



# WARRINGTON

Borough Council

Professor Steven Broomhead  
Chief Executive

Andy Farrall  
Executive Director  
Economic Regeneration, Growth & Environment

Town Hall  
Sankey Street  
Warrington  
WA1 1UH

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Dear [REDACTED]

## WARRINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN PREFERRED DEVELOPMENT OPTION CONSULTATION

I am responding to your letters of 10<sup>th</sup> September and 15<sup>th</sup> September addressed to Andy Farrall.

We have prepared a range of evidence base documents which are available on our web site which address some of the issues you have raised. However, it is important to stress that we have not carried out the full level of detailed assessment that will be required to support the formal draft version of the Local Plan. We are consulting ahead of working up the formal Plan to give residents the opportunity to provide comments an early stage.

I will respond to each of your points in turn.

### Affordable Housing

The Council currently seeks 30% affordable housing on sites in south Warrington. Concern about the affordability of homes has been a common theme at our consultation events. I would encourage you to raise this issue in your response to the consultation as this will assist the Council in working up its detailed affordable housing requirements.

### Quantity of Housing

The Council has set out how it has worked out its housing target in the Preferred Development Option Consultation Document – paragraphs 2.3 to 2.21 and paragraphs 4.5 to 4.19. More technical justification is provided in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) documents which are provided as supporting documents on our web site.

In summary, the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires the Council to plan for a level of housing to match forecast jobs growth. For Warrington this means our housing need is 955 homes per annum. This is our 'objectively assessed need' for housing and is the minimum level we can plan for under current Government guidance.

The Council has reviewed its own regeneration and growth plans as set out in the Warrington Means Business regeneration programme and in the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership's (LEP) Strategic Economic Plan. The housing requirement to support the level of job growth proposed in these documents equates to 1,113 homes per annum. The Council is making the positive decision to plan for this level of growth and this provides the basis for the Local Plan Preferred Development Option.

I can confirm that the job forecasts that underpin the housing numbers pre-date the referendum decision. This is a concern a number of people have raised during consultation events and is something you may wish to highlight in your response.

As you note in your letter of 15<sup>th</sup> September, the Government is currently consulting on a new methodology for calculating local housing need. Under the proposed methodology our Local Housing Need figure is calculated at 914 homes per annum. This is based on an annual average increase in projected households of 810 calculated over the period 2016 to 2026 and an affordability ratio which uplifts this projection by 12.9%, based on an assessment of median house prices in Warrington compared to median wages. This calculation for Warrington has been confirmed by the Government's Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

It should be noted that new methodology is supportive of councils uplifting their housing targets above the minimum figure if they have ambition to increase employment and jobs in their areas. We have provided more information on the new methodology as an additional 'Frequently Asked Question' on our web site.

#### Increased Traffic

The Council has undertaken an initial transport review in support of the Preferred Development Option but much more detailed Transport Assessment work will be carried out in preparation of the draft Local Plan using a detailed Transport Model which has been prepared specifically for Warrington.

The Council will also be updating its Local Transport Plan in parallel with the Local Plan to ensure future transport planning is fully joined up with land use planning.

As part of the consultation, the council has prepared a development concept for the garden city suburb, to the south east of Warrington. This is one of the locations proposed for new development as part of the preferred development option and the council considers this area could provide up to 7,000 homes.

The development concept is an illustration of what this development could look like and sets out the likely infrastructure required to support this level of growth, such as new schools, health facilities, parks and transport improvements. The development concept identifies potential transport infrastructure to support development and suggests that a number of new routes including a further crossing of the ship canal may be required.

No detailed scheme has been worked up for a crossing at this stage and this crossing could be a road, a public transport route such as a busway or a combination of the two – further work will be required to determine this.

The development concept shows the potential of using the disused railway line as this is an existing alignment making it possible option for the location of a crossing. It also shows an illustrative alignment of a new link route which would connect the crossing into the proposed Garden City suburb to the south and towards to the town centre to the north. This route has been included to give an indication of the areas that the route would need to connect to and has not been worked up in detail.

Following the current consultation period, the council will be looking at the transport impacts of the preferred development option in much more detail to confirm whether a new ship canal crossing is required. If it is required, the Council will need to consider all possible route options for the crossing in addition to the option shown on the plan. This will be subject to further consultation as part of the next round of Local Plan consultation scheduled for spring 2018 before it is subject to Independent Examination by a Government appointed inspector.

The Council would undertake a thorough public consultation on all transport schemes which are needed to support the Local Plan once it is adopted.

### Lifestyle

Promoting active lifestyles is specifically referenced within the proposed Objectives for the Plan as is the importance of green spaces. We have also worked with our Public Health colleagues in updating the key considerations for the Sustainability Appraisal which we need to undertake to test sustainability and environmental aspects of the Plan. The Sustainability Appraisal document which has been produced in respect of the Preferred Development Option is provided on our web site as a supporting document.

### Air Quality

Improving Air Quality is also specifically referenced in the Plan Objectives and is an important consideration in the Sustainability Appraisal. The Council will need to undertake a more detailed assessment of air quality impacts in support of the formal draft version of the Local Plan.

### Wildlife and protected species

This is an important consideration in the Sustainability Appraisal but again more detailed work, including a Habitats Assessments will be required in support of the formal draft version of the Local Plan.

### Flooding

We have taken into account the Environmental Agency's defined Flood Zones in working up the Preferred Development Option. We will however need to complete a detailed Flood Risk Assessment in support of the formal draft version of the Local Plan.

### CAV Technology developments

This is another issue which has been raised during our consultation events. This is something the Council will need to consider in support of the formal draft version of the Local Plan and as part of updating its Local Transport Plan.

### Town Centre / Brownfield Sites

The Council has set out how it has assessed the potential for development within the existing urban area in paragraphs 2.22 to 2.26 and 4.8 to 4.10 of the Preferred Development Option Consultation document. The Council has also provided a more detailed Urban Capacity Statement as part of the supporting documents to the Preferred Development Option. The Preferred Development Option does look to promote higher density development, including flats, in the town centre and inner Warrington.

### Outside Interests

Contact details of all Executive Board Members are available on the Council's web site.

### Community Engagement

The Council has received a number of comments about the nature of the consultation on the Preferred Development Option and will be taking these into account ahead of the next stage of consultation on the Local Plan.

The figures included in the Preferred Development Option document are intended to be illustrative rather than detailed. We have used large versions of these plans at our consultation events with Officers on hand to respond to any queries from members of the public. The Council has prepared higher resolution plans relating to sites submitted to the Council as part of the 'Call for Sites' exercise. At the next stage of the Local Plan process the Council will need to define definitive boundaries on an Ordnance Survey base.

We have registered your letter as a formal response to our Preferred Development Option. We are hoping the above highlights the initial evidence we have produced to date. If this has not addressed your concerns then we would welcome a further response which we will then combine with your initial letter.

Yours sincerely,

