

Objections to the PDO

Having attended the latest consultation showing the proposed development in South Warrington, I am putting forward my objections.

My main objection is the scale of the development. The official increase in population predicts that there is a need for 528 houses to be built a year making the government's suggested figure of 909 a year far too high. Warrington has chosen a figure above this and suggested 945 houses need to be built a year. The reason given for this higher figure is that WBC wishes to be in control of the development rather than the government. I understand that the government has never gone back to a local authority and taken over immediate control without first asking the local authority to think again so this is a bogus argument. On top of this WBC has not included the over 1000 new houses currently being built in South Warrington at Appleton Thorn, Appleton Cross, Grappenhall Heys, and Stretton. If these developments were included then the figure for new housing could be substantially reduced.

The new housing may technically claim to provide affordable homes. However, having looked at two current developments (King's Quarter and Saviour's Place) the cheapest house is £234, 395. Bloor Homes at Appleton Thorn has not yet released its house prices. Affordable homes relate to the current house prices in the area. Thus the so-called affordable houses in South Warrington are not affordable at all. This will be true of all the proposed development.

The proposed developments in South Warrington will not be going to young Warrington people trying to get on the housing ladder. If they were, I might not have such strong objections. The houses will be bought either by Warrington residents who are in a position to afford more desirable houses or, more likely, to people outside Warrington who want to use the area as a convenient commute to work as the developments are close to the motorway network.

I realise that large scale development of more expensive housing helps WBC immensely as it brings in useful revenue. The 2018 annual monitoring report (covering April 2017 - March 2018) shows that 6 section 106 agreements were signed and 3 "unilateral undertakings" which provides a total future income of £8,996,542. The bulk of this comes from 3 sites in South Warrington (Pewterspear Green Road, Grappenhall Heys and Appleton Cross) Despite the fact that budgets are being increasingly squeezed and local authorities have to find income to fund things like social care, I do

not believe this should be a criteria for any development. However, I have no doubt that this contributes to WBC allowing such large scale development.

Equally as strong as my objections to the scale of the development is the fact that the Green Belt is being infringed. I do not believe there are any exceptional circumstances to allow the release of the green lungs of Warrington. The 20 year figure for planning looks far too far ahead. A 15 year plan would be more realistic and would obviate the necessity to use Green Belt land.

There has been a great deal of media coverage about the destruction of our planet notably by the extinction rebellion movement. The bulk of the population supports the fact that we should do everything in our power to protect our environment for the future. It does not matter that any of the new homes will be eco-friendly as I have been told (and I question whether they will be) because once our countryside has gone it has gone for ever. The habitats of wildlife (animals, insects, flowers etc) will disappear. These cannot be replaced by the occasional tree-planting and manicured linear parks. We need natural habitats for our flora and fauna to thrive and to absorb rainfall to prevent flooding.

On top of this, the question of air quality needs to be considered. Much as WBC believes everyone will use the mythical "mass transportation" system (shades of an Orwellian future) they are very misguided. I estimate that the majority of people buying houses in these new developments will have and use 2 cars. This means that places like Stockton Heath will be both gridlocked and highly polluted. There is currently no new provision for mitigating the congestion either in the form of new roads, motorway junctions or canal crossings to service the proposed development. The one ship canal crossing is west of the town which will help congestion in that area and which also will be advantageous to Peel Ports.

It is vital that we maintain the character of our area. I have just returned from a holiday in France where the importance of belonging to a place is embedded in its culture. I believe that everyone in Britain also has a similar attachment and pride in the area in which they live. That means we must retain the idea of individual villages. The villages in South Warrington (Grappenhall, Stockton Heath, Walton, Appleton Thorn etc) have their own individual character and many residents volunteer in these communities in order to keep their identity. Here are just a few of the many examples of such community spirit - Grappenhall Community Library, Appleton Thorn Bawming of the Thorn, Live at St Wilfrid's, Stockton Heath Festival. This is just a small selection of what is happening in individual communities. This will be completely destroyed when South

Warrington villages are merged into a vast urban sprawl. This is something we must strenuously avoid.

Warrington's unemployment rate is as low as it can possibly be. (One can never achieve full employment). Any jobs which may come from the proposed 116 hectare industrial development on Green Belt at the M6/M56 junction for warehousing is therefore not going to help Warringtonians. It is also questionable how many jobs will be created as warehouses are becoming more and more automated.

One positive note is that New Town House and Quattro are being demolished and the area is to be used for housing to "reduce the risk" of needing to build on Green Belt. I look forward to hearing from WBC how much this will reduce the current proposed numbers of houses in South Warrington. Councillor Hitesh Patel has recognised that there are "understandable" concerns over development in green spaces and that such development is "a last resort". I sincerely hope that he carries out his words.

Unfortunately he goes on to patronise me and all the residents of South Warrington by adding that "sometimes the public don't always see the different activities undertaken by the council and the administration to address some of our housing demand." As an intelligent and highly educated resident of South Warrington I can assure him that I follow everything that WBC does and am well aware of what is happening. I am also fully aware of what housing is needed and that is truly affordable housing for the local population. The South Warrington Development definitely doesn't achieve that.

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