

Langtree Property Partners

Warrington Local Plan Examination

Hearing Statement – Matter 4

July 2022



01 Introduction

Introduction

- 1.1 This is a Hearing Statement prepared by Spawforths on behalf of Langtree Property Partners (Langtree) in respect of:
 - Matter 4: Housing need and the housing requirement
- 1.2 Langtree has significant land interests in the area and has made representations to earlier stages of the Local Plan process.
- 1.3 The Inspector's Issues and Questions are included in **bold** for ease of reference. The following responses should be read in conjunction with Langtree's comments upon the Warrington Local Plan 2021-2038 Submission Version, dated November 2021.
- 1.4 Langtree has also expressed a desire to attend and participate in Matter 4 of the Examination in Public.

02 Matter 4 – Housing need and the housing requirement

Issue

- 2.1 Whether the Local Plan has been positively prepared and whether it is justified, effective and consistent with national policy in relation to housing need and the housing requirement.

Questions

Question 1: Has the calculation of Local Housing Need (816 homes per annum) been undertaken appropriately using the standard method and correct inputs?

- 2.2 The Framework describes the purpose of the planning system to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. There are three overarching objectives which are central to the achievement of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. The economic objective is to “*help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure*” [Paragraph 8, NPPF, Spawforths emphasis].
- 2.3 Plans are required to be prepared positively and in a way that is aspirational but deliverable, and ensure that strategic policies look ahead over a minimum of 15 years from adoption in order to anticipate and respond to long term requirements and opportunities such as those arising from major improvements in infrastructure. Strategic policies include the scale and quantity of development and making sufficient provision for housing (including affordable housing), employment, retail, leisure and other commercial development alongside infrastructure and community facilities.
- 2.4 The Framework is clear that to be considered positively prepared and therefore ‘sound’ the plan must, as a minimum meet the plans objectively assessed needs [Paragraph 35, NPPF].

- 2.5 The Government is committed to boosting the supply of homes and ensuring that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, and that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed [Paragraph 60, NPPF].
- 2.6 The Plan is also expected to create conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt, which requires a clear economic vision and strategy which positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth. There should be significant weight on the need to support economic growth and productivity. Plans are required to be flexible enough to accommodate needs that have not been anticipated within the Plan. Critically in relation to housing, the Framework requires growth and investment in infrastructure to be aligned, and that policies “*address barriers to investment, such as inadequate infrastructure, services or housing, or a poor environment*”. Policies are also required to recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors [paragraphs 81, 82 and 83NPPF].
- 2.7 Langtree would like to emphasise that the proposed housing requirement should be viewed as a minimum. It is therefore important that barriers are not created which may affect greater levels of sustainable growth. Given Warrington’s prime location in the North West, Langtree believes that the Borough is ideally located to achieve high levels of growth and if the Plan had greater flexibility it could deliver that growth.

Question 2: Should the housing need figure be higher than the minimum Local Housing Need figure of 816 homes per annum? Do any of the circumstances set out in paragraph 10 of the housing and economic needs assessment chapter of the PPG (or any other relevant circumstances) apply in Warrington?

- 2.8 Langtree considers there is potential for a higher housing need figure. As stated earlier the Government is committed to significantly boosting the supply of homes and with that aim in mind national policy is clear that sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed. National policy and guidance is clear that the standard methodology does not produce a housing target, and is only a minimum starting point for the preparation of the requirement. The Local Plan requirement must be informed by local circumstances. Such examples include growth strategies, strategic infrastructure improvements and meeting affordable housing needs.
- 2.9 Interestingly, affordability ratios have worsened recently and the need for affordable housing has increased with the Local Housing Need Assessment Update (2021) showing a need of 423 dpa.
- 2.10 Furthermore, Langtree would like to highlight that it is important to recognise that the development of new housing will bring forward additional economic benefits to the area. The relationship between economic performance in an area and housing is complex, but having the right quantity, quality and balance of housing in an area is necessary for economic growth. This is recognised within the Framework, paragraph 82. The development of new housing can therefore support local economic growth, both through direct job creation through the construction phase of the scheme, but also through the increased population which will increase sustainable local jobs from the increased demand for goods and services. This provides an important sustainable development opportunity for Warrington

2.11 Langtree therefore consider further housing allocations should be made, such as their site at Appleton Thorn.

Question 3: The Local Housing Needs Assessment Update 2021 concludes that 816 homes per annum will provide an increase in working age population sufficient to support the number of additional jobs likely to be created over the plan period. Are the assumptions and calculations which support this analysis robust and is the conclusion justified?

2.12 Langtree do not have any comments on this particular issue.

Question 4: What is the relationship, if any, between the housing need figure of 816 homes per annum and the amount of employment being provided for i.e. approx. 316ha?

2.13 Langtree consider that the level of housing growth should reflect the economic ambition of the Council and the region. As highlighted earlier, the Framework states in Paragraph 81 that:

Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future.

2.14 Within this context the proposed housing requirement should be considered and assessed and set as a minimum requirement.

Question 5: What are the implications of this amount of employment land in terms of jobs growth? Is it possible/reasonable to estimate the number of jobs likely to be created from this amount of employment land using past trends, evidence from recent proposed and permitted schemes in Warrington and the wider region or analysis in the Economic Development Needs Assessment 2021 (noting that it estimates the amount of land needed for projected jobs growth using both Oxford Economics and Cambridge Econometrics models)?

2.15 Langtree do not have any comments on this particular issue.

Question 6: Does the scale of employment land provision justify an increase in the housing need figure?

2.16 Langtree do not have any comments on this particular issue.

Question 7: Notwithstanding the above, is the housing requirement of 816 homes per annum justified? Should it be higher or lower than this and if so to what level and on what basis?

2.17 Langtree would like to emphasise that the proposed housing requirement should be viewed as a minimum. It is therefore important that barriers are not created which may affect greater levels of sustainable growth. Given Warrington's prime location in the North West, Langtree believes that the Borough is ideally located to achieve high levels of growth and if the Plan had greater flexibility it could deliver that growth.

Question 8: What is the basis for the stepped housing requirement (678 homes per annum rising to 870 per annum from 2026)? Why were the particular time periods and annual averages chosen? Is the approach justified?

2.18 This part of the policy indicates that the housing requirement will be stepped from 678 dwellings per annum in the period 2021-2025, up to 870 homes per year from 2026 onwards.

2.19 Langtree does not consider a stepped requirement is necessary and that the appropriate provision of housing should be provided for the entirety of the Plan period.

2.20 The Council's justification appears to suggest that the stepped requirement is needed to achieve a five-year housing land supply at the start of the Plan period. Langtree suggests that more sites should be identified that are deliverable at the start of the Plan period, rather than constraining supply. One such site that could address this shortfall is Langtree's site at Appleton Thorn

Question 9: Should the Local Plan set housing requirements for designated neighbourhood areas in light of paragraph 66 of the NPPF?

2.21 Langtree do not have any comments on this particular issue.

Proposed Change

2.22 To overcome the soundness matters Langtree proposes the following changes:-

- Increase the housing requirement.
- Identify further housing land, including Langtree's site at Appleton Thorn.