

Warrington Draft Local Plan 2021 - feedback to Warrington Borough Council
Sent by email to localplan@warrington.gov.uk

From: Mr Roderick Furnell, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Date: 15th November 2021

To: Local Plan, Planning Policy and Programmes, Growth Directorate, Warrington Borough Council

Below are my comments on the Warrington Draft Local Plan 2021.

Positives

I am pleased to see :

- The Plan has a reduced housing target.
- Fiddlers Ferry is now included within the Plan for employment and housing.
- The reduction in the amount of land to be removed from the Green Belt.

Concerns

The Plan does not explicitly require Brown Field development to take place before taking new land from Green Belt. Is this justifiable given if it becomes evident over time that the housing need is lower than the numbers forecast in the Plan, then it may well lead to unnecessary and irrecoverable loss of Green Belt?

The introduction of Thelwall Heys into this version of the Plan is a surprise for the following reasons:

- Previously this area has been identified by developers as desirable for development and in 2006 WBC successfully defended this area as Green Belt. What has changed that justifies WBC taking the opposite position and now promoting removal from Green Belt?
- The Plan suggests removal of Thelwall Heys from Green Belt can be considered as 'rounding-off'. Previously WBC designated this area as having Special Landscape Character Status and distinctive from surrounding areas. Is it justifiable to now abandon that designation, and the additional landscape richness it brings to the wider area, by sacrificing it to 'rounding-off'?
- The Plan appears to indicate a significant benefit of removing Thelwall Heys from Green Belt is that it enables early development (in other words, a 'quick win' for housing build). Is it justifiable to remove this land from Green Belt for a 'quick win'?
- Access to the 300+ proposed houses appears to be via Cliff Lane. Traffic exiting the development to head South will be constrained by the single lane route under the Cliff Lane canal bridge which is also prone to flooding. This traffic may exacerbate exit congestion for traffic heading North which will have to cross and join a very busy Knutsford Road. Is this access strategy viable?

- The Plan briefly restates the NPPG identification of how Green Infrastructure can deliver Mental and Physical Health benefits. However otherwise there is no obvious focus on Mental and Physical Health and Well Being. The Coronavirus pandemic has demonstrated very clearly the Mental and Physical Health benefits of existing Green Infrastructure as many more people have taken to walking and cycling. This is clearly the case along those sections of the Trans-Pennine Trail, the Bridgewater Canal and Cliff Lane that bound the existing Green Belt area of Thelwall Heys. Is it justifiable to abandon that Green Belt and the positive contribution it makes to the Mental and Physical health of Warrington residents?

More broadly:

The Plan will generate significantly increased levels of traffic for employment, education, shopping and recreational journeys. This will place substantially increased pressure on existing routes crossing the Bridgewater Canal and the Manchester Ship Canal that are already struggling for adequate capacity and throughput. Alongside congestion, delays and general road user frustration, this will also generate additional levels of harmful emissions impacting negatively on air quality. There does not appear to be either a Traffic Management or Infrastructure Plan to manage this additional traffic burden. Given the Likely piece-meal nature (in timing and location) of the proposed housing and employment development, is it justifiable to omit traffic management and infrastructure proposals to specifically address these issues?

Health services provision (GPs, Dentists and Hospital) is already under significant pressure in Warrington, but there is no clarity in the Plan about how and when these services will be enhanced to cope with the increased population numbers. Is this a viable approach to ensuring the Physical and Mental Health and welfare of existing and new Warrington residents?

Thankyou

R K Furnell