

[REDACTED]

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Dear council members,

I am writing to express our objection to the council's preferred development option.

My husband and I live in the village of Hatton with our family and we have a number of serious concerns regarding both the proposals outlined in the PDO and also the manner of the consultation process.

1. Our choice of home in Hatton is based hugely on the quality of life that it brings [REDACTED] living in the relative countryside, as well as close to the small but excellent village of Stockton Heath. This incurs a certain higher cost as housing in this area of Appleton, Stretton, Grappenhall, Hatton is all more expensive than housing in other areas of the Borough. We have worked hard to afford to buy in this area and enjoy, like the other residents of these hamlets and villages, the benefits of living in a small, close community and the local shopping village of Stockton Heath. The proposed development of the land around both the Stretton and Appleton area, and the Walton area, will irrevocably change the lived experience of residents here, creating one large residential area with one village merging into the next without the advantages of the green belt agricultural land separating them. It will be extremely difficult to continue to have the small community life that these areas currently enjoy and there can be no guarantees that this will not also have a detrimental effect on the prices of housing in these areas too. Neither the possible detrimental effect on house prices nor the loss of the small community identities are acceptable situations to be imposed upon us as residents. The effect that this plan will have on the village of Stockton Heath is also not to be underestimated. Traffic in and out of Stockton Heath is already extremely busy on weekends, and at gridlock when the canal bridges are opened. The impact on the village as it is enjoyed at the moment, when so many thousands of houses will be built in the vicinity, can only be adverse.

2. The areas where the PDO covers in South Warrington are already close to a number of key road networks, with the M56, M6 and M62 all extremely close. On the other side of us there is the Manchester Ship Canal. Both of these transport areas already have an impact upon the direct area here, with the opening of the Canal bridges affecting transportation across the canal due to the regular road closures, which then backs up through Stockton Heath or Walton. When there are issues on the M56 near junction 10 Hatton already becomes a traffic 'rat run' for commuters who also do not know the country road and usually drive too fast and create a steady stream of traffic. If the PDO was to go ahead in its current form, there would be even greater impact on the hamlet of Hatton, which lies directly between the area of the canal and the motorways. The proposed 'Eastern Link' from junction 10 to the north of the canal, would attract extra traffic in our area, would cause unacceptable noise, pollution and vibration. As well as being a quiet hamlet for residents, Hatton it is also an extremely popular place for cyclists (especially cycle clubs) and horse riders to use, and extra traffic using the lanes as a short cut or run through would be a danger to these people and animals. Therefore it would be completely unacceptable for Hatton Lane, Warrington Road and Daresbury Lane (which run through Hatton) to become a regular traffic route or an inescapable run through to avoid queues elsewhere.

3. Warrington Borough Council are not currently meeting its air pollution targets, and the air quality of this area, being so close to so many motorway networks, the Runcorn power plant and the factories near the train station in Warrington near Walton, is very poor. In

2015 WBC measured levels of a harmful air pollutant called Nitrous Oxide in 47 places around the town. It has an annual mean objective of keeping levels below **40µg/m<sup>3</sup>**. The Council's own monitoring showed that in 2015, 28 (60%) of those sites had pollution levels higher than their own objective. In 2014 only 8 (17%) of sites exceeded that level so Warrington's air quality has worsened. *WBC Air Quality Annual Status Report 2016*. [https://www.warrington.gov.uk/info/201090/environmental\\_issues/2024/air\\_quality\\_and\\_pollution](https://www.warrington.gov.uk/info/201090/environmental_issues/2024/air_quality_and_pollution).

In May 2016, the World Health Organisation said that Warrington is the second worst place in the North West for breaching air pollution safety levels.

In 2011 the Council's Local Transport Strategy said:

- Warrington has a higher percentage of households with 2 or more vehicles (36%) than the rest of the North West (27%) or UK (30%).
- Warrington attracts more journeys to work (97,078) each day than it generates (85,813) and is the 8th largest attractor of work trips in Greater Manchester, Merseyside & Cheshire. [SEP]
- Warrington has a higher percentage of people commuting over 20km to work in (17%) or out (18%) of the borough than the rest of the North West (10% & 14%).

These figures show that Warrington already has a heavy reliance on cars and other polluting vehicles. Should the plans be approved air quality may well worsen. The PDO does not take into account how 9000 more households, and the thousands of extra vehicles that this will inevitably bring into the area, will impact on an already poor quality of air. I am an asthma sufferer and all of this this is of serious concern to me. I have not read anything so far to reassure me that WBC is doing everything it can to improve the current situation's air pollution, let alone the effect that the vast increase in housing, and the consequent extra vehicles, will have on it.

4. The use of so much Green Belt land to accommodate the high number of houses in the PDO is completely unacceptable. There are large Brown Field sites likely to be released within the 20 year period of this plan, including Fiddlers Ferry, and these do not seem to be taken into consideration. The national Planning Policy Framework says that Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in "exceptional circumstances". Once Green Belt land is gone, it cannot be reclaimed and the damage cannot be undone. The effect that the destruction of this important protected land will have cannot be underestimated. This is an area with high levels of agricultural development, it is not 'unused'. The Green Belt land in the South of Warrington is of huge value and importance to all of the borough, not just the local residents, and it is visited and enjoyed by residents across Warrington, Halton, and Cheshire as a whole. The impact this plan will have on wildlife can also not be underestimated either, and the destruction of so much Green Belt land in this area of Warrington will have a severe detrimental effect on the habitats of a wide range of species of mammals, birds and insects. How can this be of benefit to Warrington and Cheshire as a whole? Wildlife matters, and Green Belt land plays a crucial role in how we support our native wildlife in this country.

5. Under the PDO plans I understand there are 4 primary schools and one secondary school proposed to be built. This is of course essential for the numbers of families that the houses will bring in to the area. However, I work within the education sector and I have seen how housing developments impact upon current communities and schools in practice. As the houses are to be built over a 20yr period, the timing of the building of the schools will be crucial, and if wrong will lead to over populated schools in our current communities. The resources provided to the current schools may not be adequate, and ultimately I have a

huge concern over the differences there will inevitably be in the future between the newly built schools and the current schools we have in the area. Bridgewater High in Appleton is an outstanding school, [REDACTED] However it is not in the best state of repair or resources. Compare with this a proposed brand new secondary school in close proximity to it; the difference in environment and access to up-to-date resources all makes a huge difference and leads to other schools struggling to 'compete' (for want of a better word.) I have seen it happen in Trafford, and know only too well what it is like to work in a school which is grossly under resourced, falling apart and struggling to pay the bills whilst retaining outstanding status, whilst new schools are built elsewhere and have resources thrown at them. These issues will need very serious thought and consideration, and consultation with the stakeholders in the education sector of South Warrington.

6. With regards the manner of this consultation process, I would like to express my grave concerns over the way it has been handled. The fact that the consultation process took place mainly during the long school holidays, when many people were likely to be away, added to the fact that it was not publicised anywhere near as much or as clearly as it should have been, is shocking. I only found out about the consultation in time to make the additional meeting put on at the Park Royal Hotel, but this meeting, I discovered, was not even on the original list of consultation dates. Whilst I was queuing (yes, queuing) to get into the Park Royal to see the plans and speak to council representatives I discovered that a lack of knowledge among local residents about the PDO was the common theme being discussed. The fact that local residents who will very likely suffer significant negative change at the hands of this plan were not told individually by mail is a completely unacceptable way to carry out a consultation on such a huge proposed change to our villages. With any consultation process, communication and transparency is the key, and the lack of both of these is extremely worrying and makes me very suspicious for the reasons behind it.

7. On finding out more about this PDO we have discovered another worrying piece of information about WBC's push to gain 'city' status. We chose to move to South Warrington precisely for its countryside and its villages. We are extremely close to the two cities of Manchester and Liverpool already, and we do not see how achieving city status is going to benefit us as residents here if it means that most of the borough's countryside, historical villages and hamlets and ultimately their essence and identity will be erased. The PDO is stated to be "Option 2" – this appears to be based on the aspiration of the Council executive to create a "new city"; therefore it is not the independent, objective and expertly assessed need of the town.

8. Our research also shows that the figures and 'facts' that the PDO is based upon, and from which the council has come up with the 24,000 houses over 20 years figure, are not accurate. The Objectively Assessed Needs (OAN) is cited on p.5 of the PDO as 839 new homes per annum - but this was based on 2012 surveys. Before publishing the PDO, WBC were in possession of an updated May 2017 report based on 2014 data which shows a comparable figure of just 738 homes per year (but could be as low as 679 homes pa), but this number has obviously been ignored. As the 839 is taken as the base for the higher Economic Development Needs Assessment (EDNA), then if the 839 is a significant overstatement, so must be the EDNA. The lower number is more consistent with the 716 homes pa average until 2039 within the latest ONS live tables which could be used to underpin the Government's proposed formula for calculating OAN published in September 2017. If the plan does not accurately reflect the updated data then it cannot be upheld as adequate as a PDO, and the "exceptional circumstances" needed to reclaim our Green Belt land. It is crucial to also recognise that the projections used are based on data periods prior to the Brexit referendum. The Plan should be based on an updated Strategic Housing

Market Assessment that takes account of the latest economic, demographic and migratory expectations. Under the current climate of uncertainty and change, having a PDO which stretches for 20 years and which will cause so much irrevocable change to the nature of our town, is surely not advisable or responsible. We are of course aware and completely understand the need and requirement for the council to have a plan for our town's housing development, however it seems to me that this should be scaled down to 10 years and use up-to-date and more relevant data, taking into account the changes that we will see over the next 2 years as the Brexit deal is made. There should also be detailed ecological, air quality and transportation surveys and research conducted, results of which are made available to residents.

We hope that WBC will take on board our serious points of objection and make appropriate changes to the PDO it is consulting on.

Best regards,

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