

Mrs. Laura Mottram



Local Plan - Planning Policy and Programmes
Warrington Borough Council
New Town House
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Warrington
WA1 2NH
Email: localplan@warrington.gov.uk

14.11.2021

RE: Local Plan

Dear Warrington Borough Council,

I am a local resident of South Warrington having lived at the current address for over 20 years. I am writing to strongly oppose and object to the proposals and plans and request withdrawal of the plans for 'Warrington Borough Council Local Plan' due to the following key themes:

- The release of greenbelt and specifically object to the release of green belt for house building adjacent to Stockton Lane and the development of Thelwall Heys.
- The poorly thought through transport links – which are unclear. We already have congested local roads which you are now suggesting have a large volume of housing developments. The current road system cannot cope along the A50, A56 either travelling to or from Warrington. Speeding is a major problem particularly along the A50. How will your plan to increase traffic to access both Thelwall Heyes and Stockton Lane developments be viable? Congestion is a major problem across Warrington and especially in the South of Warrington – where the proposed Garden Suburb is planned. Infrastructure should be agreed, in place prior to housing. I question if the costing of this is sound – it seems an underestimate. There continues to be regular grid lock around our local motorway links and main A roads into and out of Warrington. IF we are to encourage local people to use Warrington town centre – then this needs to be re-considered how the transport plan and local plan will support this. Currently it is quicker and more efficient to travel to Altrincham, Knutsford or Runcorn for shopping than Warrington Town Centre. The Local Plan

needs a sound way to offer options for quick, safe easy transport into the proposed new Town Centre with its Waterfront.

- the proposal of safeguarding land for residential development - this will add to the urban sprawl.
- I object to release of greenbelt for housing or any other development. We have many areas in Warrington that provide a “strong contribution” to the greenbelt. Building on brownfield sites in Warrington must take priority . National planning policy revisions have strengthened the case for protecting greenbelt. The Local Plan is therefore flawed and unsound. There are no special circumstances to release greenbelt. It is encouraging that Fiddlers Ferry is now planned for regeneration, however there is much more that the council could do around the town centre with brownfield sites, prior to the unnecessary release of greenbelt.
- South Warrington is unfairly, inequitably and disproportionately affected. High value houses planned for the South, will not be affordable for the employees who are likely to be working at the nearby companies. Overall there is a lack of affordable housing in the whole plan. South Warrington also has an unfair proportion of release of greenbelt – why is this?
- The plan should only be for 10 to 15 years, not for the 20 years. This is too long. A shorter period would allow for less housing to be built and also a settling down of the UK economy post-BREXIT and an idea of numbers of possible migrants into or out of the borough.

Other Key Themes in my Objection:

Character, Distinctiveness, History and Heritage

The proposals in the local plan favour dismantling the small and historic villages of Appleton Thorn, Thelwall, Grappenhall and Lymm in South Warrington. The plans will ruin the village feel and character by influx of unnecessary building in their environs. These villages will lose identity if the proposed plan continues by creating an unnecessary linkage and urban sprawl, rather than them being separated by natural and beautiful green belt and small paths and roads. Many of us chose to live in the countryside in a small village near to a town. I do not want to live near to or in a City. Building on the proposed sites along Stockton Lane and Thelwall Heyes will increase urban sprawl.

We have many important historic features in our villages e.g. The Pickering Arms, Thelwall, The Little Manor, Thelwall, All Saints Church, Thelwall, The Red Lion Stretton, St Matthews Church, and Stretton. The Grappenhall cobbles, The Rams Head, The Parr Arms, St Winifred’s Church Grappenhall, and Grappenhall Cricket Club - much of which is surrounded by beautiful countryside. Appleton Village has its green, Dudlows Green and its surrounding area leading to Appleton is a beautiful unspoilt area of Warrington with the Dingle and brook. The character of this area will be ruined with encroaching development.

Waste

As cited in his letter to you by Mr Alex Green, in September 2018, from [REDACTED] - the local development plan requires additional information on a new WWtW, a district heating network and a review of the analysis surrounding waste (RDF/EFW) capacity, and identification of where a new WWtW and energy centre (EFW?) would be located within the Garden City development. This suggests that the Local Plan is premature and should be withdrawn.

Housing

I would also like to query the population growth of this area during the plan timespan. I do not believe sufficient allowance has been made for the likely fall in immigration following the referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union and the likely reduction of free movement of people. My understanding is there is no legal reason stipulating why it must cover such a long period and the NPPF suggest a 15-year time horizon.

Greenbelt

This land is not "spare" but supports existing farms and rural businesses.

Green belt should not be altered unless exceptional circumstances according to the 'National Planning Policy Framework Section 9 Clause 79-82. I do not consider the proposed plan considers or adheres to this framework as it doesn't demonstrate compliance with the exceptional circumstances or has it examined the other options as stated in the framework e.g. effective use of all brownfield sites, land which is underused (or public sector land), optimising proposed density of development, whether other authorities can meet some identified development e.g. St Helens, Halton.

The City concept would be at the detriment of green belt usage.

The classification system used by the review conducted by Ove Arup and partners is erroneous and subjective. If used this is likely to destroy some very beautiful and loved countryside around Warrington. This countryside is a natural landscape and habitat for much wildlife and protected species and by nature lovers, families and for exercise and linkage with our historic villages. Green belt is essential for our wellbeing and to reduce and offset the pollution that Warrington residents are exposed to. If the green belt and the Trans Pennine trail (TPT) and/or part of the Bridgewater canal are destroyed as highlighted in the plan (especially if a transport link is implemented across the TPT), we will lose the ability for locals to enjoy unpolluted green exercise. The canals, TPT and local lanes including Weaste Lane, Broad Lane and many of the smaller lanes around Appleton Thorn, Lymm, High Legh and Stretton are enjoyed by walkers and cyclists. This will be ruined by the plan. All of these areas now have increased pedestrian, cycle traffic since people have enjoyed the countryside even more during the pandemic and lockdown.

In 1995 MAFF (now DEFRA) surveyed the land at Thelwall Heys and remarked that 68% was top quality Grade 1&2. This compares to 15% of Grades 1&2 in Cheshire and 20% across England. Thelwall Heys is therefore top quality agricultural land which with global warming etc should be protected.

Ecology, Flora and Fauna

Currently there are a wide variety of trees, shrubs, animals, birds and land in the surrounding areas proposed by the preferred development. A full ecological and environmental survey is not mentioned in the development plans. This is essential before any further plans are proposed or put forward for consultation. The local protected and endangered species known are: water voles, common voles, newts. We also have nesting buzzards, herons, kingfisher, barn owls, badgers, toads, frogs and many bats along WA4. In 2004 environmental surveys of Grappenhall Heys found 32 different bird species present at Thelwall Heys including several who at that point were deemed to be of high importance due to their "red" status. Where is the environmental and ecological survey for Thelwall Heys and the fields by Stockton Lane? Has the consultation period allowed sufficient time to produce a proper survey?

Population, Pollution and Transport.

The projected population growth that is driving the need for housing development is flawed when compared with the Office for National Statistics. It is disproportionate. Perhaps the borough council should revisit the statistics - therefore less housing is required allowing the council and planners to consider alternative plans. Why has uplift been put into the plan, other than to pursue the creation of a city which residents of WA4 are strongly opposed to e.g. 4000 signatures on the 38degrees toolkit, more than 220 people attending the 'Save our Greenbelt' march along the TPT on Sunday 17th September 2018.

If the Local Plan is realised, it is likely that housing on outskirts of Warrington Town will not contribute to the urban growth or development or financial viability as it will be a commuter and dormitory town serving Chester, Liverpool and Manchester. However, the already congested motorways and A roads surrounding our town will be further invaded, congestion and cause increasing pollution to an already polluted over crowded infrastructure.

As cited by the World Health Organisation, Warrington is the 5th most polluted town in the North west for breaching air pollution safety levels. I cannot see any mention in the Local Plan or other plans of how the council aim to reduce or deal with this, with increasing housing, cars, roads. There is no mention of creative forms of transport links. Surely this is a priority for the council to reduce pollution rather than create this. (see below re: health). Air pollution is recognised as a factor in the onset of heart disease and cancer. It is the largest environmental risk to the public's health.

In 2011 the Councils Local Transport Strategy was already concerned about the percentage of vehicles and journey to work in Warrington, with a higher percentage of households having 2 or more vehicles (36%) than the rest of North West (27%) or UK (30%). Warrington is already a high commuter area both in (17%) and out (18%) compared to the rest of the North West (10 % and 14%). This shows Warrington has an inherited reliance on cars. Warrington is already a thriving and successful town – why make it any bigger ? We have low unemployment – let us keep it that way and not be overly ambitious.

Traffic speed data in April 2021, collected using the Police's traffic, monitored the A50 at the Grappenhall junction for a number of days. Data collected showed that of the 6500 or so road users in a 24 hour period 92.4% were speeding (speed limit 30) . Over 3000 vehicles travelling @ 40 - 50 mph, and over 2000 @ 50 -60mph. The highest speed recorded at 80mph. This suggests that access into Thelwall Heys for 600+ vehicles a day would pose a significant safety concern.

Health and Wellbeing, Primary and Secondary Care Health services.

Your plan mentions provision for primary health care – which I assume is general practice and community services. However, I see no mention of secondary care, urgent care provision. This is of

grave concern. The South East extension (4200 homes) has no mention of health services. We already need to 'grow' more GPs in the next 5 years as per GP forward View and Warrington and other environs in the North West are currently undersubscribed for GPs and GP trainees. More concern is that the local providers of both community services, urgent care and secondary care all require 'Needs Improvement' as per their Care Quality Commission reports. E.g. Warrington Hospital (July 2015) and Bridgewater Community Foundation Trust (February 2017) How will these services be sustainable and meet the needs of a larger population if your plan is realised? Local hospitals and community services that were already struggling pre-pandemic e.g. breaches in 4 week waits at AED, concern over inadequate Maternity Care, Medical out-patients, are now having even more challenge due to long wait times and elective recovery which is nationwide problem. Warrington will be crippled unless there are plans in place with Local health and Wellbeing Boards to develop capacity and estates for these services. It is predicted that more GPs are planning to retire following the stress and increase workload that the pandemic has provided. After the Chapelford housing development was created it took many years before the full infrastructure was in place including healthcare. With the increase in home owners now having more pets (again following the pandemic) how will Animal healthcare be provided? We have a shortage of local Vets and it is impossible now to recruit locum vets from the European market due Brexit restrictions.

I look forward to being a part of a review process of this consultation and supporting our local village with a Neighbourhood Development Plan. I also look forward to a response in due course from Warrington Borough Council.

Yours faithfully

Laura Mottram

(Local resident, General Practitioner who enjoys outdoor green gym, the beautiful countryside and local heritage and the developing Warrington 'Town'.)

Please enjoy a photograph of a vole that I spotted after playing tennis along Stockton Lane at Grappenhall Sports Club.



Photographs of the march along the TPT on Sunday 17th September 2018 .

