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FAO: Inspectors Worden and Macfarlane

Flintshire County Council Local Development Plan 2015-2030 Matter 12 Hearing Statement

Dear Kerry,

I wish to firstly offer my sincere thanks to you for your help to residents throughout the time leading up to the Examination. It has been so reassuring to receive fast, clear and detailed answers in regards to questions pertaining to the Examination of the LDP. This is sadly a vastly different experience concerned residents have received when dealing with officers at the Planning Department within Flintshire County Council. I would also like to offer my thanks to both Inspectors Worden and Macfarlane for the opportunity to present this hearing statement. I rest assured that their full and detailed consideration will be given to the information below.

Through this Hearing Statement I would like to reaffirm, expand upon and double down on the key issues identified by residents and even colleagues of officers within the Planning Department itself with the allocation of site HN1.7 Holywell Road/Green Lane, Ewloe and Ewloe Green. I shall set out below clear, detailed and most importantly evidenced issues with this allocated site that, in my opinion, leave the plan in it's current form to be found utterly unsound on numerous grounds by the Inspectors. The key issues with this allocation are Road Access and Road User Safety, Ecological issues and the Planning Department's failure to follow elements of the information set out within Planning Policy Wales Edition 10 and now 11, their own Settlement Hierarchy policies, Preferred Strategy and Delivery Agreement.

With all due respect to other concerned residents within Flintshire regarding allocated sites within the LDP, I am not submitting this Hearing Statement because I simply do not want new housing next to my home, or because I think the roads are too busy or the wait at the doctor's surgery is too long. This plan, as a whole, is truly not sound and has simply not been created in accordance with the relevant policies, both nationally and also Flintshire County Council's own policies and strategies. The sheer unwavering ineptitude my neighbours and I have experienced when dealing with officers at the Planning Department of Flintshire County Council over the period leading up to the Examination of the Plan has been truly overwhelming.

Road Access and Road User Safety Concerns

Further to my original representation regarding allocation HN1.7 following the Public Consultation of Flintshire County Council's Local Development Plan, I would like to reaffirm that the road access proposed for allocation HN1.7 is utterly not suitable in terms of almost all appropriate measures of suitability any reasonably minded person would regard when considering the future road access to a new housing development site. In the case of allocation HN1.7, a site to consist of approximately 300 new dwellings, a very large site. The proposed access road of Green Lane is simply ill thought out, dangerous and just not a deliverable aspect of this allocation within the plan. Green Lane is a single track lane, used currently only by a select handful of residents and farming vehicles such as a range of tractors, utility vehicles and milk tankers. The lane is flanked continuously by deep ditches for which no warning posts are present for this danger. There are no

designated passing places, the only way to avoid an oncoming vehicle is to enter a private driveway of a property. The road surface of the lane was until very recently beyond dire, riddled with deep potholes. This has been improved after pleading with Officers at Flintshire County Council however the road surface is still not what one would expect of a public highway in the United Kingdom. Being the road access to a working and well established farm, the road surface constantly consists of thick mud, sometimes spilt silage and most definitely always animal waste.

Colleagues of Officers within the Planning Department at Flintshire County Council have confirmed to me on multiple occasions their own vast concerns with Green Lane in it's current state for just it's current amount of traffic, let alone for potentially 300 new homes worth of traffic in addition. This, I can only imagine, is entirely embarrassing for Officers within the Planning Department, to be utterly contradicted so clearly by colleagues within the same organisation. Assessments of Green Lane have been carried out and below details the comments of Ian Bushell, Streetscene Area Manager "Thank you for your email and sorry for the delay in getting back to you. I completed a site visit today of Green Lane / Magazine Lane with the Local Area Co-Ordinator to review several issues. Along with the missing marker posts there are areas of flooding, blocked ditches, large potholes and damaged fencing".

Further correspondence from Mr Bushell has also been received on 15/04/2021 and is as follows "Since our initial correspondence regarding the replacement of damaged verge marker posts the scheme for Green Lane has grown considerably. Following the heavy rain earlier in the year a number of issues have been highlighted which I want to address at the same time. Not only the replacement marker posts are required but additional works around culvert replacement, headwall reconstruction, carriageway patching and drainage investigations are all needed".

Noting the dire assessment that has been carried out it is very alarming to residents and I that the Planning Department were entirely content with the submission and progression of this allocated site. Clearly there are extensive issues here way beyond what has been investigated by the Planning Department and I once again must stress that the proposed road access to allocated site HN1.7 is just simply not suitable. The above improvements which have been proposed by officers within Streetscene are needed urgently just for the current amount of traffic utilising Green Lane, quite literally a handful of vehicles a day. This road is not suitable for 300 new homes worth of traffic in addition. It really is madness in my opinion to suggest otherwise and I sincerely hope that the inspectors will agree once a site visit is undertaken.

It is my understanding that if this allocation does somehow reach fruition, the junction from Green Lane to Mold Road will be somewhat remodelled. Currently the visibility splay at this junction is not suitable even for the lanes existing minimal traffic. Looking to the right for potential road traffic when trying to exit the junction is extremely difficult if not impossible, from 11 years experience, it is a case of 'just sort of go for it and hope for the best' which I, of course, admit is extremely dangerous but we have no other option. It is also my understanding that the lane, if this proposal reaches fruition, will be widened. This was welcome news before I took a few moments to consider how the Planning Department would achieve this. The lane can only be widened up until the first property on the left of Green Lane, a bungalow. This is long before the allocated site on the right of Green Lane even begins. So the lane would be widened to two lanes perhaps as road users turn in but then traffic would yet again be forced into a single lane to actually gain access to the site. Therefore the widening of the lane is absolutely pointless without, say, the purchase of another property on Green Lane and or land which would render yet again this site as more troublesome, time consuming, costly and just simply so much more difficult than many other candidate sites that were submitted, even in the extreme locality to this allocation.

In regards to other candidate sites, a planning application has now been lodged for the development of 130 new dwellings on land off Old Aston Hill, Ewloe which was a candidate site which the community were much more welcome to. It would for a start be within the actual settlement boundary of Ewloe, would represent perfect infill and would provide a much lesser impact on the infrastructure of Ewloe and Ewloe Green having nearby access to the A494 without having to go through the centre of the settlement of Ewloe and without new traffic having to go back and forth past the extremely busy and oversubscribed (teaching in two static caravans as temporary classrooms) Ewloe Green Primary School. The candidate site clearly had extensive

developer interest and it leads me to question yet again why certain officers within the Planning Department at Flintshire County Council have pushed this allocated site, HN1.7, so hard despite their own ranking system rating this site as lower than other candidate sites.



Ecological Concerns

Since the Public Consultation of Flintshire County Council's Local Development Plan took place there have been a number of developments with regard to the ecological concerns many residents and I have with allocation HN1.7. Officers within the Planning Department at Flintshire County Council have been contradicted once more by their own colleagues. Stuart Body, Tree and Forestry Officer at the council has since assessed the site in question and has granted 3 no. Tree Protection Orders which have been formally confirmed by full council and offer protection to a total number of 15 trees of significant local amenity. Whilst of course a TPO does not protect a tree where full planning permission is granted, it is a consideration which I think is deserving of very considerable weight.

It is my understanding that this site is the only allocation within the plan to contain protected trees. The orders are as follows: Tree Preservation Order No.327 (2020) Land at Ivy Cottage, Green Lane, Ewloe, Tree Preservation Order No.328 (2020) Land to south and east of Newbridge Farm, Holywell Road, Ewloe and also Tree Preservation Order No.329 (2020) Land to the North-East of The Moorings, Green Lane, Ewloe. I would kindly ask the inspectors to consider this update to the allocated site and to offer considerable weight to the protection of the above mentioned orders. I can only draw the conclusion that a vast number of officers within Flintshire County Council are on the side of residents rather than their colleagues in the Planning Department who did not think that the above mentioned trees had any local amenity otherwise they would potentially have not chosen this site as an allocation within the Plan.

Since the TPO's have been confirmed, the landowner has committed wilful damage to one of the protected trees and this is currently under investigation by the Tree and Forestry Officer and Legal Officers at Flintshire County Council. This shows the sheer disregard that the landowners have for the law and for the residents in the community of Ewloe. The Tree and Forestry Officer has provided this update on 10/03/2021 "I went out to see the tree yesterday afternoon, it is the second tree down from the electric pole which is T3 of TPO 328. A large limb has torn out from the trunk on its northern side and the remainder is standing. Somebody has cleared the logs and stacked the brash. I will email the agent about it and get back to you". It must be of the utmost importance to protect these trees within allocation HN1.7 and quite clearly it is a race against time

before more violations are carried out in the hope that this will assist the landowners wishes of this site being included in the adopted plan.



Planning Policy Concerns

Policy STR2 of the emerging LDP directs that Tier 1 Main Service Centres (defined as settlements with a strategic role in delivery of services and facilities) should be the main locations for new housing developments. Ewloe is defined by the emerging LDP as a Tier 2 Local Service Centre (defined as a settlement with a local role in the delivery of services and facilities) and as such, is deemed suitable for 'more modest' levels of new housing development. Paragraph 5.13 of the emerging LDP explains that the Plan does not seek to apportion development spatially by the use of numerical or mechanistic methods relating to growth bands, rates, targets or quotas. Rather, the Plan seeks to distribute development in a sustainable manner having regard to the settlement hierarchy and by identifying the most sustainable settlements and sites.

It goes on to say that the Plan intentionally avoids creating a perception that every settlement in every tier must contribute towards growth through having a housing allocation. Instead, the Plan looks at each settlement on its merits to determine whether it is able to sustainably accommodate an allocation. It explains that the Main Service Centres will be the main locations for growth whereas Local Service Centres will accommodate more modest levels of growth.

It is asserted that the proposed housing allocation at Holywell Road/Green Lane, Ewloe Green (Tier 2 Ref. 7) conflicts with this logical approach to housing strategy. Ewloe Green has a distinct character and is separated from the main part of the settlement of Ewloe by the A55/A494 intersections. The introduction of an additional 298 dwellings would almost double this section of the settlement and it would amount to a disproportionate increase in its size.

This argument is supported by the fact that at up to 298 dwellings, the proposed allocation is larger than the largest of the Tier 1 allocations (246 dwellings on land between Gwernaffield Road and Denbigh Road - Tier 1 Ref. 6). This in itself conflicts with the LDP preferred strategy which quite logically directs that Tier 1 settlements should be the main locations for new housing development, whilst Tier 2 settlements should accommodate more modest levels of growth. The introduction of almost 300 dwellings (which is larger than any proposed allocation for a Tier 1 settlement) cannot reasonably be described as modest. I feel that I simply cannot expand upon this anymore, this allocation and this plan, in my opinion, simply cannot be found as sound.

Kindest Regards,

C. M. Wynne