



Proof of Evidence

# Vol 6 – Climate Change

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Rule 6 Party

Peel Hall - APP/ M0655/W/17/3178530

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## 0 Proof of Evidence – Climate Change

### 1 Personal Details

- 1.1 I am Peter Black, a Chartered Town Planner with experience of over 20 years in town planning, transport, climate change and sustainable development. I served as an elected Councillor in Warrington 1995-2001 and am familiar with the site.

### 2 Scope of Evidence

- 2.1 This evidence covers climate change and why the current planned development will increase climate change gas emissions contrary to central and local Government policy. It explores an alternative that would create a sustainable development that reduces emissions.

### 3 Introduction

- 3.1 David Attenborough – **‘We are facing a man-made disaster on a global scale. Right now, we are facing our greatest threat in thousands of years. Climate change. Scientists across the globe are in no doubt that at the current rate of warming we risk a devastating future. The science is now clear that urgent action is needed. What can be done to avert disaster and ensure the survival of our civilisations and the natural world upon which we depend?’**
- 3.2 One of the three NPPF overarching objectives includes **‘... mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.’**
- 3.2 Since the original planning application was made, and since the initial Public Inquiry the world has moved on:
- Parliament declared a Climate Change Emergency in May 2019
  - Government has made many commitments and policy decisions on climate change
  - Warrington Borough Council declared a Climate Change Emergency in 2019
- 3.3 These are serious developments to tackle a serious situation. Wiki defines an emergency as **‘a situation that poses an immediate risk to health, life, property, or environment. Most emergencies require urgent intervention to prevent a worsening of the situation’.**
- 3.4 The Court of Appeal ruled in February 2020 that the Government unlawfully ignored the UK’s climate commitments. While this related to a 3<sup>rd</sup> runway at Heathrow, the decision has implications for planning decisions across the UK, including Peel Hall.
- 3.5 Transport was the largest emitting sector of UK greenhouse gas emissions in 2018 (28%), much arising from personal car journeys. Reductions since 1990 have been negligible (3%). We must change the way we travel; new communities must not be car dependent. It means careful consideration of where new development is located, and how we design new communities.
- 3.6 The car-dependent urban sprawl proposed at Peel Hall does not meet new tests on climate change that are required by recent policy developments and Court decisions. We think there are potential forms of development including on the Peel Hall site that make best use of land that meet the terms of an ‘Emergency’ as declared by the UK Parliament.
- 3.7 While this proof focusses on transport climate change emissions, the development aspires to the lowest legal standard for building emissions – there is no mention of district heating, renewable energy generation or anything else that would reduce emissions.

## 4 Warrington

- 4.1 In Warrington **car traffic** increased by about 8% from 2000 to 2015, but **cycling** dropped as a proportion of travel to work from 3.5 to 2.8% - about 20%, and in absolute terms by 12%. Fewer people **walk** compared to either northwest or national averages, and the trend is towards less walking. **Bus** use declined precipitously by 43% (from 11.5 to 6.6 million journeys) in the five years to 2016. Only 10% of Warrington's residents use active travel to get to work. This is far lower than the national average and other New Towns (50% lower than Peterborough at 15%).
- 4.2 **In 2016, road transport created 37% of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in Warrington.** The only possible conclusion is that Warrington has a sustainable travel crisis., and that this has fuelled the emission of climate change gases in Warrington.
- 4.3 Traffic dominance brings many issues apart from climate change:
- **Obesity and other health issues.** Hospital admissions where obesity was a factor is increasing at health clinics. In Warrington schools over 20% of reception and 30% of Year 6 children were overweight and obese. This is a shocking indictment of the lack of opportunities for and promotion of active travel in Warrington housing developments.
  - **Local Air pollution** is the top UK environmental risk to human health, and the greatest threat to public health in Warrington after cancer, heart disease and obesity (all worsened by car dependency). It shortens lifespans and damages quality of life. The Warrington AQAP requires over 40% reductions in motorway and town AQMAs. Poor air quality caused by car-dependency leads to several hundred additional deaths in Warrington every year.
  - **Accessibility** For those without access to a car, the dominance of vehicular traffic makes it much harder to get around, deters journeys and reduces quality of life.
- 4.4 Opportunities for sustainable travel in the Peel Hall area are sparse, so existing residents are car dependent. Car commuting is high and increasing. Other options are unviable:
- **Bus:** services are limited, infrequent, expensive, and their use is declining.
  - **Rail:** Birchwood, Warrington BQ/Central and Newton-le-Willows all involve a slow, unreliable bus, or a car/taxi access journey; cycling to stations is indirect, inconvenient, and dangerous.
  - **Cycle:** Almost no safe or convenient cycling routes anywhere in the area. Traffic dominance makes cycling unpleasant; major roads are a huge physical and psychological barrier.
  - **Walk:** Traffic dominance makes walking generally unattractive. Many routes and pavements are not suitable for those with mobility needs including mobility scooters and prams.

## 5 Peel Hall – proposed development

- 5.1 The overall development at Peel Hall proposes 1,200 units on 69 hectares – an average density of about 17 homes per hectare. This is a low density even by the low standards of volume builder speculative estates and is hugely wasteful of land.
- 5.2 The current parameters plan suggests a layout along a spine road that is easy to access by car, and easy to reach major Motorways that would be constructed for vehicles, not people.
- 5.3 Other proofs highlights the inadequacy and temporary nature of bus provision. As Warrington bus use has almost halved in six years, it stretches credibility to think that the modest, tortuous, slow bus route proposed will attract new residents to public transport.

- 5.4 Rail use is suggested via Birchwood or Warrington Central. These would all involve a slow, unreliable bus journey. Any Car/taxi access journeys would add to local congestion and danger. Parking at stations is limited. Cycling to these stations would be indirect, inconvenient, and dangerous as no improvements are proposed to cycle routes off-site.
- 5.5 The estate layout will be dominated by cars. Cycle and pedestrian provision is derisory and even if residents could get off Peel Hall safely, cycle and walking provision in Warrington is largely non-existent. It is hard to see anyone walking or cycling along the A49 by choice.
- 5.6 Overall, it would be hard to find a site in Warrington that was worse for encouraging public transport, walking, or cycling.
- 5.7 Almost all journeys outside the estate and most within will be by private car or taxi with associated problems of congestion, poor health (both from lack of exercise and air pollution) and increasing climate change gas emissions. This applicant has been unable to demonstrate that there will not be chaos on the local road network.
- 5.8 The appellant has not provided any figures on climate change gas generation by the development for transport or for the development when occupied. The Environmental Statement does not make a single reference to climate change apart from a quote from NPPF on the importance of climate change - which is then ignored.
- 5.9 The estate and associated transport demand will be a significant emitter of carbon dioxide which goes against local and national policy and declared Climate Change Emergencies.

## 6 An alternative future

- 6.1 There is a clear alternative. The dominant form of urban development in northern Europe is the 'compact city' model. This produces much higher densities (typically 60 to 100 dph), usually in dwellings with a larger floorspace than typical UK dwellings. This allows viable concentrations of both city and local services with the potential to provide both fixed public transport links and high quality, attractive and convenient walking and cycling links. Communities have much lower car use, accessibility is improved for most people, not just individuals with access to a car. As a result, compact cities enjoy a much higher quality of life.
- 6.2 Examples of 'Compact City' development are seen in the UK, for instance at Cambridge North. Entries for the Wolfson Economic Prize 2014 showed that high housing densities were compatible with a garden city atmosphere. The Shelter entry for the Hoo Peninsula gave 15,000 dwellings at 30 – 90 dph (average 60 dph). This included 40% open space and 37% affordable housing. I have studied examples, for instance Freiburg (Germany) – see appendix and Ypenburg (Netherlands) that provide high quality housing but low carbon emissions.
- 6.3 Ghent (comparable to Warrington) created a car free centre to tackle traffic jams, pedestrian and cyclist safety, climate change gas emissions and air quality, and to improve town centre viability. Over just two years, the results were 30% less accidents, 15% more users for bus & tram and 27% more cyclists. This meant a substantial reduction in climate change emissions.
- 6.4 To the east of Warrington, Greater Manchester aspires to be 'carbon neutral and accommodate all growth to 2035 without any additional car journeys. They have a clear strategy for effective delivery of a public transport, cycling and walking network that makes active travel a viable choice.

- 6.5 Sustainability means building in locations that are well-placed for high quality public transport and good local facilities and have a genuine potential for high levels of walk and cycling.
- High quality public transport – frequent rail-based or other quality mass transit, not just a couple of buses an hour with a slightly improved bus stop.
  - Developments that are built around walking and cycling, not around a road with car parking.
  - Local facilities mean the full range of shopping, leisure, and education, not an estate with a supermarket like Chapelford in West Warrington.
  - Developments are dense enough to make it viable to provide the walking and cycling routes, public transport and local facilities that are required.
- 6.6 Housing densities are critical. They are a key factor in increasing sustainability and reducing energy use. If more people are housed in the same area, then sustainable transport facilities become viable. The need for travel is reduced and high-quality walking and cycling routes can be provided and a much higher standard of public transport can be supported with lower subsidy and cheaper fares. Car dependency, noise and severance are reduced and air quality improved. Space that would have been used by roads and parked cars is available for people.
- 6.7 **We think that new housing development should be concentrated in areas of existing or potential high public transport accessibility, and at densities that encourage walking and cycling. The current low-density sprawl proposed for this greenfield site cannot be effectively served by non-car-based modes, and we should not pretend that it can be.**
- 6.8 A solution is to consult with the local community to agree the scale and density of housing to be built on Peel Hall, and for this to be significantly less than the proposal. Higher density accommodation could then be developed in or near the town centre, where public transport links are present. The majority of the Peel Hall site would then be developed as a Forest Park as a ‘Great Green Lung’ for north Warrington. The area would be a massive carbon sink that would mean the site helps in the fight against climate change rather than accelerating it. This would also benefit the local population, which suffers the effects of poor air quality on a daily basis.

## 7 Conclusion

- 7.1 **Climate change** is the biggest problem facing the world. Transport contributes almost 40% of CO2 emissions in Warrington. The climate change, environmental and obesity crises fuelled by car dependency in towns like Warrington exist now. We can already see similar towns where land-use planning and appeal decisions have reduced the need to travel, where public transport, walking and cycling are high quality and normal and where transport emissions and the health of local communities are far better than Warrington.
- 7.2 Cars, taxis and Lorries are not energy efficient and we cannot encourage unrestrained use. We know that bold steps are needed to make our development patterns more sustainable. We are facing major, irreversible climate change if we do not make significant changes as well as the public health challenge and costs from car dependency and lack of active travel.
- 7.3 Central Government and local government in Warrington are agreed there is a Climate Change Emergency. A **‘situation that poses an immediate risk to health, life, property, or environment.’** This emergency requires urgent intervention.

7.4 The Peel Hall proposal is oblivious to the well-documented threat of climate change. It will be low-density sprawl that will not only encourage travel but will encourage travel by private vehicles that are largely responsible for the inability of the transport sector to cut climate change gas emissions.

End of main document.

## 8 Appendix – Good European practice<sup>1</sup> – Freiburg, Germany

- 8.1 Freiburg is a small city of 230,000 people (comparable to Warrington) which builds around 1,000 houses a year. Although Germany doesn't have formal Green Belt, outward expansion of Freiburg is constrained by strict landscape designations. Housing growth has been concentrated in redevelopment areas 1-2 miles from the town centre. A typical suburb is Vauban, on a former military base 3km from the centre (very similar to the former RAF Burtonwood base in Warrington). Built 2000-10 it houses 5,000 people in 2,000 new dwellings with 600 jobs at a net density of 95 dph, mainly in human-scale 4 and 5 storey buildings with no high-rise blocks. Public transport and cycle use are both high and car use low. There are some local shops and a cafe, but as it takes 10 minutes either to cycle or take public transport to the centre, most people use central facilities. Despite the high density for a suburb, the quality of life is high, energy use and costs are low, and Freiburg is often cited as 'Germany's happiest city'. Warrington could choose this type of development too.
- 8.2 Freiburg is a good example of what is called a 'compact city'. There are numerous examples particularly in the Netherlands (Randstaat) and Germany where compact city development has created popular, high quality living which makes best use of land.

End of appendix

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<sup>1</sup> Personal experience – Peter Black visited Freiburg in 2017 and has extensive experience of other European developments.