



# **Warrington Borough Council Local Plan Examination**

**Matter 7d – Site allocations - Lymm**

**Hearing Statement**

August 2022



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## **MATTER 7D – SITE ALLOCATIONS - LYMM**

**Issue - Whether the site allocations at Lymm (Policies OS4 and OS5) are justified, effective and consistent with national policy.**

**Question 1: What is the background to the site allocation and how was it identified?**

2.1.1 This hearing statement has been prepared in respect of Gladman Developments Ltd's (herein referred to as 'Gladman') land interests at Pool Lane and Warrington Road, Lymm. Gladman are actively promoting the sites on behalf of their landowners, with the support of a signed Promotion Agreement. Together, the sites have been proposed as an allocation with a capacity for a minimum of 170 dwellings under Local Plan Policy OS4 – Land at Pool Lane/Warrington Road.

2.1.2 The element of this question that refers to site identification is a matter for the Council to address in more detail. However, Gladman confirm that we are supportive of the decision to identify Land at Pool Lane and Warrington Road as an allocation as part of the Local Plan process.

**Question 2: 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?**

2.1.3 This is a question for the Council to respond to. However, Gladman agree that the current Green Belt boundaries relating to the Pool Lane and Warrington Road sites can be successfully and appropriately altered to release land from the Green Belt in this location.

**Question 3. What would be the effect of developing the site on the purposes of the Green Belt?**

2.1.4 This is again a question for the Council to respond to. However, Gladman believe that the Pool Lane and Warrington Road sites can both be successfully developed without undermining the Green Belt's five stated purposes:

- **Purpose 1: To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas** – the development of the Warrington Road and Pool Lane sites would have no impact on this purpose and would not lead to the unrestricted sprawl of a large built-up area.
- **Purpose 2: To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another** – the development of the Pool Lane and Warrington Road sites would have no effect on this purpose and would not lead to the merging of any separate settlements.
- **Purpose 3: To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment** – the Pool Lane and Warrington Road sites both benefit from a strong sense of enclosure and strong, durable boundaries that would prevent any potential encroachment into the wider countryside beyond, with both sites well connected to the existing settlement edge. Land at Pool Lane (the northern parcel allocated under Policy OS4) is contained by a mixture of Warrington Road, Pool Lane to the west, and an existing Public Right of Way and associated area of planting along the site’s northern boundary. The southern parcel of the proposed site allocation (Land off Warrington Road) is contained by Warrington Road, the route of the Trans Pennine Trail to the south, and a well-established and dense area of tree planting that runs along the site’s western boundary.
- **Purpose 4: To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns** – the development of the sites would have no impact upon the setting of the Lymm Conservation Area.
- **Purpose 5: To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land** – it is noted that all sites have been given the same assessment score for this purpose as part of the Council’s Green Belt assessment work.

**Question 4. Are there exceptional circumstances to alter the Green Belt in this particular case? If so, what are they?**

- 2.1.5 Yes, Gladman believe that there are exceptional circumstances to alter the Green Belt's boundaries in this particular case, as discussed further in our Matter 3 hearing statement. At a strategic level it is clear that there is a requirement to release land from the Green Belt to meet the authority's housing needs, and Gladman agree that it is justified to meet some of this need with the borough's Outlying Settlements, including Lymm. Gladman also believe that exceptional circumstances have been demonstrated to alter the Green Belt boundaries specifically in relation to the Pool Lane and Warrington Road sites.

**Question 5. What is the basis for the scale of development proposed and is this justified?**

- 2.1.6 This is a question for the Council to respond to. As outlined in our Matter 3 hearing statement, Gladman are supportive of the decision to direct further development to the Outlying Settlements as part of the Council's spatial strategy, and the decision to direct the majority of this growth to Lymm as the largest of these villages and locations. We are supportive of the decision to allocate the Pool Lane and Warrington Road sites for a minimum of 170 dwellings in accordance with Policy OS4.

**Question 6. 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?**

- 2.1.7 This is again a question for the Council to respond to and clarify. However, as highlighted in our Updated Submission Version Local Plan representations, Gladman believe that a deliverable development proposal can come forward on the Pool Lane and Warrington Road sites without giving rise to any unacceptable development impacts.
- 2.1.8 Gladman have already undertaken a series of background technical studies and assessments to support the sites' delivery and we are currently in the process of refining these documents with a view to informing a future planning application

submission. The preparation of these documents has not identified any constraints that would preclude the sites' development:

- **New Homes** – The sites could deliver a wide range of market and affordable housing to meet the Borough's needs, with 30% of the proposed units being delivered as affordable housing. Any proposals would be delivered in accordance with the aspiration to achieve a minimum average density of 30 dwellings per hectare.
- **Community Facilities** – Any development would be accompanied by proportionate developer contributions towards the delivery of new community infrastructure, including any identified need to provide additional primary and secondary school facilities and increased healthcare capacity. Gladman would be willing to agree to all requests for developer contributions that meet the relevant requirements of paragraph 57 of the Framework and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations 122 and 123.
- **Open Space** – The sites could be developed to meet the Council's minimum open space standards. In common with any necessary enhancements to community facilities, proportionate developer contributions to address any identified need for enhanced leisure facilities and playing pitch provision would be provided.
- **Natural Environment** – Any development would be carefully masterplanned to take account of and retain all existing landscape features wherever possible, accompanied by new areas of green infrastructure planting. Views of the two parcels from the wider surrounding area are largely restricted by existing landscape features, intervening vegetation, and topography, whilst ecology surveys have not identified any constraints that would preclude the sites' development. Through the provision of new green infrastructure planting and other ecological enhancements, the development of the sites can achieve net biodiversity gains. Gladman are also aware of the expectation that the development of the sites would also achieve net biodiversity gains when measured against the Defra Metric.

- **Green Belt** – As described in response to Question 3, the Pool Lane and Warrington Road sites benefit from established areas of woodland and tree planting along their northern and western boundaries respectively. These will create a strong boundary to the retained Green Belt beyond and will be retained and enhanced as part of any development proposals. Gladman have provided separate comments on the matter of compensatory Green Belt enhancements in response to Question 8 below.
- **Transport and Accessibility** – Gladman is satisfied that both sites can be safely accessed from Warrington Road. Appropriate cycling and walking routes would be provided within the sites and the existing route of Footpath 10 will be incorporated into any development proposals. A future planning application would be supported by a Transport Assessment and a Framework Travel Plan. Again, Gladman is willing to provide proportionate developer contributions towards any identified need for enhanced accessibility infrastructure.
- **Utilities and Environmental Protection** – A surface water drainage strategy developed in accordance with Sustainable Urban Drainage (SuDS) principles will be employed as part of the sites' development, ensuring the proposals do not increase the risk of flooding on-site or elsewhere, whilst the sites could be safely developed in relation to flood risk and the risk of flooding would not pose a constraint to their development. The proposals could be designed to mitigate the impacts of climate change (please see our Updated Submission Version Local Plan representations relating to the requirements of Policy ENV7), with a noise assessment forming part of a future planning application submission.
- **Historic Environment** – The development of the sites would not have an unacceptable impact on the setting or significance of any heritage assets, including the Grade II listed Statham Lodge. There is no intervisibility between the sites and the historic core of Lymm, and views between the sites and Statham Lodge are heavily filtered by intervening vegetation.

**Question 7. Does the policy identify appropriate and necessary infrastructure requirements? How will these be provided and funded? Is this sufficiently clear?**

- 2.1.9 This is a question for the Council to respond to. As outlined in our response to Question 6, Gladman would be willing to provide proportionate developer contributions towards the enhancement of local infrastructure where this necessary to make the development of the Pool Lane and Warrington Road sites acceptable in planning terms.

**Question 8. Is the requirement for Green Belt compensatory improvements justified and appropriate?**

- 2.1.10 Gladman are aware that it is the intention to revise the part of Policy OS4 that refers to compensatory Green Belt enhancements, as follows (proposed modifications highlighted in bold/underlined):

*"A scheme of compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of land remaining in the Green Belt will be required. **In the first instance, the improvements should be made in the immediate vicinity of the site and delivered by the developer. The Council will consider improvements in the wider area where it can be demonstrated that the improvements cannot be delivered in the immediate vicinity of the site or where this will provide greater benefits.** Financial contributions will **only** be considered where this would help to ensure that the benefits of compensatory improvements can be maximised by providing them in the most a more appropriate location."*

- 2.1.11 Having reviewed this proposed modification, Gladman believe that greater flexibility could be built into this element of Policy OS4, in turn providing greater flexibility over how any compensatory Green Belt enhancements can be achieved and delivered. We would therefore propose the following modifications for the Council and Inspectors to consider:

*"A scheme of compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of land remaining in the Green Belt will be required. **Improvements***

**should preferably be made in the immediate vicinity of the site, however the Council will consider improvements in the wider area where this will provide greater benefits.** *Financial contributions will **also** be considered where this would help to ensure that the benefits of compensatory improvements can be maximised by providing them in the most a more appropriate location."*

- 2.1.12 A scheme for securing compensatory improvements could be secured by planning obligation or conditions at the time of obtaining planning permission. This will provide certainty that compensatory improvements will be delivered in support of development proposals.

**Question 9. 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?**

- 2.1.13 This is a question for the Council to respond to. As outlined in our response to Question 6 above, Gladman are satisfied that the Pool Lane and Warrington Road sites can be safely accessed from Warrington Road.

**Question 10. Are there potential adverse effects not covered above, if so, what are they and how would they be addressed and mitigated? N.B. The Council's response should address key issues raised in representations.**

- 2.1.14 This is a question for the Council to respond to. However, Gladman wish to reserve the right to comment on this question further at the Matter 7d hearing session.

**Question 11. 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?**

- 2.1.15 Gladman are confident that the Pool Lane and Warrington Road sites would both be capable of delivering houses quickly and in the short-term to meet the Borough's housing needs. We are currently in the process of preparing an outline planning application submission which we envisage would be capable of being lodged with the Council in autumn 2022.

2.1.16 As a company, Gladman has a strong track record of converting outline planning permissions to completions on site. The nature of our contractual agreement means that once planning permission has been secured it is in our interests to market the site expeditiously. The housebuilder that subsequently takes the site forward is equally motivated to secure a reserved matters approval and commence site construction as soon as possible, to see a return on their investment.

2.1.17 We are not aware of any viability or delivery constraints that would affect the timescales or the sites' ability to come forward in the short term to meet the borough's housing needs.

**Question 12. What is the situation in relation to land ownership and developer interest?**

2.1.18 As outlined in response to Question 1 above, the Pool Lane and Warrington Road sites are both being actively promoted by Gladman on behalf of the same site owners with the benefit of a signed Promotion Agreement. There are no landownership constraints that would affect their delivery.

**Question 13. 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?**

2.1.19 As described in response to Question 12, both sites are being actively promoted by Gladman, with it being our intention to submit a single outline planning application which would cover both parcels of land. The planning application would be supported by a single S106 Agreement, which together with accompanying planning conditions would include appropriate obligations and triggers for governing the timing and provision of any necessary infrastructure improvements.

**Question 14. Are any main modifications necessary for soundness?**

2.1.20 Please see our comments in response to Question 7 regarding the proposed modifications to the element of Policy OS4 that refers to compensatory Green Belt enhancements.