

## **Independent Examination of the Lichfield Local Plan Staffordshire County Council Statement on Main Matter 2 - Tamworth Housing Needs**

The Council has indicated that joint working with Tamworth to address cross boundary housing needs has progressed since consultation on the main modifications. What is the latest agreed position and should the Plan be updated to take account of this?

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Lichfield Local Plan currently proposes a Broad Development Location (BDL) capable of accommodating 1000 dwellings to the North of Tamworth on land to the East and West of the railway line in Lichfield District. Fifty percent of these dwellings are to meet the needs of Tamworth. At the Lichfield Local Plan Hearings we heard that this BDL was to be comprehensively planned together with a development of up to 1400 homes proposed within the Anker Valley in Tamworth Borough. The Ashby Road – Upper Gungate Corridor within Tamworth is a key commuter route and also serves primary and secondary schools plus Tamworth College. It is congested at peak times, particularly in the morning between 0800 and 0900 hours and would be directly impacted by traffic from development in the BDL and/or Anker Valley. Staffordshire County Council's proposed highway improvements will only release capacity for up to 500 homes (JCT Technical Note 21 February 2013)

<http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/transport/transportplanning/localtransportplan/districtintegratedtransportstrategies.aspx>

These improvements are designed to optimise the operational capacity of the corridor, through road widening within the highway boundary and co-ordination of the traffic signals. After implementation levels of congestion will not be significantly increased from today's levels and road safety will not be compromised.

- 1.2 The Anker Valley Link Road (AVLR), promoted in previous Tamworth Local Plans, has historically been seen as the means of providing additional highway capacity to release more homes in Anker Valley; and now the BDL. However the deliverability and affordability of this local highway scheme has always been questioned.
- 1.3 On the balance of evidence presented, and being a 'suitable location', the BDL was adjudged to have a reasonable prospect of coming forward and was allocated in the Lichfield Plan. The Inspector commented however, that if circumstances changed, and the prospect of development receded in this location, Lichfield could reconsider its position through their emerging Lichfield Local Plan: Allocations. The County Council in its role as Highway Authority supported this position and offered to work with Lichfield DC and Tamworth BC to provide further evidence to support the BDL.

## 2. Changing Circumstances

- 2.1 In September 2013 BWB Consultants were jointly commissioned by Tamworth, Lichfield and Staffordshire County Councils to undertake a further study.

<http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/transport/transportplanning/localtransportplan/districtintegratedtransportstrategies.aspx>

Four transport packages, compiled to have a contrasting emphasis in terms of transport delivery were evaluated to see if a development of up to 2400 homes, 1400 in Anker Valley and 1000 in the BDL could be made acceptable. The packages were;

1. Do –Nothing
  2. Highway Improvements Package – including the AVL R
  3. Demand Management Package – essentially pedestrian, cycling and public transport improvements
  4. A combination of 2 and 3.
- 2.2 Improvements to the Upper Gungate Corridor were considered committed for this study, because the County Council secured local pinch point funding in 2013 to implement them and help release housing in Anker Valley. At the time of writing, these works are being delivered and will be fully operational by April 2015.
- 2.3 The BWB study concluded that a transport strategy consisting of both highway and sustainable transport improvements (including the AVL R) could release 1,350 homes in Anker Valley, but that this was unlikely to be financially viable without significant public investment. Without additional highway capacity (the AVL R), the Anker Valley site could only be developed for up to 700 homes; this figure being dependent on enhancing travel planning at Landau Forte and South Staffordshire Colleges to create ‘capacity headroom’ in the Upper Gungate Corridor. Further work was recommended to support these conclusions, most notably, survey work to validate residential trip rates and routings and the need to apply 2011 Census Journey to Work (JTW) data, once it becomes available (to check modal split and likely routing).
- 2.4 Having accepted the BWB recommendations in 2014, the County Council submitted a successful bid to the DfT (Access to Jobs Training and Services in Tamworth) for £ 985,000 of Local Sustainable Transport Revenue Funding (LSTF for 15/16) supporting capital interventions of around £2M and a further £1M Local Authority revenue support in the period to 2021. It is expected that LGF capital funding will be available from 16/17. The focus of the bid is to help increase the numbers of people travelling by bus, rail, cycle and walk in Tamworth and lower the percentage of car driver trips. The Upper Gungate Corridor was included within the scope of the project and as it carries significant education and commuter traffic, will directly benefit from our projects.

- 2.5 Informed by the BWB report, Tamworth Borough Council has reduced their proposed allocation in Anker Valley to 500 homes in their emerging Draft Plan. The Anker Valley Link Road is also no longer included within the Plan.
- 2.6 Developers are bringing forward schemes for 165 houses off Browns Lane (outline permission granted in Lichfield District) and 535 homes in Anker Valley (in Tamworth District) and both schemes will impact on the Upper Gungate Corridor. However, following pre-application discussions both schemes offer acceptable financial contributions towards the Tamworth Borough Integrated Transport Strategy and will facilitate and actively promote sustainable travel choices at their developments.
- 2.7 With the highway improvements to Upper Gungate, the infrastructure delivered from developers and the LSTF project, the County Council believes there is a reasonable prospect that the 700 homes being proposed can be accommodated, without a significant deterioration in operational and safety conditions on this corridor.

### **3. Developer Interest in the BDL**

- 3.1 Barwoods representation to Main Modifications proposes 1200 homes in the BDL ahead of an Anker Valley Link being provided in Tamworth. In parallel to the Lichfield Local Plan process, a planning application for 1000 homes at Arkall Farm has been progressed and lodged with Lichfield District Council in May 2014. Supporting technical work undertaken by Peter Brett Associates (PBA) Consultants for the Applicant, seeks to demonstrate that the substantial amounts of generated traffic that would impact on this corridor at peak times can be acceptably accommodated in addition to the 700 homes already planned. Our audits of the earlier supporting information (provided through the Local Plan and Planning Application Processes) revealed several flaws in PBA's analysis. Also publication of 2011 JTW Census Data at Middle Layer Super Output Area (MSOA) level offered both Staffordshire County Council (SCC) and PBA an opportunity to review assumptions around trip distribution and assignment.

A revised assessment was submitted to SCC in August, still supporting 1000 homes on the BDL. The County Council appointed the JCT Consultancy to audit the modelling work underpinning this assessment.

<http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/transport/transportplanning/localtransportplan/districtintegratedtransportstrategies.aspx>

JCT identified a number of issues with the proposed design changes which may compromise the operation of some of the junctions and raise safety concerns. These include:

- Changes to the proposed traffic signal stage timings at the Ashby Road / Comberford Road junction which will present a significant number of southbound vehicles with a red signal at the proposed pedestrian

facility, increasing the likelihood of vehicular pedestrian conflict and potentially causing block back in the junction.

- Changes to the phase delays at the Upper Gungate / Salters Lane / Offadrive junction which may result in southbound vehicles blocking the junction and cause operational problems.

JCT also identified a number of potential anomalies and possible errors with the models which cast doubt on the validity of the model outputs. These include:

- The use of intergreen timings in the models which do not reflect the existing controller specifications or the intergreens in the JCT proposed models
- The use of the Congested Platoon Dispersion Model on a non-flared lane, which underestimates the effect of blocking
- An assumption of flare usage at the Gungate / Salters Lane / Offadrive junction which are not consistent with site observations
- Assumptions about the frequency of demand dependant stages which are not consistent with site observations. This overestimates junction capacity.
- Modelling of some flare lengths which are not consistent with the current or proposed highway design.
- Incorrect offside lane modelling which increases / overestimates junction capacity.
- Modelling of a phase and stage structure at the Aldergate / Lichfield junction which does not reflect the existing controller specification or the JCT proposed models

**JCT concluded that ‘with the lack of supporting information on design changes and the significant potential errors identified in the modelling it is not possible to have confidence in the results and the assertions made in the Transport Assessment Addendum’.**

Notwithstanding the above, the County Council still has concerns that the assumptions underpinning PBA’s assessment, particularly with regard to trip containment and traffic assignment to the local network, are unrealistic and has lead them to significantly underestimate future traffic demand along this corridor as a consequence of 1000 additional new homes emerging on the BDL. These aspects of the assessment work were outside the brief given to JCT.

#### **4. Proposed Update to the Lichfield Local Plan**

- 4.1 With the Anker Valley Link Road identified as not financially viable and no longer supported by Tamworth BC, the available evidence base suggests that aside from the 165 homes currently permitted in LDC (and with 535 planned in Anker Valley), a housing development on the scale being proposed would result in unacceptable operating conditions along the Upper Gungate Corridor for the local community at peak times.
- 4.2 In the absence of an alternative way of meeting the total travel demand from 1000 homes in this location, the County Council cannot continue to support the BDL and recommends that it should be deleted from the Lichfield Local Plan. Alternative sites should now be investigated by Lichfield District Council for the remaining 335 homes for Lichfield and 500 for Tamworth's needs elsewhere in the District (as agreed in the Memorandum of Understanding with Tamworth BC) and be subsequently allocated through the Lichfield Local Plan: Allocations Document.

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