

PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE WARRINGTON PROPOSED SUBMISSION VERSION LOCAL PLAN 2017-2037

Response by Ian Estall; [REDACTED]

I request that the comments set out below be taken into account in the Borough Council's review of the Plan's policies and proposals prior to the Plan's submission to the Secretary of State and holding of a Public Examination as may be required.

I am especially concerned that, in its present form, the Plan as a whole is at serious risk of being found to be 'unsound', particularly with regard to overall volume and locations of areas of open land that it is proposed should be removed from the statutory Green Belt. The draft local plan fails to provide sufficient justification for such fundamental changes to be capable of withstanding scrutiny when subjected to the inevitable Public Examination in 2020.

Such concerns can only have gained credence from the Government's very recent commitment to meeting a UK Net Zero Emissions target as set out in a statement in the House of Lords on 12 June 2019. Whilst that has not yet been enshrined in National Planning Policy Guidance, such a measure must surely be enacted in time for it to provide a stern test that any emerging development plan must pass at the time of the Public Examination of this Plan. This will demand the most critical scrutiny of the road transport implications of the proposed large-scale development of presently open land in the Walton, Appleton, Grappenhall and Stretton areas.

The proposed requirements for housing provision at a rate which measurably exceeds Warrington's own needs according to the 2016-based population projections must surely be revised downwards although I accept that any such reduction should be tempered by assurance that all locally-arising needs should continue to be met. Such concerns are being raised, not only by residents of south Warrington but also, most recently, by those who would be affected by development at Peel Hall to the north of the town.

[REDACTED] Lymm, I accept that a certain amount of housing development must take place by 2037 but feel that a figure of 430 houses cannot be fully justified given that the character of the village would be at serious risk of being irrevocably damaged by either large-scale 'infill' or peripheral expansion on visually-sensitive sites.

The Consultation Draft Plan proposes that four defined areas be released for housing development in the plan period. I believe that it is reasonable to request that at least one of those sites be deleted from allocation. In that regard, I would argue that Site ref. 10.10 [Lymm; Pool Lane] would, if developed, represent the least damaging loss of open land for the following reasons:-

1 It is not a visually-prominent site, being in the lower part of the settlement and bounded by defensible boundaries. In contrast, development of the land on the opposite [more southerly] side of Warrington Road [site 10.12.] is significantly more open in character and, if developed, would markedly reduce the extent and visual value of the remaining undeveloped land between Statham and the M6 embankment. I would also find it more difficult to accept the loss to development of site 10.11. [Rushgreen Road] which makes an important contribution to maintaining the break in development between Lymm and Oughtrington to the north of the Bridgewater Canal.

2 It adjoins a bus route on Warrington Road, noting that the contribution that public transport can make to reducing exhaust emissions can play a significant part in combatting global warming.

3 It is easily within walking distance of a primary school.

Development of smaller un-allocated sites outside Lymm's existing developed area can both make socially-beneficial use of land with environmental benefits and, if sensitively designed in accordance with detailed local plan policies, can accommodate a proportion of local housing needs displaced from presently-proposed green field allocations in appropriate circumstances. Such opportunities around the edge of Lymm have resulted in permissions for a significant number of houses in recent years, all without evident harm to the local environment.

The Borough Council invited submissions promoting such sites at an earlier stage in preparations for this Plan. These were assessed against relevant criteria and, inter alia, resulted in a relatively favourable assessment of a site adjacent to Pool Farm, Pool Lane, Statham which is contiguous with the draft Pool Lane allocation referred to above. I am aware of the landowner's intention to submit a case in favour of a small-scale, sensitively-designed solution to development of that land.

Given the thoroughness of the supporting investigations into vehicular access, precautionary measures for flood alleviation and illustrative plans for architectural design and 'massing' of built development, I feel confident about the positive contribution it can make to the range and affordability of housing without harming the environment or compromising the principles of Green Belt.

Ian E Estall; 17 June 2019

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