

In response to the recent modification to Warrington Local Plan

18th April 2023

To Whom It May Concern

We wish to respond to the consultation with the following points in relation to the modifications to the Warrington Local Plan.

We do not believe that these recent modifications go any way to addressing the points raised previously and that there continues to be a complete disregard for resident views in relation to Thelwall Heys. None of the matters raised by residents have been addressed and therefore we do not support this development.

We are writing to you as extremely concerned and dissatisfied residents of Warrington to register our dismay with regard to the Warrington Draft Local Plan which we now understand continues to include the land at Thelwall Heys.

As residents of the immediate area of [REDACTED] directly in proximity to Thelwall Heys and directly impacted by the proposal, we are appalled at the lack of insight into the wider impact of this project.

We are at a loss as to understand any fundamental change from when this proposal was originally raised and rejected on a number of occasions previously. The principles raised at that time still stand today and the upset caused amongst our community cannot be underestimated.

We recognise and accept the population need for housing and infrastructure, supporting the employment sector, a general improvement of the area where we reside and the rationale behind levelling up and improving the economy. Warrington as a town centre is neglected and poorly served by its existing infrastructure compared to some of the surrounding areas and common sense tells us, it is clear that a sensible and proportionate plan is required.

That said, we cannot accept the continued rationale for this development – the economic calculations simply don't add up in terms of volumes of properties, affordability, infrastructure, environmental impact and detriment to the green belt. There is no evidence to link the plan to the development in the surrounding cities of Manchester, Liverpool and Chester to indicate that this is a well-planned and adequate strategy.

At a time of continued economic fragility it would appear that Warrington Borough Council are taking full advantage of the demoralised public to push through an under-handed and ill-conceived plan.

Our key concerns relate to the following points:

- The government have committed to a programme of reduction of green belt use for development of other brownfield sites would make far more sense. The unique social and heritage character of Thelwall Heys, the property and its surrounding area as a heritage site and its value to Warrington as a whole have been totally ignored. We do not believe that there are adequately evidenced exceptional circumstances that allow for development of this piece of Green Belt, and South Warrington has been targeted in this inequitable manner. Thelwall Heys is noted for its high-quality agricultural land, this is better quality than other local areas and as such in the light of climate impacts should be protected for the long term.
- The environment and ecological impact of the loss of green belt at Thelwall Heys has clearly not been assessed in detail or with integrity for the following reasons:
 - The protection and sanctuary of a much-varied local wildlife, consisting of mature trees, hedgerow, the canal, water life and many varieties of wild birds, plants and animals, bat protection orders, horses in surrounding paddocks have not been assessed in this plan due to the short consultation period
 - Very limited green belt left in this area. Development will impact not only on the conservation area of Grappenhall Village and further reduce its appeal as a historic village as noted in the Domesday Book. This has already been impacted severely by the derelict nature of the Village Rectory, the development of the Walled Garden and the area left abandoned at Grappenhall School. Further development only reduces the appeal through pollution, traffic impacts and environmental damage
 - The close proximity to the quiet appeal of the TransPennine trail and surrounding views are heavily impacted, this is meant to be an area of tranquility, nature and open space to serve public enjoyment which will be disturbed by this development. This is the one of the last open spaces in this area alongside the canal and will have significant detriment to those using it as a point of recreation and relaxation – again where is the learning from the pandemic and the impact on the well-being and mental health of the population.
 - Those who reside within Thelwall Heys will suffer directly as a result of the loss of Green Belt around their properties environmentally, and this will cause significant harm to the wildlife in direct proximity to their properties.
 - Water levels are already an issue in this area and further destabilisation will only add to this problem in the longer term.
 - We note that that the owner of the land last year treated the land causing much of it to die off with unknown consequences on the wildlife around it and this year has suddenly treated it and started planting. We are highly suspicious of these actions and any related integrity about the impact on the wildlife and environmental factors
- Infrastructure – the planned development of Thelwall Heys does not offer any consideration for the already stressed services, education, and lack of health and social care facilities. Currently there is no capacity in GP and dental surgeries, Warrington Hospital is repeatedly overwhelmed and incapable of dealing with routine healthcare and providing adequate emergency services. There is insufficient provision for education and very limited facilities for children within the immediate

vicinity. We would go so far as to state that it is on the verge of collapse under current pressures.

- Congestion and Air Pollution – the area is already hugely impacted by the pressures of congestion and air quality as a result of the junction at M56/M6/A50/A556 – the increase in traffic will simply overwhelm the area which is already incredibly challenged due to the motorways inability to cope, the swing bridge and general volumes. Stockton Heath as the nearest village is already under significant traffic pressure and this will only serve to make it worse. Incoming traffic to the new distribution centres will only add to the burden with overall volumes and pollution by increased hauliers.
- Of significant concern, the increase of traffic for over 300 homes in addition to that already outlined in the Appleton area is simply untenable and will lead to further disruption, accidents and other related issues. The proposed development is not close to train links and therefore will only serve to increase road traffic. Cliff Lane is already dangerous due to the speed and volume of traffic, accidents will only increase, specifically if children are crossing this road from the proposed development to walk/bike to school.
- Disruption – there has been no account taken of a programme that will last for around 10 years to the area for what amounts to a relatively small number of properties when taken as a proportion of those required overall, and thus makes little impact to the perceived wider need. Surely it would be more sensible to focus on the larger programmes of building where infrastructure projects will be made readily available, and to set a programme of reassessment of the volume of numbers required as the economy moves forward and rebalances post COVID recovery.
- We know from personal experience that this proposal even prior to planning has significantly impacted on the sale of properties in the area, people are concerned about buying in this area due to the impacts on area of conservation, heritage asset and impact on green belt.

The overall plan appears to rely heavily on uncertainty and key deliverables that have little or no evidence to support them. Key services and challenges have been overlooked with limited focus and objectivity.

As a result of the above, and many other associated factors, too many to detail in the level they warrant, we wish to register our firm rejection of this plan. We look to the Borough Council to hear our objections this time and remove Thelwall Heys from this plan.

Regards

Gary and Patricia Lamb
