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Representations to Wyre Local Plan Examination: Matters, Issues and Questions (Matter 8 – Allocations)

Land at Garstang Road/New Link Road, Catterall
Beecham Developments

April 2018



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2 ISSUE 7 - CATTERALL HOUSING AND MIXED USE SITES (SA3/2)

- 2.1 Site ref: SA3/2 (Joe Lane, Catterall) is proposed as an allocation for **Mixed Use Development**. The draft policy refers to both ***"Housing and Employment"*** as the proposed uses for this wider site, following outline approval for housing, employment and a new village centre (ref: 15/00248). However, the policy does not designate specific parcels of land for particular uses. It also does not imply that the suitability of the subject site for employment has been specifically assessed.
- 2.2 Housing is now being constructed by Miller Homes in the northern part of this wider site, with 200 houses at 'Beacon Park' on either side of Joe Lane, following a reserved matters approval in June 2017 (ref: 16/01065/RELMAJ). In addition, the new village centre is also being developed following a reserved matters approval in November 2017 (ref: 17/00780/REMMAJ). Given that these sections of the site are now committed, it serves no purpose for this area to be included as part of the proposed allocation. If they are to be included in the allocation, the wording of the policy should at least be updated to reflect the fact that construction has commenced.
- 2.3 The remaining land to the south of the proposed allocation site is now subject to a full application for 40 houses (ref: 18/00337/FULMAJ). The outline permission for the wider site included an indicative plan showing employment development within this part of the application site, along with a family pub. However, layout was a reserved matter and evidence is now available that there is no demand for such employment development as will be explained below.
- 2.4 Importantly, the Committee Report for the outline permission noted that ***"as site layout is not a matter for determination at this stage, the Parameters Masterplan is purely indicative and may be subject to change"***. Condition 4 of the outline approval provided a maximum employment floorspace, but no obligation to provide any employment land at all arises from the permission.



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- 2.5 The subject site has been actively marketed for the employment uses shown on the indicative plan for the outline approval. Marketing information was sent to prospective occupiers following the outline approval in November 2015 in order to gauge interest. Sale boards were erected on the A6 and Garstang Road on the 11th May 2017, after which agents were sent mailshots with sale particulars.
- 2.6 There has been minimal interest in the employment land, with only a single offer which was significantly below market value and not acceptable to the landowner. Feedback from the marketing process has included that the land would not be viable as an employment opportunity. In particular, its relatively small scale makes it unattractive to develop as speculative industrial units for sale or rent, due to the limited returns in relation to development costs. We have not seen evidence that the Council has assessed this as a stand-alone employment site whereas our client's evidence is that it is unattractive to the market. The small size combined with the irregular shape of the potential employment area limits what the site could potentially accommodate, due to the larger footplate and servicing requirements of industrial and commercial buildings.
- 2.7 The land for the 'family pub' has also been marketed through site board and mailshots, but with no resultant market interest in this use or alternatives such as a restaurant or drive-through.
- 2.8 This evidence of lack of demand combined with the ongoing shortage of housing land subsequently prompted the new proposal for residential development. This section of land should now be allocated for housing, either separately or as part of the wider mixed-use allocation. If it is to be included as part of the mixed-use allocation, the policy wording should be amended to reflect the current situation. An additional 40 units should be added to the 'Housing Capacity' of the site. The 'Employment Capacity' of the site is currently stated to be 0.95ha, which was the size of the parcel set aside for 'Employment' in the indicative layout for the outline application. Reference to 'Employment Capacity' should now be removed completely given the status of the subject site.



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- 2.9 According to paragraph 182 of the NPPF, in order to be considered “sound”, the plan should be “positively prepared” based on a strategy which seeks to meet objectively assessed development requirements. In the case of the proposed allocation, it has not been “positively prepared” as there is evidence of no demand for employment development at the site. It also cannot be considered “justified” as the reasonable alternative of allocating the subject site for housing in view of the lack of demand for employment has not been explored. The Council has simply repeated that there is an outline approval which is now out-of-date in view of the demand evidence. It is therefore also not “effective” as there is no evidence that it would be deliverable for employment over the plan period.
- 2.10 The Site Allocations Background Paper (September 2017) states that one of the framing principles for allocating sites is that they “*should be suitable and free of significant constraints and there should be a reasonable likelihood that development can be delivered within the plan period*”. We have shown that the site is not suitable for employment and is unlikely to be delivered for such use within the plan period.

Balance between housing and employment land

- 2.11 The Inspectors Preliminary Questions (EL1.001a) document refers to the “*imbalance between housing and employment land provision set against assessed needs*” (parag. 30) and asks whether there is any scope for increasing housing allocations by utilising more of the land allocated for employment/mixed use.
- 2.12 With regards to the evidence base for the employment land requirement of a minimum of 43ha stated in Policy EP1, this is stated to reflect the evidence within the 2015 Wyre Employment Land Study Addendum II which was published in 2017. However, this clearly indicates at paragraph 5.9 that the employment land requirement is between 32ha and 47ha. The 43ha selected by the Council is towards the upper end of the range, whereas the study discusses how the top of the range is based on recent take-up which is not reflective of



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- a full development cycle. In these circumstances, the evidence base provides no justification for prioritising employment over housing.
- 2.13 In contrast, the housing target selected (411 dwellings per annum) is below that of the Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) requirement of 479 dwellings per annum.
- 2.14 As acknowledged by the Council, Policy SP1 only proposes to meet 86% of the identified requirement. The consequences of this are likely to be that economic growth will be constrained and that there will be a reduced impact on tackling housing affordability. This reduced housing provision is a concern given the expectation in paragraph 47 of the NPPF that local planning authorities should use their evidence base to ensure that their Local Plan meets the full, objectively assessed need for market and affordable housing in the housing market area, as far as is consistent with other policies which it sets out.
- 2.15 The employment target has been set at the upper end of the identified need while the housing target has been set below the identified need. The Council has made a choice to meet its identified employment land need in its entirety whilst failing to meet housing need. This is a choice which is not supported by the Framework or dictated by the character of potential sites.
- 2.16 As there is a clear imbalance between housing and employment land provision set against assessed needs, it is appropriate to increase housing allocations by utilising more of the land allocated for employment/mixed-use. While the land subject to these representations would remain as 'mixed-use' due to the village centre, the 0.95ha capacity for 'Employment' should be removed as it is more appropriate for housing.
- 2.17 The allocation of this land for housing would not materially affect the Council's development strategy. With the current application being for 40 units, this number would constitute only 0.49% of the 8,224 dwellings to be delivered between 2011 and 2031. In addition, the removal 0.95ha of employment land from the 43ha proposed to the required by the Council represents a reduction of only 2.2%.



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2.18 In the Catterall Settlement Profile (October 2016), Catterall is described as “*residential settlement*”. In a context of little market interest in the subject site, there are already other employment allocations proposed in Catterall, including:

- **Site SA2/3** – Riverside Industrial Park Extension, Catterall (3.42 ha)
- **Site SA2/4** – South of Goose Lane, Catterall (1 ha) – This site is adjacent to the subject site and available if employment development is needed in the vicinity but we are not aware of evidence of demand.
- **Site SA7** – Brockholes Industrial Estate Extension, Catterall (32.49 ha) – This site is referred to as a Development Opportunity rather than an employment allocation but it is stated that it could come forward during the development plan period and contribute towards employment land requirements.

2.19 The combination of these sites totals 36.91ha, which is a significant amount for a settlement the size of Catterall. The removal of the 0.95ha of proposed employment land at the subject site will therefore not materially affect this total.

2.20 A high proportion of the 16-74 population of Catterall (74.5%) is already in employment, significantly higher than nearby settlements such as Garstang (59%). There is therefore not a pressing need for employment development in Catterall additional to those sites listed above. There is also existing employment in Catterall including Brockholes Way and Riverside Industrial Park which contain industrial and commercial uses. Other key employers include the Franklaw Water Treatment works, Green Lane West Industrial area (Garstang), Longmoor Lane (Garstang) and The Creamery Industrial Estate (Barnacre); while these are outside of the settlement they are still accessible to residents.

Deliverability

2.21 Not only is the site developable for housing but it is deliverable in terms of 5 year supply, meeting the tests of footnote 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework: it is available



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now, offers a suitable location for development now, and is achievable with a realistic prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within five years and in particular is viable for housing. There is currently a detailed application for housing development at the site for 40 units (ref: 18/00337/FULMAJ) as discussed above and it is therefore highly deliverable.

- 2.22 The site represents a suitable location for residential development, being directly adjacent to housing once the Miller Homes site is completed to the north-west. It will also be located directly adjacent to the future local centre which will provide new shops and facilities once constructed.
- 2.23 The development of housing at the site would relate well to the urban form of Catterall, with a defined and defensible boundary on all sides and can help Wyre to meet its housing needs early in the plan period.
- 2.24 Given this is undeveloped land on the edge of the urban area, there are few constraints to overcome and its development is inherently achievable. The site is within Flood Zone 1 with less than 0.1% or 1:1000 year chance of flooding. This area is also designated as Grade 3 agricultural which is 'moderate' farmland only, while the majority of farmland in Wyre is of higher quality in Grade 2. The site also already benefits from an outline permission for development with access achievable from the link road approved as part of this development and shown on the draft plan.
- 2.25 The site is available, being promoted by Beecham Developments for housing with the [REDACTED]
- 2.26 Given the greenfield nature of the site, there are no insurmountable technical constraints to stymie its development. A series of reports (Ecology, Transport, Site Investigation, Flood Risk, Drainage and Tree Survey) were submitted in connection with the current detailed application and are already in the possession of the Council. As such, we consider that the site is a viable proposition for residential development, for which the Miller Homes development confirms market demand.



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Site accessibility

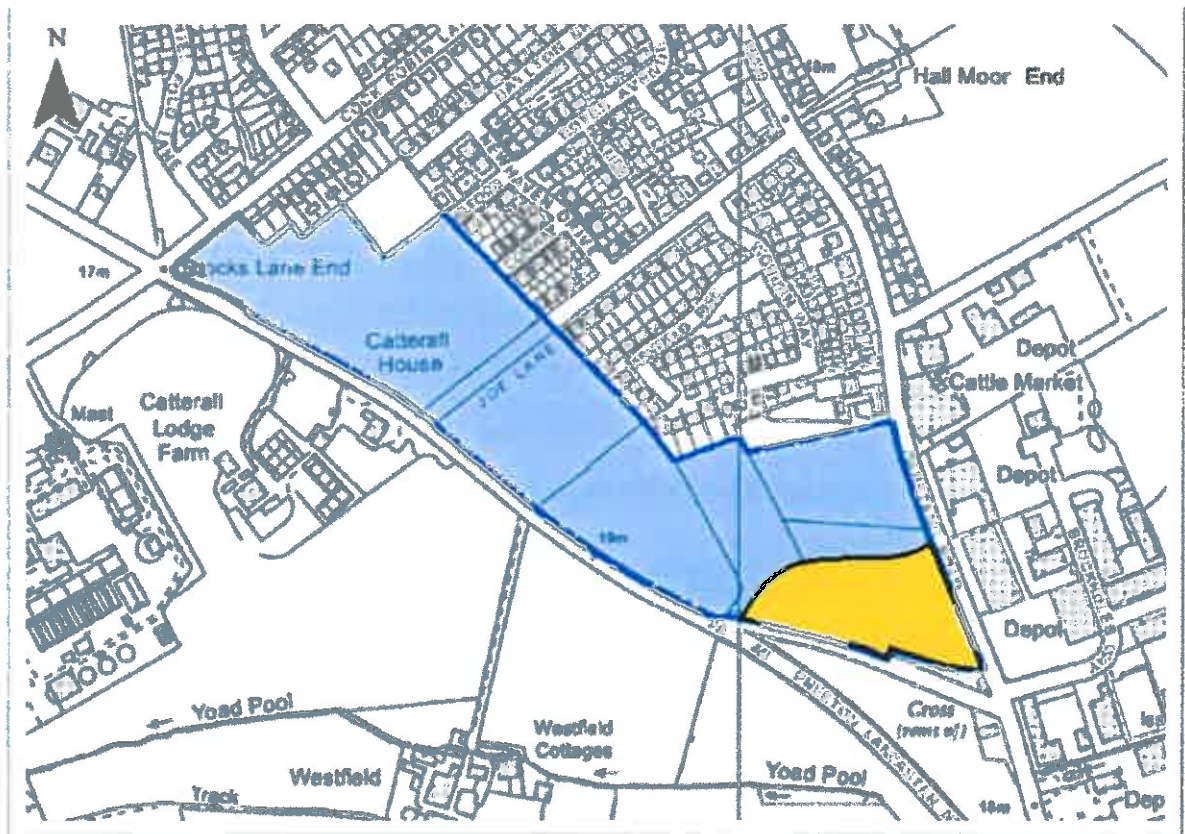
- 2.27 The site can be adequately accessed from the link road between the A6 and Garstang Road. While the access into the site was approved on the basis of employment use, residential development would be less intensive and is therefore appropriate.
- 2.28 A Traffic Impact Note produced for the application at the site concluded that the approved employment floor space would have been likely to generate more traffic than the new residential dwellings on the local highway network and therefore that the proposals will have no detrimental effect on the traffic generation of the site. The Highway Authority accepted this position in a pre-application meeting held on 19th October 2017.
- 2.29 As confirmed in the Transport Assessment submitted with the outline application at the site, it is in an accessible location adjacent to an existing employment area and bus route. The Catterall Settlement Profile confirms that the settlement *"has a frequent bus service to key service centres throughout the week including Lancaster, Preston, Blackpool, Wyre villages along the A6 and to the west of the borough, including Great Eccleston and Poulton-le-Fylde."*
- 2.30 The new village centre will be within walking distance of the site, which the new services and facilities that this will bring and reduce the need for residents to make trips to Garstang by car.
- 2.31 There are also secondary and further education establishments in relatively close proximity, including Garstang Community Academy and Bowgreave & Myerscough College.
- 2.32 There will be improvements to walking and cycling routes as part of the housing development currently under construction which will enhance connectivity to the site. In particular, a buffer zone along the A6 incorporating a footpath and cycleway will connect Cock Robin Lane to the north through to the subject site.



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APPENDIX 1

Land at Garstang Road/New Link Road





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APPENDIX 2

Detailed Site Layout (app ref: 18/00337/FULMAJ)



