

Comments on WARRINGTON LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (2017-2037)

1. It is understood that WBC need to have Local Development Plan to cater for its needs over the next 20 years. But question arises, what has so radically changed that there will be demand for 1100 houses p.a. over the next 20 years as compared to rounded fig. of 525 houses p.a. as partly completed and predicted in the Local Plan Core Strategy reviewed in 2012 and adopted by the Council in July 2014. The impact of Brexit is likely to slow down the economy and the demand for more housing. However, the main objective should be to improve the infrastructure to cope with the realistic expansion and not to be over ambitious to have adverse impact on the quality of life of its present and future residents along with reducing any adverse impact on the wider environment.
2. To support 24,775 new houses required over the next 20 years, the Local Plan proposes to have 8655 houses and 117 Ha. of employment land in South Warrington over the next 20 years by releasing land in The Green Belt. The growth anticipated seems very ambitious partly to satisfy the Council's aspiration to have City status and partly led by the challenge by the big developers to release land in the Green Belt. It is well known that big house Builders acquire land and seek outline permission but then delay building houses.
3. The Development Plan for the proposed Garden City Suburb in South Warrington needs to be realistic to acknowledge the highways constraints due to the special local features like the Bridge Water and Manchester Ship Canals along with crossings over River Mersey meandering through the town as explained in detail by the Councillors representing Appleton & Stockton Heath areas.
4. Any development west of Stretton (shown as SHLAA Green Belt sites) would further encroach good agricultural land in The Green Belt and would have adverse impact on the wild life. The Stretton Traffic Lights road junction is already congested.
5. Any major new housing in South Warrington will increase the traffic congestion at the crossing points over or under the Bridge Water Canal and Manchester Ship Canal. It will bring traffic to Knutsford Road, Lyons Lane, Lumb Brook Road and A49 London Road. Any additional road crossings over the two Canals and road along the old disused Railway embankment are shown as strategic routes which would be expensive and problematic to implement as they run closely through residential areas - some built recently. These roads would be detrimental to the people living close by. Moreover, WBC Officers at the Park Royal Hotel explained that major new road links need to be worked up in detail and implementation would be subject to Government funding and may not be there in time. A proper Traffic Impact Appraisal need to be prepared without and with the new major strategic roads with their committed phased completion.
6. In addition to already land zoned for housing in Grappenhall Hays and Pewterspear Green, some limited housing development may be just feasible on land provided with road network and drainage served by Dipping Brook Avenue and Black Cap Road along with a new Local Centre, GP Surgery and a Primary School. This would meet housing need for a number of years before encroaching the Green Belt.
7. Warrington residents have been a long time waiting for a long promised new Western Link from Walton Road to Sankey Way to improve traffic flow between South, North, West & Central Warrington. It may help congestion on Chester Road to the Town Centre but may not be that useful for the development in South-East Warrington. Any development in North of River Mersey (e.g. Omega, Peel Hall area) or in Green Belt would be better linked to the existing road network and retail facilities in the Town Centre and along A 49- Winwick Road along with provision in West Brook and Gemini areas. Further more, Mersey Rail and the Council are planning to build a new Warrington West Railway station, which will provide better rail link to both inward and outward commuters in North and West Warrington areas travelling by train.