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To:

Planning Policy Team
Warrington Borough Council
New Town House
Buttermarket Street
Warrington WA1 2NH

Dear Planning Policy Team

Re: Local Plan - Warrington Borough Council's Development Plans for South Warrington

We are writing to register our objections to Warrington Borough Council's proposed development plans for south Warrington which includes Appleton, Appleton Thorn, Stretton, Grappenhall, Hatton, Walton and Stockton Heath.

We are opposed to the planned building of houses and employment units on the prime agricultural land located in the above-mentioned areas. Agricultural land is an important economic asset which should be kept and maintained both locally and nationally. Considering the uncertainties of Britain leaving the EU retaining prime agricultural land is essential for our present and future self-sufficiency and we should plan to hold on to as much as possible especially if there is insufficient justification to destroy it. Reducing the amount of agricultural land in Warrington would result in increased dependency on other parts of the country to produce and supply staple foods, vegetables, meat and dairy produce. Until 'Brexit' has been resolved we do not know how the regions of Britain could be affected and therefore we should be mindful and cautious about the potential adverse effects of reducing our ability to grow a sufficient amount of our own food to feed the population.

We have been informed about the proposed development plans from newsletters produced by the locally elected Borough Councillors in our area. In their recent newsletter the South Warrington Borough Councillors say that they have been excluded from the work on the Local Plan which has been going on for several years! Why have they not been included in the planning process? It is not only disgraceful but also undemocratic that neither the residents nor their elected representatives have been properly consulted or involved in the future plans which would affect the people living and working in Warrington.

Our additional comments and objections to the development plans for South Warrington are as follows:-

The scale of the South Garden Suburbs, environment, loss of Green Belt land and traffic/transport issues:

We have lived in south Warrington for many years. The size of the proposed Garden City Suburb would completely change the character of the area and destroy its heritage and history. The areas that are now separated by fields would be engulfed in one huge urban area which would not only adversely affect the human population living there but also the wild animals that live there.

The loss of a significant amount of accessible countryside would be a loss of an amenity to local residents and the town as a whole. The proposed development affects land which is being used for agricultural purposes to produce food and dairy produce. It also provides the people of Warrington with some wide open spaces and vistas to enjoy where they can escape to from the urbanisation which has already spoilt other areas of Warrington.

If the proposed level of development was to take place, it is likely that Warrington would eventually end up merging with Manchester and Liverpool creating a vast urbanized region devoid of countryside and land for agriculture. Warrington's residents would have to travel miles away to enjoy the countryside which would not only be expensive but would also take up a lot of time and requires the use of a vehicle. Country Parks do not provide the same benefits as agricultural land and are an artificial un-satisfactory substitute for the real countryside.

There are also issues concerning the level of traffic having an adverse impact on residents living in these areas. Pollution levels would be increased which has an adverse impact upon health. Studies have been done that raise concerns that people living close to busy roads are at a higher risk of suffering from dementia let alone cancer and lung disease. Traffic congestion is already a major problem. Roads and footpaths in these areas are already badly in need of repair and maintenance and are being neglected which we are told is due to a lack of funds. Adding more roads and footpaths will add to this problem and it will also add to the traffic congestion and pollution which has been an ongoing problem in Appleton for many years due to the development of housing and expansion of local schools. It appears that no detailed traffic plan has been included in the development plans and therefore the plans do not address one of the fundamental major adverse impacts that increased levels of traffic would have in the proposed areas of development.

We haven't seen any reference to budgets or funding for the Council's development plans.

Information and evidence of affordability is required as to how the development and infrastructure would be funded when it appears that there is already insufficient money to properly fund the care of the elderly, maintenance of existing roads, footpaths, local parks, trees, hedges and recycling centres to name but a few.

Considering that there are existing brown field sites available for housing and

some that are likely to be released within the 20 year period of the plan, these should be utilised before spoiling the environment for residents and destroying prime agricultural land and green field sites. Practically all of Warrington's Green Belt could be preserved by scaling back on the planned housing and employment numbers and better use of Brown Field Sites. The Council's proposed massive increase in the size of the town is neither necessary nor wanted.

According to the local Councillors' comments a population projection by the Mid Mersey SMHA updated in May 2017 indicates that only half the houses Warrington Borough Council wants are needed and Green Belt land does not need to be touched.

Healthcare:

The huge increase in Warrington's population would require the provision of more medical services which are beyond the scope of the Council. As most of the town's GP practices and hospitals are already virtually at full capacity, having to ration healthcare and working on a crisis management basis, it would be reckless to plan such a large expansion of Warrington to the level proposed without properly considering the impact this would have on the health of the people living in Warrington. Therefore, consultation and agreement with the NHS regarding sustainability would be necessary before progression of the proposed development.

Employment Land:

Regarding the proposed 116.8 hectares of Employment Land within the Garden City Suburb housing development, so far, we haven't come across any details of what type of employment this area would include. However, undoubtedly it would have a detrimental impact upon the local environment.

City Status:

We have not received notification from Warrington Borough Council informing us about the Council's proposals for major expansion of Warrington from a town to a city. We think that the Council should have written to all the residents of Warrington to inform them of their plans for the future development of Warrington and proposed changes from a town to a city and consulted them before proceeding with the Local Plan. We would appreciate an explanation from the Council as to why they have not informed all the residents about this.

There are a lot of people who have no desire to live or work in an over-populated, urbanised city environment and would mourn the loss of the town if it is massively expanded and possibly move away. It might also put people off moving to Warrington.

Having lived in Warrington all of our lives we feel that the town has already expanded more than enough. How would the residents of Warrington benefit from increasing the housing figures more than is required? The residents of Warrington haven't been properly consulted as to whether they would want a massive expansion of their town into a City. If City Status and devolution is the motivating factor behind Warrington Borough Council's proposed expansion then the Council should have been upfront about this and consulted all of the residents before making plans and decisions to go down that route, especially now when Brexit is uncharted territory, the impact of which we do not know.

We trust that our comments and objections to the Council's proposed development plans for South Warrington as outlined above will be taken into consideration and we await a personal response from the Council concerning these matters in due course.

Yours sincerely

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