
Wirral Council

Local Plan 2021 – 2037 Examination

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WIRRAL LOCAL PLAN

INSP001

INSPECTORS' INITIAL QUESTIONS

1. This note sets out some initial questions which would like to ask the Council as part of the early stage of the examination of the Local Plan. The responses to these questions will help us to define the Matters, Issues and Questions. It may be that some questions can be answered by directing us to the relevant parts of the submitted evidence. Some questions may need new material to be submitted or clarification of existing documents.
2. We would be grateful if the Council could let the Programme Officer know by 13 January 2023 when it will be in a position to respond to these initial questions. This will help us programme when we will be able to issue our Matters, Issues and Questions and consider the timeline for the remainder of the examination. We would be happy to receive staged responses so that answers to some questions are not held up whilst work may be undertaken on others. If any of our questions are unclear, please contact the Programme Officer.
3. The issuing of these initial questions does not mean that we won't have any follow up questions, for clarification, prior to the issuing of the Matters, Issues and Questions.
4. We will publish a Guidance Note around the same time as we issue Matters, Issues and Questions. The Guidance Note will, amongst other things, set out our expectations and outline timetable relating to the hearing sessions and the submission of additional statements.

Duty to Co-operate

5. Reference is made to progressing a Statement of Common Ground with Historic England in relation to Reg 19 representations. Can you please explain what the dispute is between the parties currently, whether this is likely to be resolved, whether any modifications will be proposed in relation to it and when the Statement of Common Ground is likely to be published?

Spatial Strategy

6. We would like the Council to provide a brief Topic Paper setting out the methodology behind the spatial approach proposed in the Local Plan, including the identification of regeneration areas and site allocations. This may well be a bringing together of links to existing documents in a logical order.

Policy WS1

7. The table at WS 1.C refers to 'Plan requirement' in three stages, 2021/2022-2025/2026, 2026/2027-2030/2031 and 2031/32-2036/37. The plan requirement figures are set out as: 5010, 3795 and 4555 respectively.
8. Elsewhere the Local Plan states that there is no stepped requirement. However as set out at WS1.C with the use of the word 'plan requirement' it appears as if there is a stepped requirement.
9. On the tables and graph at the end of BLP1.1, the annualised requirement is shown which is at around 1000 pa units for the first five years and 759 pa for subsequent years. Can you please clarify if this actually intended to be a requirement or a reflection of expected delivery?
10. Table WS 1.C states that 'existing new build commitments and deliverable and developable sites with planning permission at April 2021' totals 1,730, of which 1,692 are expected to be completed by 31 March 2026. Table BLP1.1 (the submitted Housing Trajectory Annual Breakdown) sets out that that 'Commitments/Sites with planning permission' figure is 1,922 for the plan period of which 1,880 are expected to be completed by 31 March 2026. The table towards the bottom of the BLP1.1 states that commitments are 1,730. Can the Council please clarify the position and explain the discrepancy between these figures and how they are defined?
11. What is the reason why no units within these categories will be completed beyond 2026/27? What does the total 3,275 units relate to in the Commitments/Site with Planning Permission row on BLP1.1?
12. Can the Council direct us to the evidence which supports the development assumptions on the commitments/sites with planning permission?
13. It is not totally clear to us how the 10% slippage /non implementation rate been applied. Could additional explanation or clarification be given?

14. How can we be satisfied that there is no double counting for the various allowances (conversions/changes of use/return to use of empty homes/windfalls)?

Regeneration Areas

15. For those regeneration areas where an allowance has been made for contribution from 'other developable areas' can further explanation of how these areas have been assessed be provided? Can the Council direct us to the evidence which supports those assumptions?
16. Wirral Waters has planning permission for around 13,500 homes, which was granted in 2013. BLP1.1 shows the site capacity of the Wirral Waters Regeneration Area as being 4434 of which 3234 are expected to be delivered in the Plan Period. Where are the remainder of the 13,500 homes which have permission in Wirral Waters if they are not within the Wirral Waters Regeneration Area? How many of the 13,000 have been completed since 2013? What is limiting only 3234 units being delivered to the end of plan period?

Draft Birkenhead 2040 Framework

17. The Housing Delivery Strategy of May 2022 states that the Draft Birkenhead 2040 Framework will be endorsed as interim pending the final framework. What is the timetable for this? Does this wait for the Local Plan to be adopted, is it done in parallel or before?

Viability

18. The Council has produced and submitted the Aspinall Verdi viability report June 2022. One of the representators, The Development Consortium, has produced its own viability report. We would like the Council to produce a Topic Paper on viability which will include a Scott Schedule agreed with the Development Consortium (and if possible with any other representator who has submitted viability evidence). This will enable us to clearly see what the prime areas of agreement and disagreement are in terms of viability evidence and assumptions.
19. We would also like this paper to include details of the strategies and funding sought or committed in respect of Wirral, other than development plan documents, including their current status, timing and any implications in terms of delivery. In respect of funding the June 2022 Viability Assessment indicates that investment here justifies a '2 or 3%' premium above normal market growth.

20. Please also provide a breakdown of the proportion of housing and commercial development intended to come forward in each of the four housing market zone maps shown at figure ES1.1 of the June 2022 Aspinall Verdi Viability Assessment.

21. We expect that this will be a relatively short and simple document.

Statements of Common Ground (sites)

22. We expect that the Council will be working on the preparation of Statements of Common Ground between the Council and developers/promoters/landowners, particularly on the larger sites. These will confirm agreement and provide supporting evidence to the development assumptions set out in the Local Plan and other evidence. These may be helpful to be available to the examination particularly when further statements are submitted following MIQs. We would like the Council to confirm its position and progress on the preparation of such Statements of Common Ground (sites).

Affordable Housing

23. Paragraph 3.53 of the Local Plan states that there is an identified need for 374 affordable homes each year in Wirral. A requirement for a minimum of 20% affordable housing is referenced in Local Plan policy WS3.3. This is reduced to 10% in viability zones 1 and 2 and then allows an option for it to be delayed to later phases. We are not clear on how the identified need for affordable housing would be met. We would like the Council to produce a brief Topic Paper on affordable housing setting out anticipated affordable housing delivery relative to needs. This paper should reference links and information in existing submitted documents/evidence base.

Policy WD17

24. The policy states that the safeguarded areas are shown on the Policies Map. Can you clarify where and how these are shown?

Policy WM 6

25. Can you clarify the position of the Joint Waste Local Plan for Merseyside and Halton? The plan was adopted in 2013 and it states that it will guide waste management decisions until 2027. Its review is not within the Wirral Local Development Scheme. When is that plan intended to be reviewed?

Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

26. We would like the Council to produce a short Topic Paper which should address any implications of the judgement in *Lisa Smith (Lisa Smith v The Secretary of*

State for Housing, Communities and Local Government and others [2022]
EWCA Civ. 1391). It should also explain what has occurred in respect of needs relative to the 35 households identified in the former 2014 assessment, evidence of encampments, and any implications of needs or supply in neighbouring authorities insofar as the Local Plan is concerned (both in respect of permanent and transit provision).

Mike Worden and Tom Bristow

INSPECTORS

23 December 2022