

07 March 2022

Dear Councillor,

World of Pets, Thorley Lane, Timperley, WA15 7PJ
Application Reference: 105905/OUT/21

On Thursday you will be asked to consider Harlex Property's outline planning application for up to 116 new homes on the former World of Pets site at Thorley Lane in Timperley. This marks the culmination of nearly three years collaboration with Trafford Council and so I very much regret that the application has been recommended for refusal by your officers.

Three minutes is never enough time to adequately cover the amount of thought and effort that goes into regeneration projects like this, which is why I wanted to write to you personally ahead of the meeting.

Much has been made about the site's Green Belt location and indeed it is the perceived harm to the Green Belt that is the sole reason for your officers recommending refusal. However, as I hope you get the chance to see for yourself, whatever policy washes over the site, what we are proposing is to regenerate a former garden centre, with hardstanding, concrete and derelict greenhouses into affordable new homes for local families. This is not a beautiful field untouched by development.

Furthermore, the site has been allocated for residential development – exactly as is being proposed – in the Places for Everyone Development Plan. Your fellow councillors voted last year to approve the document with this as one of the sites to be used for residential development. Councillors accepted that this is an appropriate and sustainable site for new homes. All our outline planning application does is seek to speed-up the delivery of new homes on this site at a time when local families are crying out for more affordable housing options in Timperley.

You will be aware that Trafford Council has not had a five-year housing land supply in almost a decade and has consistently failed to deliver the number of homes that it is required to since the Government's Housing Delivery Test was first introduced in 2018. There is therefore a significant need for new homes in the borough. This was reinforced by the results of our pre-application consultation with the public in which over 40% of respondents stated that they had been affected by Trafford's housing shortage. A further 60% of respondents agreed that there is a need for new housing in the borough. Since we submitted this application, 287 Trafford residents have been in touch to express an interest in either owning or renting one of the 116 proposed new homes. That is 287 families either struggling with the cost of housing, wanting to get onto the housing ladder or unable to find a house that is suitable to their needs.

If approved, the development will help Trafford Council deliver more affordable housing in the borough by ensuring that 45% of the new houses will be provided and managed by a registered housing provider in Trafford. This is the largest onsite contribution of affordable homes that Trafford has seen in recent years. These will help local people looking for their first home in Timperley to buy or rent at a reduced rate and help to reduce the high cost of housing in the south of the borough.

Given the growing waiting lists for affordable housing in Trafford and soaring rents, I ask you to contemplate whether it is more important for the council to slavishly adhere to an out-of-date Green Belt policy that will soon be changed as a result of Place to Everyone; or for the council to be on the side of Trafford residents who are looking for an opportunity to get on in life in Timperley.

Alongside the moral imperative of using a previously developed brownfield site, such as this, to deliver much-needed new homes, there is legally sound justification for the committee to vote to approve the application on Thursday.



QC advice which I have shared with your officers is clear. Very special circumstances do exist for the application to be granted approval. This is based on the ongoing housing land shortfall and the chronic undersupply of housing generally in Trafford + the significant benefits that the application seeks to deliver, including:

- **45% onsite affordable housing contribution**
- **Homes designed and built with the environment in mind:** adopting modern construction methods and materials to exceed carbon reduction and energy requirements as set out in Trafford Council's adopted planning policy
- **A new play area, wildlife corridor along Timperley Brook and new accessible open space:** to deliver biodiversity net gain and provide space for residents to live a healthy lifestyle
- **The use of SuDS:** reducing the risk of downstream flooding against the current base line
- **New pedestrian and cycle routes through the site:** connecting into the wider network
- **c£500,000 CIL payment and \$106 contributions towards local infrastructure improvements**
- **Economic benefits:** such as the development supporting the employment of 359 people
- **Delivering at least two electric vehicle charging points:** for public use in an area where there is currently very few

Since the publication of the recommendation, our agent has responded in detail to ask that several points are clarified in the committee update paper. It is our view that your officers have failed to assess the Very Special Circumstances we have put forward in their entirety and have asked that this is reconsidered.

As Managing Director of Harlex Property I am 100% committed to delivering a high-quality affordable housing development on this previously developed site. The housing crisis is not getting any easier and opportunities to regenerate derelict brownfield land like this do not come along very often.

As an investor, the safest route for Harlex Property would've been to sit back and wait another two years before bringing a planning application forward. In that time Places for Everyone would be adopted and the emotive words 'Green Belt' would no longer be an issue. Your officers have acknowledged as much in their report. But that would be two more years of rising property prices, more disappointment and reduced opportunity for people trying to get on with their lives.

We all have relatives – sons, daughters, grandchildren – who can't get on the housing ladder or are living at home when they should have a place of their own. Or we have friends who can afford a mortgage but are stuck renting privately.

On Thursday you have an opportunity to show that you care and you understand. I ask you to put aside spurious concerns about harm to a Green Belt that your council has already voted to reallocate for development. I ask you to weigh up the merits of a refusal versus the costs of the clear legal opinion that we have shared with your officers. I ask you to interrogate the conclusion that your officers have come to. I ask you to vote for new affordable homes. I ask you to approve our outline planning application.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. I look forward to speaking to you at the committee meeting.

Yours faithfully,

James Nicholson
Managing Director
HARLEX Property

cc. All members and substitute members of TMBC Planning & Development Management Committee
 cc. Cormack McGowan – Case Officer cc. Michelle Cody – Governance Officer
 cc. Councillor James Wright – Executive Member for Housing & Regeneration