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Warrington Borough Council

13th Nov 2021

Dear Planning Policy team,

Warrington Local Plan Consultation

Please find attached some brief comments on the revised Local Plan.

I have contained my comments to those areas that I am most familiar with, but I generally support the assessment made by the South Warrington Parish Council's working group on the overall approach of the local plan.

Overall strategy and vision

As in my previous comments on the 2019 Local Plan, I acknowledge that not all growth and development is bad and that new homes and employment opportunities are needed if Warrington is to remain a vibrant town. It is good to see that the Council have taken on board many of the comments made about previous proposals. I am personally particularly pleased to see the safeguarding of Moore Nature Reserve, the removal of the urban extension between Lower Walton and Moore and a commitment to tackle the climate change and biodiversity crisis. I am pleased to see the removal of the **Port Warrington** proposals, although I doubt that Peel Holdings will stop trying to develop land adjacent to Moore Nature reserve.

I support the need to make more of the **river frontage and waterfront** in the inner town centre, as long as this is done in a way that respects the natural habitats and landscapes of the river valley and creates an attractive, healthy place to live and work. This needs careful planning, with high quality development, good green infrastructure and provision of recreational and active travel routes.

However, some of the proposals remain contrary to **Government policy** and advice, especially the proposed removal of large swathes of green belt in South Warrington which the NPPF states should only be done in "exceptional circumstances" and the continued prioritisation of new road based infrastructure over other forms of transport.

The Government's 25 year environment plan states that "12% of land in the United Kingdom is designated as Green Belt and we remain committed to protecting it" It goes on

to promote the enhancement of Green Belt as “breathing spaces” for our urban populations to enjoy, and our rich wildlife to thrive, while providing the houses we need.

Warrington is fortunate in having good provision of parks and greenspace, which has been much valued during the pandemic. But I still consider the South Eastern extension, which will see house building on greenbelt and farmland, will destroy the character of that part of Warrington and won't provide the affordable housing that is so needed. The development will instead create homes for commuters, who will need to rely on cars for transport, as they are too far from the town's stations and bus hubs, putting more pressure on the areas roads and increasing pollution.

Whilst the plan purports to have lowered the number of houses to be built in the SE urban extension, it leaves the way open for another 1800 homes to be built after the plan period, which means that the number of houses likely to be built will match the 4200 in the previous Local Plan.

The forecasts of economic growth feel unrealistic in the current economic climate and it is still not clear that the projected growth will provide a sustainable future for Warrington or ensure that enhanced public transport infrastructure and environmental mitigation will be properly funded. There is already too much low quality development in the Borough, that adds to congestion on the roads, adds nothing to the character of the place and doesn't provide high quality environmental mitigation.

As in previous plans it is recognised that there is an overly high dependence on car travel in the Borough and increased localised air pollution. The Western Link in particular will draw more traffic through Warrington, as drivers avoid tolls on the Mersey Gateway. As previously stated, although I would prefer for this new route not to be put in place at all, given the blight it will cause along the route and the extra road traffic it will encourage, I suggest that any new link here should also be tolled to avoid this and to ensure that those who will benefit, especially private sector businesses are paying for the new infrastructure.

Inevitably as a resident of south Warrington I have considered the impact of the Local Plan on my immediate vicinity in particular, but I am still of the view that proposals in south Warrington will detract from the **intrinsic character and quality** of the Borough as whole and in the longer term will make the Borough a less attractive, healthy place in which to reside and invest.

Yours faithfully,

Elizabeth Newton.