



Richard Buttrey



Objections to the Revised 2021 Local Plan

Please include the following in the council's consideration of public objections to the 2021 Local Plan.

I don't believe the proposed plan is consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021 in that as far as the South East Warrington Urban Extension (SEWUE) is concerned it fails to meet the soundness test. In particular sections 35 (b) and (d). The plan is not an 'appropriate strategy' and does not recognise reasonable alternatives. Neither are there exceptional circumstances for altering the green belt contrary to section 140 of the NPPF

In particular the plan fails to "protect and enhance valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity and fails to "minimise impacts on and provide net gains for biodiversity" contrary to sections 174 & 180 of the NPPF. It fails to prevent 'new development from contributing to or putting at unacceptable risk, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water and noise pollution". WBC has spent a lot of money on flood defences. Concreting vast areas of green fields which act as a rainwater sink will inevitably result in rain water run off exacerbating flooding elsewhere.

I am particularly concerned at the effect on Lumb Brook Valley.

The plan puts the ancient woodland at the Lumb Brook Valley at risk of irreparable harm with the proposed development adjacent to designated ASNW/LWS, the Dingle and Fords Rough. In addition irreparable harm will be caused by development directly adjacent to designated LWS Parr's Wood and Beech Wood. These sites contain a huge biodiversity which will be lost. They've already suffered significant encroachment through previous mass development without there being any buffer zone to these habitats. The development proposed by the current SEWUE will mean the woodlands are blocked in on all sides by mass housing and other development effectively isolating them from any supporting habitat.

The 2021 plan for the SEWUE ignores the earlier objections in the Woodland Trust's formal objection to the PDO 2017 / PSV 2019 proposed development sites. In spite of The Woodland Trust's formal objection to use of their woodlands as part of Warrington Borough Council's strategic green space in any draft Local Plan.

Although the revised plan has reduced the number of houses, the scale of the development is still vast. 4,200 houses are planned in Grappenhall, Appleton, Appleton Thorn and Stretton with 2,400 of them to be built before 2038. Coupled closely with this is a huge area of industrial development at the M6/M56 junction. The siting and scale of the development will totally destroy the character of the area changing it from a rural area with small villages into an amorphous urban sprawl.

No account has been taken of the significant developments in South Warrington these last few years. The council has not included the over 1000 new houses currently being built in South Warrington at Appleton Thorn, Appleton Cross, Grappenhall Heys, and Stretton. If these developments were included then the figure for new housing could be substantially reduced.

I am also aware that it is the current Conservative Government which has decided that 816 houses need to be built a year. This figure is disputed. The official increase in population predicts that there is a need for 528 houses to be built a year making the government's suggested figure of 816 a year far too high.

I can see no exceptional circumstance under the NPPF 2021 for the immense size of the proposals and the Green Belt is being significantly impacted. These areas are the green lungs of Warrington. With concerns about air quality everywhere it is perverse to be destroying the green environment. The existing greenbelt area was confirmed only 7 years ago in what was deemed to be a 20 year plan. There is now a large brownfield site at Fiddlers Ferry which will allow for 1,300 houses. This is an excellent example of what can be done and which should ease pressure on greenfield sites. I believe WBC can use other brownfield sites. The fact that developers don't like this because they can't make as large a profit shouldn't be a consideration.

Once green field sites have been developed there is no turning back and they will be lost forever. Warrington has declared a climate emergency, Now is not the time to be destroying the very spaces that mitigate the effect to climate change. During the climate emergency we need open spaces and tree planting rather than tarmac and concrete. It is more important than ever that people should buy local. Much of the greenfield area which will be destroyed is high quality agricultural land which should be providing food for the local population. The environmental or ecological impact of this large-scale development has not been assessed.

The quality of life is important. Over the last two decades there has been a huge loss of countryside. Even as I write there is a significant housing development taking place on what was a country walk past Grappenhall Cricket Club. It will now be an uninspiring walk though a housing estate.

There has been a great deal of media coverage about the destruction of our planet notably by the extinction rebellion movement. The COP26 meeting in Glasgow was all about cutting carbon emissions and saving the planet. Most of the population supports the fact that we should do everything in our power to protect our environment for the future. This development is doing the very opposite of that. WBC will be destroying our children's and our grandchildren's future.

Whether new homes will be eco-friendly is irrelevant if there is no eco to be friendly about. Once our countryside has gone that's it. Gone forever. The habitats of wildlife (animals, insects, flowers etc.) will disappear. Replacing these with occasional tree-planting and manicured linear parks is no substitute for raw nature. We need natural habitats for our flora and fauna to thrive and to absorb rainfall to prevent flooding.

Arguments that we need to provide affordable housing in Warrington are spurious. The term affordable housing is in the eye of the beholder and is a misnomer and largely meaningless. Affordable homes relate to the current house prices in the area. The so-called affordable houses in South Warrington are not affordable at all and that will be true of all the proposed developments. They will not be going to young Warrington people trying to get on the housing ladder. The houses will be bought either by Warrington residents who are in a position to afford more desirable houses but more likely by incomers from outside Warrington who want to use the area as a convenient commute to work since the proposed developments are close to the motorway network. They will not be helping our town centre's regeneration.

The use of the term 'Urban Extension' shows WBC is aware that it is changing an area of individual villages into a huge built up area. The motive is not unconnected with the council's desire to bring in large amounts of council tax.

There is no proper infrastructure built into the plan. Very few community facilities are guaranteed. I understand Grappenhall Heys School is to be expanded but no other schools, doctors' surgeries etc. are planned. South Warrington doesn't even have a fit-for-purpose sports/ leisure centre, provision never mind the idea of a community hub with all the services they provide. The current offering is a decrepit run down 1970s facility. The demand on the already poor facilities cannot sustain any further development.

With just four crossings of the ship canal, three of them rusty swing bridges, traffic is often gridlocked with the passage of ships. When the M6 Thelwall viaduct is restricted or closed then the whole town becomes a car park with all the attendant pollution that brings. This will not improve as thousands more houses are built. It is unrealistic to believe that even with all the good intentions that traffic should eventually be largely electrically driven, fossil fuels are going to be with us for a long time. It is delusional to think the town can cope with all the planned development and not suffer in terms of quality of life and health.

Despite the fact that budgets are being increasingly squeezed and local authorities have to find income to fund things like social care, this should not be primarily from huge developments which only allows greedy developers to take profits and move on elsewhere.

I object to the industrialisation of the area which is even more inappropriate than the scale of housing. Greenfield sites should never be destroyed for the purpose of building logistics sites. The local motorway junctions are already overloaded. Nor is there any justification for saying it will bring employment to Warrington. The town's unemployment rate is as low as it can possibly be.

(One can never achieve full employment). Any jobs which may come from the proposed 116 hectare industrial development on Green Belt at the M6/M56 junction for warehousing is not going to help Warringtonians. It is also questionable how many jobs will be created as warehouses are becoming more and more automated.

On top of this, the question of air quality needs to be considered. I am part of a walking and cycling family. Over the past weeks my wife and I have been monitoring the traffic and pollution whilst walking. Whilst not a strictly scientific experiment we have noted nevertheless a vast increase in traffic in South Warrington and have smelt, tasted and inhaled traffic fumes. All this pollution has been proven to harm people's health and our children are arriving and leaving school with this harmful pollution in our atmosphere. As parking on residential streets increases, traffic slows and pollution increases. When this is coupled by the ship canal bridges being off then the main A49 through Stockton Heath is at a standstill with a consequential increase in pollution. This problem will only be exacerbated by increased housing in the SEWUE and its consequent car ownership.

Much as WBC believes everyone will use the mythical "mass transportation" system (shades of an Orwellian future) they are misguided. The majority of affluent people buying houses in these new developments will have and use 2 cars. This means that places like Stockton Heath will be both gridlocked and highly polluted. There is little provision for mitigating the congestion either in the form of new roads, motorway junctions or canal crossings to service the proposed development. The diversion of Stretton Road to a junction with the A49 south of the Cat and Lion is only condition before work can start. The one ship canal crossing is west of the town which will help congestion in that area and which also will be advantageous to Peel Ports. The other canal crossings in the Warrington area are already working to full capacity, often being brought to a standstill.

It is vital that we maintain the character of our area. In France the 'community' is embedded in its culture. I believe that everyone in Britain also has a similar attachment and pride in the area in which they live. That means we must retain the idea of individual villages. The villages in South Warrington (Grappenhall, Stockton Heath, Walton, Appleton Thorn etc) have their own individual character and many residents volunteer in these communities in order to keep their identity. Just a few of the many examples of such community spirit - Grappenhall Community Library, Appleton Thorn Bawming of the Thorn, Live at St Wilfrid's, Stockton Heath Festival. This is just a small selection of what is happening in individual communities. This will be completely destroyed when South Warrington villages are merged into a vast urban sprawl and no one is attached to a discrete and local community. This is something we must strenuously avoid.

In short for these and other reasons that I've seen others are commenting about I do not believe the plan is justified, deliverable or meets the area's assessed needs.

Yours faithfully



Richard Buttrey