

Mainly, my response relates to the proposed development at Fiddlers Ferry. I do not oppose the development and fully recognises the benefit it could bring to the town in terms of employment and housing. However, I am concerned about the impact of another large development upon the existing community of Great Sankey.

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. Generally the infrastructure development has been post development, and again does not seem to benefit residents but large industrial concerns and passing traffic.

I 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 areas 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 I firmly believe 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. I do not believe this is sufficient.

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. I do not 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.

I generally support the work suggested for improvements to enhanced public and active travel, but am 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.

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 provision of green space within the site is welcomed because there is a shortage of such areas in Great Sankey and Penketh because of the large amount of development which has occurred. 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.

Councillor Phil Jones

Great Sankey Parish Council