



23 September 2017

Dear Sirs

FORMAL OBJECTION TO THE PREFERRED DEVELOPMENT OPTION PUT FORWARD BY WARRINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

As a lifelong resident of South Warrington, I was shocked, upset and disappointed to learn of the Council's development plans which propose, amongst many other things, an urban extension of 2,000 houses in South West Warrington and a total of 24,000 new homes.

Please take this letter/email as my *strong* objection to the Council's proposals, for the following reasons:

Utilisation of Green Belt Land is completely unjustified

Having attended a local consultation event and seen the Council's development plans, it was a shock to see how much Green Belt land is proposed to be used for the Council's plans. It is my understanding that all of the fields in Higher Walton and Appleton could be built on and many in Grappenhall and Stretton could be used. This is incomprehensible.

We currently live next to a field which I understand to be 'ear marked' for the development. It is not "spare" land. It is used currently for agricultural purposes; something which should be promoted and nurtured by the Council, not removed with the promise of a large pay off. I understand this to be the case for many of the fields outlined in the Council's proposals.

My understanding is that the National Planning Policy Framework that provides guidance on the utilisation of Green Belt for development states that Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where there are "exceptional circumstances". I fail to see that the Council has satisfied that exceptional circumstances apply here; my understanding is that there are various Brownfield Sites across Warrington that are available for development. In my opinion, the Council would need to be very clear (and explain to residents) as to why this could not be used and why there are exceptional circumstances meaning that the Green Belt could be bulldozed in such a barbaric manner.

Changing the character of Warrington beyond belief

I have grown up in South Warrington and have been fortunate enough to live in a place where there are parks and fields which intersperse the already too-busy roads of Warrington. [REDACTED] It worries and upsets me (at a time in my life which should be completely positive and happy) to think about the prospect of the character of South Warrington changing beyond recognition. The children of Warrington should be able to grow up in a Town that has its fair share of fields and Green Belt, not in a Town that is heavily congested and that has totally lost its historical character. Climate change is as prevalent now as it has been. Removing all of the fields from Warrington will make it a miserable, polluted place to live - I fail to see how people will be attracted to live here when there will be no open spaces and nothing but cars and buildings.

The residents of South Warrington are, as I am sure the Council is aware, totally horrified by the Council's plans. The small villages of Grappenhall, Stretton and Walton will be subsumed by new developments around their edges. This will completely destroy local heritage and the areas' local history.

The removal of fields and open spaces across South Warrington will affect all residents, not just those of South Warrington. There will be no open space for anyone within the Town to enjoy. The increased population and traffic will make moving from one end of the Town horrendous and even more impossible than it currently is. Having said this, the residents of North Warrington are barely affected by the Council's proposals. There are regularly sharp, barbed comments on the Warrington Guardian's commentary pieces regarding the Council's plans, with North Warrington residents finding this amusing that South Warrington's residents are going to be so badly affected. Does the Council want to support this inequality?

The traffic implications

The response that I am currently met with when I tell people that I live in Warrington is that the traffic within the Town is horrendous. Firstly, is the Council proud that this is how the Town is portrayed? Adding a further 24,000 houses on to the traffic misery that currently offends the Town is absolutely ludicrous.

My understanding is that a detailed traffic survey has *not* been included within the Council's plans, nor has a detailed environmental survey. How can the Council even be considering moving ahead with such substantial proposals without considering infrastructure and traffic planning and the impact that the plans could have on the local environment? Surely this is a contravention of the Council's duties towards its constituents which could be ripe for Judicial Review.

Warrington becomes a total gridlock whenever there are problems on the surrounding motorways. Only a few weeks back, a crash on the M6 brought the whole Town to a standstill. It took me an hour [REDACTED] which would normally only take me 10 minutes. The Council adding to this with 24,000 additional homes is utter madness.

The Housing Targets placed on the Council by the Government are totally unrealistic

It is my understanding that the Council is targeting the build of 24,000 new homes over the next 20 years and that the Council blames the targets imposed by Government on it for this. Challenge the Government! The targets are woefully unrealistic. Warrington is a *Town*, not a City. It does not have the space nor the infrastructure to support the build of this many houses. Yes, there is a need to ensure that new generations can buy houses in Warrington. However, we implore the Council to use the existing Brownfield Sites that are available to build a reasonable amount of new homes.

Does Warrington really need an extra 24,000 homes? Who will live in these homes? Yes, there is a proportion of those homes that will be reasonably priced and available for the younger generation of Warrington to purchase. However, my understanding is that a proportion of the homes in South Warrington would carry a higher price tag. Who will want to buy a higher priced home in a traffic filled metropolis with no surrounding open fields or character?? Knutsford and other villages would be a much more attractive option.

Warrington is not and should not be a City

I am sure that the Council will not have been able to ignore the outpouring of local anger towards these proposals, particularly in relation to Warrington potentially applying for City status. The Council's aspirations appear to be geared towards driving a higher housing assumption and employment assumption than may otherwise be necessary or realistic.

Yes, there are new businesses coming to Warrington at Omega, for example. However, we don't need 24,000 houses to accommodate the employees of those businesses. Many of those employees will live outside of Warrington and travel in for work. For those who work in Manchester or Liverpool, the Council is sorely mistaken if it think that it will be able to attract the employees of those Cities to live in Warrington if it becomes a Town devoid of any soul or agricultural space.

Warrington does not have the infrastructure to become a City. I live adjoining Chester Road, in Walton, where the traffic in the morning is horrendous now, let alone with thousands of other houses being built on it.

Warrington is a Town with history and character. Let us keep it that way and not let it become a place that is busting at the seams with too many residents, unsatisfactory public services and traffic levels beyond measure.

Summary

In summary, I consider the Council's plans to be extremely detrimental to the character of Warrington. They will change the Town beyond belief. My husband has already indicated that we would be making a move out of the Town should the proposals proceed. I don't think we will be the only ones thinking of taking such drastic measures as a result of the Council's ill thought out plans.

We implore the Council to scrap its local housing development plans and replace them with fully considered proposals upon which it has consulted with local residents (something that the Council has failed to do properly in running the consultation period over the Summer holidays.....).

Yours faithfully

