

Response to Warrington Local Plan Proposals

Dear Sir,

I write in response to Warrington's Local Plan proposals and I would like the Council to take note of my following thoughts and comments:-

- I accept the need for a Local Plan and thank the Council for undertaking so much work to formulate one for our town, even though this will bring changes that I find less palatable.
- I have read the on-line documents and visited the consultation meeting at the Park Royal Hotel. My major concern about the information provided is that I found the maps difficult to follow clearly when identifying exactly the areas referred to and would have appreciated more detail linked to clearly identifiable land marks beyond the canals and motorways.
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- As an Appleton resident, I understand that much of the land around Appleton, Grappenhall, Appleton Thorn and Stretton has already been identified for future planning from the New Town Development days. I personally consider this to be enough land to completely change the character of these areas. This already includes the destruction of at least three farms. I consider that South Warrington is disproportionately affected by the Plan. North and Eastern Warrington are barely touched by the proposals.
- My main concern with the Local Plan centres around the extent of the proposals in particular the Garden City suburb and the Waterfront development because of their size and the considerable use of Green Belt land.
- With regards to the number of homes required, I note how you calculated this need but remain highly concerned about the sheer volume proposed. I noted that prior to 2015, the Council seems proud of the fact that they exceeded their building target. The fact that no target was required in subsequent years and that the Council considers they have not continued to build so profusely, should not in fact, be factored into the new Local Plan in my opinion. I completely disagree that the suggested backlog of 847 homes should be included and ask that the figures for the number of houses are reconsidered.
- I would like complete assurance that all brownfield land sites have been developed before encroaching onto Green Belt land, even if this is more costly to use. I was told, at the meeting, that all the development around the Omega Site has already planned to be used. I hope this is the case

and that this has been factored into the Local Plan. I was also pleased to note that the Plan does consider the future of Fiddler's Ferry and its potential for future development and I would like that to be a definite commitment on the part of the Council.

- I agree with the priority of unlocking major development opportunities in the Town Centre and Inner Warrington whilst addressing existing congestion in the town. One suggestion for consideration is including higher density in the town centre, therefore lowering the density in outer area. Achieving a higher housing density in the town centre (such as apartments) of up to 40 dwellings per hectare could mean that a lower density could be achieved elsewhere in the Preferred Development Option. This would have the advantage of requiring less Green Belt land or enabling a different type of housing mix to be built (such as bungalows for elderly residents).
- I also agree about the need for improvements to existing roads to address current congestion problems before building any new houses and hope the Council will honour this proposal. Stockton Heath is not mentioned specifically in the PDO but the impact of the Garden City Suburb and the Warrington South West Extension on this village will be enormous. The traffic lights at the junction of the A49 and the A56 in Stockton Heath are already operating at capacity and the A49 flowing through the village is frequently at a standstill. A detailed traffic survey has not been included in the PDO and this should be urgently considered. Warrington is uniquely positioned close to the M6, M56 and M62 motorways. The growth of Warrington has often been attributed to its proximity to the transport network. But Warrington is affected detrimentally whenever there are problems on the motorway network and I don't think this has been considered sufficiently.

The PDO also suggest the use of an old railway embankment and bridge to the west of Latchford Locks as a new strategic transport route. This route would be detrimental to the people currently living in this area.

- Whilst I welcome the fact that the Local Plan makes reference to the building of new schools and facilities, I am less confident about this promise of delivery and seek reassurance on this issue. My concerns centres around the development of schools around Chapelford and Westbrook to support the additional homes in this area. Initially, a new school was proposed at Chapelford but in reality the school at Sycamore Lane was demolished. Ultimately, Chapelford and St Philips, Westbrook have been made into three form entry primary schools with all the resulting traffic in those specific areas. I note also that, at a recent Director's Briefing, the Council will be inviting the development of Free Schools within the Local Plan. Whilst the PDO makes mention of providing new health facilities in the Garden City Suburb and the South West Extension, there is notably no mention of increasing capacity at Warrington Hospital. The residents occupying the additional 24,000 dwellings will also need access to healthcare facilities.
- I am also concerned about the claim that the Local Plan will deliver two new Country Parks. I understand that development will take place around Moore Nature Reserve. Is this one of the new Country Parks proposed? I know that Peel Holdings, who hold much of the land around the Nature Reserve are keen to sell or develop the land for commercial use and I hope they are not putting undue pressure on the Council.
- I welcome the proposals regarding areas of green linking corridors but would seek firm reassurances that ancient woodland would not be destroyed. A high level environmental and ecological impact survey has not been included in the PDO and this is also an urgent requirement. A

wide variety of animals and birds live in the Green Belt areas including badgers, water voles, great crested newts and bats etc. We must protect their habitats for the future.

- Finally, I am very concerned about the Council's aspirations for Warrington to acquire 'City' status. Why do we want this? I hate the 'Garden City Suburb,' label. As I drive through Runcorn, I see the trees and grass verges but also the vast quantities of roads and roundabout with residential areas indistinguishable because of their general uniformity. I love the character of South Warrington and am totally despondent at the thought of its complete destruction.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my response.

Yours faithfully

