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12th November 2021

Warrington Local Plan, 2021-2038

Updated Proposed Submission Version, September 2021

Response to consultation, Great Sankey Parish Council

This correspondence is forwarded on behalf of Great Sankey Parish Council in respect of the current consultation on the Warrington Local Plan 2021-38.

The comments which are outlined below reflect the views of the Parish Council following discussion at the meeting held on 10th November 2021. In the main, our response relates to the proposed development at Fiddlers Ferry. We wish it to be known that Great Sankey Parish Council does not oppose the development and fully recognises the benefit it could bring to the town in terms of employment and housing. However, there are concerns about the impact of another large development upon the existing community of Great Sankey.

It is the view of the Parish Council and many of our residents that during the previous 20+ years, our area has undergone a massive increase in housing and mixed commercial developments, including Whittle Hall, Chapelford, Omega, Lingley Mere and Primrose Meadow. There has been additional development in adjoining parishes, such as Westbrook, with new housing and the Gemini Retail Park. These have all led to an increase in population and demand for social infrastructure, as well as increased pressure on the road network. Whilst there has been investment in the infrastructure, this has frequently been retrospective rather than proactive, and it is not felt by the Parish Council or residents that it has kept pace with the building projects.

We note that within the vision of the plan there is a commitment which stipulates that any new development should provide benefit to new and existing communities. The experiences of Great Sankey residents to date suggests that there will be a degree of cynicism regarding this statement. This scepticism is compounded by the fact that development in the town south of the Manchester Ship Canal has avoided the upheaval in development which Great Sankey and other neighbouring parishes have experienced, and this is reinforced by the reduction in the proposed development in the south in this updated version of the Local Plan. The growth of Warrington should be equally distributed across the town and Great Sankey Parish Council firmly believes that there should now be a greater emphasis on development to the south of the borough.

Fiddlers Ferry proposed development

The initial phase of the Fiddlers Ferry development will involve the building of 1300 new homes and areas of mixed-use employment land. It is likely that the majority of these 1300 homes will own one or two cars. Para 29-33 of the plan highlights the transport and accessibility statement for the site. It summarises the need for enhanced bus services and provision for active travel with improvements to the local and strategic highway networks, however Great Sankey Parish Council feels that this is insufficient. Based on prior experience, it is anticipated that routes within Great Sankey will be used by many residents and commercial vehicles for access to the site, particularly using J8 of the M62 and then local roads (Omega Boulevard, Skyline Drive, Lingley Green Avenue through to Stocks Lane, St Mary's Road or Lane Ends). These roads are already well-used and traffic levels will be exacerbated by the recent approval of the SW Extension of Omega for development by St Helens Council. The Western Link Road will also join with Cromwell Avenue and Sankey Way increasing the demands on the road network from the east side of the parish. The Parish Council cannot understand why, in order to facilitate the now approved Parkside development with St Helens, a new road is to be built for access from J22 of the M6 when no such infrastructure consideration appears to have been given to the Fiddlers Ferry site.

Great Sankey Parish Council are in support of the work suggested for improvements to enhanced public and active travel, but are mindful of the demands of current lifestyles, particularly for working families. In households where both partners are working, there is often a need to take/collect children to and from school as well as after school activities and sports clubs. Public and active transport is often not a viable option for many in terms of cost, timing, and route availability and whilst financial packages may be offered initially to support public transport, once this finishes, routes are often no longer sustainable. In our response to the previous version of the plan we suggested that local employers should be encouraged to consider the implementation of a flexible working week to ease demand on the road network. This point is still valid, especially in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic and would be beneficial across the town as a whole.

Para 10.3.24 confirms the need to conduct surveys relating to the habitats and use of the site by protected bird species and recognises that evidence will need to be provided that the development will not result in adverse effects on the Mersey Estuary SPA.

The Parish Council acknowledges the provision of green space within the site which is welcomed as there is a shortage of such areas in Great Sankey and Penketh because of the large amount of development which has occurred. Great Sankey Parish Council believes that every effort should be made to increase this green space with a guarantee that the identified areas will not be diminished at any point during the development of the site. Paras 10.3.23 and 10.3.24 recognise the importance of the Mersey Estuary SPA and the requirement that the development should not adversely affect the integrity of the SPA. Greater emphasis should be placed on protecting this area and using the green space within the site to add to the sustainability and future of the SPA.

In closing, Great Sankey Parish Council recognises that this is the final consultation on the Local Plan, but as a responsible body, we would ask that we are fully involved in the subsequent discussions and consultations that will be required to implement it.

Yours faithfully,

Karen Carter

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