

The following two statements are for support and in preparation for the meeting on 26th September 2022 at Townhall Warrington. I am intending to speak on both 7a and 7b as already agreed and listed.

STATEMENT FROM Cllr CAROL BENSON RE CROFT - MATTER 7a LOCAL PLAN

I wish to raise issues with the Plan submitted for Croft for the following reasons

1. The area identified is in the Green Belt and legal requirements not been followed
 - 1.1 WBC have not shown exceptional circumstances for taking this green belt and wrongly claim it is WEAK greenbelt.
 - 1.2 The area is occupied by a horse stud farm so horses grazing on green fields
 - 1.3 They have not looked at alternatives to this site.
 - 1.4 WBC have not explained how or what will be new strong new defensible greenbelt boundaries.
 - 1.5 They claim development on this site does not represent unrestricted sprawl. Of course, it does – it is both sprawling and unrestricted. It reduces the green belt gap between Croft and Culcheth.
 - 1.6 It says site is not next to a historic town. Culcheth is close by and has a lot of history. It is first mentioned in survey of 1212. There are many historic buildings and buildings of interest.
 - 1.7 No green belt needs to be taken for more than 15 years given the amount of brownfield sites available.
 - 1.8 It would appear little thought has gone into deciding the green belt is weak. A quick look through all the areas will reveal they have tended to use the same arguments for most sites. Each site is different and has its own individuality.

2. Decision to select this site is unsound.
 - 2.1 The site is planned to be built on first/early in conflict of rules to use other sites such as Brown field first.
 - 2.2 There have been infill builds during the consultation period for this plan so numbers claimed to be needed are no longer correct.
 - 2.3 The census shows a reduction in the residents for Warrington generally so again supports the lowering of numbers needed.
 - 2.4 WBC claim developer approves the location – Not really proof of suitability.
 - 2.5 No modification to these numbers since the 2017 & 2019 plans produced which failed to get approval. Why do they think it should now?
 - 2.6 The sewer network is over committed and these planned houses would add to that.
 - 2.7 The country roads through Croft already are overloaded and more cars would be intolerable.
 - 2.8 WBC claim there are resources to support the proposed development. This is incorrect. There are no shops, no Post Office, No speed bank, No Doctors, Schools are full.

2.9 The proposed houses would **overlook children playing in school playground** which should not be allowed. The noise from the school would not be in keeping with building houses close by. The horses don't mind!

3. WBC have failed their duty to co-operate

3.1 They said they would undertake a full and comprehensive program of consultation. This was very poor, only one venue for the exhibition of the plan (Halliwell Jones Stadium) centre of Warrington. The entrance for the consultation was round the back of the stadium and was difficult to find. The exhibition was closed very early on 20th October when the Consultation wasn't due to end until 15th November.

3.2 Many local residents do not drive nor have access to computers. They have been left without contact from WBC.

3.3 Local Parish Councils were told they could collect information from WBC to display in libraries or Parish Halls. There was much confusion on where and when these items could be collected. The onus was put onto the Parish Councillors to arrange everything. Staff were uninformed of what was needed. Very little notice and little thought given. Again only those able to visit the library and if they were aware of the consultation would be able to visit. Many if not most residents remained unaware of any plans.

3.4 The WBC website which was supposed to have information for residents to look at re the Local plan failed to work initially. Neither Councillors nor residents could get onto the site.

3.5 The Borough Council meeting held to discuss and approve the local plan was badly planned. Papers were only sent out a week before the meeting with well over 700 pages to read and all the supporting evidence referenced within that needed to be looked up, it was felt and stated by opposition Councillors that insufficient time had been given for studying the information before the meeting.

3.6 The whole consultation appeared rushed through and little thought or care to how everyone would be notified.

3.7 They did not send a letter to each house which was raised at the time but chose to put an article in the Warrington Guardian. That would not be seen by the vast majority of residents.

3.8 Many of our residents are still unaware of the plans.

This statement indicates some of the issues with the Local Plan for Croft. Cllr Benson wishes to speak at the hearing as requested and will bring supporting papers and answer questions to assist with the Inspection.

Cllr Carol Benson – Culcheth, Glazebury and Croft