

**Development Plan Representation – Warrington Borough
Council Local Plan Review**

Submission Version Local Plan

On behalf of Langtree Property Partners

June 2019



I. Introduction

Spawforths have been instructed by **Langtree Property Partners (Langtree PP)** to submit representations to the proposed Submission Version Local Plan Review Document (March 2019).

Langtree PP have significant land interests in Warrington and we welcome the opportunity to engage in the Local Plan Review and look forward to being an active participant in further stages of the Plan process.

We welcome the Borough's growth ambitions and housing and employment needs to reflect these ambitions. We support these growth ambitions and overall intentions, underpinned by the housing and employment evidence base, aligned with job growth, which recognises the need to identify more housing and employment land in the Borough.

We make a series of specific representations in this Document as follows:-

| Submission Draft Local Plan Policy Reference | Comment (Support / Objection) |
|---|--|
| Vision | Support. |
| Objective W1 | Support approach to housing. Conditionally Object to omission of “a minimum of ...” in respect of Employment. |
| Objective W2 | Support acceptance of need for revised Green Belt boundaries. |
| Spatial Strategy | Support approach to Garden Suburb. |
| Key Diagram | Support approach to Garden Suburb. |
| Paragraph 3.3.23 | Support approach to Fiddlers Ferry Power Station being a longer term (post Plan period) opportunity. |

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| Paragraphs 3.4.7 – 3.4.16 | Support recognition of, and justification for, “Exceptional Circumstances” to justify Green Belt change for housing and employment development for the Garden Suburb and for Lymm. |
| Policy DEV1 | Support broad approach to Garden Suburb (Point 3) and Lymm (Point 4); but Conditionally Object to stepped housing trajectory (Point 5). |
| Policy DEV4 | Support Employment Land Requirement (expressed as a minimum) (Point 1); identification of new Employment Area at Garden Suburb (Point 4); and focus of new warehousing and distribution to Garden Suburb Employment area (Point 11). |
| Policy GB1 | Support removal of Garden Suburb from Green Belt (Point 3); and Lymm as an Inset Settlement (Point 4). |
| Policy MD2 | Support for General Approach to Garden Suburb. |
| Policy MD2 – Point 14 | Conditionally Object to blanket restriction on new residential development beyond Phase I. |
| Policy MD2 – Point 55 | Conditionally Object to inclusion of “employment development” within this criterion. |
| MD2 Illustrative Development Concept | Conditionally Support subject to ongoing masterplanning approach. |
| Policy OS6 | Object to Pool Lane housing allocation. |
| Policy OS7 | Object to Rushgreen Road / Tanyard Farm housing allocation. |

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| Policy OS8 | Object to Warrington Road housing allocation. |
| Omission of Langtree's Booth Lane (Lymm) site from a housing allocation and its retention in the Green Belt | Object to the Green Belt designation of Langtree's Booth Lane, Lymm site which should be extracted from the Green Belt and re-allocated for housing as an extension to allocation OS5 Massey Brook Lane. |

We trust that you will confirm that these representations are duly made and will give due consideration to these comments.

Please do not hesitate to contact us to discuss any issues raised in these representations further.

2. National Planning Policy Context and Tests of Soundness

The Government's core objectives as established through the recently published 2019 National Planning Policy Framework (the 2019 Framework) are sustainable development and growth. Paragraph 11 of the 2019 Framework stresses the need for Local Plans to meet the objectively assessed needs of an area. The 2019 Framework sets out to boost significantly the supply of homes and confirms that a sufficient amount and variety of land should come forward where it is needed. In terms of building a strong and competitive economy the 2019 Framework states that planning should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. The key focus throughout the 2019 Framework is to create the conditions for sustainable economic growth and deliver a wide choice of high quality homes. The sites identified to meet the housing and employment requirements must be deliverable and developable.

In relation to Local Plan formulation, paragraphs 15 to 37 of the 2019 Framework states that Local Plans are the key to delivering sustainable development which reflects the vision and aspirations of the local community. The 2019 Framework indicates that Local Plans must be consistent with the 2019 Framework and should set out the opportunities for development and provide clear policies on what will and will not be permitted and where.

In relation to the examination of Local Plans, paragraph 35 of the Framework sets out the tests of soundness.

The Local Plan and spatial development strategies are examined to assess whether they have been prepared in accordance with legal and procedural requirements, and whether they are sound. Plans are 'sound' if they are:

Positively prepared – providing a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to meet the area's objectively assessed needs; and is informed by agreements with other authorities, so that unmet need from neighbouring areas is accommodated where it is practical to do so and is consistent with achieving sustainable development

Justified – an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, and based on proportionate evidence;

Effective – deliverable over the plan period, and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic matters that have been dealt with rather than deferred, as evidenced by the statement of common ground; and

Consistent with national policy – enabling the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in this.

This Representation therefore considers the content of the Submission Version Local Plan document on behalf of Langtree PP in light of this planning policy context.

3. Vision and Spatial Strategy

Langtree PP generally **support** the Ambition and Vision as set out in the Plan. Langtree PP also **support** the Local Plan Objectives W1 and W2; and also **support** the Local Plan Spatial Strategy as set out in the Key Diagram.

3.1. Test of Soundness

Langtree PP considers that the Local Plan Vision, Objectives W1 and W2 and Spatial Strategy are **sound**.

| Which test of soundness are comments about? | | | |
|---|---------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| X | Positively Prepared | X | Effective |
| X | Justified | X | Consistency with National Policy |

3.2. Justification

The Ambition/ Vision is **supported** as it provides a balance between meeting the needs of the Authority and preserving and protecting natural and physical assets. It is also recognised that the Local Plan supports the need for Green Belt land release and hence the Ambition/ Vision is generally positive in its approach to development.

The Vision is positive in referring to a “strong economy” and “strong, active and resilient communities”. It rightly supports “positively planned growth” to “ensure that new homes, jobs and businesses are supported by major improvements to the Borough’s infrastructure”.

Langtree PP specifically support the economic hub role referred to and the recognition of the need for “major new employment locations” which will include a range of economic activities including logistics. This accords with the strategic role of Warrington within the Region (this is noted in terms of location and connectivity) and supports the approach in Paragraph 82 of the 2019 Framework in terms of the locational requirements of employment occupiers.

Langtree PP also **support** the recognition of the link between new housing development and economic growth.

Langtree PP **support** the Plan objectives, specifically:-

- Objective W1 in relation to the scale of employment land – 362 hectares; but Langtree **conditionally object** to the precise wording which should be amended to express the 362 hectares as a minimum to align with Policy DEV 4.
- Objective W2 in relation to the need for revised Green Belt boundaries.

Langtree PP **support** the Spatial Strategy and Key Diagram, specifically in relation to the identification of the Garden Suburb Main Development Area and the Garden Suburb Proposed Employment Area.

Langtree PP also **support** the recognition that Fiddlers Ferry Power Station is unavailable to meet future employment needs within the Plan period.

Langtree PP also **support** the Local Plan's approach to Green Belt release and the justification provided in Section 3.4 in relation to "exceptional circumstances".

3.3. Proposed Change

To overcome the conditional objection the Council should:

- Amend Objective W1 to read "supporting Warrington's ongoing economic success by providing a minimum of 362 Hectares of employment land between 2017 and 2037".

4. Strategic Planning Policies

Langtree PP **support** Objective W1 and Policy DEV1 (Housing Delivery). Langtree PP have concern over the justification for the stepped trajectory within Policy DEV1 and hence raise a **conditional objection** solely to this element of DEV 1.

Langtree PP **support** Policy DEV4.

Langtree PP **support** Objective W2 and Policy GBI.

4.1. Test of Soundness

Langtree PP consider that the Local Plan Policies DEV1, DEV4 and GBI along with Objectives W1 and W2 are **sound** but would be improved if the suggested amendments were made.

| Which test of soundness are comments about? | | | |
|---|---------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| X | Positively Prepared | X | Effective |
| X | Justified | X | Consistency with National Policy |

4.2. Justification

Objective W1 sets out the scale of housing and employment need as a minimum of 18,900 homes and 362 hectares of employment land. Langtree PP **support** this scale of need which is justified, positively prepared and consistent with national policy.

Policy DEV1 confirms the housing requirement (expressed as a minimum) and the housing distribution strategy. It also promotes the removal of the Garden Suburb from the Green Belt and identifies that it has a minimum capacity of 6,490 homes to meet the housing needs and this is **supported** by Langtree PP.

Langtree PP **conditionally objects** to the stepped housing trajectory within Policy DEV1. Langtree PP are working constructively with the Council and other landowners to evolve the Garden Suburb trajectory and hence expect that Langtree PP's conditional objection will be addressed as this work evolves and the housing delivery trigger points are agreed.

Langtree PP **support** Policy DEV4 in relation to the employment land requirement (expressed as a minimum) and employment land distribution. Langtree PP **support** the proposed removal of the Garden Suburb land from the Green Belt and its allocation as a new Employment Area. Langtree PP also **support** point 11 which directs major warehousing and distribution developments to preferred locations which include the Garden Suburb Employment Area.

Langtree PP **support** Policy GB1 and specifically the removal of Green Belt land at the Garden Suburb.

4.3. Proposed Change

To overcome the **conditional objection** the Council should:

- Continue to work positively with the Garden Suburb developers / landowners to finalise and agree a development trajectory for the Garden Suburb.

5. Site Allocations – Garden Suburb

Langtree PP **conditionally support** Policy MD2 Warrington Garden Suburb. **Langtree PP fully support** the Garden Suburb principles and justification and are **fully committed to the delivery** of the Garden Suburb, however, they **conditionally object** to some detailed elements of the policy as set out below.

5.1. Test of Soundness

Langtree PP consider that in its current form the Policy MD2 is generally sound but it would be improved if the suggested amendments were made.

| Which test of soundness are comments about? | | | |
|---|---------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| X | Positively Prepared | X | Effective |
| X | Justified | X | Consistency with National Policy |

5.2. Justification

Langtree PP **support** the identification of the Garden Suburb as a sustainable urban extension within the Warrington Submission Version Local Plan. Langtree PP **support** its removal from the Green Belt to facilitate this. Langtree PP also **support**:-

- The identified housing (7,400 homes) and employment (116 hectares) capacity.
- The concept of three Garden Villages, a central Neighbourhood Centre, a significant employment zone and extensive green infrastructure.
- The requirement for a Development Framework for the Garden Suburb as a whole, in the form of a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD); including more detailed masterplans for each of the Garden Villages; together with a delivery strategy and phasing plan.

- The concept of “proportionate contributions from all developers within the Garden Suburb to fund and deliver the infrastructure required” and Langtree PP look forward to developing the precise delivery mechanism and trigger points further with all key stakeholders.
- The identification of a New Garden Village adjacent to the A50.
- The recognition that the new employment development can come forward in parallel with the off-site motorway junction improvements (point 15); that up to 116 hectares of land is for employment uses (point 27) and that such uses are for distribution and industrial uses (B8, B1c and B2) (point 28).
- The Green Belt boundary being identified as the M56 and A50 (Point 53).

Langtree PP **conditionally support** the following:-

- The Illustrative Development Concept for the Garden Suburb. This support is conditional as the masterplanning approach is ongoing and hence whilst the broad disposition of uses within the Illustrative Concept Plan is supported, the precise boundaries and details are still to be determined and Langtree PP remain committed to working collaboratively to determine these.

Langtree PP **conditional object** to the following:-

- Point 14. The restriction on any further residential development (beyond the Homes England first phase) before the funding and programme for the Green Infrastructure network, strategic link road and community infrastructure has been confirmed. Whilst Langtree PP support the need for this infrastructure and welcome the opportunity to be involved in agreeing appropriate trigger points for new infrastructure, the blanket restriction on any further residential development before the above has all been agreed and programmed is considered too restrictive. Langtree PP remained committed to working with the Council through the Garden Suburb masterplanning to addressing this issue.
- Point 55. In respect of transport and accessibility Langtree PP consider that the following wording is imprecise: “Required improvements for the next phase of residential development and employment development will include:...”. The

reference to the employment development in this sentence should be omitted as it is not restricted in delivery terms by point 14 and yet point 55 contradicts this with regard to matters such as the “new strategic link”. Such a link is not required to enable the Employment Area to come forward.

5.3. Proposed Change

Langtree support the Garden Suburb concept and are fully committed to its delivery. To address Langtree PP’s objections and conditional support, the Council should:

- Continue the dialogue with Langtree PP and the other landowners / developers to evolve the masterplan for the Garden Suburb.
- Continue to develop the delivery mechanisms for the Garden Suburb in conjunction with Langtree PP and the other landowners / developers in order that the blanket restriction on a further phase of residential development (point 14) can be refined.
- Amend Point 55 to read (i.e. delete “...and employment development”):-

“Required improvements for the next phase of residential development will include:...”.

6. Site Allocations - Lymm

Langtree PP **support** the principle of new housing allocations within Lymm in accordance with Policy DEV1 but Langtree PP **object** to the following sites: OS6: Lymm (Pool Lane); OS7: Lymm (Rushgreen Road / Tanyard Farm); and OS8: Lymm (Warrington Road).

Langtree **object** to the “omission” of their site at Booths Lane, Lymm and hence **object** to it being retained within the Green Belt and they consider that it should form part of a larger new housing allocation to meet the housing requirements for Lymm as set out in Policy DEV I.

6.1. Test of Soundness

Langtree PP consider that the above draft allocations within Lymm should be deleted and that Langtree PP’s “omission site” at Booths Lane, Lymm should not be retained within the Green Belt and instead it should form part of a larger new housing allocation to meet the housing requirements for Lymm as set out in Policy DEV I.

| Which test of soundness are comments about? | | | |
|---|---------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| X | Positively Prepared | X | Effective |
| X | Justified | X | Consistency with National Policy |

6.2. Justification

Langtree PP **support** the identification of Lymm as a settlement that can accommodate additional housing growth as set out within Policy DEV I and that as such Langtree PP agree that “exceptional circumstances” have been proven to exist to warrant Green Belt change on the edge of Lymm.

Langtree PP **object** to the following:-

- OS6: Lymm (Pool Lane). This site in conjunction with Site OS8 (Warrington Road) comprises a significant urban extension in the least accessible location to existing services within Lymm.
- OS7: Lymm (Rushgreen Road / Tanyard Farm). This site is a key settlement break between Lymm and Oughtrington that forms part of the distinctive character of Lymm. This is recognised in the Lymm Heritage and Character Assessment (November 2018) which confirms in paragraph 6.1.3 and proposed Policy LCA02: East Lymm that “Future development should not detract from Lymm and Oughtrington as distinct settlements within the Green belt”.
- OS8: Lymm (Warrington Road). This site in conjunction with Site OS6 (Pool Lane) comprises a significant urban extension in the least accessible location to existing services within Lymm.

Langtree PP do not object to the allocation of Site OS5 Lymm (Massey Brook Lane) but Langtree PP consider that this allocation should be extended to the south to encompass the land under Langtree PP’s control (as shown below):-



A single larger housing allocation within Lymm using Massey Brook Lane and Booth Lane as logical Green Belt boundaries would consolidate the urban edge in a location which is highly accessible to Cherry Tree Primary School and the services and facilities at Booth’s Hill Road.

6.3. Proposed Change

To address the above objections, the Council should:

- Delete draft housing allocations OS6; OS7 and OS8.
- Extend housing allocation OS5 (Massey Brook Lane) to the south to encompass the Booth's Lane land under Langtree PP's control.