

WARRINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN REVIEW – REPRESENTATION ON PREFERRED DEVELOPMENT OPTION

Submission by [REDACTED]

Land east of Crouchley Lane, Lymm –Green Belt Parcel LY22, SHLAA reference 2901, Call for Sites Reference R18/076

Introduction

I am writing this representation as a resident of Lymm, specifically of [REDACTED] Close bordering the site which is the focus of this representation. I welcome the Council's decision to adopt a transparent approach to development of the local plan, making the evidence base for the Preferred Development Option (PDO) available to residents and other interested parties.

This representation takes as its starting point the PDO as it is being consulted on – it does not seek to question the overall level of housing build in the PDO, including the allocation of 500 new homes on Green Belt land in Lymm. Were the Council, as a result of the consultation process, to propose a significantly different number of Green Belt houses, including in Lymm, then it would be essential for the Council to conduct a further round of consultation on its new PDO before proceeding to development of the local plan.

Summary

The Council has undertaken an independent, objective and impartial review of Warrington's Green Belt land. On its own account site 2901 (R18/076) is one of the most valuable Green Belt sites within the Borough. It sits within one of only five of twenty four General Areas making a strong contribution to the Green Belt's purposes (the only such GA in Lymm), and within a parcel, LY22, which also makes a strong contribution. Finally, and in contrast to the arguments made on behalf of the landowners, the site itself also makes a strong contribution.

As the Council's settlement profile for Lymm makes clear, the 500 home target for Lymm can be met without the need to release "strong" Green Belt sites. A totaling of the sites proposed for Lymm suggests that c.2,000 homes could be accommodated on sites making only a weak or moderate contribution, indeed weak sites alone get close to the target.

On this basis, it would be unreasonable for the Council to include site 2901 in the Local Plan, having taken an approach that clearly and objectively seeks to weigh the relative Green Belt contributions of different sites.

The Council has assessed the relative importance of the Borough's Green Belt land and judged site 2901 to be particularly valuable

Given that the PDO envisages significant Green Belt land release and that the NPPF identifies a number of purposes for the Green Belt (within the fundamental aim of preventing urban sprawl), it makes sense for there to be a relative assessment of Warrington's Green Belt land, assessing it against the five purposes.

At the highest level, Warrington's Green belt has been sub-divided into twenty four General Areas, each of which has been assessed. Only five make a "strong" Green Belt contribution. Land within those areas is, therefore, clearly worthy of special consideration. Just one of the strong GAs, GA8, sits within Lymm. That is the GA within which site 2901 sits.

Perhaps more important is the assessment of “parcels” since these are more natural spatial entities, defined in relation to durable boundaries and thus representing appropriate units for application of the Green Belt assessment methodology. LY22 (within which site 2901 sits) is part of GA8 and is itself judged to make a strong contribution. It is worthy of note that not all parcels within GA8 make a strong contribution.

Finally, whilst a full assessment of Call for Sites responses has not been made, a Green Belt assessment has been performed and site 2901 (R18/076) retains the strong contribution characterization of the larger parcel.

The landowner’s arguments regarding the Green Belt status of site 2901 are fallacious

The landowners have sought to argue that site 2901 makes only a moderate contribution. However, their argument serves only to reinforce the fact that it is parcel LY22 that is the most appropriate unit of consideration. Site 2901 has no durable boundaries on its southern edge, the aspect which most clearly contributes to openness and protects against encroachment. Development of the site could only be expected to lead to further development within the parcel. Further, in arguing that site 2901 makes a smaller contribution by virtue of being only 19% of LY22, they open the door to salami-slicing of the larger parcel.

Other sites make a less important contribution to the Green Belt and can accommodate Lymm’s housing target

As is the case across the borough, many more Green Belt sites have been proposed for development in Lymm than are needed to meet the PDO’s housing target. More than 30 sites in Lymm were submitted in response to the call for sites. A review of those responses suggests that there are close to 400 houses proposed for sites assessed as making only a weak contribution and c.1500 for sites with a moderate assessment.

As noted above, the fundamental aim of the Green Belt is to prevent urban sprawl. Visual examination of the Green Belt sites proposed for Lymm shows that a number constitute infill within the existing boundaries of the village. Site 2901 would, by contrast, represent an extension of the village’s existing contours.

On this basis, there is no need for site 2901 to be considered in the local plan.

As well as its Green Belt value, the site makes a number of other significant contributions to the community

Critical to the site’s Green Belt value is its openness and it is this quality that makes the site so attractive and of such value to residents adjoining the field and others. With a right of way crossing the site, it is extensively used by dog walkers, runners and ramblers.

The site also provides the open setting for the listed Lymm Water Tower, which can only be fully enjoyed from the South.

The site is currently agricultural land of a high quality, supporting a wide range of crops, further enhancing the attractiveness of the site, creating varied annual and seasonal perspectives.

Residents adjoining site 2901 have responded with enthusiasm to the PDO consultation

The PDO consultation has clearly energized residents across the borough. Residents adjoining site 2901 have been especially active. We have held two residents’ meetings and commissioned a number of professional reports (funded by voluntary contributions) to examine the case for release of this Green Belt site. I, like my fellow residents, am strongly supportive of the reports submitted on our behalf by:

Gary Earnshaw Planning

Walsingham Planning

Camlin Lonsdale

Conclusion

This site is an outstanding natural landscape, performing a valuable role in maintaining the purposes of the Green Belt and representing a cherished resource for residents and visitors to Lymm. It contains a high quality agricultural resource. The Council's own assessment conforms these conclusions and that the site should not be released for development.