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DATE

Response to Wirral's Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation 2020.

Dear Sirs,

I am writing to express concerns over the contents and conclusions of the Issues and Options Consultation document regarding Wirral's Local Plan.

After such a long wait for a Local Plan, it is disappointing to see so many aspects that work against the Council's stated desire and Preferred Option, a Local Plan based on regeneration of north and east Wirral and other urban areas.

My own desire is also to see a Local Plan which at last addresses the run-down nature of the once thriving, historic areas of Wirral including its Waterfront, Dockland and hinterland. Those places have both much potential and need in equal measure, and hold the key to improving the image of our Peninsula and more particularly the life chances, health and well-being of those in the most deprived areas.

Directing and restricting development largely to such areas would as a direct consequence also help preserve Green Belt, one of Wirral's greatest assets, making a massive contribution to the quality of life, health, the tourist industry and local economy, and which will play an increasingly important role in future in tackling Climate Change, securing food supplies and protecting wildlife and their habitats. There is certainly no need to destroy wonderful countryside with its distinct towns, villages and community life to appease landowners and developers who seek easier, short-term financial gains. Allowing new housing within Green Belt would stall rather than encourage much-needed regeneration elsewhere.

Many of the exercises supposedly providing evidence for the Plan appear seriously flawed and incomplete, and reach wrong conclusions. But the worst feature is the unrealistically high Housing Need figure of 12,000 new homes, which would be in addition to replacements, upgrades and conversions. So, this would mean around 20,000 homes and an additional population of 20 to 30 thousand. Surely, this is nonsense.

Such a high figure is simply not justified by historic or current trends and seems to stem from a Council running scared, unprepared to challenge a formulaic starting point as, I'm told, the Council has been urged to do by Secretaries of State, many local politicians, the majority of community and interest groups, and most importantly the people of Wirral in huge numbers.

Not challenging the figures for actual need gives landowners and developers an 'open goal' to argue for green belt development, emphasising the problems with delivering so much, so quickly through more difficult brownfield sites with unsecured funding. The solution and 'Preferred Option' should be to work with the support of so many groups and individuals, and put forward more realistic targets and proposals (backed by real local historic, current and future trend information) and get on with securing available Government and Public Sector funding.

After admission that, until last May's local elections, there was indeed an undisclosed, even refuted, policy of house-building in green belt in order to "kick start the local economy" and increase Council Tax receipts, the high figures and dire conclusions of reports leave one wondering.

Please take the opportunities on offer to produce a Local Plan based on much more realistic (lower) figures, ones suited to Wirral's needs and more likely to attract support and thereby succeed, which is what we all wish for.

Yours faithfully,

Signature

NAME