

Submission by Barwick and Scholes Parish Council on the Leeds Local Plan Consultation 2025

Introduction

This submission does not consider all the issues raised in the consultation, but seeks to address and respond to the sites put forward in the parish for housing development as these are of most interest to residents.

Some sites have been identified by landowners/developers for renewable energy, but these have not been assessed by Leeds City Council (LCC) and are not addressed in this Report.

Overview

One aim of the new Plan is to focus housing provision in the city centre where there is already a surplus over the amount required over the new plan period. Additional housing can be provided in the city centre and along with windfall sites this will reduce the amount required in the outer areas. Given the investment by LCC in providing increased cycling and pedestrian access around the city centre this will reduce commuting and is a good idea and should be supported.

Barwick in Elmet and Scholes Overview

Scholes is a linear village and has limited facilities. Both public houses have closed, the Scholes Superstore only recently reopened having been closed for some time and there is concern about the future of the doctor's surgery.

Barwick is a circular village and has more facilities than Scholes, including a parade of shops which are fully let based in the centre of the village which gives easier access for residents than the linear village. One of the villages public houses is currently closed. The countryside on the eastern side of Barwick is designated of special landscape value and could limit any development potential on that side of the village.

The settlements of Barwick and Scholes are surrounded by green belt. Scholes has a safeguarded site which could take 650 dwellings. LCCs breakdown of housing requirements in the 2 villages suggests a need of 56 new dwellings in Scholes and 71 new dwellings in Barwick, out of an overall requirement of 837 for the Outer North East area if the city centre surplus is taken into account and 2186 if it is not. These figures provide the framework for making allocations in the parish.

All the other sites put forward by landowners/developers for housing allocations in the parish apart from the 3 safeguarded sites in Scholes and the land north of Pear Tree Farm Barwick lie in green belt. Many were rejected when the current plan was being prepared for this reason.

LCCs approach to site allocation will be driven by the outcome of the Green Belt review which is to be carried out by the Council. On the face of it, the release of the Scholes safeguarded sites would provide land for 650 dwellings which would meet the requirements of the parish and a considerable amount of the Outer North East area.

This would be bad planning for the following reasons,

- It would provide a huge oversupply of housing for the parish and would provide a large amount of the housing in one place in the housing area.
- The character of Scholes as a village would be overwhelmed and almost doubled in size
- This site is not in a very sustainable location with limited facilities scattered around the village and totally inadequate access to public transport.
- If green belt sites can only be released if LCC can show an exceptional need for housing (as at present LCC say there is) and it is necessary to release the safeguarded sites on a sequential basis, ie before green belt sites can be considered, then it is recommended that to limit the impact on the village only part of the safeguarded site east of Scholes (ref:LPS00180) only be released for housing at this time. Even this level of release would provide a site for 300 houses which is more than enough for the parish. Rakehill Road provides a natural barrier to limit any allocation east of Scholes. A preference would be to locate development between Rakehill Road and Main Street as this would give better access to local facilities within a 20 minute walk, which would be more questionable for the extremities of any development north of Rakehill Road.
- Both Scholes and Barwick are defined as smaller settlements in the new draft Plan and as such they are expected to take some new development to meet the housing requirement for the Outer North East area. To allocate all this on one site in Scholes, with none in Barwick where facilities are better is not good planning.
- A preferred approach would be to allocate smaller sites in both villages which would meet the housing requirement for the parish and make a modest additional contribution to the Outer North East area in recognition of the existence of 2 smaller settlements in the parish.

The Green Belt Review

The present government has issued new rules regarding development in the green belt, including a new concept called the “grey belt”. LCC advise that they are still studying the new advice which allows for a review of existing green belt boundaries where there is shown to be an exceptional need for housing which cannot be met elsewhere. LCC have confirmed that they will be carrying out a full comprehensive green belt review.

It will be recalled that when preparing the current plan LCC also identified an exceptional housing need and took sites out of the green belt in Aireborough. This decision was quashed by the High Court on the basis that such a need had not been identified. In the present case it will be seen that if the whole of the Scholes safeguarded site is released there will be virtually no need to release any of the other sites. If LCC are able to release green belt sites in light of the new guidance without being obliged to release the whole of the Scholes safeguarded sites then it is necessary to look more closely at the other sites being put forward. Land should only be taken out of the green belt in exceptional circumstances as defined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), if the land falls within the categories identified in the NPPF. In Barwick and Scholes the main reasons for green belt are to check unrestricted urban sprawl, prevent neighbouring towns from merging and to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

Applying this principle to Barwick and Scholes, there is a need to maintain a green belt boundary on the west side of Scholes to ensure that there is no merging of Scholes with Leeds and to limit urban sprawl. This narrow green belt strip must be maintained, especially between the A64 and Leeds Road to apply these principles.

To the north of Scholes there is ribbon development along the A64 which lies within the existing green belt. Although the site at Holmecroft is being put forward for commercial use, and had a

previous planning permission, these developments have no relationship with Scholes and protection is required against any further unrestricted sprawl. There would be no merit in extending Scholes to the A64 as this would merely emphasise the linear nature and dispersed facilities of the village.

Land to the east of Scholes has already been taken out of the green belt and any further release would encroach into open countryside.

In addition to the green belt around Barwick, land on the eastern side is also designated as Special Landscape Area. Given the existing green belt boundary is currently tightly drawn around the village it is acknowledged that not all land can be retained in the green belt if Barwick is to make a contribution to the housing requirements of the Plan.

Methodology and Site Assessment

The basic methodology is agreed as a basis for site assessment. It is noted that traffic generation is not included and this is often a concern of local residents.

We have analysed the sites put forward in the call for sites for housing. We are aware of new sites which have been put forward subsequently and await to hear from LCC about these sites and their assessments.

1 Scholes Safeguarded site east of Scholes ref: LPS00180 LCC score -9 yellow

- The site is not in the green belt
- This is a large site and it is unclear where distances are measured from to make the judgements
- Rail station proximity should be -2
- Grading of the agricultural land is unknown but crops are grown on it so it should be -2
- It is not previously developed land but in active use so score should be -2
- This adjusted scoring would make the site Orange rather than yellow
- See above about the wisdom of allocating the whole site and it is not appropriate to apply the allocation of the safeguarded land sequentially ahead of sites in the green belt for the reasons set out above.

2 Land at Aberford Road Barwick ref: LPS00605 LCC score -9 Yellow

- Agree site assessment scoring
- Acknowledge that although the site lies within an area designated as a special landscape area the site itself does not contribute to it

3 Land west of Elmwood Avenue Barwick ref: LPS00809 LCC score -7 Yellow

- Agree site assessment
- Site does not lie in an area designated as a special landscape area

4 Home Farm Scholes ref: LPS00500 LCC score -11 Orange

- There is an infrequent bus service along the A64 so score should be -1
- It is a long way from a rail station so score should be -2
- It is in active agricultural use so score should be -1
- We agree the overall score of -11
- Allocation of this site would extend Scholes to the north and access to village facilities would be a considerable distance away.

5 2 Sites west of Scholes ref: LPS00496 and ref: LPS00417 LCC scores -8 and -6 Yellow

- These sites adjoin each other and are safeguarded sites. They are not in the green belt.
- Although on the west side of Scholes and therefore within the sensitive area between Leeds and Scholes, both sites are well screened by woodland and their development would not impact on the corridor.
- The scoring is agreed apart from the rail accessibility which should be -2
- Only one of these sites has been put forward for development. The other site has been reserved for expansion of the school. This is in anticipation of the site east of Scholes (ref: LPS00180) being developed for housing. If this did not occur, or occurred only in part both these sites may be available for housing.
- Access to both sites may be difficult and would impact on the attractive approach to Chippies Pond a local beauty spot. This is not addressed in the site assessment.

6 Land north of Elmet Drive Barwick ref: LPS00002 LCC score -11 Orange

- Scoring for this site is agreed.
- The site lies within an area designated a special landscape area.
- The site is situated along lengthy estate roads with parked cars and located some distance from local facilities

7 Land north of Pear Tree Farm Barwick ref: LPS00275 LCC score -7 Yellow

- Scoring for this site is agreed
- Access to this site could be a problem
- The site lies outside the green belt but upon the site of an Iron Age Fort

8 Land at Richmondfield Road Barwick ref: LPS00236 LCC score -16 Orange

- Accessibility to rail should be -2 and it should be classed as agricultural land as -2 making the overall score -19
- Given the level of the score this site is clearly not suitable for development

Neighbourhood Plan

The Neighbourhood Plan Revision Group has decided to pause the Revision of the Neighbourhood Plan until the strategic approach to be adopted by LCC becomes clear. The Group will then be able to look at policies in the new plan which can help shape any new development proposed and look at the importance of agricultural land to the area and the extent to which it adds to the characteristics of the villages.

Summary

Given the major development of the East Leeds Extension and its impact on existing infrastructure, health provision, and education facilities, further major development within the plan period in the parish is unwelcome and unnecessary. Instead a number of small sites could be identified to provide a range of locations and choices.

No sites should be allocated in the hamlets of Potterton, Kiddal and Barnbow Carr with limited infill only allowed.

The PC would wish to be consulted on any new sites which are put forward by landowners/developers for housing in particular. It would also wish to be kept informed about the progress of the green belt review and how any changes will be applied.