Warrington Local Consultation – November 2021

Have your say – deadline 15 November 2021

You can use this document to help inform your own response.

Warrington Borough Council is consulting on a revised Local Plan which will guide planning decisions until 2038. It updates the much-criticised 2019 version. The Council have taken on board many of the concerns raised by Croft Parish Council, and Culcheth and Glazebury Parish Council including:

* Reduction in housing requirement and reduction in plan from 20 years to 18 years.
* Allocation of the Fiddlers Ferry power station site for employment and housing.
* Removal of some of the Green Belt sites allocated for housing.

However, we think the Council could and should go further. The world has moved on since 2019. The **climate change and the environmental crises have deepened**. We are also in an **obesity crisis** largely fed by car-dependency and lack of active travel, yet the Local Plan is stillbased almost solely on 1960s principles of car transport, promoting largely dispersed, unsustainable, low-density housing. The Plan still proposes significant releases of Green Belt land including sites in Croft and Culcheth.

We believe the plan is not justified or effective and is currently unsound. While the Parish Councils will make a response on behalf of our communities, **individual responses are important too**.

The current plan remains wasteful of land, would destroy the integrity of the Green Belt, would entrench car dependency both in Warrington and the wider area, increase inequality, increase climate change gas emissions and ultimately be unsustainable and incompatible with a high quality of life either for existing or new residents who will live on estates with few facilities and be dependent on congested roads for work, education, shopping, and leisure trips.

**Specific improvements we would like to see before the Plan can be considered ‘sound’ include**:

* Reduction in the housing allocations in the 2019 plan from 18 to 17 years; the plan should be adopted mid-2023, giving 2021/2 and 2022/23 before adoption and then a clear 15 year housing allocation after adoption as required by Government.
* A normal 5% ‘flexibility’ allowance should be used - 10% has not been justified by the plan.
* Reassessment of urban capacity should take account of post-Covid realities that more major sites will become available during the plan period.
* Reassessment of building density requirements in urban areas outside the town centre.
* Full and fully independent review of the climate change implications of the plan.

**17 years x 816 x 5% ‘flexibility’ would mean sites for 14,565 homes needed**

**The Council state that 11,745 urban capacity is currently identified.**

**Further urban capacity will become available during the 15-year plan period – we have assessed this as around 4,000 homes, for instance from the hospital site, Padgate Campus, Bank Quay, and further retail decline, meaning no Green Belt release is necessary.**

On **Green Belt policy** we welcome rejection of most of the sites put forward by developers. We believe the changes suggested above would allow **retention of the current Green Belt boundaries with minor modifications for the plan period**. The case has not been made for the ‘exceptional circumstances’ required for Green Belt boundary alterations. **Sites OS1 and OS2 should be deleted**.

We welcome higher required densities in the centre of Warrington.But apart from the town centre density (50 to 130dph) these are still too low (30dph) to create sustainable neighbourhoods, and best practice is to specify habitable rooms per hectare and type (flat or house), which is not done in this plan. The current proposal could result in small, inflexible flats that provide poor living conditions and slums for the future.

**Outside the town centre, the plan should adopt a minimum housing density standard of 50 dph for houses and 70 dph for apartments**. Additional standards based on habitable rooms per hectare should also be designated.

The **Unilever and other sites around Bank Quay** will become available within the plan period. Yet this is excluded from the plan, a negation of planning. This **should be considered within the plan**

We remain concerned at the lack of integration between land use and transport planning. Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) was adopted in 2019, but progress has only been made is on schemes that increase road capacity, which points to the unsustainable nature of the local plan. Progress on walking and cycling has been glacial, the ‘First and Last Mile Transport Masterplan’ is unambitious –certainly not a masterplan, and there has been no progress on a transit system that is desperately needed to replace the bus network where patronage is imploding.

You can view the draft local plan and comment on-line at Warrington.gov.uk/local plan – copies are also available in public libraries, Parish Council offices and the town hall.

Remember to respond by the deadline

15 November 2021

**‘We are at a unique stage in our history. Never have we had such an awareness of what we are doing to the planet, and never have we had the power to do something about that. The future of humanity and indeed, all life on earth, now depends on us.’**

― David Attenborough