



6 June 2019

Dear Sir,

WARRINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN
PROPOSED SUBMISSION VERSION
SOUTH WEST URBAN EXTENSION FRAMEWORK PLAN
OBJECTIONS

Yet again, we are writing to you in connection with our objections to the above plan.

Very little has changed from the Preferred Development Option version of the Local Plan, and nor have our views regarding the effect it will have on our area. We strongly object to the Proposed Submission Version of the Plan, and the reasons for our objection are expressed in some detail in the enclosed document.

Having once again read your documents in detail, and once again attended one of your consultation events, we remain appalled, shocked and outraged at the scale of the development proposed in the Warrington area.

Development in the Warrington area in general on the proposed scale is totally unacceptable. South Warrington already lost most of our green areas over the last 50 years, as have other areas of Warrington, and it essential that we preserve those which remain.

Our specific objections are in relation to the South West Urban Extension. This is the area where we have lived for over 40 years. It is an area of outstanding natural beauty, and unique in its character.

The council claims that the plan is 'sound', but it is just the opposite. It is neither justified nor deliverable, and most certainly does not meet the needs of our area.

Please acknowledge receipt of this letter, and of our objections to the plan.

Yours faithfully



Christine & Michael Trepess

PROPOSED SUBMISSION VERSION LOCAL PLAN

The PSV of the Local Plan makes a number of statements regarding its' aims and requirements for the borough.

It states that plans must be developed through the local community, be justifiable and effective, and also to be deliverable.

THE PROPOSED RELEASE OF GREEN BELT LAND

The plan states that there are exceptional circumstances for the release of green belt land. These exceptional circumstances for the release of green belt land are based solely on the council's insistence that there is insufficient land from brownfield and other non-green belt land to meet the requirements of the plan.

The council has excluded The Fiddlers Ferry Power Station land from the plan, as it is still operational, and its decommissioning date is not yet known. However, the last date that coal fired power stations can close is 2025. This is less than half way through the period that is covered by the plan. Clearly Green Belt land should only be considered for release once it is absolutely certain that this site will not become available by 2037, and all other non-green belt land has been used up.

As the 20 year plan covers the period up to 2037, this land will become available well before then, and so should be taken into account.

Furthermore, the council is intending to release green belt land in parallel with brownfield and other development land. Inevitably, this approach would lead to the green belt land being used first.

Given the level of development previously achieved, it is highly unlikely that the current proposed level of development will be achieved. This will leave brownfield sites undeveloped and derelict, and the borough with decaying structures and waste tips.

Surely it is essential that brownfield and other non-green belt development land should be used before the consideration of the destruction of our countryside?

THE GREEN BELT

The green belt is there for a reason, and this is acknowledged by the council.

We must concentrate on the area in which we live, which is Higher Walton, to give examples of the effect that any erosion of this land will have on the local community, and the wider population in the Warrington area. There will be similar examples in all the other areas affected, such as Appleton.

The PSV Local Plan makes a number of statements.

1) The character of Warrington's places will be maintained and enhanced with a vibrant Town Centre and main urban area, surrounded by attractive countryside and distinct settlements. The unique elements of the historic, built and natural environment that Warrington possesses will be looked after, well managed, well used and enjoyed

2) New development will be successfully integrated into Warrington's transformed public transport system. The enhanced Green Space and Waterways network will provide popular, high quality walking and cycling routes that promote active lifestyles, reduce carbon emissions and contribute to improving air quality.

3) The Borough has a unique identity with the town of Warrington surrounded by attractive countryside and a number of smaller outlying settlements, each with their own separate character. The Borough has a large number of heritage and ecological assets which contribute to Warrington's identity and character.

4) Warrington's Green Belt fulfils an important role in ensuring the separation of Warrington from neighbouring towns and cities and preventing urban sprawl extending into the countryside.

5) The general extent of the Borough's Green Belt will be maintained but as set out in Chapter 3, it is not possible for Warrington to meet its development needs without releasing some Green Belt Land for development. The land proposed for release equates to around 11% of Warrington's total area of Green Belt.

Response to these statements

Our response to these statements, point by point is as follows. These points relate to the Plan for the South West Extension

1) a) The character of the Walton area will be totally destroyed. Walton village which is a Conservation Area will no longer be a distinct settlement. It will be swamped by the new development.

1) b) Walton Hall is one of the most iconic and historic buildings in the borough, and its' estate and gardens are visited by huge numbers of visitors from inside and outside the borough. It is not only the estate itself that is visited, but the visitors spill out into the surrounding area of countryside, passing along the Bridgewater canal, and down the local lanes, which pass through green fields containing a wide range of wildlife. If the plan goes ahead, this will be destroyed, not looked after. All the fields will be covered in houses.

We will cover the impact on the environment, and on local wildlife later in this document.

2) As mentioned in point 1 above, the Bridgewater canal passes through our area, bordered by productive farmland and trees, as far as the boundary of the borough of Warrington. The council has undertaken to protect its' industrial heritage, which includes the Bridgewater canal, but now intends to allow houses to be build alongside most of on side of this. Doing this will not enhance the waterways network.

We will cover the subject of air quality later on.

3) Walton is currently an area with its' own character, with an important heritage asset in Walton Hall, and is surrounded by attractive countryside. Once again, this plan aims to destroy this character.

The majority of the buildings contained within this area are Locally Listed. There are also other properties adjoining the site on the Listed Buildings/Locally Listed Buildings list. We know the map contained within the draft plan which shows these buildings was not complete. For example, our own property is on the Locally Listed Buildings list, but not shown on the map. We do not know if this has been updated.

The Bridgewater Canal has a number of bridges which are also on the list.

These precious heritage assets need to be protected at all costs, and building almost 2000 houses around them is not the best way to do so.

4) One of the purposes of green belt land is, indeed, to prevent urban sprawl, and prevent towns merging, so safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. The South West Extension Plan has the opposite effect. We would be left with a distance of around 200 yards of green belt land between the Warrington and Runcorn/Halton boundary.

There is a distance of approximately 1 kilometre only between the Conservation Areas of Walton Village and Moore Village. The two areas are linked by the Bridgewater Canal, and Runcorn Road. **It is vital** that the areas of farmland surrounding these links are kept as Green Belt, free from urban sprawl.

This is the only way to fulfil the purpose and requirements of the Green Belt – that is, to stop towns merging, and to keep Warrington separate from Runcorn, and thus maintaining this beautiful rural gap between the two towns, and separating Runcorn's and Warrington's urban sprawls.

5) The council states that it is releasing 11% of our green belt land, as if it is an insignificant amount. We have already lost such a large amount of green belt, in the south Warrington area, that any further erosion of it will leave hardly any green land remaining.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The loss of habitat in south Warrington in general will have a huge impact on local wildlife.

The area covered by the South West Extension has a wide diversity of wild birds, animals and flowers, supported by the areas of Green Belt Land. If we allow this development to go ahead, we will lose this. In our area alone visitors can see a large variety of birds - lapwings, curlews, sky larks, yellowhammers, fieldfares, redwings, and dozens of others, too numerous to list. We also have badgers, foxes, stoats, bats and newts. There will be nowhere for this cherished wildlife to live, if we build on their homes.

This area of the Bridgewater Canal is a green link between Walton and Moore villages, and is immensely popular with the public for walking, jogging, cycling, fishing, horse riding and boating. Its' elevation provides fine views of farmland and ancient woodland. It provides a rare and unique 'green lung' area adjacent to both towns. Its' loss would be a tragedy for both Warrington and Runcorn.

There is also **Moore Nature Reserve**. Under the Warrington Waterfront development, this will all but disappear, to enable industrial development. **This is a vitally important area for wildlife.** I understand that Cheshire Wildlife Trust are having discussions about this with the council, but I must mention some of the species which will be lost if it is destroyed.

We have many rare birds, including bitterns which over-winter there, water rails, goldeneye, Cetti's warblers, green woodpeckers, all 5 species of owls, rare dragonflies, bats, and several rare species of mammals. This area cannot be lost.

This is an area of heavily worked farmland, scattered cottages, and buildings listed as historic assets.

It is also one of the few areas near to the town which is unaffected by light pollution. At night, the stars are actually visible in the sky! It is also possible to walk around without breathing in the pollution experience so widely nowadays.

Traffic and Air Quality

The Manchester Ship Canal runs through the middle of Warrington, splitting the north and south parts of the borough. To move between the two sectors, it is necessary to cross this canal, and this is done using a number of swing bridges, which were built in the 1890s, when the canal was constructed. The only alternative to these bridges is a high level bridge which crosses the canal between Stockton Heath and Latchford, but this is a weak bridge, and not suitable for large volumes of traffic. We are told that the number of ships using the canal will be increasing significantly over the next few years. The traffic chaos currently caused by these bridges when they are opened to allow boats to pass through, is dreadful. I can only imagine what things will then be like when all the additional vehicles associated with another 18,900 houses, and all the extra industrial sites arrive in the Borough.

The queues backing up from these bridges are very long already, and result in dozens if not hundreds of vehicles standing with their engines running for up to around 20 minutes, resulting in high levels of pollution in the area, and poor air quality. It is not unusual for the queues on the Chester Road swing bridge to back up into the town centre. The proposed Western Link road should in theory help to alleviate this problem, assuming that traffic can actually access the inbound road. This access is only a short distance from the bridge itself, and it is quite possible that the standing traffic waiting to cross the swing bridge will block off the junction.

Currently the stretch of road between the town centre and Daresbury (A5060 and A56) has mainly minor roads joining it. The exceptions to these are the Gainsborough Road and Walton road junctions. There is going to be a new road, the Centre Park Link joining the A5060 at the Gainsborough Road junction, at a new roundabout. There will also be a new roundabout on the A56 at Walton Lea, where the Western Link road ends. These changes will without doubt cause traffic to back up at each of the new roundabouts, and also make it more difficult for traffic coming out of Walton Road to join the A56, as this junction is only a short distance from Western Link roundabout. Currently there is a cycle lane running from the Walton Road junction to the road accessing Walton Village. I assume that this will go, and the stretch from the Western Link road to the bridge over the Bridgewater canal will all become dual carriageway.

The A56 then becomes single carriageway up to the traffic lights at the Daresbury Expressway. Even now, at busy times outward traffic can back up along a large part of the single carriageway section of the road, and where the single and dual carriageway sections merge. The volume of traffic using the A56 is bound to increase, as the two new roads will by-pass the congested town centre, and in theory allow easier access to the motorway network, via junction 12 of the M56. This additional traffic, plus the additional vehicles we will get from the new housing in the area will cause the congestion on the A56.

The town centre is another major problem for traffic. At present, there are only two crossing points over the River Mersey. One of these is Warrington Bridge in the town centre, and the other is Kingsway Bridge at Latchford. The two new crossings provided by the Centre Park Link and the Western Link roads will help with this problem, but only with the traffic heading for the A56 exit from the town centre. All the other incoming roads will still have to pass through the centre, including all the extra traffic resulting from the houses and industrial building proposed in the Appleton area of the borough. Any problems on the motorway network will still result in gridlock throughout the borough.

Noise Pollution

All the new building and traffic will make a big difference to the levels of noise currently experienced in the Walton area. The extra noise associated with an additional 1600 houses alone will be significant, replacing what is now the peace and quiet of the countryside. Add on all the extra traffic passing through the area as a result of the Western Link road, which will undoubtedly channel a much higher volume of heavy vehicles and our days of peace and quiet will be at an end.

To summarise

Warrington Borough Council insists that this plan is 'sound'. It is just the opposite. It is neither justified nor deliverable, and most certainly does not meet the needs of our area. What our area needs is the preservation of its' rural identity, as a resource for the whole of Warrington and beyond.

Please do not allow our Council to destroy this area.



CHRISTINE & MICHAEL TREPES