

## **+++ The York Local Plan extra**

I've written lots about the York Local Plan and the refusal of the Public Inquiry to take my evidence (See *Appendix. Excluded from the York Local Plan*). There are links to the evidence I wanted to present at the end of this appendix. There are a few extra points following.

### **++ Accessibility of York's greenbelt.**

The York Local Plan has referenced a clause from the National Planning Policy Framework to justify proposed greenbelts. This says greenbelts exist " to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns".

This condition for York's plan cannot be justified: Stand anywhere in York's proposed green belt and it is difficult to see any "special character" of York, except the top of the Minster which can be seen from a distance. (It even pokes through the layer of haze covering York on humid sunny days, an impressive sight from Garrowby Hill, twenty kilometres away.)

This green belt is little to do with "special character" of York but the character of suburbs where the affluent live. to quote Timothy Worstall of the Adam Smith Institute:

[T]he whole point of the green belts [is] to stop any housing ... anywhere near where upper middle class people ... might want to live.

Twitter: [@worstall](#)

Greenbelts support the scarcity value of Property Location Rights and increase the rewards of developers and land owners when planning permission is actually granted. They enhance the assets of the rich and affluent and raise the cost of housing for the young and the poor. (See *Appendix, Housing and Inequality*)

### **++ Example: A £3 billion bonus for landowners and developers**

York's Local Plan, is giving away over £3billion in planning gain. This is a rough calculation: 18,000 homes with an average planning gain of, say, £170,000 per home. Planning gain is built into the cost of new homes enriching landowners and developers.

I have found York Council a bit shy about this process. The City of York Planning Policy Housing Delivery Action Plan, December 2021 says:

**6.23 Competition.** Much of York's housing land is in the control of a small number of commercial house builders. This lack of competition does not incentivise a quick and efficient build out of homes. Often a commercial builder will not have two sites under construction if competing for the same buyers.

I made Freedom of Information Requests to ask York Council, who were the "small number of commercial house builders. One reply (April 05, 2022) contains:

Practically this means as we are effectively developer blind, for the Housing action plan and the Local Plan we do not make the connection to specific owners as these are private assets who's beneficial ownership can change at any time and are therefore not relevant to the application of policy.

"Practically this means as we are effectively developer blind" seems odd since York Council has had meetings with developers to work out "Statements of Common Ground". However, it is true that "beneficial ownership can change at any time".

### **++ Example: Site. ST15 - Land to the West of Elvington Lane**

In 2014, I wrote [an article for YorkMix](#), about a site in the York Local Plan, site ST15 (Land to the West of Elvington Lane). Since the site belonged to the Halifax Estates, I referred to the planning gain as a 'Halifax tax'. However, I wrote :

I have some regret in using [the term Halifax tax] because the reports in [The Press of the village planned by Halifax Estates](#) makes it sound very worthy. But reference to this specific example will set the meaning in our minds, especially mine.

How the 'Halifax tax' adds £50k to the price of every new York house

Recently, I have found the report [Local Plan ST15 Sustainable Transport Study](#) (2022) by Wood Group UK Limited. It refers to the development of ST15 as a "As a garden village, and mixed-use community". It refers to standards set by the Town and Country Planning Association. (Disclaimer: I am a member of the TCPA.) The TCPA is discussed in the *Appendix, Visions of Planners and Architects*.

Wood's document aspires to many qualities for pleasant sustainable lifestyles like having local services and improved bus routes to cut the use of private motor cars. It is unlikely that such a development could work as planned. This is because of the section on parking standards This refers to the York's parking standards, which can be found in the York Council document, [Car and cycle parking standards](#).

Wood's document implies that the development will adhere to these standards, which mandate car parking for "dwelling houses (C3)". One or two bedroomed dwellings should have one car parking space each and there should be two parking spaces for dwellings with more bedrooms.

Despite Wood's report aim of making ST15 a "Garden Village" development with car clubs, bus discounts and bike vouchers, the reality would be as shown in the paper from the Institute for Transport Studies, University of Leeds and the Politics Department of the University of Sheffield by Marsden et al.:

We find dominant policy approaches do focus on individual choices, but significantly it is not because decision-makers have faith in their effectiveness.

These approaches persist in policy on carbon reduction for two reasons.

One is appeal to a politically powerful, but incoherent, discourse of individualism.

The second is that decision-makers do not want significant behavioural change. There is an imperative of economic growth and a firm belief that a strong economy is linked to higher traffic levels, and that to reduce the demand for travel is to risk economic damage.

### Carbon reduction and travel behaviour: Discourses, disputes and contradictions in governance

This means that policy approaches focusing on individual choices do not work. Providing a bus service or a bike hire to give residents the chance to avoiding car ownership (and use) are not effective. If people are given the opportunity of owning a car - by having car parking at or near their home - they will own cars and use them.

## **++ Earlier plans for ST15**

A report in the York Evening Press in 2013, shows ST15 was planned for more houses and perhaps even greener than the current proposals:

CAR-FREE streets, four schools and up to 2,200 new jobs have been revealed as part of the vision for a 5,580-home new village on the edge of York.

### Proposed Whinthorpe housing development is being modelled on Poundbury

It was planned to have:

- 4,680 homes being built between 2015 and 2030, the lifespan of the Local Plan, with the rest built afterwards
- Up to 30 per cent affordable housing
- Potentially three primary schools and one secondary school
- “Local centres” with shops and other facilities
- Cycle routes to the city centre and the University of York, with talks being held with the Highways Agency about a new A64 junction.
- 54 per cent of the site being developed, leaving the rest as open space.

Basing the design on King Charles' Poundbury suggests other sustainable features.

However, as this design did not bypass the [City of York Council's car and cycle parking standards](#) so the aspirations for a much greener lifestyle are compromised.

## **++ Who owns ST15?**

Representations for this development are now through a company, Langwith Development Partnership Limited, which appears to have been dormant on August last Year, [according to a filing at Companies House](#). The company status is now listed as Active.

Oddly, there is a document STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND agreed between Langwith Developments and York Council concerning ST15 prepared for the Phase 1 hearings of the Local Plan in December 2019. (I was excluded from the Inquiry hearings at the last minute by an intervention by Inspector McCormack and others. That was in the lunch break before I was due to speak. See *Appendix, Excluded from the York Local Plan.*)

## **++ Managing conspiracies and dealing with influence**

I have too little insider knowledge of how deals and decisions are made in the planning process to be certain of much. My first hand experience of being excluded from the planning process has left me racking my brains to work out why. My initial entry was late but there seems more to it than that.)

I suspect my last minute exclusion from the Local Plan hearings was when it was realised I incorporated the "York exiles the poor" theme in my submission on climate change. I had been given the go ahead to comment on climate change.

I suspect the stance of York council, bending to various Nimby and other influences, was this: Green belt policies will be defended by the countryside lobby and restricting housing supply will increase the value of the planning gain to be allocated. (It could be rising from the £3billion mentioned above and will be rising again after the coming economic recession.) York will increasingly become a pleasant place for the affluent to live, retire and settle.

Now, dear reader, you have some insight into my conspiratorial tendencies. However, my plan is not a result of righteous anger. The point of this Greater York Plan is to make housing very much cheaper and to build a way of life that does not destroy life as we know it.

Building a Greater York will need skills and experience. For example, the skills that Caddick Properties have shown in building the Vangarde Shopping Centre at Monks Cross. Caddick are one of the partners in Langwith Development, so perhaps they may develop the ST15 land (which may still be owned by the Halifax Estates). Judging by their website, the Halifax Estates do have a vision that preserves some of the good aspects of country life.

I believe it is wrong to give York developers and land owners a bonus of planning gain averaging £200,000 for each home. However, should they be offered a chance to get £10,000 for each of one million homes in this Greater York plan? In total that's a much bigger payout.