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20th September 2017

PDO and Long Term Strategy

Thank you for arranging the consultation meetings, we visited the Park Royal to gain some background on the Preferred Development Option. With such a radical departure from the previous long term strategy document (in which the green belt was protected for 20+ years) there were some very emotional reactions to the Plan and this is only to be expected. In our area [REDACTED] many people have worked hard all their lives and moved to the area because of the green belt status and the plans are a major departure from the council's earlier intention to keep Weaste Lane and surrounding areas as a 'conservation area'.

Firstly I would ask for some background on the idea of a 'Garden City'. The whole approach looks like an academic exercise to establish Warrington as a City and to provide an opportunity for big developers who are primarily driven by revenue rather than the priorities of existing residents or the need for affordable homes. The council are of course civil servants paid for by taxes and should be representing the needs of the existing community as well as strategically planning for the future but in recent years we see the same names appearing on the boards of development companies, on the Council, on the Warrington Enterprise Committee and as a part of Warrington and Co.

From the meeting at the Park Royal Hotel, it would appear that many people would like for the Senior Council Executives to declare their external business interests and associations. This action alone would calm the current situation and hopefully regain the trust of Warrington residents.

Main Concerns/Objections/Suggestions

I have three major issues with regards to the new PDO.

- 1) My main objection is to the new 'strategic' road which shown on your map(s) would cross Weaste Lane, split in half the green belt area near our home and pollute the area from the centre outwards.
- 2) I also question the number and type of new homes proposed throughout Warrington.
- 3) My understanding of the government's green belt policy was that it should only be used in exceptional circumstances and when all other options for development are not feasible. The long term plan does not explain why development elsewhere has been ruled out.

lights. The road could then go over the railway bridge to cross the river if the council still wanted to utilize that potential route into Warrington.

Number/type of dwellings

My second objection relates to the projected number of dwellings required and the 'type' of dwellings. The policy of 'calling for sites' is a very perverse way of investigating options. It is probably a cheaper way of assessing ideas when council resources are limited as it delegates the planning ideas to 3rd party developers who then see an opportunity. Developers will ALWAYS want to develop in the most profitable areas and they struggle to make a profit with redevelopments in areas where property is cheaper. **The brief given to developers should be to 'come up with a plan for affordable housing and provide evidence that minimum green belt has been impacted'**. In recent months there has evidently been a 'developer feeding frenzy' as they all look at ways of making huge profits by developing in green belt areas. Landowners probably then feel they might miss an opportunity or be left farming an area surrounded by housing, so very quickly lots of offers for sites are submitted to the council and the situation 'snowballs' out of control.

Whilst the council have no other figures on which to base population and housing projections than those published by the office of National Statistics, the likelihood is that with BREXIT the actual need for homes may be less than WBC are planning. Why not start smaller and then 'ramp up' if need be and after the economy and population projections become clearer?

Developing in green belt will NOT produce affordable homes, it will produce desirable and more expensive homes. WBC should perhaps look at how Liverpool and Manchester have been redeveloped with attention to inner city areas and docklands. Apartments use a smaller footprint, can be developed in the Town Centre and as a result, people can walk to work which reduces inner city traffic and also benefits local businesses. Much of Liverpool is now thriving with cafes and restaurants and it is good to see that previously run down areas such as the Dockland areas are now a nice place to be. The centre of Warrington might benefit from a similar approach.

Green Belt Policy

A number of residents in our area have apparently spent time investigating the government's green belt policy which says that '*green belt should only be released in exceptional circumstances and when all other options are not feasible*'. Can the council please provide details that this government policy has been adhered to and also give details of why other options were excluded?

Yours faithfully

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