

Subject:


Building on Green Belt Land in South Warrington

Dear Sir/ Madam

I am writing in response to the proposed development on Green Belt land in South Warrington. I am a resident myself in this area and chose to live here because of the open areas around. I would like to put forward some key points as to why I disagree wholeheartedly with this proposal.

Key Points

I am appalled that the council propose to build on so much green belt land when there are brown areas that are crying out for regeneration and would make the areas they are in more desirable. I understand that it would cost more to regenerate these brown areas but it would be money well spent in that it would benefit Warrington in the long term.

The sheer scale of the proposed Garden City Suburb is horrifying to destroy villages such as Appleton, Stretton, Appleton Thom, and Grappenhall. These have their own identity at the moment and all that will be lost and will destroy the history and heritage of the area. The ability to access and enjoy green space is an amenity in itself and the loss of such a significant amount of green space will be detrimental to all residents, not just local ones.

Significant loss of Green Belt Land

- The PDO includes the release of greenbelt land to supply 9,000 new homes over the next 20 years.
- Paragraph 83 of The National Planning Policy Framework indicates that established Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in "exceptional circumstances". There is no definition of "exceptional circumstances". WBC indicated on page 15 that they believe that these are exceptional circumstances, but their reasoning is unclear.
- This land is not 'spare' land, it is actively being used for agricultural purposes. In the current context of uncertainty following 'Brexit' and broader climate change, using no greenbelt land, or at least a smaller portion of it, should be considered.
- This issue affects the whole of Warrington.

A desire for "City" status is driving the growth

- The PDO is based on an assumption of 1,113 new homes per annum over the next 20 years, equating to around 24,000 new dwellings. Although the reasoning for this assumption is discussed in the PDO, the conclusion needs to be challenged in light of the current economic environment. Adopting a lower assumption of new homes per annum could significantly reduce the amount of Green Belt Land which would be needed.
- In various parts of the PDO, reference is made to Warrington 'New City'. The aspirations of WBC to become a city are not necessarily shared by residents and residents have not been consulted on this. Such aspirations appear to be driving a higher housing assumption and employment assumptions than may otherwise be necessary or realistic.

Stockton Heath is already over capacity

- Stockton Heath is not mentioned specifically in the PDO but the impact of the Garden City Suburb and the Warrington South West Extension on this village will be enormous.
- The traffic lights at the junction of the A49 and the A56 in Stockton Heath are already operating at capacity and the A49 flowing through the village is frequently at a standstill.

Traffic issues and geography

- A high level traffic survey has not been included in the PDO.
- Warrington is uniquely positioned close to the M6, M56 and M62 motorways. The growth of Warrington has often been attributed to its proximity to the transport network. But Warrington is affected detrimentally whenever there are problems on the motorway network.
- The PDO includes an 'Eastern Link Road' from M56 Junction 10 to the north of the Manchester Ship Canal (this route would cut right through the proposed new residential areas). On the downside, this would provide a new HGV access road to the Barleycastle Trading Estate (which, at the moment, is only accessible from the M6 junction). It would also provide an alternative route for traffic caught up in problems on the M56 / M6 motorways. As such, this will result in the deterioration of the quality of life for current residents who will be subjected to increased noise, pollution and vibration from the increased traffic flow.
- The PDO also suggest the use of an old railway embankment and bridge to the west of Latchford Locks as a new strategic transport route. Again, this route would be detrimental to the people currently living in this area.

There is no infrastructure in place to accommodate all the extra traffic. Parking is a nightmare in Stockton Heath now so what will it be like with all the extra housing proposed. The roads around the areas involved are in the main country lanes and were not built for the volume of traffic the proposed plan will generate.

The new Runcorn toll bridge is also going to generate more traffic through this area as people will use this route rather than pay the toll.

Environment

- A high level environmental impact survey has not been included in the PDO.
- A wide variety of animals and birds live in the greenbelt areas including badgers, water voles, great crested newts and bats.

Higher density in the town centre, lower density in outer areas

- WBC have used a housing density of 30 dwellings per hectare throughout the PDO.
- Achieving a higher housing density in the town centre (such as apartments) of up to 40 dwellings per hectare could mean that a lower density could be achieved elsewhere in the PDO. This would have the advantage of requiring less greenbelt land or enabling a different type of housing mix to be built (such as bungalows for elderly residents).

Healthcare

- Warrington and Halton hospitals are already operating at or near to capacity. Almost all of the GP / medical centre in Warrington are operating at or near to capacity.
- Whilst the PDO makes mention of providing new health facilities in the Garden City Suburb and the South West Extension, there is notably no mention of increasing capacity at Warrington Hospital. Also isn't up to the NHS as to whether new health facilities will be provided? In this climate the NHS are struggling to keep going what is already there are they really going to be investing into this? The residents occupying the additional 24,000 dwellings will also need access to healthcare facilities.

Equality

- South Warrington is disproportionately affected by the PDO. North and Eastern Warrington are barely touched by the proposals.

Education

- Schools in the area are difficult to get in to at the best of times especially Bridgewater High school so where are all the extra places needed going to come from? Also parking at schools is a big problem now so how is this going to be addressed with such a huge influx?

Would it not have been better to look nearer the town centre and regenerate some of these areas as Warrington is a dying town at the moment and some of the areas around the town centre look neglected. Regeneration nearer the town centre and in the brown areas would bring more people into the centre. People in South Warrington just won't bother going into Warrington as the volume of traffic all this extra housing will generate will just not make it worth the while going anywhere that involves travelling through Stockton Heath or the A49.

I hope these points will be taken into consideration

Regards

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