

  


Dear Sir,

I am writing to express my opinion on the Warrington Preferred Development Option as part of the consultation process. While I accept that a certain amount of development is necessary, the scale of these proposals fills me with horror and the chaotic nature of the consultation, coming as it did over the summer period does not lead me to have great confidence in the planning process. I set out some of my many concerns below.

In the first place, I am extremely worried about the release of so much green belt land. Green belt is designated for a purpose – to protect the natural landscape from encroaching urban sprawl and provide much needed “lungs” between major built-up areas. I understood that the release of green belt land for development should only be in “exceptional circumstances” and the current proposals have not, in my opinion, justified the need for such massive development of Warrington. The option of using all brown field sites should be exhausted before any consideration of our precious green belt is made. I refer in particular to the Fiddler’s Ferry site which does not seem to have been taken into account despite the fact that it will cease operations well within the development time frame.

You are proposing to build on valuable agricultural land with all the ramifications for food supply, not to mention the potential impact on an already high water table and consequent risk of flooding. Equally important is environmental impact on local ecosystems e.g. the semi-ancient woodland site of Lumb Brook Valley. Furthermore, the increased noise and traffic pollution will worsen Warrington’s already shocking breaches of safety levels for air pollution as cited by the recent World Health Organisation report.

In addition, I believe that no traffic modelling has been carried out relating to these proposals. Warrington is already a bottle-neck; congestion is only going to get worse as we see increased traffic flow from motorists seeking to avoid the Mersey crossing tolls in Runcorn. An increase of the magnitude likely to be generated by this scheme in traffic in Latchford and Stockton Heath would be likely to lead to total gridlock; just consider what the effect of shutting the Cantilever Bridge was, or any disruption on the motorway network. I agree that a further north –south crossing of the Manchester Ship Canal as part of the overall planning strategy for the town is needed but the current proposals do not seem to have been thought through.

I do not believe that an extra 24,000 homes reflects the true needs of the town of Warrington - where is the evidence? It seems to me that such massive urban growth is more concerned with aspirations for "City Status". If I wanted to live in a city, I would choose to move to one of the three on our doorstep – Manchester, Liverpool and Chester. Given the proximity of the new "Garden City Suburb" to the motorway network, I surmise that it is likely that it is more likely to become a dormitory for one/all of these with little contribution to the community and strengths of Warrington. South Warrington has been selected to bear the brunt of the development with no apparent consideration given to the individual character of the village communities of Grappenhall, Thelwall, Appleton Thorn etc. Many years ago, I was involved in the preparation of the Village Design Statement for Grappenhall and Thelwall; how have the aspirations of that report contributed to your thinking, for example?

Finally, but by no means less importantly, I am worried about the provision of essential facilities to sustain this increased population. In particular, Warrington Hospital is already stretched to breaking point and any of the local residents will tell you how difficult it is to get a doctor's appointment in South Warrington. Given the experiences of Chapelford, where the promised new medical centre is still awaited, what reliance can be placed on the promise of medical and educational facilities as part of the new development?

I urge you to re-consider these plans for development and work together, and in true consultation with, local communities to make Warrington the great town it should be.

Yours faithfully

