

Objection to Warrington Local Plan and Transport Plan

I am writing to object to the emerging Local Plan and Transport Plan, in particular the release of greenbelt in South Warrington.

There is no justification for the predicted growth in housing needs that the Council suggest. The figure suggested in the plan is well above the government calculation and includes greenbelt being set aside for housing for a further 10 years beyond the plan period. I am concerned that the government figure is too high let alone Warrington's even higher figure. Warrington has never exceeded building 500 houses per year. There is no guarantees within the plan to prioritise brown field sites over green belt eg. Lymm green belt due for 2020 start – green belt should be the last to be built on, not the first.

The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Warrington Draft Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) states that the 2016 population was 209,000, 2036 population expected to be 225,100. Projected increase of 16,000 residents only over the plan period. This, together with the ONS 2016 projections raises real concerns regarding the housing needs for a 20-30 year period. I believe a 15 year plan based on government 2014 figures would have been prudent meaning there would be no need for the release of greenbelt within the plan period.

These are unprecedented levels of growth and the levels of delivery are incompatible with anything previously achieved, as such I believe the plan is unsound and undeliverable.

I note that all economic growth projections for Warrington in the plan are based on the figures from third parties i.e. Warrington and Co, Developers, Local Businesses, the plan to expand the port etc. All of these figures appear to be based on the company targets for increased earnings and have had no ratification as to whether they are realistic or not. For this reason I believe the projected economic growth in the plan is unrealistic and unsound.

There are already large areas of vacant commercial properties in the region and I do not believe the Council have addressed this appropriately in the plan. It has been announced that Fiddlers Ferry will shut in 2020, this is a massive brownfield site of some 330 hectares and its exclusion from the plan should not now be accepted as it would offer an alternative to the use of large areas of existing greenbelt as has been seen in other parts of the country.

I do not believe the council have properly considered the use of brownfield and vacant land becoming available in the near future ie Fiddlers Ferry, Warrington Hospital, as such I believe the plan is unsound.

With regards to Infrastructure, I am disappointed by the lack of detail in both the Emerging Local Plan and draft Transport Plan. It does not provide details regarding the infrastructure that would be required for the vast developments suggested in South Warrington. I feel the consequence of this is that residents cannot provide an informed response to this aspect of the plan.

The transport plan is speculative and unfunded and there is no details on phasing or pre-requisite works before any developments can proceed. The plan has no substance, is a wish list of transport systems (with no serious attempt to justify or cost them) and seems to be relying too heavily on walking and cycling as the prime means to solving the air quality issues in Warrington. There are vague plans to address an additional MSC crossing at Latchford High Level Bridge with land around it being safeguarded, however with little information of where this bridge would lead to/from. There is a lack of detail over the huge multi-million pound infrastructure projects that would be required. What improvements will be needed on the A50 and A49 either side of the garden suburb? What is the reason for the garden suburb link road? Is there a risk this will be used by HGVs especially if problems on the motorway (which happens often!). The Transport document advises against creating rat runs....isn't the link road at risk of being just that?

The Transport Plan does not satisfactorily underpin the Local Plan, and in particular lacks information on timescales, costs and funding. As such, I must conclude that based on the limited information supplied within the emerging plan and transport plan, the plan is unsound and not fit for purpose.

The WBC emerging Local Plan vision is:- *The character of Warrington's places will be maintained and enhanced with a vibrant Town Centre and main urban area, surrounded by attractive countryside and distinct settlements. The unique elements of the historic, built and natural environment that Warrington possesses will be looked after, well managed, well used and enjoyed.*

I cannot see how the plan seeks to comply with this vision for South Warrington. The character of the area and distinct settlements will be obliterated and instead will be replaced with the Garden Suburb (including employment land) and Walton Urban extension. It will change the local /individual character of distinct rural Cheshire villages of : Appleton, Appleton Thorn, Grappenhall, Walton, Stretton and Moore. It also recommends an unfair distribution and reduction in greenbelt targeted to South Warrington with approximately 50% of our greenbelt being removed.

It is important to keep a separation between our villages to maintain the appealing open aspect and so these villages do not feel enclosed to give the feeling of space which local residents, families and visitors enjoy and is the reason why most moved to live here.

As such, I believe the emerging plan is unsound as the developments suggested on Greenbelt in South Warrington would not check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas and does not assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. It is also not in line with the Councils own vision for the emerging local plan.

In summary, I am objecting strongly to the plans with regards to the development on Greenbelt in South Warrington, I believe both the Local Plan and Transport Plan are unsound, undeliverable and not fit for purpose on the grounds highlighted in this letter.

Regards

Adrian Sorsby, 