

WARRINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE - 1 JULY 1980

WARRINGTON NEW TOWN DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION - PRELIMINARY  
SUBMISSION OF SECTION 6(1) PROPOSALS - PEWTERSPEAR ACTION AREA

REPORT OF THE PLANNING & ESTATES OFFICER

1. INTRODUCTION

The WNTDC are submitting proposals, seeking approval by the Department of Environment under Section 6(1) of the New Towns Act 1965, for major development in the parishes of Appleton and Stretton. The submission, called the Pewterspear Action Area, follows the 'Dudlows Green Action Area' 6(1) and related Bridgewater 'Context Plan' which were considered by Committee in July last year.

Prior to formal submission of the Pewterspear proposals, the DC have requested the comments of WBC.

2. RELATED LAND USE/TRANSPORTATION ISSUES

The 6(1) proposals, viewed in conjunction with the Dudlows Green proposals, represent very substantial development and raise a number of important land use and transportation issues:-

- (a) since development in this area has a critical relationship to the proposed N-S expressway/high level bridge.
- (b) since the current proposals have implications for the future planning of the entire Bridgewater area. Bridgewater here refers to those areas of the New Town lying south of the Ship Canal.

This report, therefore, not only deals with detailed comments on the Pewterspear 6(1), but also the wider policy issues.

3. PLANNING BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

In considering the Pewterspear proposals, it is important to summarise the planning background and context.

3.1. Warrington New Town Outline Plan

The WNT Outline Plan, approved by the Secretary of State in June 1973, allocated large areas of land for development in Bridgewater (see attached Plan 1).

A related element was the proposed N-S expressway, involving the construction of a new high level bridge over the Ship Canal, the aim being to relieve the existing north-south traffic/swing bridge problems and at the same time serve the proposed new development areas.

### 3.2. Bridgewater Context Plan (see attached Plan 2)

In July 1979, the DC submitted their revised proposals for Bridgewater via the 'Bridgewater Context Plan', which was prepared following the Secretary of State's Review of New Towns in 1977 and the announcement of reduced population targets for Warrington New Town.

The Context Plan proposals still indicate the HLB and N-S expressway, but there have been significant reductions in land use allocations:-

#### 3.2.1. Area Lying East of Proposed N-S Expressway

Large areas of land lying east of the proposed expressway, although allocated for development on the Outline Plan, are not now shown for development. The DC state that the future of these so called 'grey' areas will need to be determined by the Borough Council (after the 'life' of the DC).

#### 3.2.2. Area Lying West of Proposed N-S Expressway

The Context Plan indicates Bridgewater development primarily concentrated west of the expressway and east of London Road. The proposed development, albeit on a reduced scale than envisaged on the Outline Plan, still represents major development and is being dealt with under two Section 6(1) submissions, viz:

- (i) Dudlows Green Action Area - this was considered by the BC in July last year and relates to approximately 140 acres of land for housing, open space and ancillary uses in the Lyons Lane area. The proposed housing would comprise approx. 415 dwellings.  
The BC raised objections to these proposals for reasons explained in para.52. below; the DC have now submitted these proposals to DOE, and a decision is pending.
- (ii) Pewterspear Action Area - this forms the subject of the current submission for WBC comments. The details are set out below.

### 4. PEWTERSPEAR 6(1) PROPOSALS

The proposals relate to the development of a further 250 acres of land for housing, employment and ancillary uses, and a continuation of the Lumb Brook Valley Linear Park. A Plan will be shown at Committee. The proposals include:-

#### 4.1. Housing

A further 442 dwellings is proposed (medium to low density for owner occupation). No reference is made to 'quality' housing as in the previous Context Plan.

#### 4.2. Employment

A 100 acre landscaped 'Science Park' is also proposed which the DC state is required to continue the marketing concept which has proved successful for Birchwood.

##### 4.2.1. Use Classes

It is intended that the Science Park would include specialised employment developments of high quality, e.g. prestige offices, research and high technology developments, etc. However, the DC also now state that some firms may wish to be engaged in other activities ancillary to their main use and, so as not to prejudice such uses, the submission seeks approval for employment development falling within Use Classes II (Offices), III (Light Industry), IV (General Industry) and X (warehousing). The DC emphasise that such uses would still only be permitted where they fulfil their high space and design standards.

##### 4.2.2. Employment Figures

Although no employment figures are included, the DC have previously indicated a 3,000 jobs estimate.

##### 4.2.3. Outline Plan Departure

The site of the proposed employment area, lying south of Pewterspear Lane and north of Stretton Village, is not in the same location as that shown on the Outline Plan. In the event of any objections, it would, therefore, need to be the subject of a Public Inquiry.

NOTE: the approved Outline Plan indicated this site for housing and open space.

#### 4.3. Relationship to Existing Road Network

This must be seen in conjunction with the recent 'Dudlows Green Area' submission. It is intended that the development of the Dudlows Green Area and 'part' of the Pewterspear Area will take place in advance of the high level bridge, and will be served primarily by the A49 (London Road) via new distributor roads and existing roads east of A49.

The Pewterspear area will mainly be served by the proposed Pewterspear district distributor which connects to A49 at Owens bend, near the junction with Pewterspear Lane and opposite Hillside Road. The Pewterspear development could also lead to increased traffic, via proposed local distributor roads (in addition to traffic generated from the Dudlows Green Area) on existing roads such as Lyons Lane and Bridge Lane/Lumb Brook Road.

The DC consider that the increase in the volume of traffic using the existing roads will lead to "only marginally worse conditions".

#### 4.4. Previous Policy Statements on Bridgewater Development/Highway Implications

At the Public Inquiry into the Outline Plan in 1972, Cheshire CC stated that not more than 1,000 houses should be developed south of the Canal until the high level bridge/expressway proposal was implemented. The purpose of this limit was to avoid putting additional traffic on already congested roads, in particular the A49, until the necessary expressway investment had been made.

Subsequent approvals granted under the New Towns Act 1965 and the Town & Country Planning Act 1971 have already exceeded this figure.

The County Structure Plan, published in 1977, indicates a slightly revised attitude and states that, until a new HLB is built over the Ship Canal, development should be restricted to a level consistent with the capacity of the existing bridges and associated highways.

#### 5. COMMENTS OF WBC/CCC ON PREVIOUS 6(1) SUBMISSIONS IN DUDLOWS GREEN AREA

Two previous 6(1)'s have been submitted in this area:-

##### 5.1. Dudlows Green 1

This was submitted and approved in 1976 and was for proposed housing (260 dwellings) on land lying east of the existing Appleton Park estate. The WBC raised no objections subject to a number of conditions, which included:-

- "(1) The rate of development should not exceed 25 houses per year.
- .....(5) this housing be the last major proposal of the DC in the Bridgewater district before publication of the district plan and the completion of the high level bridge and Lumb Brook Trunk Sewer". (D.S. Committee Minute 1327; 26.2.76).

Cheshire CC also stated that:-

....."any further development south of the Ship Canal will be the subject of strong planning objections, until such time as the high level bridge and associated expressway is built".

##### 5.2. Dudlows Green Action Area

The BC's comments on the subsequent Dudlows Green Action Area were consistent with previous policies: objections were raised on grounds that it would be premature to commit further major development in the absence of the related expressway/HLB, because of the possible effects on the existing road network. This was especially so in view of:-

- (i) current uncertainty surrounding the HLB/expressway.
- (ii) the absence of any traffic study information to justify the changed policies.

It was emphasised that this was not to advocate a complete restriction on development south of the Canal, but to adopt a more incremental approach, i.e. allowing further development on a smaller scale and more piecemeal basis, and reviewing the traffic situation periodically, instead of committing 'blanket' approvals as proposed by WNTDC.

Cheshire CC also drew attention to the highway problems and need for the HLB issue to be resolved, but raised no objections, which represented a reversal in policy.

## 6. COMMENTS ON CURRENT PEWTERSPEAR 6(1) PROPOSALS

### 6.1. Highway Objections

The BC's fundamental objection to the recent Dudlows Green proposals, i.e. the highway implications, not only remains but is now considerably increased in that even further major development is proposed in advance of HLB.

The Dudlows Green and Pewterspear proposals together include an additional 857 houses plus a 100 acre employment site with an estimated 3,000 jobs. These proposals would have a considerable impact on the traffic generation of the area, especially at peak hours, and should, therefore, be strongly opposed on traffic grounds.

It is significant that the DC refer only to development which can take place 'before the HLB is approved'. The HLB alone (Section between A50 and A56) will do nothing to relieve the potential traffic problems on the A49 and existing roads to the east, but must be seen in conjunction with further substantial lengths of expressway which would be required to serve this development.

The detailed comments of the Borough Surveyor and Environmental Health Officer, who are both strongly opposed to these proposals on traffic grounds, in the absence of the N-S Expressway/HLB, are attached.

### 6.2. Other Planning/Policy Considerations

Besides the detailed highway implications there is the wider policy issue of whether further major development in Bridgewater and the related expressway should be supported overall.

The principle of major development and the related expressway has always been accepted within the context of the approved (1973) Outline Plan. However, with changing circumstances, (ref: revised NT population figures; changing economic conditions/ effect on public expenditure and road programmes; revised context plan, etc) it is necessary to look at Bridgewater afresh. This is especially so from the Borough Council's viewpoint, who will not only inherit existing development policies in this area (when the DC have ceased to exist) but who will need to determine the long term future of the so called 'grey' areas (ref: para. 3.2.1.).

For example, the immediate DC proposals might have undesirable effects on the existing road network, or alternatively force the HLB issue, which in turn would 'open up' and therefore make it difficult to resist the full remaining development of Bridgewater in the long term. An overall BC policy view is therefore required at the outset (i.e. of whether to support full development of Bridgewater and related expressway or, alternatively, limited incremental development without expressway and/or perhaps with certain improvements and management measures to existing roads).

In considering both the immediate 6(1) proposals and the wider policy issues, attention is drawn to the following facts.

#### 6.2.1. Housing Land Availability

Given the constraints on Bridgewater development, as outlined in 6.2.3.-5. below, it is significant that large areas of land are still available for development in the northern areas of the town, e.g. Padgate (Cinnamon Brow, Peel Hall), Birchwood (Oakwood, Gorse Covert) and Westbrook (Old Hall, Callands). Moreover, current forecasts of the DC rented buildings show a reduction in the next 5 years of about 3,000. This would release these same sites for private building.

The DC emphasise the importance of Bridgewater in terms of the need for 'quality' housing sites, which they state are limited in the northern areas. However:-

- (i) Quality housing already exists in south Warrington (with a frequent high turnover). Lymm also represents part of this market.
- (ii) Such housing can still be provided in Bridgewater on a smaller scale, incremental basis, spread throughout pockets of land in south Warrington. Recent such developments include Field Lane/Windmill Lane, Appleton; Walton Old Hall; Bellhouse Lane, Grappenhall; and Bell Lane, Thelwall.
- (iii) Such small scale development, not all concentrated on A49, could take advantage of the improved sewage treatment/sewerage facilities in the area; the traffic implications could be reviewed periodically.

#### 6.2.2. Strategic Need

Cheshire CC have in the past referred to the strategic importance of housing land in Bridgewater (to include the 'grey' areas) to compensate for medium to long term shortages of housing land in surrounding districts of the County. However, a number of current unresolved issues could affect these considerations, e.g. the present Inquiry into the Merseyside Structure Plan; housing land allocations relating to Runcorn New Town Master Plan Amendment No. 2; and possible major housing land releases in Macclesfield District (Poynton and Tytherington).

It is also of concern that the County Council, in reaffirming its support for the Bridgewater development in November last year, requested the DC to design proposed development in such a way "as to minimise CCC expenditure, particularly on new roads and schools".

### 6.2.3. Infrastructure Costs

#### (a) Future Required Investment

The proposed highway improvements to serve major development, i.e. the expressway/HLB, would itself involve considerable overall costs:-

Financial Costs - costs of HLB alone are estimated over £12-15 million. Moreover, commitment to HLB means commitment of large capital expenditure to other sections of expressway which are required before it starts to have any purpose.

Environmental Costs - these would be considerable, in particular relating to:-

- (a) the HLB section, in terms of its scale and relationship to surrounding residential areas in Stockton Heath and Latchford.
- (b) the environmental impact south of Bridgewater Canal on areas of high landscape value.

Amenity Costs - to include:

- (a) effect on large communities in Stockton Heath and Grappenhall, both during and after construction.
- (b) large scale house demolition.
- (c) potential noise problems to existing residential areas from elevated expressway - compensation/disturbance costs.

Other general points include:-

- development of a large section of expressway will inevitably result in pressures to complete remaining 'pieces', with further environmental impact, e.g. through Fairfield.
- commitment to such a major scheme might have a delaying effect on other desirable highway schemes in the Borough, especially since only parts of it could be developed during the remaining 'life' of the DC. In this respect, emphasis must be placed on the overall costs and benefits relative to other schemes in the Borough, e.g. Bridge Foot, A49 Diversion, etc.

It is accepted that the HLB, besides being related to Bridgewater, is an issue in itself, and that<sup>it</sup> is argued that a new Ship Canal crossing is already necessary anyway, this would add weight towards development policies in South Warrington. However, in the absence of the required traffic study information, I have strong reservations about the existing justification for HLB when the likely traffic benefits are balanced against the massive financial, environmental and amenity costs involved.

The main need for the HLB/expressway relates to the serving of proposed Bridgewater development, which leads back to the whole issue of whether major development in this area is supported anyway.

(b) Existing Infrastructure Investment

A factor supporting development concerns the improved sewage treatment/sewerage facilities in this area. However:

- (a) certain improvements were already required in this area anyway, to relieve existing problems.
- (b) these improvements could serve additional small scale development which otherwise could not have proceeded at all.

In other words, the existing improvements would not represent 'wasted' investment if major development in Bridgewater was not allowed.

NOTE: the proposed extension of the trunk sewers to serve the Pewterspear area has not yet been approved, and forms the subject of a separate submission.

6.2.4. Protection of Prime Agricultural Land

On the Min. of Agriculture's Land Classification Sheets, large areas of Bridgewater, to include the Pewterspear 6(1) site and the 'grey' areas, include Grade 2 land, which is prime land and constitutes only 17% of the agricultural land in England and Wales. Government policy requires that such land should not normally be considered for development, except when there is no reasonable alternative (Govt. Circular 75/76). Attention is again drawn to land availability in the northern areas of the town.

6.2.5. Protection of High Quality Landscape Areas

Both the existing 6(1) sites and Bridgewater in general include areas of high landscape value unique to Warrington. Major development and the related highway network would have a considerable impact on these areas, and result in the loss of their 'open country' setting.



#### 6.2.6. The Science Park/Employment Issue

At the present time, the attraction and promotion of employment must be a primary aim overriding other planning considerations. However, it is felt that the above highway issues and planning factors, when viewed together and in conjunction with land availability in north Warrington, presume against development in this location. Detailed reference is also made to:-

- (i) the recent DC 6(1) submission for 'Birchwood Centre Reserve Area' (Feb.1980) which is now to be used for additional land for office and research establishments. (38 acres).
- (ii) the BC's Draft Proposals for the expansion of the nearby Stretton Airfield employment area, which is a disused airfield where development has and is already taking place.

#### 6.2.7. Local Opposition

There is considerable opposition to the NTDC development proposals in this area. This includes opposition from local residents (large petition from Appleton Residents Action Group) and Local Parish Councils. Appleton PC have requested that their previous objections to these proposals be restated, on grounds already included in this Report. Their objections are supported by Stretton, Stockton Heath and Grappenhall and Thelwal Parish Councils; the Council for the Protection of Rural England; and the Warrington Area Committee of the Cheshire Association of Parish Councils. They have also referred to the need for a Public Inquiry.

### 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Borough Council object to further major development in Bridgewater at the present time, as set out in the Pewterspear 6(1) Submission, not only because of the potential highway implications on the existing roads, in particular relating to A49 and existing roads east of A49, but also having regard to:-

- (i) the considerable financial and environmental problems associated with the related HLB/N-S expressway proposal which, given the existing A49/Ship Canal crossing problems, would be necessary to serve further major development in this area.
- (ii) the existing availability of land in the northern areas of the town for development.
- (iii) the other planning factors which presume against development in this area, to include the loss of prime agricultural land and areas of high landscape value.
- (iv) the view that housing sites can still be provided in South Warrington on a more limited, incremental basis, not all concentrated on A49.

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THE DETAILED COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE, BOROUGH SURVEYOR AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OFFICER ARE ATTACHED.

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PEWTERSPEAR ACTION AREA 6(1) - COMMENTS OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE:

The Chief Executive has drawn attention to significant changes between the previous draft and final submissions:

1. Prestige Development - this is not mentioned in the relevant paragraph of the revised submission which merely talks about "specialist employment."
2. No. of Jobs - this information is not quoted in the revised submission.
3. High Level Bridge and Expressways - the revised submission considerably plays down the traffic problems and in particular the need for the HLB/Expressway.

The Chief Executive states that, following previous comments he has made regarding the potential employment benefits, the arguments in favour of the Science Park have obviously been weakened by the apparent withdrawal of their "prestige" customer. He also states that:

....."from my informal discussions with the New Towns Division, it seems unlikely that there will be any decision on either the Dudlows Green or the Pewterspear Applications until after the current review of finance to be allocated to the New Towns. In these circumstances I think we should stress the difficulty in commenting on the applications separately and request that they be considered as an entity. This would obviously give much greater flexibility with the possibility, for example, of permitting Pewterspear but not Dudlows Green, or vice versa, or parts of each. In any event the question of whether or not the High Level Bridge/Expressway is to happen is crucial to both applications."

PEWTERSPEAR A.A.P. - PLANNING PROPOSALS

BOROUGH SURVEYOR'S COMMENTS

1. General

In making these comments on the planning proposals paper prepared by the Development Corporation, it must first be mentioned that the paper does not appear to contain a strong justification for the development. The introductory paragraphs containing such statements as:

"the need to allocate a Science Park in Pewterspear in order to have a site to continue the marketing concept which has proved very successful for Birchwood. This location has good access to the M56 and is an efficient land use arrangement which utilises the infrastructure provided for housing in Dudlows Green and Pewterspear".

"Early DOE approval of these proposals is required in order to ensure that sufficient employment land is available to meet enquiries which cannot be accommodated at Birchwood Science Park".

From the Development Corporation's paper, it is noted that the theme for development will be based on the site's rural character. This is an admirable and essential objective and therefore to ensure that the rural character is not destroyed, development should be sufficiently restricted in extent to retain the natural beauty of the area and not simply leave the wooded areas as large pockets and/or extended fingers. Preferably, should the development itself, both residential and industrial be confined to pockets with the road links between such areas designed to be as unobtrusive, and least detrimental as possible. In particular, the district distributor roads and the expressway should be carefully planned so as not to destroy the natural attributes of the area and all considerations in the design should be secondary to this ideal

2. Highways

Acceptability is dependent upon satisfactory details taking into consideration the views expressed above and the following comments, together with the implementation of the North/South Expressway (including the High Level Bridge).

The development - consisting of 3,000 jobs in the Science Park and a population increase of 1,250 (440 dwellings) - will have a considerable impact on the traffic generation of the area, especially at peak hours.

The design of local distributors, district distributors, and the expressway should be such that the maximum amount of traffic is drawn to the expressway rather than to the A49, in particular the positioning and spacing of junctions on the expressway should ensure that this requirement is met. In addition, the southern section of expressway, i.e. linking to the M56 roundabout, should precede development again to ensure that the minimum of traffic is drawn to A49 even in the early stages of development. From an environmental view-point, this is essential.

It is considered that no part of the development should take place prior to a firm commitment to the North/South route for the following reasons:

- a. The inadequacy of the Canal crossings.

2. b. The limited environmental capacity of the A49 both to the North and to the South of the proposed Pewterspear Road/London Road junction.  
(In considering the capacity of a road due regard must be given to its overall nature rather than just the mathematics of the situation and in this case, the following must be included in the equation:
  - i. existing frontage development with direct access points
  - ii. contiguous pedestrian routes
  - iii. Stockton Heath Village centre.
- c. The combined effect of Dudlows Green Action Area and Pewterspear on existing roads to the East of the A49.

### 3. Drainage

The report states that Lumb Brook Trunk sewers Phase 2 and 3 and the Pewterspear Area Drainage Phase 1 schemes are both programmed to commence in Mid 1980.

This does give the impression that the construction of the sewers are to go ahead without regard to any planning consultations which may be carried out. A K29 has been submitted and it is believed that the North West Water Authority are not happy that the schemes should go ahead in advance of the agreed area planning.

The references to the Stretton Village Scheme are not relevant, it has been decided that future Stretton Flows will be taken into the existing sewer in London Road and will not be connected into the Warrington New Town Sewerage system.

### 4. Phased Development

Should be viewed with extreme caution for the reasons given in 2, especially where existing roads are used.

### 5. Conclusion

If the rural character of the area is to be retained, it is very doubtful whether development to the extent indicated in the Development Corporation's proposals could be achieved. In addition, amendments to the draft layout are needed if the requirements outlined in these comments are to be met, and there must also be a positive commitment to the construction of the High Level Bridge.

PEWTERSPEAR ACTION AREA 6(1) - COMMENTS OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OFFICER:

The Environmental Health Officer makes the following comments:

1. The development as proposed is bound to add to the traffic problems arising from the existing crossings of the canal and also at Bridge Foot.

In Para. 7.2 The Development Corporation "considers that the volume of traffic using existing roads will lead to only marginally worse conditions."

I would take issue with this and feel sure that the Borough Surveyor can provide evidence to indicate that traffic problems will be more than marginally worsened.

For this reason, I consider that the Development must be phased to coincide with the provision of a high level bridge and improved river crossing at Bridge Foot. Otherwise it should be opposed.

2. It is noted that the development will link into the existing A49 at Hillside Road. The opportunity should be taken to try and solve the Hillside Road Garage problem by relocation of these premises and using the site for road purposes.
3. The proposed development should not adversely affect arrangements for refuse collection and the length of carry from any property to the highway must not exceed 30 metres.
4. The new estate roads must be designed to provide ready access for large capacity refuse collection vehicles and bear in mind problems that have arisen on other New Town estates with parked cars obstructing free access.

Standards should be in keeping with the existing development at Pineways, Fairways and Beechways etc.

5. In conclusion, I must add that the Development as proposed will add to the prosperity of the Borough and should, therefore, be supported.