



25/09/17

RESPONSE TO PDO FOR SOUTH WARRINGTON

I am a lifelong resident of Grappenhall; [REDACTED]

I read the PDO with real horror. The plan will destroy the beauty and feel of the village and its surrounding area. The villages of Grappenhall, Thelwall, Appleton Thorn and others will merge into a polluting conurbation with little resemblance to the area we love. I didn't believe that the destruction of so much beautiful protected Green belt area would ever be considered.

The plan is weak, its foundations from the needs of the area, to the assessment of the green belt is weak. It is biased heavily towards the wants and greed of developers and over ambitious councillors and away from the needs of Warrington people.

I am not a NIMBY, I have [REDACTED] ambitious children of my own and give due consideration to the needs of the growing population. I do not believe that development of this scale is needed or that adequate consideration has been given to other options such as brownfield sites. I strongly disagree with the assertion that all of the green belt highlighted for development in the PDO should have the same classification and is equally suitable for development.

1. CONSULTATION PROCESS

The process for notification of this change was appalling. I first heard of it thanks to a face book post by a local resident in August. Despite living in one of the most heavily impacted areas I had heard nothing directly from the council. [REDACTED]

Grappenhall residents heard nothing until I told them of the plan; many of our friends and neighbours knew nothing of it. People were on holiday, children were not at school, and the usual informal communications that happen during term time weren't in place. The council held NO communication sessions in Grappenhall itself and advertised nothing in Grappenhall. The reason given for this (inadequate parking and facilities?!) was pitiful.

Most people I know were squeezed into the meeting in a tiny corner of the Park Royal as it was the only one available by the time they found out. We asked the same questions of a number of council employees and received contradictory information. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED], the answers given were not clear to me or my equally intelligent husband. They were evasive, misleading and contradictory. I was really quite shocked that the professionals designated to bring this to life were so appallingly bad at the job.

The strength of public feeling is huge in the community; the facebook page with over 4000 people demonstrates that. I attended a walk down the Trans Pennine Trail last week and there were well over 200 people giving up their Sunday to walk in the rain. The people of Warrington DO NOT want a city. The Warrington Guardian survey was conclusive. The people of Warrington hate the idea and deserve more. Many people are not on facebook and still know nothing of this, extending the date by a few weeks was an inadequate gesture. The council should have gone to the villages most affected and held meetings in each village. They should have WIDELY advertised the meetings. They should have dropped clear leaflets and they should have engaged the elected representatives to spread the word.

Where are the posters and the clear maps, why were the council representatives so unprepared?

I didn't even read anything in the Warrington Guardian until the Facebook group started to generate publicity. Are we in Mao's china or is this Britain? I am disgusted by the underhand nature of the process. This should be addressed before the process is allowed to continue. The people of Warrington deserve facts, not lies, they need more information about road networks, schools, facilities, and they need more options. They need council representatives who have answers and are not purposely evasive and worse contradictory. Jumping to the conclusion that the only option is to build this ludicrous number of houses in the prime and beautiful nature spots is such an easy option. This brings me to my second objection.

2. BASIS FOR NEED CALCULATION

My husband and I were particularly interested in this as it feels fundamentally wrong. We asked many questions about the parameters for the calculation and again were left believing there to be a massive amount of bias in the numbers presented;

- Why is the plan over such a long period? 20 years is well in excess of the government requirement and drives an enormous amount of uncertainty into the calculation. Other time periods should be considered and the calculations put forward – my guess is that a shorter period would massively reduce the need. Why decimate our precious greenbelt on the basis of something so tenuous. Let's just do what we have to as the price we have to pay is just too high.
- Why is this pre Brexit considerations, there should be a significant down scaling in line with wider economic assumptions?
- The data used is highly sensitive to the relationship between employment, population demographics and dwelling occupancy. The particular assumptions used appear to have been selected to justify a higher housing requirement well above the need and are not logical, consistent or robust. Please review this.
- Option 2 is based on an excess employment and economic growth outlook with considerations completely outside the control or influence of WBC, and ignoring the competing aspirations of adjacent and further afield boroughs and housing areas. Why? This should all be considered. Please explain why this has not happened.
- All the economic initiatives highlighted under the EDNA such as Cheshire devolution and HS2/HS3 will, if they ever happen, be needed just to provide jobs for the natural increase in the population; they are not a justification for even more housing.

I was again appalled when one of my neighbours brought it to my attention that the Objectively Assessed Needs (OAN) is cited on p.5 of the PDO as 839 new homes per annum - but this was based on 2012 surveys. Before publishing the PDO, WBC were in possession of an updated May 2017 report based on 2014 data which shows a comparable figure of just 738 homes per year (but could be as low as 679 homes pa), but this number has been ignored. Why wasn't this used instead? Presumably because it didn't give the answer the developers and our overly ambitious >£100K per year councillors wanted. Presumably, because if this whole thing was massively scaled down to what we REALLY have to do, the justification for destroying the countryside would be weakened. This is politics and spin at its worst, I am shocked beyond belief.

3. GREEN BELT CLASSIFICATION

My next objection is based around the classification of the Green Belt. Vastly different areas were bucketed together and given an overall 'Weak' classification. How can a farmer's field that backs onto the M6 be in the same category as woodland with streams and protected wildlife that surround a stunning ancient village set in one of Grappenhall's conservation

areas? The areas need to be reviewed separately as their value to the villages and the strength of the classification is vastly different in each.

The survey was clearly biased and not suitably independent or thorough. This should be repeated by an independent body not linked in any way to the developers who are set to gain the most from this. The areas must be considered separately.

The conservation area was barely mentioned. [REDACTED] I am incredibly proud of our cobbled village, with the ancient church proudly boasting the Cheshire cat and a Saxon Font. The village is in the countryside and this should be protected at all costs. The council are already being remiss in their duties with 2 iconic buildings in this small area being left to turn to ruins. Protect our history. It is important to us and to future generations. These needs should be considered more carefully in the assessment and how this is going to happen should be explicitly spelled out not totally ignored!

4. WILDLIFE and NATURE

I am concerned that a number of rare species of animals may be put at risk by the development. [REDACTED] Broad Lane, we had hundreds of bats living in the trees around our property. The urbanisation of this area is very likely to have an impact on the bats in this area. I understood that they are a protected species and I am surprised this wasn't mentioned anywhere. What is happening to protect the bats and other rare species living in and around the PDO area?

[REDACTED] I have spent many happy hours walking through the fields between the Bridgewater Canal and Cartridge Lane and I use the paths through Grappenhall Heys almost every day. We often see birds of prey, have spotted water voles, badgers, rare birds etc. The fields have blackberries that we pick and conkers we collect. This has been an evocative and important part of family life for us, we live in the countryside and having this on our doorstep has brought us an enormous amount of pleasure. The thought that this beautiful area could be wiped out is a real tragedy. The urban sprawl proposed by the PDO will turn our villages into a town with little distinction between each and I think this is a huge loss for the people of South Warrington.

5. THE COUNTRY PARK

I noted on the plans that there is a proposal for a Country Park to surround the village area. I am astounded that this isn't extended to include the beautiful and well used areas surrounding the much loved cricket club and extending from broad lane to the Bridgewater Canal. These pockets of land are used SO frequently by so many people and I think that without them the feel of the village will change dramatically. Please reconsider these areas as a priority, when we gave up our woodland for the Grappenhall Heys development there was assurance that the rest of this area (other than the earmarked land) would be protected. Don't break this promise, extend the Country Park to include it.

At the Park Royal event, I quizzed a number of people on the Country Park and it was clear that NO real thought has gone into this. I asked some really basic questions and again the answers were evasive and contradictory from different representatives. What is a Country Park, what will this be and how can residents get assurance that this really will happen?

If we really must lose some of the Green Belt (and to be clear I don't agree with the extent of what is suggested in any way), then go for the areas that will leave the villages as they are. Create a new village around the existing warehousing up near the motorway and leave the area around our ancient village alone.

Surely by doing this you will get closer to the objective of creating more affordable housing. That land will be cheaper and the properties will not need to be in the £300K+ area. Build some attractive flats and smaller houses in a new village. Only build what you must.

Reconsider some of the brown field sites, take into account areas such as the Fiddler's Ferry site where there is still long term uncertainty. Assume that land will be available rather than assuming it won't be!

6. TRANSPORT LINKS

Again this was a key focus for us at the Park Royal event. I was appalled by the contradictory spin being given out on this subject. The Warrington road network is famously bad. The town is locked in by waterways and motorways and there is already chaos. Warrington is one of the areas in the country where health is most badly affected by air pollution, largely caused by traffic.

When questioned, Andy Farrell and his team gave totally different answers to simple questions like what alternatives are being considered and how can we guarantee that developers will go ahead with the improvements to the road network. They couldn't discuss how funding would work. Some of them claimed that the proposed route through another much loved area, the Trans Pennine Trail wasn't really a proposed route.

This has to be a major blocker. Without a VERY clear plan for how this is all going to work in an area with such massive issues already surely this will be a disaster for the town. The plan and the funding must be secured before the green belt is released. To seek one without clarification of the other is ludicrous.

I can envisage huge issues with the M6, M56 junction in Grappenhall, already renowned for causing traffic chaos. The Thelwall viaduct is infamous for traffic issues. Any problems at all on this difficult part of the road network lead to immediate consequences for the A50 and Broad Lane, used as alternatives for the suffering commuters. How on earth is this going to work with years and years of development and a vast increase in population?

Many more people will die of pollution related diseases and businesses will fail due to inefficiencies caused by this. In Warrington in 2013, 4.8% of all deaths were caused by man-made particulate pollution in our air, which is equal to 95 unnecessary deaths a year. This is slightly worse than the average for the North West of 4.6%. This situation is unacceptable and is not being tackled.

The commute out to Manchester and Liverpool (very commonplace in South Warrington) will be impossible. Grappenhall to Manchester City Centre currently takes 1 hour 10 mins on average in a morning and longer at night, this is a journey that should take c30 mins and is already on the outer range of doable for most commuters. Add into this many thousands of extra people making their way to the local cities and we will have utter chaos. The model won't work as people won't want to live here.

7. FLOODING

Broad Lane and Stockton Lane both flood very frequently, [REDACTED] How is this going to be addressed? Surely without the fields and plants this situation will get worse. The flood issue in Grappenhall wasn't mentioned anywhere. Is this going to be addressed? The whole area has a problem with this, Broad Lane is a big hill and the areas at the bottom of the hill are often water logged. The council representatives weren't even aware of this, why not?

8. AMENITIES

Health – Warrington Hospital is not meeting targets and is already providing an appalling service to the community; increasing the population will make this worse – what is being done to address this? Will more people die because of this plan?

Dentists/ Doctors – It is incredibly difficult to get appointments at dentists and doctors in the area already, with an extra c24K people, how will the stretched services cope? How will improvements to amenities be made?

Schools – Schools are largely full and would be over stretched with the current development plans for Grappenhall Heys alone, how is this being addressed? There was no clarity here and little thought had gone into this.

Shops – Already inadequate in parts of South Warrington eg Grappenhall Heys, how can residents be assured that this isn't going to lead to further traffic chaos?

Community Areas and Sports Facilities – As above , how will the needs of all of these people be addressed without causing further health and well-being issues in the area ?

Decimating the Green Belt is the cheap, easy, most profitable route for developers, but it is wrong. In this case the easy option is not the right option. The people in the villages of South Warrington want to remain in villages. We do not want to live in a city. We need the Green Belt to provide us with clean air, recreational areas and to prevent Urban Sprawl. Nature and history should be protected. The calculations and definitions in the PDO must be reviewed and challenged. The council should represent what people want as well as what they need. We accept that more houses are needed, but not this many and not by stripping us of so many of our most precious areas of beauty.

I look forward to your response and make no apology for the length of this letter or my strength of feeling. Grappenhall has been my family home for generations and we love it and will do all we can do to protect it from this. I will campaign tirelessly to prevent this abomination.

Yours Faithfully

