



**WIGAN CORE STRATEGY EXAMINATION**

**RESPONSE TO MATTER 7B - BROAD LOCATIONS FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT  
(POLICY SP4) – EAST LANCS ROAD CORRIDOR**

**BY**

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**ON BEHALF OF**

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**REPRESENTOR REFERENCE: 2935**

**January 2012**



## **7.0 Matter 7b – Broad locations for new development (Policy SP4) East Lancs Road Corridor**

- 7.52 The principle issue in respect of Matter 7b relates to whether the proposed broad location East Lancs Road Corridor for new housing development is justified, effective and consistent with national policy.

### **Question 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?**

- 7.53 The broad principle of residential development along the East Lancashire Road Corridor (ELRC) is supported, as is the designation of land at Pocket Nook Lane in Lowton. However, Policy SP1 does not reflect the broad locations identified at SP4 along the ELRC. It states that:

*"Elsewhere in the borough, in Standish, Aspull and Shevington, Orrell and Billinge and otherwise in Golborne, Lowton and Astley, development will be limited to redevelopment opportunities, existing allocations for development and suitable infill or other small sites".*

- 7.54 This should be amended to include reference to the Broad Location set out in Policy SP4.
- 7.55 It is also important that the policies makes it clear that the designation of such sites will meet a combination of local market and affordable housing needs, as well as a broader requirement for aspirational and executive housing.

### **Question 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?**

- 7.56 Policy SP4 identifies 4 potential sites along the ELRC all of which have previously been safeguarded for future development needs. None of these sites are in the Green Belt and therefore their development will not undermine the purposes or objectives of the Green Belt. None include the best and most versatile agricultural land. These sites are considered in more detail below.

### Land at Pocket Nook Lane

- 7.57 This site extends to around 70 hectares in total, or around 60 hectares excluding the Lowton High School and playing fields and the small area at risk of flooding alongside the Carr Brook. Of this retained area approximately 85% is estimated as developable giving around 50 hectares of net developable land. This could yield anything up to between 1000 and 1500 dwellings depending upon mix and density if the entire site was to be released for housing. Paragraph 8.26 states that some of the development will only be at 10 dwellings per hectare as opposed to the previous minimum of around 30 dwellings to the hectare.
- 7.58 Although the site includes a small area of land which is at risk of flooding, this unlike the site at Astley will not significantly change the net developable area. The issue could be properly addressed as part of wider redevelopment proposals and incorporated within open space or utilised for other less sensitive uses as part of a comprehensive development.
- 7.59 The development of this larger site has the best chance of facilitating investment in infrastructure elsewhere, which is most unlikely to be deliverable on the back of one of the smaller sites being released. However, the lack of information on this point in the emerging Core Strategy is of concern and should be properly addressed in order to ensure the deliverability of any proposed spatial strategy.
- 7.60 The release of Pocket Nook Lane would also facilitate a strategic review by the Council of its schools provision. The Council have been considering the possibility of combining the two existing secondary schools in Golborne and Lowton into one modern purpose built premises capable of delivering the facilities and environment for learning. This site could include Lowton High School which could be expanded, or redeveloped and relocated as part of any wider proposals with the capital receipt from the sale of the land contributing significantly to the costs.
- 7.61 The site is relatively unconstrained, the only known issue being the presence of one listed building within one of the existing complexes of farm buildings and cottages. This will however, not preclude the development of the surrounding areas.
- 7.62 Access to the site is readily available for a combination of pedestrian cycle and vehicular routes in locations such as Pocket Nook Lane itself, from the A572 and A579. The site commands a two mile direct frontage with A580 East Lancashire Road, the first motorway class road to be built in England, which itself gives

immediate access to Junction 23 of the M6 Motorway thereby providing unrivalled access East – West, Liverpool – Manchester – Leeds as well as North – South – Birmingham – Bristol – London & Carlisle – Glasgow.

- 7.63 The site could be brought forward either in whole or in part and for a mix of uses, including community and employment uses if appropriate with sufficient space for supporting green infrastructure that may not be able to be properly accommodated on the other sites. There is scope for suitable landscape buffers to the adjoining developments and the A580.

Land at Rothwell's Farm, Lowton Road, Golborne

- 7.64 This site extends to around 18 hectares and is bound to the east by Golborne High School, a waste water treatment works and an area identified as a Site of Biological Importance. On a site of this nature it would be normal for 80% to be developable which would equate to 14.4 hectares of land available for residential development. This would equate to an estimated 290 to 430 dwellings. This is a relatively small site which is unlikely to deliver the contributions required for any significant investment in infrastructure.

- 7.65 The site is also isolated from the A580 and is less likely to be able to provide for the aspirational and executive housing. Likewise it is less likely to be suitable for complementary or employment uses. The site contains a number of trees, ponds and two public footpaths (Nos. 30 and 31) which could constrain development, although they will not necessarily prevent it.

Land East of Stone Cross Lane, Lowton

- 7.66 This site extends to around 25 hectares. This includes existing highways and properties which may not be able to be incorporated within the development and therefore could impact upon the developable area. There are also some remnant field boundaries, trees and ponds which could constrain the development. There is an existing cattery and kennels within the site which may result in some environmental noise pollution issues. There are also two public footpaths (Nos. 81 and 82) which cross the site. The site is identified in the SHLAA as Site 151 (Stirrups Farm).

- 7.67 The site is probably around 75% developable which would mean around 18.5 hectares of land capable of providing residential development. This could probably deliver between 370 to 550 residential properties.

- 7.68 This site is well located near to Stone Cross Park and allocated employment area and might be better suited for this form of development as it would build upon function of this adjacent industrial and office area.

Land at Coldalhurst Lane, Larkhill, Astley

- 7.69 This site extends to around 11.5 hectares and is the smallest of the locations identified. Of this area, a large part is within Flood Zone 2 or 3. The land which is not extends to around 6.75 hectares. Even if this was fully developed, at an average density of 30 dwellings per hectare it would only deliver around 200 units. Bearing in mind the desire for aspirational housing the density is likely to be below this. If it was built out at an average of 20 dwellings per hectare the site would yield only 135 units.
- 7.70 Bearing in mind the obvious availability of other sites, and the need to adopt the sequential approach this site can be discounted as a strategic broad location for development.

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

- 7.71 Paragraph 8.26 identifies that the ELRC from Golborne to Astley is not within the 'east-west core'. It is clearly close to the East-West Core adjoining Leigh, Tyldesley and Ashton which are at least in part within. However, the broad approach of needing to provide a balanced housing market and meet needs in this corridor are supported. It is however unclear as to why development in this location might prejudice delivery in the east-west core.
- 7.72 However, paragraph 8.26 goes on to advise that:

*"It is identified as a broad location for new development to help balance the local housing market. Specifically it will provide for lower density, higher value housing that would be unlikely to be developed in a significant quantity in the 'east-west core'...."*

- 7.73 This is misleading as the development of this type must be to meet local housing needs and to balance the housing offer across the Borough by providing executive and aspirational housing that is unlikely to be deliverable elsewhere.

7.74 The statement at paragraph 8.28 that while not being in the east-west core “it will contribute to the broad-based regeneration of that area” is generally supported although it should be recognised that the delivery of this form of accommodation will help regenerate not only those specific areas, but also the wider Borough.

7.75 This will be achieved primarily by capturing a substantial share of the development value through a levy on such development. Provisions for such a levy have been made nationally and are likely to be advanced in one form or another. We will establish a levy locally once confidence has returned to the development industry, in order to contribute to the provision of infrastructure necessary to the delivery of development in the east-west core.

**Question 4 - How in practical terms will development in the East Lancs Road Corridor benefit regeneration in the EW core? How will it be phased? Could investment and demand be diverted from the EW core, particularly in difficult market conditions?**

7.76 The approach adopted makes provision for the release of one or more of the sites. This should be considered flexibly and if appropriate there is no reason why a part of some of those sites should not be released. In terms of the sites at Points 1-4 there remains concerns about the deliverability of these sites, particularly in the short term. It is also unclear, again largely due to the SHLAA, how the release of this site will contribute towards housing land supply in terms of the commitments in Policy CP6 to deliver a 5 year supply of deliverable and developable sites.

7.77 In respect of Point 5, the issues and concerns associated with the broad location in the Green Belt between Pemberton and Ashton-in-Makerfield have been set out above, and apply equally to the wording of this policy and its reasoned justification. It is apparent from the wording of the policy that

*"The need for and extent of the development and the removal of that land from the Green Belt will be determined in a subsequent development plan document.*

7.78 However, in the paragraph above it gives the impression that the site is being allocated. In terms of the Core Strategy, this is fundamental to the approach being adopted and the evidence should exist at this time if the broad location is to be identified.

7.79 In terms of Point 6, the policy should identify the anticipated scope of the development envisaged in order to be consistent with Points 1-4 and in order that

the contributions towards housing need, infrastructure and other related issues can be properly considered. Alternatively, and more in accordance with the broad strategy approach suitable in the core strategy, the balance of land to be release on these sites should be left to be considered in the subsequent site allocations DPD. This is reflected in paragraph 8.6 of the document but not Policy SP4.

- 7.80 In addition, regarding the detailed wording of Point 6, it is considered that the site at Astley should be omitted, which, with a net developable area of around 6 hectares, is not a strategic site and will not contribute towards the infrastructure and related issues being put forward by the Council to any significant degree. This is discussed in more detail below where each of the 4 sites are considered.
- 7.81 Paragraph 8.25 refers to exceptional circumstances being demonstrated but this is not considered to be the case. None of the evidence presented with the document has demonstrated or sought to demonstrate such circumstances exist. The issue of exceptional circumstances is not even mentioned in the GVA Report and is certainly not fully addressed.

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

- 7.82 In terms of my clients land, initial discussions have taken place with Council Officers in housing, highways and education as well as representatives of the Land Registry and United Utilities. This has identified no significant impediment to development. In respect of highways, there may need to be some minor improvements to the highway arrangement, but this is understood to be achievable within the existing extent of the adopted highway.
- 7.83 In terms of housing, discussion have included the need for development to accommodate housing suitable for the elderly including sheltered and extra care accommodation. There is considered to be a need for market and affordable housing within Golborne and Lowton which this site could contribute towards.
- 7.84 The site is in a highly sustainable location with good access to shops, services and facilities. There is a main bus route along Newton Road with stops a short distance either side. There are a number of potential pedestrian and cycle linkages into the surrounding area. There are also both primary and secondary schools which immediately abut the site.

- 7.85 The site is not significantly constrained with access from either Pocket Nook Lane or Crompton Way. Discussions have taken place with your colleagues in highways and this has confirmed that there are no significant highways constraints to the release of this site. Discussions have also taken place with United Utilities and we are unaware of any other constraints to the development of the site.
- 7.86 As set out in the section above regarding the SHLAA, we believe this site could, and should, be released, either as part of the larger Pocket Nook Lane site, or as part of a smaller change to the safeguarded land boundary following a more detailed review and full and proper assessment of housing land availability, needs and demands, in Golborne and Lowton.
- 7.87 In terms of the wider land at Pocket Nook Lane, whilst a small part of the site is within Flood Zone 2/3 this covers only a very small areas when combined to the whole. There are a number of potential access points which would be more than capable of accommodating the scale of development proposed. There are no known significant environmental or ecological constraints within the wider site.

**Question 7 - Are the sites realistically viable and deliverable? What evidence is there?**

- 7.88 My client's interest in the land at Pocket Nook Lane extends only so far as the land identified in the attached Plan. This falls within the ownership of the A F Brideoake Will Trust which is a registered charity and provides support to people living in the York, Leigh, Liverpool and North Manchester Areas who are experiencing hardship or distress. Any receipts from the sale of the land would benefit the charity and enable it to provide further assistance to those in need.
- 7.89 Although not currently controlled by a developer, I can confirm that the land can be considered to be available for development, and that should the safeguarded land designation be removed it would be my client's intention to either sell the site or secure an outline consent on the site and find a suitable developer to progress the scheme. There has been continued interest from developers of housing, including specialist housing providers, to secure options on the site. On that basis the land should be considered to be available for development in the short term.
- 7.90 The site is in a highly sustainable location, well related to the existing urban area and is in close proximity to key facilities and services. It could provide for existing development needs, particularly for residential development including affordable



and family housing, as well as nursing home, sheltered or extra care accommodation as well as a retirement village.

- 7.91 In terms of the wider site, a large part of the land is controlled by developers including particularly Persimmon Homes and Gordon Moon all of whom have made representations to the process indicating their willingness to deliver development in this location.
- 7.92 In many respects it is apparent that the Council is considering releasing a site in the ELRC to meet such need and also to provide for some cross subsidy of infrastructure elsewhere within the Borough. However, there is no indication as to the nature of the contributions to be sought, the infrastructure to which it will contribute, the likely quantum of development that is envisaged in the ELRC in order to secure the necessary contributions. Whilst, the principle of such a contribution is not a fundamental concern, this has to depend upon the nature of any contributions and the infrastructure that is being funded. On the basis of the lack of information about the approach the Council intend to adopt, this area is of significant concern to my client.
- 7.93 Paragraph 8.28 identifies that the levy will be established locally once confidence has returned to the development industry. However, there is no indication of the timing and how it might be phased. It is important to note that a significant element of the development will have to be brought forward prior to contributions towards infrastructure elsewhere within the Borough being made. It is therefore advocated that any approach is identified and adopted as early as possible in the plan period so as to establish certainty which is important to the development industry and the Council in investing in the appropriate infrastructure.

## **Conclusions**

- 7.95 By way of a conclusion to the above, it is considered that there remain some fundamental question marks over the approach of the Council and the evidence being relied upon. In some respects this is because that information has not been made publically available, and it is therefore not possible to consider the evidence that the Council have relied upon to formulate its strategy. This is particularly the case with the GVA Report relating to employment issues and the release of land from the Green Belt, but also in respect of the SHLAA and housing land supply position.
- 7.96 However, there remain some areas of support in principle to the Council's approach, including the suitability of the ELRC to support the development needs of Wigan without undermining the regeneration of other area.
- 7.97 In respect of the land at Pocket Nook Lane, the wider site represents the best strategic site available to the Council which is likely to deliver the form of development that the Council wish, as well as sufficient development to make some meaningful contribution towards the infrastructure issues elsewhere.
- 7.98 It is apparent that the site is not significantly constrained, by highways or other issues and would be developable in the short term. I would urge you to give serious consideration to the identification of this site as a single strategic site and broad location for future development without the need for a future decision between the competing sites. Such an approach would provide significantly greater certainty to the process and enable all the issues to be properly considered.
- 7.99 In respect of the land within my client's control, the site is wholly owned by the Trust and immediately available for development. It could be released in the short term, even as a first phase of potential wider development at Pocket Nook Lane. There are no known ransom issues, constraints or highways issues which would prevent this land being developed. Both sites are immediately adjacent to the existing urban area and comprise logical small scale infill areas which could be released to meet local needs as well as broader aspirational and executive housing. In particular:
- Site A is fully related to and serviced by Crompton Way and the drainage and services utilities invested in the recent adjacent housing development. This

site is most suited to an extension of the Wainhomes medium value type development but could provide any form of family accommodation.

- Site B is fully accessible from Pocket Nook Lane and could provide for a broad housing offer depending upon detailed needs. This site would be most suitable for a combination of medium and high value housing or provision of an extensive Retirement Village. For example there has been detailed interest in the site for accommodation suitable for the elderly.

7.100 There is scope within the site for a joint venture with Wigan Council which could enable the development of either the site of Lowton High School for housing or for the re-provision of Lowton High School and Golborne High School as a combined entity. This could provide for modern school facilities whilst improving the quality and breadth of education offer, including the possibility of the provision of a Sixth Form Centre either at Lowton High School, or elsewhere depending upon the wider proposals. There is certainly no doubt that Lowton High School and St Mary's Primary School provide immediate educational support for any intended housing development.

7.101 The sites are close to Junction 23 of the M6 / East Lancashire Road giving unrivalled access to the North to Lancaster and the Lakes, East to Bolton and Leeds, South to Manchester and Birmingham and West to Liverpool. Whilst it is considered that my clients land might be better suited for residential development, there is scope for a mixed use development within the wider site, including employment and other uses. This would provide for a sustainable development of potentially exemplary quality which is deliverable in today's market.

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