

Response to Yew Tree Farm Draft Master Plan

Introduction

This Draft Master Plan for Yew Tree Farm document is described as a framework to guide developers on the planning and design requirements when bringing forward the site for development and is therefore highly technical in its content. It further states that “this will ensure a sustainable Yew Tree Farm development is delivered that complements the environment of Burscough, strengthens the local community and contributes to the growth of the economy in West Lancashire”.

- This Draft Master Plan is confusing, contradictory in parts, lacks important details and provides information on why the development should not proceed.
- This document asks the developer to undertake a number of tasks in order to have these included in their proposals when submitted. It does not say what the process and assessment system will be for determining that all proposals meet the minimum criteria. This raises issues around the process, the appeal process and whether it will be robust enough to withstand a legal challenge. How will Burscough residents know that the developers have undertaken all that is required of them to acceptable standards in plain and non technical language when their proposals have been formally considered?
- I and many other residents fail to see how this development will strengthen the local community, when 96% of residents voted against the proposals for this site. The West Lancs council’s actions in ignoring the wishes of the Burscough residents have already caused damaging resentment and this will lead to greater resentment when construction begins and problems relating to drains and transport become intolerable. I have yet to meet anyone who supports this development and I support the view shared by many people that this development will certainly **not** strengthen the local community and will in fact have an adverse impact due to the number of issues.
- The statement that it complements the environment of Burscough is highly debatable with many residents questioning the accuracy of this comment. The statement that it will strengthen the community in West Lancs is one that can also apply to other developments; in the case of Yew Tree Farm it is debatable and therefore also superfluous. If the development is important to West Lancs then why is a development of this size not being developed in Ormskirk or Skelmersdale?
- It has been said that no one in West Lancs council will be held accountable when it goes wrong and this document states that developers need to undertake and provide information on specific tasks in relation to their proposals, therefore this suggests that the developer and other organisations would be held accountable for **any** problems that would subsequently occur. The council have requested information, evaluated it for acceptance and then judged and agreed the decision to proceed with a contractual agreement for

the development of the site. How can the council not be held accountable for its decisions when the council have been made fully aware of the issues around this development and its impact on Burscough and its residents, in the event that the council has no responsibility then this suggests the council will have no authority or leverage for issues to be resolved.

- What is the impact on Burscough and its residents, should a developer gain approval for the site and then sell on this approval to another developer. What safeguards can West Lancs council put in place when a contract is transferred to another organisation to ensure that what the council previously approved is maintained?
- Due to the issues raised in this document around waste water and transport West Lancs council need to make a clear and unambiguous statement to the residents in Burscough regarding which organisations will be responsible for the various issues that will arise resulting from the development of this site. It's the least the residents deserve for the way their views have been ignored and the way this development has been allowed to proceed.
- Having been informed by council officers that house values in the vicinity of this development will be reduced, what compensation can residents expect to receive. Again West Lancs council should be making a clear statement to local residents what the impact will be and what the council will be doing to mitigate this impact. My house has been built with the lounge looking directly over land on Yew Tree Farm and the house must have been approved in the past by the Local Authority for this to happen. I do not see any statement regarding the retention of green views for existing residents. Existing residents who are directly affected by this development have never had any responses from West Lancs Council to their issues, whether independent letters or responses to the consultations. Again it raises questions about the validity and meaningfulness of the consultations.
- Why can green field sites in Burscough be given approval for developments to take place, when proposals for other areas in the district are not considered? Why have brown field sites and the continued development of Skelmersdale not been the priority?
- I have never seen any justification why one half of Yew Tree Farm has been given protected status until a later date for development, can someone please explain the reasons why one part was selected over the other part.
- If residents are raising issues through the consultation process then they should receive responses to the points raised, this would show they are being taken into account or rejected with appropriate comments.
- The base line of 500 homes in phase 1 is being used by other organisation in looking at Drainage and Transport issues as well as other associated issues, as this figure is not confirmed and may become substantially increased then these other organisations workings will then be less credible in their findings. This therefore becomes a concern with regards the consultation process.

Growth

The Introduction makes comment that this development will strengthen the local community, however it fails to be specific about how this will happen, this section on Growth identifies the need for 4,860 new homes for West Lancs however it fails to suggest how this and other developments could be maximised for the benefit for West Lancs Businesses and residents.

I have concerns around future development in the village as the structure of the village does not lend itself for further expansion until the road/rail network are improved. The major constraints to the village are recognised as the canal bridge and the rail bridge and it is of vital importance that these issues are resolved before further construction begins in Burscough. Solve these issues and there then becomes more land available to develop Burscough along both the routes of the canal and the railway line.

- Opportunities were lost when the Heathfields site was built. Entry to the canal pathways should have been built that would have allowed people to access the village with a degree of ease, as it stands they either have to drive or have a very long walk to the village. By having a bridge over the canal it could then have been a made a feature and a pleasant walk for all Burscough residents, as it stands, unless you have a car you are now isolated in Heathfields.
- I understand that the Heathfields estate and the flats at the Quays have still not be adopted by the council, while I don't know what all the issues are I do understand that drains are an issue and would suggest that until these sites issues are resolved and are subsequently adopted then no more developments should commence. What assurances will Burscough residents have that Yew Tree Farm site will be completed to standards acceptable to the council and other authorities concerned and the site subsequently adopted.
- When I look at the proposed 850 homes for Burscough as part of the Local Plan, I'm unclear how many are being built in the first phase at Yew Tree Farm, is it a maximum of 500 or a minimum of 500, can clarify on the number of different types of homes be provided for Yew Tree Farm development. If 850 homes are allocated for Burscough and Yew Tree Farm takes 500, we then have homes at Mill Lane under construction and potentially further homes at Abbey Lane, how accurate is this 850 homes. It's feasible that Factory closures currently in residential areas could in the next few years become available and release brown field sites that would allow substantial land to be developed for housing. Will developers be allowed to come forward with more plans and be accepted which will take the future allocation beyond 850 homes.

Local Highway Network and Access

This section in the Draft Master Plan provides numerous points that clearly demonstrate why Yee Tree Farm site should not be developed at this point in time, due to its impact on the road network around Burscough. The proposals suggest an entry to the site from Liverpool Road South at a point opposite Lordsgate Drive on A59, whilst I don't believe there is a better point of entry to the site it does emphasize the difficulties that this site will present to the residents of Burscough and those people who will be required to travel through Burscough and the failure to have a better route.

- I can understand why you would want to close Higgins Lane at the Junction of the A59, however it is going to send more traffic along Truscott Road and this is not acceptable. Is it possible to leave Higgins lane open but to only allow an exit to the left at the point where it meets the A59?
- I also have concerns that the Yee Tree Farm site is going to send more traffic through narrow country roads and across canal bridges at Crabtree Lane and New Lane. These roads and existing housing along these roads were not designed for the increased volume of traffic about to come in their direction.
- Will heavy goods vehicles be allowed to enter the road network on Yew Tree Farm development from the A59 on Liverpool Road South?
- The Draft Plan shows that parts of the A59 already operate above capacity and other parts close to capacity, in factoring in the Yee Tree Farm site then the situation becomes worse. The situation for the future is recognised however it fails to provide adequate solutions as it put traffic before residents needs when dealing with future issues.
- I see no recognition of the annual increase in traffic that would happen anyway even if the site was not developed.
- In the statement "traffic moves freely through Burscough for the majority of time is an accurate fact but its use in this document is interpreted as **misleading** when it does not include volume of vehicles. The traffic does move freely between 7.00 pm and 7.30 am and this equates to the majority of time when people are in bed, however outside of these times you can expect a **considerable increase in the volume** of vehicles, leading to more delays and subsequent journeys times. This could be damaging to the reputation of the local area, with productivity of businesses being affected by traffic congestion.
- Delays occur due to volume, large vehicles, buses stopping, and frequently road works, etc; these delays have been quite considerable in the past year and are likely to continue for the foreseeable future.
- Where Yew Tree Farm joins the A59 this will become a blockage point and will need additional issues to be resolved due to the vicinity of the school and the crossing point. This could result in double yellow lines being put along

the A59 for a longer area than is currently there. This will mean those houses affected will have a lower resale value due to the impact of more traffic and double yellow lines.

- The solutions put in place are likely to have further impact on homes in the vicinity as parents dropping off children at the school look for places to park. It is noticeable that parking problems also occur when events take place at the school in the evening and at weekends. It is noticeable that parents and grandparents picking up children come at least half an hour before school finishing time to secure a space close to the school, this causes further unnecessary congestion for all.
- I have previously suggested for safety reasons having an area of Yew Tree Farm set aside for parking for the parents dropping off children at the school, this has been dismissed in this document without any explanation being provided or a solution suggested. It is not right for genuine consultation to take place and points raised to be dismissed without appropriate comment and alternative solutions to issues. I can only interpret this to mean that the building of homes is of paramount importance over the concerns of Burscough residents and the safety of children and those responsible for their safety in attending school.
- It is highly possible that something will need to be undertaken at the entry of Square Lane to the A59 to help the traffic at this point; subsequently this will become another blockage point in the future.
- It will be interesting to see what delays will now happen when the new roundabout becomes operational at the junction of Pippin Street and the A59. I suspect that this will further complicate traffic issues at this junction and has the potential to hold up traffic at peak periods through queues on various roads
- The traffic travelling along the A59 will need to overcome that many blockage points within Burscough that journey times will be considerably extended and other roads will become used, causing rat runs to be developed.
- With an increase in traffic and a further increase in the number of junctions now in Burscough the quality of air will be reduced to a lower level through the amount of standing traffic in queues at junctions. What Plans do the Council have to monitor the air quality along the A59, however how much does this matter to those making decisions that don't live in Burscough?

Drainage

The statements in the Draft Master Plan Drainage section again raises questions why this development should not proceed due to the serious issues around the existing capacity issues of the foul water drainage network in Burscough. The lack of capacity at waste water treatment works at New Lane which serves parts of the surrounding locality is a current ongoing concern. Land drainage is also identified as unsatisfactory in places due to unmanaged local culverts and pinch points due to

physical barriers that cause obstructions to the flow of water to the outfall at Martin Mere. There is a statement that *"the Council is aware that the issue of drainage is one of the key local concerns and that this development must do all that is possible to avoid worsening the situation and, where possible, make improvements"*. The suggestions in the document do not convince me or provide me with confidence that the planned action is sufficient and safe to prevent disease and infections occurring to Burscough residents and visitors or to prevent flooding to homes and business premises. These issues are further complicated by the managing of the risks and understanding who has each responsibility; this is difficult when numerous land owners have a responsibility.

- Is it possible for one body to be responsible and have overall control of all flooding and all drainage issues?
- New Lane Sewage Plant suffers currently from capacity issues is this part of the reason why the Heathfields and Quays developments have not been adopted. If Heathfields, Quays, Mill Lane and other planned and approved developments are connected to New Lane Sewage Plant before 2020 will it be able to operate effectively all the time within its safety capacity
- If it is currently at operating capacity then this is a major concern and asks the important question, what risk assessment have been undertaken in case of a major breakdown and what can the residents of Burscough expect. Any vital process should only operate at full capacity in emergency situations and be designed to have reserve capacity in case of emergency.
- Martin Mere is a major tourist attraction and any damage to its water will have a devastating impact on its operations. Its operation relies on good water quality and if it's fine operating water balance is affected then their ability to function effectively maybe placed in a precarious situation. This crucial balance will impact on the jobs of staff employed there, but also other local businesses that rely on Martin Mere's operations.
- It's imperative that the responsibilities of the management of flooding are absolutely clear and those with responsibilities are undertaking their duties and working in partnership with others involved. A failure in this should be an offence and those with responsibilities must have insurance cover in order to meet the payments of any costs and awards to members of the public and business who are affected through their failure.
- As it will be at least 2020 before any new capacity is available at New Lane sewage plant, it is already a concern due to it already being at capacity, currently it would not be appropriate to link in new homes to the system until its capacity issues have been resolved.
- I am not convinced that removing a volume of surface water into the natural drainage system is a satisfactory solution. Can United Utilities guarantee 100% that this water will not be contaminated with disease and human waste/detergents?

- Does this proposed option involve those with responsibilities who already do not actively look after their natural water courses?
- The suggestion that putting a Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) is an unacceptable and dangerous system on a housing development where pets and children are expected to roam freely. These SuDS will have the potential to become stagnant water and be a source for vermin and disease. To remove all the stagnant water it will need to be pumped as the site soil is clay and holds water. There is a potential risk of contaminated water being discharged into the natural drainage network. What monitoring of the SuDS will take place to ensure they are constantly safe from disease and bacteria? It is emphasised that the surface waste water on the development must not be discharged into the Public Network is this because of either the contamination or the capacity issues. If its capacity issues will this not cause problems elsewhere and issues for a riparian owner.
- Are these areas where the SuDS are going to be sited classed as part of the green belt within the site, if so then it raises serious questions in the management of the site?
- It states that an appropriate attenuation rate to mimic the existing Greenfield rate. Have you not noticed that a large part of the site will now be covered in tarmac or concrete (estimate 35%). This means that for the same area the same rain will fall but more rain water will now end up going into the drainage /SuDS system and increase the capacity problems, how has this been accounted for?
- The Maps and the statements in the document show that the site has a vast number of areas susceptible to surface water flooding both within and adjacent to the site. Is it appropriate to leave this situation totally in the control of the developer without greater controls being stated, I have yet to be convinced that this will be an acceptable and fully safe system.
- **Biodiversity**
 - During late Autumn I have seen wintering birds use land on Yew Tree Farm for feeding.
 - In the spring, summer and autumn we have had Bats flying around numerous gardens by me for the 28 yrs that I have lived here.
 - We have also had many different forms of wildlife in our garden.
 - The issue of wildlife is important and should not be overlooked; a full Habitats Regulation Assessment should be carried out before the development is given acceptance.
 - It is interesting to note that an initial HRA assessment has shown that increased levels of housing and businesses can lead to reduced water quality, in another statement the waste water treatment infrastructure is vital to ensure that no negative implications arise that could impact on protected species, new buildings will disturb various species. These

more comprehensive and informed assessment that would have provided a more valued and informed document that may have been more current today.

- Having observed the price of new retired homes in Ormskirk, I don't believe many elderly people will be looking to buy a retirement home on this site. I feel that many elderly people wanting to down size will be looking more for affordable housing arrangements, than potentially buying a more expensive new home.
- The housing market has changed quite considerably in the past few years due to high house prices and low wages which don't help young people to get on the housing market. This project should be looking at **more affordable housing models** for young people and those first time buyers.
- I would have wished to have seen an Equality Impact Assessment that would have provided more accurate details regarding the issues and potential solutions around the needs of young people and affordable housing. More accurate information on the needs of the elderly and those people in the community who have a disability and their housing needs. This information should have shown the types of homes and bedroom requirements to fit in with the community's needs. It also failed to show the full impact on Burscough residents and subsidiary issues or to offer solutions. In not providing more detailed information on the impact of the site it raises issues whether this Equality Impact Assessment will be currently valid and meets the requirements of "West Lancs Borough Council Public Sector Equality Duty"

Employment

The previous section on Growth makes comment that this development will strengthen the local community and identifies the need for 4,860 new homes for West Lancs however it fails to suggest how this could be maximised for the benefit for West Lancs Businesses and residents.

Recent Projects along County Road in Ormskirk has shown contractors vans from Cheshire, Manchester and Yorkshire, these projects have therefore not maximised the full potential of these projects for the benefit of the local community and its businesses.

To maximise the local business potential for this volume of construction I would suggest that the Master Plan provides information on how the development of the site should also involve local businesses and employees and requests the developers to present proposals as to how they would work with local businesses including suppliers, this should also be linked to using local labour and the recruitment of local apprentices for employment and training.

It makes economic sense that any **finances** coming into West Lancs continues to circulate around businesses and people in the area for as long as possible, once it leaves it means local business and its residents lose any benefit.

Many Local Authorities have already developed "Partnership Working Agreements" where the council will expect investors who have a "genuine commitment" to work with the council in tackling and improving local conditions. This would entail a commitment to work positively with the various bodies involved in supporting employers and includes schools, colleges and universities to ensure that young people and adults can gain benefits in many different ways from this large construction project, the benefits are that businesses prosper with the area having a highly trained workforce through many rather than a few sharing the benefits of the development of the site.

It's vitally important that this project is part of an overall plan and incorporates suitable and appropriate solutions acceptable to the community and is not built in isolation of the other issues that currently exist or create or increase the issues and damage Burscough's reputation.

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