stated the following about how the Council's buses were making the Oughtrington Lane route 'work':

***'The existing width of Oughtrington Lane does not facilitate two buses (or one bus and another large vehicle) to pass safely and as a consequence vehicles, including 10 double decker bus movements, are regularly mounting the pavements to maintain flows which, in turn, have the potential to increase the safety risk of road users, bus passengers and pedestrians alike.'***

Cllr Mundry  
Letter - 10<sup>th</sup> Feb 2017  
(Appendix 1)



Photo showing school bus on Oughtrington Lane driving along the pavement to make way for an oncoming van beyond the black car. (Photo from YouTube video)

In Autumn 2016, a fresh assessment of the Oughtrington Lane route was undertaken by SK Transport Highways Engineers. Their report detailed how the narrowness of the lane made it unsuitable as a bus access route to Lymm High School. The report, a copy of which is with the Council, explained how it was the dimensional width of the carriageway that made it physically impossible for wider vehicles to pass and this was why the pavements were regularly being used by the Council's buses. It also detailed how, because of the other heavy traffic that followed the school buses down Oughtrington Lane at peak times, there was no practical alternative for the bus drivers but for them to drive along the pavements in order to maintain traffic flows.

As part of their assessment, SK Transport took photographs to show how Oughtrington Lane was being made to 'work' - see Appendix 2 of this document or view online at:

<https://www.higherlanelymm.co.uk/newaccess-road-for-lymm-high-school/existing-highways-route/>

SK Transport also collected video footage of the buses driving on the pavement and this has now received over 1600 views on YouTube. We would urge you, Council Officers and Councillors to view this footage at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mZSlc9Jgnio>

In February 2017, a meeting took place with the Council to discuss the highway safety problems on Oughtrington Lane and the solution that could be provided by the Higher Lane land. During the meeting, both Councillor Mundry and Alyn Jones (WBC's Specialist Transport Manager) explained that, whilst the Council was aware of the existing issues on Oughtrington Lane, owing to budget constraints and the multiple ownerships of land along the route, the Council had no way of addressing the narrowness of the lane. As a result, both Councillor Mundry and Alyn Jones relayed their support for the idea of a new access road to the school as part of the Higher Lane proposal and this was subsequently confirmed within Councillor Mundry's letter of the 10<sup>th</sup> February 2017 (see Appendix 1).

Therefore, the Council has now acknowledged there to be a significant problem on Oughtrington Lane and one which relies upon its buses driving unlawfully along the pavements when faced with an oncoming wide vehicle. Whilst the drivers are doing what they can to make the route 'work', this does not change the fact that what they are doing to overcome the width deficiency is illegal and represents a clear and frequent breach of health & safety legislation. Furthermore, it would be difficult to see how the Council's awareness of how the route is being used would not have implications for the validity of its public liability insurances, should an incident occur.

Whilst it is true that all schools access routes experience busy periods at peak times, what happens on Oughtrington Lane goes far beyond what could be described as reasonable or acceptable activity. Clearly, the Council has a duty of care, not only to the pupils it transports on its buses, but also to other pupils and members of the public who have no alternative but to use the pavement on Oughtrington Lane each day. As a result, we believe that the Council has a responsibility to take steps to address a situation on Oughtrington Lane which has already been allowed to carry on for far too long.

### **So how long has the problem been known about?**

The way in which the buses use the pavements on Oughtrington Lane has been known to Lymm High School and the Council for many years. In 2008, the school, in conjunction with the Council, commissioned a report to assess the school's travel & highway safety arrangements. The report was entitled '*Lymm High School Travel Plan 2008*' and it stated the following within its findings:

***'Buses using the pavements'***

***'There have been a number of incidents over the last few years of pupils being hit by bus wing mirrors'***

***'Narrow footpaths on Oughtrington Lane causing a danger to pupils as pedestrians'***

***'A new road needs to be built to the school'***

Lymm High School Travel Plan 2008

The assessment carried out by SK Transport Highways Engineers in 2016 confirmed that the same activity as had been recorded by the school and the Council back in 2008 was continuing to take place on Oughtrington Lane some nine years later. Further, emails and letters that we have received from ex-Lymm High School pupils, local residents and one from a former Governor at the school, detail how, to overcome the narrowness of the lane, the Council's buses have been driving along the pavements ***'for at least the past 28 years'***.

### **The Solution being offered by the Higher Lane land:**

The Higher Lane land adjoins Lymm's eastern settlement boundary and exists as the only undeveloped area of land between Lymm High School and the main A56 (Higher Lane). As a result, it provides the only way in which a new road could be built to access the school from the A56.

The proposed new bus access road would be delivered as part of the Higher Lane scheme and would lead to a dedicated pupil drop-off and collection zone adjacent to the school's original rear drive (see Appendix 3). The new route would also incorporate wide footpaths and dedicated cycle lanes to improve pupil safety and the overall accessibility of the school.

Consequently, the allocation of the Higher Lane land as part of the Local Plan Review would provide the Council with the opportunity to secure this new infrastructure which would bring an end to the dangerous way in which Oughtrington Lane is currently being made to 'work' and at no-cost to the Council. It would also address pupil / bus conflict more generally, promote cycling to the school and deliver a far safer highways situation, both for the school, its pupils and the general public.

### **Raising awareness of the problems on Oughtrington Lane & the Higher Lane solution:**

As part of a public consultation exercise, a brochure for the Higher Lane proposal was distributed to all Lymm addresses in Autumn 2017. The brochure detailed the highway safety issues on Oughtrington Lane and explained how the allocation of the land would provide the opportunity to build a safe new bus route to the school. The brochure also highlighted some of the other key benefits unique to the Higher Lane land which include:

- Its direct highways access onto the A56 (Lymm's only arterial trunk road). This would ensure that a development would not direct traffic through Lymm's village core nor exacerbate congestion on the Rush Green Road / Warburton Bridge side of Lymm;
- The gifting to the Council of 10 acres of land for sport & recreation immediately adjacent to Lymm High School, Lymm Leisure Centre and Lymm's Hockey & Cricket Club facilities. This would respond directly to the identified deficit of sports pitches in Lymm as detailed within the Council's Settlement Profile document (July 2017). The provision of this land could also provide the Council with scope to enable the future redevelopment / expansion of Lymm's Leisure Centre which the Council assessed in 2017 to have a ***'poor quality'*** rating.

Along with the brochure, a website for the Higher Lane proposals was also launched last year. This can be found at: [www.higherlaneland.co.uk](http://www.higherlaneland.co.uk) It provides further information about the proposals and provides a copy of Councillor Mundry's letter. It also includes photographs together with the video showing how Oughtrington Lane is currently being made to 'work'.

## **Statements made by Councillors & Lymm High School:**

**Cllr Rebecca Knowles** (WBC Councillor & Lymm High School Governor) has confirmed that both she and the Headteacher of Lymm High School are very worried about the current highway safety situation on Oughtrington Lane.

Councillor Knowles, who is a former solicitor with a background in negligence, has stated that the existing Oughtrington Lane route is **'not fit for purpose'** and has described the situation the Council is presiding over on the lane as **'inarguable'**. Councillor Knowles has also stated that **'the Headteacher thinks it's only a matter of time before there's another incident'**.

In relation to pupil safety, the Headteacher of the School has recently written to all pupils and parents stating that **'health and safety always has to be the school's main concern'**.

Furthermore, the School's Travel Plan (2008) states that its 'Aims and Aspirations' are: **'to improve the safety of the journey to and from school for all'** and advises that **'The School Governors have always supported actions to address the traffic problems'**.

**Cllr John Bamforth** (Lymm Parish Council Chairman) has issued an email which has been forwarded to us by a concerned Lymm resident. Within his email to her, Councillor Bamforth has expressed his own concerns about the situation on Oughtrington Lane and, in describing the use of the pavements by the Council's buses as **'illegal'**, has called for the matter to be referred to Cheshire Police.

Notwithstanding Councillor Bamforth's suggestion to involve the Police, it is clear from the highways assessment undertaken by SK Transport that the activity taking place is a consequence of the drivers being required to follow a route which the Council already know to be too narrow to enable wider vehicles to pass safely. For this reason, I think it would be unfair to blame the bus drivers for this situation as they have no choice in the route they are being instructed to follow. Further, it is clear that the Police could not do anything to address the root cause of the problem which is the physical unsuitability of the lane.

**Cllr Hans Mundry** (WBC's Executive Board Member and Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transportation & Public Realm) has been clear within his letter in respect of the Higher Lane proposals. He has acknowledged the way in which the Council buses regularly use the pavements on Oughtrington Lane because of the narrowness of the route. He, along with Alyn Jones of the Council's Highways Department, has explained why the existing route cannot be widened and, having viewed the photographs and video footage collected by SK Transport, has issued a letter of support for the delivery of the new bus access road as part of the Higher Lane proposals.

Within his letter dated the 10<sup>th</sup> February 2017, Councillor Mundry stated:

***'I have received details of your proposal, which plans to develop land to the north of the A56 and east of Oughtrington Lane in Lymm. I would like to record that the facility for buses to use the proposed new spine road through your site and board / alight students near the northern end of your proposed development would significantly aid the movement of students.'***

Cllr Mundry Letter  
10<sup>th</sup> Feb 2017  
(Appendix 1)

## **The importance being placed on highway safety elsewhere in Lymm:**

On the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2018, I attended the planning meeting for the Ravenbank House proposal on Pepper Street in Lymm (Ref: 2017/31074). As the debate about the application progressed, what struck me most was how the discussions between Councillors were almost entirely dominated by their concerns about child highway safety and it culminated in them stating that ***'the Council needed to make highway safety of paramount importance for the children at the nearby school.'***

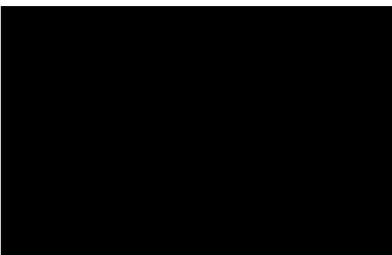
Whilst I agreed with the Councillors' position, it did make me wonder, if it is the case that the Council place child highway safety as paramount, how has it ever been possible for the Council to have allowed a situation on Oughtrington Lane to continue for so many years, and one that sees its own double-decker buses drive along the pavements which are used by pupils walking to school? And equally, if child highway safety is the Council's top priority as the Councillors claimed, how could it ever be defensible for the Council to allow the current situation on Oughtrington Lane to continue now that a no-cost solution is being offered as part of the Higher Lane proposals?

## **Summary**

As landowners, we are obviously eager to highlight the merits of our own land. However, the current Local Plan Review provides the Council with the opportunity to deliver solutions to identified problems within the Borough. As the person ultimately responsible for Highways, Transportation & Public Realm, Councillor Mundry has formally acknowledged that the Council has a significant highways safety problem on Oughtrington Lane and one which currently relies upon the Council's buses regularly engaging in activity that is illegal. As a result, we would now urge other Councillors and Council Officers to give due consideration to the Council's position in respect of the risks that are being taken on Oughtrington Lane and further, to support Councillor Mundry's efforts to secure a safer highways solution through the allocation of the Higher Lane land.

If you could please provide response to the issues raised in this letter and confirm its safe receipt, I would be grateful.

Yours sincerely,



On behalf of The Higher Lane landowners

cc.

Cllr Terry O'Neill - WBC Leader

Cllr Hans Mundry - WBC Portfolio Holder for Highways & Transportation

Cllr Tony McCarthy - WBC Chair Development Management Committee

Cllr Cathy Mitchell - WBC Director Warrington Borough Transport Ltd

Andy Farrell - WBC Executive Director for Environment and Regeneration

Matthew Cumberbatch - WBC Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer

Appendix 1:

Letter of Support of Higher Lane Proposals - Councillor Mundry 10<sup>th</sup> Feb 2017



**WARRINGTON**  
Borough Council

Professor Steven Broomhead  
Chief Executive

Mr  
(by



CLr H Mundry  
Portfolio Holder (Highways, Transportation &  
Public Realm)

New Town House  
Buttermarket Street  
Warrington  
WA1 2NH

Our Ref:  
Your Ref: STS/320/AJ

February 10, 2017

Dear Sir

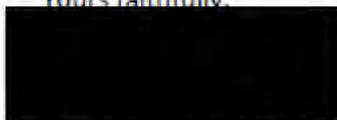
**Proposed Development – Lymm**

Further to our recent meeting pertaining to your submission to the 'Call for Sites' process for new developments in the Warrington Borough Council area.

I have received details of your proposal, which plans to develop land to the north of the A56 and east of Oughtrington Lane in Lymm. I would like to record that the facility for buses to use the proposed new spine road through your site and board / alight students near the northern end of your proposed development would significantly aid the movement of students, approximately 700 of which are transported via bus services from various parts of South Warrington to Lymm High School. This new road would reduce the traffic levels on the approach to the existing entrance to the school off Oughtrington Lane, particularly at the beginning and end of the school day.

The existing width of Oughtrington Lane does not facilitate two buses (or one bus and another large vehicle) to pass safely and as a consequence vehicles, including 10 double deck bus movements, are regularly mounting the pavements to maintain flows which, in turn, have the potential to increase the safety risk of road users, bus passengers and pedestrians alike.

Yours faithfully,



Councillor Hans Mundry  
Portfolio Holder (Highways, Transportation & Public Realm)

warrington.gov.uk

**Appendix 2:**

**Some of the photos submitted to the Council by SK Transport in Autumn 2016 showing how Oughtrington Lane is being made to 'work'.**

School bus driving along Oughtrington Lane pavement.



Double-decker bus mounts and drives along the pavement in order to pass.

School bus drives past pupil pedestrians within inches of their coats and bags.





Double-decker bus driving on the pavement to accommodate queuing traffic.

The photo below show the narrowness of the pavement on Oughtrington Lane which only exist to one side. These are the pavements being used by the Council's buses.



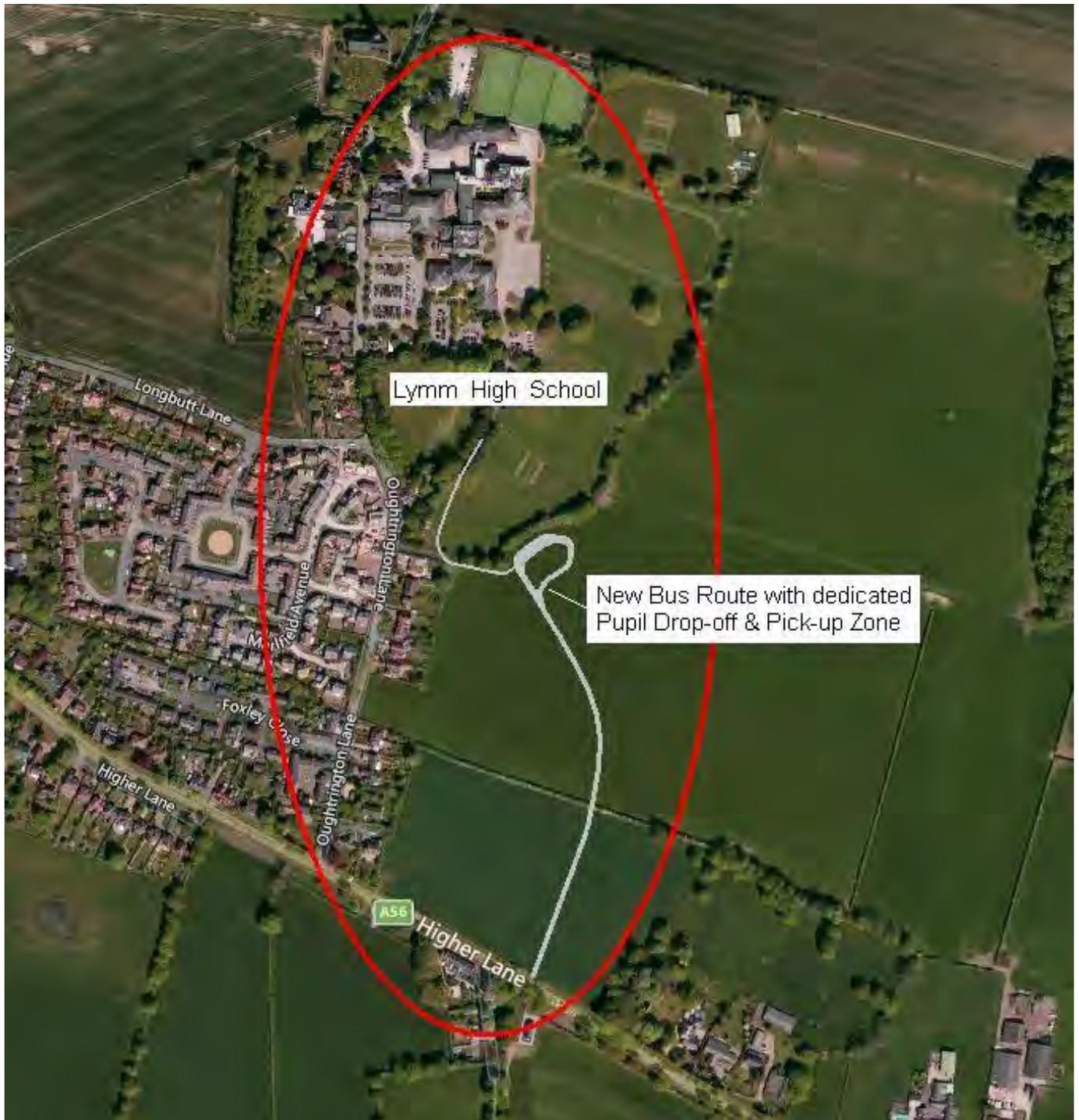
Owing to the narrowness of the lane, the bus is over the centre line resulting in an oncoming vehicle taking to the footpath to pass.



Double-decker bus uses pavement to pass.

**Appendix 3:**

The Aerial view below shows Lymm High School & Leisure Centre and illustrates how a new bus route could lead directly from the A56 Higher Lane to connect with the school's original driveway. It also shows the school's existing narrow Oughtrington lane route.





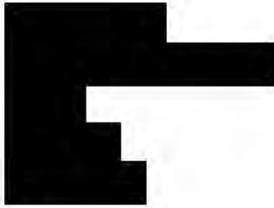
# WARRINGTON

Borough Council

Professor Steven Broomhead  
Chief Executive

David Boyer  
Assistant Director  
Transport and Operations

New Town House  
Buttermarket Street  
Warrington  
WA1 2NH



Your Ref:  
Our Ref: STS/302/AJ

21<sup>st</sup> November 2017

Dear

**Oughtrington Lane, Lymm**

I refer to your letter dated 18<sup>th</sup> November 2017 which has been passed to me by Councillor Mundry for a response. Please find below my comments.

Oughtrington Lane is presently frequented by a significant volume of traffic at the beginning and end of the school day, in order to gain access to Lymm High School. Whilst most of the traffic that uses the road is private there are a number of commercially operated double deck vehicles that serve the school, collectively transporting around 700 students, which occasionally have difficulty in passing each other along parts of its length.

As part of the review of Warrington's Local Plan, the Council issued a 'call for sites' to landowners and developers in October 2016, asking them to submit sites which they wanted the Council to consider as part of the Local Plan process. As the Local Plan progresses, the Council will be reviewing these sites in detail to confirm whether they should be allocated for development. Details of all of the sites submitted were published when the Council commenced consultation on its Preferred Development Option for the Local Plan in July 2017. All the site information is available on the Council's web site.

[https://www.warrington.gov.uk/info/201368/local\\_plan\\_review/2349/site\\_submissions](https://www.warrington.gov.uk/info/201368/local_plan_review/2349/site_submissions)

The proposed plans that were included in support of one of the sites submitted in Lymm included an area for school borne traffic to drop students off away from Oughtrington Lane, which have the potential to disperse traffic and reduce potential

conflicts. Without conducting modelling of any proposed development, as part of any subsequent planning application process, it is not possible to determine traffic dispersal or impact. This would be modelled if this or other developments progressed.

If the development was to proceed, which is of course subject to the Local Plan process, it is likely that students would board and alight services at the drop-off facility. If this occurred, it would likely divert 40 large vehicle movements on school days from Oughtrington Lane. Other vehicle movements facilitating access for students and others to Lymm High School could also use this drop-off and pick up area if the development transpired.

Is it common for bus services to serve the vicinity of destinations rather than the front door. This is the case for a number of schools in the Warrington area.

I should emphasise that this proposal attracted by the 'call for sites' process has no planning status, the letter issued by Councillor Mundry is observational in respect of the potential for benefits to local highway infrastructure.

The next stage of the review of the Local Plan is for the Council to assess in detail all sites which have been submitted as part of the 'call for sites' to establish if any should be allocated for development. Further consultation will then be undertaken during 2018 on the draft version of the Local Plan which will include the allocated development sites. I must stress that a large number of sites have been submitted in Lymm, far in excess of the number which would need to be allocated to meet the level of development for Lymm set out in the Preferred Development Option.

All proposed developments which come forward through the planning process are reviewed by the Council's Planning Department and the Highways Development Control team. This process is established to formally review the impact of developments on the local highway network (amongst other considerations), before they are permitted to pass through the various well established stages towards approval. Applications are regularly reviewed, altered and in some cases rejected if they are considered to deteriorate local conditions.

Councillor Mundry met with the landowners of the proposed development, at their request, along with an officer from within my department. The letter detailing the observational potential impact of the proposal, rather than of support for the development, was issued to the landowner. The officer that attended the meeting has not been subsequently approached to determine whether the Council would be happy for that letter to be made public.

Officers who are presently working on the future Local Plan and the review of the 'call for sites' process are fully familiar with the associated national policy

framework, legislation and associated matters. They will take all of these elements into account as they progress through the future stages of this work.

Yours sincerely,

David Boyer  
Assistant Director (Transport & Operations)

**Please contact:**

**Direct dial:**

**Email:**

[REDACTED]

Dear Mr Farrall,

I write to you as one of three landowners who have put land forward on Higher Lane, Lymm in response to the Council's Call for Sites process and Local Plan review (R18/111) and upon the suggestion of Councillors Mundry and Knowles.

Notwithstanding the formal submissions that our planning consultants (Indigo Planning) have made to the Council, I wanted to write to you directly to confirm, firstly, that formal agreement is in

place between the respective landowners regarding the release of the land for development and further, that we are now at the closing stages of entering into agreement with a major national housebuilder who want to deliver the scheme.

In addition to this, I also wanted to make you aware that, as part of a public consultation exercise, a brochure has been distributed to all Lymm addresses and a website launched: <https://www.higherlanelymm.co.uk/> which highlight to local residents how the Higher Lane land offers three major advantages which no other land in Lymm can offer. These being:

(1) A direct highways access onto Lymm's A56 arterial trunk road. This would avoid traffic being directed through the village core whilst preventing further congestion problems to the north side of the village on Rush Green Road and Warburton Bridge;

(2) The ability to gift 10 acres of land for sports & recreation immediately adjacent to Lymm High School / Lymm Leisure Centre / Lymm's Hockey & Cricket Clubs. This would respond directly to the Council's identified '*significant deficit of sports pitches in Lymm*' as detailed within its Settlement Profile document (July 2017);

(3) The unique opportunity to build a new bus access route to Lymm High School to address the significant highway safety problems created by the width deficiencies of Oughtrington Lane.

With regard to (3) above, I also wanted to provide you with copy of a letter of support for the Higher Lane proposals as issued by Councillor Hans Mundry (attached). The letter was forwarded by Alyn Jones following our meeting with both him and Councillor Mundry. Within the letter, Councillor Mundry has been candid about the Council's knowledge of the significant problems on Oughtrington Lane and in particular, the way in which Network Warrington buses are having to use the pavements owing to its deficiency in road width. During our discussions, both Councillor Mundry and Alyn Jones also acknowledged that, in the absence of the new bus access route that is being offered by the Higher Lane proposals, the current unsafe situation which relies upon the buses regular unlawful use of the pavements on Oughtrington Lane, will be set to continue for at least the next plan period. To give you an idea of the problem, the video clip below shows how Network Warrington buses use the footpath on the school's existing Oughtrington Lane route. This clip has now received over 820 views with many Lymm residents having provided feedback to our website email contact raising their concerns about the current situation on Oughtrington Lane. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=1&v=mZSlc9Jgnio](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=mZSlc9Jgnio)

Image removed by sender.



[Lymm High School Bus driving along pavements on Oughtrington Lane, Lymm](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=mZSlc9Jgnio)

[www.youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)

In addition to the meeting with Councillor Mundry and Alyn Jones, I can also confirm that Councillor Rebecca Knowles, who is also a Governor at Lymm High School, has expressed her concern, as well as that of the Headmaster, regarding the current highways situation on Oughtrington Lane and described the situation as 'indefensible', not least given that there have already been a number of recorded incidents. Commenting in response to the Higher Lane proposal, Councillor Knowles described the provision of a new access route to the school as a 'genius solution' and suggested I

request the opportunity to meet with yourself to discuss the proposal.

We understand that at present the Council is processing the many consultation responses it has received. Furthermore, that the Council has confirmed it is looking to publish its Draft Local Plan in Autumn/Winter 2018. However, we wanted to provide the above information and request a meeting to discuss the benefits of the Higher Lane land in more detail and how it could resolve a significant existing highways safety problem for the Council and school.

If you could let me know that you have received this email safely I would be grateful, and please advise as to when it would be convenient for us to meet.

Yours sincerely,

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