

Matter 6f – SEWEA- 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

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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, 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

- 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).
- 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 employment (and housing) 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).
- Any expansion of SEWEA at the expense of GB land loss in the S Warrington area contravenes several Appleton Thorn Ward Neighbourhood Plan policies
- Overall there are too many unsound features in LP-PSV21/22, potentially massive increases in employment land in particular, and we welcome the Inspectors'

examination in order to revise the plan, making it acceptable to both the Council and our town communities

An important town issue is the potential sacrifice of open Green Belt land to be replaced by massive commercial employment land through the targeted SEW Employment Area (Matter 6f). 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 community health? Worryingly for SEW residents, already Langtree has prematurely submitted an untimely and unwanted proposal for a massive commercial zone/ logistics hub on local GB land in advance of the new Local Plan being settled.

Overall the proposals for SEWEA to take precious green belt and be replaced by an industrial zone on the periphery of Appleton Thorn are most unwelcome by local residents across S Warrington who wish to retain and enjoy their rural environment. This is protected by national policy, and through the implementation of policy MD2, to satisfy overestimated and unjustified commercial and population growth targets makes them flawed. Any further large SEWEA proposals exacerbating pollution (air quality, noise, light from commercial hubs) in an already polluted town is unacceptable (Warrington's climate change policy). Furthermore a SEWEA location relies on road transport making it single modal transportation and not multimodal as in N Warrington (eg Fiddlers Ferry which can be multimodal through train and water transportation) and therefore more uneconomic and more commercially unsound. Already recent ambitious road transportation plans in Appleton Thorn through a local Brexit park is struggling commercially leaving a large area tarmacked unnecessary and fairly useless.

It is necessary therefore for WBC to respond to major public criticism of policy MD2. This Policy will have a seriously disproportionate and unbalanced effect around Appleton Thorn and the surrounding environment. New community and commercial schemes destroying large areas of GB and replacing these with large industrial premises are unsound and unsustainable mostly due to the lack of the necessary road infrastructure and importantly 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.