



Dear Sirs,

**RE : Preferred Development Option Regulation 18 Consultation**

I write to set out my objection to this scheme as set out in your document "Preferred Development Option Regulation 18 Consultation July 2017" which I will refer to as PDOC for the sake of brevity below.

I have considered the PDOC and associated documents as best as I am able as a lay person and even to my untrained eye whole scheme is destined to fail its aims and will do nothing at all to benefit the people of Warrington or the surrounding areas ( either now or in the future).

It seems that the whole project is based on a vain and pointless aim to change the status of Warrington into a city and so that is where I shall begin

**"The City of Warrington" pointless ambition**

As we near the third decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Warrington has virtually none of the typical features one associates with a genuine City. There is no proper University, no Cathedral and no professional football team. To my knowledge, the town never hosts large concerts, has only a single tiny theatre of and at the time of writing does not even have a cinema in the centre. There is no significant park in the town and the highlight of the social calendar involves nothing more than walking the streets. As far as I am aware there is no trade for which it is particularly famed.

It seems obvious that the England's Northern cities have either evolved from ancient settlements or else rose up in the Industrial Revolution. Warrington is by no means a new place and yet it remains relatively unknown if not insignificant .

To state matters plainly, if Warrington deserved to be regarded as a city, it would already be or at least appear to be one. Warrington will never compete with nearby Manchester and Liverpool so why bother trying ?

The people of Warrington would be better served by you directing your energies to becoming a first rate town rather than toward the vanity project of becoming a 4<sup>th</sup> rate city.

Assuming that you will not see the obvious truth of that, I now turn to the substance of the scheme proposed

### Homes for an increased Warrington workforce or car dependent commuter camp ?

I note that in pursuit of the City status ambition, the PDO concludes that over the next 20 years some 24,000 homes are required to support a growing work force. Of that total, approximately 7000 are to be built in a so called "Garden City suburb" which is to be superimposed on Green Belt land in the vicinity of Grappenhall and Appleton,

Whilst the PDO does not detail the character and size of the houses to be built in the Garden City Suburb, this is currently the most expensive area in the borough. One can only assume that housebuilders will take full commercial advantage of that fact and build houses which can be sold at prices in keeping with those which currently exist. A quick viewing of "Rightmove", "Zoopla" or "Primelocation.com" reveals the average house price in Grappenhall exceeds £300,000. This must be kept in mind when one considers who will be living in these new Garden City Suburb houses.

The PDO assumes a growing workforce and justifies the need for further homes on this. I do not know whether the workforce projections are accurate but have no evidence to dispute them. Even if they are correct, it should not be lost on anyone that the PDO itself acknowledges that "*the predominant growth sector in terms of land for new development is within the distribution sector*" (para2.17). Further it acknowledges that "Port Warrington" will provide a key distribution centre for freight from the Ship Canal which points toward the creation of further distribution sector type jobs (para5.25) and extensions to the Barleycastle estate will do likewise.

The relevance of this is that the increase in jobs is likely to be "living wage" jobs for the most part. According to "PayScale.com" the current average salary in Warrington is only £24,000. In short the people who will end up doing the jobs which are to be created simply will not be able to afford to live in the houses which are likely to be built in the Garden City.

This reflects my anecdotal experience living in Grappenhall. In that time, I have met many hundreds of people by virtue of my involvement in local sports clubs, schools, pubs and clubs. I can only recall meeting one local resident who actually works in Warrington. The rest commute to Manchester and Liverpool as well as less obvious areas in Cheshire and Lancashire

It seems that most people live in South Warrington because of its well placed road links to places other towns and cities.

I see no reason to suppose that will change. Putting aside affordability, the reality is that the South Warrington is poorly connected to the town centre by road and is poorly connected elsewhere by public transport. I need hardly point out that there is no railway station on the South of the Ship Canal and inadequate bridges. Even the proposed bus routes between the Garden City and the town centre will not make much difference. The sort of people who buy the houses are likely to want to use their cars

In all likelihood, the houses proposed for building under the PDO will be inhabited by people who work elsewhere rather than Warrington based workers which completely defeats the object. Moreover, it will create more traffic congestion

### **Alternative Sites**

The PDO necessarily requires the destruction of local countryside and villages, Whilst the current character of those areas has been the status quo for many centuries, the timescale of the PDO is such that they will be destroyed in a few short years and of course the damage will be permanent. Mistakes will not be reversible.

With that in mind it would be well to be patient and explore other likely options. The potential availability of Fiddlers Ferry is mentioned at para 3.6 . Surely development of that would represent true improvement rather than wanton destruction. Houses built at that site are also likely to be more affordable.

In the circumstances it would be foolishly hasty to proceed down the wrong road before seeing what opportunity might come of that site.

### **Environmental and Health Factors**

For the sake of completeness, I wish to make it known that the PDO will increase pollution from vehicular traffic and will lay waste to natural environments.

One has to wonder what sort of a world do the officers of Warrington WBC wish to be responsible for creating.

### **Due Process**

I would like to express my utter disgust at how the so called consultation process has been handled by Warrington BC. Rather than engaged the local community in what will be a life changing upheaval, you have operated furtively as if deliberately trying to by pass the publics attention.

The proposals have not been well published. Plans published issued have been blurred and on an indecipherable scale a completely useless scale. Incomprehensible jargon is used in a long complicated documents and there has been no attempt to provide an easy to understand summary. The decision to start the process over the summer holidays cannot have been a coincidence not can the lamentably short consultation period.

The whole thing smacks of an underhand , grubby and undemocratic effort to steam roll the project onwards with no regard whatsoever for the people who will be affected by it.

If Warrington BC cannot even make a decent job of the consultation process, one can have no confidence in their ability to actually implement a plan on this scale. Indeed the town's shortcomings which I highlighted above hardly point to a model of competence on the part of the local planners.

### **Summary**

I would urge you to please reconsider this misconceived plan for the following reasons

- 1) Whilst Warrington could be a fine town with the right people running it, it will never be a true City and ambitions of that nature are pointless.

- 2) Houses built in South Warrington are likely to remain unaffordable to people whose work is to be based in the town
- 3) Building more houses in South Warrington is likely to put further strain on the motorway network since the residents will use roads to commute to Liverpool, Manchester and beyond
- 4) For the sake of a few years, Green belt land should not be developed on in circumstances where a huge brownfield site which might become available in the relatively near future ( especially in circumstances where house built on that brown field site would be more affordable and better connected to the town centre.
- 5) The PDO will be terrible for the environment and terrible for public health
- 6) The consultation process has been contrived to bypass and ignore the tens of thousands of people who will be massively affected by what is proposed.

I look forward to hearing from you

