

[REDACTED]

From: James Mann [REDACTED]
Sent: 15 November 2021 16:01
To: Local Plan
Subject: Prepared submission Version Local Plan 21

Dear Warrington Borough Council / Planning Policy & Programmes Team,

I write in response to the latest proposal for the prepared submission version Local Plan 21.

We are quite shocked and taken a back that after the previous consultation, where detailed and specific points were outlined, and plenty of time has passed to enable re-consideration of various elements that there is so little real change in the proposal as it impacts South Warrington. There is no way that this plan comes across as anything close to being a sound plan.

Un-suprisingly this leaves myself and many other local residents both with the impression that the consultations (e.g. previous) are superficial procedural steps by the council planning department, not actually taking the objective views of the community, clearly and repeatedly stated into consideration, and making substantial changes to the proposed plan accordingly. Our household do not consider the consultation process to have been sound. Quite curious to us, and how ironic, that all the direct consultation has been North of the borough, in the area (due to traffic congestion to cross the canals and river via the bottlenecks) it is very hard to get to. I do not see any credible reason not to have held the consultations spread over time in an accessible place to local residents. For example there is a large secondary school premises with 2 large halls, several churches, and a hotel with large capacity. The fact that last time the consultation on one night in the hotel caused local traffic congestion illustrated 2 things. 1. The number of people interested/concerned who turned up is huge. I know the number who turned up to Halliwell Jones Stadium were much less 2. The transport infrastructure in South Warrington is already cripplingly constrained (one of the core reasons why this plan is not sound), as a result of previous developments with no improvement to infrastructure.

The first and important point to state clearly, is that we do actually support the need for an effective Local Plan, and Local Transport Plan, agree some development is both necessary and appropriate, and some small release of green belt at some stage in the future may be necessary. To any sensible resident / citizen this is obvious, for practical, not just legal reasons. In this respect we are aligned with the Council and appreciate a process is being conducted to bring such plans forward.

However, where we are consistently strongly opposed to the approach to the plans, and our dominant concerns on its unsoundness are as follows:

1. Environment, Climate change & Greenbelt. The principle exist to preserve Greenbelt, not to find ways to justify its release. The starting position should be no loss of greenbelt, and then any releases carefully justified, with any actual releases deferred to as later as possible so that projections on housing can be reviewed, and after all other options are close to exhaustion. This is clearly the opposite to developers aspirations, and the lack of enhancements/reductions from previous versions of local plan leads to a conclusion that the objections raised were overruled by the aspirations with respect to developers interest, pressures and enhancement for the council. I would like to know in writing any commitments the council received from any developer to fund infrastructure in return for a more generous release of greenbelt. I do not believe the council has been transparent on this point, and would like to see some clear statements. Looking at diligence, I am curious as to what the Arup Green Belt report does not classify all Greenbelt land impacted. For example the land south of the A49 Cat & Lion junction is not classified for Greenbelt, and is heavily impacted by the proposal. The objective is not to fill in land from urban developments up to adjacent motorways/major roads. The rationale for proposing Green Belt in Stretton Village as weak contribution to Green Belt is not justified.

There is huge focus on climate/environment, for good reason. Warrington has a shockingly bad environmental/air pollution performance. Green Belt land helps protect the current levels, and releasing large swathes with increased vehicle transport (especially idle/queuing/stop/start) makes it worse.

2. Transport. Anyone who lives in South Warrington today knows perfectly well how inadequate the transport was even before the last set of housing planning approvals. And now already it is worked. I have not seen effective delivery of the previous mitigation measures which were condition of previous planning approvals, and already have low trust based on that. The Local Transport Plan 4 looks beautifully written, and very engaging, however it doesn't recognise or address the existing substantial problems, and in reality a very superficial document, that doesn't provide credible plan for the unique complexities of both canals and topography height elevations of about 80 metres height difference between centre and plan of South Warrington, and unspecific information on Mass Transit System (still – no change since previous consultation). The examples we live with M56 J10 back ups onto carriageways at peak times. Cat & Lion Junction woefully overloaded. Despite 1973 plan, and the points raised, there is still a conceptual plan for another road junction between M56 J10 and A49 Cat & Lion, not the true need linking M56 J10 directly. The Transport Plan is in itself not credible, nor allows a thorough impact assessment of development proposals and therefore is not a sound basis for a Local Plan. Really disappointing that previous consultation feedback wasn't paid more attention to.
3. Predicted Growth: Simply that lack of use of latest predicted growth figures, and using older figures with an additional uplift is not a sound basis for a Local Plan, with the above 2 considerations, both of which are counter-intuitive to growth projections anything over the minimum. It would appear the rationale for growth is to justify the need to release as much Greenbelt land as proposed for housing.

I am disappointed that the council has wasted so much time, and so much public money (directly and with consultants/advisors) has been consumed on plans which are not sound for so many reasons. More robust work earlier with proper engagement of local community, and effective follow up to consultation would have been more effective, and likely already resulted in a prepared submission version local plan and local transport plan, that sufficient sensible residents would have supported.

I sincerely hope that the council will take a more sensible approach.

If not, and these plans are submitted unchanged for review by an independent inspector, that such inspector looks very carefully at the plans, takes time to understand the unique geographical features/infrastructure of the South Warrington Area, the pre-existing problems dating back years, and the multiple specific concerns on soundness raised by so many residents, and qualified experienced professionals not employed by the council.

Regards,

James Mann, family and neighbours,

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of James Mann.