





Dear Sir/Madam,

Warrington Borough Council – Local Plan Preferred Development Option



I am writing to object to Warrington Borough Council's Local Plan PDO on a number of fronts.

Whilst I have specific objections relating to the options that will affect Moore, I also have more general objections to the Council's proposal to build 9,000 homes on greenbelt land across Warrington, much of it on what is currently greenbelt land on the south side of the town. The Government's current White Paper on housing states:

Green Belt land

Our Manifesto commits ours to be the first generation to leave the natural environment better than we found it – which we will take forward through our 25 Year Environment Plan. The Green Belt is highly valued by communities, particularly those on the edge of urban areas. The fundamental aim of Green Belt, since its introduction in the 1950s, has been to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. It has been largely successful in this aim – the percentage of land covered by Green Belt has remained at around 13% since at least 1997.³³ However parts of it are not the green fields we often picture, and public access can be limited, depending on ownership and rights of way.

In the last Parliament, the Government increased Green Belt protection by abolishing the unpopular and counter-productive Regional Strategies that sought to delete areas of Green Belt. Our manifesto reiterated our commitment to protecting the Green Belt. The National Planning Policy Framework is already clear that Green Belt boundaries should be amended only “in exceptional circumstances” when plans are being prepared or revised, but does not define what those circumstances are. The Government wants to retain a high bar to ensure the Green Belt remains protected, but we also wish to be transparent about what this means in practice so that local communities can hold their councils to account.

Therefore we propose to amend and add to national policy to make clear that:

- *authorities should amend Green Belt boundaries **only** when they can demonstrate that they have **examined fully** all other reasonable options for meeting their identified development requirements, including:*
 - *making effective use of suitable brownfield sites and the opportunities offered by estate regeneration;*
 - *the potential offered by land which is currently underused, including surplus public sector land where appropriate;*
 - *optimising the proposed density of development; and*
 - *exploring whether other authorities can help to meet some of the identified development*

requirement.

• *and where land is removed from the Green Belt, local policies should require the impact to be offset by compensatory improvements to the environmental quality or accessibility of remaining Green Belt land. We will also explore whether higher contributions can be collected from development as a consequence of land being released from the Green Belt.*

I do not believe that WBC has met these requirements. It has neither shown 'exceptional circumstances', nor proved that the necessary homes cannot be provided through effective use of suitable brownfield sites. The suggestion that 24,000 new homes are needed is highly questionable and does not match the Government's own projections. It is my belief that the true housing need is substantially lower and can be met entirely, or almost entirely, through building on brownfield sites.

Specific objections in relation to the options that will impact Moore are:

1. According to the Government's National Planning Framework, one of the primary purposes of the Green Belt is to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas and prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another. Moore village sits on the border between Warrington & Halton borough councils and, with the Sandymoor development to one side and Warrington's South Western Urban extension on the other, the towns of Warrington and Runcorn would quite literally merge into one another.
2. While taking account of the natural and historic assets within its own borough, the Council has failed to consider the likely impact on Moore, which immediately adjoins Warrington's boundary but is in Halton. Moore is a historic village, with a Conservation area, several listed buildings and many natural resources enjoyed by Warrington residents, eg. footpaths, canal towpaths, Moore Nature Reserve. All of these assets will be severely impacted by the proposed South Western Urban extension.
3. The Port Warrington proposal (part of the Waterfront area) indicates a large distribution centre with huge warehousing to the north of the Manchester Ship Canal, which would have a catastrophic impact on the lives of the residents of Promenade Park, on Moss Lane. There are 80+ homes on this site - accounting for nearly a quarter of the population of the village - and their homes directly overlook this area. The majority of people living here have chosen to retire to Promenade Park because of its pleasant, open setting and relatively peaceful environment. This will be ruined by the implementation of warehousing which will create noise disruption and seriously harm the visual amenity.
4. As a regular visitor to Moore Nature Reserve, taking photographs, viewing wildlife and walking my dog, I am particularly concerned that the Port Warrington /Waterfront option appears to totally encompass the reserve. This area is a safe haven from a vast array of wildlife, including Kingfishers and other rare species. It has been managed and tended for many years by a small team of employees and volunteers. It is a place that is enjoyed by very many people from across the Warrington area and I strongly believe it should be retained as a natural asset and protected from development.
5. I do not believe that the local infrastructure can cope with the planned expansion. Our roads are already totally clogged up every time there is a problem on the M56, M6 or Runcorn-Widnes bridge. This will only be made worse with the opening of the new tolled Mersey crossing very soon. I understand that the PDO is intrinsically linked with the plans for a new Mersey crossing at Warrington (aka The Red Route) but, given the Council is seeking to provide land for 24,000 more homes, which would bring with them somewhere in the order of 50,000 more cars on our roads, I fail to see how such a crossing will alleviate the current congestions. We will simply find ourselves back at square one - or worse.
6. I am also acutely aware that our local medical centres are already unable to cope with demand. I have found myself unable to get an appointment at my own surgery on numerous

occasions. Doctors, dentists and other essential services are already completely overstretched. Our town simply does not have the resources or infrastructure to cope with 24,000 more homes.

For all of these reasons I wish to register my objections to the proposed Warrington Local Plan Preferred Development Option.

Yours faithfully,

