



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

Warrington Local Plan Consultation response from Brian Davies, 


Dear Sir/Madam,

I am submitting my concerns on the plan as a whole. I consider the plan not to be sound and fit for purpose.

1 The Government requires that plans are submitted to cover the next fifteen years. Why is Warrington proposing a plan over the next 20 years? Surely a better strategy would be to hold a review every five years, and at the point where there are five years left, plan the following five years so that it is a rolling plan.

2 That strategy should be to use brownfield land, and release Green Belt only when absolutely necessary. There are already developments taking place on green fields, before the brownfield land has been used up. So the promise of not using Green Belt does not hold water. Also the Green Belt boundary was only confirmed 5 years ago and was supposed to be good for 20 years.

3 There will be an inevitable loss of habitat, environmental and ecological impact, and the removal of a carbon soak, the last thing we need when faced with climate change and poor air quality.

In relation to the release of Green Belt, I interpret the term 'safeguarded' to mean the opposite, that it is proposed to be taken out of the Green Belt. Once regarded as out of the Green Belt then it is now 'safeguarded' for building.

4 The housing targets go way beyond what the Government require Warrington to build, and exceed the demand for housing from the existing population. I have seen evidence that Warrington's growth is projected to be around 19,000 by 2041. This would require just short of 8,000 dwellings which could be accommodated on brownfield sites. The projected growth is inflated presumably because Warrington has plans to achieve 'CITY' status (ie a vanity project)?

The main housing development of the Garden Suburb location south of Grappenhall is far too big and the impact is going to be huge. There should be a more balanced approach spreading developments over the whole MBC so the impact on existing southern areas is reduced.

5 The proportion of 'affordable' housing would seem to me to be too low, when this is where the current demand is. We should be solving those problems first.

6 The proposed employment land is almost all centred on the junction of the M6/M56 and on green land. The proposed huge warehouses will take up a vast amount of land, and provide few jobs for Warrington residents. The majority of jobs will be minimum wage, and bring people from other areas. It will greatly increase traffic in a highly congested area.

7 The infrastructure associated with such huge developments is 'promised' in woolly terms, and is unlikely to happen in the right timeframe. The housing will be built and the infrastructure will be an afterthought when it becomes apparent that they truly have put too much pressure on existing schools, doctors, transport etc.

There is no detail about schools, doctors, amenities, local services that will be needed. Indeed there is reference that all such services are currently at capacity. The development needs to be as self contained as possible because if everyone has to travel for anything they need, the impact is going to grind existing life to a halt. I can't see anywhere where park and ride is proposed.

8 Where is the evidence of liaison with neighbouring authorities?

9 One of the objectives is the regeneration of the town centre. How does this fit with the plan for neighbourhood hubs?

10 The transport plan LTP4 has a timespan up until 2041. We have huge problems with car journeys blocking the roads now, and the target is only to reduce to 60%. When taken in the context of the growth, 60% of the total then is likely to be a higher number than 74% is now. We need the transport plan delivering prior to increasing the housing or workplace traffic, with the current timespan we'll have 20 more years of putting up with what we have now.

The light rail proposal is a good one, and should be pressed ahead with NOW, to reduce the cross ship canal and Mersey road journeys, along with the walking and cycle-ways which are currently poor and need of investment to encourage people to take more exercise. The Garden Suburb will generate a huge increase in car journeys on already gridlocked roads.

The town centre is a bottleneck now and more needs to be done to provide transport links which don't rely on the centre. There is gridlock regularly, particularly when the motorways are disrupted and traffic spills off onto the surrounding roads, which is at least 3 times a week. There are quite enough retail parks and food outlets to sustain a population twice the existing size, and all rely on car transport. How about better leisure/sport facilities?. Only by improving the public transport will there ever be an encouragement for people to get out of their cars and use public transport.

I have seen mention of linking up with the Manchester Metro system, this will provide very little for Warrington and reducing the transport problems. The focus should be on a Metro for Warrington which links to Bank Quay and Central stations, and the bus Interchange.

There are no projected costs in LTP4, how serious are the plans to actually address the problems.

General

I would like to have seen a succinct summary of what is being proposed, where. I think the provision of all the planning regulations, and highly technical background within the proposal documents is unhelpful for a member of the general public. I have spent 2 whole days looking at the supporting documents and have only scratched the surface.

The objectives are defined in long wordy sentences and should be more direct and measurable.

I understand development is needed, and don't take the approach of no change in my own district has to be maintained, but I can't see the justification for turning vast areas into concrete.

Also should building land become viable at Fiddlers Ferry then that should be considered now, not deferred as is currently suggested.

Outlying Settlements should remain outlying, we do not want to be in a vast urban sprawl where any identity is lost. Thelwall is classed as urban, but it is borderline. Around the Thelwall area there were proposals for housing on the A56 Stockport Rd, Camsley Lane, ADS, Halfacre Lane, Weaste Lane etc.

The Thelwall conservation area has even been proposed for housing along Bell Lane and between Lymm Rd and Stockport Rd. With these proposals Thelwall will become urban, with virtually all the green space being lost. When has a conservation area become eligible for new housing development?

It is suggested that a Gypsy and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople site will be alongside the Garden Suburb. I can't see the new homebuyers being happy to be in that vicinity.

As it seems that Gypsy and Travellers have already moved into places illegally you may as well make them legal and as long as they pay for their use keep these areas but make them more controlled.

I note that land from Birchwood to the ship canal is referred to as 'reserved for energy use. I presume this means fracking which is a not acceptable. An acceptable use would be for a solar farm, and this could apply to Fiddler's Ferry also, starting as soon as it is decommissioned.

How about powering the new developments from renewable sources?

Recently constructed houses I have seen have 2/3 solar panels on the roof. I assume this is because developers are mandated to supply home with renewable energy sources. What they are doing is a joke and the majority of the public will not understand they are being duped. 2/3 panels is totally inadequate for meeting a houses needs, and means that no surplus will ever be exported. The cost of a solar system reduces the greater the capacity it delivers.

Kind Regards,

Brian Davies,

