

**Warrington Borough Council
Planning, Policy and Programmes
New Town House
Buttermarket Street
Warrington
WA1 2NH**

26/9/2017

Regarding the proposed plan for the preferred development plan south of Warrington, please note the following objections.

1) Poor Communication

Warrington Borough Council (WBC) have taken an approach of preparing a plan while trying to hide detail from residents and have attempted to prevent sufficient time for residents to raise considered researched objections. Furthermore, maps available at the public meetings arranged by WBC were of such poor quality as to be unreadable.

2) WBC's ability to make considered independent proposals

- a) WBC's investment in Redwood Bank calls into question the ability of the council to make any independent objective assessments of the boroughs real needs for development.
- b) Investment in private banking operations does not seem to be appropriate use of public money and raises questions over the council officers' financial judgement.

3) Creation of a Garden Suburb of Warrington

The exiting villages of Appleton Thorn, Grappenhall, Stretton and Thelwall are ancient individual communities with their own identities. The residents of these villages do not want to be part of one large suburb of an enlarged Warrington.

- a) People settle in these villages to enjoy the benefits of small communities.
- b) Thelwall is a very ancient settlement, WBC's Local Plan Core Strategy document (p61) recognises the need "to identify, conserve and where appropriate enhance the borough's historic assets and their settings". I would urge the council to examine the older buildings in Thelwall and recognise that creation of a suburb and loss of identify for the village of Thelwall does not fit with the core strategy.

4) The population growth figures

The population growth figures used for the Development Plan would appear to be not valid:-

- a) The figures are based on pre Brexit data. When the UK leaves the EU in 2019 there will be less immigration to the country and population growth/decline will be dictated by deaths/birth-rate and job relocation moves. Population growth will not be massively influenced by European workers coming to the UK.
- b) The Objective Assessed Needs figure does not appear to be based on 2017 data that would suggest a lower number of houses required per annum. By not using current or latest data the entire Proposed Plan is likely to be legally challenged, WBC will then have to use money intended for projects and services in the borough to defend its position, or simply admit the error, in which case costs will still be those incurred in producing the current plan and its subsequent replacement.

5) Warrington City Status and growth objectives

There seems within the council to be a desire for Warrington to be a City. Warrington is an ancient town that is midway between the major established cities of Liverpool and Manchester, development should be to:-

- a) Maintain and restore the character of Warrington, particularly around the lower Bridge Street area.
- b) Ease traffic congestion in the town.
- c) Improve public transport into the town.
- d) Improve public transport links to Liverpool and Manchester.

Liverpool and Manchester are both hubs for transport and industry/business growth, both cities also have successful Universities that generate income and new businesses. The proposed plan for Warrington does not consider the plans these cities have or indeed reflect how they will impact on Warrington. It is entirely likely that businesses in Warrington will leave for the better resources of the established surrounding cities, thus resulting in much lower demands for increased housing.

Given that Warrington will not directly link to the HS2 plan (WBC are well aware of this), it is further likely that there will be a move of businesses away from Warrington to towns that will have direct access to the improved rail facility. To counter this WBC would be better looking at development options towards Wigan. Relying on any benefit from a proposed HS2 station at Manchester Airport to the West would require an upgrade of the M56 and/or improvements to the railway facilities in Warrington, neither of these are within the direct control of WBC.

6) Location of the Preferred Option

Property prices south of the ship canal tend to be higher than in other parts of Warrington, it has been said by council members that building here will give developers higher returns and more incentive to invest. However, higher property prices mean that houses will not be affordable.

- a) It is more sensible to build in an area that keeps purchase prices as low as possible.
- b) No evidence has been presented to show jobs that are expected to be created are high status that will provide the income to buy expensive housing. Indeed, given that the population projections are based on invalid data, there is no evidence that any new jobs will be created.
- c) Building to the South of the ship canal means extensive use of Green Belt.

It is clearly obvious that Fiddlers Ferry Power Station to the East of the town will reach the end of its life within the next twenty years. Demolition of this site will create a significant brown field area for development.

- a) The timing for this land being made available should be considered before destroying green belt.
- b) The power station site is already on a good road communication link to the town, thus providing an excellent route for Park and Ride services.

7) Proposed New Road (or other transport) Link into Warrington

There is no justification for any new road transport link into Warrington, the town is already gridlocked with insufficient car parking. Most local authorities look for ways to discourage cars from town centres with improved public transport through Park and Ride or Tram Systems. Page 29 of the Local Plan Core Strategy document sensibly recognises need to reduce use of private cars, this has several benefits:-

- a) Improves air quality in towns – Warrington already has a poor record on air quality.
- b) Reduces noise levels in towns.
- c) Makes towns more pedestrian friendly and encourages use of shops, restaurants and other facilities.

Page 30 of the Local Plan Core Strategy document says development will be located to reduce the need for travel, especially by car. I do not understand how this fits with a hastily drawn line for a new transport link.

Warrington does need a western by-pass linking the M62 and M56, this should include pick up points for park and ride or trams, but it must not encourage traffic to enter the town.

The suggested transport route through Thelwall and Grappenhall shown as a blue/purple dotted line on the council's plans is completely unacceptable as it utilises the Trans Pennine Trail. This dotted line seems to have been produced as an afterthought. At one of your public meetings officers of the council tried to convince myself and others that this route was not a proposal.

However, it is clearly shown on your maps and has an immediate effect on making properties along the route unsalable.

- a) Page 12 of the Local Plan Core Strategy document specifically recognises the Trans Pennine Trail (TPT) as a Green Corridor of strategic importance. The TPT is a wild life corridor providing homes and a safe movement area for bats, many species of birds, foxes, hedgehogs. Destruction of this habitat is unacceptable and could be legally challenged.
- b) Page 32 of the Local Plan Core Strategy document quotes a strategic approach to “care and management of green infrastructure” and mentions TPT. Turning it into a transport link does not constitute care or management.
- c) Page 99 of the Local Plan Core Strategy document states a want to “encourage walking and cycling for both utility and recreation”. The TPT is already a very busy route used by local people to cycle, walk dogs, ride horse and to commute along. It is also part of a national network of footpaths joining the east and west coasts of England. Page 99 also cites a General Principle of support for proposals to reduce use of private cars. Building new roads does not fit with this principle, and use of the TPT as a transport link to the town is in direct conflict with the objectives set out in the Local Plan Core Strategy document.
- d) The route shown as a dotted line on the council’s plan cuts through a residential area, construction of any transport link through here would result in the loss of gardens backing onto the TPT, this would have an immediate effect of reduced air quality and increased traffic noise pollution to residents. Both would result in ill health and both would result in loss of value to properties.
- e) The potential that this transport link could be at the current height of the embankment means that large vehicles would be travelling above the roof level of many of the properties adjoining it, this would be extremely unsafe.

Overall WBC’s plans are:-

- a) Flawed and likely to be subject to legal appeal.
- b) Of questionable independence.
- c) Do not seem to have been produced in a professional way with reference to other documents.
- d) Are completely inward looking and have not considered what is happening in surrounding major cities.
- e) Appear to designed around the council’s executive’s ego for Warrington to become a city, rather than concentrating on what is right and sustainable for the current and future residents of the borough.

I look forward to receiving your comments and a professionally redrawn map for the proposed new transport link.

