

My Response to the revised Warrington Local Plan 2021

Susan Richardson, [REDACTED]

I am writing to respond to the new, revised Draft Local Plan which sets out the proposed basis for planning decisions in the town until 2038. It is a revised and updated plan following the initial version published in 2019.

Sadly, although there have been a small number of changes which I can welcome, including a slight reduction in the amount of Green Belt proposed to be taken, I am clear that hardly any of the objections I raised when I responded to the initial Plan in 2019 have been addressed.

I am a resident of South Warrington and I consider that if these proposals are adopted not only would the character and distinctive nature of South Warrington be lost forever, at the same time they would do nothing to support the success and development of the Town Centre of Warrington which is surely extremely important.

I object to this Plan on the basis that it is NOT SOUND.

- The strategy does not seem to be based on accurately and objectively assessed needs; I cannot see how or where the proposed development properly takes into account what is happening in Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Cheshire.
- There is no clear evidence of justification for the predicted growth and no objectively demonstrated need for the volume of housing in this area, nor the need for the release of Green Belt land;
- The Plan is neither effective nor deliverable as it has no clear demonstration of how the already very poor and over-stretched transport infrastructure of South Warrington can possibly cope with the massively increased levels of traffic which would result from the increased housing and employment infrastructure proposed. It also does not clearly set out how the increased need for health, social, education and leisure services will be met and within what timescale;
- The Plan is not consistent with national policy as it does not deliver sustainable development – there would be harm to air quality and local ecology; it would massively increase the number of car journeys made on an inadequate road infrastructure. This is completely inconsistent with the Climate Change agenda of the UK. It also does not deliver a sufficient quantity of affordable housing.

I wish to make representation requesting modifications to the Plan which would :

- Significantly reduce the number of houses proposed for South Warrington
- Take out any proposals for housing or employment infrastructure which would remove any part of the existing Green Belt, and instead look at more use of brownfield sites -of which there are still many- BEFORE any proposals for building on Green Belt
- Put forward an Infrastructure Delivery Plan which addresses the need for routes from the South East of Warrington which do not rely on three decaying Victorian Swing Bridges and a single track crossing across the Bridgewater Canal over a dangerous narrow bridge in a residential area (Red Lane)
- Put forward a properly costed and funded plan to address existing problems of congestion and air quality ALREADY being experienced in Stockton Heath and Lower Walton, at Junction 20 of the M6, Junction 10 of the M56 and the hugely problematic and congested junction by the Cat and Lion on London Road.

Below I will set out in more detail my concerns and supporting evidence.

I have looked at the latest proposals that the Council has put forward very carefully and recently attended a consultation event at Wolves Stadium. As a long term resident of South Warrington it is still my considered view that the proposals are **unsound and not fit for purpose**. The new proposals would still completely change the area, and would still destroy the nature of South Warrington and remaining open countryside. There are a number of key issues which are of major concern to me which I will set out below.

Environment, Traffic Management and Air Quality

Some of the most important issues to me which have not been adequately or appropriately dealt with in the plan are **environment, traffic management and air quality**.

South Warrington is already choked with traffic. The air quality in Stockton Heath and along London Road is already extremely poor. There are constant queues through Stockton Heath, along London Road to the Motorway and on the roads leading from Grappenhall and Appleton Thorn. There is nowhere in the plan any indication of how increased traffic arising from so many additional houses would be managed; how the geography of South Warrington (two canals, one major, and a river) will be managed when the additional houses are built, or how the already existing severe difficulties would be mitigated.

How would South Warrington residents get into town or through town?

Existing Victorian bridge crossings are old, in poor condition and already choked with traffic, particularly if the swing bridges are raised or if there is a problem on the nearby motorway network. Any new roads indicated simply link to existing roads which are already totally choked.

The new bridge crossing which runs at the back of Centre Parks is causing major problems for Stockton Heath residents as there are now significant numbers of cars travelling along Red Lane, across a narrow one track bridge with poor visibility and through residential areas. This traffic is set to increase and cause further problems. This route is dangerous and has clearly not been thought through.

The new Plan still does not put forward any clear routes for new highways, motorway junctions or canal and river crossings which would be needed to serve the proposed development. This would still effectively block South Warrington residents from accessing facilities in the town centre or the north of the town. The area is already gridlocked – the existing infrastructure could not possibly cope with so many additional houses, generating thousands and thousands of more cars onto the road network.

Given the likely size and cost of the proposed houses it is highly unlikely that residents would use public transport, even if it existed (current public transport in the area is quite simply very poor).

Air Quality in South Warrington is already extremely poor

The Plan still does not address the growing local and national concerns about the severe health hazard of air pollution. Pollution in the area is already significant and additional traffic will only worsen it considerably. Warrington is surrounded by motorways. If the open countryside which currently exists is destroyed, the mitigating effect of the countryside on gases and particulates will be lost and pollution will increase.

Impact on Key Services in the Area

If the number of houses proposed were built, there would be insufficient key services to support the local population. There is already significant pressure on services such as schools, GP surgeries, dentists and hospitals. It is totally unclear how these could be increased in the future.

The Plan predicts the need for more schools, medical facilities, shops etc. but there is no guarantee that these will be provided, when they will be provided, who will pay for them or how they will be staffed. Warrington Hospital is already stretched to breaking point and is in dire need of rebuilding.

Proposed Housing Numbers are still far too high and there is NO JUSTIFICATION for releasing Green Belt

Green Belt land should only be released in exceptional circumstances. The new Plan does not show convincingly what the exceptional circumstances are. More Brown Field sites are likely to be or become available and the Green Belt land is precious. We will never recover it once lost. In my view the environmental and ecological impact of the loss of Green Belt has not been properly assessed in the revised plan.

The Proposals are Undeliverable, Unrealistic and Unsound

The housing numbers which underpin the Plan are still way in excess of anything Warrington has achieved in the recent past and are not needed.

The poor traffic infrastructure and the geographical limitations of the area make the Plan simply undeliverable.

Loss of Character, Environment and Green Space

If the proposed developments go ahead, the whole character of South Warrington will be changed beyond recognition. Distinctive village communities will be subsumed into an urban mass and roads will be more choked and polluted than ever. Valuable environment will be spoiled and lost, and what is now a pleasant area to live in will no longer be so.

The plan would be a total disaster for South Warrington.