

WARRINGTON LOCAL PLAN COMMENTS

Local Plan Preferred Development Option

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29 September 2017

GENERAL COMMENTS – BOROUGH WIDE

PROCESS & LACK OF GENUINE CONSULTATION

First, I am extremely unhappy about the process for developing the Local Plan and Preferred Development Option. The first that I heard about it and the consultation exercise was after the last of the public meetings and the original end of the consultation period on the 12th September. I have been away until yesterday and this has been my first opportunity to view the documents and respond. Talking to my friends and neighbours and reading social media, it is clear that I am far from alone in this respect. This Plan has far-reaching implications for the whole of Warrington and I'm disappointed that it has been rushed through with so little genuine consultation with residents and council tax payers.

DRIVEN BY BUILDERS AND OUTSIDE INTERESTS

Furthermore, it is clear that external developers and others who have no interest in the welfare of Warrington and its residents appear to have been sufficiently aware of the process as to be able to respond to the call for sites in such large numbers. Their motivation is clearly driven by financial considerations without a second thought for the development of Warrington or the wellbeing of its inhabitants.

It is clear that the Plan results from pressure by House Builders, both at local and national level, to create an illusion that there is a shortage of housing such that it must be dealt with by extreme measures. House builders care not a jot for where they build or what they build: they simply need land in order to sustain profits and growth.

NOT IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF RESIDENTS

You are our Borough Council and your objective must be to improve Warrington for the benefit of residents, ahead of the commercial gain of outside interests. This Plan appears to respond to

external pressures and national frameworks rather than starting from the position of how best to develop the town for the benefit of all of its residents.

DESTRUCTION OF THE GREEN BELT

The pressure to destroy Green Belt comes primarily from the PR departments of national house builders. Green Belt land was set up for a reason and the reasons remain valid. Only under the most extreme circumstances should Green Belt land be destroyed in the way envisaged in this Plan. Destroyed is a strong word but it is valid. Once built on, Green Belt land becomes brown land and is lost forever. Then, at the next review, adjoining Green Belt land comes under pressure. If not checked early on, Warrington will be like Birmingham or London, miles of urban sprawl with only managed, artificial green spaces.

I am completely opposed to any development on Green Belt land.

EMBARGO ON BUILDING ON ANY GREEN BELT LAND FOR 10 YEARS PLUS

It is conceivable that one day there may be an unavoidable need to develop on certain Green Belt land. However, it is very clear from the Plan that we are **not there yet**. The Plan tries to envisage circumstance in the future where pressure on the Green Belt cannot be avoided. If, as a result of the Plan, land is removed from the Green Belt so that it can be built on, inevitably that will happen immediately. Only later will brown land be built on as this is less profitable for building companies. The Green Belt land will thus be lost immediately and forever. If the Plan's forecasts turn out to be wrong, it will be too late for the Green Belt.

Therefore, no development should be permitted on any Green Belt land until all brown land has been developed and the forecasts in the Plan reviewed, say after 10 years

LOSS OF DISTINCTIVENESS OF OUTER SETTLEMENTS

Warrington is indeed a town in the country. The outer settlements provide a variety of housing types and village environments that add to the desirability of Warrington as a place to live and work. The addition of more housing in these areas, including by the destruction of Green Belt land, will only detract from the variety and unique settings available in the borough. This will make Warrington a less desirable place to live, especially for companies considering relocating here.

GENERAL COMMENTS – CROFT VILLAGE

The plan envisages about 60 new houses being built in Croft Village, with clearly no science behind that figure. The Call for Sites has generated many sites in the village which amount to multiple hundreds of new houses, all on Green Belt Land. Clearly, allowing all of these developments to go ahead will destroy any semblance of a village and take away Croft's community and distinctiveness. It would also despoil the village for many many years during construction. The Plan as written does not envisage this but I am concerned that the Borough should be prepared to stand up to pressure which will be brought to bear by powerful developers.

There are many reasons why further large scale development in Croft Village is not desirable and I am sure that the Borough's Planners understand these. Clearly the highways in the village are a

a proposed development is about 1.5, a number borne out by the existing Abbey Close/Deacons Close development.

Thus this proposal to add 90 new houses equates to an additional 135 vehicles using Deacons Close/Abbey Close for access. It is a reasonable assumption that most cars will leave the estate twice per day on average, corresponding to 4 vehicle movements per car/van. That equates to 540 new vehicle movements per day. The new residents are likely to be of working age with children, meaning that the majority of movements are likely to be at peak travel times, especially concentrated between 8 and 9 in the morning. At this time, there are already delays and difficulties leaving Abbey Close and the addition of the new vehicle load will inevitably lead to an unacceptable bottleneck and congestion in the centre of the village.

In addition, new homes will generate visitors, delivery vehicles, etc and create perhaps a further 100 additional vehicle movements per day.

Thus, a new estate built on the Stables land will likely result in an additional vehicle load of some 640 vehicles per day. This is far in excess of the existing traffic flow generated by the stables at present.

Deacons Close

This section of the road is residential, narrow and subject to a 20 mph speed restriction. In fact, 20 mph is too fast for safe driving. The properties along Deacons Close mostly have short drives and no garages; consequently, there are usually 5-6 vehicles parked on the road or pavement. Deacons Close is effectively a one-way chicane. Courtesy prevails and it is usual to be able to get through OK at present. The proposal that a further 600 plus vehicle movements per day through this section would have no impact is nonsense.

Lord Street / Abbey Close Junction

Lord Street is a narrow, twisty road with a 30 mph restriction. It is well known that buses / HGVs have difficulty passing each other on this road through the village, a road already subject to heavy through-traffic flows at peak times between Winwick and Culcheth/Lowton.

The junction with Abbey Close is already inadequate and potentially hazardous. There is a sharp turn in the road which makes sight lines barely adequate if oncoming vehicles adhere to 30 mph, let alone at the higher speeds often witnessed through the village. Coming from Winwick and trying to turn into Abbey Close across the traffic flow can be difficult, as oncoming vehicles are not visible until the last moment. Only last week I narrowly avoided being hit by a motorbike here.

Similarly, leaving Abbey Close in the direction of Culcheth is already difficult at time. At present, a queue of 5 or 6 cars can build up trying to leave the estate. The addition of several 100 further cars trying to leave the estate will inevitably create significant and frequent congestion at this junction, both in the estate and in Lord Street, the through route between Winwick and Culcheth / Lowton.

In summary, I contend that Abbey Close / Deacons close are already at capacity and are totally unsuitable to provide access to a new housing development on the stables land.

FURTHER COMMENTS

I have run out of time to respond and my further comments must wait. I apologise that I have been unable to proof read what I have written.