

Response to the Preferred Development Option From Warrington BC

Having attended the consultation event at the Park Royal Hotel on the 5th September and studied the information provided I would like to submit my views on the twenty year plan.

I understand that there is a need for additional housing, and there is certainly value to the local economy in growth through the arrival of new businesses and the creation of additional jobs. I also support the concept of a 20 year plan, so that there can be certainty about where new development will happen, and plans put in place to ensure that the supporting infrastructure such as transport links, schools and leisure facilities are sufficient to maintain the local population.

However - If the location of most of the new development is to be through greenbelt release in South Warrington (as per the 'preferred option') then there needs to be a specific, and very different approach to that development in terms of planning, and in particular consultation with the local community compared to other previous development in Warrington.

South Warrington has an abundance of nature: buzzards are commonly seen, badgers more rarely – but there are there. We also have an array of birds, trees, wild animals and flowers, plenty of green spaces and natural footpaths, cycle routes and even bridleways which are an essential part of the health and well-being of the local residents, from both a physical and mental perspective. In addition the plan covers several **villages of great character**. Appleton Thorn, Stretton and Grappenhall carry many of the features of a quintessential English Village and this must be maintained. I cannot condone any plan that would take greenbelt land and turn it into a 'concrete jungle' as has been done on the other side of Warrington in the form of Chapelford Village. That type of development would be totally wrong from an ethical, social and environmental perspective.

The preferred development plan **MUST** maintain South Warrington as a 'green and leafy' area commensurate with the title of 'Garden City Suburb'. In particular the following will be key:

Any housing must be very low density to allow for sufficient green spaces, footpaths and playing fields, and to maintain as many of the current mature trees and natural streams and ponds as is possible. The original Pewterspear development (1990-1997) did this well, however more recent additions such as Grappenhall Hays and the Pewterspear Green Road/Ashford Drive developments are mistakes that should be learned from. Narrow roads combined with insufficient parking facilities and large numbers of three story houses do not fit with the character or needs of the community. These developments have resulted in cars double parked and roads that are barely passable. With large numbers of children around this is a severe safety issue.

Developers will always try and cram as many houses into as small a space as possible. Their only driver is profit and they are totally compromised in terms of producing plans that meet the needs of the community and are sympathetic to the environment. The council has a moral obligation to ensure that all plans for greenbelt release land have extremely strict criteria attached to them and should be passed by a panel of local representatives (possibly parish councils) as well as the WBC planning department to ensure that the character of the area is maintained.

Parking – Estimates for parking requirements must assume all properties have **at least** two vehicles. Realistically most one bedroom flats will have a couple with a car each, and family homes have a minimum of two cars. Larger executive homes will often have 3, 4 or even 5 cars as young people live with their parents until they are much older than in previous generations.

Air Pollution – This links to the above point on parking. By under-estimating the number of vehicles there will also be an incorrect estimate of additional air pollution. I understand that South Warrington already has a very poor air quality and this situation must be improved upon, not added to. As residents we need to see evidence of how Warrington Borough Council intends to do this.

Transport – Again this links to the estimates of additional vehicles. The vast majority of local residents require motorway access to get to work and the addition of 9000 homes could easily add 18000, vehicles to the rush hour. There is simply no way that this can be accommodated, and there needs to be a plan for roads, within the current identified development area to support the additional requirements. This does not seem to have been done with any level of certainty.

In Conclusion:

With a partnership approach between the council and the local communities affected there is an opportunity to meet the needs of additional housing whilst maintaining the character of local villages and protecting our much-valued greenery. I do not however believe that taking all of the above into account, 9000 homes is achievable, and this number needs to be revised down quite significantly to produce a plan that is in the best interests of our town and its residents.