



11 June 2019

Local Plan, Planning Policy and Programmes
Warrington Borough Council
New Town House
Buttermarket Street
Warrington
WA1 2NH

Objection to Warrington's Local Plan - Proposed Submission Version

Housing Numbers are too high

The North-West is depopulating, Manchester being an exception. I am not denying that some growth needs to take place, but the growth figures for Warrington seem excessively high. Per annum the Council figures are for 945 new houses, the Government figures are 909, and the official population increase predictions are 528.

An oversupply of housing, like the excess of retail development with its empty shops, would have consequences. Many towns across the North-West are rapidly building more and more houses. We used to live in Preston where enormous numbers of houses are being built on green field sites without sufficient employment opportunities. It recently took eighteen months to sell our fifteen year old Redrow house at a depressed price and it was well situated in Longton village. And think of Liverpool's rows of unsaleable terraced houses! This is why it is so important that projected housing needs are not over-inflated.

Government subsidies of new homes to first time buyers are depressing the second-hand market and house-builders are naturally looking to build as many houses as possible on easy green field sites. When this policy finishes, Warrington could end up with a glut of new houses.

No Justification for Releasing Green Belt

I am very worried that the overstatement of Warrington's population growth will result in the destruction of our very beautiful and high amenity local Green Belt in South Warrington for no good purpose. My husband and I walk out weekly, setting out from our door, and we average five miles along delightful footpaths, through woodland, farmland and along ancient lanes. Thus we know the area very well. The new development would permanently obliterate an area rich in flora and fauna, used extensively by many members of this community.

Inadequate Transport Infrastructure

I am very unhappy about the transport plans. Buried deep in a development framework document is a map (copy below) showing a potentially major road in a SW-NE direction. This seems an ideal rat-run for lorries between the M56 junction 10 and the new factories proposed. It would career through the footpaths we walk through, creating noise and pollution for nearby houses.



The plan does NOT address our access to the centre of Warrington, the hospital, the cinema, any of the large supermarkets or any of the large shops like Dunelm, Wickes, M&S (clothes), B&Q etc. What is currently required by local people, whether or not the Garden Suburb development takes place, is more North-South access across:

- (i) the Bridgewater Canal
- (ii) the Manchester Ship Canal
- (iii) the River Mersey to alleviate current congestion.

Not a single extra crossing of the Bridgewater Canal is proposed. Nor is there any proposal to widen the busy single lane under the Bridgewater Canal at Lumb Brook where on-going versus on-coming traffic is controlled by traffic lights.

Nothing addresses the bottleneck in Stockton Heath across the Manchester Ship Canal. At rush hour and lunch times the queues and traffic pollution build up. When the swing bridge opens the queues are horrendous. Nobody likes to think what will happen when the swing bridge, tremendously dilapidated and neglected, is eventually shut for months for repainting and renovation by Peel Holdings. The new housing would bring traffic to a complete standstill, even after the bridge is repainted.

The new Western link that has just been given the go-ahead may alleviate some of the current congestion across the River Mersey for east-west commuters to Chester or Manchester, but does not address the north-south needs of Appleton and Stretton residents even before this massive housing development takes place.

In summary, transport links for a substantial number of new houses in this new Garden Suburb of South Warrington is completely uncatered for. All the local people in this area, myself included, think that the transport plans are a joke.

Pollution

On a cold winter's morning, when driving two miles from Appleton to Stockton Heath along the A49, a descent of about 100 metres, you can see the pollution over Stockton Heath. There is a line on the horizon below which it is dark grey and above which is blue sky. It is caused by temperature inversion, the cold clean air above trapping the warm dirty air beneath, until the sun eventually warms the upper layer of air and the pollution becomes evenly spread in the atmosphere.

I am horrified by this. I had previously only seen such pollution in Almaty, Kazakhstan. As we have two grandchildren in Stockton Heath, I am very concerned.

The present traffic gridlock in Stockton Heath, at rush hour, at lunchtimes, and when the swing bridge closes, exacerbates this pollution. The local plan only worsens this existing problem and does nothing to tackle it.

Council officials at the Halliwell Jones event said that Warrington is a popular place to live, strategically placed between Liverpool and Manchester. If the government is encouraging us all to drive less then we should not be building houses for commuters. Our homes and places of work should be closer together. A vast increase in housing near the M56 would only facilitate this commuting.

The local plan emphasises bike ways. I am unlikely to bring my main supermarket shop back to my house on a bicycle. Nor will I be pedalling eight miles each way to the cinema or six miles to the hospital. Besides I never had the opportunity to learn to ride a bike when I was young and I am now [REDACTED]

I would like to take a bus into the centre of Warrington. Along London Road, a major artery into town, buses are hourly and very occasionally do not come. In practice, my husband drives me into the centre or drops me off in Stockton Heath where there is a frequent bus service. I come home by bus because I can wander around the shopping centre to kill time. I do not see any concrete proposals for a bus along London Road every 15 minutes, the tipping point where my husband and I would willingly take a bus into the centre.

However, as mentioned earlier, most facilities like the hospital, the cinema, the bowling alley, and the large shops like Dunelm, Wickes, B&Q, and the Gemini centre that includes M&S (clothes), are all two bus rides away. Therefore we will continue to use the roads, inadequate though they are. The similar needs of 5,000 extra families would result in grid-lock.

Health Centres, Schools, Supermarket

New houses on two large sites nearby are currently being built and the Local Plan proposes another 5000 new houses in Appleton / Grappenhall / Stretton. What the Local Plan does not state is WHEN the medical facilities, schools and a large supermarket are to be built. A large local supermarket would certainly reduce the need for lengthier car journeys. But the Local Plan is vague about dates and I worry that facilities will be late or forgotten about.

There are only a handful of small GP practices in Appleton, Grappenhall and Stretton, and the pressure on their services is already stretched. Similarly with dentists. It has just taken me over four months to get my broken crown replaced by my local dentist. When I attended at the end of January no slots were available until the end of May and early June. These facilities are required now.

Omission of a new Hospital Site in the Local Plan

Warrington has an old hospital on a small site. Local newspapers inform us that current discussions about a new hospital are ongoing, possibly on a new site.

Surely the proposed hospital site should be decided upon, before or as part of this Local Plan. Grappenhall and Appleton are the last unbuilt parcels of land close to the centre of Warrington that are large enough to accommodate a new hospital. If the Local Plan goes ahead, and Grappenhall and Appleton are completely covered in houses, then strategic choices for a hospital site will be lost.

I submit that the Local Plan is unsound.

Yours sincerely,

A large black rectangular redaction box covers the signature and name of the author. The redaction is composed of two overlapping rectangles: a larger one on top and a smaller one on the bottom left.



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I have read and agree with the objections in this letter.

Additional signatories

