



Dear Sirs,

Preferred Development Option (PDO)

As a resident of Grappenhall, I would like to make comments as detailed below, particularly with regard to the proposed “Garden City Suburb”.

City status

References are made throughout the document to Warrington City – why is this, particularly as even Warrington Borough Council (WBC) has stated it has no plans at present to become a city? Is this driving the assumption that around 24000 new houses over the next 20 years? Many residents do not wish Warrington to be a city as they cannot see any benefits - there are already two major cities within a few miles of the town.

Housing

With the Government’s recently-issued new methodology for calculating housing needs for the period 2017 to 2027, does this not mean the PDO calculations are now premature and overstated?

Furthermore, the type of housing that would be built in south Warrington will not generate local employment – the majority of residents will travel out of the area, and mainly into the larger conurbations via the already-stretched motorway network. Has WBC consulted with Highways England and other authorities on the impact of the PDO?

Employment

The main type of development for employment currently around Warrington is nothing but warehousing, covering vast areas with “sheds”. The majority of their employees travel in from other areas by road, and in addition, these developments generate large amounts of heavy vehicle movements. Creation of more will exacerbate the current traffic issues (see below).

Traffic/Transport Infrastructure

Most journeys in south Warrington are carried out by using cars, mainly because there are very poor alternatives. Currently, the local bus services outside Stockton Heath hardly exist after early evening. Even during the daytime, buses are just withdrawn without explanation.

There are no alternatives to using cars/buses in south Warrington – no railway, for instance. No consideration seems to have been considered/included in the PDO as to what alternatives may be possible. Furthermore, it would appear that there has not been a detailed traffic survey done to support the assumptions made in the PDO.

There are already vast traffic problems in the whole of south Warrington, particularly when there are problems on the surrounding motorway network, Warrington being almost completely surrounded by motorways. Whenever there is a problem closing lanes after an incident, or even closing a whole stretch of the motorway as happened recently, the whole of south Warrington is flooded with traffic, bringing chaos to the surrounding major and minor road network. These issues also affect the town centre and surrounding areas. We do not yet know the impact of putting tolls on the Mersey Gateway and Jubilee Bridges, which may generate even more traffic through Bridgefoot.

In addition to the above, with the **existing** traffic flows there are already a number of points where the traffic is already over capacity – A49 through Stockton Heath, where, for most of the day, traffic is at a crawl; Lumb Brook Road canal bridge/Grappenhall Road/Ackers Road junction; A49 London Road/Lyons Lane traffic lights. And, when ships are progressing along the Manchester Ship Canal and the bridges are open to them, there are significant delays and traffic build-up, compounded when there are motorway incidents. I cannot see any consideration has been given as to how to properly alleviate these issues?

There is no indication from the proposals as to how traffic generated by the developments would access the town centre other than by existing roads. That is, apart from a line drawn on the plans along part of the Trans Pennine Trail which terminates in the middle of Latchford!

Environment

I can see no evidence of studies on the effect on wildlife habitats if green belt land is released, or on the additional air pollution which will be generated by the increase in vehicle use – Warrington already has one of the poorest air qualities in the region. Surely these studies should have been carried out before the PDO was issued?

Green Belt/Brownfield Development

If the plan is reduced to a more achievable 15 year period, indications are that there are sufficient brownfield sites available without having to concrete over the green fields, particularly if, as expected, the site of e.g. Fiddlers Ferry power station becomes available for development. What are the “exceptional circumstances” that justify the wholesale destruction of the green belt in south

Warrington? Most of the green belt land is being actively farmed – if Brexit goes ahead, there may be implications for importing food in the future, and more may need to be produced in the UK.

Again, with the Government's recently-issued new methodology for calculating housing needs for the period 2017 to 2027, does this not mean the PDO calculations are now premature and overstated?

Local Villages

Currently, the villages of south Warrington are entirely distinct from each other, each with its own identity. If the Garden City Suburb goes ahead, there will be just one urban sprawl, with no proper centre – the individual identities will disappear. Furthermore, has consideration been given to the effect on the existing conservation areas in south Warrington?

One of the objectives of the PDO is to regenerate the town centre area. How will this be achieved if development is pushed to the peripheral villages (particularly south of the Manchester Ship Canal)?

Town Centre

The town centre is currently a cultural desert. There is nothing to attract residents to visit, either during the day (with shops such as M&S closing), nor at night (if one can travel there other than by car). If more development was concentrated closer to the town centre, the regeneration as envisaged in the PDO may be achievable. By concentrating development on the periphery, this will only destroy even more of the town centre.

Conclusion

The PDO undermines the regeneration of the town centre by the creation of the Garden City Suburb, and destroys the character of the villages and major areas of green belt in the process.

It would appear that other options have not been seriously considered, if at all. In the light of the recently-issued Government guidelines, the whole PDO needs to be re-addressed.

It doesn't address environmental issues (wildlife, air pollution, etc.).

It doesn't resolve the existing traffic issues, never mind creating even more.

There needs to be consultation with, e.g. Highways England, on the impact of the additional traffic that would be generated on the major road network.

There should be consultation with adjoining authorities to try to achieve some co-ordination across the board.