



Warrington South Western Urban Extension Secondary School Position

This briefing note has been drawn up on behalf of Peel L&P Holdings (UK) Ltd to review the secondary school position with regard to the needs arising from the proposed South Western Urban Extension (SWUE) as part of the Local Plan going forward.

It will conclude that across the Borough sufficient spaces will exist to meet the needs of the SWUE across Warrington through the Local Plan period. It will also conclude that while some local shortfalls of places may be identified, these can be resolved through the efficient working of the admissions system and the existing fluidity of school admissions across Warrington.

1. Introduction

1.1 The proposed site lies to the south west of Warrington immediately to the south of the Manchester Ship Canal (MSC). It was originally identified as a potential residential site by Warrington Borough Council (WBC) but has not been included within the latest version of the Local Plan - Reg 19 version dated September 2021. One reason for this is specified in the Development Options and Site Assessment Technical Report (September 2021 – Appendix 5, Option 5) on the basis that “... *there are likely to be pressures on existing infrastructure in south Warrington, in particular in respect of secondary school provision...*”. The site was originally identified as having the potential to yield 1,700 dwellings, but for the purposes of this paper, a figure of 1,800 has been adopted as being deliverable.

1.2 The WBC has a Planning Obligations SPD dating to January 2017, which uses a pupil product ratio (PPR) of 0.18 to calculate the approximate number of secondary age pupils likely to arise from new developments. When this is applied to the 1,800 dwellings currently proposed, a total of 324 pupils is calculated, representing approximately 2.16 Forms of Entry (2.16FE).





1.3 This paper will review the secondary position, both locally and for the Borough of Warrington to demonstrate that across the period of the Local Plan 2017-37 sufficient secondary school places will exist to meet, not only the needs of pupils arising from the SWUE but also from the totality of the housing identified within the emerging Local Plan.

2. Borough Situation

2.1 The proposed development site lies just south of the MSC close to the with Halton (Map 1). However, while some cross boundary movement is inevitable, as each education authority has responsibility for the children residing in its area, only the schools within the Warrington boundary will be reviewed here.

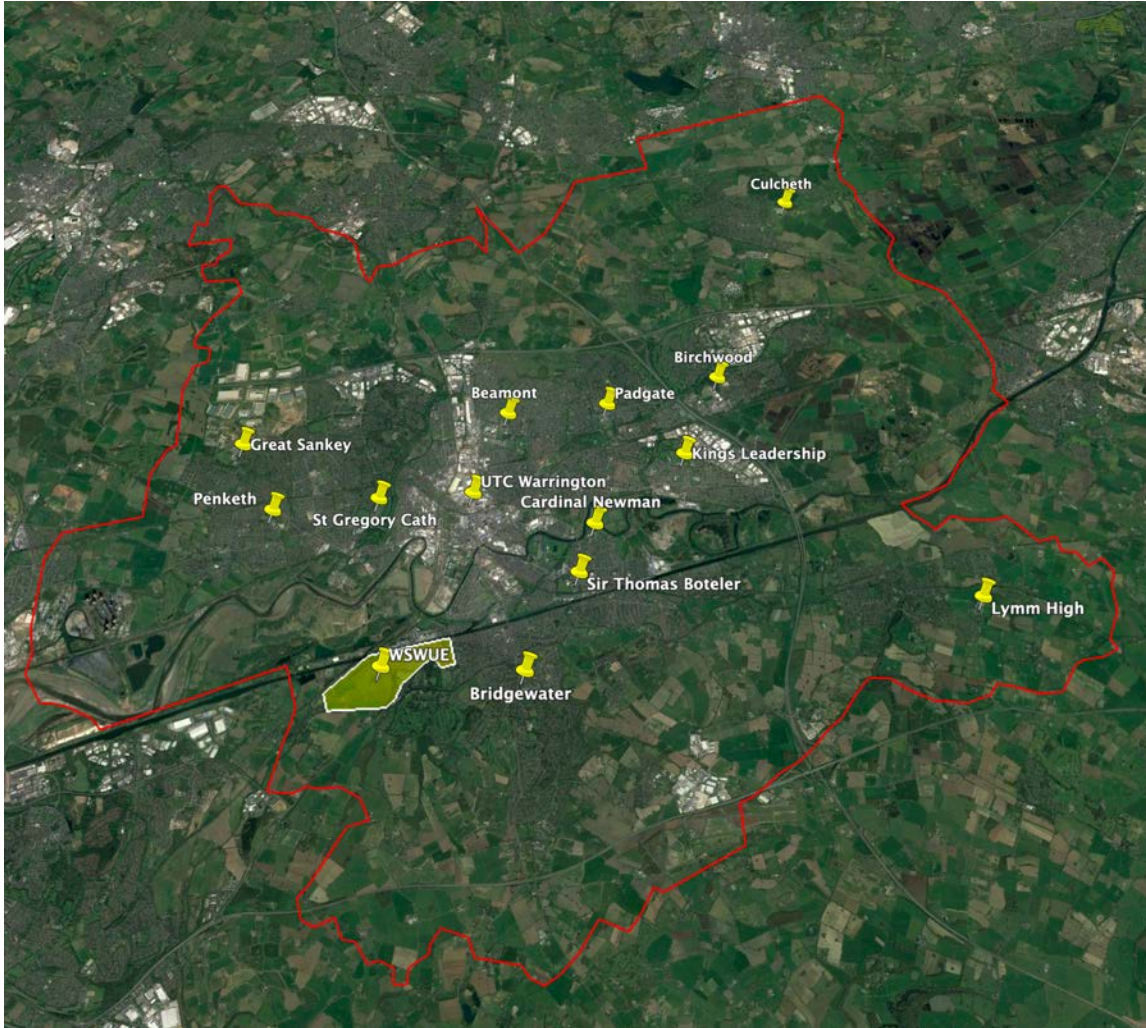


Map 1: Site of proposed development and Warrington Borough Boundary (approximate)

2.2 There are thirteen secondary schools within Warrington, the majority of which are located in the urban area north of the canal (Map 2) with three more rurally located to the north east, south and south east of the Borough. One of the schools is a University Technical College, which accepts pupils at age 14, the remainder accept pupils at age 11. Four of the



schools host sixth form capacity, but for clarity of data this will not be examined in detail within this report



Map 2: Warrington secondary schools

2.3 The schools’ capacity and roll data are shown in Table 1. Between them, the schools have capacity for 13,502 main school pupils, excluding sixth form capacity, which provides a further 1,677 places. At present there is a total of 12,377 main school pupils on roll, leaving a surplus of 1,125 places across the Borough. The majority of the surplus places exist within the older year groups with the younger years showing higher numbers of pupils. This is largely due to the failure of the UTC Warrington to admit fully at Year 10, which leaves surplus capacity from that point.



School	Postcode	Distance	P Area	CAP	PAN Yr R	PAN Yr 10	NoR	Yr 7	Yr 8	Yr 9	Yr 10	Yr 11
Penketh High	WA5 2BY		8770012	1200	180	180	820	150	166	146	160	198
Great Sankey High	WA5 3AA		8770012	1536	375	375	1770	374	375	368	337	316
St Gregory's Catholic High	WA5 1HG		8770012	1141	240	240	1096	239	244	235	191	187
King's Leadership Acad	WA1 4PF		8770013	600	120	120	694	164	151	135	123	121
Culcheth high	WA3 5HH		8770013	1296	240	240	1174	240	239	232	233	230
Birchwood community High	WA3 7PT		8770013	1050	170	170	790	161	153	145	153	178
Beamont Collegiate Acad	WA2 8PX		8770014	1065	180	180	914	180	183	182	180	189
UTC Warrington	WA2 7NG	2.7	8770014	283	0	130	108	0	0	0	53	55
Sir Thomas Boteler CE High	WA4 1JL	2.9	8770014	825	165	165	615	134	147	134	108	92
Padgate Acad	WA2 0LN		8770014	750	150	150	502	110	125	100	82	85
Cardinal Newman Catholic High	WA4 1RX		8770014	825	165	165	795	157	162	172	155	149
Bridgewater High	WA4 3AE	2.15	8770015	1522	300	300	1544	306	314	316	306	302
Lymm High	WA13 0RB	3+	8770015	1409	300	300	1555	308	319	309	308	311
			Total	13502	2585	2715	12377	2523	2578	2474	2389	2413
			Surplus				1125	62	7	111	326	302

Table 1: Warrington secondary schools (excluding 6th form)

2.4 It is important to note at this stage that patterns of admission across the Borough show that many pupils do not automatically attend their closest school. Parents are entitled to express a preference for their favoured schools(s) and this results in pupils being admitted to schools which are not their closest.

2.5 Within Warrington this is particularly clear for Lymm High School, which has on roll pupils from Grappenhall and Partington and Sir Thomas Boteler High School which takes many pupils from south of the MSC. The majority of the central Warrington schools admit pupils for whom the school is not the most local. It is notable that in the admissions round for September 2021, WBC data lists two schools, Padgate Academy and Penketh High School, which admitted their last pupil from “more than 10 miles away” in a straight line, and four others admitted their last pupil from three or more miles away.

2.6 This emphasises the fluid nature of school choice and admissions across the Borough and suggests that in a situation of local deficit places, the admissions patterns will have the flexibility to adapt to local pressures by “pushing back” applications from less local pupils.

2.7 Each year, WBC is required to provide to the Department for Education (DfE) forecasts of pupil numbers based on groups of schools within its area. There are four groups within Warrington, and when combined the forecasts based on Spring 2019 were as shown in Table 2. No forecasts were published in 2020 due to the Covid situation.

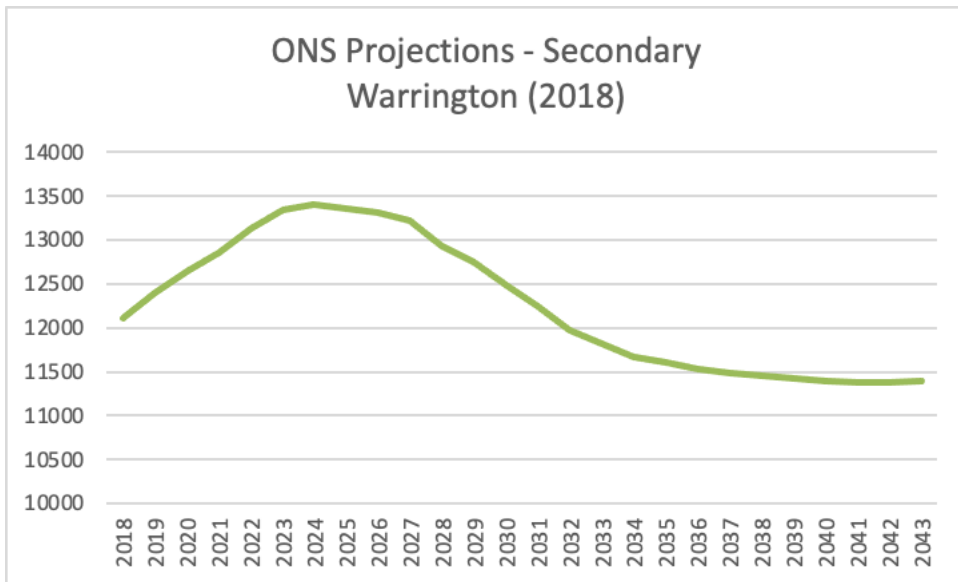


8770012, 13, 14 & 15	Yr 7	Yr 8	Yr 9	Yr 10	Yr 11	Main Total
May 2019 Actual	2495	2373	2408	2382	2268	11926
2019-20 F/c	2579	2509	2398	2416	2406	12308
2020-21 F/c	2549	2609	2537	2416	2444	12555
Spring 2021 Actual	2523	2578	2474	2389	2413	12377
2021-22 F/c	2697	2584	2642	2550	2449	12922
2022-23 F/c	2764	2721	2607	2657	2573	13322
2023-24 F/c	2795	2790	2744	2624	2679	13632
2024-25 F/c	2765	2811	2805	2753	2638	13772
2025-26 F/c	2710	2792	2832	2826	2777	13937
Total Listed PAN / Capacity	2585					13502

Table 2: Warrington combined secondary forecast

2.8 WBC clearly anticipates a deficit of approximately 435 places by 2025-26. There are, however, two things to note. The first is that the actual number of pupils on roll in Spring 2021 (pink highlighted row) is some 178 pupils lower than forecast for that year (row above). It appears that the forecast anticipates in-year growth as pupils move through the school system, but the check on the actual suggests that this has not occurred and that the numbers of pupils in each cohort has remained largely stable as they progress. Consequently, the forecasts could be overstated by that number, and this may slow down the arrival of any deficit. Admissions data published by WBC indicates that places were offered to 2,557 Year 7 children for September 2021. While this is higher than in 2020, it is 140 below the forecast figure for 2021-22 and will exacerbate the over-forecast currently shown.

2.9 The second thing to note is that the 2018 based ONS Population Projections for Warrington for the 11-15 year-old age group shows that while numbers are currently expected to rise through to 2024, they are then due to level off, before commencing a significant decline – of approximately 2,005 children. The ONS Projections are trend based and take into account the effect of population migration, births and will include the impact of new housing in prior years (delivered at an average of 639 dwellings per annum since 2001).

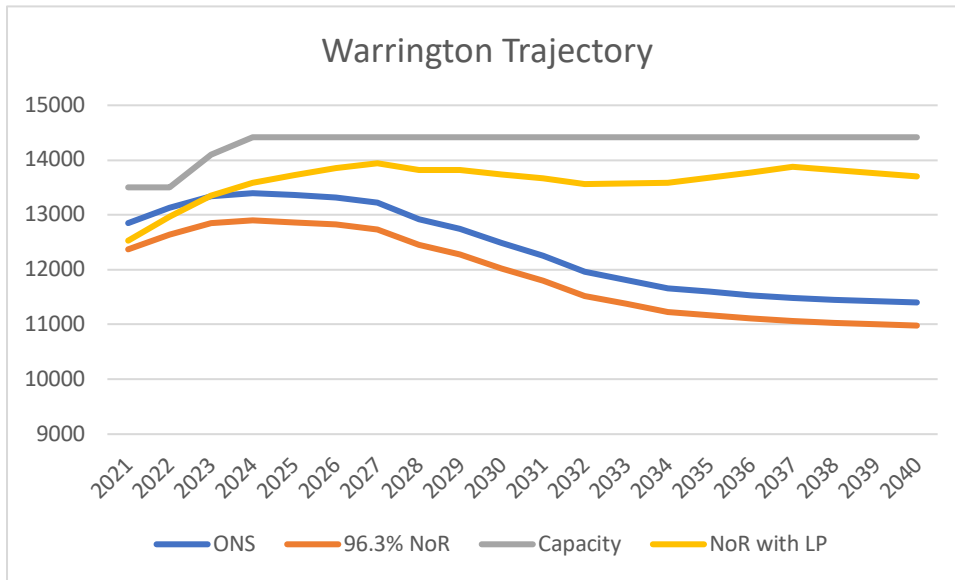


Graph 1: ONS Projections for secondary age children (2018 base)

2.10 There is no indication that the stabilisation and subsequent reduction in child numbers within Warrington post-2024 has yet been factored into WBC’s forecasts. With 2024 now just three years away there is every suggestion that by the time the major Allocations start to come forward, this change in population will have become noticeable and the secondary school population will have started to decline, if it has not already done so.

2.11 A trajectory to model future pupil numbers into the future within the Borough has been constructed and is shown in Graph 2. It is based on the ONS Projections with additions made for the Local Plan housing target of 16,495 (2021-37) spread across the Local Plan period. The Borough’s pupil product ratio of 0.18 has then been applied and decayed to the Borough average of 0.139 across twenty years.

2.12 The trajectory gives a picture of a rapidly falling number of secondary-age children living in Warrington, from 2024 onwards (blue line). A reduction has been made to account for the fact that WBC school rolls reflect a 96.3% take-up rate of places (orange line) and the Local Plan housing targets are then added in (yellow line). Capacity rises to 14,417 following the planned addition of 300 places at Bridgewater High School, 75 places at Sir Thomas Boteler CE School and 240 places at St Gregory’s Catholic High School - and is not exceeded within the Local Plan Period.



Graph 2: Warrington trajectory including Local Plan Housing

2.13 In summary, in a complex situation and with updates not yet published, it appears probable that WBC has overstated the impact of population growth in its forecasts for at least Spring 2021 and 2022. It is becoming clear that the numbers emerging in the medium term for the Borough will be lower than anticipated. In addition, the decline in the numbers of secondary-age children projected by the ONS is currently of such an extent that the full quotient of Local Plan housing could be accommodated with little need for further capacity additions, through to at least the end of the Local Plan period.

2.14 In these circumstances there can be no question that across the whole of the Borough there will be sufficient secondary school places to meet the needs of the Local Plan housing, including the proposed development of the SWUE. With current admissions patterns, at least some of these surplus places will become available for the secondary age children moving into new homes in the southern part of Warrington.

3. Local Situation

3.1 There are three schools within the statutory walking distance of the proposed SWUE development site, Bridgewater High, St Thomas Boteler CE High and the UTC Warrington. Focusing on the two mainstream schools which admit pupils at Year 7 (aged 11), a similar picture to the one in Table 1 emerges, with 188 surplus places currently available, the



majority of which are within Years 10 and 11. Both schools admitted fully for September 2021 and the picture suggests pressure could emerge in the system before long.

3.2 The UTC Warrington has not recruited fully for some years and in its main school years had 108 on roll in Spring 2021 compared to capacity of 260. It accepts pupils from across Warrington at Year 10 and specialises in science, technology and engineering – it does not provide Year 7, 8 or 9 places. As such, while it is part of the secondary school offer within Warrington, it has a specific rather than a general offer and will not be considered in detail here, other than to note that some secondary places remain available here, but only within the two last mainstream year groups.

3.3 Bridgewater High School, the closest school to the SWUE, is grouped with Lymm High School to the east for planning and forecasting purposes. Both schools are located south of the MSC and serve the southern rural extent of Warrington, the data provided in Table 3, shows that both schools are currently under some pressure, with a deficit of 168 places in Spring 2021, distributed across all year groups.

School	Postcode	Distance	P Area	CAP	PAN Yr 7	NoR	Yr 7	Yr 8	Yr 9	Yr 10	Yr 11
Bridgewater High	WA4 3AE	2.15	8770015	1522	300	1544	306	314	316	306	302
Lymm High	WA13 0RB	3+	8770015	1409	300	1555	308	319	309	308	311
			Total	2931	600	3099	614	633	625	614	613
						-168	-14	-33	-25	-14	-13

Table 3: Warrington South secondary schools

3.4 The WBC forecast for this group of two schools is shown in Table 4. It shows that the schools accepted in excess of their admission numbers in both September 2018 (May 2019 actual) and in 2020 (2021 Actual) and are expected to continue to do so. Published WBC data states, however, that offers were made to just 600 pupils by the two schools for September 2021, in line with their published admission numbers.



South - 8770015	Yr 7	Yr 8	Yr 9	Yr 10	Yr 11	Main Total	Post-16	Total
May 2019 Actual	627	615	609	597	590	3038	377	3415
2019-20 F/c	632	635	628	611	609	3115	369	3484
2020-21 F/c	641	642	645	631	621	3180	371	3551
Spring 2021 Actual	614	633	625	614	613	3099	404	3503
2021-22 F/c	643	649	650	646	639	3227	366	3593
2022-23 F/c	686	650	657	651	654	3298	377	3675
2023-24 F/c	679	690	654	653	655	3331	374	3705
2024-25 F/c	661	679	690	647	653	3330	370	3700
2025-26 F/c	668	663	681	686	650	3348	363	3711
Total Listed Capacity	600					2931		3431

Table 4: Warrington South secondary forecast Spring 2019

3.5 As with Warrington as a whole, the actual rolls recorded in Spring 2021 are lower than were forecast by WBC, and again this is likely to produce a slower overall rise in numbers.

3.6 What is also clear, however, is that Warrington schools admit pupils from Boroughs outside Warrington, in the south from Runcorn, Cheshire West and Chester as well as Cheshire East. In 2020 Warrington schools had on roll 185 pupils from these three authorities, while just 26 from Warrington took up places in schools in them. Thus, for the southerly part of Warrington, there was a net inward migration of 159 pupils. In Warrington Borough the trend has been in the other direction, with 463 children travelling to schools outside the authority (mostly St Helens and Trafford) and 365 travelling in to Warrington schools (mostly Halton, Salford, St Helens, Trafford and Wigan).

3.7 Nonetheless, for the southern part of Warrington, there is a significant number of pupils travelling into the Borough to take up places in Bridgewater High School and Lymm High School and were the SWUE to go ahead, pupils living there would take admissions priority over many non-Warrington pupils on the grounds of proximity. This suggests that up to 159 places could gradually become available as the SWUE is constructed.

3.8 ONS Mid-Year Estimates of population for the Wards south of the MSC indicate that in 2020, by year group, there were more children of secondary age currently living in that area than younger children. Table 5 shows the current 11-15 year-olds estimated by the ONS to be living in the Wards:



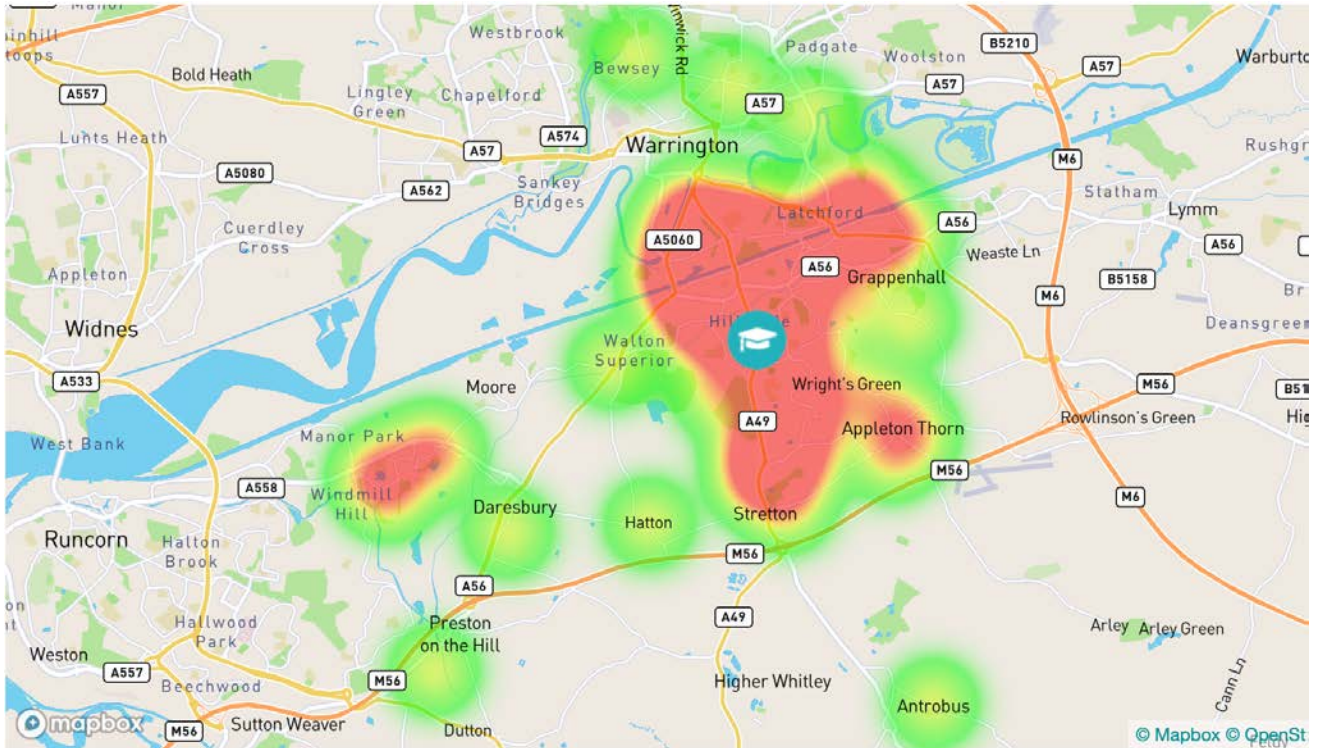
Year of Age	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Children Resident	290	321	342	377	429	447	440	454	434	475	470	476	500	500	493	506
2020																2,475
2021																2,439
2022																2,421
2023																2,355
2024																2,309
2025																2,273
2026																2,250
2027																2,204
2028																2,147
2029																2,035
2030																1,916
2031																1,759

Table 5: ONS Population Estimates – Southern Wards

3.9 For 2020, approximately 2,475 11-15 year-olds were estimated as resident. As these children move through the system over time they are replaced by smaller numbers of younger children, until by 2031 the numbers have fallen to 1,759. Both of these figures are far lower than the number of children attending the two southern group schools (3,099) and the schools’ capacity (2,931). Clearly, a considerable number of the schools’ current pupils are travelling in from other parts of Warrington, and beyond.

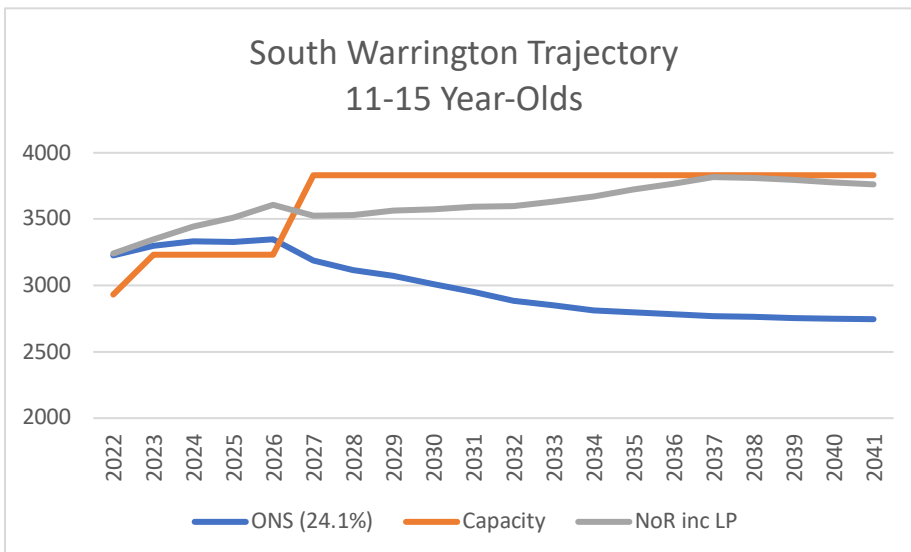
3.10 While this does not, of course, account for additional housing or future increases in the birth rate, it has to bring into question the forecasts shown in Table 4. Even with approximately 400 dwellings currently under construction in the area south of Bridgewater High School, producing approximately 72 additional pupils, there is still a potential reduction in local child numbers of 644 by 2031.

3.10 It appears that Bridgewater High School is a major draw for pupils from north of the MSC and from other neighbouring authorities. A “heat map” of school attendance (Map x) shows clearly the extent of this pattern, with many pupils travelling from north of the MSC as well as from Windmill Hill in Halton, 3.75 miles to the west and some from Cheshire West and Chester, four miles to the immediate south.



Map xx: Bridgewater High School – Heat map 2020

3.11 A trajectory (Graph 4) has been prepared on the basis of the two schools sitting south of the MSC. The forecast numbers on roll for 2026 at the two schools have been apportioned to the ONS Projection for Warrington (25.14%) and carried forward at that proportion through to the end of the Local Plan period.



Graph 4: South Warrington ONS including Local Plan Housing



3.12 Current Allocations proposed for developments south of the Canal, together with the SWUE have then been factored in, to a total of 6,126 dwellings, and these comprise:

- SEUE – 2,400
- SWUE – 1,800
- Fiddlers Ferry – 1,310
- Thelwall Heys – 310
- Lymm - 306

In addition, expansion works at Bridgewater High School and the new 4FE school proposed for the South Eastern Urban Extension have also been included. The proposed developments have been spread through the Local Plan period and a model decaying from 0.18 to 0.139 pupils per dwelling over a number of years has been employed.

3.13 The capacity line (orange) is shown rising on two occasions; the first represents the expansion of Bridgewater High School while the second is the potential new school at 4FE to meet the needs of the SEUE.

3.14 This trajectory (grey line) demonstrates that the area will be technically short of places until approximately 2026 when the ONS Projections start their downward movement and the new school is shown. This shortfall is, in part, a pre-existing problem which WBC is making efforts to meet. However, with the LP housing coming forward during the period, the need for the 4FE school is clear, and once that is in place the area’s needs will be met.

3.15 If, for some reason, the South Eastern Urban Extension and its attendant school did not progress within the Plan period, but the SWUE did, a similarly based trajectory indicates that the development of approximately 3,746 dwellings in the southern area would peak at a temporary deficit of between 107 and 270 pupils. The lower figure excludes the admission of pupils from outside of the Borough. In either scenario, the deficit could be met through the “push-back” of pupils to outside of the Borough or to schools with surplus places elsewhere in Warrington. This would be facilitated by the provision of the western access which is planned to cross the MSC, railway and River Mersey between the site of the SWUE and west Warrington.



3.16 As an alternative, the expansion of Lymm High School could also be considered. Although already a large school, its site is of a size (15.5ha) which indicates a maximum of 2,900 pupils - 1,000 more than it accommodates at present.

3.16 In summary, it is agreed that there is currently pressure on places for the South group of schools. However, as with the Borough as a whole, a review of the actual figures on roll and the ONS Projections suggests that the WBC forecast are set higher than is likely to become the case. While the addition of a new 4FE school within the SEUE would be a useful local addition, were that development not to progress, the needs arising from the remaining developments and the SWUE could be met through the use of places elsewhere in Warrington through the “pushing-back” of admissions - or consideration of a small expansion of Lymm High School. While this school is further than the statutory three mile walking distance from the proposed SWUE, it regularly accepts a large number of its pupils from the Grappenhall / Stockton Heath area.

4. Conclusions – Borough Wide

4.1 Forecasts – it is far from clear that WBC’s forecasts are currently as accurate as they could be as forecasts were not collected or published by the DfE in 2020. There are fewer pupils listed on roll at the Borough’s schools than were forecast in 2019 and this will undoubtedly have a knock-on effect in forthcoming years. Consequently, it is highly likely that there will be more places available than forecast through to 2025-26.

4.2 Long-Term Projections – the ONS-based trajectory for the area shows that the impact from the housing will not all come at once and that the significant reductions in the long-term projections will make sufficient places available to meet the housing need through to 2037.

4.3 Borough-wide, therefore, there can be no objection to the proposed SWUE development as one of a number of Allocations within the Local Plan.

5. Conclusions – Local

5.1 The local position, when focusing on the area south of the MSC, is that there are fewer children resident there than attend the two local schools. Pupils travel from south central Warrington to attend Bridgewater High School. There is also a net gain of



approximately 159 pupils travelling in from other Local Authorities to the area. With fluidity of admissions across the Borough, admissions for these pupils will naturally be pushed back to closer to their home area as and when pressures increase in the southern group of schools.

5.2 An assessment of the proposed Allocations together with 1,800 additional dwellings in the SWUE shows that there would be a need for the proposed new school at the SEUE, and with this in place there would be sufficient places for all pupils throughout the period.

5.3 Were the SEUE not to progress, or to progress later in the period, and the new 4FE school be delayed, this could create some issues in meeting the need for new pupils particularly in the early part of the period before the ONS Projected decline in numbers starts to take effect. The impact could be as high as approximately 270 pupils in excess of the places available.

5.4 However, this could be met through the flexible and fluid admissions patterns seen across the Borough, with schools just north of the MSC accepting more pupils from the south than currently is the case. An alternative would be for an expansion of Lymm High School to be considered.

5.5 While the potential for some pressure the southern area is acknowledged, it is not calculated to be of such a scale that should prevent consideration of the SWUE being included within the Local Plan Allocations.

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