




Dear Sir,

Response to the Warrington Local Plan: Preferred Development Option Regulation 18 Consultation

As you will see from my address, I do not live in the south Warrington area, but I have long associations with Grappenhall and have friends and family there. I therefore feel obliged to express my disbelief and outrage at what the council is proposing in its Development Plan.

- **Consultation.** This has been completely unsatisfactory, with the consultation period being sprung on residents over the Summer holiday, when many people would be on holiday (including officials who therefore could not be contacted). Parish Councils were also on their summer break. Pressure on the council achieved an extra 2 weeks after the original deadline, but still not much when one's way of life is at stake. I understand there was no direct contact with residents and the information you have given them has been very poor, indeed often contradictory. There is a lot of confusion over key issues, places where the council ought to be making an effort to be especially clear. Originally no consultation meetings were planned in south Warrington, the area most affected, and the two events eventually set up were inconvenient to attend and very much over-subscribed. Far more were needed.
- **Reliability of evidence.** The evidence base appears to have been provided by work from consultancy companies who also work for the developers and landowners who stand to make a great deal of money if this scheme goes ahead. That presumably explains why the whole scheme is driven by economic and developmental arguments instead of the interests of the people of Warrington who the council is elected to protect and represent. Residents need to be told who is collating this evidence, what links they have to the developers, who will be doing the independent adjudication and any relevant government guidance.
- **New City ambitions.** That could be taken more seriously if Warrington first addressed its existing problems. It is a good place to live for most at the moment – but not all, and some areas of the town, particularly the centre, rather let it down. Forget the delusions of

grandeur, work on what is already there. Again, there is uncertainty over what exactly is proposed here; council comments in the press do not make city ambitions plain, but the Development Plan makes numerous references to City status as though it is a “done deal” despite application for that status having been turned down twice. Is this all the proposed development is about?

- **Housing need.** According to the DCLG document “2014-based Household Projections: England 2014-2039, Housing Statistical release” the number of extra households in Warrington were predicted to be between 440 and 840 a year over a 25 year period, starting in 2012. So where does the figure of 1113 the council is quoting come from? This seems to be linked to a purely speculative assumption that Warrington is due to become part of a devolved authority with Cheshire, a proposal which has not yet had even an initial consultation. How can the council inflate its assessment of new houses needed to accommodate something which may never actually happen? The reliability of these figures becomes even more questionable when one reads that a large part of the government’s projected figures takes immigration into account and that has now been thrown into complete disarray by Brexit.

The housing white paper does, however, state that local communities should have more control of local development and what form it takes, an area in which Warrington is failing spectacularly. It repeats what has already been strongly said by successive governments that the green belt should be protected and environmental issues be prime considerations. Failed again. Homes that are built should be homes that people “want to live alongside as well as in”, as stated by Rt. Hon. Sajid Javid M.P. Failed again. But it also promises increased planning fees for Local Authorities building new homes – could it be that that is really at the heart of all these proposals? Money! The other failures do not matter as long as the council (and developers, and landowners) make money!

- **Loss of Green belt land.** The council’s proposals involve a massive loss of greenbelt land. I am heavily into environmental issues and treasure nature in all its forms. No one can dispute that building over such a massive area can have anything other than a detrimental effect of wildlife. But over and above that, one of the chief stated aims of greenbelt policy is to prevent urban sprawl and keep land permanently open. What is proposed will be a catastrophe for all who are caught up in it. Policy is rather to keep settlements individual and use brownfield sites rather than green and pleasant land. Various government statements emphasise that greenbelt land should only be released in the most exceptional circumstances, and economic and housing needs should not over-ride environmental ones.
- **Finally, traffic.** When visiting Grappenhall I leave the M6 south of Thelwall viaduct and take the A50 towards Warrington. I drive through pleasant countryside which the council is proposing to turn into something which is a town in its own right. Inhabitants of this new conurbation are going to turn out of their drives in a morning and head for the M6/M56 junction, adding to traffic which is already grid-locked on frequent occasions. That is something that most people can see; the council is creating a dormitory town for Manchester, Liverpool, Chester, even Birmingham. Very few people will be boosting the economy of the town itself. For those who do turn towards the town centre there appears to be conflicting information as to how the extra traffic will be dealt with. Council Officers at the Lymm meeting said exact routes were not yet determined but certainly the level of

infrastructure shown in the Consultation document would be needed, while the council's Executive Director for Environment and Regeneration says no detailed traffic modelling has been started as yet. Sounds to me very like "Let's build then worry about the practicalities afterwards". This "maybe we will maybe we won't" approach won't do. There is a plan attached to the Preferred Development option which shows a blue dotted line which follows part of the Trans-Pennine Trail then crosses the Mersey at the disused Latchford high-level bridge. Presumably this is the crossing referred to in Para. 5.32 of the document where it states a new high-level connection *may* be needed. Will it, or won't it? It will blight the lives of a large number of home owners in the area below and near it, but are they not deserving of the council's honesty? What is going to happen to the Trans Pennine Trail? Let's have some facts instead of flummery and contradiction.

I could go on at much further length as there are many more aspects to this ill-judged plan which I have not touched on. The loss of amenities afforded by the greenbelt, the loss of leisure opportunities such as the Trans-Pennine Trail, the lack of consideration for good things Warrington already has such as the waterways, the pleasant approach to the south side of the town, the fine architecture of Grappenhall village centre, the sense of community which will be destroyed by development on such a scale. So many things being neglected when the council should be addressing them instead of seeking glory as a city; the unemployed, the tired town centre, managing the traffic which already exists. I am not a voter in your area, but I know what I would be doing at the next elections if I were.

Yours faithfully,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the sender.