

Warrington Borough Council
Objection to the Draft Local Plan 2021

The Warrington Local Plan is fundamentally flawed and is **not a sound plan based on the following reasons:** -

Fundamentally this is a “rebranding” of many aspects of the previous 2019 Plan and all previous objections to many aspects of that Plan which have not changed should be considered for this 2021 Plan.

Destruction of Greenbelt

There are no “exceptional circumstances” that justify building on the prime green belt area of South Warrington. The Greenbelt boundaries were only confirmed 7 years ago so what has dramatically changed?

Building of this centre on Greenbelt land would not safeguard the countryside from encroachment.

If building were to proceed it would change this beautiful landscape forever and fundamentally change the character of this area, and for what benefit? Not for the local people who’s lives will be blighted by this.

The area is full of beautiful villages with plenty of green open spaces and walking paths, but if what the council is proposing comes off, we will lose our local identity
WBC Landscape character Assessment 2007 stated that the character of Stretton and Hatton and Appleton Thorn was undulating enclosed farmland..... these character areas will need to be respected - so why is the Council now ignoring this assessment.

This plan has been dictated by the wishes of the developers (both housing and commercial) rather than building on the infrastructure strengths and transformation of existing, or future (eg Fidlers Ferry Power Station site) brown sites to enhance the image of the town.

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This is a further adverse change to the 2019 Plan, and the destruction of prime greenbelt.

When development of this land was proposed in the past WBC themselves vigorously opposed any development of this area stating: -

“The protective green buffer zones forming the approaches to the villages and between suburban and rural areas must be preserved at all costs as they provide essential delineation against more suburban areas and maintain the historical semi-rural signature of the locality. Likewise, green routes punctuating existing settlements provide a similar essential function. Any development encroaching upon these areas is to be strongly resisted, as it will start to erode the essential balance between

rural and urban zones.

G8 Any potential development adjacent to, or encroaching upon established linear corridors, such as the Bridgewater Canal and Trans Pennine Trail, is considered inappropriate. The existing distinctive views and rural approaches provided by these essential leisure routes must be maintained and enhanced wherever possible”

What has changed!!? – These arguments are even more applicable today and should be “re-wilded” to improve the environment, reduce emissions for the benefit of the planet.

Housing Assessment

The redevelopment of brownfield sites at Fiddlers Ferry is welcomed and this policy should be rigidly enforced across the borough rather than the destruction of prime green belt.

These are unprecedented levels of growth and the levels of delivery incompatible with anything previously achieved.

The Plan provides no justification why these areas identified for housing and employment are better than other areas in the area.

Employment

The identification and assessment of an SE Warrington employment area adjacent M6/56 (including Stobarts and Six56) is not evidenced and its comparative evaluation against other potential areas is not justified or proven. This area is not close to other key infrastructure namely railways; there is already identified distribution areas at Omega which are as yet not fully utilised, and there is ample opportunity to expand the Omega site if demand requires. Indeed Distribution Centres are a relatively new phenomenon and whilst Warrington’s Omega site was leading many other regional centres are emerging resulting in stiff commercial competition which will lead to obsolescence of existing developments. The Plan is driven by economic needs of existing operators and landowners and not by sound planning.

There are already large areas of vacant commercial property in the region that can accommodate this proposed development.

Building of these distribution centres rather than using derelict or other urban land e.g. the airfield is contrary to the purpose having Greenbelt.

Building this centre on Greenbelt land would destroy the setting and specialist character of this part of Warrington.

The type of employment being proposed by Six56 / Stobbarts had not been fully described so it is not clear what economic benefit they would bring to Warrington. Many of their

existing workforce commute from areas other than Warrington, which increases congestion and decreases air-quality.

This development will result in additional vehicle movements of both staff and HGVs.

HGVs frequently use the smaller local roads. Stobarts HGVs drive down roads such Stretton Road and through local villages even though they are not supposed to impacting the local community causing noise disruption, air pollution and vibration damage to roads and other structures.

This site is also not close to where Warrington employment needs are. This site will not attract the number nor the high-quality jobs that are claimed. Workers will probably have to commute from outside the area further exacerbating the pressures on the road infrastructure.

Infrastructure

There is scant detail in the Transport Plan which demonstrates how the vast scale of development in the SE Warrington Urban Extension can be serviced thereby avoiding serious deterioration for the existing communities.

The transport plan is speculative and unfunded and there is no details on phasing or pre-requisite works before any developments can proceed.

The infrastructure of Warrington and in particular South Warrington is already stressed to capacity and further development will result in serious pressures on roads, public transport, GPs & Warrington Hospital which is already under immense pressure.

The Draft Local Transport Plan is contradictory in that it states “Neighbourhoods in Suburban Warrington will become even more attractive places to live than they are currently. Residents will benefit from improved air quality, less traffic and improved access to the town centre” but the increase in traffic from the SE Urban Extension and the SE Warrington (Six56/Stobarts) Employment Area developments will:-

- Worsen air quality
- Increase traffic
- Destroy the character of South Warrington and make the area less attractive to live.

Road Infrastructure

Info from Transport appendices document indicates "40,000 additional car trips per day due to additional housing planned (this is work related trips and does not include leisure, school or business trips). This however doesn't take into account increased car trips to Warrington employment sites from those who don't live in the borough, or any non-work trips by new residents.

The employment area development is proposed to facilitate distribution access to the M56 and M6 motorways. Junctions 19-21 of the M6 and junction 9 of the M56 are already

heavily congested, causing frequently daily standstill despite the opening of the new “smart” motorway.

Gridlock of the motorway network ripples into the trunk road network resulting in standing traffic on the A50 main joining road which links the SE Warrington Employment Area development to the motorway.

This development of both distribution centres in the employment area, and vast housing development will further exacerbate this intolerable situation which results in traffic trying to “rat run” through the town to avoid the motorways creating heavy congestion and gridlock of the ship canal crossings and town centre roads.

Transport for the North (TfN) aims to secure investment for rail, recognising the already congested roads. Research by TfN shows quite frightening predictions for levels of congestion and pollution if we carry on as we are doing now.

The proposals TfN have submitted to Government show that funding for the Western Link and M6 J19 to 21 improvements are way down the list of Government transport funding priorities.

I have attached several Google traffic images which vividly illustrates the typical daily congestion (red/purple roads) of the road traffic network in the area. I have mapped this road congestion daily and hourly.

GPs & Hospitals

The GP Surgeries are under immense pressure. Non urgent appointments are not available between 2-4 weeks and emergency same day appointments are filled immediately booking becomes available.

Pollution

WARRINGTON has been named and shamed by the World Health Organisation for breaching air pollution safety levels. The town is one of 40 places in Britain and Ireland that has breached the WHO's safe levels PM2.5, which are particles of things like smoke, soot, dirt and dust found in the air.

WBC has said itself in its Air Quality Action Plan “we have estimated poor air quality causes approximately 145 premature deaths per year”. A Warrington Councilor said *“Warrington Borough Council takes its responsibility for the health and wellbeing of its residents extremely seriously. “We remain determined to tackle the causes of ill health in the borough and that includes air pollution – to this end we have a comprehensive network of sampling sites which form part of a national monitoring programme”* Yet how can they support adding more HGVs, the most polluting sources!

Building on Greenbelt land will result in a loss of biodiversity.

Conflicts of Interest

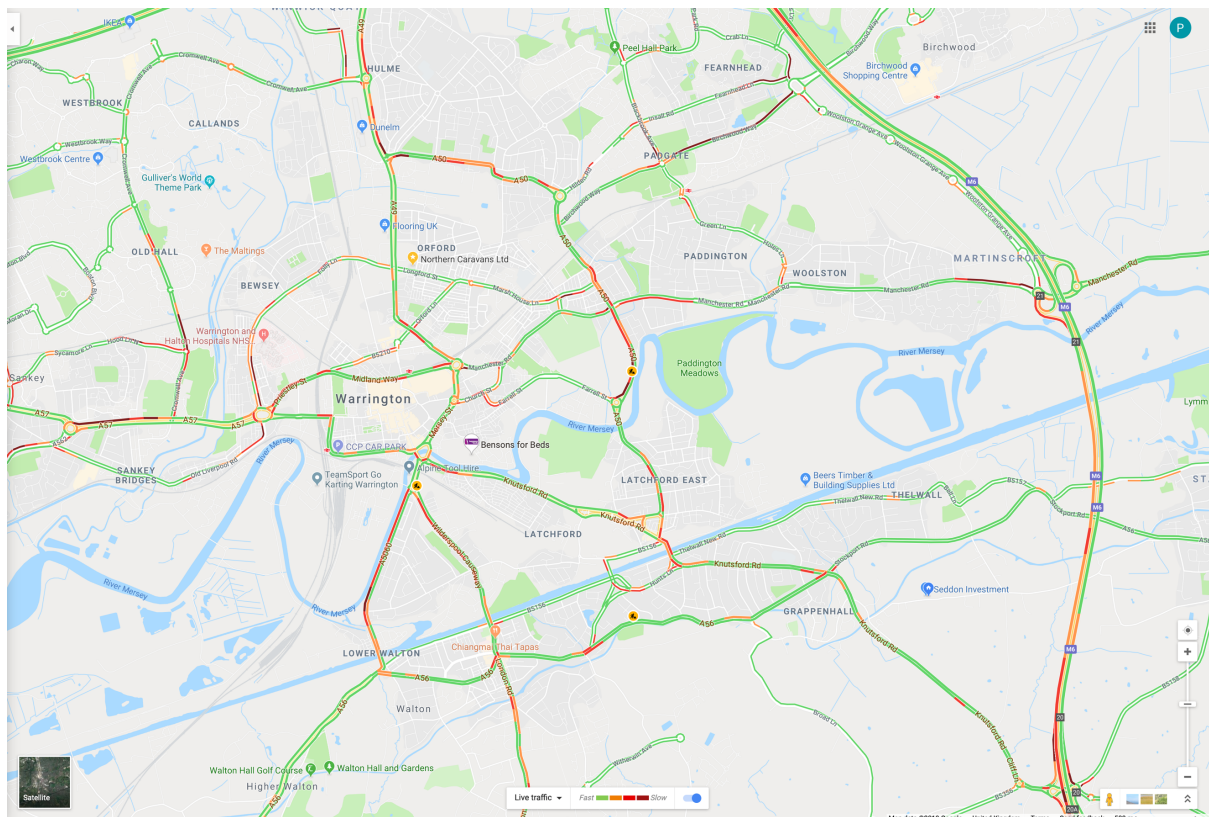
WBC is conflicted in assessing this application as the proposal has been developed jointly with other Council bodies.

Warrington Councilors also hold roles/relationships with developers whose sole purpose is to exploit commercial interests at the expense of the environment, communities and local residents.

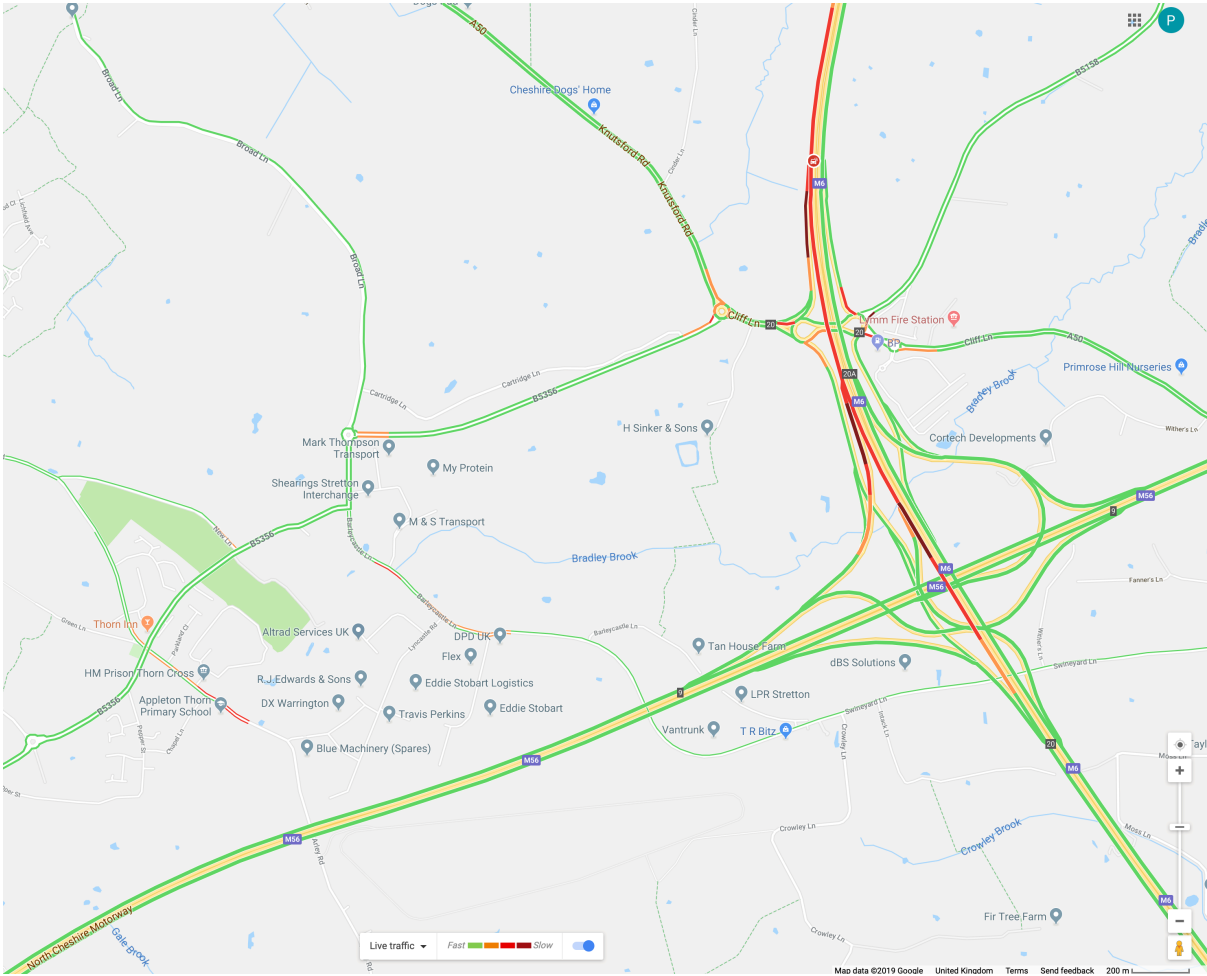
WBC has not liaised with adjoining local authorities to develop a strategic plan for growth in the NW Region.

The benefits claimed for these proposed developments both housing and employment do not justify the loss of this prime greenbelt and the destruction of the very character of this part of Warrington which makes Warrington an attractive place to live.

Paul Bennett



Typical daily traffic congestion on the Warrington Area road network



Typical road congestion in the Stobart Area and links to the Motorway network