

Hearing Position Statement by
Tetra Tech Planning
on Behalf of Ashall Property Ltd

MATTER 8 HOUSING SUPPLY

Prepared by Tetra Tech Environment Planning Transport Limited.
Registered in England number: 03050297

Our Reference: B040704/8

Summary of matters addressed in this Statement:

We will provide a summary of our Client's position on the Issues and Questions raised by the Inspectors on Matter 8 and will set out what actions are required, in our opinion, to make the draft Local Plan sound.

Matter 8 Inspectors' Questions being addressed: Questions 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9

1. Introduction

1.1 Tetra Tech Planning is representing Ashall Property Limited (our 'Client') in support of their proposed site on Land South of the A56 Chester Road (site reference R18/P2/041 – SHLAA reference 2671). Ashall Properties Limited own the Freehold interest of this 8.18 hectares (20.21 acres) site in Walton.

1.2 This Statement supplements the submissions previously made by Ashall Property Limited (Respondent Reference UPSVLP 0417), including Hearing Position Statements on Matters 3 and 6c, and should therefore be read in conjunction with the representations previously made.

2. Response to Inspectors' questions

Q2: For each of the sources of housing land supply for the whole plan period in, 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?

2.1 Lichfields undertook a review of SHLAA sites (50+ dwellings only) during the 2021 UPSVLP consultation on behalf of the Home Builders Consortium. In total they reviewed 44 of the SHLAA sites with the findings set out in the Lichfields Housing Land Supply Technical Note (Annex 4 of UPSVLP 0417 response). This showed that from that sample of 44 sites alone 20 were either undevelopable or had unrealistic development trajectories. The review found that for sites of 50+ units at least 1,610 should be removed from the developable supply within the Plan Period.

2.2 We have undertaken a further review of the updated 2021 SHLAA, **excluding the the 44 sites reviewed by Lichfields**, to avoid double counting. Our review of the housing supply from the different SHLAA sources are listed below and more detailed commentary on each of the sites are set out in Appendixes A and B.

a) **SHLAA sites under construction**

2.3 No comments

b) **SHLAA sites with planning permission but not started**

2.4 Please refer to our Appendix A for our review of sites with planning permission and which are considered not to be deliverable. In summary the following sites should be removed from the housing supply: 1800 (18) and 2633 (16).

2.5 In total that is 34 dwellings that needs to be removed from this source in addition to the ones already identified by Lichtfields on behalf of the Consortium.

c) **SHLAA sites without planning permission**

2.6 Please refer to our Appendix B for our review of sites without planning permission and which are considered not to be deliverable. In summary the following sites should be removed from the housing supply: 1647 (28), 1720 (11), 1733 (31), 1753 (38), 1809 (25), 2129 (15), 2463 (20), 2478 (44), 2480 (42), 2676a (92), and 3309 (11).

2.7 In total that is **357** dwellings that needs to be removed from this source in addition to the ones already identified by Lichtfields on behalf of the Consortium.

d) **Small site allowance**

2.8 No comments.

e) **Each of the Main Development Areas involving housing**

MD1 Warrington Waterfront

2.9 The Council assumes this allocation can deliver 1,335 dwellings of which 1,070 will be delivered in the Plan Period. The Council itself has stated that the delivery of Warrington Waterfront is intrinsically linked to the delivery of the Warrington Western Link (WWL). Therefore, it is unrealistic to assume any housing will be delivered from Warrington Waterfront until the delivery of the WWL is secured.

2.10 The application for the WWL was due to be submitted 14 months ago but it still has not. Discussions with our Client, as one of the key landowners for the alignment of the proposed WWL, has stalled since January 2021. To date there has been no draft sale agreement, or any contractual position reached on the land required for the WWL despite our client being a willing seller. Our client is just one of a vast number of landowners with whom agreements will need to be reached to acquire the land to deliver the WWL Some of the other landowners may not be as willing to sell their land.

- 2.11 Notwithstanding the fact that the cost of acquiring the land above has not been fixed, there is insufficient funding to deliver the WWL. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP)[IN1] on page 11 identified a shortfall of £77.5 million to fund the WWL. This is a vast sum of money yet to find and the cost of delivering the WWL is likely to have gone up substantially from the indicative cost identified in the 2021 IDP and will continue to go up as inflation ramps up.
- 2.12 Unless and until the Council can demonstrate that it can acquire all the land required to deliver the WWL **and** secure the funding required, it cannot reasonably assume that the WWL will be deliverable. By default, in line with the Council's own assessment, the Warrington Waterfront allocation is not therefore deliverable.
- 2.13 Should the Council and the Inspectors consider that it is appropriate to retain the Warrington Waterfront allocation on the hope that the issues around the delivery of the WWL can be resolved within the Plan Period, then we would make the following comments on the housing supply position.
1. It has not been demonstrated that 1,335 dwellings can be accommodated on the site and comply with the proposed policies in the UPSVLP. Of particular relevance is the need:
 - To achieve 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG) on this large greenfield site with valuable habitats;
 - for mainly (65%) larger family housing which will make it hard to achieve the minimum density of 50 dwellings throughout the development;
 - for further technical studies to inform the constraints analysis; and
 - the need for a masterplan that would provide a realistic assessment of the net developable area and density that could be achieved on the site.
 2. The assumed development trajectory for the site will need to be amended to reduce the number of dwellings that will be delivered in the Plan Period. The completion of the WWL by 2025/26 as identified in the IDP is clearly no longer appropriate. At best the completion should be pushed back to 2027/28. This will substantially reduce the number of dwellings that can be delivered from this allocation within the Plan Period.
 3. We strongly recommend safeguarded land be identified in the likely eventuality that the WWL is not delivered in the Plan Period.
- 2.14 If the WWL does not come forward a much smaller element of housing may still be possible with access from Forrest Way, but this is likely to be in the region of the low hundreds rather than anything approaching a figure near 1,000 dwellings. This should be subject to evidenced highway capacity assessment and access before being considered as part of the housing supply. It is our understanding that Peel own the land immediately surrounding the roundabout at the south end of Forrest Way and as such a ransom strip is likely to exist.

2.15 For the time being **0 dwellings** should be assumed to be delivered from Warrington Waterfront during the Plan Period.

MD2 South East Warrington Urban Extension

2.16 A number of sites make up the whole urban extension. Notwithstanding that the bulk of the proposed allocation is in Homes England ownership, some of the land will be in multiple ownerships and not all the sites will have common boundaries and so there will be gaps between them.

2.17 This means that it is likely to be difficult for the site promoter(s) and Local Planning Authority to quickly bring about a cohesive masterplan, with a clear staged phasing of the development with multiple land ownerships.

2.18 A significant amount of work will be required to deliver the Extension noting that a Development Framework will have to be prepared and approved by the Council to guide development in accordance with the allocation Policy MD2.

2.19 The Council anticipates the first homes being completed in 2025/26, which to us seems extremely optimistic, given the amount of masterplanning and other technical supporting work still to be carried out in accordance with Policy MD2. This includes, for example, ensuring that the allocation site provides evidence that development will not have any adverse impacts on the integrity of the Mersey Estuary Special Protection Area and provides a scheme for measurable Biodiversity Net Gain. Furthermore, a comprehensive package of transport improvements will be required to support the Urban Extension, which will include new roads and transport infrastructure.

2.20 Education infrastructure will need to be constructed, such as delivering two new 2 form entry primary schools and a new centrally located secondary school. Furthermore, the Urban Extension will be required to deliver a new leisure facility including flexible space for health care, and should also include local shops, a supermarket, and other appropriate local services and community facilities. This means that equalisation between different landowners will need to be agreed prior to the Development Framework being agreed.

2.21 Funding (through S106/CIL/Central Government) will also need to be secured early on in the development cycle in order to ensure delivery of those pieces of infrastructure on time to meet 1st occupation of the new dwellings proposed as part of the South-East Warrington Urban Extension.

2.22 All of these elements, together with the planning application process makes it very unlikely that any meaningful number of housing would be delivered in the first half of the

Plan Period and overall less will be delivered in the Plan Period than projected by the Council.

2.23 A more realistic trajectory would be first delivery in years 2027/2028 and overall delivery of 2,160 during the Plan Period.

MD3 Fiddlers Ferry

2.24 The Masterplan document Regeneration Vision submitted by the previous owner SSE does not provide any detailed consideration of the site constraints for this site and how that would affect the developable area. There are numerous such constraints, some of which are listed by the Council on page 13-16 of their Local Plan Site Allocation Site Profiles document [CD02].

2.25 Notwithstanding our comments on the inappropriateness of further reducing the strategic Green Belt gap between the main urban areas of Warrington, Widnes and Runcorn, we consider the assumed number and timing of housing from this allocation is flawed.

2.26 In terms of housing numbers from the site we believe the capacity of the residential element south of the railway line (900 dwellings) is over estimated. given the environmental and access constraints associated with that parcel of development.

2.27 Insufficient information has been made available to us to make balanced judgement on the site's capacity at this stage.

2.28 In terms of timing the lead in time for the delivery of housing on the site is significantly underestimated. The UPSVLP states in Paragraph 10.3.14 that "the detailed infrastructure requirements for Phase 2 (the 900 dwellings south of the railway line) will be confirmed through future formal reviews of the Local Plan." Yet, Point 6 in proposed Policy MD3 says that the landowner will be required to prepare and agree a comprehensive Development Framework prior to submission of the first planning. These statements contradict each other.

2.29 We believe it is right to prescribe that a detailed Development Framework be agreed prior to determining any applications on such a strategic site. The infrastructure requirements for the whole of the site should be considered at the outset to ensure an integrated and deliverable development. For example, foul sewerage connections and infrastructure to service the isolated south parcel in particular, sport mitigation, and BNG.

2.30 There will be large areas of greenfield that will be developed (circa 30 hectares), if the Phase 1 housing (Land in the strategic Green Belt gap east of the Power Station site) is released from the Green Belt. It is likely that ecological mitigation will be required on the land south of the railway line to compensate for the loss of such a large area of green belt land. This should be considered from the outset together with any impacts on Designated sites.

2.31 The need for a comprehensive approach for all of the site will add to the lead in time required before development can commence. The phasing also fails to take account of the need to provide replacement playing pitches that are ready for use **before** the current pitch on the site is lost. In addition to this we consider the Council has not allowed sufficient time for the remediation of the Power Plant site.

2.32 For the reasons outlined above we consider the Council's development trajectory for Fidders Ferry is overly optimistic. The housing supply from the site during the Plan Period should be reduced even if the proposed allocation is retained in its current extent. We believe no dwellings will be delivered within years 1 to 5 and the earliest delivery will be in the latter half of the Plan Period. As such the housing supply contribution during the Plan Period needs to be reduced by **at least** 175 dwellings.

Q3: [Would there be an adequate supply of housing land for the whole plan period?](#)

2.33 **No**, see comments on Question 2.

Q5: [In terms of a five year supply and paragraph 74 of the NPPF, is a 20% buffer appropriate?](#)

2.34 **Yes**. There has been significant under delivery over recent years. The five year average between 2015 to 2020 was only 517 per year as referenced in Table 2 (page 26) of the Developer Rebuttals document by GL Hearn, dated February 2022 [LP Document ID: H1].

2.35 More specifically in relation to the last three years Warrington has had the following net completions according to the latest Annual Monitoring Report (page 14) [CD01]:

Year	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021
Net additional dwellings	503	541	573

2.36 This figure is substantially below any of the housing needs figures that have been in circulation since 2019. The Proposed Submission Version Local Plan proposed an annual target of 945dpa, the Updated Proposed Submission Version utilises the Standard Method figure of 816 from 2021.

2.37 In accordance with Paragraph 74 of the NPPF a 20% buffer should therefore be applied.

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)?

2.38 It is not appropriate to apply a stepped annual requirement given the low annual housing completions over recent years, which is well below the annual housing need figure. Instead the Council should look to allocate more sites that are deliverable in the short and medium term.

2.39 As a minimum the annual housing target should be 828, allowing for the increase in the Standard Method calculation using the most up to date affordability ratio. That would equate to a 5 year requirement of **4,968 dwellings** (5 x 828 + 20% buffer).

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

2.40 This is for the Council to confirm, but as stated already the Year 1 to 5 supply across a number of the sources of supply is overstated.

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

2.41 **No. At least 671 dwellings should be removed** from the 5 year supply with 2022/23 as base year. This includes:

1. South East Warrington Urban Extension – 270 dwellings;
2. Fiddlers Ferry – 105 dwellings;
3. At least 223 from SHLAA sites with capacity of 50 dwellings or over;
4. At least 34 dwellings from SHLAA sites with planning permission between 9 to 50 dwellings (See Appendix A) and
5. At least 39 dwellings from **SHLAA sites without planning permission** and excluding the sites already identified by Lichfields on behalf of the Consortium (See Appendix B).

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

2.42 This will depend on the completions data for 2021/22, but is very unlikely given the level of delivery in the preceding years.

3. Actions required to make the UPSVLP sound

- 3.1 A thorough review is required of the SHLAA site assumptions in Appendix 1 of [H4A] to accurately establish the current supply of housing for the full Plan Period.
- 3.3 The Council should then allocate further deliverable sites for housing to make up the resultant deficit. The selection criteria should be consistent and follow the Council's preferred approach of allocating sites adjacent to the Main Urban Area.
- 3.4 Our Client's site (Land South of Chester Road – SHLAA reference 2671) borders the Main Urban Area of Warrington, is less than 250 metres from Inner Warrington and less than a kilometre from Stockton Health local centre. It is in single ownership with good road access and is therefore deliverable within years 1-5 of the Plan Period. It has a site capacity to provide a care home with (80 to 110) beds, 70 extra care or retirement apartments and 137 dwellings (of which 50% will be affordable housing).

Appendix 1: SHLAA sites with Planning Permission to be removed

1. SHLAA SITE 1800 (Land adjacent to Rosa Villa)

Stated capacity 18, stated delivery years 1-5

On page 39 in Appendix 1 [H4a] the site is counted as 18 dwellings despite the fact that the permission was for an extension to the care home for additional bedrooms rather than new dwellings. **Remove from the housing supply.**

2. SHLAA SITE 2633 (Former Orford Farm)

Stated capacity 33, stated delivery years 6-10

Application: 2014/24291 – This application was approved on 19 November 2014 and appears to now have lapsed. Approximately half of the site is covered by mature trees and extensive vegetation to the rest. Ecological considerations such as achieving a BNG is likely to impact on the deliverability of the site and net developable area **Reduce site capacity by 50% to 17, therefore remove 16 dwellings from the housing supply.**

Total SHLAA sites with planning permission to remove from the housing supply = **34.**

Appendix 2: SHLAA sites without Planning Permission to be removed

1. SHLAA SITE 1647 (Land off Mill Lane)

Stated capacity 28, stated delivery years 1-5

This site is immediately adjacent to the M62 and will require detailed consideration on the developability of the site in terms of noise and air quality considerations, notwithstanding other constraints such as ecology and below ground conditions. Despite this the Council in Appendix 1 [H4a, page 24] of the 2021 SHLAA considers the site to be suitable and achievable. Furthermore it considers the site will deliver 28 dwellings between 2023 and 2025. This is overly optimistic considering there is not even a planning application submitted for this site and in light of the constraints mentioned above. There is no certainty that the site can deliver more than 10 dwellings and as such should be removed from the housing supply. **Remove from the housing supply.**

2. SHLAA SITE 1720 (MSBS Joinery Site)

Stated capacity 11, stated delivery years 6-10

The site is identified for 11 dwellings [page 28 of H4a] even though half of this 0.37ha site is located in Flood Zone 2. There is no planning application or consent for this site. The site should be removed from the housing supply until it can be demonstrated that it is in fact developable for residential use. **Remove from the housing supply.**

3. SHLAA SIT 1733 (Hall Motors)

Stated capacity 31, stated delivery years 11-15

This site is in commercial use as a car showroom/ garage [page 31 of H4a] and not being promoted for residential development. We do not understand how the Council can assume that this site will definitely come forward for residential development. In addition, the site is quite narrow along the south boundary and close to other existing commercial properties which would stymy its desirability as a residential site. **Remove from the housing supply.**

4. SHLAA SITE 1753 (Land at the rear of St. James Court)

Stated capacity 38, stated delivery years 6-10

The majority of the site is in Flood zone 2 and the rest in Flood Zone 3. The site is therefore unlikely to be suitable for residential development. **Remove from the housing supply.**

5. SHLAA SITE 1809 (Europcar)

Stated capacity 25, stated delivery years 11-15

This site is in commercial use as a car hire premises and not being promoted for residential development. We do not understand how the Council can assume that this site will definitely come forward for residential development. In addition, a third of the

site is in Flood Zone 3 and the rest in Flood Zone 2. The site is not suitable for residential development. **Remove from the housing supply.**

6. SHLAA SITE 2129 (Land off Knutsford Road / Blackbear Bridge)
Stated capacity 15, stated delivery years 11-15

The site is not available as it is currently in commercial use. In addition, it is located in Flood Zone 2 and within 250m of a former landfill site. There is too much uncertainty about the deliverability of the site given these considerations for it to be included in the land supply.

Remove from the housing supply.

7. SHLAA SITE 2463 (Midland Way/ Priestley Street Garage)
Stated capacity 20, stated delivery years 11-15

This site is in commercial use as a tile showroom and not being promoted for residential development. We do not understand how the Council can assume that this site will definitely come forward for residential development. **Remove from the housing supply.**

8. SHLAA SITE 2478 (General Street Metal works)
Stated capacity 44, stated delivery years 11-15

This site is in commercial use as a scrap/ metals merchant and not being promoted for residential development. We do not understand how the Council can assume that this site will definitely come forward for residential development. **Remove from the housing supply.**

9. SHLAA SITE 2480 (Former K&N works)
Stated capacity 42, stated delivery years 11-15

This site is in commercial use and not being promoted for residential development. We do not understand how the Council can assume that this site will definitely come forward for residential development. **Remove from the housing supply.**

10. SHLAA SITE 2676a (Scottish Power)
Stated capacity 92, stated delivery years 11-15

This site is in commercial use as an office and depot for Scottish Power and not being promoted for residential development. We do not understand how the Council can assume that this site will definitely come forward for residential development. In addition the site is located in Flood Zone 2. **Remove from the housing supply.**

11. SHLAA SITE 3309 (Land behind the Plough Public House)
Stated capacity 11, stated delivery years 1-5

Located directly to the east of SHLAA site 1647, this site is deemed suitable for 11 dwellings [page 96 of H4a] with 10 being delivered 2023/24 even though the site has no access to the highway. The Council's profile incorrectly states that site access issues are not applicable. This site should also be removed from the housing supply, especially years 1- 5. **Remove from the housing supply.**

Total SHLAA sites without planning permission to remove from the housing supply = **357.**