



Re Consultation on Preferred Development Option, South Warrington

We wish to lodge our strong objection to the above, particularly with regard to the extensive use of Green Belt land. Our main concerns are :

1. Lack of Public Consultation

Our attention was drawn to the proposed Option by our local LibDem councillors - NOT by WBC Planning Department. We have had to do our own research by internet to understand the details of the proposal. There seems to have been no attempt by WBC to inform us of these extensive, even life changing, plans. Furthermore, we understand that South Warrington councillors were excluded from the work on these plans.

Thus we would urge that any future development, communications etc regarding these development proposals follow the principles in Sajid David's (Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government) speech to the Local Government Association on 4 July 2017, which said:

"Today I can confirm that this month we will launch a consultation on a new way for councils to assess their local housing requirements, as we promised in the Housing White Paper (Feb 2017).

Our aim is simple: to ensure these plans begin life as they should with an honest, objective assessment of how much housing is required.

That means a much more frank, open discussion with local residents and communities.

It also requires a new approach.

One that is straightforward, so everyone can understand the process.

One that is transparent, so decisions are not hidden behind complexity or bureaucracy.

And one that is consistent, so every community, from the biggest city to the smallest hamlet, can be confident their council is assessing housing need properly and fairly. After all, nothing is more corrosive to trust than the idea that some areas are being treated better than others"

2. City Status

The document alludes to the aspirations for City status for Warrington. It suggests more than once that these development proposals will aid in the attainment of City status. What advantages will 'City Status' bring? There would appear to be no tangible benefits. Surely residents should have their say if this is the path our elected councillors wish to take and we should be given concrete facts on the perceived benefits.

3. Use of Greenfield Land

Much emphasis is given to using Greenfield land whilst scant attention is paid to Brownfield land. From the document WBC seems to set great store on the opinions of Developers. Greenfield sites are naturally a 'Developers Dream Ticket' - easy to develop with the opportunity for maximum profit. It is not surprising therefore that they support their use. By their very nature, Brownfield areas are more difficult and perhaps less profitable to develop. Why would developers promote their use? Only two possible **long term future** Brownfield sites are mentioned - Fiddlers Ferry and Warrington Hospital (but only if the hospital is rebuilt elsewhere).

In the Government's White Paper - Fixing Our Broken Housing Market - Feb 2017, it states

"Section 1.24 We must make as much use as possible of previously-developed (brownfield) land for homes - so that this resource is put to productive use, to support the regeneration of our cities, towns and villages, to support economic growth and to limit the pressure on the countryside. The Government is already pursuing a number of reforms to make this happen, as set out in the annex.

Section 1.25 Going further, the presumption should be that brownfield land is suitable for housing unless there are clear and specific reasons to the contrary (such as high flood risk). To make this clear"

There is no evidence that WBC have undertaken studies to locate any potential existing brownfield sites. The development plans should be put on hold until such studies are undertaken.

The need to demonstrate 'exceptional requirements' for the use of Greenfield land is mentioned briefly in the WBC report but it does not adequately do so.

The stance of WBC on Greenfield areas flies in the face of current Government policy. Planning Reform Proposals 2017, Section 2.16 Green Belt, states the Government proposed to amend the NPPF as follows:

"...authorities should amend Green Belt boundaries only when they can demonstrate that they have examined fully all other reasonable options for meeting their identified development requirements, including:

- making effective use of suitable brownfield sites and the opportunities offered by estate regeneration
- the potential offered by land which is currently underused including surplus public sector land where appropriate ... "

4. Traffic

The impact of such a vast project on our roads cannot be over-stated.

One example: the A49 through Stretton, Appleton and Stockton Heath is barely adequate for the current volume of traffic, particularly during peak times and frequently comes to a grinding halt when there are problems on the nearby motorways and/or the swing bridges open.

Another: Lyons Lane is proposed as a major thoroughfare in the plans. Is this an appropriate proposal? This road, and its junction with the A49, is already very busy being used for access to and from Bridgwater High School Lower and Upper sites.

Another: A new road linking the proposed new development with the A49 is shown with its junction just before the roundabout giving access to the M56. This seems wholly inappropriate from a safety viewpoint and would only add to the traffic chaos.

These are just a few examples.

In addition, the proposed redesign of the adjacent motorway junction would be a very costly, major project in itself.

Our research indicates that there has been no traffic study carried out for this area in the recent past. Without this base-line information, how is it possible to properly plan a development of this size?

A formal traffic survey needs to be commissioned before the Development Option proceeds any further.

5. Protection of Wildlife and the Environment

The effect such a development across large swathes of open countryside would have on wildlife and the environment is not addressed in the report.

A study needs to be carried out in accordance with the Environmental Impact Assessment, Town & Country Planning Regulations 2017.

6. Health of Residents

Building over such large areas of open countryside will NOT improve the health of residents, either locally or in the wider community. It is an acknowledged fact that such open spaces are the 'lungs' of communities, offsetting the effects of pollution. These green spaces are a free amenity for all, rich or poor, making a significant contribution to good health.

The sheer size of the proposed development, with the attendant increase in cars and their emissions, the proximity of nearby motorways, together with the removal of large areas of green belt can only be detrimental to the well-being and health of the community.

Warrington already has high pollution levels. We should be seeking ways of preserving green areas not removing them.

Please acknowledge receipt of this letter.

Yours faithfully

