



Proof of Evidence - Summary

Climate Change

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Rule 6 Party
Peel Hall - APP/ M0655/W/17/3178530

0 Summary 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 application was made, and 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 3rd runway at Heathrow, the decision is relevant to this appeal.

3.5 Transport was the largest emitting sector of UK greenhouse gas emissions in 2018 (28%), mostly from personal car journeys. Reductions since 1990 have been negligible (3%). New communities must not be car dependent but must be carefully designed and located.

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. There are opportunities including at Peel Hall site that make best use of land that meet the ‘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 NW/national averages, and the trend is towards less walking. **Bus** use declined precipitously by 43% (from 11.5-6.6 million journeys) in five years to 2016. Only 10% of Warrington's residents use active travel to get to work, lower than the national average and other New Towns (50% lower than Peterborough at 15%).
- 4.2 **In 2016, road transport created 37% of CO₂ emissions in Warrington.** Warrington has a sustainable travel crisis, and this has fuelled the emission of climate change gases.
- 4.3 Traffic dominance brings many issues apart from climate change:
- **Obesity and other health issues.** Increased hospital admissions where obesity was a factor in Warrington schools over 20% of reception; 30% of Year 6 children were overweight/obese.
 - **Local Air pollution** is the top UK environmental human health risk and responsible for hundreds of Warrington deaths. The AQAP requires over 40% emission reductions.
 - **Accessibility** - vehicular traffic dominance 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.
 - **Walk:** Traffic dominance makes walking generally unattractive.

5 Peel Hall – proposed development

- 5.1 Peel Hall proposes 1,200 units on 69 hectares =17 dph. A low density even by the wasteful standards of volume builder speculative estate. The parameters plan has a spine road designed to accommodate and encourage driving.
- 5.2 Other proofs highlight the inadequacy and temporary nature of **bus** provision. Warrington bus use has almost halved in six years. A modest, tortuous, slow bus route will not attract new residents to public transport. Rail use at Birchwood or Warrington Central would all involve a slow, unreliable bus journey. Any Car/taxi access journeys would add to local congestion and danger. Cycle routes are indirect, inconvenient, and dangerous.
- 5.3 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.
- 5.4 It would be hard to find a site in Warrington that was worse for active travel. Most journeys outside the estate and within will be by private car or taxi causing congestion, poor health (lack of exercise and air pollution) and increasing climate change emissions.

- 5.5 The appellant has not provided 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.
- 5.6 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 northern European urban development form is 'compact city' model. This has much higher densities (60-100 dph), in dwellings larger than a typical new UK home. This allows viable concentrations of services and makes both fixed public transport links and attractive and convenient walking and cycling links viable. Communities have much lower car use, accessibility is improved for most, not just drivers. As a result, compact cities enjoy a much higher quality of life.
- 6.2 Examples of 'Compact City' development are seen in the UK, at Cambridge North. The Wolfson Economic Prize 2014 demonstrated that high housing densities were compatible with a good quality of life. 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 built examples, for instance Freiburg (Germany - main proof) 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. And a substantial reduction in climate change emissions.
- 6.4 Greater Manchester intends to be 'carbon neutral and accommodate all growth without any additional car journeys'.
- 6.5 **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.**
- 6.6 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. We are facing major, irreversible climate change if we do not make significant emission reductions as well as facing a public health crisis and costs from car dependency and lack of active travel.
- 7.2 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. From this PI.
- 7.4 The Peel Hall proposal is oblivious to the well-documented threat of climate change. It will be low-density sprawl that will both encourage travel and encourage travel by private vehicles that are largely responsible for transport sector climate change gas emissions.

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