

Subject:
Date:

Local Plan - Objection
16 June 2019 22:26:08

Mr Jon Parr

Warrington,

Warrington Borough Council – Local Plan & Draft LPT4 Objections

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing this letter in objection to the latest local plan produced by Warrington Borough Council. Firstly, I feel it prudent to raise the issue over the local plan questionnaire, a highly technical and lengthy document of which the general public were expected to digest, understand and feedback their specific concerns.

During the consultation period, a small group of residents including myself have run several workshops to try and best help other local residents who were unsure of what the local plan entailed and how to go about raising their objections. The overwhelming opinion is that the format of this questionnaire was constructed in such a way to discourage and confuse residents into not bothering at all and I fear that is most likely the case for a large number of our local community whom we have been unable to reach out to.

Warrington Borough Council faced over 4,500 objections to their previous iteration of the local plan last time around, most of which have seemingly been ignored. A change in WBC administration would have us believe that the days of riding 'rough shod' over the town's residents was a thing of the past and that we could expect more of a voice with more open ears, it beggars belief therefore that this questionnaire is deemed an appropriate tool by which residents can have their say.

My principal objections in respect of the local plan are highlighted below and will be dealt with individually. There is no hierarchy in the order of these points as I believe they all hold equal significance to the potential irreparable harm that lies ahead.

1. Peel Hall MD4
2. Loss of Amenities
3. Over-inflated Housing Numbers
4. Economic Diversity
5. Transport
6. Air Quality
7. Brown Field Sites

Peel Hall MD4

Firstly, I would declare Peel Hall as the area of which I am most concerned. I use the past tense very carefully as at present, the proposed development of Peel Hall will take away everything my family hold dear – green

spaces, wildlife and a place to play.

This site has been under threat for almost 30 years and failed numerous times to convince Inspectors of its sustainability and deliverability. Time has since passed by and in this time there have been countless other developments approved, there has been a huge increase of traffic and noise to unprecedented levels which I believe are already the wrong side of a healthy threshold. Following the recent unsuccessful application and appeal to develop this site, I was astonished to see Peel Hall back in the local plan, but not just back, back utilising the exact working and detail originally used by the prospective developer.

We are led to believe from our council chiefs that this local plan is one of careful consideration, lots of dialogue and input from specialist consultants in numerous fields, how can it be therefore that the local plan reads almost word for word like the recent planning application. I find this lazy and insulting and it begs the question just how much of this plan actually stands up to scrutiny.

The land at Peel Hall has been classed as developable, we all know this is not the case. After 30 years, this land should be re classified to undevelopable, which was the whole reason the land was sold for a pittance over 30 years ago by Commission for New Towns.

Loss of Amenities

The plan for MD4 Peel Hall requires the relocation of playing fields from its current location off Ballater Drive to Grasmere. How in anyones eyes is it acceptable to relocate playing fields approximately 1km away from the existing site. I suggest that this benefits the residents of the proposed development whilst existing residents are massively disadvantaged and expected to travel even further to use 'their local facilities', this is not right and quite simply, no way to treat existing residents.

Over Inflated Housing Numbers

My concern with respect to housing numbers is the artistic license by which our Council has the ability to apply at their discretion. Actions such as back dating of the implementation period to 2017 and not present day, actions such as the implementation of arbitrary margins to further increase housing numbers and actions such as increasing the plans implementation period from the standard 15 year plan to 20 years.

All of which ultimately and rather transparently add up to the requirement for release of green belt to achieve their numbers. Without this artistic license, WBC would not be able to artificially increase housing numbers, they would not be able to justify green belt release and in doing so would not be able to accommodate yet another logistics park in the South of Warrington – currently known as Six 56.

Economic Diversity

The above logistics park and the potential creation of relatively low paid salaries and zero hours contracts brings me to the subject of economic diversity, specifically with respect to the creation of an array of jobs across the employment spectrum, this is ultimately what Warrington Borough Council should be aspiring to and I'm sure that is what Warrington residents wish to see. Sadly they have failed to achieve this in recent years as they have opted to make use of Warrington strategic highways location by building countless logistics depot's. Despite countless feedback, discussions and objections to these types of facilities I find it hard to believe that Warrington Borough Council still feel that the production of another giant logistics hub is the best option to service the towns growth.

These types of developments do not provide diversity of jobs, nor do they create jobs with salaries commensurate with those required to purchase new build houses – especially in South Warrington. Quite simply, the plan in its current state is lazy, ill thought out and contradicts

statements surrounding other issues including transport routes, numbers of journeys and from where these journeys are made.

Transport

At the recent local plan consultation event held at Halliwell Jones, there was a loud and clear message provided from the consultation team – the majority of people in Warrington, work in Warrington. This quite simply is just not true and this misguided belief underpins the failed transport plan currently being proposed.

The misguided belief that improved cycle networks will get people out of their cars and cycling to work – this is simply not the case and certainly not in the numbers that would realise any relief to the currently congested transport links with which Warrington residents suffer on a daily basis.

The misguided belief that better bus services will get people from home to work without the requirement to use their car – again, completely utopian given that the buses will ultimately be confined to the same congested road networks within the outer circle of Warrington.

Furthermore, the cost associated with bus travel is not affordable.

The misguided belief that people will live and work locally, thereby mitigating journey length, time and need to use a car – again, this is simply not true. The logistics park proposal will not support salaries commensurate with home ownership in the south of Warrington, this will create hundreds of additional lengthy journeys to accommodate required staffing levels, given it's location, it is likely that Warrington residents may not even benefit from the jobs created given the easy highways access for surrounding areas.

Air Quality

The area I myself am most invested in and quite frankly worried about is Peel Hall. This last natural green space in North Warrington is a vital lung situated between Orford, Fearnhead, Cinnamon Brow and Houghton Green. This area unwittingly finds itself situated along two major AQMA's (air quality management areas) principally the M62 and A49 Corridors and land locked with minor roads designed to support houses and car levels put in place over 30 years ago.

The removal of Peel Hall park and it's redesignation as a protected site is paramount to the physical and mental health and wellbeing of North Warrington residents. I acknowledge that Peel Hall is not green belt but just merely green field – that however should not hang over residents heads like a rain cloud waiting to precipitate. It is the ONLY remaining green space our local residents have to walk their families and pets, it is the only space to get away from traffic, it is the only space where you can get to see wildlife and nature with your own eyes without requiring to get in a car and make another unhealthy journey across town.

Urban Sprawl and greenbelt erosion is a very serious issue that requires dealing with sympathetically, I would however counter that argument with the importance of ensuring that ALL residents (and especially the least affluent) are afforded the ability to experience their own little bit of greenery and fresh air.

Brown Field Sites

The above brings me to my final point in respect of brown field sites and the importance of ensuring that these are prioritised for development in the first instance, only when brownfield sites have been exhausted should we then consider other areas. The councils local plan makes reference to brown field sites but falls very short of expressing the importance to develop these sites as a first priority.

Warrington Borough Council, I'm afraid to say has a very sordid reputation. A reputation for

being puppets to the large developers, a reputation for failing to protect its towns many sites and items of heritage and community value and their lack of desire to make best use of brown field sites within our town I find, quite frankly, disturbing. Our borough council should be sending a clear message to all developers out there – ‘if you wish to work with us developing the green land, then show your commitment by redeveloping the brown field sites first’.

If they are truly in tune with the people of Warrington , with their best interests at heart (like their glossy literature would have you believe) then demonstrate it with actions and not words!

Finally, during the writing of this letter, our Government has since signed a legal declaration of Net Zero Carbon emissions by 2050. This isn't just an ambition, it is a legally binding commitment that we must achieve.

As a principal mechanical engineer, let me express just what a monumental task now lies ahead of us all. This isn't just a case of a little more loft insulation, some insulated render on the front of your premises. This isn't a case of replacing your boiler for a newer and more efficient model, nor is it just turning down the dial on your house thermostat one degree. This commitment will shake the very foundations on everything we hold dear to modern day life, things such as car use, use of electrical appliances, homes, holidays, local transport, the list goes on.

The current government commitment is based not only around efficiency and cleanliness of how we live, but also on the assumption that future technologies will be designed that will effectively remove CO2 from our atmosphere - not only therefore are we placing the burden on our children by taking away vital green CO2 sequestering sites, but our Government have now assigned those children to whom we leave this mess, the task of fixing it.

The final paragraph alone should be enough to halt the current local plan in order that the next 30 years are considered in respect of achieving our Governments Net Zero Carbon aspirations, factor in the short term harm that our town will face should this plan be allowed to pass through and be adopted, then I fear for our town, it's residents and their children to come.

Kind Regards

Jon Parr