



Groves Town

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Warrington Local Plan Examination in Public	
Representor/Number	South Warrington Parishes/0450
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Site	Whole Plan

1 Introduction

1.1 Groves Town Planning has been engaged to represent the South Warrington Parish Council's Local Plan Working Group (SWP) since April 2018 at which time the Preferred Development Option of the Council had been published.

2 Consultation

2.1 Comprehensive representations were prepared and submitted in respect of the 2019 Preferred Submission Version of the Warrington Local Plan and the 2021 version of the PSV.

2.2 Prior to submitting representations for the 2019 PSV the SWP pursued an active role in informing members and constituents of all the parishes involved about the local

plan process and the issues of greatest relevance in formulating the emerging plan. This was to a large extent a reaction to the failings of the Council in creating adequate opportunity to review proposals because of a lack meaningful events which enabled understanding of both process and policy content of the PDO.

2.3 This included last minute reaction to pressure to organise events in South Warrington, consequent inability to literally get through the door at the one event organised, because of the overwhelming interest from the local population.

2.4 Those residents who were able to attend reported concern over a position adopted by then senior planning staff that the process was about providing information rather than genuine consultation which might influence the outcome of decisions made about the plan.

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2.5 Notwithstanding changes in approach from current staff this initial approach in combination with other issues highlighted below, has tainted formal consultation under sections 18 and 19 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

2.6 Whilst documentation is available on the Council's website relating to the response to the call for sites information about the representations to the PDO process in the summer of 2017 are much more difficult to locate.

2.7 A document entitled Proposed Submission Version Local Plan: Responding to Representations Report 2019 is held in the evidence base pages supporting the 2019 PSV.

2.8 It is evident particularly from section 5 of that document that there was considerable public concern of the nature

of the Section 18 consultation both in terms of process and content.

2.9 The absence of a clear reaction to large numbers of respondents, their concerns about unjustified aspirations for growth and consequent lack of justification for Green Belt release; the use of reference to master plans and supplementary documents produced outside any democratic process and the influence of interested developer partners in the Cheshire and Warrington LEP and Warrington's own development and economic agencies has pervaded and undermined public confidence in the local plan process.

2.10 The Council made the decision to anonymise representations to the PDO and 2019 PSV. This made it impossible to identify key representations and responses to those two stages of the plan. Even after a convoluted

process of seeking the permission of representors to publish their names, the Council's website listed representations by number which made consideration of representation of any neighbouring authority or key landowner impossible. This position has only changed with the publication of representations to 2021 PSV.

2.11 This has severely limited the scope to assess the wider reaction to the various stages of the plan.

2.12 In light of the above it is considered that compliance with the adopted Statement of Community Involvement 2020 and largely identical predecessors must be questioned.

2.13 The stated aim of the SCI is that by achieving greater community engagement throughout the planning process our stakeholders and other organisations will have an active involvement in identifying and addressing the

main planning issues, and in the development of planning policies and proposals. It is considered that questioning of residents and groups would question whether the approach adopted by the Council across the evolution of the plan has met this objective.

3 Neighbourhood Plans

3.1 Representatives of the Appleton Thorn Neighbourhood Plan group will be making their own specific representations to the Examination. Appleton Parish Council is however part of SWP and it therefore relevant to comment on the relationship of the local plan with the neighbourhood.

3.2 It is concluded that the impact of the land allocated for development around Appleton Thorn effectively envelops the village and removes existing buffers of open

developed land. As such the essential aspirations of the NDP are undermined by the Local Plan.

4 Other Plans and documents

4.1 Throughout the local plan process the presentation of other planning documents including SPD, concept drawings and development frameworks have confused and contributed to misunderstanding rather than provided clarity.

4.2 Master plans for the town centre, the South Warrington Urban Extension or the Garden Suburb in previous versions of the PSV have been produced outside any part of the formal planning process and without any public consultation. Further these plans have been produced by the Council's own development arm – Warrington & Co with no apparent input from planners. The plans have

however been directly referenced in policies and have been used to provide the basis on which allocations will be delivered.

4.3 It is considered that such an approach supports the contention that the plan is development and growth focus without sound reference to development plan policy.

4.4 In other respects however the consideration of site allocations in South Warrington should be supported by clear delivery plans for specific proposals. At present these allocations are only supported by developer led aspirations or loosely defined illustrations. These provide no real indication of how development might come forward; the precise nature of highways infrastructure, the location of suggested elements of the allocated sites including locations for gypsy and traveller sites and the location of a waste recycling site.

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4.5 The absence of clarity of the role of these plans and their status has led to confusion and concern. The SWP is aware that representations by local residents have focused on illustrative concept drawings which have no status in presentation of the Plan. Further confusion has arisen given inconsistency between plans contained in LTP4 and plans contained in the 2021 PSV. The twin tracking of consultation of the 2019 PSV and LTP4 has similarly given rise to inconsistency as proposals and concepts for allocated sites have evolved from PDO through the two versions of the PSV.

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