

CWaC LOCAL PLAN ISSUES AND OPTIONS CONSULTATION

WESTMINSTER PARK RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION COMMENTS

1. Introduction

These comments refer mainly to Chester as our local area. They reflect our recent experience of development on Greenbelt along Wrexham Road in particular and many of our suggestions are born out of that experience.

2. Vision

VI 2 Principles

We support the principles outlined in the consultation document.

VI 3 Places

We support the principle of creating a Master Plan, but also of creating individual development briefs for each place that is selected for development. These briefs should be drawn up independently of construction companies and in consultation with the local community. They should reflect the individual needs and character of each place and work to their enhancement not to the builders' favour.

Infrastructure should be considered carefully and timed appropriately. Community centres should be provided which cater for the social needs of the new community – not just shops and schools but a community hall where local events can be held.

Decisions on areas for development should be made on the basis of evidence rather than whim. Studies should be made to identify where housing is needed, what type of housing is needed, where employment premises are needed, etc. Researching the journeys of people living in newly built estates such as Kings Moat on Wrexham Road will reveal more about the location of employment opportunities and facilities that are used. This could feed into the decision-making process.

3. Objectives

OB 5 The objectives in Option B are desirable but why should Options A and B be mutually exclusive? Many of these objectives are very generalised. How will they be applied to new developments and how will they be measured?

4. Sustainable Development

We support the approach set out in SD 1, however we would like to comment regarding transport. At the consultation stage of the Wrexham Road Development in 2017, the transport study suggested that new residents would largely rely on walking, wheeling and cycling as their preferred mode of transport. This is not the case as many residents are employed many miles away from their homes, the infrastructure promised has not yet been delivered and therefore many car journeys are being made to schools and shops and no account has been taken of the proliferation of deliveries of online purchases. We disagreed with the transport study at the time and we still disagree with it. Will realistic transport studies be made to assess the environmental impact of new developments?

5. Spatial Strategy

SS 2

In order to determine whether a stepped approach would be advantageous, it would be necessary to evaluate the availability of labour in the construction industry. This should feed into the provision of training opportunities made available to our young people and in turn the provision of courses in our further education system.

SS 4 Principles

We support the principle of developing urban redevelopment sites first whilst maintaining a high quality design which complements existing buildings, particularly in a historic city such as Chester.

If sustainability is the guiding principle for development, greenfield sites are not the solution. They lack adequate infrastructure, are often far from public transport routes and currently act as soakaways for flooding. Recent new regulations regarding sustainable urban drainage will make flood avoidance in these areas more difficult.

SS 5 - 8

Whatever the hierarchy, each development should be considered individually and an assessment made of the ability of the local infrastructure to absorb the additional population numbers. If adequate services cannot be provided in a given place then it is not appropriate to develop that site.

The Local Plan should not be planning from the point of view that every settlement should receive a set quota of new houses. Housing should be planned on the basis of need to provide for the people employed in the area, or on reasonable public transport routes to it.

SS 9 - 19

Greenbelt has been established to protect our country from urban sprawl. We believe that, wherever possible, building on it should be avoided.

If sustainable transport is high on the agenda, then Option C which emphasises growth around railway stations would appear to be the best choice, but only if the transport system is improved. Many local residents work in Liverpool, Manchester and further afield and services must be improved if they are to be encouraged to leave their cars at home.

SS 23 - 25

We are particularly against developing the Greenbelt along Lache Lane to the south of Chester as our communities south of the River Dee are struggling already to assimilate the additional residents moving into the Kings Moat development on Wrexham Road and the infrastructure and services (education, health, shops, transport, etc.) promised have not yet materialised. No more development should be planned in the area until the current development has been fully absorbed.

The Dale would seem to be an obvious area to develop, providing local services are included as above.

6. Chester

CH1 – 4

New housing developments should be located with a view to minimising travel by car to work, shopping and leisure destinations. It should promote the use of public transport such as buses and rail, and promote cycling and walking through minimising distances to facilities and the provision of safe cycling lanes and footpaths. Studies should be undertaken, and published, showing the current extent of cycling and walking and how they could be increased.

The plan should minimise new incursions into “greenfield” land and build on “brownfield sites” wherever possible. Emphasis should be placed on building on sites where planning permission has already been given.

We are concerned about the composition of the housing being built in Chester, in particular the affordable housing. There is a great need for affordable family housing whereas all too often large numbers of small flats are provided by developers to meet their current 30% quota. With the affordable housing quota rising to 50%, it is even more important to ensure that the housing made available matches the local need.

The Kings Moat development on Wrexham Road has been built without a community hub or even any shops at present. Any future developments of new communities of 1000+ dwellings should have these social features as standard to develop social cohesion.

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