

Mr. M Bell
Planning policy and Programmes
Warrington Borough Council
Planning Policy Team
Buttermarket Street
Warrington
WA1 2NH

27th September 2017

Dear Mr Bell

Stockton Heath Parish Council Response

Warrington Borough Council Local Plan

Preferred Development Option, Regulation 18 Consultation, July 2017

I summarise, in this covering letter, the main points that Stockton Heath Parish Council wish to make in response to the consultation document on the Warrington Borough Council Preferred Development Option (PDO) covering the next 20 years. All the points SH Parish Council wish to see addressed and comments are contained in the appendix.

This letter with the appendix, reflect the views of both Parish Councillors and residents who have made contact with us.

The Parish Council is opposed to any development on green belt land, and in particular, that to the south of Stockton Heath village.

The Parish Council challenges the need to build 24,220 houses over the next 20 years. Using the normally accepted multiplier of 2.3 people per household, this equates to a population growth of 55,706 over that period. Using the Office of National Statistics and other sources, the forecast population growth for Warrington by 2037 is only 25,400. This, including the 5% increase used in the report and adding in the current backlog, equates to only 12,442 houses. The significant population increase used in the report is not adequately explained or justified.

The urban capacity (brown field sites) of 15,429 homes, quoted in the consultation document, would easily be able to cover the number required over the next 20 years based on the forecast population growth. Even more if the Fiddlers Ferry and Warrington Hospital sites become available.

We understand that Central Government has very recently issued, for consultation, guidelines for establishing housing need. This indicates that a minimum of 914 houses per year would be required to be built in Warrington. The Parish Council has not yet had the opportunity to interrogate and understand this number.

Should, however, the new Warrington Local Plan cover the more normal 15 years and use the Government minimum number (assuming guidelines are confirmed), the

housing number in the Plan could not be challenged and all the new houses could be built on brown field sites for the duration of the Plan. With a 15 year Plan, the housing number could even be increased to 1028 per year without touching green belt land. This approach would also be more likely to address lack of affordability, which is also one of the Governments objectives.

The Parish Council considers that no green belt land need be used.

The Parish Council is aware that, even before the consultation document was produced, there are proposals to build more than 1,000 houses on land outside the green belt to the south of Stockton Heath.

When the Warrington Development Corporation was in place and developing the expansion of the Town in the 1970/80's, a significant new road structure was planned, including a North/South expressway, which would have been in place before house building. The Corporation expected the Town to grow to a population of 200,000. The Corporation was disbanded prematurely before much of this was constructed. Warrington has, however, continued to grow and now has a population of over 207,000. Hence the almost daily grid lock we all experience, both in Stockton Heath village and elsewhere.

The Parish Council is opposed to any new significant development in the South before a road network, to cope with existing and new traffic volumes, is in place and the environmental impact on Stockton Heath village has been assessed and addressed.

The Parish Council understands that this may not now be possible without destruction of existing residential areas, both in the North and the South, and valued assets such as part of the Trans Pennine trail lost.

Should this be the case, development should not be permitted.

The Parish Council understands the need to have a local plan and that elements of the previous plan have been challenged. It is considered the PDO is an over-reaction and will not address the needs of the Town. The new plan should accommodate normal population growth, concentrating on affordable homes and social housing, should discourage disproportionate car growth and deal with existing traffic problems and air pollution.

The Parish Council would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the many briefing sessions that have been made available and ask you to take the views in this letter into account when developing the new draft local plan.

Yours sincerely,

Lara Jacob

Clerk to Stockton Heath Parish Council