

Matter 6b - Feedback to WBC/ Government Inspector regarding Updated Proposed Submitted Version of the Proposed Local Plan LP-PSV21/22

To: WBC Council and Local Plan Team, Government Inspector commissioned to review LP-PSV21/22

From: Dr Kevin McAloon*, Ref 0082

*co-author of Thorn Cross Neighbourhood Plan (2017), ex Chair and Trustee of Appleton Thorn Village Hall (ATVH), representing the Appleton Thorn community including ATVH membership, Appleton Thorn Choral, etc. Also a member of Rethinking South Warringtons Future (RSWF) and Campaign Against Ruining our Environment (CARE) community support groups

Introduction

The LP-PSV21/22 heavily impacts Warrington town, especially the village communities of S Warrington moreso Appleton Thorn wherein massive swathes of Green Belt land are at risk to be transformed into commercial development or housing development, thereby changing the character of local rural communities and contravening both national policies (NPPFs, climate change, Green Belt protection) and local policies (Thorn Ward NDP- Neighbourhood Development Plan).

Objections

In representing Appleton Thorn village, I fully endorse and support Rethinking South Warrington's Future (RSWF) community group's submission regarding Matters 1- 14 of LP-PSV21/22. In particular, the following summary points should be urgently considered

- There is a complete lack of transport infrastructure provision, with little indication of how the existing road infrastructure, which is constrained by limited crossings of the Manchester Ship Canal and Bridgewater Canal, will be improved to cope with the additional housing and employment land (as detailed in RSWF Report 1)
- There is no justification for the scale of Green Belt release, nor are there any mechanisms to protect the released land as the plan period progresses (as detailed in RSWF Report 2).
- At present, with climate change issues and food security challenges following Brexit, it seems inappropriate to develop precious greenfield land from the Green Belt, much of which is currently agricultural land (as detailed in RSWF Report 3).
- There are several instances where the LP-PSV21/22 appears to diverge from the NPPF, especially around sustainable development (as detailed in RSWF Report 4).
- In an uncertain future through Brexit, climate change, pandemics there is no justification for strong local economic growth and therefore for the excessive increase in the volume of employment land (Matter SEW 6f).
- Although the government housing methodology has been followed, past rates of housebuilding suggest the targets set for Warrington are too optimistic and therefore undeliverable

- There is too little emphasis on Town Centre regeneration, particularly maximising the use of brownfield sites, including the repurposing of other land uses in the Town Centre which could be better utilised as housing development, and improved retail and culture facilities. However the use of Fiddler's Ferry as a potential large multimodal brownfield site for commercial development is welcome.
- Overall there are too many unsound features in LP-PSV21/22 and we welcome the Inspectors' examination in order to revise the plan, making it acceptable to both the Council and Town communities

An important local town issue is the potential sacrifice of open Green Belt land for large housing development schemes through the Matter 6b SEWUE proposals. There are no 'very special circumstances' to violate this S Warrington land which helps as the eco-lungs of both S Warrington villages and crucially Warrington as a whole. Our town has a WHO reputation of being one of the top 5 polluting towns in England for NOx and 2.5 micron particulates. Surely we should be looking for opportunities to reduce local pollution, not add to it, thus improving both reputation and community health? Already Langtree has prematurely submitted an untimely and unwanted proposal for a massive commercial zone/ logistics hub on GB land in advance of the new Local Plan being settled.

Overall the proposals for the SEWUE to take precious green belt around Appleton Thorn, which is protected by national policy, through the implementation of policy MD2, to satisfy overestimated and unjustified population growth targets is flawed making any aggressive SEWUE proposals unsound. Existing road infrastructure already under stress by increased traffic, will further exacerbate traffic congestion especially down the A49, A50 & 57 if these new community developments are sanctioned. LTP4 does not provide a solution to congestion. It is necessary for WBC to heed and respond to major public criticism of policy MD2. This Policy will have a seriously disproportionate and unbalanced effect around our village and the surrounding environment of Appleton Thorn. New community (and commercial) schemes destroying large areas of GB thereby changing local rural character to mass urbanisation of the SEW area are unsound, unsustainable and completely against the wishes of the majority of residents of South Warrington. In short, MD2 cannot be used to support the 'exceptional circumstance' in order to justify green belt release.