

Planning Inquiry regarding application 2019/34799 Land to the west of at the junction 20 of the M6 and junction 9 of the M56 (known as 6/56)

I suppose Warrington has probably always had a problem with its transport network. Starting originally with the River Mersey when there was a need to find ways to get across, then in the 18th Century the Bridgewater Canal was built. Between 1837 and 1869 the West Coast Railway line followed linking London to the North West of England and beyond to Scotland. Around this time various other railway lines such as that from Liverpool to Manchester were routed through the town. In 1893 the Manchester Ship Canal was completed with the three swing bridges at Latchford, Stockton Heath and Walton being built to allow ocean going ships to reach the sea from the Manchester Docks. Finally in the 20th Century three motorways were built, the M6, M62 and M56 and these run on three sides of the town. They have all resulted in Warrington becoming a major place for transport links but each of these modes of transport have needed structures to either get over or under them. These were built to cope with traffic which was significantly less than what they are now expected to carry. The consequential effects of this has been both a boon and a disaster for the town. On the positive side one success has been the attraction of commuters to live here resulting in thousands of houses have been built. Alongside this has been the need for transport facilities to support the commercial traffic, including massive distribution hubs which are gradually encircling the town. On the negative side is the massive increase in the amount of traffic and the stark lack of infrastructure which at times causes a nightmare for the residents of the town. The town suffers from an extremely poor public transport system, both buses and trains are so bad that both commuters and people making short journeys around the town use their cars to get around.

Whenever there is a problem on any of the motorways drivers often use the town's roads as by-passes to avoid the hold-ups and because of the lack of infrastructure the town becomes gridlocked. This is exacerbated at times when the swing bridges on the Manchester Ship Canal are closed either because a ship passes at peak times in the day or they are out of service because they have broken down; a common occurrence and not helped by the owners not carrying out essential overhauls/maintenance on them. This is an ongoing problem and there have been several disputes between the Council and the owners. It is a ridiculous state of affairs to have the town being brought to a standstill by the decisions of a private company.

I have lived in Appleton for almost thirty years but I have had links with the area since early 1960s and I have seen the consequence of the failure to deal with the increase in traffic. Thousands of houses have been built without virtually any adequate roads to support them, particularly in the south of the town. My house is at the junction of Longwood Road and Dipping Brook Avenue and in the last four years four new estates have been built nearby with almost a thousand houses on them. The increase in traffic and the speeds vehicles travel along these roads is alarming. At present they feed the surrounding housing estates but the Plan is to turn them into major arterial routes to be used by HGVs. It is absurd that these vehicles will pass through housing estates causing noise, pollution and danger to the residents, 24/7, 365 days of the year. Why should residents be exposed to this? Ironically the Council's Plan appears to be contrary to their latest policy of preventing traffic from passing through housing estates, something which has been introduced fairly recently.

Traffic on the A49 has increased dramatically and in rush hours significant queues build up into Stockton Heath and each way around the Cat and Lion traffic lights up to the M56. At times in the evenings there are queues coming off the slip roads at Junction 10 of the M56 and also the approach roads to that junction from the south (the A49 and the A559).

There is no doubt that there is an obvious need to do something to improve the infrastructure in the town but it is my opinion that what is being proposed for Warrington can only make matters worse. The causes are not being dealt with and I believe that should the current proposals take pace the problems will only multiply. Not enough thought has given to finding alternative routes away from housing areas, neither have ways to reduce the amount of traffic using our roads been identified, I ask why haven't any moves been made to get HGV vehicles off the motorways by transferring that type of traffic to the railways? The town is being strangled by transport please don't let it deteriorate even further.

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