

WARRINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN PREFERRED DEVELOPMENT OPTION

What I can accept

- Some development is inevitable and 'no change' is not an option
- Land for housing and development must be considered together
- Infrastructure must be put in place before building commences
- Regenerating the town centre is vital
- The Western Link Road with a new crossing over the Ship Canal, currently subject to a parallel consultation, is essential to enable the opening up of the waterfront and relieving congestion in the town centre. I support the modified Red Route proposal
- The support from the Council for the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans is welcome because these Plans will give Parish Councils a say over the type and location of new housing

Consultation

I am most unhappy about the timing and nature of the consultation process

Timing & Communication

- The consultation has taken place over the summer period when many people are away on holiday and Parish Councils do not meet in August
- [REDACTED] obtained a concession for responses from the Parish Council to be allowed up to 29 September instead of 12 September and [REDACTED] managed to get this same extension for members of the public
- The process may have been delayed by the General Election but changes of this magnitude deserve full consideration during a time when people are around and not away
- A leaflet about the Plan should have been delivered to all homes in the affected areas. Saying it would have cost too much, is no excuse

Drop-in Sessions

- The Planners have grossly underestimated the number of people who would turn up to the drop-in sessions. The Lymm one was described as 'shambolic'
- There was no session organised for Grappenhall & Thelwall despite it being a strongly affected area which meant that many residents from these villages attended in Lymm so swelling the numbers
- There were complaints that the officers answering questions were not very well informed and there was little of direct relevance to Lymm
- The extra session at the Park Royal was described as chaotic with queues right through the car-park. There were so many people there it was difficult to ask questions of officers
- Paper copies of the questionnaire were only available if you asked for one and were hidden away in a box at the Park Royal

The Consultation Document and the website

- The documentation is extremely difficult for ordinary people to find their way round and understand. As someone said, it was written 'by professionals for professionals'
- Little thought had been given to the needs of ordinary people and it is full of jargon. A quote from one resident, 'I would like to have seen a succinct

summary of what is being proposed...I have spent two whole days looking at the supporting documents and have only scratched the surface'

- The on-line questionnaire is most off-putting and most people will not have a clue about how to answer the questions. How are people expected to answer questions about the methodology of the calculations – what they want to do is say how the changes would affect their lives

Housing Numbers

- There is pressure to increase housing numbers from both developers and national government
- However the high number for new housing is a result of a policy decision by Warrington Council first contained in the 'Warrington means Business' proposal
- We are ambitious for Warrington's success too but the numbers do not have to be as high as proposed
- They result from the high figures submitted as part of the Devolution bid with the two Cheshire Authorities and are contained within the Local Enterprise partnership's Strategic Economic Plan. However there is little appetite in the Government for devolution bids from non-city areas so the status of this proposal is limited
- Much of the Green Belt release is due to these high policy-driven figures

- The number of homes required depends on population growth, the average number of people in each property, the size of plots / density, the growth of jobs and the economic aspirations of the Council
- The population projection by the Council is 232,000 for 2037 and the current population in 2017 is 207,700, an increase of 24,700. Using a 'people per home' figure of 2.3, this amounts to an increase in new homes of 10,739 not 24,000. Since the projection for future years was based on a figure of 210,500 in 2017, the discrepancy is even larger
- On the basis of this analysis, I believe the calculations for the number of new homes required is flawed
- The reason for this discrepancy is probably the drive for higher employment growth in Warrington bringing in more population. This excessive drive does not justify the social and environmental cost

- Nor do I know what kind of employment is being proposed. If it is large logistics / distribution facilities they will take a lot of land without providing many jobs. There should be a greater concentration on manufacturing and 'high tech' industries which have a better ratio of jobs per hectare so requiring less land
- Specifically I do not understand why 5% flexibility (1113 homes) is necessary 'to allow for market choice and in the event that specific sites do not come forward'. What does this mean? It should be taken out and the numbers reduced
- It seems likely that Brexit will have a negative impact on economic growth. This has not been taken into account

City Status

- People do not seem to want Warrington to become a City – they want it to remain a town and see the idea of becoming a 'city' as a vanity project
- There is a suspicion that the Council has upped the housing numbers to enhance the City aspiration

Developers

- I understand the potential for future legal challenges but we believe the Plan is too developer / landowner-led and their wishes have taken precedence over the wishes of residents
- There is particular concern about the influence that Peel appears to wield over what is being proposed
- The Green Belt survey they commissioned from Turley appears to water down some of the conclusions in the survey commissioned from Arup by the Council
- Peel successfully forced the Environment Agency through an action in the High Court to change the flood risk status of some of the land round the Ship Canal making it available for profitable development
- There must be guarantees that brownfield land will be used before Green Belt is released, despite pressure from developers

Affordable Housing

- The huge need in Lymm and the rest of South Warrington is for affordable housing for young people – it is not for yet more executive homes
- Smaller properties are also needed for older people to downsize into
- I suspect that most of the projections are based on more of the same size larger properties
- Apart from fulfilling a major need, smaller affordable houses have the advantage they don't require so much land thus reducing the requirement for green belt release

Green Belt

- The report states that Green Belt designation following the Plan should provide protection for 40 years. Planning so far ahead is nonsense because history tells us before many years have passed, the goalposts will be moved
- I do not accept that much of the land in the south is in the lowest 'weak' category
- I do not accept how the release of Green Belt will ease congestion in the town by unlocking 'strategic infrastructure' representing the 'very special circumstances' that must be demonstrated to support the release of Green Belt. More to the point, I do not understand this argument

Other Brownfield sites

- There are two other brownfield sites which are not properly considered in the report
- It is now common knowledge that the Hospital has plans to move out of its current site to another one somewhere in the town. (Your Hospitals Newsletter Summer 2017). If this happened a considerable amount of land would be available for housing
- The second site which is referred to in the report is Fiddlers Ferry. It is highly likely that this power station will be closed down within a few years freeing up a large amount of land. More account should be taken of this rather than Green Belt release. Green Belt must not be released until the future of this site is known.

Character

- The fifth objective of the Strategic Plan is 'to secure high quality design which reinforces the character and local distinctiveness of Warrington's urban areas, its countryside, its unique pattern of green spaces and its constituent settlements'
- We believe these proposals will destroy the character of many of our settlements

Transport and Infrastructure

- The importance of creating the necessary infrastructure to support new housing is recognised but it is not clear how this will be financed
 - At present there is severe congestion and gridlock in parts of Warrington not helped by the swing bridges
 - If there is a problem on the motorway or Thelwall Viaduct this creates chaos in the town
 - The imposition of tolls on the Mersey Gateway Bridge will divert more traffic through Warrington creating more problems
 - Plans by Peel Ports to increase the use of the canal will make matters worse
 - We do not believe that these proposals for new homes will miraculously solve all our transport problems, quite the contrary
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- The marking on a map of the possible line of a new strategic road on part of the Trans Pennine Trail and using the disused bridge over the Ship Canal was inept and a huge mistake
 - Residents who live nearby have now had their houses blighted, not helped by careless comments at a consultation session about dual carriageways and compulsory purchase
 - This proposal is highly speculative and for illustrative purposes but the damage is now done. It has greatly upset local residents in my ward at Thelwall
 - No mention has been made of the possible option of a tram or light railway on this route which would be a more acceptable alternative for many

Housing sites in Lymm

- Land that would accommodate well over 2000 homes (2400) has been put forward for Lymm
- It is highly likely that this will increase as other landowners realise that they could put land forward too
- Space for 500 homes is proposed in the Plan
- The critical need is to secure the open spaces between Lymm and Thelwall, between Lymm and Oughtrington and between Lymm and Broomedge
- Lymm is embarking on the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan and this will give guidance on the location and nature of any new developments

Infrastructure in Lymm

- The report states that 'there will be a small amount of green belt release in Warrington's outlying settlements where the number of new homes can be accommodated by the existing infrastructure within the settlement'
- I do not accept this is true for Lymm
- The High School and some of the Primary Schools are full.
- In the Council's Public Health Report for 2017 it clearly states that 'capacity is very stretched' for GP surgeries in the whole of the south of the town
- Parking is a major problem and no consideration has been given as to how roads might be developed

15 September 2017