

Dear Sir,

WARRINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN
SOUTH WEST URBAN EXTENSION FRAMEWORK PLAN
OBJECTIONS


On 3rd August 2017, we wrote to you, in connection with the above Warrington Borough Council Plan. An email was received from you on 18th August acknowledging receipt of this.

Subsequently, we have done further research into the issues relevant to the plan. As a result of this, we have prepared another document, detailing our further objections to the proposed development.

A copy of this is enclosed, together with copies of previous correspondence, and the document containing our initial objections.

Please acknowledge receipt of this letter, and may we also have your comments.

Yours faithfully



FURTHER OBJECTIONS TO

WARRINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN **SOUTH WEST URBAN EXTENSION FRAMEWORK PLAN**

In addition to the objections previously submitted, we would like to add these additional points.

GOVERNMENT POLICY ON THE USE OF GREEN BELT LAND

The Government's Manifesto reiterated its' commitment to protecting the Green Belt, and its' wish to retain a high bar to ensure the Green Belt remains protected.

The National Planning Policy Framework is already clear that Green Belt boundaries should be amended ONLY "**IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES**". It states the following:-

The NPPF states the government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of the Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential character of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence (para.79)

Green Belts serve five main purposes;

- To check unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.
- To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another.
- To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.
- To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.
- To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

The proposed SW Urban Extension complies with **NONE** of the above requirements and is essentially an extension of Warrington Borough's unrestricted urban sprawl; cramming almost 2,000 houses into a small and unique Green Belt area.

This existing Green Belt area provides a small green gap between Warrington and Runcorn, thus stopping these neighbouring towns merging into one another.

The area separates two villages which are conservation areas – Walton in Warrington, and Moore, in Halton. They are linked by the Bridgewater Canal, and Runcorn Road, which are surrounded by productive farm land.

THE CHARACTER OF THE AREA PROPOSED FOR THIS DEVELOPEMENT

The whole of this area provides GREEN SPACE close to both towns. It is home to diverse wildlife, and unusual birds. Visitors to the area can see lapwings, curlews, sky larks, yellowhammers, fieldfares, redwings and dozens of others, too numerous to list. We have badgers, foxes, stoats and newts.

It is also one of the few areas near to the town which is unaffected by light pollution. At night, the stars are actually visible in the sky! It is also possible to walk around without breathing in the pollution experience so widely nowadays.

This is an area of heavily worked farmland, scattered cottages, and buildings listed as historic assets.

It is a green link between Walton and Moore villages, and is immensely popular with the public for walking, jogging, cycling, fishing horse riding and boating. Its' elevation provides fine views of farmland and ancient woodland. It provides a rare and unique 'green lung' area adjacent to both towns. Its' loss would be a tragedy for both Warrington and Runcorn.

The merging of the sprawling towns of Warrington and Runcorn should never even have been considered as a development option. It would be a devastating loss to both these towns, and to the people who live in these towns.

WBC's ASSESSMENT OF THIS AREA OF GREEN BELT AREA

Warrington Borough Council's assessment of this Green Belt area is flawed.

Firstly, it only acknowledges the Walton Village Conservation Area, and totally ignores Moore Conservation area, which would be heavily impacted by both this and other proposed developments within the plan.

Secondly, its' identification of Historic, Listed and Locally Listed Buildings in and adjacent to the area covered in the South West Urban Extension Framework Plan is incomplete. It does not highlight several buildings on Runcorn Road, which are listed as Historic Assets in the WBC Core Strategy document from February 2014. There are also other omissions of Listed and Locally Listed buildings adjacent to the area, of which our cottage is an example.

Thirdly, the general assessment of the WORTH of this Green Belt area is flawed. It is productive both as farmed land, and as an area of value to the many people who use the area for recreational purposes. WBC should be seeking to reinforce the character and local distinctiveness of what is one of Warrington's very few remaining green spaces, and to protect its' built and natural assets.

THE USE OF BROWNFIELD SITES

The NPPF document we have previously mentioned makes it clear that brownfield sites should be used as a first resort for any development.

We have not been able to obtain a list of all the brownfield sites in the Warrington area, so do not know which and how many have been dismissed as unsuitable by our Council. However, we do know that Fiddlers Ferry Power Station is due to close in the near future. As we understand it, the date it will close permanently have been extended from 2017 to 2018. The vast majority of this site is within the WBC district. It is a significant area. Although it is not currently available for redevelopment, given that it is a 20 Year Plan, surely it should have been taken into consideration?

INFRASTRUCTURE

As we have previously mentioned, the local road network is totally unable to cope with the volume of traffic that it currently takes. Even minor problems cause traffic chaos, which happens frequently.

We have a number of motorways in this area. It is not unusual for any accidents or breakdowns on any of them to result in the town becoming gridlocked.

Last week, the M6 Northbound was closed for about 5 hours. The town was swamped with vehicles, all trying to get over the two river crossings we have. I do not know exactly how many miles the queues stretched, but at a conservative guess it must have been 7 or 8 miles on each of the roads accessing the town centre. In addition to that, any local roads which drivers thought would get them through more quickly were swamped with miles of standing traffic.

We do not want or need any extra vehicles in our town. How many will an additional 24,000 houses bring us on a daily basis?

FINAL COMMENTS

WBC's Preferred Development Option Summary gives an overall view of the development proposed for the Warrington area.

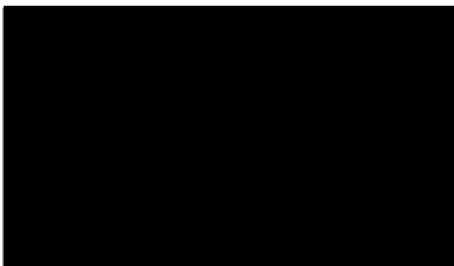
Although it is not entirely clear how many of the 24,000 proposed houses are going to be built on Green Belt land, it appears that it is certainly **OVER 66% OF THEM**.

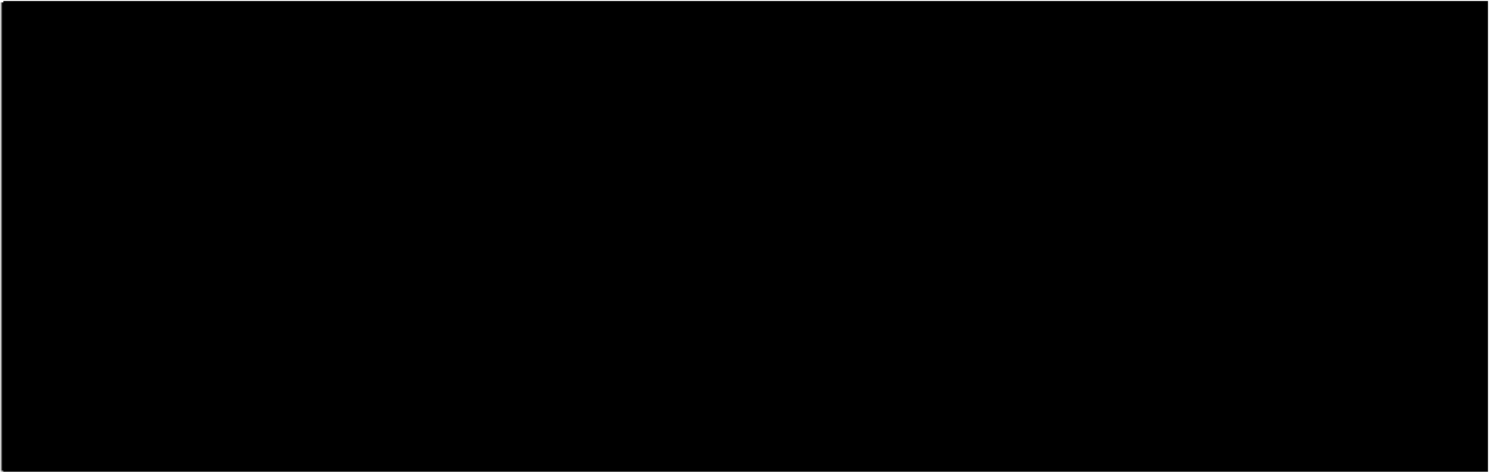
This cannot be acceptable for a town which has already suffered rampant development over the last 50 years. We cannot afford to lose any more of our green areas, anywhere in the Borough.

We have just heard that under the Warrington Waterfront proposed development on the other side of the Manchester Ship Canal from us, the intension is to destroy Moore Nature Reserve. This must not happen. It is a very valuable area, and the home to many rare birds, including bitterns, which over-winter there, water rails and Cetti's warbler, to name but a few. It is an outrageous plan.

We can only hope that common sense will prevail, and that these plans will be stopped.

Objections submitted by:-



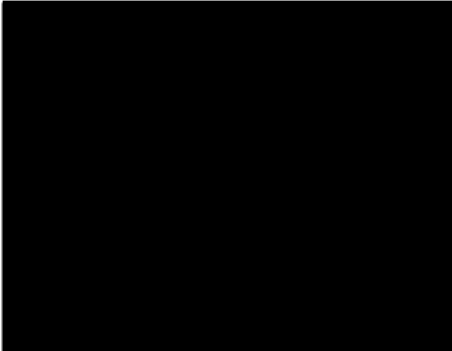


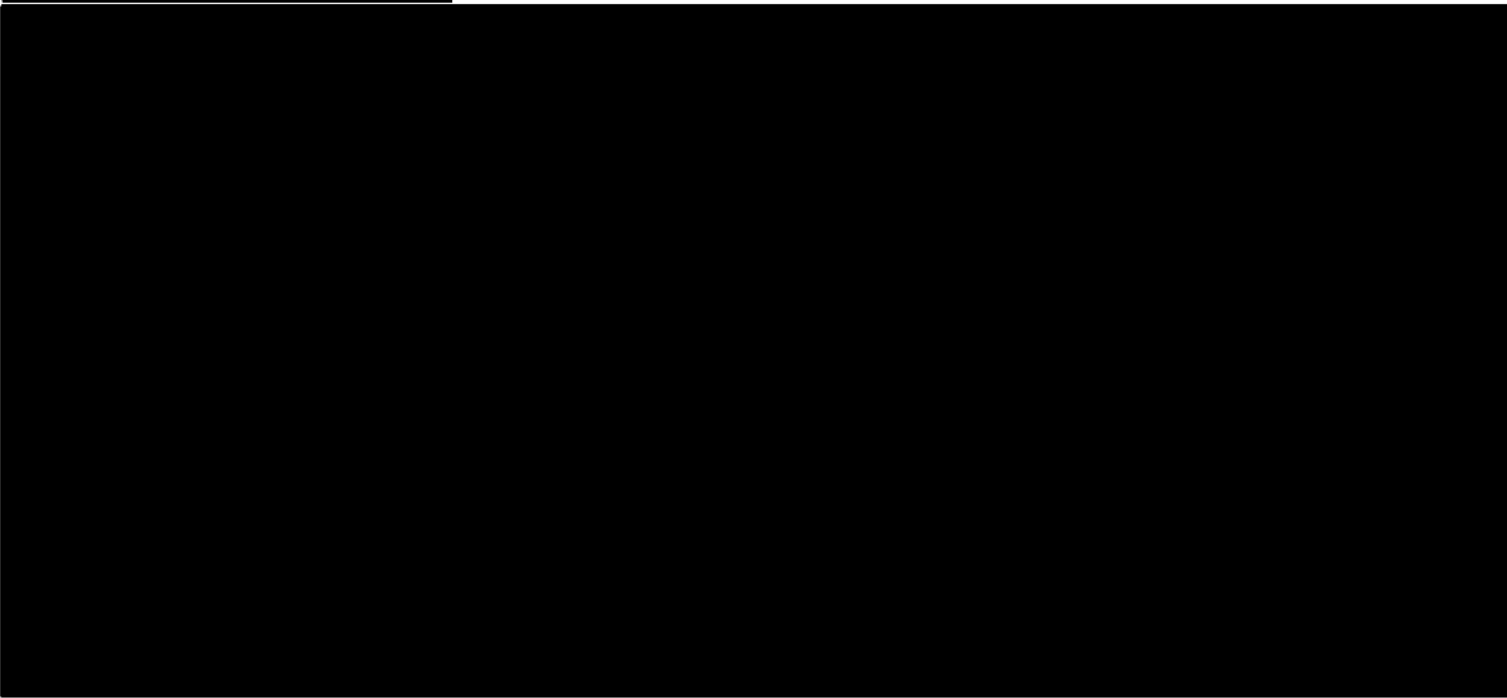
Thank you for your recent letter outlining your objections to the Council's Local Plan South West Urban Extension.

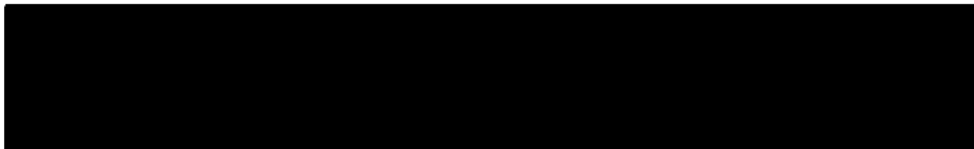
I can confirm receipt of your letter and that your comments will be analysed and taken in to account as we prepare the next stage of the Local Plan.

Regards,

Planning Policy & Programmes Team.







Dear Sir,


WARRINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN
SOUTH WEST URBAN EXTENSION FRAMEWORK PLAN
OBJECTIONS

We are writing to in connection with our objections to the above plan.

We strongly object to the proposed development plan, and the reasons for our objection are expressed in some detail in the enclosed document.

Having read your documents in detail, and attended one of your consultation events, we appalled, shocked and outraged at the scale of the development proposed in the Warrington area.

We feel that any further development in the Warrington area in general on the proposed scale is totally unacceptable. We have already lost most of our green areas over the last 50 years, and it essential that we preserve those which remain.

Our specific objections are in relation to the South West Urban Extension. This is the area where we have lived for over  years. It is an area of outstanding natural beauty, and unique in its character.

Please acknowledge receipt of this letter, and of our objections to the plan.

Yours faithfully





OBJECTIONS TO

WARRINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN **SOUTH WEST URBAN EXTENSION FRAMEWORK PLAN**

POPULATION AND CHANGE IN WARRINGTON COUNCIL AREAS

Current modern Borough of Warrington was formed in 1974 as a result of Local Government Reorganisation.

This incorporated the former County Borough of Warrington, and a number of other areas, including parts of Warrington RDC, Parts of Runcorn RDC, and some small councils, such as Lymm UDC.

This followed the designation of Warrington as a New Town by the Government as part of New Town Development in 1968.

The latest population figures for Warrington in 2015 is estimated to be almost 208,000, comprising of 85,000 households. This is approximately double the population of the area prior to New Town development in 1968. There has been an increase of around 8% in the number of people living in the area since the mid-1990s.

Many of the areas incorporated into the new WBC in 1974 were predominantly farming communities

INFRASTRUCTURE

There have been few major changes within Warrington in recent years.

The new Warrington Bridge was built in around 1910. A further adjacent crossing was made in 1986, which was effectively the construction of a roundabout.

Kingsway Bridge, the only other Mersey crossing in the town, was opened in 1934.

Wilderspool Bridge was built over the railway and opened in 1957 to replace the existing level crossing, as a continuation of Warrington Bridge, linking it to Wilderspool Causeway and Chester Road.

The much loved swing bridges over the Manchester Ship Canal were built in the 1890s, when the canal was constructed. We are told that the number of ships using the canal will be increasing significantly over the next few years. Having experienced the traffic chaos caused by these bridges when they are opened to allow boats to pass through, I can only imagine what things will then be like.

There have been some road improvements made, and some sections of dual carriageway build, but these have mainly resulted in traffic being channeled into the town more quickly, but still having to cross over the Mersey at Bridge Foot.

In addition to this, we now have the opening of the new Runcorn-Widnes Bridge to look forward to. This will be a toll road. Once this happens, it will result in a large increase in the number of cars passing through the town, as people will refuse to pay the tolls imposed on the new bridge.

We are now told that a further 25,000 houses are going to be built in the Warrington area, which will result in a further 75,000 cars using the town, at a conservative estimate.

The proposed new road will result in some relief from the congestion of traffic passing through the town between Bank Quay and Chester Road, but may only result in more congestion elsewhere, notably the Chester Road area.

OTHER PROBLEMS

In addition to problems with road chaos, there are other aspects of the local infrastructure which will not be able to support the proposed development area, notably Medical Services.

GP's surgeries already struggle to cope with the number of patients they have, as do the local hospitals. An additional 100,000 people is going to stretch them to breaking point.



HERITAGE

The majority of the buildings contained within this area are Locally Listed. There are also other properties adjoining the site on the Listed Buildings/Locally Listed Buildings list. We know the map contained within the plan which shows these buildings is not complete. For example, our own property is on the Locally Listed Buildings list, but not shown on the map. The Bridgewater Canal has a number of bridges which are also on the list. These precious assets need to be protected at all costs, and building almost 2000 houses around them is not the best way to do so.

THE IMPORTANCE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS GREEN BELT LAND

The purpose of the Green Belt is to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas. It is also to prevent towns merging, so safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

Contrary to this protection, Warrington's proposed South West Urban Extension extends Warrington's urban expansion all the way up to the Runcorn/Halton boundary, leaving no green gap or space between Warrington and Runcorn.

By doing so, **the proposed development plan complies with none of the obligations of the Local Authority to prevent the merging of the urban sprawls of Warrington and Runcorn.**

This south west area of Warrington includes large areas of ancient woodland which were part of the former Walton Estate. This includes Walton Park and Gardens, Walton Hall Golf Course, The Crematorium, and Walton Village, which is, of course a Conservation Area.

Adjacent to this is the farmland on which it is now intend to build. The whole of this area is incredibly popular with cyclists and walkers, and is a green area unmatched anywhere else in Warrington. **It is a Flagship rural leisure area for the Town.**

There is a distance of approximately 1 kilometre only between the Conservation Areas of Walton Village and Moore Village. The two areas are linked by the Bridgewater Canal, and Runcorn Road. **It is vital** that the areas of farmland surrounding these links are kept as Green Belt, free from urban sprawl.

This is the only way to fulfil the purpose and requirements of the Green Belt – that is, to stop towns merging, and to keep Warrington separate from Runcorn, and thus maintaining this beautiful rural gap between the two towns, and separating Runcorn’s and Warrington’s urban sprawls.

The Bridgewater Canal in this area is an immensely popular and a precious green link between the Conservation areas of Walton and Moore villages.

This 1 kilometre stretch of canal runs through working Green Belt **which is productive farmland**, and is totally unspoilt. It is **NOT**, as stated by Warrington Borough Council, performing poorly. A variety of crops are grown in the fields – it is intensively farmed throughout the entire area of the proposed development. There are fine rural views on both sides of it. The purpose of the Green Belt in this area is **NOT** ‘generally weaker’, as stated in the WBC Local Plan FAQs. All this land is consistently intensively worked and cropped by the local farming community.

Green Belt land is there for many reasons. One of these is to allow people who may not otherwise be able to do so to experience something of the beauty of the English countryside, to see wildlife in its’ natural habitat, to see crops in the fields. The proximity of the area to the immensely popular Walton Park gives this opportunity to numerous residents of Warrington.

There is a wide diversity of wild birds, animals and flowers supported by this area of Green Belt. **If the development goes ahead, all this will be gone.**

The Plan talks of preserving the character of Warrington. That character has all but gone, destroyed by the invasive developments already completed. Places like Appleton are a shadow of their former selves.

It is the duty of the planners to preserve what little of the character of the area that is still left.

If Warrington is ever going to attain a City of Culture status, it needs to preserve and enhance such unique and irreplaceable heritage and conservation areas as it still has, by keeping urban sprawl well away from such popular and important areas of outstanding natural beauty.

IN CONCLUSION

Warrington South West Urban Extension must not be allowed to merge Walton with Runcorn.

A small and unique Green Belt gap already exists. **It is an area of outstanding natural beauty**, and a haven for wildlife, flora and fauna.

The proximity of this area to the immensely popular Walton Park, gives opportunity for numerous residents of Warrington to appreciate this unique area, this Green Belt area, which also serves to separate the towns of Warrington and Runcorn.

IT MUST NOT BE LOST

This is a small but vital Green Belt link area which is enormously popular with the residents of both Warrington and Runcorn.

Objections submitted by:-

