

6 June 2019

Dear Sir,

WARRINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN
PROPOSED SUBMISSION VERSION
SOUTH WEST URBAN EXTENSION FRAMEWORK PLAN
OBJECTIONS

My wife and I have jointly submitted a document giving our objections to the Proposed Submission Version of the Local Plan.

This second document gives in more detail my views on the proposed destruction of Green Belt land in the Walton area, as shown in the South West Urban Extension Framework Plan.

It underlines the devastating effect that the proposed development will have on this area, on the lives of the people who live here and the people who come to this area to enjoy its' peace, tranquillity, beauty and wildlife.

Please acknowledge receipt of this letter.

Yours faithfully



Michael Trepess

Warrington Borough Council has recently published the Proposed Submission Version of the Local Plan, which covers the period from 2017 to 2037.

The previous version, which was published in 2018, generated in the region of 4500 objections from local residents, yet the revised version is virtually identical to the original plan that people found so objectionable.

The council claims that there are exceptional circumstances to justify the loss of greenbelt land, and that these circumstances are its' ability to make a significant and sustainable contribution to Warrington's development needs. This is not an exceptional circumstance.

The UK is already deemed one of the world's most nature depleted countries. What the plan proposes is the premature use of greenbelt land. A brown field approach is what is required. All brownfield sites must be fully developed (and filled) before any greenbelt land is considered for development.

(By the time it has all been used up, there is a very good chance that further brownfield land will have become available. For example, the intention to relocate Warrington Hospital to a new site as soon as possible, which will release the land currently housing the hospital complex.)

Stopping green belt development is the only way to effect the use of more expensive brown field development. Green belt release should only be proposed when all urban and brownfield development options have been exhausted. Where is the evidence to justify any exceptional circumstances for the immediate release of greenbelt land?

This detailed objection concentrates on the parts of the plan which relate in the main to the devastating effect it will have on our rural landscape. It does not mean that I am in agreement with all other aspects of the PDV.

As it is my local area, and so a district with which I am familiar I am concentrating on the policy statement made in the part of the plan relating to the South West Urban Development. However, most of the points I will be making on this policy could undoubtedly be applied broadly to other areas of the plan.

Policy MD3 – South West Urban Development
Statements made within this document

Green Belt

10.3.4 states “The new Green Belt boundary will ensure clear separation between Warrington and Runcorn and will provide a strategic gap between the urban extension and the village of Moore. It is essential that this separation is maintained to preserve the function of the Green Belt and the separate identity of Warrington and Halton communities.”

10.3.15 states that “The Green Belt in this part of Warrington is of key significance ensuring the separation of Warrington and Runcorn. It is therefore imperative that development provides a strong Green Belt boundary.”

10.3.16 states “ It is also important that the area of Green Belt between the western extent of the urban area and Moore Village is protected as a Strategic Gap to ensure the separate identify of Moore Village.”

MD3.3 point 32. “Development at the western extent of the site will be required to respect the Green Belt boundary and contribute to maintaining the Strategic Gap between the urban extension and Moore village. “

Historic and rural aspects

MD3.3 point 47. “The locally listed buildings within the site should be retained and an appropriate landscape buffer should be provided around the assets and their curtilages. The design of new development in proximity to these assets should be sympathetic to their rural setting.”

10.3.14 says the development “preserves ... and enhances the built, historic and natural environment”

10.3.6 states “The urban extension will preserve and enhance the heritage assets within the site and will be designed to respect the setting of nearby heritage assets, including the Bridgewater Canal and its bridges and Walton Village Conservation Area.

MD3.3 point 46b says “Bridges and aqueduct over Bridgewater Canal – requirement for retention and enhancement of landscape buffers; **for development to be situated a distance away from the assets**; development to be designed to be sympathetic to their rural surroundings.”

Wildlife

MD3.3. point 27. “The Green Infrastructure Strategy should demonstrate how development within the urban extension will protect and enhance existing wildlife corridors and provide new corridors to link the site into Warrington’s wider ecological network. “

10.3.5 states “Development will ensure that important ecological assets within the site are preserved with opportunities to provide additional habitats and enhance biodiversity. “

Comments relating to the above points

There are two main areas to consider in relation to the above statements, made in the PSV of the 20 year plan.

To comply with the above aims of the MD3 Policy:-

1) Landscape, wildlife and local heritage

Any development must at all costs avoid compromising the longstanding existing wildlife corridor connecting Walton Conservation Village to Moore Conservation Village, i.e. The Bridgewater Canal, its' adjoining land and associated heritage assets.

The existing Development Plan (PSV) shows housing directly abutting the Bridgewater Canal, Thomason's Bridge, Acton Grange Bridge and Acton Grange Wood, not a distance away as stated in MD3.

The development as shown would devastate the attractiveness of this hugely popular section on the canal which stretches for 1200 yards from the A56 Chester Road to Moore Village. No development should approach this section of canal and its' heritage assets. Additionally no development should be considered on the ribbon of land between Runcorn Road and this section of the Bridgewater Canal.

The catalyst for the popularity of this area is Walton Hall Estate, park and gardens. This venue attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors each year, with 25,000 people attending in one day for the D.A.D. event. It is also one of just 24 key locations across the UK chosen for various prestige events. However, a key aspect of the attraction of Walton Estate is its' surrounding area of natural undeveloped beauty. This area of ancient woodland includes Walton Conservation Village and its' Bridgewater Canal link with Moore Conservation Village

It is a haven for wildlife, a low light pollution, green lung area, and is a thriving community leisure destination. A unique and hugely popular asset to the community. **The popularity of this whole area should not be underestimated.** As was demonstrated in the past, when WBC threatened to sell Walton Hall and part of the gardens.

There is a bank of evidence of how visiting green spaces and getting outside helps people deal with stress, and improves mental health. This is a flagship leisure area for Warrington, and has become a go-to area for people in the community appreciating this benefit. It attracts vast numbers of people from Warrington, Runcorn and beyond.

Any housing development in this area must not under any circumstances compromise this **unique** Warrington asset.

The Bridgewater Canal and its' adjoining land is the vital green wildlife corridor linking Walton Conservation Village and surrounding areas with Moore Conservation Village. It is commonly regarded as the most attractive section of the Bridgewater Canal with unrestricted open views in all directions.

No development should be permitted within open line of site of this section of the canal. If Warrington is to become a go-to town, it must preserve popular green leisure areas like this unique link between Walton and Moore and to comply with the above aims of MD3 Policy

2) Green Belt

Any development must ensure **a clear separation** of Warrington and Runcorn, provide a **strong** green belt boundary and **greenbelt strategic gap** to maintain the **separate identity** of Moore Conservation Village and stop the merging of Warrington and Runcorn.

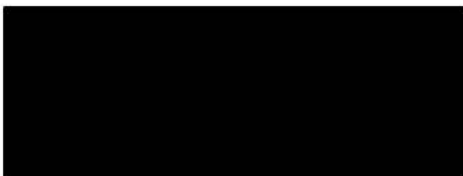
The existing Development Plan shows **no clear separation** and **no strong greenbelt gap** between Warrington and Runcorn.

The greenbelt gap to the North side of Runcorn Road is just 240 yards, there is **no clear separation of Warrington and Runcorn.**

A strong greenbelt gap already exists along Runcorn Road from the A56 Chester Road to Moore Village. This ¾ mile stretch of road should remain clear of development. **No development should be permitted between Runcorn Road and the Bridgewater Canal,** and any development to the North of Runcorn Road should be set a distance away so as not to be within line of sight of this greenbelt strategic gap.

Any development to the north of Runcorn Road must **only** have access from the new western link road. No access should be allowed from Runcorn road, thus preserving it as a strong greenbelt strategic gap, providing a meaningful clear separation of Warrington and Runcorn.

In conclusion, all the above points should be very carefully considered, before deciding to destroy an area which is loved and enjoyed by many people, and also home to a vast range of wildlife, and if this development goes ahead, all that will be lost forever.



Michael Trepess

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Add your home address here

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Dear Sirs

Warrington Proposed Submission Version Local Plan 2017- 2037

I do *not* believe that the proposals contained in the above document are sound. Whilst accepting that Warrington has to grow and some development is needed, I do *not* accept the scale and nature of what is being proposed by WBC due to the profound negative impact it will have on the residents of South Warrington in the future. Instead of improving the quality of our lives, the proposals will cause serious deterioration.

The plan is unsound for the following reasons:-

- The **plan period** is 2 years longer than it needs to be to meet government requirements. This necessitates the *unnecessary* building of an additional 1,890 houses and the consequent loss of around 120 hectares of Green Belt.
- There is *no* justification for the predicted **growth levels**. Growth predictions are based on *unrealistic* economic forecasts and population projections. For example: If the 2016 population projections were used, there would be an increase in the local population to 2041 of 18,874. This equates to the need for only 343 homes per year rather than the 945 proposed.
- Consequently, due to the 2 points above, the level of **Housing Numbers** are far too high and compounded by the addition of a 10% flexibility increase for which there is no need, as the Local Plan will be reviewed every 5 years. I believe the lowest number of new houses possible should be used in the development of the local plan.
- The overestimation in housing numbers has a significant impact in increasing the need to build on **Green Belt**. Warrington will lose 11% of its Green Belt, virtually all of it in South Warrington – this is unnecessary and disproportionately spread across the Borough. I believe the loss of Green Belt, if any is really required, should be spread more evenly and be a last resort after all other reasonable options have been examined.
- The **location** of new homes should be where the new jobs are being created to minimise commuting, and also be **affordable** in relation to the types of jobs created. This is *not* the case in relation to South Warrington:-
 - The 1,600 houses at Walton will all be for commuters as there is *no* new employment in that area.
 - The new jobs created near the 'Garden Suburb' will be mainly distribution and logistics related and there is likely to be a serious mismatch between the remuneration levels of the new jobs and the costs of the new housing being developed – staff will have to commute from other areas. 5,000 houses are being developed which will mainly be for commuters as there is little existing commercial activity in South Warrington that will provide new employment opportunities.
- The villages of Walton, Grappenhall, Appleton Thorn and Stretton will be completely changed in relation to their **character and distinctiveness** which is contrary to the 'Vision for Warrington's future' outlined in the Local Plan.

- The **traffic infrastructure** proposals are *totally inadequate* to alleviate the current problems of **congestion, noise and pollution** in South Warrington and also support the new housing and commercial developments.
 - The 'Garden Suburb' will have 5,000 new houses with consequent daily car journeys of around 10,000:-
 - There is *nothing* planned to improve the A49 as it goes north from the M56 through Stockton Heath towards the Town Centre – it is already extremely congested and polluted!
 - There is *no new crossing* of the Manchester Ship Canal in South East Warrington > WBC are relying on *the existing Victorian swing bridges* despite the projected major *increase in shipping traffic* necessitating the bridges being *closed* much more often in future.
 - The Transport Plan does *not* provide any details of how the new public transport systems would cross the Manchester Ship Canal or the Bridgewater Canal.
 - The already congested and polluted A56 will need to support and contend with:-
 - around 7,000 daily car journeys emanating from the Walton Development and the new houses Halton Borough will be building near the A56.
 - around 5,000 daily car and HGV journeys associated with the Waterfront development via the Western Link.
 - many people will use the Western Link rather than pay the tolls on the other 2 Mersey crossings.
 - traffic to/from South East Warrington using the Western Link via A56.
 - the new Western Link junction plus the 2/3 other new junctions needed to access the Walton housing development, will cause the traffic to *stop and start* continuously between Walton Village lights and the Western Link junction.
 - the steep incline on the northbound Western Link, will mean that traffic will be in low gears (especially HGV's) and as the Western Link is single carriageway, the achieved speed will be that of the slowest.
- The National Planning Policy Framework requires the Plan to be aspirational but **deliverable**. I do *not* believe this Plan is deliverable and is therefore *unsound*:-
 - The annual average delivery of 945 new houses is more than double the current build rates (359 in 2018/19). There is a peak build requirement of 1,656 houses in 2025/26 which I do not believe is achievable. Developers will only build houses if they believe they can be sold, so the control on the rate of building does not lie with WBC but with the developers.
 - While some money is available from Government for infrastructure, the bulk of the funding will need to come from the developers. The size of that funding requirement is *unclear* in the Plan as is the commitment of developers to deliver the necessary funding for infrastructure. Development is only acceptable with the *effective mitigation* of its key impacts (traffic congestion, noise, air quality, education & health facilities, local amenities & the environment, as well as maintaining / improving our quality of life), are *properly planned and implemented before and during the building process but before completion*.

Yours Sincerely,


Add your Signature here

MICHAEL TREPSS
Print your name here

6/6/2019
Add the Date of your letter here