

Responder

[REDACTED] a resident of Warrington.

General

The present consultation is massively flawed in that it allows the public only to consider details of the plans but neither reveals the reasons nor source of the plan for scrutiny or debate. By delving into detail one can discover that the seeds of the plan are to be found in the Warrington and Cheshire Growth Pilot from 2014 where the plan for supporting Peel Holdings and the HCA in South Warrington is laid out in support for ring-fencing of HCA revenues for infrastructure spending – essentially completing the New Town project. This was then rolled into the Cheshire Devolution deal for which no details are to be found by the public, only a summary which discloses housing requirements of 26000 to 2040 and job growth of 5500 to the same date. This devolution plan for Warrington is the Warrington New City proposal from 2016 and is the actual unpublished basis for the growth requirement which is the basis for the Local plan update, the immediate status of which was called for in the Strategic Economic Plan dated March 2014. The hearing of the Administrative Court which quashed parts of the Core Strategy did not occur until 29/2/2015 after the decision to go for growth in the Strategic Economic Plan had already been published. Consequently the claim in the press by Andy Farrell that the new local plan is mainly driven by the quashing of parts of the old one is clearly bogus. That there is duplicity is underlined by the outline and detail planning permissions for housing at Omega being given after the quashing of text in the Core Strategy which was intended to authorise it.

There is no detail available as to the transition from the LEP's Strategic Economic Plan to the Devolution update. Only a summary of the devolution update with headline numbers is available. It appears that the SMHA report was worked out to accept those numbers and reject those derived from the DCLG forecasts based on demographic data. It is significant that the demographic rate were based on a 2014 forecast whilst the actual data for migration rates to March this year have fallen. This means that the forecast being used by the council was significantly (50%) larger than the DCLG forecast and will be even more inflated when compared to the new forecast due to be produced by the ONS in 2018.

The entire local plan is demonstrably linked to an unsupported ambition to grow the Town to an even larger extent than was proposed by the New Town, this is presumably the source of the epithet "New City" which has rightly attracted much animosity. The current proposal is a significant reversal of the no-growth reaction to the end of the New Town. The policy of constraint of growth promoted in the 2006 UDP had the further side effect of inappropriately growing green belt without the compelling reason which the High Court confirmed was required. This meant that [REDACTED] assumption that compelling reason was only required to remove Green Belt and not to add it was flawed as confirmed by the Judge in the Pell Hall case. The land in South Warrington needs to be admitted as bogus Green Belt and the council needs to apologise for its mistake. That means it could

revert to the Cheshire Structure Plan as the proper source of Green belt policy and then establish new boundaries within the Planning framework with proper lasting and detailed boundaries.

Answers to specific Questions.

1. Do you have any comments to make about how we've worked out the need for new homes and employment land in Warrington over the next 20 years?

The need for houses and employment is not explained in the documents. The Review of Warrington Employment Targets to 2040 by Metro Dynamics appears to be particularly poor since it contains review information but does not seek to justify the forecasts used in the Strategic Economic Plan of the LEP, but simply regurgitates them. The details seem to have originated in the shadowy Warrington and Co, whose Managing Director Steve Park is not listed as a Director of the company at Companies House. That really means that Langtree and other companies are driving the plan and I note that Langtree's CEO is also Chairman on the Cheshire and Warrington LEP. The forecasts for employment seemed to have been consistently over-egged and I also note that Metro-Dynamics state "it is conceivable that the town will grow at an accelerated rate above the baseline forecasts". I see that as being damned by faint praise and whilst the authors were paid to support the plan predetermined by Warrington and Co they do not confidently believe that reality will so far exceed the Oxford and Cambridge Economics forecast, and nor do I.

2. Do you have any comments to make about how we've worked out the number of homes and amount of employment land that can be accommodated within Warrington's existing built up areas?

I am rather concerned that the plans incorporated by reference for the Town Centre include the destruction of Asda Cockhedge and Sainsbury's Church Street supermarkets. I believe that the latter's Freehold is owned by the retailer so the plan suggests more compulsory purchase. In general the whole plan assumes things which make no sense. In the City Centre plan the former ASDA warehouse is subsumed by a road from Guardian Street and in another page of the same document used for housing. The document is based upon a marketing story and does not stand up to detailed scrutiny. I conclude that the rest is unsustainable too. For example there are no indicative housing density targets.

3. Have we appropriately worked out the amount of land to be released from the Green Belt, including the amount of land to be 'safeguarded'?

Rather a lot of Green Belt in the south is not really green belt at all. The justification for separation is not made in this or the 2006 UDP which introduced it. I have no concerns about the loss of green belt because my view is that most of it never met the enduring purpose requirements for Green Belt, that being nothing to do with being pretty countryside.

4. Do you agree with the new Local Plan Objectives?

No. The objectives have not been subject to public scrutiny and the will to reduce development from the New Town era is still clearly gripping the public consciousness. The transport infrastructure that was needed for a town of the current size was thwarted by the petty local

politics of Labour Council versus the New Town Development Corporation and Cheshire County Council prior to 1974. We still live with those consequences today and that needs fixing which would be an appropriate use of funds from the Public Works Loans Board. If the project was limited to that aim I could support it but instead it is adding the size of Warrington by more than 50000 above the New Target and only providing new infrastructure for the new homes without fixing the historic problems. The plan is not fit for purpose.

5. Do you have any comments to make about how we've assessed different 'Spatial Options' for Warrington's future development?

The chosen strategy supports my view that the detailed Green Belt extensions in 2006 were unsafe and I have no concern about losing green belt provided the Objectives of the final Cheshire County Structure plan continue to be met.

6. Do you have any comments to make about how we've assessed different options for the main development locations?

The document fails to mention that the die was cast back in 2014 in the LEP Growth Pilot where the council agreed to work with the HCA provided that proceeds were ring fenced for infrastructure. The work in the consultation was a foregone conclusion as was the development of Port Warrington and the areas around. There seems little point in commenting really, however the Garden City is clearly intended to be lower cost housing than the existing ones at Appleton and therefore needs roads to Warrington centre for employment. That scenario aligns with the HCA policy objectives and the road is needed. Unfortunately the opposition is growing and it may have been better to tell the truth over a longer period of time and not hide the road proposals.

7. Do you agree with our Preferred Development Option for meeting Warrington's future development needs?

No, the infrastructure requirements are ill-described but vital. I assume that this is to prevent objections but the issues need more courageous handling.

8. Do you have any comments to make about our Preferred Development Option for the City Centre?

I prefer to wait for the detailed stage.

9. Do you have any comments to make about our Preferred Development Option for developing the Warrington Waterfront?

I prefer to wait for the detailed stage.

10. Do you have any comments to make about our Preferred Development Option for the Warrington Garden City Suburb?

This is to be welcomed and needed to take the load away from Westbrook, Chapelford and Omega which have/will been overdeveloped.

11. Do you have any comments to make about our Preferred Development Option for the South Western Urban Extension?

No.

12. Do you have any comments to make about our Preferred Development Option for development in the Outlying Settlements?

No.

13. Do you agree with our approach to providing new employment land?

Yes.

14. Do you agree with our suggested approach for dealing with Gypsy and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople sites?

Yes. It is necessary to minimise objections and the chosen sites seem appropriate.

15. Do you agree with our suggested approach for dealing with Minerals and Waste?

No comment

16. Having read the Preferred Development Option Document, is there anything else you feel we should include within the Local Plan?

More detail of the road proposals and in particular how we will mitigate the abysmal performance of the Motorway network which blights the town with diversion traffic and how the extra diverting load from the Runcorn Toll Bridge is to be handled. Let us make clear what the bill is for Halton that they undertook to help pay, the time for being nice to neighbouring Labour councils is over after their demands scuppered free use for Warrington residents. The Western link will intensify the problems in Westbrook and at the ASDA junction in particular. The council has too cosy a position with ASDA and the traffic projections showed overloading after the new development at the Westbrook Centre. The Western link and motorway diversion traffic from the M6 will utterly overwhelm Cromwell Avenue meaning that the ASDA Westbrook development was not sustainable. We need a plan for how to cope with this issue since the Western link appears key to the plans objectives but its side-effects have been completely ignored.