

Western Art Co-ordination Group (WACG) email to HBC dated 16th January 2023 regarding infrastructure development

“You will recollect that in July last year a Teams session was held between HBC/NYCC and a number of stakeholders concerning how various mitigations would be developed to improve the infrastructure of the western arc of Harrogate. As you know the Western Arc Co-ordination Group (WACG) has been concerned throughout the whole Local Plan process that a total of 4000 houses were to be built in a part of Harrogate without, in our view, adequate infrastructure. We note that the Parameters Plan, and other correspondence repeatedly mentions a figure of 2500 dwellings (originally it was 2000), but we consider this number to be understated and not fully indicative of what is happening on the ground - a point that was made by several of us during the session.

After the session was held the WACG sent their comments on the summary pack. I will not go through all of our concerns again as a copy of our reply is attached. However, one of the key points that came out of the July session was a commitment by the councils that:

All the details making up the complete West Harrogate Infrastructure Strategy (WHIS) and the Infrastructure Delivery Schedule (IDS) would be made available in October 22. This was understood to mean clear objectives, clear deliverables, timings, supporting data and financial costings.

We are now in January 2023 and none of the above has so far been made available, and of course we are not far away from the unitary authority coming into being.

From where we stand, we are looking at a process that not only tracks back to the Local Plan hearings that were held in early 2019, but actually started in 2011 when the `Plan The Future With Us Paper` paper was published, which led up to the initial Local Plan being rejected in 2014. Yet we are now in 2023 (more than a decade on) and no mitigation plan/schedule appears to exist, and traffic congestion is as bad as ever. For example, I personally remember an officer from the HBC traffic department stating, at the Local Plan inquiry in 2019, that discussions with a bus operator were at an advanced stage and that a site had been identified in relation to a Park & Ride service being introduced. Where are we with this, and how many more studies are still to be undertaken?

With the unitary authority coming into being on 1st April 2023, and the recent announcement that it is the intention to merge all the Local Plans into a single North Yorkshire version then we are seeking clarity on the following:

- 1. Where exactly do matters stand with the commitment given during the July 2022 session?*
- 2. Is it the intention to hold a stakeholder session in the near future, or are matters now being left for the new Unitary Council to pick up?*
- 3. What is the situation with the various western arc sites going through the planning process, and any outstanding applications? For example:*
 - Site H51 (Gladman) 18/05202/EIAMAJ - Application validated 04/01/19 – now presumably out of time.*
 - Site H51 (Banks) 20/01706/EIAMAJ - Application validated 24/06/20*
- 4. Given the intention to create a single unitary Local Plan, is it the intention to revisit many of the calculations and assumptions that the current HBC plan is based upon? It seems to us that things have changed dramatically from when many of the sites within the Local Plan were proposed, especially on the green/low carbon front. A brief summary on each of the associated sites, explaining where matters stand would be appreciated.*

In addition, a brief summary of where matters stand with overall mitigation, not just roads and junctions, but other elements such as transport and schools, would be useful. On the mitigation front we understand that a headline figure of £25M is now being mooted, up from the original £15M. Progress of sorts but still, in our view, inadequate, given inflation.

To summarise, what we are asking for is clarity on where matters stand with the whole mitigation process and the current planning status of the associated sites. We appreciate that budgets will be very constrained over the coming years, but without a mitigation plan it is difficult to see how infrastructure problems can be adequately addressed.

HBC's response dated 20th January 2023:

"Thank you for getting in touch with your queries regarding the West Harrogate project and implications in relation to the Local Government Review.

I have started off by picking up some general comments on the implications of new unitary local government and also provided an update on park and ride. I then go on to specifically address the four questions that you posed in your email.

Unitary Authority

Local Government Reorganisation is a big shift in the structure of the Local Planning Authority and the Local Highway and Education Authorities. However the officers and managers currently dealing with the West Harrogate sites, will continue to work on the project. We are already meeting regularly to agree matters on these strategic sites so the day to day arrangements will not be impacted by LGR. Officers at both HBC and NYCC are putting in place appropriate member and senior officer briefings. This will ensure there is a clear understanding of the considerations and consistency of approach, for any decisions on the current planning applications and strategic infrastructure documents made after 1 April.

Park and Ride

Officers at NYCC are leading on the HTIP study but we are working closely with them to pull together the various strands which relate to West Harrogate sites. The timescale for the HTIP work is not directly linked to the Cumulative Transport Strategy and update to IDS, it will therefore not delay them. Whilst Park and Ride may form part of the wider HTIP studies, this is not a mitigation directly linked/required for the West Harrogate applications.

Infrastructure Documents/Stakeholder Engagement (Questions 1 and 2)

When Tracey and Alex emailed you in October, we had anticipated the next Stakeholder event would be in either December or January. To support the Highways Authority in assessing the transport mitigation strategy, HBC and NYCC jointly commissioned consultants to carry out a buildability review and costings exercise. As we have explained previously to stakeholders, this will provide clarification and certainty for future application determinations, accompanying s106 agreement and assist delivery of the works. Whilst the majority of this commission was carried out in Autumn 2022, the complex nature of it means that it is not yet complete. However, please be assured that officers are prioritising this work. The results of the buildability work have implications for the overarching infrastructure delivery documents, so officers have been unable to complete them at the moment. Whilst these delays are frustrating for all involved, this is the nature of strategic projects.

Tracey and Alex will be in touch with you and other key stakeholders when the current work on the Cumulative Transport Strategy and Infrastructure Delivery Strategy and schedule update are at a stage where we can usefully share them. It is the intention to hold a session before the 1 April, however, as noted above the transition to one North Yorkshire Council will not change how we are working on the project.

Planning applications (Question 3)

The H51 planning applications, are still live and under consideration by the local planning authority. Extensions of time have been agreed between the applicants and the relevant case officer. We understand revised/updated information will be provided by the applicants in due course, which will be consulted on by the case officer via public access.

New Local Plan for North Yorkshire (Question 4)

Local plans need to be based on up-to-date evidence, which is why councils review their Local Plans regularly. The review of Harrogate's Local Plan will in effect be subsumed into the preparation of the new Local Plan for North Yorkshire. Through the preparation of this new local plan there will be a full assessment of housing and economic need across North Yorkshire. The plan will then identify a growth strategy and available sites to deliver the identified need, taking into account those sites that have yet to be delivered within the current suite of adopted local plans.

You ask for a summary on each of the associated sites, by which I assume you mean those to the West of Harrogate covered by the parameters plan. We have provided information in respect of H51 and the following summarises where we are with the other relevant sites:

H49: There is a current planning application by Anwyl and Redrow live and under consideration by the local planning authority for the majority of the allocation.

H45: There is a current planning application by Homes England live and under consideration by the local planning authority for the majority of the allocation.

H70: The northern part of the allocation is being built out, we anticipate a planning application on the southern part in due course.

H36: The application by Homes England had the Decision Noticed issued in December following the completion of the s106."