

EiP Supplementary Statement – CD13a

Warrington Updated Proposed Submission

Version Local Plan 2021-2038

Home Builders Consortium

Representor ID UPSVLP 0410

Our ref 64052/01/RCA/MKR

Date 21st October 2022

Subject Matter 8: Updated Housing Trajectory including 2022 monitoring data (CD13a)

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Lichfields was instructed by a Consortium of leading developers and housebuilders, namely Ashall Property, Barratt Developments (Barratt Homes and David Wilson Homes), Metacre Ltd, Satnam Developments and Story Homes [the Consortium], to make representations on its behalf to the Warrington Updated Proposed Submission Local Plan 2021 to 2038 (September 2021) [WUPSVLP].

1.2 This supplementary note has been prepared following the publication of the Warrington Updated Housing Trajectory [WUHT] (September 2022)¹, and following the Matter 8 (housing land supply) EiP hearings session on Thursday 29 September 2022. This statement has been prepared in addition to the Written Statement submitted on behalf of the Consortium to the Matters, Issues and Questions raised by the Inspector for the Matter 8² and should be read alongside it.

2.0 Comments on the Warrington Updated Housing Trajectory

2.1 We note that the WUHT (document ref. CD13a) includes:

- An update to the housing trajectory at Appendix 1 of the WUPSVLP;
- Tables of all the individual components of the supply that contain all of the sites that constitute that element of the supply; and
- The map that identifies geographically the main components of the supply.

2.2 The information was published online less than a week in advance of the Matter 8 hearing session on 29 September 2022. There was no opportunity for participants to make formal representations on the document in advance of the session. The WUHT introduces new

¹ Warrington Borough Council – CD13a: Updated Housing Trajectory (September 2022)

² Home Builders Consortium (0410) – Matter 8 Written Statement on Housing Land Supply (August 2022)

evidence which is fundamental to the soundness of the plan and should be subject to the same scrutiny as the trajectory submitted alongside the WUPSVLP.

- 2.3 The Consortium considers that a significant proportion of the proposed quantum of delivery and trajectory of key components of the WUHT remain unjustified and are undevelopable. The capacity of the urban area is being overstated, the Council has failed to provide robust evidence on Fiddlers Ferry and Warrington Waterfront, and small sites are now being double counted. This is discussed further below.
- 2.4 Not only that, limited regard is being paid to the type of units which are being proposed and there is a disparity between the supply of small apartment style developments in the urban area compared with the SHMA requirement to deliver larger family homes. The ability of the claimed urban supply to deliver affordable housing has also been largely ignored by the Council.

Double Counting of Small Sites

- 2.5 In the WUHT, the Council includes an additional 635 dwellings in the urban capacity by including small sites (less than 0.25ha) which have a capacity of over five units. This is in addition to the small site allowance of 81 dpa which is already accounted for in the trajectory. We consider that this approach is completely unjustified and represents the double counting of small sites.
- 2.6 The basis for the Council's 81 dpa small sites allowance is the average over the ten-year period 2010-2020 (from the previous 2020 SHLAA³). The 2020 SHLAA methodology for small sites did not seek to disaggregate small sites with a capacity of more/less than five dwellings. Historic completion rates for sites below the threshold of 0.25 ha are set out in Table 2.4 of the 2020 SHLAA (Figure 1). The evidence does not provide a breakdown of how many units came forward on small sites with a capacity of more than five dwellings. Nonetheless it is reasonable to assume that a proportion of the small sites in the third column below did come forward on sites with a capacity of more than five dwellings. Therefore, the updated approach represents double-counting of small sites with a capacity of over five units.
- 2.7 The Council must rethink its evidence on small sites. In the meantime, the Consortium strongly recommends that the additional 635 dwellings included in the WUHT is removed from the trajectory.

³ Warrington SHLAA (2021) – Stage 2 (Assessment Methodology)

Figure 1 Summary of annual average small site completions

Year	Total number of gross completions	Completions on Small Sites (below 0.25ha)	Completions on Small sites as a % of total completions	Completions on Large Windfall Sites (0.25Ha and above) not previously in SHLAA
2007/2008	1565	207	13.2%	1
2008/2009	633	89	14.1%	0
2009/2010	388	57	14.7%	0
2010/2011	527	42	8.0%	0
2011/2012	600	57	9.5%	3
2012/2013	647	57	8.8%	0
2013/2014	693	117	16.9%	2
2014/2015	687	62	9.0%	0
2015/2016	595	60	10.1%	0
2016/2017	521	117	22.5%	0
2017/2018	385	103	26.8%	7
2018/2019	503	86	17.1%	0
2019/2020	559	112	20.0%	3
2020/2021	592	132	22.3%	0
10 Yr Total	5782	903	15.6%	15
Small sites average completions (last 10 yrs)		90		

Source: Warrington SHLAA

- 2.8 The Consortium has other fundamental issues with the inclusion of a small site allowance of 81 dpa. Primarily, the recent level small site/windfall delivery has likely been inflated by the lack of an up-to-date local plan and the resultant absence of housing allocations, which has necessitated higher delivery on small sites in order to boost supply (particularly for the period 2016-2021).
- 2.9 Furthermore, the Council's small site allowance should be based on a net figure of completions rather than gross. The Council states that it has made no allowance for losses through demolition and conversions because the figures for each SHLAA are based on net yield. However, small sites are removed from the SHLAA assessment process at the initial stage, and it appears from the table at Figure 1 above that they are gross figures, rather than net. This also represents double counting.
- 2.10 The Council has also introduced an element of double-counting using this trajectory when calculating the indicative housing supply beyond the plan period (2038-2050). As summarised in paragraph 4.1.30 of its emerging Local Plan, the Council has assumed that there will still be additional brownfield development sites within the existing urban area that will come forward beyond the Plan Period but which cannot be accounted for at present:

“The Council has therefore identified the average level of brownfield development in the final 5 years of the Plan period and has projected this forward to account for potential brownfield capacity.”

- 2.11 As shown in Table 2 of the Local Plan, the Council has assumed that 3,024 units can be delivered from brownfield development between 2038 to 2050, a figure that equates to 252 dwellings per annum [dpa] over the 12 years. As set out above, this has been calculated on the basis of adding together the last 5 years of delivery from non-Green Belt sites in the Housing Trajectory in Appendix 1, and trending this forward 12 years. However, this includes the delivery of 410 units (82 dpa) from Warrington Waterfront, but this is also included as a separate contributor in Table 2 (delivering 265 units post 2038).
- 2.12 Clearly the Council cannot be including the same site twice in the post-2038 calculations. The Warrington Waterfront site should be taken out of the ‘assumed brownfield development’ category calculation in Table 2 of the Plan (or any further adjustment to the calculations following the revised Housing Trajectory in CD13a). As its inclusion contributes 82 dpa, this means that the 3,024 pdl figure has been over-estimated by a substantial 984 units (82 dpa x 12 years) and should be reduced to 2,040, which means that the Council cannot meet its identified development needs post 2038.

SHLAA Sites

- 2.13 The housing trajectory submitted with the WUPSVLP included SHLAA sites (0.25ha and above) under one category, entitled ‘the Wider Urban Area’. This has now been split into three sub-sections in the WUHT, namely:
- 1 Town centre;
 - 2 Inner Warrington; and,
 - 3 Wider Urban Areas.
- 2.14 The capacity of these three areas over the plan period is 6,796 dwellings (a reduction from 6,992 in the original trajectory). The Council has sought to offset this reduction through double-counting small sites – as discussed above.
- 2.15 Furthermore, the housing trajectory submitted with the WUPSVLP projected that 1,040 dwellings would be delivered in the ‘Wider Urban Area’ in 2021/22. However, the WUHT (p.4-5)⁴ sets out that only 379 dwellings were delivered in this area over the 2021/22 monitoring period. This represents only 36% of the projected deliveries in the ‘Wider Urban Area’ during the first year of the plan period – demonstrating that the Council is overstating the deliverability of the urban area SHLAA sites and their ability to come forward in line with the proposed trajectory.
- 2.16 The housing projections for the earlier years of the plan period should be the most accurate because they are based on sites with existing planning permissions and more up-to-date information. With the monitoring data demonstrating a 64% discrepancy between projected and actual housing delivery of SHLAA sites in the Wider Urban Area in the first

⁴ Warrington Borough Council – CD13a: Updated Housing Trajectory (September 2022)

year of the plan period, the Council must revisit its proposed delivery trajectories for these sites. This is likely to have serious implications on the Council's five-year housing land supply position.

- 2.17 Further to this, at the Matter 8 hearing session, Lichfields agreed to coordinate a list of contested sites where the development industry had concerns regarding the delivery rates set out in the WUHT and provide this to the Inspectors and Warrington Council. The email containing the contested sites was provided to the Inspectors (via the Programme Officer) on 29th September 2022.
- 2.18 The Council is yet to provide a response or robust evidence justifying the proposed delivery and trajectory of these sites. Unless robust evidence is provided to demonstrate their developability, additional Green Belt sites must be released to overcome the shortfall of deliverable and developable sites over the plan period.

Warrington Waterfront

- 2.19 This section should be read alongside the Consortium's Written Statement to Matter 6a (Warrington Waterfront)⁵ and its supplementary statement on Matter 6a⁶ submitted alongside this statement.
- 2.20 In its housing trajectory submitted with the WUPSVLP, the Council claimed that the first dwellings were anticipated to be completed at Warrington Waterfront in 2027/2028. The WUHT [§3.2] now states that:
- "The trajectory for the two Warrington Waterfront parcels (K5 and K7) have been pushed back two years to reflect the revised delivery programme of the Western Link."*
- 2.21 The Consortium considers that these timeframes remain completely unrealistic. The WUPSVLP (§10.1.7) states that Warrington Waterfront cannot come forward until the funding and the programme for the delivery of the Western Link has been confirmed. The Council has accepted that the costs of delivering the Western Link Road have increased significantly and there remains a funding gap⁷.
- 2.22 The Council's Note to the Inspectors [CD09]⁸ states [page 2] that the Council is:
- "exploring all possible sources of additional funding including from the Department for Transport and other sources mentioned such as CIL or Business Rate Retention and as part of this all other funding options will be explored."*
- 2.23 Until funding for the Western Link is confirmed, the Council should not rely on Warrington Waterfront to meet its housing needs. Including any supply from Warrington Waterfront at this stage remains wholly unjustified for the reasons set out in our Matter Papers and discussed in detail at the Examination. It is up to the Council to robustly demonstrate that that Warrington Waterfront can be viably developed within the plan period. If the Council

⁵ Home Builders Consortium (0410) – Matter 6a Written Statement on Warrington Waterfront (August 2022)

⁶ Home Builders Consortium (0410) – Supplementary Statement on Matter 6a Warrington Waterfront (October 2022)

⁷ Please refer to the Consortium's supplementary statement on Matter 6a Warrington Waterfront (October 2022)

⁸ Warrington Borough Council – CD09: Note to Warrington Local Plan EiP Inspectors (September 2022)

is unable to provide this evidence, Warrington Waterfront must be removed as an allocation from the WUPSVLP and not included in the Council's supply.

Fiddlers Ferry

- 2.24 The Consortium has submitted a further supplementary statement on Matter 6c (Fiddlers Ferry)⁹. It relates to the document released by the Council (CD31)¹⁰ which sets out the ecological strategy for the Fiddlers Ferry and reconfirms Peel's assumptions on the delivery programme carried forward to the WUHT.
- 2.25 Despite this, the Consortium still has fundamental issues with the claimed delivery rates of Fiddlers Ferry. The overall delivery trajectory for the site across the plan period is overly ambitious and will not be achieved because the site as a whole is unviable.
- 2.26 The Council's WUHT still claims that Fiddlers Ferry will deliver 35 units in the first five years, despite no planning application being submitted. No additional evidence has been provided by the Council at the Examination to demonstrate the site's deliverability. The inclusion of units in the first five years of the plan period remains wholly unjustified.
- 2.27 The Council's and Peel's assumptions for the delivery of Fiddlers Ferry set out under 'Masterplan Delivery Programme' section of CD31 (p. 4-5) are overly ambitious. Further commentary on the Fiddlers Ferry programme is set out in the Consortium's supplementary statement regarding CD31 (Fiddlers Ferry) and we remain firmly of the view that our concerns are valid and have not been fully addressed by either the Council or Peel.
- 2.28 In particular, the Council confirmed during the Hearing session for Matter 6c that it did not commission Cushman & Wakefield to undertake a viability assessment of any of the southern part of the Fiddlers Ferry site, which they claim has the potential to deliver some 900 dwellings. Given that we have serious concerns regarding its deliverability due to a range of issues including access constraints and ecological considerations, our view is that the southern part of the site is unviable from a planning perspective. Nor is this part of the wider site necessary to deliver the demolition and subsequent remediation of the Power Station site itself, which Peel confirm can be cross-subsidised sufficiently from the commercial and residential elements of the northern part of the site alone.
- 2.29 The Consortium therefore still contends that units will not be completed before 2033/34 in accordance with the following timeline¹¹:
- 1 Adoption of the Local Plan – 2023.
 - 2 Commencement of Development Framework upon adoption of the Plan. Significant levels of technical input required for such a complex site and the best-case scenario for adoption would be end 2025. The Council Officers also need to be involved in other Development Frameworks which all affect the availability of staff resourcing at Warrington Borough Council.

⁹Home Builders Consortium (0410) – Supplementary Statement on Matter 6c Fiddlers Ferry (October 2022)

¹⁰Warrington Borough Council – CD31: Fiddlers Ferry Response to Inspectors' Questions (October 2022)

¹¹ Detailed justification for our trajectory is set out under Question 18 Home Builders Consortium (0410) – Matter 6c Written Statement (Fiddlers Ferry)

- 3 Planning Application(s) to follow in 2026 in accordance with the Development Framework as required by policy.
- 4 First completion 7 years post submission of the planning application. This accounts for extensive negotiation of the planning application including engagement with public consultees, signing of legal agreements, preparation and submission of reserved matters applications, discharging planning conditions, remediating the site, putting necessary infrastructure including access into the site before finally completing dwellings. First completion expected 2033 (**all subject to viability**).