

Objection

Martin Jones



I would like to object to the Warrington Borough Council Plan.

General Remarks

"Before one single house is built we will put the infrastructure before

That is a promise I say to Everyone involved"

Terry o'Neil, Council Leader Warrington Borough Council 2017

The plan is attempting to set a path for the borough for 20 years. We are going through some of the most dramatic changes in this country since the end of World War 2. Going for a 20 year plan is Unsound because with so many factors from Brexit, falling birth rate, drop in immigration, fall in economic immigration, the collapse of high street retail we should not be making so many irreversible, unsound and premature plans.

We are still deciding where Britain stands on the world stage with Brexit. It's impossible to predict month to month let alone decade to decade. I know from conversations I have had with our Polish friends and neighbours that the wage differential between the UK and Poland which brought many people is now much smaller. Immigration has been the biggest growth factor in UK population but immigration is falling heavily. This is the from the National statistics office(<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/bulletins/migrationstatisticsquarterlyreport/february2019>) (28/2/19) *“immigration to the UK for work has fallen to its lowest level since 2014; this follows a fall in the number of EU citizens arriving to work”* Population figures are dropping in most northern hemisphere countries at a substantial rate in

fact I recently filmed report on this for the BBC in Salford. Trying to predict what the population needs of Warrington will be for the next 10 years will be near impossible so the figures for 2039 must be a work of fiction. Government figure suggest a target of 10,000 houses in total. I cannot find any justification for the 18,500 planned target in the WBC plan. If you look at the National statistic office bulletin(<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/livebirths/bulletins/birthsummarytablesenglandandwales/2017>) (Published 18/0718)

- There were 679,106 live births in England and Wales in 2017, a decrease of 2.5% from 2016 and the lowest number of live births since 2006.
- In 2017, the total fertility rate (TFR) declined for the fifth consecutive year to 1.76 children per woman, from 1.81 in 2016.
- 'Fertility rates decreased for every age group in 2017, except for women aged 40 years and over, where the rate increased by 1.3% to 16.1 births per 1,000 women in that age group, reaching the highest level since 1949.
- - Warrington Borough Council (WBC) has admitted that the figures they are using are from a much earlier date. We are making a 20 year plan based on figure that may be 30 years out of date by the end of this plan. At every point WBC has taken the highest growth figure to justify the housing figures.
 - Britain's retail sector is going through its most dramatic change ever at this moment. Even the "Queen of the High street" Marks and Spencer is closing 100 stores. While righting this at least three companies that have shops in Warrington have gone into receivership. The Warrington plan makes a large provision for retail but in reality we could according to a report commissioned by the BBC see a drop in High street and retail park retailing by 50% in the next few years. Competition from Online retail has had a devastating impact on retailers. Warrington has been faced with traditional competition from developments at Liverpool One and the Wirral Outlet Village. Perhaps the most devastating blow is the Trafford centre. Its 10 miles from Warrington city centre. It has free parking a huge range of shops restaurants and cinemas. It even has Lego land and Sea world. I was talking to the Newcastle Metro Centre manager in January 2019 who told me they would no longer be the largest UK shopping Mall because the Trafford centre was expanding yet again. Warrington is never going to be able to compete with these Leviathans. We must realise that in a declining market many retail parks will become empty and high streets have gaps in them. We should be looking to these sites to be reused as Brownfield sites before using our Green Belt sites. If we had a series of 5 year plans we could look at the availability of Brownfield

land becoming available and reduce the need if any to build on Green Belt land.

- In a similar way we will have a huge Brownfield site becoming available when the Fiddlers Ferry power Station is de-commissioned. This site cannot be allowed to become derelict. It will be a perfect site for new houses. It's very surprising that the only people who have not identified it are the council. Using this site would meet a very large part of the housing requirement.
- The large Crossfields Factory has closed making a big opportunity to reuse the site

Warrington suffers from one of the worst levels of Air Pollution that have even been noticed by the World Health Organisation (WHO). WBC's own statement says: "In 2013, 4.8% of all mortality in our town was attributable to man-made particulate pollution the equivalent to 95 premature deaths. This is slightly worse than the average for the north west of 4.6%. There are no figures available for Warrington on the health impact from nitrogen dioxide exposure.

In 2015, around 4% of all mortality in Warrington was attributable to man-made particulate pollution, the [Air Quality and Health JSNA, Feb 2018 report \[pdf\]](#) has more detail.

Whilst the majority of Warrington has good air quality, there are areas close to major roads where nitrogen dioxide levels are high and exceed national standards". <https://www.warrington.gov.uk/info/201090/environmental-issues/2024/air-quality-and-pollution>. As an asthmatic this is not news to me. This plan is going to encourage more vehicles to use our congested roads. With the Huge increase in the Omega site recently constructed in north Warrington we have not yet had time to see the impact of that development. The Premature developments at Stobarts and Six56 will have a massive impact with 24 hour HGV/LGV movements on our air pollution.

- Two premature applications for the Stobarts distribution centre and SIX56 (The councils own private development company Langtree scheme) have been rushed through to avoid scrutiny. These generic applications have claimed wrongly a special case to break the 5 rules of Green Belt. These applications also completely ignored the first Neighbourhood plan agreed in Warrington. These are too large to be considered outside the Local Plan and their impact on the Plan must be considered.

Air Pollution

Warrington is surrounded by the M62 to the North, M6 to the East and M56 to the South. We are over flown by planes landing at Liverpool Airport and taking off from Manchester. We have heavily polluting ships travelling up the ship canal. Because the full implications of the Western Link have not been discussed we will suffer a massive rise in pollution because it will draw in traffic taking the direct Toll free route from Merseyside to the M6 South. As a result of the Amateurism of WBC at a single stroke we will have more pollution and more traffic. We have many industrial sites causing pollution. Most

worrying of these is the new Cheshire Incinerator that is likely to have a dramatic impact on the air pollution we suffer. It does not appear anywhere in WBC plan which shows a worrying lack of knowledge on this subject. Pollution is now the biggest limit to growth in Warrington. There is nothing to reduce pollution in Warrington in this plan only increase it. None of these developments can go ahead because we are always already suffering illegal levels of air pollution. Anyone who permits further development in Warrington will be responsible for the catastrophic effects on health.

Housing

Who are we building for ?

If you read the WBC and much of its supporting literature it talks about a plan for Warrington and the People. The problem is the sole focus of the plan is on numbers. There is a complete lack of focus on who is going to live here and what we are building.. This is by far the biggest flaw in the plan and where its whole soundness of proposals to build on Green Belt in Appleton, Stretton Grappenhall and Lymm Fall down. All developments in these areas have been for family houses priced between £300,000 and £750,000. The small number of affordable houses on each development is priced at over £250,000." Affordable" is an unhelpful definition because the average wage in Warrington is around the National average of £25,000. Two people on that income with a deposit are going to be able to afford a property of about £130,000. There have been no houses of this price built in this area. There are also no plans I can find for social housing. I live in Statham where we have a very successful mix of social and private housing. Its a shame there is no provision to continue this in South Warrington. I can speak about this from a very personal viewpoint because my Daughter who is an ODP in the NHS treating cancer patients and her Fiancé live in our house saving to get a house.They have a budget of £150,000 very similar to many young Warringtonians. I have spoken to them and they simply don't want shared ownership schemes and I don't blame them. They have looked at the new developments in the area but they are between 2 and 8 times what they can afford. They either have to move out of the area or compete for the small number of older houses. People are not opposed to development if it is appropriate especially if its truly brown field first. The problem is that if the people of Warrington can't afford these houses who is going to live there? This causes two fundamental flaws in the housing plan :

- No houses are being built that people who live in Warrington can afford.
- Houses are being built that are attracting people from outside the borough who commute to Manchester and Liverpool

These actually create housing problems in Warrington rather than solving them. Private construction companies have no incentive to build houses for people they build for the maximum profit . This will not meet the needs of the people of Warrington.

Lymm

I live in [REDACTED] Lymm. The plan is trying to squeeze 400 new houses onto our green belt in a very compact area all using the very busy Warrington Road. We have very small roads in this area. There are already several pinch points. Star Lane joins onto Barsbank road where it passes under the Bridgewater canal. This is height limited to 9 feet so a single deck bus can just pass underneath it. Because Barsbank road is steep and the bridge is narrow only one vehicle can pass at a time at a safe speed of no more than 15mph. On the rare occasions I have to bring my 6.4 Tonne vehicle from work I can only access my house from Warrington Road. All large vehicle like the Dray truck for the Star Pub and a number of vehicle in excess of 7.5 Tonnes that service the shops on Albany Roads, all have to use Warrington Road. Similarly, Whittbarrow Road which is a continuation of Warrington road and is the other route to the centre of the village narrows considerably by the entrance to the Golf Course. This is a pinch point where cars can only pass one at a time and has been the scene of several collisions. It gets very busy at peak times. Because of the narrowness and unsuitability for larger vehicle most traffic uses Warrington Road. Warrington road is very dangerous because it has an entrance for Statham School on a narrow section of road on a blind bend. My wife worked there for several years and all three of my children attended school there. We have seen many accidents and near misses over the years. It is regularly congested and I have even had to call the police to a road rage incident because of traffic delays. Warrington Road is a walking route to school for many children attending Statham School and the attached Little Foxes Nursery. Traffic is already heavy and peak times the pollution levels are high. Warrington Road is also used extensively by the Riding schools in this area. Not only do they use the fields but its currently used to train young and inexperienced riders how to use the road. Very many children in this area use these stables.

Putting 400 houses onto Warrington road will have a massive impact on the road . Its important to see where the traffic will exit because the other two routes Star Lane/ Barsbank and Whitbarrow are constricted all traffic exits onto the A57 Stockport Road. This junction is very dangerous and complex. Stockport road has a 40 mph limit . There are two blind bends on either side of the Junction on one side there is also the busy entrance to ADS Recycling a business that operates a fleet of Skip vehicles. On the other side is a sharp bend and a slip road for the turn to Thelwall. Traffic into Thelwall is busy not least because an illegal Airport Car park operating from |Caddicks Nursey that WBC has continued to fail to close. This junction is very dangerous and is a frequent site of collisions. Adding 400 houses here is going to cause traffic chaos. We suffer from noise pollution from the M6 Thelwall Viaduct, we all received compensation for this about 20 years ago. These houses will be much closer to the motorway than we are so it will have an impact. We are about 500m from the motorway in Star lane, these new houses are much closer so they will suffer the full effect of Particulate pollution from the Motorway.

A recent application to tear down the Lymm Hotel (The Brazil World Cup Team and PELE stayed there) on Whitbarrow Road Lymm to build new retirement flats, was granted by WBC. Both of the Lymm Doctors surgeries opposed the application because they are already at capacity and cannot meet the needs of more residents. That application was for 80 residents so how are they going to cope with up to

1000 residents. Most of us are lucky enough to be able to walk to our Doctors surgeries but people on this new development will be faced with a drive. If WBC ignore the views of our GP's and overrule them over the Lymm Hotel it shows a fundamental lack of understanding of what our community needs.

Appleton/Stretton/Grappenhall

The proposal to put 7000 houses in this area is just completely unsustainable. It breaches all 5 purposes of the Green Belt. It destroys the boundaries between communities some even mentioned in the Saxon Chronicles pre dating the Domesday book. This area has already had a huge expansion in housing. The council has not improved the road infrastructure so we already have huge traffic jams coming from the small roads that lead off from the estates. Traffic has got worse at the motorway junctions and on the London Road, Stockton Heath route into Warrington. These roads are already at over capacity and regularly end in Gridlock. With addition of the massive developments at Stobarts and SIX56 which should have been in this plan but were rushed through will put thousands of HGV/LGV's on the same roads not to mention the hundreds of cars commuting to these site. The development of 7000 houses will cause complete traffic shutdown on the inadequate road network. The destruction of Warrington's Green land will mean we are not sustainable. We are doing nothing to offset the CO2 produced by our population in our own plan area so we are effectively exporting it to our neighbours.

Western Relief Road

The Western Relief Bridge and road may on paper seem like a solution to our traffic situation but in fact it's going to cause more traffic. If you take a map of the northwest and draw a straight line from the centre of Liverpool to junction 20 on the M6 it would take you over the Western link bridge. In addition it's the first Toll free crossing from the Mersey travelling from the west. It's been a massive miscalculation by WBC. It is going to attract traffic that currently going via Runcorn or the M6/M62 interchange.

Warrington Hospital

There are plans to relocate Warrington Hospital but they don't appear in this plan. The location of the hospital will have a massive impact on the town and surrounding communities. There can be few more important locations and it should be at the heart of the transport plan. Its yet another massive whole in a plan lacking in detail. We would be much better rebuilding the Hospital on its own site with its existing well established infrastructure. Whiston Hospital is an excellent model that we should use. It would fit on the site and if you built exactly the same building it will:

- Be working to a proven existing model
- Cut down substantially on design costs
- Will have existing contractors who will have known costs so the budget should be easy to control.

Peel Hall

North Warrington has been overdeveloped. It has very few Green Spaces. Peel Hall is one of those places that I have visited. It's a place that is loved with a passion by the local people. If this site is lost then for many people less able to get around it would be a drive or a bus trip to get to a similar area. Its loss to more generic development would damage that community.

The Failure of the Process of the Plan

We have just had a Pandemic and still have high levels of covid, at time of writing 1 in 50 people are believed to be carrying the disease. People are still cautious about coming out, So why has the consultation period not been extended to give everyone a chance?

With so many factors changing from population, Brexit Climate change etc why are we having a rigid plan for 20 years at a time of great change when we could have two 10 year plans giving the town the ability

The Councillors have NOT been holding surgeries so local people have not had the access to represent their views or ask questions about this plan.

The "Meet the Leader" series of public meetings was a complete SHAM. Everytime an issue was raised about the plan the question was either in my case not answered or given a non comittal answer. This will be given by the council Leader as evidence of listening to and consulting the Public. It has been nothing of the sort and there has been genuine anger.

The Council Leader has behaved disgracefully. People who obviously could not attend meetings have been berated in the Council Chamber as "Keyboard Warriors" merely for discussing the plan in Public. He has not answered emails and when people have sent a follow up email he has said he doesnt want to hear from them.

The complete failure to engage with the Public is a breach of the planning procedure and the Nolan Principles.

The Quality of the plan document is very poor and lacking in detail. The Maps are tiny and cannot be read. There are no place name to locate each part of the map. An example of this failure are the Allotment holders on Star Lane in Statham who had not realised their allotments were on the plan until they were shown a more accurate map drawn by a local graphic artist. I believe this was a failure to carry out their duty to inform the public .

Time after Time Warrington Borough Council has failed to facilitate questions and information. The original outline plan was objected to by thousands of people yet the plan stands very largely unammended having ignored both the wishes of the people and the huge changes in circumstances.

Conclusions

- This plan is full of holes because the council has put several strategic developments such as Stobarts and SIX56 and the Hospital all outside the Plan. These all break the 5 Purposes of Green Belt and would not stand up to scrutiny from a planning inspector; this is why they have been put through out of sight of the plan. Warrington residents not only had to look at both Local Plan and transport plan concurrently effectively halving the time available to give both proper scrutiny; it has at the same time pushed through other large applications so residents have been overwhelmed with planning applications and not had proper time to consider them. It's simply impossible to consider either the Local Plan or Transport Plan without these. As a result the Local Plan and Transport Plan are incomplete, vague and unfit to stand as planning instruments.
- Both Local Plan and Transport plan are based on "information" that is very highly selective. The Population growth figures used by WBC were chosen from a year of higher birth rate and immigration. They simply don't match the situation in 2019 where it has been established immigration is much lower and we are in a period of sustained falling birth rate. Using the WBC figures in a 20 year plan will mean we have made decisions for 2039 based on data that is over 30 year out of date. We have had very little information about Brownfield alternatives to Green Belt development. There is little or no documentary evidence about pollution and sustainability from the council side. In short they have offered very little information to support the claims they make in this plan. What little there is lacking in detail, out of date and quoted highly selectively .I would like the Planning inspector to have a very close look at what is being claimed because it simply does not stand up to scrutiny.
- Trying to put a 20 year plan in place and locking the Borough into irreversible changes at a time of Brexit uncertainty and a collapse in high street retail is simply unsound. We should set the minimum period possible and use the 5 year reviews to increase the development figure if needed.
- Warrington has seen unprecedented rapid growth in the last 40 years. It hardly has time to draw breath before the next development. We have just had a massive expansion of distribution centres on the old Burtonwood airbase site. The impact of this has still not been assessed for its impact on pollution, traffic. The massive growth of the Omega site as it is now called and HGV/LGV are running in and out of sites both sides of the M62. Its having a huge impact on the local communities, New plans such as Stobarts SIX56 Peel port are Generic and just more of the same. They don't offer anything new or make a special case to break the 5 purposes of Green Belt.
- The Green Belt is not being respected in this Plan. The 5 purposes of Green Belt are very clear but they are not even mentioned in most cases by WBC. No attempt has been made to minimise the use of green belt land. The council have drawn lines through existing Green Belt all over this plan. Most worrying at a council meeting to discuss the expansion of Stobarts (which proposed to use extensive amounts of Green Belt Land for yet another distribution centre) One of the only

Neighbourhood Plans was in place. It didn't even get a mention in the planning process by WBC. The area designated by the Neighbourhood plan as Green Belt was completely ignored. Development in the Green Belt can and should be replaced by brownfield development. This should be done by having an up to date list of brownfield site and a review every 5 years of what sites are coming available. WBC has a green belt first policy. The 7000 houses in the Appleton, Grappenhall and Stockton Heath area will destroy the distinctiveness of these Saxon and Viking villages into an urban suburb breaking the fundamental rules of Green Belt. I am asking the inspector to test the claims by WBC against the 5 purposes' of Green Belt.

- WBC has admitted on many occasions that it has outgrown its infrastructure and it is currently suffering because it is overwhelmed by its population and traffic. This plan and the transport plan don't offer any answers to this problem but does offer huge unnecessary expansion. This will turn a bad situation into an unmanageable one with traffic gridlocked and harmful pollution across the borough. There is simply no room or capacity to growth without a full overhaul of infrastructure. The Western Link is going to cause many more problems than it causes. The Tram solution is a fantasy and the people behind the suggestion lack any credibility or experience. Their claims need to be carefully examined. A tram could not be built in the timescale so cannot be considered as solving problems in this plan which exist today.

This whole plan was laid out in the Preferred Development Option by WBC. It received universal thumbs down with over 4500 objections. WBC failed to take any of those comments on board and have put out exactly the same plan. Major developments have been left out of the Plan such as the huge distribution parks at Stobarts and Six56, and the new Hospital site will have a dramatic effect on both the local plan and Transport Plan. These have been left out either to be hidden from the Planning inspector or because the Plan is not ready to be considered as a whole. A local plan should be ready to go not a flatpack of part swith a dodgy spanner.

I would ask that the whole plan is sent back to be re written this time taking the views of the people who live here People here are not Nimbys they understand the need for a plan but it's got to be fit for purpose, sustainable, deliverable but above all OUR plan. People oppose this in great numbers. Please don't pass this unsound plan over the heads of the people; give it back to you and we will give a plan for communities and people, not a bonanza for construction companies. We stand to lose our air quality, our quiet roads our distinct ancient communities, our beautiful wildlife. We recognise it is a very difficult job but we all have faith that an independent planning inspector will see this plan is unsound, respect the people who must live with the outcome for 20 years and throw it out

I started with a quote from the former leader of the council made in 2017 at the start of this process so I will end with a quote from thre Current Leader:

"We have listened and responded to public feedback and will continue...its vital the plan continues to be shaped by the people of Warrington" Russ Bowden current leader of WBC

This has simply NOT happened.

Thank You

Martin Jones

Warrington Resident