



WARRINGTON
Borough Council

Warrington Borough Council Local Plan

Urban Capacity Assessment

2019

Urban Capacity Statement

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement sets out how the Council has assessed the capacity of the existing urban area – comprising the main urban area of Warrington and the outlying settlements that are inset from the Green Belt - to accommodate new development.
- 1.2 In identifying land to meet Warrington’s need for housing and employment, the Council has sought to maximise the capacity of the existing urban area to accommodate new development. In accordance with Government policy (NPPF - Paragraphs 117 – 123: Making effective use of land), the Council must demonstrate that all reasonable options have been identified for meeting our development requirements before proposing to release any land from the Green Belt.
- 1.3 The Council has undertaken a detailed assessment of urban capacity for new homes through its Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) and for employment through its Economic Development Needs Assessment (EDNA). It has also identified the significant additional capacity for homes and employment that can be delivered through the regeneration plans for the Town Centre, Warrington Waterfront and parts of the wider Inner Warrington area. This has involved a detailed masterplanning exercise undertaken in partnership with Warrington & Co, the Council’s economic development partnership. The relevant master planning documents are contained in Appendix 1 to this Statement.
- 1.4 The SHLAA, EDNA and masterplanning work have all been updated following the consultation on the Local Plan Preferred Development Option (PDO). This has taken into account responses from the local community, elected representatives, developers and statutory consultees, as well as other relevant information. The Council is confident that its approach provides a comprehensive assessment of the available land supply in the Borough, outside of the Green Belt, and demonstrates that that the use of brownfield land is being maximised.

2 Responding to the Preferred Development Option Consultation

- 2.1 There were a number of respondents to the PDO consultation that considered that the Council’s assessment of the urban capacity did not take account of all available brownfield land. In particular a large number of residents and elected representatives considered that the Warrington Hospital site and the Fiddlers Ferry Power Station site could provide land to meet future development needs. Conversely a number of developers and landowners considered that a number of sites had been included in the masterplanning work which could not be demonstrated as developable. A large number of respondents also did not believe that the Peel Hall site should be included within the SHLAA.

- 2.2 The density assumptions used in both the SHLAA and the masterplanning work were also questioned. Some respondents considered them to be too high and some too low. A number of developers considered that allowance should be made in the SHLAA for a proportion of sites which may not come forward for development in the 15 year assessment period.
- 2.3 There were no submissions to the PDO consultation promoting brownfield sites that the Council had not been previously aware of and accounted for.
- 2.4 A full list of issues raised relating to urban capacity and the Council's response to them is provided in the Responding to Representations Report 2019.
- 2.5 Following the PDO consultation, the Council has undertaken a comprehensive review of the SHLAA, EDNA and its masterplanning work. It has consulted with the owners/operators of both Warrington Hospital and FFPS and taken their views into account in establishing the urban capacity. The Council has also revised the housing density assumptions for both the SHLAA and masterplanning work. The detail on how this has informed the Council's assessment of urban capacity is set out below.

3 Housing

SHLAA Land Supply

- 3.1 The Council has undertaken a major review of its Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) in 2018, identifying committed and planned housing land supply over the next 15 years. The SHLAA (2018) takes into account planning permissions granted and completions up to 31st March 2018 and is in the revised assessment format that takes account of the recommendations contained in the National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) in respect of the site size threshold.
- 3.2 It also, it takes account of the responses to the PDO Consultation, providing updated evidence to support the assumptions used for estimating the development potential of sites.
- 3.3 The assumptions in the SHLAA regarding; net developable area ratios; build rates; lead-in-times; densities etc) have been re-appraised again to ensure that they up-to-date and take account of recent fluctuations in market conditions.
- 3.4 The net developable area ratios; build rates; lead-in-times have remained unchanged. However, a review of permissions in the Town Centre and Inner Warrington indicates considerably higher densities in some instances than previously employed in both the SHLAA and the Town Centre Masterplanning. Hence, new density bands have been included for Inner Warrington (130dph) and the Town Centre (275 dph). The justification for these densities is included in the SHLAA (pages 16/17 and Appendix 4).

- 3.5 In respect of the major brownfield sites that were identified by respondents as being available, the Council had already taken account of these but has sought confirmation from the site operators that the previous advice was still correct. In respect of the Warrington Hospital site the Council have been advised that the hospital trust are currently reviewing whether their preferred option is to redevelop the hospital on site or whether they are going to relocate to an alternative site. The Council is not therefore able to include the existing site within its land supply, but this will be kept under review.
- 3.6 The operators of Fiddlers Ferry Power station have indicated that the power station is likely to continue operating into the next decade and that the existing ash processing activities at the site are expected to continue beyond the power station's life span, until the existing deposits are fully depleted. It is likely that a new power generating facility will then be developed on the site, but this would require a much smaller area. This would mean that land could be released for development, but the operator has confirmed this would be for employment development and not housing.
- 3.7 The Council has reviewed the SHLAA assessment for the Peel Hall site following the recent appeal decision. As there is no agreed package of transport mitigation measures, the Council has re-classified the Peel Hall site from 'deliverable' to 'developable' in the SHLAA. The Council has not therefore included any completions from the site within its five year land supply.
- 3.8 It is acknowledged that a specific allowance is not made for the non-delivery/implementation of sites/permissions in the SHLAA. This is because the deliverability of every site is reassessed annually and up-dated. Sites where planning permission has expired or where a consent for an alternative use has been granted are either removed from the deliverable supply or pushed back into the developable 6-10 or 11-15 year supply, as is considered appropriate. Also, it is important to note that whilst standard assumptions are applied in the absence of any other information, site specific intelligence/information from developers is used where this is available. In particular, the Council have sought information from the developers of large sites to inform the density and phasing of development.
- 3.9 In addition, the SHLAA includes a review of past projections comparing projected completions with actual completions that occurred in a given year (Table 3.8, 2018 SHLAA). This illustrates that the actual completions continually exceed the projected completions, which serves to demonstrate the cautious approach inherent in the assumptions within the SHLAA.
- 3.10 The updated SHLAA (2018) identified a total housing land supply in the urban area and on green field sites outside of the Green Belt of **9,226** up to 2032 (Table 1 below). This figure includes a 'Small Sites' Allowance for sites below the 0.25ha size threshold employed (See column D in Table 1 below) but does not include any Windfall Allowance for sites of 0.25ha and above.