



**Leeds City Council
Site Allocations Plan
Issues and Options
(Outer North East)**

TAG Response (Housing)

Peter Locke

Chairman - TAG

14 Thorp Arch Park, Wetherby, LS23 7AN

01937 842590

Question H1 - Do you agree that the sites that have been identified as 'green' represent the most suitable sites to consider allocating for future housing development?

Answer - NO.

Reasons

- > The sites marked green are in some of the least sustainable locations, furthest possible from Leeds urban area, where most employment is based.
- > These sites are beyond the green belt, and would put housing in dormitory communities less well served by public transport.
- > Commuting times to Leeds, transport costs, greenhouse gas emissions, road congestion, resources consumption would all increase with this approach to expanding the city.
- > These sites will encourage car dependence.

Question H2 - Which sites do you disagree with and why? Please give site reference and reason.

Answer - Thorp Arch Trading Estate: Reference 1055. Site at TATE should not have been identified for development at all and should have been sieved out.

Reasons

A) The site is not within the settlement hierarchy of the Core Strategy and does not warrant it being included on the grounds of sustainability.

- > At the UDP review in 2006 the inspector concluded that the site was not sustainable, nor likely to be made sustainable.
- > All the site characteristics that lead him to that conclusion still remain. He described its inherent unsustainability in terms of location, accessibility, and the ability to sustain sufficient local services and facilities.

B) In the Site Allocation Plan Volume 2 document, there are 32 sites within Outer North East Leeds considered to be Green or Amber. Of these TATE is ranked the 6th worst site according to the Sustainability Appraisal Report prepared by the Council. We contest even this assessment, which is incomplete and inaccurate.

- > The transport links in the area are very limited, with a packhorse bridge across the Wharf, which is single carriageway with a narrow footway to Boston Spa, and the dangerous Walton-Wetherby road (with 4 traffic cameras) leading to the notorious bridge over the A1 and the small roundabout.
- > Traffic congestion will be unavoidable. Some plans we have seen also result in vastly increased traffic through the main street of the conservation village of Thorp Arch - a totally unsuitable street, where parking is required for residents and there is a local primary school, with young children crossing the road.
- > It is very hard to envisage how anyone living on the site could manage without a car, since there is nothing accessible by foot or bicycle. The notion that anything other than a small proportion of prospective house owners will also work on the site is unrealistic, given they live elsewhere. This was also the conclusion reached in the inspectors report in the UDP review.
- > This site is not consistent with Leeds' stated desire to increase transport by rail - the site is over 13 miles by road from the nearest regular rail service to Leeds
- > The proposed 'relief road', or should we say 'bypass' does not relieve the traffic issues envisaged, but merely moves the problem from one point on the Walton - Wetherby Road to another only 0.7 miles along the road. In developing a relief road then several acres of rural farmland will have to be lost for development which would likely create a negative effect on the local community spirit from polarized opinions within the villages between 'winners' and 'losers'.
- > The development of the site would also harm employment opportunities in priority towns and other centres in the area (which are lacking). Businesses will need to be offered relocation as the area of land on the Trading Estate is developed, but there is no reason to assume that they will relocate on-site, they may choose to go elsewhere.
- > The remaining area of land available for new employment will be significantly reduced.

C) Overall the development of this site would be completely out of character with the local community.

- > At present Thorp Arch is identified as a village/rural settlement with a population of 1,035. The proposed TATE development would increase the population figure to 5,047 and Thorp Arch would become a small settlement.
- > At present Thorp Arch is the 3rd smallest village/ rural settlement. With the proposed changes it would become the 4th largest small settlement in Leeds, therefore the proposed development is totally out of proportion with the size of the village.

D) The site at TATE is incorrectly classified as a 'green' site. Green means it is 'suitable' for housing. 'Amber' would mean that it has potential, but there may be 'issues' which need to be resolved. 'Red' would mean it is not suitable for housing.

- > The site has many significant issues which would need to be resolved, not least creating the scale of infrastructure and services required. This classification is at odds with 'amber sites' facing lesser restrictions, and with red sites and sites which were sieved out.
- > The site is incorrectly denoted as a major brownfield site in the summary reason for colour coding. A very significant proportion of the site consists of areas which have never been developed at all or have returned to their natural surroundings (see Ordnance Survey Explorer Map sheet 289).
- > Reference to LCC sustainability appraisal report SA objective SA11 clearly indicates that TATE is a part greenfield part brownfield site.

E) The development is at odds with the Leeds Core Strategy. It fails to comply because:

Fails to 'deliver housing growth in sustainable locations related to the Settlement Hierarchy, by prioritising previously developed land in urban areas and through the phased release of greenfield sites to ensure sufficiency of supply and provision of supporting infrastructure'.

- > The proposed settlement is not in a sustainable location. Some of the land has been previously developed, but it is not in an urban area, and there is no supporting infrastructure. It is unlikely that a developer would incorporate adequate support infrastructure to make any settlement on the site sufficiently self-contained as to prevent a major and unacceptable increase in traffic

on local roads. Studies show that new roads designed to alleviate traffic problems often generate increased traffic volume in the area. The question is, what does the proposed relief road actually achieve?

Fails to "promote the role of town and local centres as the heart of the community which provide a focus for shopping, leisure, economic development and community facilities, while supporting the role of the City Centre".

- > The allocation of land at TATE for 1,700 houses would create an isolated community which would dominate the local villages of Walton and Thorp Arch, yet the nearest local centres, Boston Spa and Wetherby, could not possibly be described as being "at the heart" of such a community, being several miles distant and for all practical purposes requiring the use of a car to travel to them.

Fails to "ensure that new development takes place in locations that are or will be accessible by a choice of means of transport, including walking, cycling, and public transport."

- > The TATE site is one of the most isolated from the Leeds transport infrastructure in the entire Leeds City Council region. The local roads are already inadequate to serve the traffic from the site which would see significant increases were 1,700 houses to be developed.
- > Consideration of a major residential development was specifically excluded from calculations when the road system was designed as part of the A1M upgrade project. It is impossible to conceive how this site could be made properly accessible for a large housing development.

> Claims that the proposed "relief road" and "road improvements" would prevent most of the additional volume of traffic from using the route via Thorp Arch and the bridge reveal a gross misunderstanding of the traffic flows.

- > Outside the core of major cities and towns, buses are used for a tiny minority of journeys, and in an isolated setting such as TATE, it would be impossible, practically, and economically, to provide a bus service which would bring about any significant reduction in car use. The direct bus journey from the site to Leeds takes approximately 1 hour. The distance is approximately 16 miles. The nearest railway connection with good access to Leeds is over 13 miles from the site.

Fails to ensure that ‘development will occur in the most sustainable locations whilst respecting the overall pattern of development within the district’.

> Based on the Council’s own Sustainability Appraisal, TATE is one of the least sustainable sites in the Leeds City Council region. A very large housing development on the TATE site could not be regarded as respecting the overall pattern of development within the district, which is rural in nature.

Fails to protect and enhance Green Infrastructure, greenspace....

> If a “relief road/bypass” were to be built, as indicated in the Leeds Site Allocations Plan, acres of green land would be lost, negating one of the arguments that

development of this “brownfield” site would avoid the destruction of green belt/green land. Whilst the TATE site itself has (wrongly) been shown as brownfield, any development which were to adequately deal with the lack of proper transport infrastructure would of necessity, destroy prime agricultural land in a rural location.

Fails to reflect that the historic pattern of development is key to delivering future growth, and will be used to guide future development.

> There is no historic residential development on this site, and its inclusion in the Site Allocations Plan therefore requires the Council to ignore another consideration required by the Core Strategy.

Final comment

It is considered that the inclusion of Site 1055 Thorp Arch Trading Estate in the Site Allocations Plan in the colour coding Green – ‘sites which have the greatest potential to be allocated for housing’ is fundamentally wrong and completely at odds with the principals of the Core strategy.

The site was found to be UNSUSTAINABLE in the UDP Review and the principals of its findings remain relevant, so one must question the political gain and manoeuvrings going on behind the scenes in pushing this forward. Far from the site being fully supported by local residents, the opposite is true. It is a fact that very strong opposition has arisen in Thorp Arch to this proposal as the true nature of that proposed becomes apparent.

This proposal, rather than delivering a sustainable extension to Thorp Arch, will completely dominate, segregate and destroy a rural community and the landscape, setting aside the aspirations of the Council for Leeds to be the ‘best city in the UK’. They cannot permit the settlement hierarchy of Thorp Arch and neighbouring Parishes to be DESTROYED.

For these reasons we strongly oppose inclusion of Site 1055 in the Site Allocations Plan.

This site should obviously have been sieved out because that proposed does not fall anywhere near complying with the settlement hierarchy and on this same basis trust that the Council will remedy its failings and also ensure that the premature application submitted by the site owners, Rockspring, Application number 13/03061 which was validated by the Council on the 16th July 2013, for in the region of 2,000 houses with associated parking, landscaping, primary school, village centre, retail development, sports pavilion, play area, amenity space and associated off site works which include a bypass to nowhere and major alterations to the Privas Way roundabout over the A1 into Wetherby will be rejected.