

Warrington Borough Council's Local Plan Preferred Development Option Regulation 18 Consultation - July 2017

Comments and objections related to the proposals

1. Development Needs - New Homes

The driving force for the Local Plan Review which has led to the PDO is claimed to be the need for new housing. The PDO contain four different figures for the number of homes required per annum over a 20-year period; 839, 955, 1113 and 1332. The figure chosen as the baseline for development of the PDO is given as 1113 homes per annum.

There is no explanation of the methodology underlying the selection of this number. It is opaque and lacking any sound analysis.

The method of calculating how much Green Belt land should be released shows that the need for Green Belt release is very sensitive to the housing figure. A robust justification for the number of homes used should be provided, but this is not the case. This is a critical flaw in the baseline foundation of the PDO.

Whatever that number might be it is certainly fewer new homes than the PDO projection. The need to build 24,220 houses over the next 20 years is not established or proven.

Using the Office of National Statistics and other sources, the forecast population growth for Warrington by 2037 is only 25,400. This, including the 5% increase used in the report and adding in the current backlog, equates to only 12,442 houses. The significant population increase suggested by the PDO proposals is not adequately explained or justified.

Given the highly questionable derivation of the numbers used to support the PDO proposals the 'exceptional circumstances' required by the NPPF to support release of land from Green Belt is not proven.

2. Strategic Objectives

Garden City suburb concept

The local Plan details the creation of one big Southern suburb rather than the distinct separate individual villages. The draft local plan states, "The initial development concept envisages this area will be focused around three green neighbourhoods centred around a new district centre."