

OBJECTIONS TO WARRINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL'S LOCAL PLAN - 2019

Introduction:

The Warrington Plan is one that will change the hitherto green areas of South Warrington dramatically and shape the local landscape for decades to come. Key features of the Plan are of great concern to local residents in particular, having carefully chosen South Warrington as a place to live and settle.

The following comments identify our concerns, with particular reference to Grappenhall:

Increase in traffic:

There will be an inevitable increase in the volume of traffic which at key times like rush hour and the end of the school day is already horrendous. In addition to this, we have three antiquated swing bridges across the Manchester Ship Canal – all heavily used and badly maintained – which can scarcely cope with today's congestion let alone any further increase. The bridges are known to be unreliable and unexpected closures cause gridlock across the town and will only worsen.

The Cantilever Bridge has carried a "Weak Bridge" warning for decades, and itself dates back to the 1890s. For exactly how long could this essential "weak bridge" survive with the anticipated increase in usage? The village has long-standing traffic problems which cause annoyance for commuters and homeowners alike. This factor has not been properly addressed in the Plan at all.

Loss of "GREEN BELT"

Aspects of this ill-advised plan are also out of line with current thinking. Other local authorities, such as Halton, are actively planning to reduce their use of Green Belt land. By contrast, Warrington's proposed Garden suburb will include thousands of homes and promises "affordable" housing for the future. Whilst acknowledging the need for development, the scope of the plan defies understanding. Why use our Green Belt land, denying access to much of the countryside, when Brownfield sites are readily available? Furthermore many of these sites have lain empty for a considerable time so are available for use, as are many existent warehouses. What discussions have been held with adjacent authorities about this?

Unlocking the land for housing development on this scale is a complete violation of Green Belt boundaries confirmed in your 20year plan, and is also far too ambitious. There are no stated special circumstances to release it for new build premises. Loss of green space is one of our very strongest objections to the plan and will have a detrimental effect on the community. Green space is essential to clean living and children need wide open spaces to play, explore and enjoy and developers should not be allowed to invade

this entitlement. The government is rightly promoting open spaces and the planting of trees in order to reduce carbon dioxide and reduce pollution. Why are you ignoring this very strong message which could ultimately contribute to yet more climate problems?

Increase in housing:

House building in this country, even on a large scale, never seems to meet demand, and often it is difficult to source enough workmen at the right time. Has this been considered? The actual number of planned houses is often not thought through properly.

Once houses are built, there is a tremendous impact on the environment. Each house could have up to two or more cars, which will not only increase traffic volume and congestion, but will need hard standing for drives, with potentially a large run-off in rainy weather leading to excessive surface water. What consideration has been given to flooding potential in the area?

Figures indicate there will be 7,400 new houses in S. Warrington alone, mostly around Appleton, and nearly 18,900 across Warrington by the end of the Plan. Who are these for, and where will they work? The ramifications of this plan are unthinkable and very much dreaded by the community. It will be Urban Sprawl at its worst.

Environmental concerns:

Historically, Grappenhall has been a farming area, and a number of farms and farming families still play an important part in our neighbourhood and landscape. Not only are these a significant part of our local heritage, which should not be overlooked, the proposed rape of this agricultural land will have a catastrophic effect on the diversity which we should be safeguarding.

Furthermore, Biodiversity does not just apply to plants and animals, it is also – and importantly, about the community living here and their needs for food security, medicines, fresh air and a clean, healthy environment in which to live.

Increased pollution – especially air quality and noise – is a great concern. Warrington already has a bad reputation for dangerous small particulate emissions, and there is a proven link between exposure to small particulates, respiratory and heart problems and even premature death. How will this issue be addressed with such a large influx of traffic in the area planned?

In the same way, the inevitable destruction of wildlife habitats is of serious concern if vast areas of trees and hedgerows are lost under the proposed Plan. There is no structured justification given for this in the Plan.

Loss of the character of our village:

Grappenhall in particular has a strong traditional village character, making it a desirable residential area. The coveted Conservation areas for example comprise a striking range of well-kept and well built properties with impressive

styles and features. It is essential that any new housing must complement and reflect this so that it is compatible with the character of the area. The ambitious housing target needs lowering significantly, thereby protecting the green space we currently have whilst still enabling the regeneration of the Town Centre. The plan is currently too ambitious and provides no justification for such predicted growth, nor does it acknowledge the urgent need to maintain the historic semi-rural nature of this beautiful locality.

Lack of infrastructure

Unlike the 1970s plan, there is no clear infrastructure in place or planned to meet the proposed development. New housing and a much increased population will immediately need better roads, better access, more schools, more public transport, extra GPs, clinics and hospital beds, considerably more off-road parking and Car parks to name but a few essential requirements. Furthermore, Health Chiefs strongly advise that schools and playgrounds are located well away from major sources of pollution, such as busy main roads, to minimise the risk to young children. Has Warrington considered this?

Provision for these in the Plan is scant or non-existent and takes no real account of the amount of traffic that will be generated on the South side of the town. The Garden Suburb will be very close to a very busy motorway junction and main trunk road where problems can already lead to grid lock across Warrington. The only mention is of a road linking the industrial estate in Appleton to Junction 9 of the M56, which will enable and encourage lorries to speed along, but very little else. A clear Transport Impact Statement should be submitted to prove that increased traffic generated will not have a detrimental effect on our already over-loaded road system. This was one of the greatest concerns expressed by members.

Lack of Clarity in the plan:

Finally, but importantly, this Plan is unclear in terms of how the Council objectives would be delivered. The overriding driver is economic growth and excessive development of housing, but there are serious concerns about the inherent changes to the quality of the environment, preservation of local heritage and landscape and the apparent lack of the essential infrastructure which should be at the heart of any realistic plan. Having given much thought to this and considered all aspects in depth, we feel that the Plan is both unsound and undeliverable overall, and inappropriate to current needs.

We trust that you will now give deep thought to the genuine concerns expressed here, and that the Plan will be re-considered with these objections in mind.

**Submitted by Grappenhall Local History Group
16/06/2019**