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28 Sep. 17

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

Dear Sirs,

Response to the Local Development Plan - Preferred Development Option 2

I wish to record my absolute dismay and objection to the scale of the local plan preferred option and the effect it will have on the town and surrounding villages, particularly in the south of Warrington and Latchford. I am not against small, proportionate expansion of the villages, but the scope and scale of this option seeks to remove the distinct identity and form of these villages, turning them into city-like suburbs. Warrington isn't and shouldn't become a city.

The introduction of a plan to cover the next 20 years is not justified or required by Government. This plan should be reviewed in 5 or 10 years' time, not 20.

Our economy is in flux with the onset of Brexit and proposals are now blighting properties that may or may never be destroyed or disrupted, to the detriment of householders who cannot predict if house improvements are going to be worthwhile, who cannot sell their properties due to the publicity indicating limited future lifespan or a potentially detrimental environment for those on the edge of development plans. For example, the suggestion to destroy the nature corridor known as the Trans Pennine Trail to build a strategic route, which could be a highly polluting highway, tramway, busway or future route for HS3. There is no obvious need for such a drastically destructive proposal to go through highly populated areas, especially if the housing estimates are in dispute. The loss of existing housing and the rural amenity to a huge number of residents as well as the loss of a coast to coast national cycleway, has not been considered, neither has the effect on householders living adjacent to or houses built upon the redundant railway land, who bought their properties precisely because it was no longer an active railway.

The consultation process was completely flawed, with inadequate notice and poorly (or deliberately timed) at a time when most people were taking summer holidays. The graphical information provided was extremely low quality and it was impossible to ascertain without considerable effort and research which specific areas would be most affected by the plans. The venue at the Park Royal was grossly also undersized. None of the consultations were held in the worst affected areas despite multiple venues being available (church halls, churches, community centres, schools etc. Was this deliberate? The information was mostly provided online, which completely excluded most elderly people, some of whom would be directly affected by the plans.

I object to the large number of houses estimated to be required in the next 20 years and the destruction of Green Belt land because:

- a) The number of houses calculated have not been adequately demonstrated to be a reasonable estimate – facts and figures relied on do not reflect the current economic situation following the Brexit vote.
- b) The latest data from the Office of National Statistics has not been applied. This states that a quantity of 792 houses per annum may be required, which supports the view that 15,000 houses over 20 years should be the basis on which development need should be calculated, and these could already be mainly accommodated on existing brownfield sites. Over 20 years, with the changing face of industry requiring reduced manual workforces (in warehousing for example), the need for commercial premises could actually decrease, freeing up more brownfield land to reduce the demand for housing on Green Belt land.
- c) A Green Belt should be an invisible line designating a border around a certain area, preventing development of the area and allowing wildlife to return and be established. Your justification for building on large tracts of Green Belt land goes directly against this principal, as it is weak and based on inaccurate housing calculations.
- d) The Green Belt satisfied the tests of durability when it was designated and WBC have presented no exceptional circumstances to justify a change. Environmental factors have not been mitigated, the token preservation of narrow green borders between existing areas will have little effect on preserving wildlife, flora and fauna and will not preserve the semi rural nature of distinct village settlements. The loss of significant areas of green space will remove the natural areas responsible for removing pollutants from the air and controlling flooding through the absorption of rain water into the water table.
- e) A significant number of homes are planned to be built in South East Warrington, on Green Belt land which is easy to build on as it requires almost no remediation work. High resultant development land prices and the intention to build at relatively low density will make affordable housing uneconomical to build and the majority of housing will only be affordable by high income earners, not at prices attainable by the local offspring of local families who want to buy locally and stay close to their family support network. Even denser concentrations of smaller housing would be at premium prices due to the high land value.
- f) More houses will bring significantly more traffic, pollution and congestion into existing semi- rural areas, and will significantly strain existing overstressed local services such as schools, dentists and doctors.
- g) As more roads are built or improved to ease congestion, more traffic will travel through Warrington in a bid to get around motorway congestion and toll bridges. A drastic increase in residential population will cause even more congestion and although we would possibly see short term benefits to traffic flow, air quality will inevitably diminish further and associated health problems will increase. Air quality in Warrington is already rated as 2nd poorest in the North West of England – how can you justify allowing increased vehicular pollution to worsen the problem? What are your plans to reduce pollution? It is well known that road improvements actually increase traffic flow in the long term, as evidenced by the congestion on the M6 over Thelwall Viaduct despite the capacity being doubled by the building of the second viaduct.
- h) Proposed bus ways don't appear to take account of the bridges they would be routed over/under or the effect of improving access to enable existing unsuitable roads to accommodate their movements. The proposal to use the Cantilever Bridge, which has a 3T weight limit, height restriction, is narrow and potholed, as a bus route appears bizarre. The proposal to use Stockton Lane for buses is equally ill-thought out. The end of the road down to Lumb Brook Road is steep and it would involve a sharp right turn to get under the canal aqueduct. The canal bank is also unprotected where the road turns sharply left and was the site of a fatal accident years ago with multiple fatalities, which caused the road to become gated and no longer a through road from Grappenhall.

- i) Developers don't build infrastructure, schools, health facilities etc., until they have significantly progressed housing development and achieved sale income. Local services will be further overstretched. There is no guarantee that the developers will actually provide the wonderful facilities that WBC are telling us about – can the council afford to step in if they fail to provide?
- j) The development of industry along the M56/A50 will build on existing farm land which frequently floods – where will all this water go when the fields are not there to soak it up? Once all of the green space has been built upon, what is the risk of increasing flooding in South Warrington in severe weather conditions? We have already witnessed the frightening scenes of flooding in Lymm and water gushing over the locks of the Manchester Ship Canal. This can only get worse with the amount of surface water run-off being directed there instead of soaking into open farm land.

If it is your policy to build new roads to reduce congestion through Warrington before housing development begins, please, please consider the combined effects of increasing traffic flow for through traffic with the addition of extra cars for new households.

our house values are going to be adversely affected for the next 15-20 years. I live close to the Transpennine Trail, spurious plans for which are already having an effect on sale prices and the saleability of our houses. That is a problem all along the former railway line through Thelwall, Grappenhall and Latchford, and has already resulted in at least one house sale falling through. We mostly bought our houses because they were in a quiet cul-de-sac and we are now in limbo, unable to tell how/if we will be directly affected. Without the need for 8,000 homes in the Grappenhall area, will there still be an economic argument for developing the TPT corridor?

Please make it clear in unambiguous terms which of the proposals will be culled from the plan and which have serious intentions for development. We had very mixed feedback at the public consultation, which indicated that some of the written documents had already been superseded by undocumented shifts in policy.

Yours faithfully,

[Redacted signature block]