

Local Plan Examination Hearings Matter 4 (Session 6), Action 5

Highways and air quality matters in respect of comments from Wigan Council and Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester related to the call-in inquiry for proposals at Parkside Phase One.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Council resolved to grant planning permission for development of circa 1 million square feet of B8/B2 floor space at the former Parkside Colliery, Newton-le-Willows, in December 2019. The Secretary of State called in the proposals and a local inquiry was held in January 2021. A decision is expected in August 2021.
- 1.2 The Council has been asked to produce a short note setting out a summary of comments submitted by Wigan Council and Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, in respect of highways and air quality matters, as well as the Council's response.

2. Representations

Wigan Council

- 2.1 Wigan Council did not make direct representations to the inquiry. An objection was submitted to the Council and the concerns were set out in the report presented to the planning committee. Detailed observations can be summarised as follows.
 - The approach in respect of trip rates, based on surveys of developments at Omega North and Florida Farm North, was said to be incorrect possibly leading to an underestimation of the traffic to be generated. The correct approach to be used should be the 85th percentile trip rates derived from the TRICS industry standard database.
 - A total of 7 junctions located in Wigan were assessed in the transport assessment, primarily on the A580 East Lancashire Road and A572 Newton Road. The junctions near to 'Lane Head' were found to be either at capacity or exceed capacity. The Wigan junctions were deemed to require no mitigation.
 - None of the committed development schemes referenced in the transport assessment were located in Wigan. A significant amount of residential development had been approved in the Lowton and Golborne areas since 2013 that would increase traffic at junctions in close proximity to the proposed development.
 - Wigan Council was proposing to designate Winwick Lane an air quality management area (AQMA) under section 83 of the Environment Act, in order to reduce harmful levels of Nitrogen Dioxide. This area had been identified as being in exceedance of the appropriate levels where the proposed development was said to only exacerbate the situation further. Wigan Council required the introduction of a northbound weight limit on Winwick Lane to mitigate the impact the development will have on traffic and human health. The cross-boundary co-operation with Warrington Borough Council on this matter was acknowledged.

Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester

- 2.2 Mr Burnham did make direct representations to the inquiry. An extract of the correspondence that summarises the position is set out below:

Proposals at the site have generated significant concern within the neighbouring authority area of Wigan. Representations have been made by residents, Wigan Council and myself (as either

MP or Greater Manchester Mayor) at all stages of the plan making process and planning application stages. The impact of the development on the roads and environment of Wigan has not been given proper consideration, and there is a very real concern that development of this scale will generate significant traffic which will be displaced onto the Key Route Network within Wigan Council and will have a negative impact on air quality in areas already in exceedance of harmful Nitrogen Dioxide levels. It is therefore important that you properly consider the impacts of the development on the road network and the air quality, particularly in the neighbouring authority of Wigan.

3. The Council's Response

3.1 The Council's response can be summarised as follows:

Highways Matters

- The approach in respect of trip rates and committed developments was found to be acceptable.
- It was acknowledged that the proposed development would increase traffic flows along the surrounding highways resulting in some additional queueing and delay at junctions in Wigan.
- The applicant stated that Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) guidance states that any increase in traffic flows of less than 10% is generally accepted as having no discernible impact as daily variation in traffic flows can be of equal magnitude. They submitted that the proposed development was predicted to generate 22 two-way trips in the AM peak and 20 two-way trips in the PM peak on the Wigan network which would equate to around an additional vehicle every 2-3 minutes in Wigan. Based on figures contained in the transport assessment, the applicant submitted that the proposed development would result in a less than 1% increase in total traffic at any junction. There would be no perceptible highway impact in Wigan, therefore.
- The highways officer's view was that the applicant's assessment of the traffic effects in Wigan was reasonable, where the proposed development would not cause material harm to any junctions in Wigan.

Air Quality

- It was acknowledged that receptors at Lane Head had not been modelled as part of the air quality assessment. However, as the development was only predicted to generate 22 two-way vehicle trips in the AM peak and 20 two-way vehicle trips in the PM peak on the Wigan network (a less than 1% increase in total traffic at any junction which is within average daily traffic flow variations), there would be a negligible impact on air quality.