

I have recently become aware of the PDO and am writing to express my dismay and opposition to the proposal in its entirety for the following reasons.

### **The consultation process itself**

1. There are far too many areas and issues all covered in the same consultation document. The response form and the accompanying documents feel overwhelming and are likely to put a lot of people off responding at all.
2. The information provided about the PDO is very complex and lengthy and difficult to understand. There appear to be contradictions and inconsistencies. Again, this is likely to put people off trying to understand what is being proposed and make them less likely to engage with the consultation.
3. There have been far too few public meetings organized by WBC and those that have been organized have been very busy, which has been difficult for some residents, and the meetings have not offered the clarity that residents are seeking. It is sad that requests for more meetings have been refused, even when made by MP and former Mayor Faisal Rashid.
4. Communication about the PDO and the consultation has been very poor to the point of feeling like dereliction of duty on the part of WBC. Without local activists on social media I would not have known the PDO even existed. All Warrington residents should have had a letter about something as important as this. In contrast, I have received four letters this summer with questionnaires related to local leisure facilities and about local transport. I fail to see how it is OK to send four letters about these relatively small, though still important, issues and no letters at all about something so huge.
5. The timing of the consultation during school summer holidays when many people are away and then busy with the beginning of the academic year has been very poor.
6. The more suspicious and cynical among us feel all these difficulties are intentional on the part of WBC. Sadly, the appalling way in which the consultation has been handled has hugely increased the sense of mistrust residents are feeling. Honesty and openness is what residents want but we are not getting it from WBC and the opinion being frequently voiced locally is that a few people behind the scenes are pursuing this for their own financial gain or to increase their own personal influence and power. This is unethical and not what elected councilors are meant to do. I wonder if the Council has taken into consideration the likelihood that there will be a measurable increase in stress, anxiety and depression being experienced by thousands of local people who feel their homes and ways of life are under threat. Are local physical and mental health services geared up to deal with the inevitable consequences?

### **Overall ambitions of the PDO**

1. I didn't move to Warrington because it was a city or had plans to become a city. I don't like cities and if Warrington becomes any more like a city I will have to think about moving elsewhere, which would be very sad for me and my family. If other highly trained professionals like myself living and working in Warrington

feel the same as me (and the indications are that they do) there may be a significant exodus of dedicated and skilled workers from essential services in the town.

2. I've never heard any other residents voice an ambition for Warrington to become a city. I imagine most people who have specifically chosen to live here do so because they are happy living in a town. In other words, they have chosen not to live in a city! It's not like we are short of cities nearby to live in or visit should we wish to. We can't possibly compete with Liverpool, Manchester and Chester, nor should we. There's no need. We have something different here – something gentler, calmer, lower key. Being a town is good. The assumption that bigger is better, on which this grand plan seems to be based, is inherently and demonstrably flawed. Why can't Warrington focus on quality, not quantity and promote greater ambitions for community spirit, respect for the environment and becoming a greener and cleaner town rather than rushing headlong towards urbanisation?

### **Proposed housing figures**

1. The huge number of houses proposed seems to be based solely on questionable government targets and statistics rather than actual proven need (ie, current homeless figures) or an actual desire on behalf of the current residents. WBC needs to resist government pressure in this respect.
2. The types of housing suggested, especially in the proposed Garden City Suburb, due to its proximity to the motorway network will attract commuters who are unlikely to spend their money here or work here but who will use the already overloaded to breaking point health, social care and education services.
3. The proposed location for the Garden City Suburb does not appear to consider the semi-rural/village character of the area. If the proposal goes ahead it will completely change the feel of Thelwall, Grappenhall and Appleton Thorn. This will affect residents' quality of life and be detrimental to housing prices in the area.
4. Physical, mental health, social care and education services in Warrington are already stretched to breaking point. [REDACTED]. We can't cope with the needs of the people who already live here - what makes the WBC think we will manage any better with thousands more people coming to live in Warrington?
5. There is no provision for a new or additional hospital. This is an urgent need already, let alone with thousands more residents.

### **Destruction of greenbelt and wildlife habitats**

1. *Scale of destruction:* I recently had the pleasure of watching six buzzards flying low over my house, which is situated on [REDACTED] across from the Woolston Eyes Nature Reserve - it was a wonderful few moments. They can often be seen flying overhead and circling over the TransPennine Trail, Woolston Eyes Nature Reserve, nearby fields, the tree lined banks of the Ship Canal and the old railway embankment in Latchford. I love living here exactly because of moments like these

and I am desperately concerned that the wildlife that finds haven in the green areas, especially in this part of Warrington, and is already under great pressure, will simply not be able to survive a development on the massive scale proposed. Habitats on greenbelt and other green areas under threat which currently provide safe shelter and breeding grounds and sufficient food resources will be lost. This will put flora and fauna in remaining green areas under even more pressure. For the long-term survival of our species, and for the sake of our physical and mental health in the present, we cannot afford to destroy any more green areas, let alone the amount proposed in the PDO.

2. *Wildlife corridors*: The TransPennine Trail and old railway embankment earmarked in the PDO for use as a road, along with many other parts of the local greenbelt, are important wildlife corridors which facilitate safe passage from one area of resources to another. Removing wildlife corridors, in part or in whole, no matter how small they may be, restricts wildlife movement making it difficult for wildlife to breed and find sufficient food. It also puts great pressure on what become isolated areas of resources resulting in fierce competition and inevitable loss of more vulnerable species and overall biodiversity within those areas. In south Warrington, this could place great strain on the resources and wildlife at Woolston Eyes Nature Reserve but the impact of these losses will be felt far beyond Warrington.
3. *Moore Nature Reserve*: The destruction of an entire nature reserve is appalling and cannot be justified under any circumstances. The owners, Peel Holdings are infamous in Warrington for demonstrating a casual, uncaring and thoroughly irresponsible attitude to anything other than the financial value of the land they own and clearly have no regard for the impact of their actions on the residents and natural environment, not just in Warrington but further afield. The WBC should not even be considering developing Moore Nature Reserve. Any councillors or WBC staff with decision making authority who have formal or informal links to Peel (or to other local landowners), even if these do not technically constitute a conflict of interests, should not be involved in any aspect of the PDO.

### **Traffic congestion and air quality**

1. There is already a serious problem with traffic congestion in Warrington and poor air quality from engine fumes is affecting the health of Warrington residents. Building thousands more houses will simply add to the number of cars on Warrington roads and make air quality even worse.
2. The construction of new roads will increase the volume of non-local traffic passing through as people will find it even more convenient to use Warrington to bypass problems on the motorways (over which the WBC has no control) and avoid the new tolls on the bridges across the Mersey (again, the Council has no control over these).
3. What is needed is a radically different approach to car use and public transport in Warrington, not a wholesale destruction of greenbelt to bring us more cars and poorer health.

In conclusion, I suggest WBC scrap the PDO and start a different kind of consultation with the local community. There are plenty of people and grassroots organisations who would be

happy to be involved in crafting better options if we thought WBC would actually listen and work with us!