



**Dear Sir/Madam**

I am writing to provide my response and objection to the Preferred Development Options (PDO) for the proposed Local Development Plan (LDP).

I appreciate and acknowledge the requirement for additional housing stock, especially in Warrington South. As someone who bought a property in the last three years with a limited budget I can confirm that there weren't many options available to me in my location of choice. As such, I support some additional (ideally more affordable) development in South Warrington where it is required on the existing safe-guarded land. However, the scale of the proposals (to develop a so-called Garden City of approximately 7,000 homes) and the plans to build the majority on the green-belt is not desirable. Outlined below are my concerns:

#### **TRAFFIC AND TRAVEL**

- Warrington South has good access to the motorways and the current proposals state that the additional housing in this location will be linked to this existing network. However, these motorways are normally very congested, especially at peak times. Have the relevant authorities been consulted to determine whether there is enough capacity to cope with such an increase in traffic (based on 7,000 additional homes it is likely that this would lead to an additional 24,000 AADT (annual average daily traffic))? Additionally, having used both junctions (M6 and M56) at peak times the local roads leading to the junctions are normally extremely busy at these times leading to long queues even before you access the motorways. These roads and junctions need to be considered to determine their ability to cope with additional traffic and what affect this will have on journey times for existing residents. In South Warrington there is little other option for travel other than private car (no rail links and buses are slow and expensive) so it needs to be properly determined whether the roads have capacity for any additional traffic.
- Following on from my previous point, there are no sustainable transport options in this part of Warrington compared with North Warrington. There are no train lines through this area so no opportunity to add additional train stations. Should residents need/want to use the rail network the nearest stations are Bank Quay and Central, both located in the already congested town centre. More needs to be done to consider more sustainable transport options rather than just relying on car use, which is all you can depend on in South Warrington. Sustainable travel should be incorporated into any re-designs to minimise the reliance on private car use (though NOT by reducing the number of parking spaces per house, this does not work to dissuade new residents to ditch the car, rather creates messy and unsafe developments/estates due to parking on all the surrounding roads) and improve the uptake in public transport (by making this more reliable and affordable) and cycling (by improving the existing cycling network especially into the town centre, ideally creating more segregated cycle paths to take cycles off the congested roads and onto dedicated cycle paths. This would encourage more people to take up cycling, especially children and more

safety-conscious/nervous adults who would never consider taking their bike on our dangerous roads. An extension to the Trans-Pennine trail to facilitate this would be fantastic.)

- Has an extension of the rail network into South Warrington ever been a consideration? Additionally, whilst maybe farfetched, has there ever been consideration of a ferry service along the ship canal? Warrington should be looking at more sustainable travel options with innovative and exciting prospects that firstly benefits existing residents and secondly attracts more people to the town with their forward thinking.
- The Council needs to prioritise public transport, cycling and walking to try to ease the traffic congestion issues within Warrington, not just to aid the delivery of additional housing stock but now(!), before a single house is built.
- With regards to sustainability, are there any plans for alternative fuelled vehicles? Will FAST electric charging points be made available to encourage the uptake of electric vehicles? And how many? Will every home have this capability to make this truly a sustainable development?
- Warrington appears to have prioritised the car over any other mode of transport and unfortunately hasn't done the best job of that too considering the congestion through the town. This will be further exacerbated by the opening of the Mersey Gateway with its proposed tolls. It is extremely probable that people will choose to drive through Warrington bypassing the tolls. Traffic and travel through Warrington is only set to get worse. Something needs to be done before our travel infrastructure grinds to a halt and makes Warrington town centre somewhere best avoided by residents. Perhaps consideration of a congestion charge through the centre with an exemption to ALL Warrington residents would assist. This may also help when there are incidents on the surrounding motorways (Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> August 2017 comes to mind) where the town centre becomes a diversion, although it can barely cope with the normal level of traffic.
- Will there be an extensive cycle path network (ideally off the roads) to provide new residents the choice to use their bikes, whether for leisure or commuting? And if so, could this be extended across Warrington to truly provide residents across the entire town with a safe network of cycle paths. If more paths were created off the roads this mode of travel could become more popular, or at least additional cycle lanes (not combined with bus lanes) would help. If journeys to school were made safer for bike users, there could be an uptake in the number of parents and children cycling to school which would aid congestion around schools and also have health related benefits. Cycling on the road with children is considered dangerous. We should aim to take cycles off the road and onto a dedicated cycle network (incorporating the Trans Pennine Trail). Additionally, there are a number of locations along the Trans Pennine Trail where users have to utilise the road network, for example at Bradshaw Road/Thelwall New Road. Improvements could be made to the Trail to ensure that as little as possible is located on the road network.
- With this in mind, the proposed plans (as rough as they may be) identify for part of the Trans Pennine Trail to be destroyed and for a road to be put in its place. I absolutely, fundamentally object to this proposal. The Trail is a wonderful feature of Warrington and enables safe bike riding for adults and children alike, as well as an attractive place to walk. This is one of Warrington's absolute selling points. And whilst I appreciate the plans only take part of the Trail away, any removal of the trail is unacceptable. As I discussed above, the Trail should (if anything) be extended. We should be proud to have this wonderful

facility on our doorstep linking us with the West and East of England. Do not destroy this wonderful facility which forms part of our heritage.

- I have also heard rumour that this part of the TPT may also be under threat from HS3. Rather than rely on rumour, regarding the possibility of this being transformed into a road in the Local Plan, or HS3 (which is identified in the Warrington Means Business document – further details of this document are outlined in the City Status part of this letter) railway, or indeed a new cycle or walking path, it would be far better for the council to actually identify the proposals outright to halt any rumours and provide us with the opportunity to actually respond to facts, rather than speculation. More transparency within the council is needed to regain the trust of the people.
- In the case of the South Warrington proposals, the council are consulting on over 6,000 additional houses on mainly greenbelt land across Grappenhall and Appleton. On average if you consider 4 vehicle movements per day from each property that equates to an additional 24,000 vehicle movements per day onto our already incredibly stretched network. That in itself is not sustainable and already congested roads will become even more so and the current traffic problems that plague Warrington will be increasingly exacerbated. Additional crossing across the Manchester Ship Canal and River Mersey will be needed to meet this need (however, I am not in favour of the proposed re-opening of the old railway viaduct bridge over Thelwall New Road as a road if this leads to the destruction of part of the Trans Pennine Trail and if people's properties along the route are likely to be affected/blighted/compulsory purchased – please Warrington BC think about your existing residents before trying to attract more). Additional crossings will need to take the traffic away from the existing routes into the town centre and new routes need to be created. Additionally, currently Bridgefoot suffers from a bottleneck effect, this will be worsened and rather than all roads leading to Bridgefoot, a bypass of this area and the roads surrounding the town centre needs to be implemented.
- Council leader Cllr Terry O'Neill was quoted in the Warrington Guardian as saying "Before one single house is built we will put the infrastructure in before – that is a promise I say to everyone involved." I do hope he means that as it is imperative that the council sort out our existing traffic problems before exacerbating them further with more development. We don't want Warrington to become an undesirable place to live and work due to the nightmare traffic, we want Warrington to prosper but to do so they need to be a leader in sustainable travel.

## **CHARACTER AND GREEN BELT**

- Whilst it is acknowledged that some additional housing is required, this should not be at the detriment to the open countryside and greenery surrounding South Warrington. The current plans are disproportionate to what additional housing is required in South Warrington and what wouldn't cause a detrimental effect on the existing character of South Warrington. As you will be aware South Warrington comprises a series of villages with their own unique charm, character and traditions such as individual Walking Days. The proposals would dwarf these villages and merge them all together. I am concerned that the greenery of South Warrington will be lost forever and the area will just become yet another area of urban sprawl. The appeal of this area making people want to live here is the access to open greenery and the opportunity to live in a village setting but with the bonus of being part of a larger town. As they stand at the moment the proposals will destroy this. More needs to be

done to preserve the open character of the landscape within South Warrington and the identity of each village, the current plans do not do this.

- As I mentioned in my introduction I do think that there does need to be further development in South Warrington as there is a need for further (good quality but also more affordable) housing in the area, as long as they are designed and built in keeping with the existing housing stock in the area in both density and style, although with the opportunity to use some innovative 21<sup>st</sup> century design. However, this housing should only be built on the existing safe-guarded land which is currently ear-marked for housing, NOT the greenbelt.
- Everything should be done to preserve the character of each village and their traditions in Warrington. Where additional housing is proposed in South Warrington (ideally on the safe-guarded land NOT greenbelt), these houses should either be created to extend existing villages (for instance Grappenhall Heys) or they should be built to create a new little village of their own with its own character and charm. This village should be completely segregated from the other villages (using large green spaces) to ensure it has its own identity and does not encroach on the existing surrounding villages. It could have its own village school, small local shops, play area and maybe a local pub to provide a centre to life in the new village. This should NOT be considered a city or even a town in itself, rather a small village designed to complement the existing surrounding villages and to safe guard the greenbelt.
- Our greenbelt should be protected! We should be proud of our greenbelt and should be doing all we can to avoid building on this precious land. We the residents of Warrington consider that the greenbelt belongs to all of us, not just the land owners or developers and as such, it is our gift to the future. It should be preserved for generations to come, not sold off and concreted over all in the name of profit. Once the greenbelt is gone it is gone forever. Don't destroy something that doesn't belong solely to you, it belongs to all the residents of Warrington and we all should get to say what happens to it.
- Why was South Warrington's greenbelt considered of a lesser quality than other greenbelt across the town? How was this determined and was the report completed with the residents of the town in mind or the developers?

## **EXISTING RESIDENTS**

- Have the Council considered the potential impact on existing Warrington residents? As I have mentioned previously, the traffic impacts is of major concern as it feels as though Warrington is at breaking point with regards to traffic without these proposed additions. In addition it appears that there are not enough dentists and doctors to serve the existing population without adding further to this population. Existing residents want to be certain that any development will be for the good of the town and not just add to the coffers of the Council.
- There is increasing concern that these plans will have a detrimental impact on the existing housing, specifically in Grappenhall and Latchford. The proposals for the TPT and the railway bridge across the ship canal are likely to result in compulsory purchase orders for those unlucky enough to be located adjacent to this land. However, this will also have a detrimental impact on house prices for those living in close proximity. Will the council provide those residents with compensation too? It is true that you pay a premium to live in South Warrington but these proposals are posed to blight parts of this area which is leaving many, many people fearing that their properties are going to be effectively worthless or unsellable. These plans are leaving a lot of people in limbo as it is likely that this uncertainty will put off potential buyers. I know of at least one house sale that has fallen through

because of the proximity of the proposed property to the TPT [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. I'm sure there are many more, I am only aware of this one due to personal circumstances. The Council needs to provide more clarity with regards to the plans, people cannot be expected to sell or buy property with such uncertainty hanging over them. Nor should residents have to worry about their houses decreasing in value because of this.

- How will the existing bridge over the Bridgewater Canal in Grappenhall cope with such an increase in housing? Additionally, what about the tunnel under the Canal at Lumb Brook? Both are single file and will either cause even larger queues than currently or do the Council propose to modify these crossings? Any amendments would be detrimental to their character and that of the area.
- With regards to the limited crossings of the Bridgewater Canal it is likely that the plans would mean a greater volume of traffic will be travelling through Grappenhall Village to avoid this route. [REDACTED] I have witnessed first-hand how crazy the traffic gets through the village in the mornings and afternoons (specifically around drop off and pick up but also in the rush hours too) and how fast some motorists drive through the village over the cobbles. It is extremely dangerous as it is but with the addition of so many new houses I hate to think how much worse it will become. The impact of additional traffic through Grappenhall Village needs to be considered and the potential impact at the school. More needs to be done to protect the school children from the traffic and risk of accidents now, any further traffic will further exacerbate the issue.
- Stockton Lane was closed over 10 years ago because of a road traffic accident [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] The incident was horrific and tragic and the Council made the right decision to close Stockton Lane to through traffic to prevent this occurring again. As such, I was disgusted to discover the plans to re-open the road as part of the Local Plan. Currently the road is not fit for traffic of any volume (we travel to the sports club each Saturday and fitting two cars down at a time can be very problematic). It is also still not safe as because the road was closed to through traffic nothing was done to block the road from the canal as it was not considered necessary. If this road continues to be part of the Local Plan the Council needs to ensure that the road is safe and fit for purpose with two proper lanes but without destroying the surrounding countryside. It would be preferable if this road was removed from the plan, this tragic incident still isn't far from my mind.

## CALL FOR SITES

- I believe that through the call for sites process it wasn't just landowners as I would have expected, rather developers who presented land that they would like to see used for their development, regardless of the ownership and designation of that land. Whether this is true or not I am unsure but if true then it seems obvious to me that developers, who would stand to make huge profits from this plan, are going to nominate greenfield/greenbelt land where they wouldn't have to clean-up any potential contamination or undertake any lengthy site investigations and subsequent remediation to maximise profits. It doesn't seem appropriate for those standing to most profit from this scheme to be able to have such a large input into the proposal. This plan should be about benefitting the existing residents of the town first and making Warrington a town to be proud of and making it a more desirable place to live, I don't think the current scheme does this.

## UTILITIES

- More information needs to be provided regarding the potential impact on the existing utility networks including electricity, gas, water and wastewater. This is obviously dependent upon the size of the proposals but the requirement for additional electrical substations, a new wastewater treatment plant etc need to be considered. Additionally, the location of any such facility will need careful consideration to ensure minimal impact on existing residents.
- It would be environmentally beneficial if Warrington BC required each house to be capable of generating their own power, for example; ground-source heat pumps and solar panels.

## HOUSING AND DEVELOPERS

- I question the need for 24,000 additional homes by 2037. Is this for the council to achieve city status or is this the government's targets/requirement for all towns of our size?
- Have the developers identified these greenfield sites in the call for sites because this land costs less to purchase than brownfield and also costs less to develop? It seems as though the developers are avoiding brownfield and are trying to take advantage of our greenfield sites because of profit. Whilst that may make better economic sense for the developers, should our Local Plan really be based around what makes the developers the most money? At the moment that is how it appears.

## CITY STATUS

- Have Warrington BC consulted the public as to whether they would like to become a city? The likely answer is no. We live very close to two major cities and have the road and rail network to make commuting or visiting for pleasure a reality. However, the beauty of Warrington is that it is not a city. People live here because they like living in a town with the opportunity to visit the larger cities should they prefer. No one moves to Warrington because it may be a city one day. Warrington has a town centre with plenty of big shops to satisfy most shopaholics and is surrounded by a series of villages, each with its own centre and character. Local life in these villages is important to the residents with an important sense of community, Walking Day is one example of each village identity. I can only cynically assume that with city status comes greater funding from the government which is leading the drive for the council to make Warrington a city but the town would not be considered appropriate as a city. We love Warrington as it is!
- I would like to refer your attention to the 2017 Warrington Means Business document published by Warrington & Co, Warrington Borough Council and Warrington Town Centre Partnership. As you are aware this document outlines the masterplan for the future of Warrington's Town Centre. However, the introduction from Councillor Terry O'Neill continues to state that this document identifies the journey from New Town to New City!?! Throughout the rest of the document Warrington is continually referred to as a city. Yet, recently the Council have been denying their intention to go for city status again. I am incredulous over this. Please can the people of Warrington be consulted regarding the proposal for a city. If the people of this town wanted to live in a city we would have chosen to live in Manchester or Liverpool. If there are benefits for the residents of this town I am hard pushed to find any and would appreciate more transparency from the Council over these plans. It may be that it would be a fantastic opportunity for the town and existing residents but at the moment, rather cynically, it seems as though this is just a vanity project for the leaders of the council, probably resulting in some substantial monetary bonus for them and thoughts such as these are creating distrust in the council from the locals.

- With regards to the size aspirations in the local plan, do these come from the actual need for Warrington or are they to do with the city aspirations of the council? The reasoning for additional housing stock of this size needs to be laid out clearly so that we can all understand the Council's reasoning. Currently I have been left unsure as to the exact reason for this requirement, more clarity would be appreciated.

## **FACILITIES**

- Considering the additional housing the Council is proposing it is perhaps a shock that our A&E department is under threat. Going back to my previous point regarding the desire for city status it seems incredulous and massively short-sighted that our only hospital will lose its emergency department. Where are the masses of people to go in an emergency? If the town is to increase the number of houses by approximately 24,000 over the next 20 or so years then why is our healthcare provision being diminished. It is not just the hospital but greater number of GPs and dentists are required now and that's without the addition of these homes.
- The impact on emergency services needs to be considered. Will our existing police, fire and ambulance stations be able to cope with such large increases in population, especially given the rumours regarding the future of the police in Stockton Heath.

## **AIR QUALITY**

- Warrington Borough Council has declared three Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) (with a fourth in progress) where the concentrations of nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) are higher than the Air Quality Strategy (AQS) objective of 40ug/m<sup>3</sup> on an annual basis. The source of these concentrations is road vehicles. Two of these AQMA (AQMA 2 and 3) are located in the town centre, whilst AQMA 1 is located along a 50m continuous strip on both sides of the M6, M62 and M56 motorway corridors. Currently the plan for the approximately 6,000 additional properties in South Warrington is to provide links to these motorways. However, this will increase the number of vehicles within AQMA 1 and have the potential to have a significant effect on air quality within this sensitive location. Additionally, there is likely to be a detrimental impact on the air quality at existing receptors local to the scheme. Any additional vehicle and congestion onto the existing network will increase pollutant concentrations. Specifically, if Stockton Heath is used as the main route into the Town Centre. Whilst Stockton Heath has not been declared as an AQMA, NO<sub>2</sub> concentrations were measured at 50.5ug/m<sup>3</sup> and 35.5ug/m<sup>3</sup> (compared to an AQS objective of 40ug/m<sup>3</sup>) in 2015 in Stockton Heath. Any increase in traffic through this area is likely to have detrimental consequences on local air quality in this area and may result in the declaration of a new AQMA. It should also be noted that any additional housing in Warrington is likely to also impact on the proposed fourth AQMA which includes the roads travelling through Latchford.
- It is appreciated that at this strategic stage an Air Quality Assessment is unlikely. However, the Council needs to appreciate and acknowledge the potential impact that these proposals could have on sensitive receptors in the town (including existing housing, schools, nursing homes etc) and also the impact on the existing AQMA. Any development occurring in Warrington should have to consider the wider cumulative effect of those sites included for development within the Local Plan to ensure that the full air quality impacts are considered and to avoid background creep.

## **CONSULTATION**

- The consultation document is not that easy to understand, I don't think that the need for the proposed excessive numbers of additional housing stock have been properly explained and the use of jargon is confusing. Additionally, it doesn't seem to have fully explained the five proposed options for the 'Garden City Suburb' and how they came to fruition. None of the five are appropriate given the excessive size of all options and the need to use greenbelt for all of them. An option only utilising land which has previously been allocated for housing should have been included with both the positive benefits and negative dis-benefits included to allow the residents, concerned bodies and stakeholders to see how each option was considered. Naively and possibly cynically it appears that the finalised option was the starting point and the council has then gone back and added in a both more populated and less populated options to then choose the sort-of 'middle-ground'. The fundamental basis for the proposed options and final option needs to be better explained in plain English to ensure it is accessible and understandable to all, otherwise it doesn't work as a consultation document.
- Why has the consultation period not been better publicised? No leaflets have been provided to local residents who may be affected. No announcement was made by the council to advertise the proposals, consultation period and consultation events. Maybe I'm just cynical but it seems very convenient to me that the council has undertaken this consultation during the summer holidays, when a lot of residents may be away. It feels as though they've tried to keep it as quiet as possible to minimise the response from the public.
- Finally the Council have a duty to consult the public on these proposals and I consider the work done so far to publicise these plans has been inadequate. I found out about the plan through a colleague and through remarks on Facebook, neither method would have ensured an elderly person (for example) would be aware of the proposals. Leaflets should have been provided to each and every house potentially affected by the Scheme and given the size of the proposals I assume that this would likely comprise of every household in South Warrington, possibly the whole of Warrington given the potential for huge traffic problems.

I do hope that you will take mine and other fellow Warrington residents' concerns into full consideration and I hope you will not do anything to reduce the appeal of Warrington including access to green space and village life within a town, to either those of us living here or to our visitors. Finally, I would like to end with a quote from the '1969 Warrington New Town Consultants' Proposals for the Draft Master Plan' that a colleague shared with me recently. This is from the section of the plan which outlined the views of the children of Warrington:

*'This final quotation seems to sum up the majority of the children's views: "have we to grow up in this town crowned by thick black clouds of smoke girded round by ten storey skyscrapers? To visit the museum to find out what a tree was or samples of grass before the Corporation built one thousand five hundred houses on every green patch? Or is there a small group of people going to stop the town from getting like this? I sincerely hope so."'*

Yours Sincerely

