

**2019/34799 Six/56 Langtree Proposal – Government Inspector Public Inquiry (Ref APP/M0655/V/22/3311877) over 8 days from May 9<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup>, 2023: Statement from Dr Kevin McAloon representing the Appleton Thorn Community**

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**Intro** : I have been a resident of Appleton Thorn (A Th) for 50+ years and have engaged strongly in our community as follows: Founder and ex Chair of A Th Village Hall, co-author of A Th Neighbourhood Development Plan + member of A Th Choral, St Cross Church, Liaison Focus with Thorn Cross Prison on Village Garden projects, co- author of Village Soldiers War History Review prepared for 2021 Centenary War Memorial Remembrance. I represent the views of many villagers who participate in these community organisations.

As background to our Appleton Thorn (A Th) area, you as the appointed Inspectorate will visit our village and Thorn Ward surroundings during your inquiry. You will find this massive 6/56 project is focused almost exclusively on the eastern outskirts of our village where there are rolling fields all around as the targeted build land was originally derived from the extensive Arley Hall Estates, essentially a farming community formerly owning much of the surrounding rural land. Over the years ownership has changed but much of the land has retained precious Green Belt (GB) status.

**COMMUNITY OBJECTIONS:** Our Appleton Thorn community has consistently strongly objected to this ill conceived 6/56 Planning Application since, if granted, this Langtree/Panattoni proposal is seen by our community as an overwhelming massive development of unsightly largescale commercial premises and offices of almost 300,000 m<sup>2</sup>

floorspace situated at the heart of a prominent rural S Warrington skyline. This will have a severe impact on the doorstep of Appleton Thorn village in particular and would be taking up an area equivalent to some 140 football pitches of open countryside accommodating both the internal floor space and external hard core space enough for a large car/ lorry park. Our main objection is this is designated Green Belt land contravening broad GB policy (Policy CS5 2014) where there is insufficient economic benefit with little 'very exceptional circumstances' to justify the land's valued GB status being overturned. Indeed protection of GB land was considered the main purpose for delivering a community and Council sponsored Neighbourhood Devt Plan for our Appleton Thorn area. This was achieved in 2017 and legally valid until the next decade.

NDP PROCESS: the 2011 Localism Act of 2011 provides local communities with the opportunity to have a strong say in their future community development by preparing Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDP) which would contain policies relating to acceptable development in their area. Following extensive consultation with local residents and businesses with some help from WBC's Planning team and over a period of some 4 years the Thorn Ward NDP, Warrington's first NDP, was drafted during 2014 - 2017 by a joint Appleton Parish Council (APC) and Appleton Thorn residents committee. After several iterations of thorough consultation within our community this important development plan was submitted to an external Examiner, and after compromises had been agreed, was finally approved by all parties by June 2017. This was seen as an important valid legal document for informing local planning decisions. It would be recognized by WBC, APC, local residents, and local businesses

as an essential input into helping shape future development in our A Th area.

**NDP POLICIES AND INFRINGEMENTS:** Many of the NDP policies which were drawn up and subsequently adopted were concerned about preserving the local character, heritage, landscape of our valued rural environment and special mention was made of the importance of preserving its green spaces including precious GB land in and around A Th and surrounding area.

But on inspection of the details of this 6/56 development proposal some infringements become evident which disappointingly would not only contravene main NDP policies but also begins to undermine the strong collaborative spirit forged between local Councils and our A Th community in which the our NDP was first set up. On closer inspection, the more damaging policy infringements of concern are listed as follows:-

a) Policy AT-D1- Design of Development of Appleton Parish Thorn Ward: 6/56 contravenes this policy as it would be destroying rather than maintaining and enhancing unique local character, distinctiveness, local identity and sense of place

b) Policy AT-D2: Protecting and enhancing local landscape character and views:

This policy states development proposals will be required to incorporate the following landscape principles – preservation and enhancement of village character and surrounding rural settlements, local habitats and wildlife corridors, important landscape features by avoiding whenever possible the siting of development in highly visible and intrusive positions.

With the elimination of so much green open space, clearly the 6/56 proposal fails.

c) Policy AT-E1 - Employment Opportunities: This policy reads....

Quote "Proposals for the development of employment opportunities will be permitted provided they conform to national and local policies and the following criteria – priority given to brownfield, are of a scale appropriate to the area, do not have a detrimental impact on surrounding residential character and amenity, with minimal loss of open space or green infrastructure, and have a connection to an acceptable highway network.

Again 6/56 does not conform. However it is noted that WBC are sympathetic to preferred development on multimodal Fiddlers Ferry land to the west of Warrington and agree that this should be investigated further.

d) Policies AT-TH1 and AT-TH2 refer to the need and implementation of good traffic management, transport improvements, and sustainable transport measures.

However it is feared successful 6/56 development proposals would invite heavy HGV commercial AND commuting working staff traffic onto local roads causing additional congestion where local roads including nearby motorway networks are already frequently snarled up. Importantly this would cause even greater pollution and community health problems in Warrington, our town with an already negative reputation at national level for poor AQ.

Overall this 6/56 proposal has development issues similar to an earlier failed Stobart development proposal of several years ago when permission was sought to build a large new national commercial hub in the same

eastern Thorn Cross Green Belt area. Therefore a similar outcome might be expected for Langtree's 6/56 development proposal as it is in serious conflict against national NPPF GB guidelines and 4 of our important local NDP policies. And despite these infringements, our NDP team is being urged to engage AGAIN with Council planners to consider revising our NDP with a new set of proposed policies to dovetail with the emerging new Local Plan. But why, we ask, should we spend more time in another protracted NDP process with many meetings with local councillors, planners, including community and business consultation events, etc so that we can redraft another updated NDP..... only for its policies to be ignored or contravened as with our original NDP? And recent support from central government Sec of State/ Inspectorate has already been forthcoming about potential unnecessary abuse of GB land in our area. In particular, during the recent 2022 Govt Inspectors review of the emerging new Warrington Local Plan, the proposal made for the use of GB for employment land (SEWEA/ MD6) land was again challenged by Government Inspectors who recommended that GB be significantly revised downwards from 316 ha, rendering the original PSV draft plan unsound. Indeed it was further recommended that SEWEA should be removed from the Local Plan to be replaced by the brownfield Fiddlers Ferry site in West Warrington where there exists the possibility of much more acceptable multimodal transport .

So why, our community asks, is Langtree persevering with this 6/56 proposal, clearly premature to the new emerging Local Plan, to try secure precious South Warrington Green Belt land when the main tenets of this Plan have not been finalised?

In summary, our community would be delighted if you the Sec of State Inspector in reviewing this 6/56 proposal were to recommend refusal of the developers' permission to build inappropriate extensive commercial logistics and warehousing schemes on our Green Belt land around Appleton Thorn village. Our Neighbourhood Development Plan was set out to be a robust meaningful policy document to be heeded by all involved Parties. As NPPF guidelines state.... 'the adverse impact of allowing development that conflicts with the Neighbourhood Plan is likely to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits'; and plans should be "the key to delivering sustainable development that reflects the vision and aspirations of local communities".

On behalf of the Appleton Thorn community, we thank you for your valued input and trust for a positive outcome supported by all S Warrington communities after your and the Secretary of State's careful deliberations.

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