

## Local Plan Review Response to Consultation

17<sup>th</sup> September 2017

To whom it may concern

Firstly, I appreciate the opportunity and need for consultation, however I believe there are lessons to be learnt in how to engage effectively with your stakeholders i.e. the residents, businesses and communities that will be potentially impacted should the proposed development go ahead. The communication (or lack of it); timing (during the summer holiday period); lack of any consultation meetings taking place in Grappenhall and Appleton (the areas which will be potentially impacted the most by the 'Garden City Suburb') has been shameful. Trust is incredibly important in any change project and I believe the messages received to date have gone a long way to breaking down trust - was the consultation exercise a 'real' exercise or a deliberate tactic to get things done quietly with minimum noise?

Please find attached my comments, in no particular order, in relation to the consultation:

1. **Northern powerhouse, is Warrington best placed?** – with political focus on the Northern Powerhouse I would like to understand why Warrington has been selected for this investment. Whilst investment is always welcome, we have already had significant investment in the Omega site and surrounding infrastructure. Yet the surrounding areas e.g. Halton remain underinvested in. I would like to know what wider options (beyond Warrington) for commercial and residential investment have been discussed and analysed. What is the business case for Warrington as opposed to spreading the wealth wider?
2. **Destruction of Green Belt land** – the potentially allocated land for the Garden City Suburb which will surround Appleton / Grappenhall area impacts on a significant amount of green belt land. This is completely at odds with the National Planning Policy Framework which clearly sets out Green Belt's permanency and purpose. I would like the council to address specifically how its Local Plan Review is compatible with the both the spirit and law as laid out in the following extracts:

Extracts from National Planning Policy Framework (27.03.12) – Protecting Green Belt Land (Paragraphs 79 to 88)

79. The government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.

80. Green Belt serves five purposes:

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas
- to prevent neighbouring towns 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

81. Once Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land.

87. As with previous Green Belt policy, inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

88. When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

What brown field sites have been considered and analysed as part of the Local Plan Review?

The current plans encroach significantly on the countryside and in effect create a massive sprawling urban area which joins up the villages of Grappenhall, Thelwall, Latchford, Appleton, Appleton Thorn and Stockton Heath. Looking at a bird's eye view the plans see Warrington overflowing to the SW to create one massive suburb. This not only destroys the character and identity of some beautiful and historic villages, steeped in tradition, but also destroys the fabric of local communities and habitats of wildlife. We will no longer have 'village' identities but be part of a mass urban area, like an inner city.

More importantly, the loss of significant Green Belt land impacts on the mental health of all residents. Without green spaces to walk, cycle, keep fit, to reflect and enjoy life (and one country park cannot replace this) the quality of life for all residents will decrease. In an age where mental health and wellbeing is at the forefront of the political and social agenda it is somewhat ironic that your Local Plan does not factor this in. Indeed "The cost of mental ill health to the economy, the NHS and society as a whole is £105 billion a year". Source: Centre for Mental Health 2016

Warrington attracts a diverse population, however as the world of work changes and the skill requirements for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century shift, increasing emphasis will be placed on the higher skill areas. In order to attract and retain talent you need to have a good quality living environment. If you destroy the wonderful environment we current enjoy talent will move out and it will be harder to attract those who will bring greatest revenue to the region.

3. **Service infrastructure** – I would like to understand how health provision will be catered for. As a Warrington resident, I have to travel to see a Dentist in Altrincham (the only place I could get registered), my daughter is currently on a 26 month wait list to see a Warrington orthodontist, it is near impossible to get an appointment at my GP surgery (I have to travel to Lymm for that one) and I have just been advised my daughter has an 18 week wait time to see a physio at Warrington hospital. Services today do not provide an adequate service so I would like to understand what provision has been planned for a substantial increase in residents.

I would also like to also understand what projections have been forecast for school sizes and number of places required. Again, as most of the Warrington schools are annually oversubscribed it suggests capacity is already reached.

4. **Transport infrastructure** – roads into and around the Warrington area are consistently gridlocked. Manchester ranks as the second most congested city in the UK (after London). The main infrastructure routes of M6, M56 and M62 are at full capacity and as a small business owner who regularly uses the network it takes an average 1.5-2 hours to commute one-way into Manchester or Liverpool a day. Additional traffic will only add increased stress on an already gridlocked Motorway network.

“Drivers in Manchester spent 39 hours in congestion during peak hours, and 10% of their total drive time (peak and non-peak hours) in gridlock, costing each driver £1,136 and the city £233 million...The UK ranked as the 4<sup>th</sup> most congested developed country in the world and the 3<sup>rd</sup> most congested in Europe with drivers spending an average of 32 hours a year in congestion during peak hours” [Source: INRIX Global Traffic Scorecard, 2017](#)

In addition, the supporting trunk roads around the Warrington area are equally gridlocked with travel across and around Warrington incredibly congested at peak times. In addition, current parking facilities in both the Town Centre and outlying villages e.g. Stockton Heath are at capacity now, what are your plans for increased parking provision across the region? In your Plan, there is an additional road infrastructure planned but I do not think this is anyway sufficient to meet demand nor will it address the already stretched Motorway Network. The cost of increased traffic on lost productive time is hugely significant and will impact many businesses, including mine, based in the NW. What plans have been considered to look at alternative green transport options e.g. cycle lanes.

I do not believe the plans for an additional work hub based in the vicinity of the M6/M56 interchange (junction 20) have merit. Again, based on the sheer volume of existing traffic that already uses the main roads around the area, an increase of potentially thousands of additional cars will impact considerably on congestion and create increased pollution. What is the council's plans to mitigate the impact of more cars and lorries on the road with respect to noise and air quality?

In summary, I strongly object to the proposal for a ‘Garden City Suburb’. The volume of housing proposed is not proportionate to the adverse impact of such an extensive Plan. It is my belief that the Plan is ill considered and short sighted.

I look forward to hearing your response.

Yours faithfully

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