

WIGAN CORE STRATEGY

MATTER 7b: EAST LANCASHIRE ROAD CORRIDOR BROAD LOCATION

HEARING STATEMENT BY BARTON WILLMORE

ON BEHALF OF PEEL (LAND & PROPERTY) LIMITED

Matter 7 – Broad locations for new development (Policy SP4)

b) East Lancashire Road Corridor

Issue

Whether the proposed Broad Locations for new development are justified, effective and consistent with national policy.

Questions

- 1. What is the justification for including four site options spread over a broad area in a submitted Core Strategy and retaining the potential for more than one or even all the sites to be developed? Does it provide sufficient guidance for later DPDs? How?**

Peel supports the concept of the East Lancashire Road Corridor Broad Location for three main reasons:-

1. It is necessary to meet Borough-wide housing requirements. On the basis of our appraisal of the current supply information, it is unlikely that the spatial strategy could provide sufficient housing land without the East Lancashire Road Corridor Broad Location.
2. It is necessary to provide flexibility within the spatial strategy in terms of housing provision. Residential development within the East Lancashire Road Corridor Broad Location is viable and could be brought forward quickly if there is delay in the development of large regeneration proposals within the East-West Core. The Council's Viability Assessment shows that all the Broad Locations are not currently viable with the exception of Garrett Hall.
3. It is necessary to help rebalance the housing offer of the Borough. In particular, there is a need to significantly increase the amount of aspirational housing for families. Such housing is seen by within the Greater Manchester context as having major social, economic and regeneration benefits (e.g. the Manchester Independent Economic Review, the Greater Manchester Strategy and the Greater Manchester Housing Strategy)

Our statement on Matter 4 gives further details.

Peel's main concern about the guidance in Policy SP4 on the East Lancashire Road Corridor Broad Location is that it does not provide any indication of the quantum of development which is expected to take place. The matter is left entirely to the Allocations DPD. Peel considers this is unsatisfactory. To provide a reasonable degree of certainty for the public and the private sector, Peel considers that the policy should indicate the level of development that is expected in terms of dwellings. After saying this, the figure should be expressed as a minimum because of the need to provide a degree of flexibility for the Allocations DPD in case more land is found to be required to meet Borough-wide requirements. The alternative that any unmet need would have to be satisfied by allocations of land in locations which would not conform with the spatial strategy.

On the basis of current information, Peel considers that the East Lancashire Road Corridor should make provision for at least 1,000 dwellings but we will reappraise this figure before the Examination.

Peel agrees with the Council that the four identified sites are the realistic options for large-scale housing development within the East Lancashire Road Corridor Broad Location as currently defined. Peel however accepts that there is no overriding reason why the four sites have to be listed in the policy. The sites could equally be listed in the explanation as potential candidate sites for allocation arising from the policy proposal. Such listing would be sufficient to inform the public of the likely consequences of the Broad Location.

An alternative to the currently designated East Lancashire Road Corridor Broad Location is to extend the boundary of the East-West Core to include the whole of Astley. This would cover potential housing sites in the eastern part of the Borough, including Coldalhurst Lane and allow them to be brought forward in accordance with Policy SP1 as it stands. The western part covering Golborne/Lowton would become a separate Broad Location. This approach has much merit as:-

1. The current boundary of the East-West Core bisects Astley and has little logic on the ground. It is more sensible to include whole settlements of the relatively small size of Astley;
2. The eastern part of the East Lancashire Road Corridor Broad Location relates strongly with Manchester and Salford, having very good public transport linkages with the Regional Centre. It is a very sustainable location for new housing development for this reason; and
3. The western part of the Broad Location (Golborne/Lowton) has a very different focus, being more related to Liverpool and Central Mersey (St Helens and Warrington) and without the same high quality public transport linkages.

2. How much housing could be delivered on each site option or all of them together? How would this relate to the overall scale and pattern of housing development planned in the Borough?

The 2011 SHLAA provides capacities for the sites as follows:-

Lark Hill Astley (Coldalhurst Lane)	324 dwellings
Rothwell's Farm, Golborne	513 dwellings

Stirrups Farm, Golborne
Pocket Nook Lane, Lowton

736 dwellings
1,688 dwellings

These sites therefore have a total capacity of some 3,266 dwellings, although this figure may be exaggerated bearing in mind the possible need for on-site infrastructure, strategic open space, community facilities etc. Peel considers the actual capacity is more likely to be closer to 2,500 dwellings, especially bearing in mind the priority to provide lower-density aspirational family housing.

Peel's primary interest is the site at Coldalhurst Lane, Astley (called Lark Hill by the SHLAA). Peel has undertaken a detailed masterplanning exercise for this site which shows that a realistic capacity is 260 dwellings, bearing in mind that it is intended primarily for lower-density higher value aspirational family housing. This information is detailed in the Deliverability Report which we submitted at Publication stage.

On the basis of current housing land supply information, Peel considers that an appropriate contribution from the East Lancashire Road Corridor Broad Location would be at least 1,000 dwellings which would amount to around 6.6% of the total housing requirement over the plan period. This is not disproportionate and would still mean that the main focus of development in the Borough would be on the East-West Core.

In conclusion, Peel considers that the scale of housing growth to be delivered in the East Lancashire Road Corridor will in no way detract from the Council's Spatial Strategy to focus the majority of development towards the East-West Core.

3. What is the justification for development on this scale outside the EW core? How would the proposal fit with the spatial strategy?

We set out above the main reasons why we consider that a Broad Location based on the East Lancashire Road Corridor is necessary. In brief, these are:-

1. The Borough-wide housing requirement could not be met without it.
2. The East Lancashire Road Corridor Broad Location provides an element of flexibility if the other Broad Locations do not come forward as quickly as expected for whatever reason.
3. It is necessary to provide a balanced housing offer within the Borough.

Peel's statement on Matter 4 provides more detail on these points.

Policy SP1 specifically identifies the East Lancashire Road Corridor Broad Location. As such, development within this Broad Location is consistent with and supported by the Spatial Strategy. In this regard, it is worth emphasising that the Broad Location would make a major contribution to achieving the Spatial Vision set out in the Core Strategy, including the creation of *"a thriving and prosperous borough which capitalises on its strategic location including the M6 corridor, the West Coast mainline and proximity to the Manchester and Liverpool city regions; and its assets"*, and the improvement of *"the supply of good quality housing offer across the borough to ensure a balanced housing market offer and choice, and improve access*

to affordable housing." This Vision cannot be achieved solely by concentration of development upon the East-West Core.

For the reasons given above, Peel considers the principle of development within the East Lancashire Road Corridor Broad Location to be fully justified and a vital component of the Spatial Strategy.

4. How, in practical terms, will development in the East Lancashire Road Corridor benefit regeneration in the EW core? How will it be planned? Could investment and demand be diverted from the EW core, particularly in difficult market conditions?

Peel considers that the primary regeneration benefit from the East Lancashire Road Corridor Broad Location will be the economic advantages of an improved housing offer. The Manchester Independent Economic Review, the Greater Manchester Strategy and the Greater Manchester Housing Strategy all highlight the importance of an increased provision of aspirational housing for the economy of the County and its sub-areas. We accept that these economic benefits would not be limited to the East-West Core and would extend to the whole of the Borough. However this is no reason to give less weight to them.

Peel notes the statement in Policy SP4 that a share of the value of the development within the East Lancashire Road Corridor Broad Location would be "*invested in the delivery of essential infrastructure in the east-west core*". However Peel is unclear how this value would be captured in practical terms and how such capture would conform with the CIL Regulations.

Peel has substantial development interests in the East-West Core including South of Hindley and Garrett Hall. It therefore has no interest in diverting development away from it.

Peel considers that the East Lancashire Road Corridor Broad Location would not divert investment and demand from sites in the East-West Core provided it is of appropriate scale and is principally orientated towards the provision of aspirational housing. Peel would be more concerned if very large sites are allocated which would serve the general housing market. This would apply particularly to the very large Pocket Nook Lane, Lowton site which has a capacity for over 1,500 dwellings and would cater primarily for the general housing market

5. What are the benefits of seeking lower density housing and how will this be achieved?

We have already referred to the clear and substantial evidence and policy base which demonstrates and supports the need to expand the range and choice of housing types available within the Borough, especially for aspirational housing.

The main mechanism for achievement of aspirational housing in the Broad Location will be the Allocations DPD. This will identify appropriate sites and should incorporate guidelines on suitable housing mixes. It is important that very large sites are not allocated for this purpose as such sites tend to be dominated by medium to high density general market housing.

6. What potential adverse effects are there, e.g. traffic, capacity of local infrastructure, open land/green space, biodiversity and residential amenity?

The East Lancashire Road Corridor Broad Location will result in the development of what is currently open land. However none of this land is currently in the Green Belt and required to be kept permanently open for Green Belt purposes. Also none of the four sites are the subject of ecological, landscape or other designations which would prevent development. As with any development proposal, there would be traffic implications but not to a degree that would prevent significant development within the Corridor. Equally there would be effects on the amenity of existing housing but these can be mitigated to an acceptable level through careful design and landscaping. There is no reason to suppose that the impacts of development within the Corridor would be any greater than development of open land sites elsewhere within the Borough, including the East-West Core.

Peel's main interest is in the site at Coldalhurst Lane (Lark Hill), Astley. It has prepared a technical appraisal of the likely impacts of development of this site which shows:-

- The Land at Coldalhurst Lane is located within a sustainable location, well served by regular bus services providing access to numerous destinations, including Manchester City Centre. It is also well served by local facilities and is close to major sources of employment.
- Safe vehicular accesses can be created into the site.
- The traffic impact of development would be acceptable.
- The ecological impacts can be successfully mitigated, by habitat management and creation. The development of the site offers the opportunity to provide a high-quality green corridor along the southern edge of the site;
- There would be a loss of open land but the site is not of high landscape quality, being dominated by adjoining housing and separated from the wider open countryside by the East Lancashire Road which is dual carriageway at this point.
- Most of the site is within Flood Risk Zone 1. The small part within areas of higher flood risk can be reserved for open space.
- In respect of drainage infrastructure, there are feasible means of providing adequate foul and surface water drainage for the development proposals, including the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems. In respect of other infrastructure, the site is not affected by any known national primary electricity and gas distributor mains or local gas, water, telecom and electricity mains; and
- There are no environmental constraints that are likely to significantly impact on the development of the site, or represent a constraint that cannot be mitigated or remediated.

Peel considers that its Deliverability Report demonstrates that the site at Coldalhurst Lane is suitable and deliverable during the plan period to provide a significant element of the higher value, lower density aspirational housing which is needed in the Borough.

7. Are the sites realistically viable and deliverable? What evidence is there?

The site is realistically deliverable within the meaning of PPS3, meeting the criteria of paragraph 54 as follows:-

- Availability – the majority of the site is within the ownership of Peel, who are in discussions with other landowners to ensure a comprehensive approach to the development of the site;
- Suitability – the site offers an immediate opportunity to residential development, sustainably located close to existing development, local services and public transport routes. There are no known major constraints to the development of the site, and its development would not have any major adverse environmental impacts. It would contribute to the creation of mixed communities and a balanced housing offer across the Borough; and
- Achievability – The site is in an area of high demand for housing and there are no significant abnormal costs on development. It can be built out in a timescale of about 6 years, even in current market conditions.

8. Conclusion

The East Lancashire Road Corridor Broad Location is an important part of the overall strategy.

Peel considers that Part 6 of Policy SP4 (East Lancashire Road Corridor) should be amended as follows:

'A location for at least 1,000 dwellings. The housing will be predominantly of lower density and higher value types and is intended to help rebalance the housing offer of the Borough'.

The list of sites should be deleted from the policy and included within the explanation as candidate sites which will be considered further by the Allocations DPD.

Paragraph 8.26 should be reworded as follows:-

'The East Lancashire Road corridor from Golborne to Astley is not within the 'east-west core.' but it is identified as a Broad Location for new development to help rebalance the local housing market. Specifically, it will provide lower density, higher value housing for which there is a significant need in the Borough and this part of Greater Manchester, as identified by a series of studies and strategies, including the Manchester Independent Review, the Greater Manchester Strategic Housing Market Assessment, the Greater Manchester Housing Strategy, and the Greater Manchester Strategy. Lower density, higher value housing is primarily intended for relatively high income families, many of

whom currently leave the Borough or are not attracted to live here in the first place because of its existing limited housing offer. Most housing locations in 'the east-west core' are only suitable for lower and mid-market housing and are unlikely to make a significant contribution to meeting the Borough's need for higher value, lower density housing, at least up to 2028. The exception is the Garrett Hall Broad Location'.

Paragraph 8.27 should be reworded as follows:-

'From within the East Lancashire Road, land for at least 1000 dwellings will be identified and allocated for housing in the Site Allocations DPD. Additional sites may be allocated in this Broad Location if necessary to meet any Borough-wide shortfall in supply which may be identified as part of the Allocations DPD. The attractive character of the residential neighbourhoods in this area along with its good transport connections and relationship with the Manchester Regional Centre, makes it well-suited to provide sustainable locations for higher value, lower density housing'.

Paragraph 8.28 should be reworded as follows:-

'While not being within the east-west core, development within this Broad Location will contribute to the broad-based regeneration of the Borough. In particular, it will have social, community and economic benefits by attracting or retaining higher income groups, including aspirational families'.