



Objection letter: Warrington Borough Council Local Plan Preferred Development Option

Aside of the fact that WBC failed to actively notify residents of the plan other than via its own website (no flyers to residents) and the initial short consultation period (since extended) during school holidays, there are so any objections on many fronts, it is difficult to put them all into one document. Below are my principal objections:-

Garden City Suburb

The Development Concept document on WBC website (South Warrington Urban Extension Framework Plan Document – Final June 2017) outlines the proposed development in the Stretton, Appleton, Grappenhall areas.

Some development has always been expected due to the land being marked for future development for many years. However, the call by WBC for proposals to submit further parcels of land for additional development has resulted in an overly excessive assessment of the growth needs for Warrington. Many of the development options are utilising Green Belt which should be the absolute bottom of the list for any development needs.

According to the National Planning Policy Framework there are five stated purposes of including land within the green belt:

- To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas
- To prevent neighbouring towns from 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.

Once an area of land has been defined as green belt, the stated opportunities and benefits include:

- Providing opportunities for access to the open countryside for the urban population
- Providing opportunities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation near urban areas
- The retention of attractive landscapes and the enhancement of landscapes, near to where people live
- Improvement of damaged and derelict land around towns
- The securing of nature conservation interests
- The retention of land in agricultural, forestry and related uses.

By wishing to create the Garden City Suburb, WBC is totally failing in all of the above points. One of the benefits to ALL residents of Warrington is that we do have Green Belt which is for the use of all of us to enjoy, through walking/cycling trails, ancient woodland (The Dingle), listed buildings, canals, etc. The whole nature of this development is an affront to anybody who has any liking of the countryside. The wildlife, listed trees, etc. will be decimated.

The new residents of this proposed development will, according to WBC thinking, be employed locally. I think not. There would be a mixture of people working locally and also in areas reachable via the M56 and M6. The increased traffic and resultant proposed extra roads will totally destroy the whole concept

of villages in the South of Warrington. Residents enjoy trips to Stockton Heath, Stretton, Appleton Thorn, Grappenhall, Thelwall and Lymm precisely because they ARE villages and not just another suburb of Warrington sprawl. Many of the roads that cross the Bridgewater Canal do so via single track roads over hump back bridges which are all listed. Or does WBC have it in their sights to get Peel Holdings (owner of the Bridgewater Canal) to accidentally destroy these bridges to enable wider ones to be built to accommodate additional traffic.

On the subject of traffic, as was reported in Warrington Worldwide the World Health Organisation rated Warrington as the SECOND WORST town in the North West of England in air pollution. Bringing thousands more cars into the neighbourhood over the coming years is only going to make this worse. We also have terrible traffic congestion across the town already, which again will get worse with more cars, regardless of new routes planned.

<http://www.warrington-worldwide.co.uk/2016/05/17/warrington-named-and-shamed-for-air-pollution/>

Having a “Country Park” at the centre of this Garden City Suburb not the same as having the beauty of the countryside.

Warrington as a City

For a number of years Warrington has had an aspiration to gain and bid for City status culminating in the countrywide competition to celebrate the Queen’s Golden Jubilee. City status can only be awarded by royal decree and Warrington was unsuccessful in that bid. Why does Warrington still continue pursuit of city status when it is highly likely that it cannot be attained?

It is stated in the PDO that objective W1 is that the prime need is to change Warrington from a town to a city. This is now a flawed concept. This misguided aspiration and vision of city status appears to be firmly driving unrealistically high economic and population growth over the next 20 years. These unrealistic projections for disproportionate population growth would appear to be driving this need for additional housing, which WBC maintain can only be provided by the uptake of green belt land. This aspiration does not warrant or justify the need for WBC to claim ‘Exceptional Circumstance’ in the use of green belt land.

Brown Field Sites

My understanding is that other potentially developable urban sites in the north and east of Warrington were included in the call for sites exercise but have not been considered for inclusion in the PDO. If so, how can “exceptional justification” be claimed for the use green belt land in South Warrington

It is likely that Fiddlers Ferry Power Station will close down within a couple of years, and yet there doesn’t appear to be mention of utilising this area for future development. Surely if this site became available then it would drastically reduce the need for concreting over Green Belt land.

I note that the old Wilderspool Stadium site is still a derelict area and that too could be utilised for residential property.

Warrington – General points

Whilst the following couple of points may not be classed as an objection to the PDO, they are in my opinion, symptomatic of the way that WBC operate and therefore may have indirectly influenced the PDO.

- Too many retail outlets in the centre of Warrington are currently empty. Every road / street around the town centre has evidence of slow decay of retail outlets. Yes the Bridge Street redevelopment

may make it smarter, but Warrington is currently NOT a town to attract more residents. Hence I would dispute the need for so many new properties on the South side of Warrington.

- Moody's 2-notch downgrade on WBC from Aa2 to A1 (26th September 2017). This is a reflection of WBC's risk appetite and projected increased debt burden. WBC have a higher risk appetite to that of other local authorities and includes the investment in the new Challenger Bank which I am totally opposed to. Are these the reasons why WBC feel it necessary to have too close a relationship with Peel Holdings who are one of the main drivers of the increased waterside developments? Is it also the driver for more housing and employment to try to pay off spiralling debts?

This latter point gives me cause for concern that WBC are not competent enough to manage the enormous financial challenge that they are committing to with the PDO.

