

Resident's Response to Consultation on Local Development Plan Preferred Option

I am a resident of Grappenhall village. I live in a listed property within a Conservation Area, sandwiched between the Bridgewater canal, Broad Lane, A56 Chester Road and the A50. I have preserved and respected that heritage at my own expense over many years and regard myself as a conservator of a small part of the locality's heritage.

However, in the past years I have seen a progressive deterioration in WBC's commitment to maintaining the previously highly valued character of this area. Examples include: failure to take any effective action for over 20 years to prevent gross dereliction of the listed Rectory in the heart of the village; its abandonment of legal opposition to proposed late opening and music license extensions for the Rams Head Pub in 2008, leaving it entirely to local residents to voice (successful) opposition to Punch Tavern's appeal of refusal in resulting Magistrates court proceedings; the more recent decision over Grappenhall school; and in respect of the deficient ongoing maintenance of the cobbled condition of Church Lane.

The Council has previously sought and received longstanding and vocal backing from residents in preserving the high quality and character of the greenbelt land between the village and the M6 corridor when resisting retrospective planning applications and appeals for permission to use land on Cartridge Lane for traveller purposes. The processes involved in that dispute have taken over a decade and were in issue until last year. In all that time residents were encouraged to support the Council's published and reasoned stance that this greenbelt land was of high quality and amenity to the area and as such was completely unsuitable to the development proposed. Such arguments emphasised the elevated position increasing the visible impact of development over a wide area. One wonders if that documentation was reviewed or even considered in the making of this plan, certainly it is not recognised in the relevant assessment of that part of the greenbelt affected.

In less than a year WBC propose a complete volte face. Nothing has changed to justify this reversal of view save political perspective. No reasoned explanation has been advanced for the change in assessment of this land's high amenity as greenbelt. It is perverse for the Council to have reached an entirely opposite view of the value and priority of such land as greenbelt in the short period which has elapsed. One cannot but believe that these present proposals were in development whilst the Council was publicly arguing against traveller development in the area in the course of such appeal.

Objections in principle to the garden suburb proposal:

- 1. This resident challenges the assumption upon which this entire proposal proceeds namely that the appropriate direction of travel for Warrington is towards city status and growth. I am unaware that such an objective is desired by the residents and tax payers of Warrington and certainly I am unaware of any mandate sought and given for the advancement of such objective from the electorate of this borough.**
2. This proposal depends entirely of a vast grab of greenbelt land to supply the great majority of the entire borough's foreseen housing and development needs. The inevitable impact of the proposed local development plan (6,000 homes plus related physical and social infrastructure) is that the existing communities will become surrounded and subsumed within an enveloping conurbation. This will be utterly transformational. Self-serving and

optimistic labels such as “sensitive frontage...” and “significant green buffer” are a transparent distraction.

The land rising consistently, as it does from the area of the ship canal to the boundaries of the proposed development of the garden suburb at the M6 and M56, mean that the development will have substantial visual impact over long distances. It will fundamentally impact of the existing communities and residents to an enormous degree. I settled in an area advantaged and characterised by that amenity in reliance on the knowledge of that protection against its fundamental change that greenbelt status afforded. The enormity of the change envisaged in one small area within the period of this plan, which is actually relatively short period of time, is disproportionately impactful and damaging to the existing residents’ quality of life. I am very disappointed that WBC no longer appears to share a valuation of this area, which previously it celebrated and defended as one of the jewels of the locality.

3. The proposals to upgrade transport infrastructure have the hallmarks of a theoretical exercise. The supporting transport survey recognises that the overwhelmingly predominant mode of transport, especially for commuting, is by private car. It identifies a long term trend of increasing private vehicle use and proportionate if not outright decrease in the use of buses and public transport generally, which in any event amount to a very small percentage of overall journeys made. That research shows an overall average of 81% of households had access to at least one car, but 39% have more than one car. It suggests that on this side of Warrington private car journeys overwhelmingly predominate in contrast to some other areas surveyed. It shows that Warrington has a higher than national average rate of increase in the proportion of households having a car. There is no reason to expect such trends to change.

I would be interested to know based on actual survey data how many vehicles per residence there are on the recent developments on, for example, Grappenhall Heys in say the last 10 years. My interested but anecdotal observation is that it is typically 2 or more. If this is borne out by actual research (the existing data are not so specific) then it points to an expectation of 12,000+ vehicles to be added in consequence of this proposal to the local traffic accessing the already over-stretch and rigid road network accessing Warrington centre, Stockton Heath and the adjacent motorway network via junction 20 of M6 and junction 10 of M56.

4. Optimistic planning for increased uptake of cycling and walking routes for local journeys is unrealistic without some evidence based model to justify the necessary expectation that such strategies will substantially alter behaviours and avoid the obviously dangerous and damaging impact of increased traffic which 6000 new homes and additional businesses/institutions and services in this “garden suburb” proposal will inevitably generate.
5. The issues of congestion which arise on both M6 and M56 on a very regular basis presently lead directly to traffic congestion on the road network immediately around the area of proposed development. The A50 and B5356 become gridlocked with great regularity whenever the M6 is obstructed. The developments already in place at Grappenhall Heys create high levels of traffic accessing to/from Chester Road at the choke point of Lumb Brook Bridge, around Broad Lane into Grappenhall Village and along the A50 on approach to

M6 junction 20. Unless planners can offer a way to prevent the M6 and Thelwall Viaduct remaining a recurrent source of congestion, no amount of revising the junction itself is going to avoid the implication for access and egress along A50 corridor and connected subordinate roads, in particular at peak times.

The plan is entirely vague about the location of additional roadways save for a looping transport link appearing to run inside Appleton, crossing the A50 and swinging back over the ship canal towards the town centre near Latchford. At the point where this new relief road will join into the existing network new levels of traffic will still be funnelled into existing roadways already oversubscribed. The plan evidences no coherent means to address obvious bottlenecks at A50 entry points, at the M6 junction, at Broad Lane and Lumb Brook Road, all of which are confined by long established housing and historic infrastructure (eg canal bridges). Additional traffic will become both a source of substantial danger to all road users and of congestion to the disadvantage of all.

6. The understood proposal to reopen the lane between Broad Lane and Lumb Brook Bridge as a bus route demonstrates the theoretical, ill-conceived and ill-informed nature of this plan.
 - The road was closed several years ago as a through route for traffic following a serious incident causing loss of life [REDACTED] [REDACTED] It was closed with public consent. [REDACTED]
 - The buses travelling along it will still enter/exit at existing choke points which are already congested at peak times.
 - Such bus services in a deregulated world cannot be guaranteed or subsidised if under used. Recent reductions in services along the A50 into the city show the unreliability of such mode of transport as any answer at all to the inevitable growth in traffic from residents of the garden suburb plan.

The plan guarantees existing residents with years of disruption only to result in a neighbourhood fundamentally changed in character, visually blighted and impacted by dangerous levels of traffic congestion to the detriment of both existing and new residents in this area and adjacent wards which will be impacted by traffic diverting through them. Think again.

Sincerely

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]