

Barton Willmore, now Stantec on behalf of Anwyl Land Ltd (Representor ID: 0405)

Examination into the Warrington Local Plan

Matter 7d: Site Allocations - Lymm

Taking each of the following site allocations individually in turn:

- ***Policy OS4 – Pool Lane/Warrington Road***
- ***Policy OS5 – Rushgreen Road***

Q1 What is the background to the site allocation and how was it identified?

1. Our Client considers that this is a question for the Council to answer, but does note the analysis provided within the allocation Site Profiles (CD02), dated June 2022, but only released by the Council in July 2022.
2. As indicated within earlier Matter Statements, our Client also notes a degree of inconsistency in approach, and a high degree of similarities between the circumstances and credentials of OS4 and OS5 to our Client's land interest at Mill Lane, Lymm. All three sites are located within a proposed mineral safeguarding area and are very similar in terms of agricultural land classification (albeit site-specific evidence in this respect is not available). The only discernable difference between the proposed allocations and our Client's land interest is that part of our Client's site is identified by the Council as being potentially contaminated. This position however lacks any evidence to support it and, given that it is a greenfield site (as the proposed allocations are), it is considered that the risk any contamination is so low as to not preclude the site from being proposed for allocation at this stage.
3. The Council has not provided any evidence to justify its concerns in relation to land contamination and our Client would urge the Council to provide evidence if they are to maintain their position in this respect. As set out within their responses to Matters 3, 4 and 8, there is a pressing need for the Council to identify additional sites for housing and so, in the absence of any substantive evidence to the contrary, there is no reason why the land at Mill Lane should not also be allocated for development within the Plan, to afford for much needed flexibility within the Plan and deliver the homes that the Borough needs.

Q2 What are the conclusions of the Green Belt Assessment in relation to the contribution of the land in question to the purposes of the Green Belt and the potential to alter the Green Belt in this location?

4. Our Client has no comments to make in respect of sites OS4 and OS5, but would reiterate the Council's assessment of their land interest, noting that it only makes a moderate contribution to the Green Belt purposes (i.e. not a strong contribution). The previously submitted Vision Document demonstrates how the site could be developed and the new, cohesive settlement boundary it would create. Given this, and the aforementioned strategic context of the borough, i.e. that there is a pressing need to identify additional housing sites for allocation within the Plan, both to build flexibility in the Plan but also to address a continued under-delivery of housing within the borough.
5. In such a context, it is prudent to allocate sites that do not perform a strong Green Belt purpose. As has been demonstrated, our Client's land interest at Mill Lane represents the best candidate for this (beyond sites OS4 and OS5) and will be vital in securing the long-term vitality and viability of Lymm.

Q3 What would be the effect of developing the site on the purposes of the Green Belt?

6. Our Client has no comments to make in this respect but would reiterate their earlier sentiments that their land interest at Mill Lane is capable of development without undermining the wider purpose of the Green Belt in this area. Furthermore, the development of the site would serve to strengthen the Green Belt in this area, by effectively rounding-off this part of the settlement and providing a stronger, defensible boundary to this part of Lymm.

Q4 Are there exceptional circumstances to alter the Green Belt in this particular case? If so, what are they?

7. As set out within our Client's response to Matter 3, our Client concurs with the Council that, at a strategic level, there are exceptional circumstances that justify a release of Green Belt land. These circumstances may not exist in the future when a review of the Plan is undertaken, and so it is wise that the Council utilises the opportunity at this stage and identify sufficient land to meet its current, and future needs.
8. The specific case in relation to the land at Mill Lane is set out above, in earlier Matter Statements, and within the previously submitted Vision Document and Representations, which have also been re-submitted as part of this submission, for ease of reference.

Q5 What is the basis for the scale of development proposed and is this justified?

9. Our Client has no specific comments to make in this respect, but would reiterate their concerns that the current Plan does not sufficiently meet the current, and future needs of the Borough. Nor does it provide a suitable degree of flexibility to account for any slippage in the delivery of the proposed allocations. As a result, the scale of development proposed for Lymm is appropriate, but does not go far enough to meet the Borough's wider needs. Whilst it is important to ensure that an appropriate development density is maintained, consistent with the character of the wider area, the pressing need to deliver more homes in the Borough means that the Council must consider additional sites for housing allocations.

Q6 What is the background to the specific requirements of the policy? Are they justified and consistent with national policy? Do they provide clear and effective guidance on constraints and suitable mitigation?

10. Our Client has no comments to make in relation to this question at this time.

Q7 Does the policy identify appropriate and necessary infrastructure requirements? How will these be provided and funded? Is this sufficiently clear?

11. Our Client has no comments to make in relation to this question at this time.

Q8 Is the requirement for Green Belt compensatory improvements justified and appropriate?

12. Our Client has no comments to make in relation to this question at this time.

Q9 Is the Council satisfied that safe access to the site can be secured, and that Lymm has the appropriate transport infrastructure required to support the development?

13. Our Client considers that this is a question for the Council to answer but would stress that the Council should be content of the deliverability of all proposed allocations within the Plan, which should be evidenced accordingly. The additional flexibility additional allocations would provide would ensure that any potential difficulties with matters such as site access, and delivery delays associated with this, would not undermine the Plan's ability to deliver the homes that the Borough needs.

Q10 Are there potential adverse effects not covered above, if so, what are they and how would they be addressed and mitigated?

14. Our Client's response to this question is as per Q10 above.

Q11 Is the development proposed viable and deliverable within the period envisaged, noting that it is anticipated that first homes would be completed in 2024/5?

15. Our Client's response to this question is as per Q10 above. Our Client would stress however that they are poised to deliver their land interest at Mill Lane and that it could make a meaningful contribution to the supply of housing within the early years of the Plan.

Q12 What is the situation in relation to land ownership and developer interest?

16. Our Client considers that this is a question for the Council to answer and has no comments to make in this respect. They would highlight however that their development arm, Anwyl Homes, are a well established housebuilder with a very strong reputation, and so the Council, and the Inspector alike can be assured that the site can and will be delivered early within the Plan, and to the quality expected within the Borough, as demonstrated by the supporting Vision Document.

Q13 How is it intended to bring the site forward for development? What mechanisms will there be to ensure a comprehensive and co-ordinated approach to development, ensuring that infrastructure requirements are provided?

17. Our Client does not wish to offer comment in respect of OS4 and OS5, but would highlight their previously provided Vision Document which demonstrates how their land interest at Mill Lane could come forward, and the associated infrastructure that it would assist in facilitating.

Q14 Are any main modifications necessary for soundness?

18. Our Client does not seek any modifications to proposed allocations OS4 and OS5 in the interest of soundness, but, as per the comments above and those made within their responses for Matters 3, 4 and 8, consider that significant modifications, principally in the form of additional allocations for development within the Plan, and safeguarded land for future development are required in the interests of adopting a sound local plan. As has been stressed throughout, our Client remains firmly of the view that their land interest at Mill Lane, Lymm, is well placed to provide a high-quality residential development that would make a significant contribution to delivering the Borough's housing need either within the Plan period, or beyond it. Our Client would urge the Council to reconsider its position in this respect, and identify additional sites to deliver the housing that the Borough requires.