

# Warrington Local Plan Examination

## Matters Statements

### MATTER 11 – TRANSPORT AND OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE

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August 2022



## **Matter 11 – TRANSPORT AND OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE**

### **Issue**

**Whether the Local Plan is justified, effective and consistent with national policy in relation to the approach to transport and other infrastructure.**

N.B. wider issues of infrastructure provision and the links with viability are dealt with under Matter 3

(NB. Examination Library reference numbers are provided in brackets after each document referred to in the Matters Statement)

### **Relevant policies INF1 to INF6**

### **Questions**

#### **Sustainable travel and transport (INF1)**

**1. Is Policy INF1 intended to be applied to all development, regardless of scale and type? If not, is this clear?**

1.1 As a first principle it is intended to apply Policy INF1 to all development. This is consistent with paragraph 104 b) and c) of the NPPF (2021) which seeks to ensure that opportunities from existing and proposed transport infrastructure are realised and that opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport are pursued. It is proposed that all new development should be focussed in the most accessible locations and seek to enhance existing accessibility levels and promote ease of access.

1.2 This is set out in point 1 of the Policy (General Transport Principles) which provides a strong basis on which to address some key challenges for the Borough including mitigating and adapting to climate change as well as increasing accessibility and encouraging sustainable travel.

1.3 Consistent with paragraph 110 of the NPPF the policy seeks to ensure that in assessing specific applications for development, appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes can be or have been taken up and that safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users. Similarly, priority should first be given to pedestrian and cycle movements, proposals should address the needs of all people and create safe and attractive places which minimise the scope for conflict between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles. The Council considers that this should apply to all development proposals.

1.4 Notwithstanding the above, whilst the Council will expect all development proposals to fulfil the criteria listed in the Policy, it is accepted that this may not always be feasible, and each application will be determined on its own merits. Where an

application is either contrary or outside the scope of the policy, then the onus is on the applicant to demonstrate why it should be considered for approval.

**2. Are all of the points in Policy INF1 genuinely related to development proposals or do some actually reflect the Council's potential actions? How could the policy be rationalised to be more focussed on reasonable expectations of development?**

2.1 Whilst it is accepted that some points of the policy reflect potential Council actions and aspirations, it is considered reasonable for development to support those actions and aspirations.

2.2 Development proposals often offer a more viable and feasible means to support wider strategic aims e.g. by inclusion of third party land, particularly in the case of large-scale applications.

2.3 Whilst it is accepted that not every development proposal will be subject to the specific bullets, the principles remain. For example bullet 1e could apply to an application for a single dwelling where the Council may seek a widened (or potentially a new) footway along the frontage.

**3. In other respects, is Policy INF1 justified, effective and consistent with national policy?**

3.1 Yes, it is considered that in other respects, Policy INF1 is justified, effective and consistent with national policy and will help to address some of the key challenges and objectives of the Local Plan.

**Transport safeguarding (INF2)**

**4. What is the basis for safeguarding land for the specific schemes in part 2 of Policy INF2? What is the status of the schemes in terms of progress and funding commitments etc?**

4.1 The proposed levels of housing and employment growth across Warrington will result in an increasing number of trips being made by all transport modes to, from, and within the Borough. Good transport links are crucial for a successful economy, a thriving Borough, and for giving a good quality of life to local residents. It is vital that improvements are made to our highway and transport networks to be able to accommodate these additional trips.

4.2 The development of new transport infrastructure will require land. It is the role of the Local Plan to ensure that the land we are likely to require to enhance our transport network is safeguarded and protected from development until suitable transport improvements can be delivered in an appropriate and timely manner.

4.3 This approach is consistent with paragraph 106 (c) of National Planning Policy Framework (2021), which states that planning policy should identify and protect,

where there is robust evidence, sites and routes which could be critical in developing infrastructure to widen transport choice and realise opportunities for large scale development.

- 4.4 The schemes detailed within Policy INF2 (and illustrated in Figures 8 to 11 in the UPSVLP) have been identified as being necessary to facilitate the proposed housing and economic growth in Warrington. If the identified improvements are to be delivered in the future it is vital that the land that they require be protected from development by other uses.
- 4.5 The status of the schemes identified in Policy INF2 in terms of progress, status and funding are set out in turn below.

**Bridgefoot Link (formerly known as Bridgefoot Bypass), providing improved access between development sites to the north end of Centre Park, Warrington Bank Quay station and the wider Town Centre.**

- 4.6 The Council has, for a number of years, safeguarded land in this area around Bridgefoot gyratory to protect an alignment for a scheme originally called Bridgefoot Environmental Enhancement Scheme (BEES) and subsequently Bridgefoot Bypass, which provided a new highway link between Brian Bevan Island and Wilson Patten Street. Bridgefoot gyratory and Brian Bevan Island are two very busy interchanges on the approach to the town centre that often become congested at peak times. The Council therefore proposes to continue to safeguard land, albeit on a slightly amended alignment (to complement the Centre Park Link scheme) to allow a new link (Bridgefoot Link) to be constructed between Brian Bevan Island and Wilson Patten Street near Bank Quay Station. Improvements to Brian Bevan Island would also need to be examined as part of any Bridgefoot Link scheme. At present there is no funding for the delivery of the scheme, but the Council undertook in its approved Local Transport Plan LTP4 (December 2019), to review the scheme within the first 5 years following its adoption.

**A new or replacement high-level crossing of the Manchester Ship Canal between Ackers Road, Stockton Heath and Station Road, Latchford.**

- 4.7 Transport Modelling carried out to support the development of the draft Local Plan has identified that a new road crossing of the Manchester Ship Canal is not critical to the delivery of the growth proposals set out in the Plan.
- 4.8 However, a number of issues will require further study and assessment over the first five years of the Local Plan and Local Transport Plan (LTP4), to understand what further transport improvements are required, as is the case here with a new or replacement high-level crossing of the Manchester Ship Canal.
- 4.9 To date no funding mechanisms are in place or have been identified to meet and / or contribute to the cost of this potential scheme.

**Warrington East Multi-Modal Corridor improvement (part of the former safeguarding known as Long Lane Diversion), connecting Birchwood to Central Warrington via Birchwood Way.**

- 4.10 The safeguarding for the corridor along Birchwood Way and connecting towards the A49 was originally protected as part of a road scheme as part of Warrington New Town Plans. The Council has committed to investigate the potential for the corridor to form an important part of its longer term transport strategy , with a review to be undertaken during the first 5 years of LTP4 (December 2019). One of the potential opportunities for this corridor is as a priority public transport corridor, which was outlined in the Mass Transit and bus priority study which supported LTP4. Further study work on the potential future public transport in Warrington is now underway and will inform what potential the above corridor has in terms of public transport. The Council feels it is critical to maintain the safeguarding whilst this review is underway.

**Warrington Western link.**

- 4.11 The Council remains committed to the development of the Western Link having completed outline design works in 2021. The Council has subsequently completed a Gateway Review of the scheme which has concluded that the scheme costs have increased from those within the original Outline Business Case. The Council is in dialogue with the Department for Transport (DfT) regarding the funding of the Western Link as part of the Large Local Majors Programme.
- 4.12 To date, based on previous funding commitments the DfT has agreed to fund £142.5m of the Western Link costs, with the Council committing to funding an additional £70m.

**Utilities, telecommunications and broadband (INF3)**

**5. Is Policy INF3 intended to be applied to all development, regardless of scale and type? If not, is this clear?**

- 5.1 Yes. As set out in part 1 of Policy INF3, all development proposals must demonstrate that engagement has taken place with the required Statutory Undertakers and Infrastructure providers, and provide a strategy for how they will connect to public utilities infrastructure and or deliver the required infrastructure to support development.
- 5.2 On large development sites or sites developed on a phased basis, applicants will be required to ensure that the delivery of development is guided by site wide strategies for infrastructure (e.g. foul, surface water and clean water) which ensure coordination between phases of development over lengthy time periods and by numerous developers. Conditions or planning obligations may be used to secure these phasing arrangements.

**6. In other respects, is Policy INF3 justified, effective and consistent with national policy?**

- 6.1 Yes, it is considered that in other respects, Policy INF3 is justified, effective and consistent with national policy and will help to address some of the key challenges and objectives of the Local Plan.

**Community facilities (INF4)**

**7. What is the up to date situation regarding a new hospital and the potential need for a new site? Could this be accommodated within the policy framework of this Local Plan?**

- 7.1 The health and social care system in Warrington, Warrington Together, has confirmed a requirement for a new Hospital for Warrington. The current hospital is outdated and is not able to meet the future needs of Warrington's growing and aging population. It is currently reviewing the business plan for the hospital in the context of wider NHS service delivery across the North West region. The Council is committed to working with the NHS Hospital Trust to deliver the new hospital either through redevelopment of the existing Lovely Lane site or on a new site.
- 7.2 Policy INF4 confirms this position and the plans for the hospital will be confirmed through a future review of the Local Plan. The NHS Hospital Trust is fully supportive of this policy approach.

**8. In other respects, is Policy INF4 justified, effective and consistent with national policy?**

- 8.1 The Council considers that the requirements of Policy INF4 are justified, effective and consistent with national policy. The provision of appropriate community facilities creates sustainable communities and improves the overall health and wellbeing of residents, as recognised in the NPPF, paragraph 93. For this reason Policy INF4 seeks to protect existing facilities and services as a starting point, and where facilities are to be replaced with other development then alternative provision should be made.
- 8.2 The Policy also seeks to ensure that adequate new facilities are provided, where necessary, in both existing and new communities, in line with the development proposed in the Local Plan. The extent of new infrastructure requirements is set out in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, with community facilities making up a big part of the type of infrastructure required – from schools and health facilities to leisure and open space provision.
- 8.3 The NPPF sets out the importance of providing for community facilities (Paragraph 20 and paragraph 28). The Council considers that INF4 is fully in accordance with national policy.

## **Delivering infrastructure (INF5)**

### **9. Is Policy INF5 sufficiently flexible in terms of taking account of the impact on viability?**

- 9.1 The Council considers that Part 6 of Policy INF5 is sufficiently flexible in taking account of viability considerations.
- 9.2 In accordance with PPG (Paragraph: 008 Reference ID: 10-008-20190509), where a viability assessment is submitted to accompany a planning application this should be based upon and refer back to the viability assessment that informed the plan; and the applicant should provide evidence of what has changed since then.

### **10. Is the approach to a review mechanism for planning obligations justified?**

- 10.1 Yes. The Council considers that it is fair and justified to include a review mechanism within S106 Agreements where it has been demonstrated that it is not viable to provide the full planning obligation requirements at the point in time when the development is permitted. This will ensure that additional contributions can be captured to mitigate the impact of development should the viability of a site improve over time.

### **11. In other respects, is Policy INF5 justified, effective and consistent with national policy?**

- 11.1 Yes, the Council considers Policy INF5 is justified, effective and consistent with national policy.

## **Aerodrome safeguarding (INF6)**

### **12. Is Policy INF6 justified, effective and consistent with national policy?**

- 12.1 Yes. It is essential that the safe and efficient operation of Manchester Airport is protected, and this may have some implications for land and development within the Borough. The policy wording is robust and encompasses all aspects of aerodrome safeguarding, which are effectively explained in the supporting text. Furthermore, the policy takes into account the most recent DfT/ODPM circular 1/2003 - advice to local planning authorities on safeguarding aerodromes and military explosives storage areas. As such, Policy INF6 is justified, effective and consistent with national policy.

## **Main modifications**

### **13. Are any main modifications to the above policies necessary for soundness?**

- 13.1 The Council does not consider that any main modifications to the above policies are necessary for soundness.