



Dear Sirs

Warrington Borough Council Local Plan Consultation

As invited, I wish to take part in the above consultation and hope that you will, as promised, take my views into account.

I attended one of the consultation meetings (at the Village Hotel), spoke at length with the Planning Officers and looked at all the maps, presentation etc. In spite of that, I have found myself surprised on a number of occasions as more information about the proposals emerge (not via your publicity). I feel the consultation has been very poorly handled. The maps available at the consultation evening were vague and unclear. I have lived in this area all my life and struggled to clearly see what was proposed. I met people locally who were not aware of the proposals and advised them to attend the only other local consultation meeting in our area at the Park Royal Hotel – they later spoke of how difficult it was to gain access to this meeting and how they had had to queue for some considerable time which would deter elderly or disabled residents. It feels like you are trying to make it as difficult as possible for Warrington residents to see what is being put forward for their town.

Note I say “town”. At the consultation evening, there were repeated references to Warrington becoming a Garden City. I do not want to live in a city. I haven’t met anyone locally who does. It seems that the Council want this, not the people who live here. I do not feel the Council has clearly explained why so many new homes need to be built. At the consultation evening, various statistics were presented with few references and very little justification as to the choices made. Predictions of future growth are just that – predictions – so why have the Council chosen to go with the extreme

estimates of housing need. It seemed that the Council had already decided that it was desirable that Warrington should become a city and it did not seem an objective consideration of all options.

Within the next 20 years, much more brown belt land may become available eg. Fiddlers Ferry, so why are the Council insisting on releasing so much land now? It is obvious developers will go for the easy option of building on fields if given the chance.

The proposed plan includes large tracts of green belt land being released for development, whether for housing, roads or industrial warehousing. I was listening to a discussion on the radio this morning about how green belt land will sometimes need to be released but the politicians agreed that this should be green belt land of low scenic value, often neglected scrub land and not productively farmed and not land which is required to halt urban sprawl. Yet the green belt land you are proposing should be released is of high scenic value, much of it used recreationally by people from all over Warrington for walking, cycling or just relaxing. Most of it is actively farmed and so producing food. These green belt areas are of benefit to the whole town, not just south Warrington, in terms of their physical and mental health.

The National Planning Policy Framework states that Green Belt Boundaries should only be "altered in exceptional circumstances". I have not read or heard any reason why the Council feels the current circumstances are "exceptional". I do not want to live in an urban sprawl with no division between Warrington and Runcorn. The Green Belt was partly established to prevent towns and cities merging into each other and has been a valued way of preserving boundaries. The size of the changes the Council proposes will totally change the local character. So many small villages will be swallowed up, villages which have been established and lived in by local people who do not want such large changes forced onto them with little convincing rationale.

There will also be huge implications in terms of roads and infrastructure needed to support such changes. The roads are already frequently gridlocked. This is likely to worsen again once the Halton bridges become toll bridges. The Western Red Route appears totally influenced by the fact that cars will soon be avoiding the toll. The local motorways come to a standstill whenever there is an accident. More houses will make Warrington traffic much worse. The proposal to use the Transpennine Trail as a road link seems completely disruptive to people living in those areas, as well as further deterring Warrington people from taking much needed exercise. Has there been an investigation into possibly deteriorating air quality, which is already poor? Infrastructure such as schools and healthcare will also be put under major stress with such a huge increase of population.

Has there been any environmental assessment of the impact of this proposed plan? The environment is really important, although frequently overlooked. Over the years my family has greatly enjoyed outings to Moore Nature Reserve and I understand that this is now under threat (again, this wasn't clear in the consultation information). South Warrington's countryside is a valuable resource for the whole town and I do not understand why the Council are so wilfully ignoring this.

I hope you do not ignore all these comments. We live in this town and care about it whilst planners and council officers are maybe not in the same situation. Certainly I did not find all the information about the Consultation either objective or thorough.

