



Dear Sirs

***Sent via email***

I wish to register my objection to the Preferred Development Option (PDO) which is currently under consultation.

My principal reasons for objecting are:

1. The miscalculation of the extent of housing required;
2. The inadequacy of the consultation process;
3. The flawed and ill-judged vision of making Warrington a city;
4. The lack of exceptional circumstances for utilising Green Belt land in contravention of all associated guidelines and legislation.

Further detail in respect of each of the above is set out below.

**1. The miscalculation of the housing needed**

The PDO document is very technical and consistently references certain key facts and assumptions although no supporting information or demonstrable verification is provided. The Objectively Assessed Needs (OAN) is cited on p.5 of the PDO as 839 new homes per annum - but this was based on 2012 surveys. Before publishing the PDO, the Council was in possession of an updated May 2017 report based on 2014 data which shows a comparable figure of just 738 homes per year (but could be as low as 679 homes pa), but this number has been ignored.

As the 839 is taken as the base for the higher Economic Development Needs Assessment (EDNA), then if the 839 is a significant overstatement, so must be the EDNA.

The lower number is more consistent with the 716 homes pa average until 2039 within the latest ONS live tables which could be used to underpin the Government's proposed formula for calculating OAN published in September 2017. The assumptions used to derive the housing need appear to have been selected to justify a higher housing requirement significantly above the OAN and do not appear logical, consistent or robust.

Associated with all of the above, the Council has failed to properly consider the infrastructure upgrades required to support such expansion. Warrington's roads, schools and hospitals are already operating at or beyond capacity. Introducing a further 24,000 households to the overall area is very likely to cause catastrophic failure of the town's infrastructure, despite the suggested improvements in the PDO. There is a real risk of this development driving people out

of Warrington as they are discouraged by the lack of supporting services and infrastructure available to them.

## **2. Consultation process**

The consultation process has been poorly managed and communicated throughout. The timing of the initial consultation launch during the summer holidays was ill conceived and has generated a sense of distrust. The residents in the borough feel insulted and let down by the lack of any democratic process or transparency. The fact that the Council has extended the deadline for responses suggests that this is at least partially acknowledged.

## **3. Warrington's city status**

There has been a complete lack of discussion around the question of Warrington becoming a city. Nobody in the town, other than the Council wants this to happen. If we wanted to live in a city we would have chosen to live in Manchester, Liverpool or Chester, all of which are in comfortable reach of Warrington. The Council seems incapable of articulating the benefits to residents of the conversion to city status. If the Council properly consulted residents on this issue it would clearly see that this project is not supported by those who live and work in the town. The desire to claim city status appears to be directly linked to the extravagant and excessive housing numbers that are being quoted and which are not supported by verified fact.

## **4. Green belt development**

The Council's proposals in respect of development of swathes of green belt land are not substantiated by good reasoning and contradict what the Council ought to be seeking to achieve in terms of promoting the health and wellbeing of its residents. Part of Warrington's unique appeal and attraction to so many is its ready access to various semi rural areas and parks along with the village community nature of so many areas outside the town centre itself. The PDO would destroy all of this and annihilate what are currently thriving communities. The preservation of a sense of community in areas such as Grappenhall, Appleton Thorn and Thelwall, whilst still maintaining access to large town amenities and transport links to nearby cities is of huge value and must be increasingly rare. Losing this will make these communities less effective and less attractive to those considering moving in to the area, which would apparently defeat the Council's growth aspirations. There is little point in building 24,000 new houses if people no longer want to live in the areas in which they are constructed.

The Council does not appear to have given due and proper consideration to any alternative solutions, such as regenerating empty retail units in the town centre or building on brownfield sites such as Fidler's Ferry. Instead, it appears that the Council has simply chosen what it thinks will be the easy route to destroy our green spaces which make so many of our communities special and unique. Bearing in mind the already significant pollution levels in and around the town, this is irresponsible and ill conceived.

Taking all of the above points into consideration, I would urge Warrington Borough Council to entirely re-think the PDO. There is no government requirement to produce a 20 year plan, even if long term statistics exist. Therefore, the Council should be considering a ten year plan, which

would encompass a more certain and manageable period, particularly bearing mind the imminent changes and challenges faced by the country as a whole.

The Council should be preparing to deliver the number of houses actually required, rather than those deemed necessary for Warrington to be classed as a city. At the same time it should be doing all it can to preserve our borough's green belt land, recognising it for the valuable amenity and attraction that it represents. In any event, investment in upgrading Warrington's infrastructure is desperately needed now, never mind in five years' time once further housing and employment development are underway.

Finally, I would urge the Council to take forward the PDO, in whatever form it takes, in a transparent, democratic and considerate manner. Surely the strength of feeling generated by these proposals demonstrates that Warrington's residents are intelligent, educated and passionate about preserving the quality of life that Warrington currently has to offer and they shouldn't be underestimated or insulted.

Yours faithfully

A solid black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.