

# **WARRINGTON LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION**

**Reference Number:** 2283

**Organisation/Representor:** Anthony Paul Buckley

## **COMMENTS ON OS1 - CROFT**

I live on [REDACTED] adjacent to the Green Belt boundary and the development will directly affect my outlook. I have lived there for 27 years.

I consider that aspects of the planning process are unsound and that the site is unsuitable for development, for the following reasons:

- Any new development will create increased traffic in and through Croft. Croft roads are already busy at peak times, with the main roads being through routes for traffic travelling between Winwick, Culcheth, Lowton and the employment areas at Risley, as well as connecting with the M62, M6 and the East Lancs Road. Croft village roads are narrow and already create difficulties with congestion and speeding vehicles which will be exacerbated by further development in this part of the village.
- Buses, lorries and tractors are unable to pass each other on the village roads without mounting the pavements at several places. Pavements are generally narrow, particularly near Abbey Close, and overgrown with hedging at several places creating hazards for pedestrians, especially dog walkers, prams, mobility scooters and children making their way to one of the local primary schools.
- The proposal is for a minimum of 75 new homes but 90 has also been quoted. The national average number of cars per household is 1.2 according to ONS. However, that varies with affluence, age profile and availability of public transport. A realistic figure for Croft, and for such a proposed development is about 1.5, a number borne out by the existing Abbey Close/Deacons Close development. That equates to an additional 135 vehicles arising from the development, plus delivery vehicles, visitors etc. I estimate that the new development will result in around 700+ new vehicle movements per day along Abbey Close/ Deacons Close and using the junction with Lord Street. This will inevitably lead to an unacceptable bottleneck and congestion in the centre of the village.
- The new traffic movements will not be offset by the loss of traffic from the livery stables. Current traffic movements are low and have no significant impact.
- The junction between Lord Street (the main road) and Abbey Close (a residential road and access to the proposed site) is already dangerous and congested at times. It is on a blind corner, exacerbated in the summer which blocks the view of oncoming traffic when turning into Abbey Close from Lord Street. Sight lines are below national standards. Having made

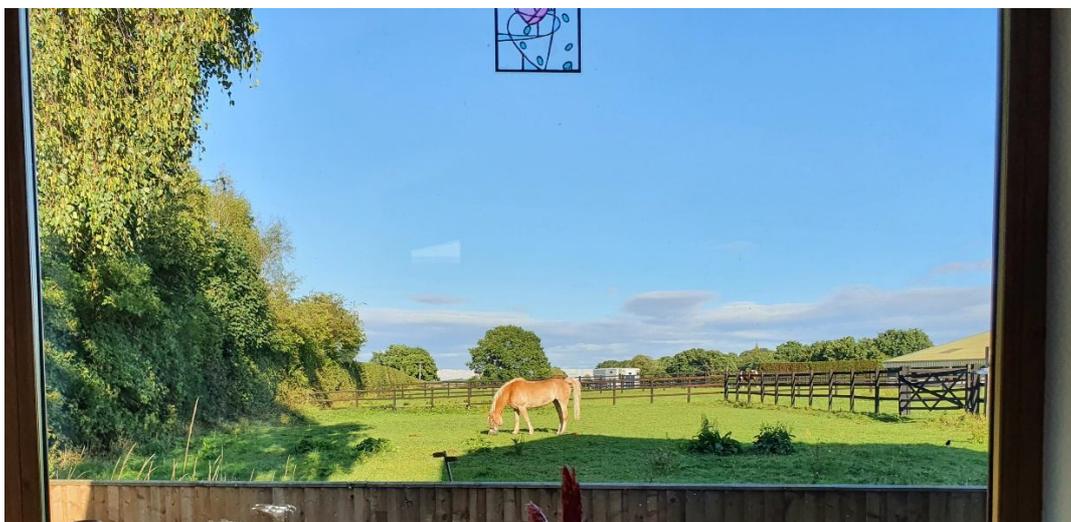
this turning regularly since 1995, there have been a great many near misses with cars coming from the Culcheth direction.

- Similarly, exiting Abbey Close onto Lord Street is often difficult, particularly at peak times. The turning circle is tight meaning that large vehicles (bin lorries, horse boxes, delivery vehicles) turning left need to cross over the white line, calling for a break in traffic in both directions. Additionally, sight lines for cars are limited because of the design of the junction and shrubbery in gardens. The junction is barely safe or satisfactory for the existing development but will be made much worse by any new development.
- Abbey Close / Deacons Close are residential, narrow and subject to a 20 mph speed restriction. In fact, 20 mph is too fast for safe driving. The properties along Deacons Close mostly have short drives and no garages; consequently, there are usually 5-6 vehicles parked on the road or pavement. Deacons Close is effectively a one-way chicane. Courtesy prevails and it is usual to be able to get through OK at present. The proposal that a further 700 plus vehicle movements per day through this section would have no impact is nonsense.
- There will always need to be on-road parking on the lower part of Deacons Close for residents without drives. Further, no provision was made for Electric Vehicle charging when Deacons Close was built. The only way to charge EVs is by on road parking and trailing a cable across the pavement. This new development will make EV ownership more difficult at a time when the government is trying to move away from IC powered vehicles
- Further, the existing residential roads are totally unsuitable for construction plant and lorry deliveries that would be needed to build the new houses.
- Green Belt. Use by the Local Plan of the Green Belt assessment undertaken by Arup is flawed. The assessment looked at parcel CR4 which is bounded by Mustard Lane, Lady Lane and existing houses. The site now designated OS1 is a very small part of this parcel. The conclusions reached for the large area should not be applied to the OS1 site as the conditions differ considerably. For the most part it is high amenity grazing lands with views across the village and to the parish church, with rabbits, hares and other wildlife as well as nesting birds in the hedgerows, and owls, buzzards and kestrels hunting the fields. No exceptional circumstances or evidence have been presented that justify removing this smaller area from the Green Belt.
- Since the last EA assessment, there has been significant flooding in the village with existing drains being clearly inadequate. Apart from serious flooding on Lord Street, Smithy Brow and Dam Lane, the field adjacent to number 32 Deacons Close floods and ponds much of the time, with no adequate drainage. The water stagnates, attracting insects. Paving over so much more land will inevitably result in drainage problems and more flooding, particularly with climate change resulting in heavier down pours.
- The land in question is significantly higher than the existing properties on Deacons Close. They will dominate the skyline, take light and diminish privacy.

- During the Call for Sites, it was proposed that 60 new properties would be located in Croft. This was entirely random, on the basis of spreading the load across the borough rather than a need for housing in the village. There is virtually no employment calling for people to be able to live in Croft. It is unclear why the housing is needed and why a development exceeding this number was accepted. The new development will amount to approaching a 10% increase in housing in the village which is a disproportionate load for Croft to bear compared to the other villages.
- There were other more suitable sites in Croft put forward, where access was better and the Green Belt value was not as good as OS1. For example, it is not clear why OS1 was chosen in preference to OS2 which has good access, fewer houses and far less Green Belt amenity value than OS1. That the Arup study gave a higher assessment to OS2 versus OS1 casts doubt on the competence of the Arup study.
- Finally, there are the issues of infrastructure, services, bus service, shops, amenities, dentists, doctors and leisure facilities. Croft is very poorly served at present and this proposal does nothing to improve things, only make them worse.
- Additionally, Croft CP School doesn't have spare capacity for the children of such a large adjacent development. Priority will be given to these new residents on the basis of proximity, depriving local children on the other side of the village (Wadeson Way, Churchfields, etc) of local schooling.

Thus the proposals are not sound. The site proposed is effectively landlocked and not reasonably or safely accessible to new traffic. Inadequate consideration was given to this major issue in selecting this site in preference to other locations in Croft. The Green Belt assessment is not valid.

On a personal note, my home overlooks this land and my garden fence is the Green Belt boundary. We moved here in 1995 specifically because it adjoins open land in the belief that Green Belt is permanent. On that basis we extended our house so that we could enjoy living here into our old age. Our garden is very small so the loss of openness to the East will have a major impact on our wellbeing.



View of the site from [REDACTED], 31 July 2022