

REF 301 R / DR 25 / LM 46 / 100563 / 000022

Objection to the building of the footpath and cycleway from Clay Lane to Omega in Burtonwood Warrington

As part of the initial objection to the Secretary of State I believe the council have not fully considered the implications to all members of the local community in Burtonwood before planning to implement this scheme.

Firstly, the authority has not continued to provide other more sustainable transport to the site as part of the existing 106 agreement with the developers of Omega. It is easier and cheaper to get a bus to omega from Birchwood, Orford, Dallam and Padgate in Warrington to the site at omega for work purposes than it is from the village less than a mile away, as the original bus that was provided at key shift changeover times was not used enough to make it financially viable. If this is the case and will be argued by the Authority as a reason to not provide the service then spending hundreds of thousands of pounds to put in a footpath and cycle path is also a significant waste of money as the need is not there to equate to the total spend. Should an adequate bus service be provided it would also provide access to other areas of the town as the returning bus could in effect take people other than those working at omega to different areas of the town on the route back, promoting sociability of both older and younger generations.

The removal and degradation of bus services for both young and old people within the village currently a blight on the councils support for our parishioners. It is understandable that it is not economically viable to provide a regular bus service to and from the village. Anecdotal evidence from local forums suggest that the current service is not used because it is not reliable nor cost effective. The village therefore has little draw to people with disabilities, young people and the elderly who cannot drive. Standing in the freezing cold waiting for a none existent bus to arrive is regularly complained about on various local action forums. Reinstating one that runs to and from omega to Warrington town centre via Burtonwood would be a way forward and more cost effective than building a footpath/ cycleway. The 161 bus service through the village connecting the next, where many local services are, has already been suspended (as has the 329 service previously although it was reinstated) as it was uneconomical and currently there is no bus route to the sites at all from the village.

A major concern is that downward house price pressure and lack of inward migration is now a significant factor within the village. The village has an aging population with fewer young people coming to or deciding to settle within the village. It has significant areas of deprivation and over a third of the village is either old council stock or terraced housing. This path may further exacerbate this problem for the following reasons.

Access to high quality education through feeder school status of the local primary is one of the only reasons young families would consider moving to the village. In 2014 the council removed feeder status from other local primaries and cited that the cost savings on school transport made the decision fair and equitable (reported in the Warrington Guardian Newspaper on July 14th 2104). They have on page 16 and 17 of the rational stated the same reason as for the necessity of building this path and cycleway. Should this be allowed in its current form then I can only see the feeder school status to the local high school being removed as safe access to and from the village not distance as being the mitigating factor for the Multi Academy Trust to remove the status.

This would not be unprecedented for this Multi Academy Trust. Two schools withdrew from it at its inception due to the refusal of the Trust to provide feeder school status for children attending them I

also understand that this choice is currently not within the gift of the council as an Academy is its own admissions regulator. Currently feeder school status for Burtonwood Primary School would be difficult if not impossible to remove due to the nature of access to and from the village as current education statute stands in the 1996 Education Act enforces the Multi Academy Trust to maintain this status.

There have been significant problems on the buses to and from the schools for years. The removal of the service for Burtonwood children because of behaviour was threatened recently when my children attended the school. If that was the case feeder status could be more easily removed if adequate footpath access is provided at any time.

Equivalent housing stock in neighbouring areas have seen significant increases in property values, where Burtonwood has seen house price stagnation if not deflation in the past 10 years. I know because I sold my house in the village 12 years ago for £210,000 and others on the same close have only been selling at or around that price after losing value. Whilst similar properties with better amenities within the same wa5 postcode have sold for similar prices in 2007 and now are well over £350,000 price and continue to rise. This has been due in no small part to the lack of infrastructure and strategic development in and around the village. As I stated in my original objection, the village needs access and services to be significantly improved. One footpath at the remote end of the village won't go any way to ensuring this, and significant strategic house and industrial building would provide better services and access for all parts of the community. This could have been addressed in the local plan but was turned down in favour of expanding other areas of already affluent serviced areas in South Warrington. Much to the detriment of the village as a whole.

Saying that the building of the footpath will improve access to working people from the village is laughable. Even the data provided by the council shows less than a dozen workers are from Burtonwood most of whom would use a different route to this should they be walking or cycling to the Omega work area as they live nearer to shorter routes. With regard to disabled peoples access. The current footpaths through the village are inadequate to allow access to the point where the new footpath starts so this doesn't improve access for this user group either without significant remedial works on existing footpath infrastructure.

Is the council's idea to spend monies for the benefit of neighbouring councils' residents to the detriment of services for residents of Burtonwood? Many of the people who currently cycle or walk to work down any of the routes through the village come from a neighbouring authority. This again is validated as I have personally counted over 30 trips to or from the site for just workers down tan house lane where I live being greater than all the people the council data shows work at omega from the village. With further development up to the village boundaries in the St Helens local plan is it not more pertinent to find out how many people utilizes each route by doing further investigation into footfall. The council haven't provided data on how many people walk or cycle along any of the proposed routes to and from the village, or taken into account the amount of people traveling on foot or by bike to the leisure facilities on Farmers Lane and Tan House Lane, where is suggest there is a far greater footfall than on the proposed route.

My final point is that as a resident of Burtonwood I cannot find a person who has been asked to consult on any of these options for the footpath. If the footpath is a significant strategic improvement to the village for the benefit of all could surely that data that was collected from users and their responses should be published within the reasoning for the development. None have been provided other than broad statements from the council like "It is not on a desire line identified by villagers and would, therefore, be little used" how do we know if the data isn't provided to support

such statements? And as such the data should be open to public scrutiny. A more centralised starting point with access from all areas of the village would be an ideal starting point and may remove some of the concerns that I have that this is in fact not aimed at improving access and services for the whole of the village and its residents.

In conclusion there are better options for the delivery of access that would benefit the whole of the people in the village of Burtonwood, would improve both quality of life and increase material value by making the village a more desirable place to live. This proposal appears to be a rushed money saving device by the council to remove burdens on the council to provide statutory services for the people of Burtonwood. This is an idea supported by the Councils own publications as previously discussed and as such needs to be thoroughly investigated with a clearer understanding of the implications for local residents mainly those of a young / old age demographic and those with disabilities.

Regards

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