



Hearing Statement on behalf of Wain Homes (North West) Ltd (ID: UPSVLP 2471)

In relation to: Matter 1 – Procedural/legal requirements

Warrington Local Plan Examination

Emery Planning project number: 19-202

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Examination

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1. Introduction

1.1 Emery Planning is instructed by Wain Homes (North West) Ltd (hereafter referred to as “Wain Homes”) to submit a written response to the Inspector’s Matters, Issues and Questions in relation to Matter 1 – Procedural/Legal Requirements of the Warrington Local Plan Examination. Wain Homes has an interest in the following omission sites:

- Land at Lumber Lane, Burtonwood; and,
- Land at Runcorn Road, Moore - part of the former draft allocation: Warrington South West urban extension.

1.2 This hearing statement should be read in conjunction with our detailed representations to the Regulation 19 Pre-Submission Draft of the Warrington Local Plan, and our other Hearing Statements submitted to this examination.

2. Wain Homes response to the Inspector’s questions

Q1 - Has the preparation of the Local Plan been in accordance with the Local Development Scheme in terms of its form, scope and timing?

2.1 The preparation of the Local Plan is not in accordance with the Local Development Scheme as it is unlikely to meet the timings set out within it in relation to the predicted timescales for adoption.

2.2 Paragraph 20 of the Framework sets out that strategic policies make provision for housing, employment and other types of growth. Paragraph 22 of the Framework sets out that strategic policies should look ahead over a minimum period of 15 years from adoption, unless larger scale developments form part of the strategy for the area, in which case the policies should look further ahead to at least 30 years. It is therefore clear that on the basis of paragraph 22 of the Framework, the strategic policies must cover at least a 15-year period from adoption.

2.3 The plan period for the emerging Warrington Local Plan is proposed to be 2021 to 2038. The base date used primarily for the purposes of monitoring of the housing and employment supply, is 1 April 2021. As a result, the end date of the strategic policies relating to housing and employment land supply is 31 March 2038. Therefore, in order for the strategic policies to cover at least a 15-year period from adoption, the plan must be adopted by 31 March 2023.

- 2.4 The Local Development Scheme (LDS) dated September 2021 (SP9) proposes July 2023 as an estimated date of adoption. Therefore, even on the basis of the Council's own schedule, the plan will not cover a period of 15 years at adoption and is considered to be unsound and not in accordance with national planning policy as set out in paragraph 2.2 of this statement.
- 2.5 We consider that the Council has been overly optimistic in setting out the timescales within the LDS. Indeed, the LDS estimated that the Examination in Public would take place between July and September 2022. The hearing programme has now been set out and the hearing sessions are not expected to commence until 6 September 2022 and carry through to October. This is subject to no delays or issues. Taking into account the time required for main modifications and further public consultation, it is unlikely the predicted timescales will be met, and the plan may not be adopted by July 2023. Should this be the case, the plan would need to be adopted by 31 March 2024 and the Local Plan period extended to 2039 in order to be consistent with national planning policy.
- 2.6 It is also important to note that Local Plan examinations have historically taken multiple years. Specific examples include the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy which took over 3 years and the Halton Delivery and Allocations Plan which took 2 years. Further cases were also set out at paragraphs 4.7 and 4.8 of our Regulation 19 submission statement. More recently, Planning Inspectors have paused public hearings being held as part of the examination into the Charnwood Local Plan 2021-2037 to allow more time for consideration of information relating to Leicester's unmet housing need. Whilst we appreciate this may not specifically apply to the case of Warrington's Local Plan, it further demonstrates the issues and delays which can take place during the examination process. It is therefore overly optimistic of the Council to assume that the plan will be adopted just over one year following the submission to the Secretary of State for examination.
- 2.7 The Local Plan is therefore not in accordance with the Local Development Scheme as it is unlikely to meet the timings set out within it in relation to the predicted timescales for adoption and as a result is unsound. The plan period should be extended to 2039 as a minimum in order to be considered sound.

Vision that looks further ahead (at least 30 years)

2.8 As discussed above, paragraph 22 of the Framework requires that plans look ahead at least 30 years if larger scale developments form part of the strategy for the area. Paragraph 61-083 of the PPG makes it clear that:

"This policy requirement would need to be applied where most of the development arising from larger scale developments proposed in the plan will be delivered well beyond the plan period, and where delivery of those developments extends 30 years or longer from the start of the plan period.

Where the policy applies, the authority will need to ensure that their vision reflects the long-term nature of their strategy for the plan or those larger scale developments. It is not anticipated that such visions would require evidence in addition to that already produced to support the plan."

2.9 In the case of Warrington, the plan involves the following allocations which have delivery timescales extending beyond the plan period.

- The proposed allocation of Warrington Waterfront for around 1,335 dwellings, 1,070 of which will be delivered during the plan period up to 2038.
- The proposed allocation of the South East Warrington Urban Extension will deliver around 2,400 dwellings within the plan period up to 2038, with a further 1,800 to be delivered beyond the plan period.
- The proposed allocation of Fiddlers Ferry will deliver 1,310 homes within the plan period and 450 homes beyond 2038.

2.10 The abovementioned allocations are large scale developments and combined, will deliver in excess of 2,000 homes beyond the plan period.

2.11 In order to accord with national planning policy, the Warrington Local Plan vision should look further ahead (at least 30 years) to accommodate the large scale developments. At present, there appears to be no consideration given to the vision and the housing and employment needs beyond 2038. This is considered in more detail in our Matter 8 Hearing Statement.

2.12 As a whole, we do not consider that the plan is being prepared in accordance with the Local Development Scheme or national planning policy and is therefore unsound. The plan period should be extended to at least 2039 and the plan should be modified to ensure that the vision reflects the long-term nature of the strategy for the plan as well as the larger scale developments, which will deliver well beyond the plan period.