

Objections to the Revised Local Plan

Although the revised plan has reduced the number of houses, the **scale of the development** is still vast. 4,200 houses are planned in Grappenhall, Appleton, Appleton Thorn and Stretton with 2,400 of them to be built before 2038. Alongside this is a huge area of **industrial development** at the M6/M56 junction. The siting and scale of the development will totally destroy the character of the area changing it from a rural area with small villages into an amorphous urban sprawl.

With regard to the scale of the proposed housing development, WBC has not included the over 1000 new houses currently being built in South Warrington at Appleton Thorn, Appleton Cross, Grappenhall Heys, and Stretton. If these developments were included then the figure for new housing could be substantially reduced.

I am also aware that it is the current Conservative Government which has decided that 816 houses need to be built a year. I dispute this figure and am currently in conversation with them about this. The official increase in population predicts that there is a need for 528 houses to be built a year making the government's suggested figure of 816 a year far too high.

This, however, does not let WBC off the hook. It is the local council which decides **where** and **what kind** of housing is provided.

My objections are not only regarding the scale of the development but the fact that the Green Belt is being infringed. I do not believe there are any "exceptional circumstances" to allow the release of the green lungs of Warrington. I believe WBC should have a policy of no greenbelt use. Instead approximately 5% is being used for development, mainly in South Warrington. The existing greenbelt area was confirmed only 7 years ago in what was deemed to be a 20 year plan. There is now a large brownfield site at Fiddlers Ferry which will allow for 1,300 houses. This is an excellent example of what can be done and which should ease pressure on greenfield sites. I believe WBC can use other brownfield sites. I am aware that developers don't like this because they can't make as large a profit but that shouldn't be a consideration.

This is only one example of how the council can save our green spaces. Once green field sites have been developed there is no turning back and we will have lost them forever. During our very real climate crisis we need open spaces and tree planting rather than tarmac and concrete. It is more important than ever that people should buy local. Much of the greenfield area which will be destroyed is high quality agricultural land which should be providing food for the local population. The environmental or ecological impact of this large-scale development has not been assessed.

I am in my [REDACTED] I have already seen a huge loss of countryside which I have enjoyed over the years. The latest example of

this is the housing development currently taking place on what was a country walk past Grappenhall Cricket Club. It will now be a walk through housing. Added to this loss of greenbelt, the local plan is proposing to develop some of the last open space in the area by building along Stockton Lane. This country lane, which borders the Bridgewater Canal, is narrow and winding and without a footpath. It already has a barrier installed to prevent through traffic because of the danger of accidents and loss of life. The only car access is either via Broad Lane, already a rat run, and two small hump-backed bridges. All these things added together make it totally unsuitable for development.

Not only do we need to look at the size and siting of any future development, we need to consider the kind of housing. The Urban Splash development at Grappenhall Heys has already been given planning permission. The very name gives a clue to the unsuitability of such housing in a rural environment. Indeed the name Urban Extension shows WBC is aware that it is changing an area of individual villages into a huge built up area.

I realise that large scale development of more expensive housing helps WBC immensely as it brings in useful revenue. The 2018 annual monitoring report (covering April 2017 - March 2018) shows that 6 section 106 agreements were signed and 3 “unilateral undertakings” which provides a total future income of £8,996,542. The bulk of this comes from 3 sites in South Warrington (Pewterspear, Grappenhall Heys and Appleton Cross). This is before we take into account any proposed future development. Despite the fact that budgets are being increasingly squeezed and local authorities have to find income to fund things like social care, I do not believe this should be a criteria for any development. However, I have no doubt that this contributes to WBC allowing such large scale development in quiet green spaces. I believe this leaves the area open for greedy developers.

Arguments that we need to provide affordable housing in Warrington are spurious. Although any new housing technically claims to provide affordable homes, this is a misnomer. Affordable homes relate to the current house prices in the area. Thus the so-called affordable houses in South Warrington are not affordable at all. This will be true of all the proposed developments. They will not be going to young Warrington people trying to get on the housing ladder. If they were, I might not have such strong objections. The houses will be bought either by Warrington residents who are in a position to afford more desirable houses but **much more likely** to people outside Warrington who want to use the area as a convenient commute to work as the developments are close to the motorway network. People with no connection to Warrington will not have any desire to help our town centre's regeneration.

It does not matter that any of the new homes will be eco-friendly as I have been told (and I question whether they will be) because once our countryside has gone it has gone forever. The habitats of wildlife (animals, insects, flowers etc) will disappear. These cannot be replaced by the occasional tree-planting and manicured linear parks. We need natural habitats for our flora and fauna to thrive.

Removing large areas of greenfields which are currently a huge sink for rainfall in the area will, when concreted over, inevitably result in water runoff and the consequent flooding. In light of Warrington declaring a climate emergency, this destructive act is contrary to that goal. No one can be in doubt that this is a major concern.

On top of this, the question of air quality needs to be considered. I am part of a walking and cycling family. Over the past weeks I have been monitoring the traffic and pollution whilst walking. This is not a strictly scientific experiment but a personal one. There is already a vast increase in traffic in South Warrington. Whilst walking I have smelt, tasted and inhaled traffic fumes. This pollution has already been proved to harm people's health and our children are arriving and leaving school with this harmful pollution in our atmosphere. Parking on residential streets is already a problem which will only be exacerbated by increased housing and its consequent car ownership.

Much as WBC believes everyone will use the mythical "mass transportation" system (shades of an Orwellian future) they are very misguided. I estimate that the majority of people buying houses in these new developments will have and use 2 cars. This means that places like Stockton Heath will be both gridlocked and highly polluted. The area already suffers because commuters use residential roads as rat runs, the majority not adhering to the speed limits.

There is little provision for mitigating the congestion either in the form of new roads, motorway junctions or canal crossings to service the proposed development. The diversion of Stretton Road to a junction with the A49 south of the Cat and Lion is the only condition before work can start. The one proposed new ship canal crossing is west of the town which will help congestion in that area only. It will, of course, be advantageous to Peel Ports but not to the residents of South Warrington whose lives are already blighted by traffic congestion. The other canal crossings, the swing bridges, in the area are already working to full capacity, with traffic regularly being brought to a standstill.

No proper infrastructure is built into the plan. Very few community facilities are guaranteed. I understand Grappenhall Heys School is to be expanded but no other schools, doctors' surgeries etc are planned. South Warrington doesn't even have fit-for-purpose sports provision nevermind the idea of a community hub. The demand on the already poor facilities cannot sustain any further development.

I also object to the industrialisation of the area. This is even more inappropriate than the scale of housing. Greenfield sites should never be destroyed for the purpose of building logistics sites. The local motorway junctions are already overloaded. Nor is there any justification for saying it will bring employment to Warrington. The town's unemployment rate is as low as it can possibly be. (One can never achieve full employment). Any jobs which may come from the proposed 116 hectare industrial development on Green Belt at the M6/M56 junction for warehousing is therefore not going to help Warringtonians. It is also questionable how many jobs will be created as warehouses are becoming more and more automated.

There has been a great deal of media coverage about the destruction of our planet notably by the extinction rebellion movement. Currently COP26 is meeting in Glasgow with the aim to cut carbon emissions and save our planet. The bulk of the population supports the fact that we should do everything in our power to protect our environment for the future. This development is doing the very opposite of that. WBC will be destroying our children's and our grandchildren's future.

It is vital that we maintain the character of our area. In the past I have regularly holidayed in France where the importance of belonging to a place is embedded in its culture. I believe that everyone in Britain also has a similar attachment and pride in the area in which they live. That means we must retain the idea of individual villages. The villages in South Warrington (Grappenhall, Stockton Heath, Walton, Appleton Thorn etc) have their own individual character and many residents volunteer in these communities in order to keep their identity. Here are just a few of the many examples of such community spirit - Grappenhall Community Library, Appleton Thorn Bawming of the Thorn, Live at St Wilfrid's, Stockton Heath Festival. This is just a small selection of what is happening in individual communities. This will be completely destroyed when South Warrington villages are merged into a vast urban sprawl. This is something we must strenuously avoid.

I do not believe the plan is justified, deliverable or meets the area's assessed needs.

Barbara J Buttrey

