

Trams for Warrington

Respondent Number 0395

Submission to September 2022 Inquiry on

Warrington Draft Local Plan

MATTER 11 – TRANSPORT AND OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE

1. Background- in 2016 Lewis Lesley of Trampower.co.uk produced a Pre-Feasibility for a 4-line Tram Network for Warrington to work as part of an integrated Public Transport Network with local bus and Rail services. At that point we set up a community group called “Trams for Warrington” to develop these ideas. I was previously the Principal Transportation Adviser to Greater Manchester Council and it was my team that came forward with the Tram ideas for Manchester which later became known as “Metrolink Trams” which all political parties in Greater Manchester supported. Another member of my team, David Thrower, in Manchester, is also a member of the Warrington Group. Two matters that I learnt from my Manchester days are (a) High Frequency Services so passengers don’t need a timetable and (b) Park and Ride facilities particularly at the ends of each tramline.
2. Local Transport Plan-the Warrington LTP4 still contains Trams as a public transport option but no effort has been put into it by the Members or Officers of WBC. Although, we believe, that they received a report from a firm of Consultants called AECComm which favours Trams as part of an integrated Public Transport Network, WBC officers have refused to provide us with a copy. It is now subject to a FOI application. The only political group in Warrington to embrace the concept of Trams has been the Liberal Democrat Group. In Warrington there is Municipal Bus operator known as “Warrington’s Own Buses” owned by WBC. The management of that company and the majority Labour Group appear to feel Trams are a threat to the bus company and have refused to meet with us. Trams should be part of Warrington’s future transport infrastructure in order to reduce the number of cars on the road and also to reduce air pollution. As we see it, the operation of Trams as an essential element of an integrated multi-modal transport network should be a fundamental tenet of both the Local Plan and LTP4. It would open up opportunities such as share a depot. We only want to develop ideas of trams in Warrington and do not want to be an operator. At present, we have found it necessary to secure a site for a depot at the former Gasworks site on Winwick Road adjacent to Tram Line 1 from Winwick to the town centre and on to Bank Quay Rail Station.
3. . Assessment Checklist (2014) provides various tests of unsoundness and I make the following submissions indicating that the Warrington Local Plan is unsound as follows-

- a) Page 6 - Sustainable Public Transport- the Officer and Members are not prepared to discuss Trams as an option (even though it is in the LTP4). This refusal renders the Plan unsound as they should be considering schemes that “encourage the reduction in greenhouse gases and congestion”.
- b) Page 15 - The Plan should demonstrate sound infrastructure delivery planning. I submit that this is non-existent and undermines the validity of the plan. I am unaware of any funds set aside by WBC develop any transport infrastructure.
- c) Page 26 - the Officers of WBC have refused to co-operate with the members of Trams for Warrington Group in relation to the following matters-
 - (i) Our colleague, Lewis Lesley, wanted to meet and discuss with the Chief Planning Officer of WBC the possibility of a planning application for line 1 but she failed to reply to emails or phone messages. I complained to the Chief Executive of Warrington Borough Council, Mr Steven Broomhead, who asked Mr Boyer (Head of Planning, Transport and Highways) to deal with this matter. A zoom meeting was arranged however Mr Boyer showed no genuine interest to pursue further talks and share ideas. The result was that the meeting was totally unsatisfactory and achieved nothing .
 - (ii) When the Local Plan was at it discussion stage I met Stephen Hunter (Mr Boyer’s number 2) about reserving a Park and Ride site at Stretton (southern terminus of line 2) close to the Junction 10 of the M56 for 300 cars of potential bus and tram passengers to use. Again, there was no genuine desire to explore the possibility and Mr Hunter refused to add it to the plot number 1 of the previous Local Plan saying “there plenty of other sites at Stretton for Park and Ride.” No help was forthcoming in finding these sites and again there was no further exploration of ideas.
 - (iii) Mr Boyer has refused to supply a copy of the AECComm Report referred to above.
 - (iv) In mid-June 2022 the Government issued a White Paper on “Levelling Up” and invited applicants to apply for Grants. At that point I contacted Steven Broomhead suggesting that WBC include in its application £100,000 for a full Feasibility Study for Trams using the Trampower scheme (bearing in mind that Trams are part of LTP4) and he replied “it will go on the list”. After a few weeks I pressed the Mr Broomhead about progress and I eventually received a reply from an Officer in Mr.Boyer’s department that the Feasibility Study for trams had not been included in the final list. It is not entirely clear who made this decision but I suspect it was the Labour Party Cabinet. This left us only a short to make an application on behalf of Trampower for a Levelling Up grant. We needed a Transport Planning partner- we eventually found one but

it was too late to make an application (the Government Department changed the date for submissions from 5 August to 2 August and that did no help). Trams for Warrington feel very let down by WBC but more importantly the residents of Warrington have been badly let down as there are no effective solutions to solving Warrington's traffic and air pollutions in either the Local Plan or LTP4.

Ian Buttress – Chair, Trams for Warrington (2nd August 2022)