

Forton Masterplan

Public consultation - Summary of Main Matters

Introduction

Wyre Council's Planning Policy team has been responsible for facilitating the masterplanning process which has been led by Hollins Strategic Land (as a land promoter with an interest in a significant part of the allocated site) and landowner interests across the allocation. It has involved extensive collaborative working between Wyre Council, landowners and relevant stakeholders. A draft Masterplan was the subject of a five week public consultation period between 16 December 2019 and 20 January 2020. Responses from 68 residents and organisations were received to the consultation.

A large number of comments raised general objections to the principle of development, including adverse impacts on the local highway, impact on the village and impact on the local environment including ecological impacts. However the land subject to the Masterplan has been allocated for development in the Wyre Local Plan and as such the principle of development has been established. Some detailed issues were raised that are outside the scope of the Masterplan, for example comments relating to the quality of the road surface in the village, general drainage/sewerage issues relating to the existing village, lack of demand for housing and employment units, the need to treat Hollins Lane and Forton as one settlement, and concern about the pressure on local services.

The consultation asked a series of ten questions including a final general comments question. Matters raised by the questions are set out in Appendix 1.

Some strong themes emerged from the consultation centred on:

- Drainage and blue infrastructure
- Environment including Green Infrastructure (GI)
- Highways and Movement
- Non-residential uses

Key points raised under these headings are set out below:

Drainage and Blue Infrastructure

- More detailed strategy required that links into Sustainable Drainage Systems and Green Infrastructure.
- Need for a vision for drainage.
- Safety issue raised in relation to the creation of new ponds.
- Flooding at Spring Vale. Development should not make matters worse (Parcel D).
- Poor water pressure in the village.
- Surface water flooding around Parcel B and Winder Lane.
- Green and blue infrastructure principles need bringing together.
- Existing sewer network needs upgrading.

- Need to integrate and co-ordinate water infrastructure/drainage solutions across different parcels/developments to an overall strategy.
- Part of the site lies in a Groundwater Source Protection Zone.

Environment including Green Infrastructure (GI)

- Proposed green infrastructure on Parcel A north is too remote from the existing village raising issues of accessibility for existing residents and potential anti-social behaviour. Should be more centrally located and be used to provide a buffer to existing properties.
- Should be a central area of play rather than being scattered about the new development.
- More emphasis on teenage provision required including the provision of a multi-use games area.
- Sport England objected to the potential loss of land identified as playing pitch (Parcel B) to accommodate a neighbourhood centre and/or access road without satisfactory reason justified against their five tests.
- Parcel B should not count towards the green infrastructure.
- Should be buffering/landscaping to A6 and existing properties.
- Need to protect trees for bat roosting and role in creating the village character.
- More tree planting/landscape planting to offset additional pollution and improve ecology.
- Support for quiet wildlife areas.
- Wildlife movement across road infrastructure needs consideration (also applies to movement across housing areas).
- Concerned about additional noise and light pollution.
- Hedges and trees are not a constraint (constraints and opportunities plan).
- Water vole – was presence checked as part of the ecological study?
- Ecology map incorrectly shows the nursing home as New Holly.
- Important to keep hedgerows on School Lane to maintain its character.
- Dedicated planting of woodland required.

Highways and Movement

- A6/School Lane junction. Need for, and design of, left hand turn lane.
- Creating a left turn lane will not help as there will be restricted visibility south if another vehicle is turning right. Left hand turn lane should be further north.
- Need for safe movement across A6 to facilities in Hollins Lane. Proposed A6 island refuge not safe enough. Suggested alternative approaches included:
 - A roundabout
 - Pelican/Puffin crossing
 - Traffic lights.
- The impact on local rural lanes including Winder Lane.
- Location of bus stops and access to same including need for bus pull-in/layby
- Impact on Fortonbank House of proposed changes to the A6/School Lane junction.
- Don't want restricted access along Winder Lane.

- Separate access for the employment area to the A6 required.
- No support for road across Parcel B.
- Public Right of Way not shown correctly (Parcel B).
- Need for safe school parking and adequate off-road parking in the village.
- Wider footpaths required.
- Road safety material dates to 2016. A6 increase in traffic since.
- Need to recognise that roads used by horse riders - no consideration in the plan.
- Concern regarding traffic generation in general and in particular traffic associated with Employment Area i.e. HGVs and noise pollution.
- Roads should be designed to be wildlife friendly with pipes and culverts underneath roads to assist movement.
- Electric charging points for new homes should be standard.
- Mixed views on the idea of a “Forton Trail” – some responses consider it unnecessary, other see a health and community benefit.

Non-residential uses

- Strong support for location of the community hall on parcel B.
- Support for employment but concern about design and impact on character.
- Convenience store – north of School Lane supported as a village centre location more appropriate for the elderly, but also where employment use is proposed to be located.
- Limited response to the location of the land set aside for a school extension.
- New hall not required – existing hall is adequate.

Key Issues

Key issues raised that have an impact on the Masterplan are listed below:

1. The design of the junction between School Lane and the A6 and associated off-site highway works on the A6, including bus pull-in/layby and enlarged pedestrian island, pelican crossing.
2. Need to maintain access along Winder Lane.
3. The location of the neighbourhood centre including community hall with Parcel B being the preferred option.
4. The need for an identifiable village centre around Parcel B.
5. The need to ensure drainage and water supply matters have been properly taken into account and linked to the provision of Green Infrastructure.
6. Objection to the development of an access road across Parcel B.
7. The need for play areas to be more central or centralised in the heart of the village accessible to the existing population rather than being scattered around the new development.
8. The need for recreational provision for teenagers.
9. The desire for an emphasis on tree planting (and protection) and landscaping as a means of supporting the local ecology and mitigating pollution impacts.
10. The need to ensure infrastructure is delivered in a co-ordinated way across different development parcels and the need to ensure infrastructure is delivered in a timely manner such that new development is properly supported.

11. The need for green buffers to protect the amenity of existing residents from new development and the identity of the village along the A6.
12. Clarity required on the maintenance of communal spaces (e.g. Forton Trail, Green Infrastructure).

Appendix 1 below provides a summary of the issues raised by consultation question.

Key Amendments

As a result of the consultation, the following key amendments have been made to the masterplan:

- There is now a clearer expression of the overarching spatial strategy.
- The constraints and opportunities section recognises that trees and hedgerows should be seen as an opportunity not just a constraint.
- Parcel B is identified as the preferred location for the community hall.
- Amended/new design principles relating to:
 - School Lane/A6 junction, including gateway design.
 - Pedestrian connectivity across the A6.
 - Sustainable drainage.
- Key principles for infrastructure delivery have been added and the infrastructure section updated.
- There is a stronger emphasis on the need to co-ordinate the delivery of infrastructure across different development parcels, including a new masterplan objective.
- There is a stronger emphasis on the link between green and blue infrastructure.
- There is a clearer description of the blue infrastructure strategy.
- There is a stronger emphasis on the need for good quality design in the employment area.
- With regard to the junction of the School Lane/A6 junction, the masterplan states a preference for a left hand turn lane from School Lane onto the A6.
- There is additional detail to guide the delivery and construction of the Forton Trail.

Appendix 1 – Questionnaire Responses

Constraints and Opportunities (Q1)

There were relatively few comments on the constraints and opportunities themselves, although a number of respondents considered that tree and hedgerows should not be viewed as a constraint to development but rather as positive features in the landscape. Other comments included:

- Need for a vision for drainage.
- Maximise linkages and integration between the development, existing residents and communities to the east of the A6 at Hollins Lane that provide services such as church, scouts, post office etc.
- More trees to mitigate the pollution impacts.
- Sewer network needs upgrading.
- Need to ensure that the mix of social housing and houses for the elderly should not be in blocks but should rather be amongst the other new houses to aid integration.
- The development does not represent organic growth.
- Add a new opportunity for Forton to have an identifiable centre centred on a new hall and improve play area in parcel B.
- Add a new opportunity for the creative use of green infrastructure to mitigate the impact of development on existing residents.

Vision and Objectives (Q2)

Most of the comments on the Vision and Objectives raised general concerns about the scale of development and the impact of development on the village, including ecological and countryside impacts rather than specifically seeking amendments to the wording or additional wording. There was also a concern that the Vision will not be delivered. Other comments relevant to the Masterplan were:

- The Vision statement should refer to importance of a gateway entrance.
- The Vision statement ignores the village frontage. There should be a planting scheme to frame the rural nature of the village.
- Infrastructure to join the two parts of the village (Forton and Hollins Lane) has not been addressed. People should be able to walk to church / scouts at Hollins Lane.

New objectives suggested through the consultation:

- To tell a story about Forton as it is now and consequently to demonstrate how it could be developed sustainably and organically through the proposed extension.
- To provide traffic arrangements at the School Lane/A6 junction which allow a smooth flow of traffic from School Lane, with a view to preserving the existing rural character of the lanes leading from the village.

- To reflect the importance of creating a gateway design that reflects the rural location of the village.
- On the timely delivery of infrastructure.

The Draft Masterplan (Q3)

There was a mixed response to the Masterplan itself with some support but also concerns about the scale of development and loss of countryside. General comments included:

- Need for adequate off road car parking.
- GI too isolated from the village particularly the north of parcel A.
- Important to retain hedgerows as part of the village character on School Lane.
- Neighbourhood centre should be on Parcel B.
- Infrastructure will not be able to cope.
- Concern that Hollins Lane is being treated as a separate village.
- New housing should blend in with the existing village.
- Need a clearer timeline on development of sites and infrastructure.
- Bungalows for housing should be on School Lane allowing easy access to public transport.

Design Principles (Q4)

Comments on the design principles included:

- Need to preserve the character of Winder Lane and protect the amenity of occupiers of bungalows on Spring Vale - avoid taller (2 storey and above) dwellings.
- New housing needs to blend in. Housing types should be mixed together not grouped in "types". Dwellings to be designed with false chimneys to tie in with existing dwellings.
- All new houses should include swift bricks, bat boxes, water butts and permeable paving.
- Need for visitor car parking/off road parking, including parking for the school
- The needs of horse riders should be considered.
- Design principles should protect existing residents from overlooking.
- Landscape buffer to the A6 could be larger than envisaged.
- A6/School Lane junction needs a left hand lane for north bound traffic.
- Need a design principle for the layout of the primary, secondary and tertiary road infrastructure.

Location of Non-Residential Uses (Q5)

See main text above.

Highway and Movement Network (Q6)

See main text above.

Forton Trail (Q7)

There was a mixed response to the idea of a circular route through the new development and existing village. Although there was some support, there was also some questioning of the purpose and the practicalities of delivery and maintenance. Issues raised were as follows:

- There are existing public footpaths into the countryside.
- Issue of who maintains the trail and how this is paid for.
- Need to clarify who the target users are. Issue of use by wheelchairs and trampers.
- Should be designed to link to key views.
- Include a fitness trail and allotments.

Green Infrastructure (Q8)

See main text above.

House types (Q9)

There was a strong response to the question of preferred house types with the following featuring strongly:

- Starter homes
- Homes for the elderly and/or mobility impaired
- 1 and 2 bed houses
- Bungalows

General comments (Q10)

Many general comments expressed concern about the principle and scale of development. Other comments included:

- New building should incorporate solar panels.
- Bungalows and adaptable housing needs to be nearest bus stop.
- Type of housing at the village entrance should reflect the rural location including a mixture of cottage and terraced housing with bungalows.
- Noise reduction fencing required for houses next to roads.
- Not “organic” growth.
- Need to safeguard the setting of the cricket club.