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December 15, 2017

Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) - Response to Consultation

Stockton Heath Parish Council welcomes all measures designed to improve the air quality of the residents of Stockton Heath Parish and of Warrington in general.

The Parish of Stockton Heath lies on the boundary of the Air Quality Management Area. The Parish Council would welcome permanent monitoring of air quality within the Parish, in particular London Road in the centre of the Village and the two primary schools, and for the Parish Council to be informed of the results of such monitoring. This should include monitoring of PM2.5 micron particulate levels.

We note that oxides of nitrogen (but not PM2.5) will be monitored at various locations in Warrington, including a few in Stockton Heath, but it's not clear where in the Parish they are. In general we consider monitoring air quality in south Warrington to be inadequate. We believe that, when measured in the past, the quality of air in the centre of Stockton Heath to be amongst to worst in Warrington. We would, therefore, like to see monitoring carried out at the London Road/Victoria Road traffic lights in the village, at the London Road/Fairfield Road/Ellesmere junction (as requested in the previous paragraph) and also at the busy Chester Road/Ackers Road/Lumb Brook Road junction.

There are references in the AQAP to the greater usage of bicycles. It is the view of experienced cyclists on the Parish Council that cycling on busy roads in Warrington is not currently considered to be safe. Until a way can be found to safely separate cycles from motor vehicles, many active cyclists will continue to use their cars. A white line close to the edge of a road marked 'cycle lane' is not perceived to be a safe option.

Other general comments from members of the Parish include:

Encourage train operators to provide an adequate number of carriages on their trains. Regular lack of seating discourages people from using trains.

There needs to be stronger warnings to switch off engines when stationary at swing bridges.

Consideration should be given by bus operators to use smaller but more frequent buses in South Warrington. Greater reliability would encourage better use, but we do understand the swing bridge issue.

On the 18 Action Points the Parish Council response is as follows:

1. Local Plan Review

The local plan will present many opportunities for the Borough to address the management of air quality through carefully considered traffic infrastructure measures, and through a reconsideration of the amount of housing development that is sustainable and will not increase air pollution. The assessment of air quality impact from planned development should be a high priority and modelling should be rigorous and take place before approval. If studies reveal that the impact on air quality would be disadvantageous, then such development should not take place.

Contrary to the statement in the AQAP, the Local Plan is not currently 'under consultation'. Only the preferred development option (PDO) is. Responses to the PDO should inform the eventual Local Plan which, we understand, will probably be ready for consultation in the Autumn of next year.

The Parish Council view is that the proposal for 6.000 houses, in addition to the 950 already granted consent, to the south of our village in the PDO is not sustainable. The roads in Stockton Heath are already congested with, probably, air pollution now at too high a level. Air quality projections need to be calculated.

We believe that building on brown field sites near the town centre, nearer employment and railway stations, will reduce the need for vehicular journeys, especially cars.

We strongly endorse that the AQAP should inform the eventual Local Plan. We would hope that air quality projections for the PDO will help determine planned sustainable additional development, its location and density.

2. Sustainable Transport Strategies and Programmes

All plans for encouraging and enhancing active travel are welcomed by the Parish Council.

All plans for encouraging a move to public transport are welcomed by the Parish Council.

All plans for encouraging cleaner fuels are welcomed by the Parish Council.

All plans for developing a Smarter Choices Strategy are welcomed by the Parish Council.

All plans for the introduction of a new Taxi Strategy as part of the LTP4 review are welcomed by the Parish Council.

3. Environmental Protection SPD

Plans to update this document are welcomed and the document should be robust and rigorous and available for comment by Parish Councils as part of the review process. This document should be informed by current and projected air quality measurements. We think this may require data from additional locations to cover areas south of the Ship Canal.

4. Council Procurement Policies

The plan to review the procurement policies of Warrington Borough Council is welcomed.

5. Smoke Control Area review

A review of Smoke Control areas is welcome. We consider it essential that, should major development take place in areas not yet subject to control, new control areas are introduced.

6. Highways England/TfN Working Group

It is important for Warrington to be working closely with national transport infrastructure organisations.

7. Warrington Intelligent Transport System

Whilst the Parish Council welcomes the second phase of this project, it should be noted that the provision of traffic condition information does not necessarily result in changes to people's travel plans and information may be used in such a way that congestion is moved from principle routes to the smaller road network as people take heed of the information and plan alternative road routes (which could become 'rat run' routes in the eyes of residents), not necessarily sustainable alternative transport choices.

8. Chester Road Cycle Way

All schemes which promote active travel are welcomed by the Parish Council, but bicycles must be separated from motor vehicles..

9. Burtonwood to Mega Cycling/Walking Link

All schemes which promote active travel are welcomed by the Parish Council. Again, bicycles must be separated from motor vehicles.

10. Warrington West Rail Station

All schemes which promote travel by public transport are welcomed by the Parish Council.

11. Centre Park Link Road

Whilst the Parish Council understand that air quality may be improved by this scheme in the Air Quality Management Area, it is also possible that air quality will decline along the new route and this should be modelled to make sure the overall benefit is beneficial.

12. Western Link Road

As above, the introduction of this new road infrastructure could bring air quality issues to new areas and we need to be assured that rigorous modelling tests were undertaken before final approval.

13. Workplace Parking Levy

The Parish Council agree that the feasibility of such a scheme should be investigated but its implementation must not be detrimental to the economic well-being of Warrington, its businesses or its working population and should only be proposed where reliable and frequent public transport can be provided.

14. Clean Air Feasibility Study

The Parish Council agree that the feasibility of clean air zones should be investigated but ways must be found to retain the economic well-being of Warrington, its businesses or its working population should they be implemented.

15. School, Nursery and Care Home Action Group

The Parish Council welcome the formation of an action group and wish to be kept informed of its progress. Does the data show that there are no schools, nurseries or care homes within areas which would qualify as AQMA's?

16. Temporary Play Streets

The Parish Council is interested in this initiative and wish to be informed of the process required in order that they could be considered within our Parish.

17. Air Quality Website

The Parish Council welcomes this initiative, but the information needs to be relevant and up-to-date.

18. PM2.5 Micron Particulate Monitoring

The Parish Council welcomes the introduction of PM2.5 monitoring and would argue that, since the rates of death quoted are higher for PM2.5 than from NOx, the council introduce monitoring at more than one site across the Borough to provide a more comprehensive picture of levels of PM2.5 concentrations.

The Parish Council is also aware that vehicular-generated particles originate not only from exhaust systems, but from tyre wear, road wear and brake deposits. Maintaining the Borough's roads in good condition (pot holes generate more particles) and reviewing road calming measures such as road humps (constant braking and acceleration generates more PM2.5 and oxides of nitrogen) may help to reduce harmful particulate matter and gases.

Please take the views of Stockton Heath Parish Council into account when finalising the Warrington AQMP.

Yours faithfully,

Peter Walker

Chair, Stockton Heath Parish Council

