

Warrington Local Plan EiP.

Matter 8: Housing Land Supply.

On behalf of Taylor Wimpey, Bloor Homes and Lone Star Land and Mulbury (Grappenhall) Limited.

Date: 05 August 2022 | Pegasus Ref: P21-3147 / R010v1 / PL

Author: ST/RD





Document Management.

Version	Date	Author	Checked/ Approved by:	Reason for revision
V1	05 August 2022	RD	ST	

1. Matter 8 – Housing Land Supply

Issue – Whether the Local Plan has been positively prepared and whether it is justified, effective and consistent with national policy in relation to the approach to housing land supply.

- 1.1. The following comments should be read in conjunction with our representations, notably:
 - Our response to Policy DEV1 – Housing Delivery (**UPSVLP 1431, P6, para 7.1 to para 7.34**);
 - Our housing land supply assessment (**UPSVLP 1431, Appendix 7, 7A-7F**).
- 1.2. With regard to the test of justified, we do not consider that the SHLAA document is set out in a transparent, accessible, and clear format. Whilst we note that the evidence test has to simply be proportionate, we would point out that the Council are not seeking to allocate many urban sites. As such, there is no clear depiction for the public as to where a very large proportion of housing growth is expected to take place other than the expansive settlement boundary itself. This is compounded by the fact that there are no maps in the proforma at Appendix 1 of the 2021 SHLAA and whilst links are provided to the Council's interactive mapping, it does not direct to the SHLAA sites themselves. As such, the SHLAA is very hard to navigate.
- 1.3. It is set out in the 2021 SHLAA that there is a spreadsheet which contains information guided by the Planning Practice Guidance, which has informed the site proforma which are provided at Appendix 1 of the 2021 SHLAA¹. This spreadsheet may have assisted our assessment of the SHLAA sites, but a copy is not available. We also requested a copy of the spreadsheet from the Council during the 2nd regulation 19 consultation, but to no avail.
- 1.4. In certain instances, there are also discrepancies with references in the 2021 SHLAA and the Council's interactive mapping. For example:
 - The proforma at Appendix 1 of the SHLAA refers to SHLAA 2673a and 2673b whereas the interactive mapping refers to 2673, 26732 and 26733; and
 - The proforma at Appendix 1 of the SHLAA refers to SHLAA 2672a, 2672b, 2672c, and 2672d whereas the interactive mapping refers to 26721, 26722, 26723 and 26724.
- 1.5. In short, we would welcome any further documents from the Council that provide greater clarity on the matter of housing supply and reserve the right to comment further once these have been supplied as part of the examination process.

Q1. What is the up to date situation regarding actual housing completions so far in the plan period i.e. 2021/22?
- 1.6. We await the Council's response and reserve the right to comment at the hearing.

¹ H4, para 2.22

Q2. For each of the following sources of housing land supply for the whole plan period in turn, what are the assumptions about the overall scale, lead in times, timing and annual rates of delivery? What is the basis for these assumptions and are they realistic and justified?

- a) SHLAA sites under construction;
- b) SHLAA sites with planning permission but not started (split by outline and full);
- c) SHLAA sites without planning permission.

- 1.7. It is not transparent from the information within the SHLAA proformas as to which sites benefit from full or outline planning permission (or are simply subject to a planning application) and therefore it is not entirely clear how certain sites have been considered in the context of the deliverable and developable tests set out in the NPPF definitions and guidance in the NPPG.
- 1.8. At the time of the second Regulation 19 consultation of the Proposed Submission Version Local Plan 2019 (**PVLP1**), the 2020 Strategic Housing Land Supply Assessment (SHLAA) was available (although was not included in the evidence base documents). The Council's proposed housing trajectory showed that 6,992 homes would come forward from SHLAA sites within the wider urban area over the plan period.
- 1.9. It was set out in our representations that this was overly optimistic since many sites were either not being promoted by the land owner, were occupied by viable businesses with existing leases, did not have planning permission. Whilst we accept that this may not prevent certain sites from coming forward within the plan period, one must also apply a pinch of reality that not all of the SHLAA sites identified would become available for development very valid reasons.
- 1.10. Our housing land assessment listed the SHLAA sites without developer interest and SHLAA sites with no planning permission and set out that not all sites with planning permission would materialise into a start on site (**UPSVLP 1431, Appendix 7, Table 5 and Table 6 and para 2.12**). At the time, a total of 840 claimed dwellings within the supply had no landowner or developer interest and 2,777 claimed dwellings within the supply had no form of planning permission. Rather than discount each site one by one, we simply applied a 25% reduction to account for the likely probability that not all sites listed would become available (**UPSVLP 1431, P6, para. 7.8**). This reduced the Council's claimed supply from SHLAA sites within the wider urban area from 6,992 to 5,230 homes over the plan period (i.e. **-1,762 homes** less than claimed) (**UPSVLP 1431, P6, Table 1 and UPSVLP 1431, Appendix 7, Table 4**).
- 1.11. The 2021 SHLAA (**H4/H4a**) was issued at the time of Submitting the plan. It still suggests that 6,992 homes will come forward from SHLAA sites within the wider urban area over the plan period. As such, there is no movement on the Council's position and therefore we maintain our position within our Regulation 19 representations.
- 1.12. The following table assists in highlighting our why we consider caution needs to be applied to the Council's assumptions.

SHLAA REF	SITE NAME	SHLAA CAPACITY	PEGASUS COMMENT
Examples of SHLAA Sites where unrealistic assumptions are made on availability			
2482	Wharf Ind. Estate	129	Industrial site is practically fully occupied and comprises of a large number of independent units with a range of ownerships and lease arrangements in place. Recent applications have been granted as late as 2019 to replace certain units with newer employment units on certain parcels. There is no evidence that there is full land owner interest to see this site come forward for residential development. Whilst we note that Langtree own approximately half of the site, Langtree's ownership is the southern half that is separated from the residential areas to the north and therefore we consider the development of this site alone for residential use would generate 'agent of change' issues for the other businesses on the northern part of this parcel. We also question the suitability of this site being within Flood Zone 3.
2481	Hopwood St, School Brow, Crossley St	109	Occupied by viable businesses including Farmfoods who signed a new lease in 2020 for 15 years with scope to renew.
2672c-d	Arpley Rd	235	Occupied by viable businesses including Go Outdoors with 20 year lease with options to renew. Other business is a viable builder's merchant. We also question the suitability of these sites being within Flood Zone 3.
2676a-b	Scottish Power / Causeway Park	184	Land is within a number of ownerships and fully occupied by various businesses. The Council confirm that promotion is not by the owners of the land and whilst it is stated there is developer interest, there is no evidence provided in this regard. We also question the suitability of 2676b being within Flood Zone 2.
1733	Hall Motors Site	31	Occupied by Suzuki Garage. No developer interest and not being promoted by owner.
Examples of SHLAA Sites where scale and deliverability issues are not fully addressed/confirmed			
1401	Warwick St	550	Whilst we note there is a current outline application, this has yet to be determined. We note that it significantly underprovides in terms of parking provision against the Council's policies and it includes four blocks of apartments for up to 12 storeys in height. The SHLAA states commencement by 28/29, which is not deemed

			to be realistic in light of no outline permission and the scale of this development may not be approved.
2673a-b	New Town House / Land at Scotland Road	900	This is another significant apartment scheme within the town centre that has yet to gain outline permission. Commencement in 26/27 is therefore unrealistic and there is limited past evidence that this scale of apartment development is viable in Warrington at this stage.

- 1.13. Just to be clear, we have not undertaken an assessment of all of the sites put forward by the Council due to the issues of transparency and clarity raised with the evidence at the outset of this hearing statement. However, the first five sites listed are not supported by any evidence from the Council despite the fact that it is plainly evident when visiting those sites that they are currently occupied by viable businesses. No evidence is provided by the Council that those businesses expect to depart these sites during the plan period and therefore the test of 'reasonable prospect' set out in the NPPF glossary has not been met. We anticipate there will be other similar instances within the SHLAA but simply accounting for these five sites would reduce the Council's claimed supply from the urban area by **688 dwellings**.
- 1.14. With regard to the latter 2 sites listed, we recognise that there are application submissions that demonstrate dwellings could be located on the sites. We also note the Council own one of the sites. However, the number of dwellings set out in the SHLAA reflects the number of homes associated with the application. Whilst we recognise that is on obvious starting point, neither of the applications have been approved despite being with the Council for some time and therefore the scale of these very large developments is yet to be endorsed.
- 1.15. One must therefore apply a level of caution to these figures because a) permission does not exist; b) they are only outline applications with no details provided and; c) there is no clear evidence that there will be end developer interest for schemes of this scale or the market demand for this many apartments within the Town Centre (coupled with all of the other apartments anticipated to come forward in the SHLAA). We anticipate there will be other similar instances within the SHLAA but simply accounting for these 2 sites and applying a 25% risk discount to these schemes would reduce the Council's claimed supply from the urban area by a further **363 dwellings**.
- 1.16. The latter example is considered to be particularly pertinent because we also note that the Council has submitted the Town Centre Masterplan 2017 (**MP4-MP5**) alongside the WLP as opposed to the 2020 version. The Town Centre Masterplan 2017 and 2021 SHLAA make different density assumptions. Those in the Town Centre Masterplan 2017 are based on an assessment of character areas in the town centre and a holistic masterplanning exercise for the whole of the town centre. Those in the 2021 SHLAA are based on planning applications that have come forward in recent years. As a result, the capacity of the SHLAA sites is an increase on that which was identified the master planning exercise undertaken in 2017. Given these differences the Council should clarify the purpose and status of the Town Centre Masterplan 2017 and treat the scale of proposed development with some caution when seeking to determine the urban capacity of Warrington, particularly if the masterplan is a material consideration in determining the planning applications.

- 1.17. We also question the suitability of other SHLAA sites for residential use within flood zone 3 including:
- 1041 – Harry Cloughfold – 64 homes
 - 1620– Recycling premises – 11 homes
 - 1715 – Spectra Building & Drivetime Golf Range – 513 homes
 - 2704 – Land at Boarded Barn Farm – 4 homes
 - 3474 – Blackburn Arms PH – 23 homes
 - 3568 – Warrington Borough Transport Depot – 153 homes

- 1.18. It is also questionable whether the following SHLAA sites would add to the residential stock, and to what extent, given they are currently in use as care homes:
- 3357 – Old Rectory – 15 homes
 - 3505 – 8 Bewsey Road – 14 homes
 - 3606 – Broomfields – 51 homes

d) Small site allowance (windfalls)

- 1.19. It was set out in our representations that the flat delivery of the small sites allowance over the entire plan period is overly optimistic and that it was appropriate to reduce the delivery from this element of the supply towards the latter end of the plan period. As such, we considered it reasonable to apply a reduced rate of 50 homes per annum from 2031/2032. Applying this reasonable assumption reduced the Council's claimed supply from this source from 1,458 homes to 1,210 homes over the plan period (i.e. 248 homes less than claimed).
- 1.20. Small sites are finite and the supply of homes from this source should naturally fall over time as sites get developed. It is therefore questionable whether any small sites would contribute to the housing land supply at a flat rate of 81 homes over the plan period, as set out in the Council's Housing Trajectory.
- 1.21. Whilst we note that the 2021 SHLAA shows that on average over the past 10 years small sites have delivered 90 homes per year (which is an increase on the 81 homes identified at the time of the 2020 SHLAA), the fact remains that the delivery of such sites should fall over time.

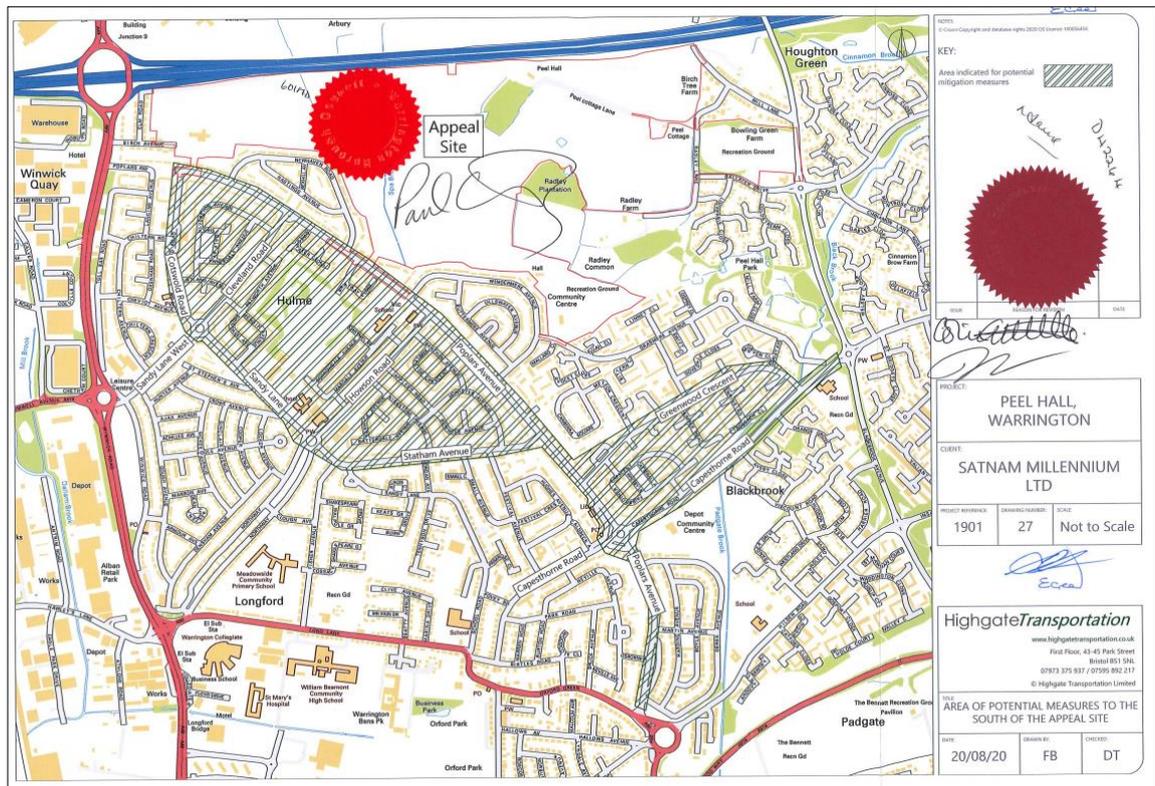
e) Each of the Main Development Areas involving housing

Peel Hall

- 1.22. The Council's Housing Trajectory is showing first completions from 2026/27. This is overly optimistic on the basis that the outline permission has 53 planning conditions and requires Road Safety Audits and Traffic Regulation Order(s). These could be tricky and lengthy

matters to work through owing to the significant level of opposition of the outline application, including by the Council's highways officers.

- 1.23. We also note that the s106 legal agreement requires an off-site highways mitigation scheme which must set out the expectant highway's impacts of the development on the off-site highways area and other potential off-site highways works (legal orders (20mph speed limit extension, waiting restrictions, establishment of road humps, as necessary), raised tables, round top road humps, TRO signate and other signage, uncontrolled crossing points along Poplars Avenue, Road Safety Audits etc.).



Off-Site Highways Area edged and hatched green (extract from s106 legal agreement)

Warrington Waterfront

- 1.24. In our representation we considered it appropriate to apply a build rate of 57 homes per annum (based on the evidence in the 2020 SHLAA) at SHLAA 1633/Parcel K5 since there was no evidence then (or now that we can find) to suggest that the claimed build rates set out in the Council's Housing Trajectory, could be achieved.
- 1.25. Policy MD1 – Warrington Waterfront says that no development will be permitted until funding has been secured and a programme of delivery has been confirmed for the Western Link.
- 1.26. Construction of the Western Link has already been delayed by 18 months, with construction initially programmed to start in 2021 and be completed by 2024.
- 1.27. In our representations we applied realistic start on site at Warrington Waterfront to tie it in with reasonable assumptions about when the funding for the western link may be confirmed and when permission may be secured thereafter.

- 1.28. The Council has since acknowledged in their response to Matter 6a (**M6a.01**) that there has been a delay at Warrington Waterfront owing to an increase in scheme cost of the Western Link. The Council now anticipate the first homes to be completed in 2029/30 (as opposed to 2027/28 as set out in their Housing Trajectory). As such, an adjustment will be required to the Housing Trajectory in this regard.
- 1.29. The Council have suggested in their response to Matter 6a that in the event there is a more significant delay to the Western Link programme they will address this through a future review of the plan and that they are confident that there would be sufficient time to undertake a review prior to address any issues with the plan's housing land supply.
- 1.30. We consider 2029/30 to still be overly optimistic for the reasons set out in our housing land supply assessment as well as the fact that an EIA will be required to support the planning application(s) at Warrington Waterfront, and the Sports England objection to the loss of playing fields will need to be overcome. This issue should be addressed now with an appropriate contingency drafted into the WLP and not simply pushed to a review of the plan.

South East Warrington Urban Extension

- 1.31. For the reasons set out in our response to Matter 6b (**M6b.08**) we are strongly of the view that the South East Warrington Urban Extension (SEWUE) should be removed as an allocation from the WLP (along with the South East Warrington Employment Area) and replaced with the former Garden Suburb allocation.
- 1.32. Notwithstanding that, in our representations we considered it appropriate to apply a build rate of 57 homes per annum (based on the evidence in the 2020 SHLAA) at the SEWUE (assuming three outlets) since there was no evidence then (or now that we can find) to suggest that the claimed build rates set out in the Council's Housing Trajectory, could be achieved. In our representations we also considered it appropriate to apply a start on site of 2030/31 on the Homes England land to reflect our evidence on past delivery on Homes England sites.

Fiddlers Ferry

- 1.33. For the reasons set out in our response to Matter 6c (**M6c.05**) we are strongly of the view that the housing elements of Fiddlers Ferry should be removed as an allocation in the WLP.

f) Each of the site allocations in outlying settlements

- 1.34. No comment until we see the Council's response on this matter.

Q3. Would there be an adequate supply of housing land for the whole plan period?

- 1.35. No. See above. Additional land needs to be allocated to address the required housing needs within the plan period at 945 dpa and even in the event of just the SM figure being applied due to the fact that a number of the proposed allocated sites are not deemed to be suitable.

Q4. Overall, would at least 10% of the housing requirement/target be met on sites no larger than one hectare (in light of paragraph 69 of the NPPF)

1.36. We reserve comment until we see the Council's response to this question.

Q5. In terms of a five year supply and paragraph 74 of the NPPF, is a 20% buffer appropriate?

1.37. Yes, a 20% buffer is appropriate owing to the latest housing delivery test measurement being 72%.

Q6. Taking 2022/23 as the base year, what would be the five year requirement (assuming the stepped annual requirement and adding any shortfall or subtracting any surplus in delivery since 2021 before applying a buffer)?

1.38. We cannot comment until we see the Council's 22/23 competition figures.

Q7. What would be the supply for this period (in total and by each source of supply)?

1.39. We cannot comment until we see the Council's response on this matter.

Q8. Are the assumptions on the sources of supply for this period realistic and justified?

1.40. No comment until we see the Council's response on this matter.

Q9. Would there be a five year supply of housing land (from 1st April 2022)?

1.41. We note that the Council confirm there is a 3.9 year supply in the SHLAA indicating that there is a lack of immediately deliverable land for housing development within Warrington. This is not entirely surprising given the lack of a full housing chapter within the adopted Local Plan and the constraints imposed by tight Green Belt boundaries around the main settlement and villages.

1.42. Whilst we recognise that the Garden Suburb proposals will require a good degree of forward planning through the SPD process, the number of potential outlets that could commence development on this site within a reasonable short order is extensive with Taylor Wimpey, Bloor Homes and Hollins Strategic Land (which is part of Hollins Homes) and also control land to the east of Broad Lane could all commence development quickly.

Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)
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