



WARRINGTON
Borough Council

Warrington Borough Council Local Plan

Urban Capacity Assessment 2019

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Urban Capacity Statement

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement sets out how the Council has assessed the capacity of the existing urban area – comprising the main urban area of Warrington and the outlying settlements that are inset from the Green Belt - to accommodate new development.
- 1.2 In identifying land to meet Warrington’s need for housing and employment, the Council has sought to maximise the capacity of the existing urban area to accommodate new development. In accordance with Government policy (NPPF - Paragraphs 117 – 123: Making effective use of land), the Council must demonstrate that all reasonable options have been identified for meeting our development requirements before proposing to release any land from the Green Belt.
- 1.3 The Council has undertaken a detailed assessment of urban capacity for new homes through its Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) and for employment through its Economic Development Needs Assessment (EDNA). It has also identified the significant additional capacity for homes and employment that can be delivered through the regeneration plans for the Town Centre, Warrington Waterfront and parts of the wider Inner Warrington area. This has involved a detailed masterplanning exercise undertaken in partnership with Warrington & Co, the Council’s economic development partnership. The relevant master planning documents are contained in Appendix 1 to this Statement.
- 1.4 The SHLAA, EDNA and masterplanning work have all been updated following the consultation on the Local Plan Preferred Development Option (PDO). This has taken into account responses from the local community, elected representatives, developers and statutory consultees, as well as other relevant information. The Council is confident that its approach provides a comprehensive assessment of the available land supply in the Borough, outside of the Green Belt, and demonstrates that that the use of brownfield land is being maximised.

2 Responding to the Preferred Development Option Consultation

- 2.1 There were a number of respondents to the PDO consultation that considered that the Council’s assessment of the urban capacity did not take account of all available brownfield land. In particular a large number of residents and elected representatives considered that the Warrington Hospital site and the Fiddlers Ferry Power Station site could provide land to meet future development needs. Conversely a number of developers and landowners considered that a number of sites had been included in the masterplanning work which could not be demonstrated as developable. A large number of respondents also did not believe that the Peel Hall site should be included within the SHLAA.

- 2.2 The density assumptions used in both the SHLAA and the masterplanning work were also questioned. Some respondents considered them to be too high and some too low. A number of developers considered that allowance should be made in the SHLAA for a proportion of sites which may not come forward for development in the 15 year assessment period.
- 2.3 There were no submissions to the PDO consultation promoting brownfield sites that the Council had not been previously aware of and accounted for.
- 2.4 A full list of issues raised relating to urban capacity and the Council's response to them is provided in the Responding to Representations Report 2019.
- 2.5 Following the PDO consultation, the Council has undertaken a comprehensive review of the SHLAA, EDNA and its masterplanning work. It has consulted with the owners/operators of both Warrington Hospital and FFPS and taken their views into account in establishing the urban capacity. The Council has also revised the housing density assumptions for both the SHLAA and masterplanning work. The detail on how this has informed the Council's assessment of urban capacity is set out below.

3 Housing

SHLAA Land Supply

- 3.1 The Council has undertaken a major review of its Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) in 2018, identifying committed and planned housing land supply over the next 15 years. The SHLAA (2018) takes into account planning permissions granted and completions up to 31st March 2018 and is in the revised assessment format that takes account of the recommendations contained in the National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) in respect of the site size threshold.
- 3.2 It also, it takes account of the responses to the PDO Consultation, providing updated evidence to support the assumptions used for estimating the development potential of sites.
- 3.3 The assumptions in the SHLAA regarding; net developable area ratios; build rates; lead-in-times; densities etc) have been re-appraised again to ensure that they up-to-date and take account of recent fluctuations in market conditions.
- 3.4 The net developable area ratios; build rates; lead-in-times have remained unchanged. However, a review of permissions in the Town Centre and Inner Warrington indicates considerably higher densities in some instances than previously employed in both the SHLAA and the Town Centre Masterplanning. Hence, new density bands have been included for Inner Warrington (130dph) and the Town Centre (275 dph). The justification for these densities is included in the SHLAA (pages 16/17 and Appendix 4).

- 3.5 In respect of the major brownfield sites that were identified by respondents as being available, the Council had already taken account of these but has sought confirmation from the site operators that the previous advice was still correct. In respect of the Warrington Hospital site the Council have been advised that the hospital trust are currently reviewing whether their preferred option is to redevelop the hospital on site or whether they are going to relocate to an alternative site. The Council is not therefore able to include the existing site within its land supply, but this will be kept under review.
- 3.6 The operators of Fiddlers Ferry Power station have indicated that the power station is likely to continue operating into the next decade and that the existing ash processing activities at the site are expected to continue beyond the power station's life span, until the existing deposits are fully depleted. It is likely that a new power generating facility will then be developed on the site, but this would require a much smaller area. This would mean that land could be released for development, but the operator has confirmed this would be for employment development and not housing.
- 3.7 The Council has reviewed the SHLAA assessment for the Peel Hall site following the recent appeal decision. As there is no agreed package of transport mitigation measures, the Council has re-classified the Peel Hall site from 'deliverable' to 'developable' in the SHLAA. The Council has not therefore included any completions from the site within its five year land supply.
- 3.8 It is acknowledged that a specific allowance is not made for the non-delivery/implementation of sites/permissions in the SHLAA. This is because the deliverability of every site is reassessed annually and up-dated. Sites where planning permission has expired or where a consent for an alternative use has been granted are either removed from the deliverable supply or pushed back into the developable 6-10 or 11-15 year supply, as is considered appropriate. Also, it is important to note that whilst standard assumptions are applied in the absence of any other information, site specific intelligence/information from developers is used where this is available. In particular, the Council have sought information from the developers of large sites to inform the density and phasing of development.
- 3.9 In addition, the SHLAA includes a review of past projections comparing projected completions with actual completions that occurred in a given year (Table 3.8, 2018 SHLAA). This illustrates that the actual completions continually exceed the projected completions, which serves to demonstrate the cautious approach inherent in the assumptions within the SHLAA.
- 3.10 The updated SHLAA (2018) identified a total housing land supply in the urban area and on green field sites outside of the Green Belt of **9,226** up to 2032 (Table 1 below). This figure includes a 'Small Sites' Allowance for sites below the 0.25ha size threshold employed (See column D in Table 1 below) but does not include any Windfall Allowance for sites of 0.25ha and above.

Masterplanning Land Supply

- 3.11 The Master planning work that has been undertaken incorporates the Council's vision for the regeneration of the areas in and around the Town Centre and seeks to maximise its development potential.
- 3.12 The Council have updated the master planning work relating to the Town Centre and Inner Warrington (including the Waterfront Main Development Area) in partnership with Warrington & Co. This has involved completely reviewing the land uses, capacities and phasing of development on each parcel within each of the masterplanning areas, to take account of; consultation responses; recent progress on site acquisition; funding; negotiations; and planning applications.
- 3.13 In particular a number of parcels have been removed or amended from the Warrington Waterfront Development Area to take account of:
- the confirmed alignment of the Western Link;
 - PDO responses from site owners regarding the availability of sites; and
 - land ownership issues.
- 3.14 The residential use category has been amended to "Residential Led Development" to take account of a representation, which considered that a purely "Residential Development" use category to identify broad land uses did not reflect the nature of schemes that have recently been granted planning permission in the town centre (2017/31394 and 2017/31148), which contain some commercial space at ground floor level. This seemed appropriate as it is likely that the Council would be looking for some commercial/retail uses at street level in most town centre schemes in order to prevent dead frontages. It would also allow an element of flexibility in proposals whilst still enabling them to be consistent with the masterplan.
- 3.15 In some cases the mix of uses has been altered, which has affected the capacities of parcels due to recent negotiations (pre-application discussions) and PDO responses.
- 3.16 In some instances the densities of parcels have been revised take account of the higher density assumptions for the Town Centre and Inner Warrington that have been employed in the SHLAA.
- 3.17 Where planning permissions have been granted the parcel capacities have been revised to take account of these.
- 3.18 In addition, the phasing has been reviewed and updated to take account of PDO comments and a number of parcels have been removed from the supply within the Plan period. These have however been retained in the master planning as they provide evidence of ongoing capacity of the urban area beyond the Plan period. The revised Master planning work is contained in Appendix 1.
- 3.19 Overall these alterations have confirmed a capacity figure for the Town Centre Master planning area of **6,549** homes within the Plan Period with the potential for a further 1,816 homes beyond the Plan Period.

Urban Capacity

- 3.20 The urban capacity figure is a product of the updated SHLAA (2018) figure and the updated Master Planning work undertaken in partnership with Warrington & Co. This has confirmed a capacity for **13,729** new homes over the next 20 years as set out in Table 1 below.
- 3.21 In order to avoid double counting of capacity from this masterplanning work the capacity of all of the sites in the SHLAA that are located within the master planning areas (2,919) has been subtracted from the masterplan total.
- 3.22 For the purposes of calculating the urban capacity an additional small sites allowance (ie. 304) has been added together with the additional capacity from the Wider Urban Area (ie. 210) from the end of the SHLAA period to the end of the Plan period and the completions from the first year of the Plan period (359 homes in 2017/18). The spreadsheets contained in Appendix 2 provide a summary of the SHLAA and Masterplanning data that has informed the urban capacity assessment.

Source	Total (dwelling units)
SHLAA 2018 (existing supply)	9,226
Additional supply (Wider Urban Area) to 2037	210
Completions from 17/18	359
TC Masterplanning Areas	6,549
Additional Small Sites Allowance to 2037	304
SHLAA sites in TC Masterplanning Areas	-2,919
Total	13,729

Table 1: Urban Capacity Assessment to 2037 – Housing Land

4 Employment

EDNA Land Supply

- 4.1 The Council's has undertaken a comprehensive review of employment land within the existing urban area as part of the preparation of the new EDNA. This has confirmed that there is a realistic supply of 83.91 hectares in the urban area.
- 4.2 As stated above, the Council is aware that Fiddlers Ferry power station may come forward for development and represents a major future brownfield redevelopment opportunity for new employment uses.
- 4.3 The site is ideally suited to power generation, being connected to the National Grid with supporting infrastructure on-site, having rail and road transport links, benefiting from a supply of cooling water and having a skilled workforce. Were a new power plant to come forward at the site in the future, this is likely to have a much smaller footprint than the existing Power Station, potentially freeing up land for power-related and other employment development. The existing site comprises a total of

119.2 hectares. Assuming that three quarters of the site is available for future development, this could provide a further 89.4 hectares of employment land.

- 4.4 The decommissioning and demolition of the existing Power Station will however take a number of years to complete. The existing ash processing activities at the site are also expected to continue beyond the coal power station's life span, until the existing deposits are fully depleted, given the current market demand for ash.
- 4.5 There is not currently therefore sufficient certainty for the site be included within the Council's developable employment land supply, but given the scale of the site, this will need to be kept under review.
- 4.6 The site does however demonstrate the scale of urban capacity for employment land beyond the Plan Period.

Masterplanning Land Supply

- 4.7 The Council's masterplanning work demonstrates the potential for a further 31.46 hectares of employment land, primarily within and in proximity to the Town Centre and in the Watefront Main Development Area.
- 4.8 It should be noted that the masterplanning work looks to redevelop and intensify a number of existing employment areas. As such the existing employment areas within masterplanning areas have been excluded from the realistic supply identified in the EDNA to avoid double counting.

Urban Capacity

- 4.9 The urban capacity figure is a product of the updated EDNA (2019) figure and the updated Master Planning work undertaken in partnership with Warrington & Co. This has confirmed an urban capacity for **115.37ha** of employment land over the Plan Period to 2037. The spreadsheets contained in Appendix 2 provide a summary of the EDNA and Masterplanning data that has informed the urban capacity assessment.

Existing supply	83.91 ha
Masterplan additional	31.46 ha
Total supply	115.37 ha

Table 2: Urban Capacity Assessment to 2037 – Employment Land

Appendices

Appendix 1 Town Centre Masterplans

Appendix 2 Housing and Employment land trajectory spreadsheet



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