

Warrington PDO response and objections.



I have read the PDO and all the supporting documents, including the Mid Mersey SHMA and in conjunction with my own knowledge of property, the market, developers and my local area, I have put together the following thoughts and objections.

SHMA findings versus the PDO

The Mid Mersey SHMA reports that the main need for properties in Warrington are 2 and 3 bedroom homes priced in the region of £125,000. The average salary in Warrington is £26,000. The average house price in Warrington is around £156,000. The argument stands that construction of a high volume of houses will bring down house prices. However, since the largest quantity of homes you propose to build will be in the South, these homes will not be priced in the region of anything like £125-150,000. This land is high value and highly desirable. Even with planning dictating the mix or 2,3,4 beds and starter home schemes, a 2 bedroom home is more likely to start in the region of £175,000, with a 3 bed at £250,000. As these homes sell, the developer will increase the price on every release unless the market falls.

The SHMA also reports that by 2037 our population of over 75's will have risen by 42%. The need for housing for the elderly will be bungalows, wardened apartments and sheltered housing. It is most unlikely that the land in the south would be bought for these purposes. Not only that, but an elderly population needs immediate access to shops and healthcare. Whilst the Garden City apparently shows these facilities, there is no easy access to Warrington Hospital from this location.

Therefore my conclusion is that the location of the highest volume of properties in the PDO does not meet the criteria of need for the population of Warrington and is majorly flawed.

Also there will not be enough money from section 106 agreements to fund the infrastructure needed to support the volume of homes. The council already is failing to look after Warrington as it is. The roads, pavements and verges around South Warrington are in a very poor state, I believe should you build these homes that the money will be insufficient to continue to support the construction of amenities and maintaining the area, even with the income from Council Tax.

There are suggestions of bus routes but in reality only the elderly and children use public transport. [REDACTED], I could not do my day on public transport, with school runs, hospital / doctors /

orthodontist / dentist appointments, working in Manchester and being pushed for time, it is impossible, you will not get people out of their cars in South Warrington. Our lifestyle does not reflect the use of public transport.

The plan shows employment land to be warehousing. Again the people living nearby are unlikely to be working in warehousing, so this location creates more traffic rather than less.

We should be promoting the use of working from home and live / work units. Our current home designs do not support our lifestyles, they offer little storage or the space to work from home. We should be looking at building down with basements to offer storage or parking, and utilising the loft as a room itself or expandable space. Since current NHBC recommendation is not to store anything in the loft.

With regards to the Garden City Suburb plan as well, the recommendation on the plan was a volume of 20 dwellings per hectare. I have noted that the council wish to stick with 30 dwellings per hectare. This is detrimental to the environment and character of the area. I agree we need more homes but not at the detriment to the environment, wildlife, character and health of residents.

Warrington Hospital

Since I have mentioned the hospital above, it is no secret that the hospital is failing and is insufficient for the population as it stands. Whilst I have read articles on the potential movement of the hospital, it is actually in the best location for the majority of Warrington. If anything we should be building another hospital in the south or making access to Halton better which it won't be with the bridge toll.

Socioeconomics

The deprived areas of Warrington such as Bewsey, Dallam, Orford and Longford have some of the highest rates of poverty and access to facilities in the whole of the country. Yet there are no plans to improve these areas in the PDO. Which makes me think "are we leaving them to rot?"

Why can't we regenerate these areas? Demolish some of the council housing which is past its best and build 'rent to buy' homes or shared ownership homes in their place. The project [REDACTED] MCC at New Brunswick in Manchester is hugely successful. We can't have city aspirations and have the whole area around the centre deprived. The PDO smacks of being the easiest option as opposed to having any joined up thinking or consideration for the town as a whole.

Traffic

Yes the PDO recognizes that our roads in the south cannot take any more traffic and the plan is to build a flyover. I am not convinced that this will change anything that much. The junction of Bridge Lane and Lumbrook Road is highly congested at school drop off and pick up times due to the location of the schools. A flyover will not change this, nor will the addition of 9000 homes make any improvement. Likewise the junction of Grappenhall Road and Lumbrook Bridge is congested, it is impossible to turn right from Stockton Heath under Lumbrook

at peak times as for some reason no one has thought to introduce a time delay to allow a few cars to turn right before the oncoming traffic.

When I lived at Grappenhall Heys I was very much against the Howshoots link road as at present GH is a very safe place to live with very little crime as no one knows it's there and there is no quick and easy access out to the motorway. That said if we are building more homes then this road is very much needed. However it will affect vehicles parking for the Walled Garden unless the parking at Stansfield Drive is extended and accessed from Witherwin Avenue, it also requires a pelican crossing to allow safe access for the children to walk to school and sadly would mean a high volume of HGV's which would directly impact on the homes and lifestyles and safety of the school children.

City Status.

The desire to become a city is not one shared by the vast majority of Warrington residents. Our town centre has been in decline since the Trafford Centre was built and the recession did not help. And whilst we have plans in place to improve the town centre, the constant building of out of town retail units is not helping bring people into the town centre. Bridge Street has the most beautiful buildings in town, if you look up the architecture is stunning, yet all the shops below are low value. These buildings should house independent boutiques, craft shops, café's etc. The Fish market building should all be restaurants and we should be considering other uses for the large empty buildings if we are unable to attract large retailers. I do not believe that building 24,000 houses will bring everyone into town as the high number proposed for South Warrington just gives those residents easy access straight onto the motorway to Manchester or Liverpool or Chester. We do not have the heritage or history in Warrington to compete with any one of those 3 cities, we have very few historic buildings left as the council keeps demolishing them or they get 'accidentally' burnt down. We have no theatre, only the Parr Hall offers any entertainment and our only sports team is the Warrington Wolves, I do not believe we should be aiming to be a city, we should be a thriving town which benefits from being a town with beautiful villages which is conveniently located for access to it's neighbouring cities. I moved from London as I did not want my children to grow up in a city.

The plan should be focusing on bringing the town together and joined at the centre, not promoting the construction of isolated urban areas which will not benefit the town as a whole.

Empty Homes.

The council has an empty homes policy. I would like to know how many homes have been compulsory purchased or refurbished under this scheme.

I completely understand why all councils are required to put together these plans, but I believe the government figures on the quantity of homes needed is untrue. I understand they believe volume of build will bring down house prices, but this will in the long run allow the Bank of England to put interest rates up.

They could actually halt foreign investment to slow down growth among other solutions.

In Manchester City Centre, the Chinese investors are buying up everything whether it be new build or second hand for cash and paying above asking price. This is happening in cities all across the UK. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] We could impose more restrictions on sites to be only owner occupiers, or restrict investor purchases. I think we should be challenging government policy rather than bowing down to it. I agree we have a shortage of homes, but with all councils putting together PDO's which from media reports seem to largely involve the destruction of greenbelt across the country, we will no longer be living in a green and pleasant land.