




Dear Sir

**Warrington Borough Council – Local Plan
Preferred Development Option Regulation 18 Consultation**

As residents of Grappenhall we write to object strongly to the plans outlined in the Preferred Development Option Consultation for the following reasons:

Housing Need

The Housing White Paper, Department of Communities and local Government, published on 14 September sets out a standardized methodology of calculating housing need for local authorities. The proposed housing figure of 24,000 homes is over optimistic and unrealistic and is driven by the aspirations for Warrington to become a city. We do not support this aspiration and neither does the local community. The effects of Brexit have not been taken into account and plans should focus on a shorter term so that figures can be reviewed and any changes factored in as the effect of Brexit and changes in trends unfold.

The new standardized methodology would indicate a housing need for 2017 – 2027 which could be accommodated within the existing urban brownfield sites where there is a capacity of around 15,000 homes. Development closer to the town centre would support the regeneration of the town centre and offer higher density housing and more affordable homes. More sustainable transport options would be possible towards the town centre where residents could walk or cycle to the centre and a regular bus service would be available.

Sustainable development and regeneration of the town centre and inner areas should be sought first and the use of brownfield sites should be exhausted before any use of the green belt is even considered. Fiddlers Ferry should be considered for future development as it is likely it will become available in the future.

Employment Land

The employment land target is over optimistic, based on old data and fails to take into account the effects of Brexit or significant changes in technology over recent years. Expansion in peripheral areas will fail to assist regeneration of the town centre and the figures should be recalculated

Loss of Green Belt Land

No exceptional circumstances have been demonstrated to justify the release of greenbelt land. Green belt land serves a valuable purpose and provides a green buffer zone between residential areas and motorway networks. The air quality in Warrington is already very poor and it would be further reduced by development and loss of green open spaces.

The loss of the special character and openness of the area would be completely unacceptable, as would the loss of wildlife, the ecological damage caused and the adverse visual impact on the landscape. Both Grappenhall and Thelwall have Conservation Areas and distinctive historic character. The extensive development proposed would not be in keeping with the area and rural surroundings and would be detrimental to the character of the area which is greatly valued and recognized in the 2003 Village Design Statement. No mention of this is made in the PDO.

A Cambridge study has predicted that there may not be enough farmland available in the future to meet agricultural needs and so use of valuable farmland is shortsighted and should be avoided. There is evidence of poor drainage issues in the area and low-lying areas are prone to flooding. Large developments would be likely to have an adverse effect on an area already highlighted as having flood risk areas.

Regeneration and sustainable development of inner Warrington, making use of brownfield sites, should be pursued first and green belt land should continue to be protected as a valuable asset and local amenity which contributes to the health and wellbeing of the community and the overall appeal of rural parts of Warrington as a desirable residential area.

Highways and traffic

The Strategic Road indicated on the map cutting across Weaste Lane, along the TPT and on to the disused railway has caused a significant blight on the local housing market and we have heard of several instances where purchasers have pulled out of buying houses, very close to the completion date, as a result of these plans. Planning officers have dismissed the indication of this road as 'just an idea' and commented that 'it may never happen'. If this is the case, I would like to know why this route was indicated, at this early stage, before the required transport and feasibility studies had been carried out to assess the viability and deliverability of the route. The route would involve a vast number of compulsory purchases which would render it unviable and would result in the destruction of a community and the loss of a great number of period properties.

Building in outlying settlements in South Warrington would not assist regeneration of the town centre as the likelihood is that residents would travel to Manchester or Liverpool using Motorway networks. Travel from these outlying areas would be dependent on use of private cars as public transport provision is extremely poor. The bus service has declined greatly over recent years and travel to the town centre is difficult using public transport.

