

*Representations to the Warrington Borough Council Local Plan*

*Preferred Development Option Regulation 18 Consultation*

*(July 2017)*

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**Do you have any comments to make about how we have worked out the need for new homes and employment land over the next 20 years?**

I do not support the way that Warrington BC has worked out the need for new homes and employment land over the next 20 years.

I am unsure where the aspiration to become a city has derived from? The residents of the town do not appear to be in favour of major urban development. Could it be the council employees looking to further their careers, at the expense of our town environmental and economic needs???

The plans for growth are incredibly ambitious and seem to stem from desires for the Borough to gain City status. The desires for the Warrington to make a transition from New Town into a New City have very little public support and it would be useful to understand where this concept has originated from.

Whilst the ambitious levels of growth proposed are in accordance with the LEP's Strategic Economic Plan, they are significantly over and above the more realistic baseline economic forecasts for the Warrington Borough. Whilst it is understood that there is significant private sector interest in the area, this level of growth cannot be sustainable for the region as whole and would raise concerns that this threatens the ability for other authorities to achieve their own growth goals.

I understand that the authority is under pressure from central government to provide a substantial amount of new builds, yet the proposed develop options appear to be drastically inflated. Little consideration of the environmental, cultural and logistical impact these developments would bring, have been explained to my satisfaction.

**Have we appropriately worked out the amount of land to be released from the Green Belt, including the amount of land to be safeguarded?**

I would appreciate more transparency in the calculations that have been provided for public consumption. It would appear to me that the developers are being extremely economical with the truth and many statistics are hidden when convenient. I remain unconvinced that the destruction of the green belt land will benefit anybody but the council leaders and construction companies.

For this same reason, I also do not agree that there is a need to include Safeguarded Land within the Warrington Local Plan, and would suggest the deletion of this in its entirety from the plan. The future of Fiddlers Ferry is currently unknown, but if this large brownfield site becomes available within the plan period, this could be an additional reason why there is no need to safeguard land beyond this.

Furthermore, the area of Safeguarded Land proposed as part of the South Warrington Garden City is particularly unjustified because the release of this land is based on the provision of a link road and new Manchester Ship Canal crossing which is currently nothing more than an arbitrary line on a plan based on a single consultant's 'Vision' for the area. There has not been any feasibility work undertaken to understand if the proposals for this link are viable, cost-effective or even deliver the traffic relief that it suggests (particularly given that the traffic model hasn't been completed). It is unclear as to whether a business case could be established to justify any funding bids, what the overall costs would be and importantly whether the benefits arising from a proposed new road link would outweigh the potential impact on the residential amenities of existing residents particularly in the Thelwall and Latchford areas.

Areas such as the Trans Pennine Trail (TPT) are the focal point of the community it dissects. With a densely-congested area, such as Grappenhall, there is limited opportunities for the residents to escape the stresses of everyday life and retreat to the relative calm of the TPT. The village uses this lifeline of vegetation of exercise, walk their dogs and exercise as a community. In fact I taught all ■ of my children to ride a bike on the TPT, as it is the only extensive, traffic free area in the south of the town that is flat enough to allow young people to roam, without fear of losing their life. Coincidentally my eldest child is disabled ■ and uses the TPT to access ■ trike, the only facility that enables her to be included in our family outings.

### **Do you agree with the new Local Plan Objectives?**

I do not agree with **objective W1** which seeks to enable the transition of Warrington from a New Town to a New City. Very little information has been provided as to why this is desirable and what the benefits of this would be to existing residents. The appeal of Warrington is its size. It is already large enough to offer attractive employment, retail and recreational opportunities. Those who want to experience a busier 'City lifestyle' or access sub-regional shopping and leisure opportunities can easily travel to Manchester, Chester and Liverpool.

I can only support **objective W2** where Green Belt releases are properly justified. I understand that Warrington does need to plan for its future and allocate sufficient sites to meet employment and housing needs, but have concerns about the level of growth proposed and therefore the extent of Green Belt releases.

I support **objective W3** which seeks to strengthen the role of Warrington town centre as an employment, retail, leisure and cultural hub, but any growth and investment in this area should be appropriate to Warrington as a Town and not a City.

I support **objective W4** in so far as it seeks to reduce the need to travel and encourage active lifestyles.

I support **objective W5** which seeks to secure high quality design which reinforces the character and local distinctiveness of Warrington's urban area, its countryside and its unique pattern of green spaces.

I support **objective W6** which seeks to ensure that development makes a positive contribution to improving Warrington's Air Quality.

**Do you have any comments to make about how we've assessed different spatial options for Warrington's future development?**

I believe that the Council should have consulted with residents about the different spatial options prior to publishing the preferred options document to enable more discussion about and a better understanding of all the options, especially given the potential for them to have a significant impact on the lives of existing residents.

At para 4.65 it is concluded that option 2 performed best against the strategic plan objectives. I would welcome sight of information which demonstrates for the proposed South Warrington Garden City Suburb:

1. How such significant growth in one area can make a positive contribution to improving Warrington's Air Quality.
2. How the proposed link road and proposed new crossing over the Manchester Ship Canal makes a positive contribution to improving Warrington's Air Quality. From what I can ascertain, the proposed link road would take additional traffic through the existing residential areas of Thelwall and deliver this to Latchford, an already highly congested area.
3. How development of such a scale in this location will be able to reinforce the character and local distinctiveness of the area and its unique pattern of green spaces.
4. How the delivery of new employment uses as an extension to the existing Appleton Thorn/ Barley Castle Estates (which are most likely to offer low-skilled distribution/ warehouse type jobs) meet the needs of the existing and proposed local population thereby reducing the need to travel (objective 4).
5. How the proposed link road encourages active lifestyles when it potentially results in the loss of a valuable and well-used recreation resource; the Trans Pennine Trail.

I do not consider that option 2 does any of these things. Furthermore, the absence of a traffic model does not allow a number of these conclusions to be reached. I would request that residents are re-consulted once this becomes available.

**Do you have any comments to make about our Preferred Development Option for the City Centre?**

Warrington is a town and not a city and development should be of an appropriate scale to support its position in the sub-regional hierarchy.

There has been significant expansion of the out-of-centre Junction Retail Park and this should not be at the expense of investment in the edge-of-centre Riverside Retail Park which serves residents to the south of the City Centre. Loss of retail in this location would result in an increased need to travel. Its allocation for residential

uses is disappointing and whilst I fully support town centre living, it would be useful to understand what other options have been explored to save the loss of this important shopping offer.

**Do you have any comments to make about our Preferred Development Option for developing Warrington's Waterfront?**

The proposals around Warrington's Waterfront are also ambitious, although I welcome residential development in this location, which is in close proximity to the town (not City) centre and the public transport network. I also welcome the regeneration of this brownfield site.

The port development does, however, have potential to generate considerable traffic and in the absence of a traffic model, would request that residents are re-consulted on these proposals once this becomes available.

I understand that the Warrington Waterfront development is very much dependent on the new 'Western Link' which is subject to separate consultation. I would be interested to learn more about the implications of the proposed Western Link on the road networks through Penketh and Cuerdley, particularly in light of the increased traffic that is likely to be generated by those seeking to avoid paying tolls on the Mersey Gateway/ Silver Jubilee Bridge.

**Do you have any comments to make about our Preferred Development Option for Warrington's Garden City Suburb?**

First and foremost, Warrington is not a City and nor do its residents want it to be! This will never be a Garden City, it is nothing more than urban sprawl.

Second, I support the planned approach to new homes as fully understand that this is the best way to deliver the services and infrastructure required to support the growing population. I welcome provision for new school, doctors' surgeries and the local centre.

However, whilst I am not against the concept of new homes and am in full agreement that new houses do need to be built in this area to meet the needs of future generations, there is some concern amongst residents about whether the existing road network can accommodate the level of growth proposed. The traffic model does not yet appear to have been completed so conclusions in this regard cannot be reached. I would also like to express my concerns about the amount of land allocated for housing and question why the Council feels it needs to safeguard land for beyond the plan period given the already aspirational level of growth assumed and the very likely release of land around Fiddlers Ferry (which has not currently been taken into account).

I raise very specific concerns about the area of Safeguarded Land proposed as part of the South Warrington Garden City and believe that this is particularly unjustified because the release of this land is based on the provision of a link road and new Manchester Ship Canal crossing which is currently nothing more than an arbitrary line on a plan based on a single consultant's 'Vision' for the area. There has not been any feasibility work undertaken to understand if the proposals for this link are

viable, cost-effective or even deliver the traffic relief that it suggests (particularly given that the traffic model hasn't been completed). It is unclear as to whether a business case could be established to justify any funding bids, what the overall costs would be and importantly whether the benefits arising from a proposed new road link would outweigh the potential impact on the residential amenities of existing residents particularly in the Thelwall and Latchford areas. The proposed link road would take additional traffic through the existing residential areas of Thelwall and deliver this to Latchford, an already highly congested area. It would result in the loss of a valuable and well-used recreation resource; the Trans Pennine Trail having a negative impact on the active lifestyles of the existing local population. It is also extremely unclear as to how the Council will look to acquire the land to enable to link road and crossing to be implemented – the project ahead is huge, even just in terms of exploring feasibility alone, and the Council should not be looking to add this proposal to the Local Plan before it is known if, how and when this can be delivered. I would suggest that this area of safeguarded land be removed from the Local Plan along with the proposed link road and new canal crossing and this be revisited as part of the next review only if more is known about the feasibility and deliverability of this route.

With regard to the delivery of new employment uses as an extension to the existing Appleton Thorn/ Barley Castle Estates (which are most likely to offer low-skilled distribution/ warehouse type jobs), I would question if this is really the correct location for such development. It is unclear how the likely jobs created by these proposals will meet the needs of the existing and proposed local population. I believed that additional employment land in this area will attract workers from much further afield thereby leading to increased traffic on already congested roads. Without sight of the traffic model, and in the absence of any information around what the market is likely to deliver in this location, it is difficult to fully appreciate the complexity of the issues presented by expanding this employment offer.

I also have some concerns that this proposal is being branded a 'Garden City' when it is doing no more than retaining existing greenery and woodland, which would be difficult to develop in any case. The country park concept is welcomed, but more effort should be made to provide a substantial green buffer to existing walkways and cycleways to retain existing pedestrian routes etc. in addition to this. This is particularly relevant to the walkway from the Grappenhall Cricket Club to Grappenhall Heys and the walled garden. This is an important recreational area and although I support new housing development in this area, I hope that the Local Plan moving forward will include strict policies around the requirement for integral open space over and beyond that included on the vision drawing at figure 7 of the Preferred Development Option document.

### **Do you have any comments to make about our Preferred Development Option for development in the outlying settlements?**

Very little information has been provided about development in outlying settlements so it is difficult to pass comment on these proposals at this stage.

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Please acknowledge receipt.