

Response to the revised Warrington Local Plan Consultation – October 2021

To
Local Plan
Planning Policies & Programmes
Warrington Borough Council
East Annexe
Town Hall
Sankey Street WA1 1HU

From

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Date: 8th November 2021

Email: [REDACTED]

To whom it may concern,

This is our response to your extremely rushed, poorly publicised and “out of the blue” consultation process for the Revised Local Plan. For ease of clarification our response will comprise the proposed Thelwall Heys development in the first instance and secondly the wider proposed planned development within the Grappenhall, Appleton, Appleton Thorn and Stretton areas.

Argument Against the Proposed Thelwall Heys Development

This proposed development will completely destroy this beautiful and historically unique green space that separates the Parishes of Grappenhall and Thelwall. The definition of “Heys” is enclosed parkland and therefore is a historically and nationally important asset. The wholesale destruction of this unique gem just beggars belief.

Loss of Green Belt

Thelwall Heys is designated Green Belt and therefore should be protected and not built on. Focus should instead be on Brownfield sites and the 1000+ empty properties within the Warrington Borough as a first port of call. Why was this not the strategy? The loss of this Green Belt will have a significant impact on the mental health and well-being of people who walk and exercise around the periphery of this area. The vistas looking across the green open spaces intersected by streams, hedgerows and trees teeming with wildlife will be lost forever. Local residents can be out in the countryside within minutes of leaving home, only if the plan goes ahead will be faced with an urbanised sprawl not in keeping with the surrounding countryside. During the Covid pandemic, this area was invaluable in maintaining the morale of local residents during exercise periods.

The Prime Ministers keynote speech at the Conservative Party Conference in Manchester on 6th October 2021 stated that **“There is no reason to allow the countryside and local green spaces to be opened up to unscrupulous developers building unaffordable homes”**. This is a governmental Brownfield sites first approach, which is in direct contradiction to Warrington Borough Councils incredible Green Belt first approach stance. With this in mind, why is Warrington Borough Council continuing with this plan? This process needs to be stopped **now** in order to prevent further wastage of tax payers money in continuing with this ridiculous and vandalous scheme. Rest assured copies of this letter will be sent to our local Conservative MP Andy Carter and to Michael Gove MP, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

Why has this scheme been added to the revised plan so suddenly and not very well advertised? Who has authorised this to go ahead? The existing Green Belt boundary was confirmed around 7 years ago in a plan that was meant to last for at least 20 years, therefore what has changed now?

The new Local Plan does not provide defensible justification for the “exceptional circumstances” required to develop Green Belt land.

In addition, Thelwall Heys has been farmed for decades creating an important contribution to the supply of food nationally. The loss of this high quality grade 2 to 3a arable farmland, in our opinion, would be a criminal act especially in light of our post Brexit future in feeding the UK nation in a sustainable context.

Impact on Wildlife

The development of the Thelwall Heys Site would have a detrimental impact on local wildlife that live amongst the hedgerows, the two watercourses (Brooks) that intersect the site, numerous native tree species and within the land itself. We have noticed many different species of birds such as Raptors (Buzzard, Kite etc.), Owls, Woodpeckers, Pheasants, Heron, Greenfinches to name but a few. Mammals we have observed are Foxes, Bats, Badgers, Dormice, stoat/weasel, mink etc. The natural habitat in which all these wildlife species live in and on will be detrimentally impacted. Development of Thelwall Heys has the real potential to contaminate /pollute both Brooks from earth movements, fuel oil spillages etc. Has an Ecology and Biodiversity Survey been carried out as part of the new Local Plan in assessing the potential impact on wildlife, flora and fauna within Thelwall Heys? Has an Environmental Impact Assessment been undertaken for Thelwall Heys as part of the new Local Plan?

Impact on Local Residents

There are a number of houses that are located on the boundary of this proposed development. What consideration has been given to these residents? We, for example have a 0.1-acre Green Belt paddock at the rear of our house. We would expect at the very least a significant buffer zone around this boundary, which could be used as a wildlife corridor etc. In addition, development of housing adjacent to existing houses would significantly affect their privacy, (especially in ours and our neighbours case where the ground adjacent to our houses is at a higher-level ~1.50m) and also reduce natural light into their homes. Entry to and exit from the properties along Knutsford Road can be problematic at the best of times due to our location on a bend of the A50 road, however, significant increase in traffic from the proposed development would exacerbate this problem intolerably.

The existing infrastructure within Grappenhall / Thelwall such as doctors, dentists, retail, roads etc. will not be able to cope with the additional number of residents associated with the proposed development. There is no mention of additional material infrastructure within the Local Plan.

Road Transport Issues

Traffic within South Warrington and Warrington Central is already atrocious, especially along the A50 on Knutsford Road with congestion and speeding a recognised issue. Building 310+ houses at Thelwall Heys would mean in real terms an extra ~620+ vehicles (conservatively 2 vehicles per household but not taking into account ancillary vehicles, delivery vehicles etc.) entering the already overloaded local transport system. This is unacceptable for the following reasons:

- Increased congestion within the area.
- Increased risk of vehicle collisions.
- Increased risk to pedestrians.
- Increased air pollution from the vehicles.
- Increased noise pollution.

In our opinion, significantly increased traffic resulting from this development would significantly reduce the quality of life of local residents along with significantly impacting their physical and mental health. This is not acceptable and justifiable in any way.

Where will the entry and exit points be of this development? How will this impact existing housing on the boundary of the proposed development? How will this extra traffic feed into the existing overloaded road network? What traffic assessment has been made? Surely all these need answering first before any revised Warrington Plan is submitted to government for consideration?

Thelwall and Grappenhall Parishes

The boundary between Grappenhall Parish and Thelwall Parish lies along the Brook within the tree line that intersects the site from north to south and is located to the South-West of Thelwall Heys House. The proposed development would effectively merge Grappenhall and Thelwall Parishes together and would therefore lose their unique and distinct individual character.

Argument against the Revised Warrington Local Plan – Appleton, Appleton Thorn, Stretton / Grappenhall Area

Many of the points raised for our argument against the proposed Thelwall Heys development are appropriate for this wider development. The extensive proposed development in South Warrington will destroy the nature and character of the area. Whole tracts of Green Belt land (approximately 1000 acres out of a total of 1400 acres are proposed to be built on) including valuable Grade 2 to 3a arable agricultural farmland will be lost forever. The loss of Green Belt seems to have come all too easily for Warrington Borough Council and is the first port of call instead of developing brownfield sites first within the Borough.

Why did the revised Warrington Local Plan not take into consideration the register of brownfield sites it holds? By the way, this register is from 2019 and is out of date.

Has there been an environmental and ecological assessment of the huge loss of Green Belt? I suspect no.

There is no justification to the circa 4200+ houses proposed to be built in the development that is over and above the hundreds of houses that are already being built and planned to be built within this area.

The transport infrastructure around South Warrington cannot cope with the amount of traffic at the best of times. The proposed development will significantly increase traffic within South Warrington (and indeed Warrington Town Centre) and will cause gridlock especially on London Road (A49), Knutsford Road (A50) and at the motorway junctions (M6-Junction 20 and M56-Junction 10). The resulting increase in air pollution, noise pollution and likely increase in road traffic accidents is not acceptable and would have a detrimental effect on the health and well-being of local people.

Why has a detailed traffic plan / assessment not been undertaken to support the new Local Plan?

Conclusion

We say a resounding **NO!** to this new Local Plan.

Kind Regards

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area of the letter.

Geoff and Pauline Woods