



Warrington Local Plan Examination, Matter 3 Additional Documents Produced by Warrington Borough Council

Additional Statement Jointly Prepared by Vectos and Cassidy + Ashton on Behalf of Patrick Properties Ltd (0436)

Introduction

Vectos and Cassidy + Ashton submit this combined Response Statement on behalf of Patrick Properties, who are the promoters of land known as South Station Place, south of Birchwood Rail Station.

This Statement provides a response to additional documents that have been produced by Warrington Borough Council (WBC) during the Warrington Local Plan Examination hearings, and it relates to documents CD09, CD09b, CD29 and CD30 by WBC.

The following comments are submitted for consideration by the Inspectors’:

1. Document CD30 is the updated Warrington Western Link (WWL) scheme programme, and it is considered that the estimated completion date / road opening in November 2028 could likely be delayed given the points set out below.
2. Document CD09 confirms that the £142.5m Department for Transport (DfT) funding towards the WWL scheme is a conditional offer at this stage. It is understood that this means specific conditions need to be met by WBC, such as delivering an approved Full Business Case and securing the associated consents and permissions that are required for the delivery of the scheme. These processes will be complex and with the potential to become protracted for a significant infrastructure scheme like the WWL, which means that there is no certainty of the DfT’s conditional funding offer being confirmed and the current scheme programme could be impacted / delayed.
3. It is considered that there is likely to be a reasonable risk attached to the above DfT conditional funding offer and the WBC funding commitment of £70.2m towards the WWL scheme as outlined in Document CD09, given the current economic outlook in the UK and the likely cuts to government spending that are expected to be announced in autumn 2022.
4. Document CD09 confirms that the latest cost estimate for the WWL scheme is circa £269m. It is understood that the additional c.£57m of funding required to deliver the scheme is not yet secured by WBC, and it is considered that the current economic outlook in the UK is only going to reduce the options for possible sources of additional funding. This further increases the risks of a significant funding shortfall and associated delays to the current programme for the WWL scheme.
5. It is considered that there is no certainty around the indicative cost of the WWL scheme and the delivery timeframe indicated in Document CD09b.
6. Document CD29 suggests that WBC expect the funding for the WWL scheme to be resolved by early 2023. Given the circumstances outlined in points 2 to 4 above, this is considered to be very optimistic

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by WBC and therefore this means that the risks of a significant funding shortfall and associated delays to the current programme for the WWL scheme will become much more likely.

- 7. The WWL scheme needs to secure various consents and permissions before construction can commence, and this includes extensive site surveys, a planning application process (and likely Environmental Impact Assessment) and there is the potential for at least one Public Inquiry, if not two, with a Compulsory Purchase process likely to be necessary. It is considered that these processes will carry a lot of risk for a major infrastructure scheme like the WWL, and the findings from detailed site investigations like ecological and ground condition surveys have the potential to cause significant cost and programme implications.
- 8. Given the concerns raised on funding, costs and the current programme for the WWL scheme, it is considered that there is a reasonable risk that this could negatively impact on the Warrington Waterfront site proposed housing delivery within the Local Plan period. In this respect it is noted that the Local Plan itself said:

“3.3.30 The Western Link is the largest transport infrastructure scheme and is fundamental to the delivery of the spatial strategy of the Local Plan. The Western Link will provide a new road connection between the A56 Chester Road and the A57 Sankey Way, crossing the Manchester Ship Canal, the West Coast Mainline and the River Mersey. It will directly enable the development of the Waterfront area and through reducing traffic levels on the existing road network, it will facilitate a greater level of development within the Town Centre and across Inner Warrington.

- 9. Accordingly, the Council accept that any delay to the WWL scheme could fundamentally undermine the Spatial Strategy of the Plan. This includes the provision of employment land as the business uses in the town centre will benefit from the improved access created by the Western Link.
- 10. WBC originally consulted on the introduction of a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) in 2015 but did not progress it at that time. The submission Draft Local Plan [September 2021] stated that the Council will consider introducing CIL immediately following the adoption of the Local Plan [para. 3.3.34]. Given the Local Plan will not be adopted before 2023 at the earliest, it is highly unlikely that CIL will be adopted until 2025/26 at the earliest. The Council state that CIL will be an important source of revenue for future infrastructure, but given this timescale it would seem to indicate further delays in the provision of publicly funded infrastructure projects and a lack of funding for emergency services.
- 11. Given the very likely delay in the construction of the WWL scheme and the fundamental impact this may have upon the Spatial Strategy of the Local Plan, it is therefore essential that additional land is allocated for employment and other purposes. There is also further justification, given this uncertainty, for the identification of Safeguarded Land to meet future development needs. Land at South Station Place is available, suitable and deliverable, and should be allocated accordingly.