

Louise Harding



This is my representation to the council regarding the proposed and revised Warrington Local Plan

I am happy to embrace change and welcome growth to Warrington, but I strongly object to the Local Development Plan as it is NOT sound.

It is fundamentally flawed....the plan needs re-thinking as it is poorly thought out, and despite the large number of objections received to the 2017 Local Plan I am very concerned that very little has changed. We are to become a suburb, a saturation of housing and warehouse “sheds” that will take away our greenbelt, removing the individual nature of our historic villages, increasing congestion and increasing air pollution.

My concerns and questions regarding this plan are:

Our community ([REDACTED]) will be affected considerably. This development is not just about roads and buildings...it’s about communities. Our social and welfare facilities have not been considered. Our opinions do not appear to count? I am questioning the drivers underpinning this plan? My concern is that developers and businesses such as Langtree, Stobbarts and Peel (via LEP) are influencing the nature and extent of this plan and its development. This is wrong, as it doesn’t reflect the needs and aspirations of the real people who actually live and work in the area (Warrington). These companies DO NOT reflect the views of our local community. We have not been listened to and therefore this plan is out of sync with our community welfare and opinions. Because of the influence of these businesses, the level of growth is overly ambitious and goes well beyond the historical development and growth of our local area. It places our beautiful and essential greenbelt at unnecessary risk of being lost to an unrealistically high number of new houses and massive warehouses (sheds). These companies have an invested interest in how Warrington is being developed...surely this is wrong that they are allowed to be so influential? How has this been allowed to happen? Why is so much greenbelt being released? What is the basis for this?

Greenbelt is also under threat with the development of the Six56 and massive Stobbart plans to build a new Warehouse. Neither of these developments will create sustainable employment locally. They will unfortunately destroy Greenbelt, provide low paid jobs for people from out of town who can’t afford to live in the area, adding to the already congested road networks and motorways in the region. We need to grow – but not to this extent. We need to develop our Brownsites first (of which there are enough to accommodate a more realistic plan for growth and development) without destroying the last remaining Greenbelt close to Warrington. What is the basis of this overly ambitious and excessive development? Why is so much greenbelt being released and where are the extra ordinary exceptions for this? Where is the historical evidence for this level of growth?

I am also concerned where the figures for the number of new houses has come from? What calculation has been used? I believe the government was driven by expectations for 300,000 houses to be built per year. Has this country ever built this number of houses? I understand that this figure has now been dropped, therefore we need to reflect this by reducing the number of houses we

build, using the 2014 figures to calculate a more realistic number. These calculations would provide a more achievable and realistic figure that would better match Warrington's future growth and development. Why are we still using /following the wrong calculation of housing supply? What is the justification for this?

We are having 5000+ houses built, just in the area around Appleton Thorn. This really concerns me as I feel our village will be suffocated and our individual identity lost. How can this number of houses be built at the rate suggested by the local plan? The sheer scale of the development is unachievable, unnecessary and very stressful for those living in that area. Why do so many houses need to be built? Who is going to live here?...commuters!! again, adding to the congestion and reducing air quality. The calculation for local housing needs is not a realistic assessment...why do we need such huge numbers in south Warrington? Is this level of saturation really needed and justified? How did WBC come up with this calculation? Is this a realistic appraisal of growth? I question...is this plan sound?

I am very concerned about the loss of Greenbelt. Where are the exceptional circumstances for us losing this? I thought Greenbelt should only be released as a LAST resort? Where is the justification for the mass destruction of our precious Greenbelt? I can't find any justification or evidence provided in the local plan that demonstrates exceptional circumstances? I recognise that the purpose of Greenbelt is to prevent sprawl and to ensure that settlements/villages do not merge with each other. If this plan is accepted, this will happen, not only at Appleton Thorn, but at the historical village of Grappenhall. The impact of releasing this Greenbelt opposes the function of Greenbelt...we become a sprawling suburb, losing our unique identities and characters, merging as one large urban characterless region. Once our Greenbelt is gone....its gone!

Our Greenbelt is of great value to the community and to Warrington as a whole. It is our green lung, attracting people from all over Warrington and the local area. It is a space to breath, to escape, to distress, to walk the dog, to enjoy the trees and nature...a release from the everyday stresses of life. It is vital for our wellbeing and physical and mental health. The sheer scale and sprawl of the plan will destroy this. No amount of small pockets or swaths of green spaces will replace the green lung that we currently have. It is a precious space for our town and region to enjoy. Our Greenbelt provides a setting for the cultural and historical history of our town. It is our roots. This will be lost with the mass building on our Greenbelt. It will be wiped out! We need to protect these Greenbelt areas with great care and fortitude. Why are they even considering building on Greenbelt? Where is the justification for this? What is the true underlying driver for this?

Ecology: I am worried about our beautiful buzzards who we see daily around Appleton Thorn. What will become of them? Will they leave? What about the small ponds and natural beauty of the area. How will the local fauna and flora be sustained?

I am concerned about the insufficient provision and evidence of sound planning relating to the infrastructure on this plan eg schools, GP practices, community centres, waste disposal site, health centres etc. Who will staff them....eg GP provision...how will we attract GPs into the area when there is a huge shortage of GPs nationally? Can these infrastructure requirements BE provided? When will they BE provided? How will this be funded? The cost and timing relating to putting this infrastructure in place is also concerning. How will WBC ensure that there is timely delivery of important infrastructure? Will the infrastructure be put in place as houses are built? If not...what

are the contingency plans as insufficient resources for infrastructure will have huge knock on effects elsewhere. There are a lot of questions relating to the provision and delivery of a sound and robust infrastructure?

There is already a huge problem with our road infrastructure around Warrington. Every morning and evening on my commute to and from work [REDACTED] I struggle in traffic....it's not easy and can be very stressful and frustrating. Incidentally – this has become even worse following the opening of the new Runcorn bridge and the impact of tolls! My concern is that with 5000+ extra houses, what are the plans for tackling congestion at our very local pinch points? Crossing the Bridgewater canal and Manchester ship canal requires traffic converging on our bridges or tunnels. This is already a problem which will only be exacerbated with the increased number of cars and lorries this plan will bring. Looking at the proposed infrastructure, it appears that the new roads just feed into existing roads...or car parks, as this is what they will become. There is no evidence of how all these extra cars will cross the Bridgewater canal (single lanes) which will result in further delays and traffic jams. The swing bridges are currently poorly maintained...why is this? If we are having more ships using the Manchester Ship Canal, there will be even more delays and frustration crossing from South to north and vice versa. Is there a new Cantilever bridge being built? Will this be alongside or replace the existing bridge? How will this help as the roads just run back into each other anyway? How much will it cost? Is £50 million a realistic figure to build this? How were these calculations and figures reached? These areas will become even more congested, a polluted car park! Is there to be a dual carriage way or rat run through the "garden suburb"? I thought this was supposed to be a residential area – not a shortcut for Stobbart and six56 lorries as that's the conclusion from the plans provided? Looking at the plans for new road networks shows the internal roads will just feed in to our existing road network. How can this be effective? How will this help reduce pollution in residential areas? Will we have even more HGVs ploughing through our village? How safe is this? Add all the new cars generated by the new housing (conservative estimate 10,000+ around Garden Suburb, will end up on our already congested roads within our existing highways. Is this do-able? Can we cope with this increase in traffic? The western link will have the same problems...the new internal roads (links) will feed into existing roads. Who will this benefit?

Within the Garden Suburb there are areas shown as community centres. When will these be built? Will they be built? What assurances are there that they will actually be built or are they just a paper exercise promise? Will we be able to staff them? (eg GPs). Where will the new waste disposal site be located? There are a considerable number of uncertainties and I am genuinely concerned that this infrastructure has not been thought through, is not robust and is therefore not sound.

The plan suggests that people will move around the area on their bikes – eg to commute to work. Is this realistic? Where will these people live? How far will they have to cycle? My concern is that the only people who will be able to afford to live in the garden suburb will most likely travel to work via car, and this will be outside Warrington (ie Manchester or Liverpool). This will further increase traffic on our highways and motorways, therefore increasing congestion and further reducing air quality. They will not work in the huge sheds that are being proposed by Stobbart and Six56 as these will not be skilled well paid jobs. These warehouses will also move to automation, further reducing local employment opportunities.

Air pollution is a major concern for this area, and one which concerns me deeply. Warrington is one of the most polluted towns in the North West...indeed, in the country. I would like to challenge the plan as if we build the number of houses suggested, and the huge Warehouses proposed, we will have even poorer air quality. Has this been fully assessed? Is there a legal requirement that must be met regarding pollution and a duty of care for our local residents and population? Has the impact on air pollution been predicted following increased congestion on the M6, M56 and M62 corridors. I am really worried about air pollution and the impact on our health. Where is the sound evidence that this plan "reduces" the already unacceptable high levels of air pollution, or helps "improve" our air quality? I do not believe this plan will achieve either!

Warrington is a great place to live...I was born and brought up in this area and am proud of my town and community. But, I don't believe the character of our town will be maintained with this plan. Where are the ideas to draw employment and people in to the town? We are becoming a warehouse city, with all the green spaces destroyed and filled in by houses and sheds. Where is the incentive to visit? Where is the culture and personality? The town is becoming deserted. Look at Altrincham. Let's look at what good looks like...not how much money can be made from rates and business "friends"!!!?? I don't believe WBC are respecting the nature and character of our town...they are destroying it! Our landscape will be altered for ever. Our villages will be lost in sprawl. Our lovely canals will be encapsulated, and our beautiful countryside will be built on. The huge development of Six56 and Stobbarts will destroy huge areas of greenbelt....our green lungs will be lost forever if these plans are passed and proceed.

How can we afford this? How do the developers afford this? What concessions will have to be made? It's obvious that they will drive luxury high end executive homes in preference to affordable. How much is going to be affordable housing for our young new starters? The figures do not stack up?

This plan is not sound when measured against government requirements. It is not achievable, is over ambitious and not justified (particularly the unnecessary loss of Greenbelt).

This plan needs to be reconsidered before it's put in front of the secretary of state. WBC should step back and rethink, listen to the people and work together. The plan as it stands is fundamentally flawed, is not justified, will not work, is not logical and is not strategic. There is no need for that level of housing and for development that reduces air quality and builds on Greenbelt. I have no confidence that this plan is deliverable, but have every confidence that it will destroy the character of the region.

I question Warrington Borough Councils figures and calculations. Where is the evidence? The level of growth that is expected does NOT match the level of development proposed (housing and sheds).

I would also like to question why brown sites are called "buffers" on some of the plans? I am concerned as to why these are not the areas that are priority areas for development? What is the reasoning behind this? Developers will always choose Greenbelt/green sites over Brown fields...this should not influence the plan. Has it?

Kind regards

Louise Harding