

16 June 2019

Local Plan
Planning Policy and Programmes
Warrington Borough Council
New Town House
Buttermarket Street
Warrington
WA1 2NH

Dear Sirs

RE: LOCAL PLAN

Having carefully considered the Local Plan, viewed the displays and discussed various aspects with Council representatives at the Halliwell Jones Stadium we believe that the plan is not sound for the following reasons:

The plan period is too long. It should be 15 years not 20 years. A shorter period would mean fewer houses, if any, need to be built on Green Belt land.

The economic growth forecasts are too optimistic. There is uncertainty regarding the economy and forecasts should be downgraded including that of new jobs.

According to a government minister housing targets should be decided locally. Forecast numbers are unrealistic and the latest 2016 population growth figures should give a starting point not those of 2014.

More affordable housing is needed. The high value houses planned in the south will not be affordable and will be bought by out of town commuters, leading to more congestion on the roads.

Brownfield sites should be built on first. Developers should not be allowed to build on green field sites except as a last resort. In Lymm we have already seen Bellway Homes start a housing development at Tanyard Farm off Rushgreen Road near to the Sainsburys store with no added infrastructure in the village or to Rushgreen Road itself. The very special circumstances required to release Green Belt have not been demonstrated for this and other proposed developments. National Planning Policy Revisions have strengthened the protection of the Green Belt.

Too much emphasis has been placed on logistics and distribution which, due to automation, generate fewer jobs. These are 24 hour businesses requiring considerable space and huge numbers of vehicle movements.

The Council's vision is for a vibrant town centre surrounded by attractive countryside and distinct settlements. The proposed plan would destroy the identities of Walton, Grappenhall, Appleton Thorn and Stretton. It would further increase the size of Lymm without any appreciable added infrastructure including schools, shopping facilities, parking and road improvements that would be required to support the proposed new dwellings.

We have already experienced vehicle gridlock and the associated reduction in air quality on normal days at shopping centres in Warrington (eg Riverside Retail Park). How on earth will those centres cope with an additional 5000 new homes and associated vehicles with no suitable infrastructure improvements being proposed.

Congestion is already a big problem on roads in the south of Warrington and at Junction 20 of the M6. Infrastructure must be built before houses, not afterwards, in anticipation of increased traffic not only due to future residents but also vehicles involved in the construction of the proposed houses and businesses. Having attended the displays and consultation at the Halliwell Jones stadium it is obvious that the Council have no plan to improve the road system at Junction 20. It is not satisfactory simply to leave this to Highways England, it needs to be factored into the proposals at an early stage.

Warrington has a poor record for air pollution. Additional vehicles will only make matters worse. We will be losing green spaces which are recognised as being good for air quality, wellbeing and mental health. Part of Moore Nature Reserve will also be lost.

Issues specifically affecting Lymm

Lymm we have seen over 1000 houses built in the village with no additional health, education or other facilities (eg road improvements and parking). How can it be guaranteed that the developers will contribute to these facilities when needed. The only infrastructure improvement included in the Local Plan is one Health Facility at the Tanyard Farm development. However, we are concerned that this will replace the existing surgeries in Lymm and will not be in addition to them. Furthermore, given that patients will be required to travel out of the village centre to the Facility we are concerned that there will be insufficient parking for patients.

Whilst we note that the number of houses proposed for Lymm has been reduced from 500 to 430 we believe that this is still too many. 200 houses are proposed for Tanyard Farm behind Sainsburys. An application by Bellway Homes on this Green Belt site was rejected by Warrington Borough Council in March 2018 on the basis that Bellway had not demonstrated the special circumstances required for the release of Green Belt land yet Bellway are already building on the land ahead of the Local Plan being approved. Why has this occurred and how can it now be assured that Bellway will contribute to infrastructure improvements?

We are particularly concerned about the extra traffic on Rushgreen Road and the congestion at Junction 20 of the M6. Both locations are already struggling to cope with the existing number of vehicles. Furthermore, there is no proposal to increase the car parking and improve the traffic flow through Lymm to take account of the increase in the number of vehicles associated with the new houses not only in Lymm but also in south Warrington generally.

In summary, in view of the comments above we do not believe that the Local Plan in its current form is fit for purpose because it is over-ambitious and should be scaled down considerably. Construction on Green Belt land should only be as a last resort and in strict accordance with the special circumstances requirements.

Yours faithfully

STEPHEN AND JUDITH HAMMOND