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15th November 2021

Professor S Broomhead
Chief Executive
Warrington Borough Council
East Annexe
Town Hall
Sankey Street
Warrington
WA1 1UH

Dear Professor Broomhead

Re: WHHFT's Response to the Proposed Submission Version of the Warrington Local Plan

The Trust supports the vision described for a town that provides opportunities for the most vulnerable, has a strong, sustainable economy that benefits everyone, is built through strong, active and resilient communities and has the ambition to be a carbon neutral, exemplar green town.

We recognise that Warrington is a fast-growing town, and that the Council has in place a strategy for population and economic growth. The Trust applauds the vision and ambitions set out in the plan as access to both skilled and unskilled workers drawn from our local and wider communities is critical for the sustainability of our organisation. In turn this enables the Trust to play a vital role in the future economic growth and prosperity of our borough. In building a town with attractive retail and leisure, education, transport and housing facilities we are increasingly confident in attracting and retaining a workforce that wants to work, live and thrive in the borough.

We previously made representations to Warrington Borough Council in response to the Local Plan Preferred Development Option in July 2017. The themes of that representation can be summarised as follows:

- At that time the plan demonstrated no appreciation for the impact new housing and commercial development would have on us as an acute hospital trust, in terms either of population growth or changes to the population demographic, as well as the impact on local transport infrastructure;
- A lack of clarity on the types and sizes of supporting health care facilities outlined within that version of the plan.

Given our previous representations it is pleasing to see the health needs of our Borough identified as a 'golden thread' which runs throughout the proposed submission:

- The current status of health and social need is identified in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessments;
- The pressure that housing and commercial development places upon health and social care services is acknowledged;
- A recognition that additional developments will have to embed essential infrastructure such as health hubs within our local communities.

We acknowledge that discussion around the provision of services within these developments is underway at the Warrington Transforming Estates Enabling Group, and the Trust will continue to work with the Council, other local partners, and newly established communities to develop a localised, integrated health and wellbeing offer which supports the strategic vision for the Borough as described through the Warrington Together partnership.

With regards to objectives stated within the local plan:

W1: To enable the sustainable growth of Warrington through the ongoing regeneration of Inner Warrington, the delivery of strategic and local infrastructure, the strengthening of existing neighbourhoods and the creation of new sustainable neighbourhoods

The Trust supports commitments within this objective to ringfence a minimum of 20% of all housing developments over ten units as affordable housing provision, and within this provision for affordable 'First Homes'. This will support the Trust as a one of the biggest employers within the borough to attract and retain workforce, especially as part of our ambitions to maximise our 'Teaching hospital' status. The Trust supports efforts outlined within the plan to provide suitable accommodation for older people and people with disabilities, including 'step free' access to homes and the provision for specialist housing for older people. We will continue to support efforts to enable a 'left shift of care' within the Borough, and suitable housing is an essential element to keeping people living independently for longer. There is a clear need to enhance care for the over-75 population especially given forecast growth of this demographic by an additional 50% across the period of the plan.

W3: To strengthen and expand the role of Warrington Town Centre as a regional employment, retail, leisure, cultural and transport hub, whilst transforming the quality of the public realm and making the Town Centre a place where people want to live.

The Trust supports the inclusion within policy of improved linkages to the Town Centre 'from the rest of the Borough and beyond'. There is a recognition within the plan of the 'significant traffic congestion' many of our staff face when commuting to work and our patients' experience when accessing their care, although there is little described within the plan to address the current situation.

We support the efforts outlined within Policy INF1 to reduce the carbon emissions and improve air quality in future developments, which aligns to our sustainability and Green objectives, but keenly any improvement in air quality directly affects our patients with respiratory illnesses – of which there is high prevalence in our borough. It is noted however that these issues will likely only be exacerbated through further development, especially within Inner Warrington and the Town Centre.

The recognition of the requirement for a new hospital to serve our population is welcome, especially as we progress with our robust Outline Business Case which presents a sustainable, integrated solution for secondary health care needs. You are aware that the Trust has submitted a widely-supported 'Expression of Interest' bid to be one of the remaining eight new hospitals proposed by the UK Government. We will continue to work in partnership with the Council, Warrington Together, other health and care stakeholders, and our growing population to develop our plans, in line with the statements within the proposed submission. This includes continuing to assess potential locations for a new hospital facility.

W5: To secure high quality design which reinforces the character and local distinctiveness of Warrington's urban area, its countryside, its unique pattern of waterways and green spaces and its constituent settlements whilst protecting, enhancing and embracing the Borough's historic, cultural, built and natural assets.

Specifically within Inner Warrington we fully support policies which aim to improve the overall environment of area through public realm improvements, improve access to services and infrastructure, promote sustainable transport measures, promote access to green infrastructure, provide new employment opportunities and training to local people, and not be detrimental to air quality and wider public health. The Trust is fully engaged within the development of the Central Six Regeneration Masterplan and looks forward to the aims of that masterplan being realised, especially those of improved housing, air quality and housing within our local neighbourhood.

W6: To minimise the impact of development on the environment through the prudent use of resources and ensuring development contributes to reducing carbon emissions, is energy efficient, safe and resilient to climate change and makes a positive contribution to improving Warrington's air quality.

The declaration by Warrington Borough Council of a Climate Emergency in 2019, and the pledges to make the Borough a net zero carbon area, align with the Trust's ambition to achieve net-zero by 2040.

/ 4 /

We acknowledge the Trust is a key Delivery Partner against these objectives of the Local Plan and commit our support to the development of our Town and infrastructure through our role as an anchor institution within the Borough.

We look forward to being a key partner in supporting the growth and development of a town with a thriving, healthy, happy and economically sound population in Warrington.

Yours sincerely

Simon Constable
Chief Executive