



Groves Town

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Warrington Local Plan Examination in Public	
Representor/Number	South Warrington Parish Councils 0450
Document Title	Hearing Statement – Matter 6e Thelwall Heys
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GTP ref	2203012
Site	Thelwall Heys

1 Introduction

1.1 Groves Town Planning has been appointed by the South Warrington Parish Councils' Local Plan Working Group (SWP) to make representations in respect of the proposed allocation of land at Thelwall Heys for development.

1.2 The general position of SWP to the spatial strategy of the submission version of the Warrington Local Plan has been established in other documents submitted as representation to the EIP. This representation does not therefore restate the position of SWP having regard to the need for development or general justification for the release of large areas of land from the Green Belt.

1.3 This representation therefore addresses more site specific concerns and the submission made by Liberty Properties in representation to the 2021 PSV.

2 Green Belt

2.1 The proposed allocation is currently located in the Green Belt.

2.2 This position was established in the adoption of previous development plans when there were pressures to consider the site for development.

2.3 The Warrington UDP adopted in Jan 2006 rejected proposals to allocate the site for a safeguarded housing land. The Inspector preferred instead to place it in Green Belt.

2.4 In so doing issues relating to housing supply were prominent in consideration, but a number of other matters

were assessed. It was concluded that the site was not required to meet housing supply requirements, but a number of constraints and considerations were taken into account.

2.5 The contribution of the site to the purpose and function of the Green Belt was considered. The Inspector's report from April 2005 reached a number of conclusions which remain of relevance to the current PSV.

- On urban regeneration grounds alone there is ample justification for not disturbing the Green Belt boundary.
- The site fulfils Green Belt purposes in preventing sprawl and encroachment into the open countryside.
- The Inspector considered a national, regional and local policy context which supported the use of tightly drawn Green Belt boundaries to achieve regeneration aims. Policy

also sought to ensure that the recreation potential of the urban edge was enhanced.

- "The site does fulfil Green Belt purposes that look to prevent urban sprawl. It is worthy of protection from inappropriate development and should be included within the Green Belt"

- Existing boundaries are strong and robust

2.6 The promoters of the site now suggest that appraisal of the Green Belt shows its contribution to be weak.

2.7 Judgement in ARUP's 2016 Green Belt appraisal commissioned by WBC reached a conclusion that overall the parcel of land including this site was weak. There was no consideration as to why a view contrary to previous assessment was reached. SWP have consistently been critical to the approach taken to Green Belt appraisal.

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2.8 Ultimately consideration of the role the site plays in the context of the purpose and function of the Green Belt is subjective. It is contended however the Transpennine Trail provides the strongest and most robust edge to the urban area. It is wrong to argue that just because there is another feature that it is acceptable to move the Green Belt boundary to create a new edge to the urban area. Such an approach contradicts the concept of encroachment.



2.9 This aerial photograph demonstrates that incorporation of this site into the settlement would not represent rounding off but would obviously result in encroachment.

2.10 The long term function of the Green Belt would not be well served by the allocation of this site for development.







2.11 The site is part of the gateway into the south eastern parts of Warrington and is open to view from a range of viewpoints as illustrated by the images above which are taken from the A50 and the A56.

3 Access

3.1 Contrary to submissions made in support of the application it is suggested that access to the site would require complex and costly highway interventions. Even if

these interventions were practically possible the addition of extensive highway infrastructure would itself impact significantly on the openness of the Green Belt.

3.2 Concept drawings submitted with representations should two access points onto the A50 both within 300m of the approach to the busy traffic light controlled junction of the A50 and the A56.

3.3 At peak periods queues on the east bound leg into the junction will extend beyond the existing point at which Cliff Lane joins the A50. The A50 is the main arterial route into south and central from the M6 and M56 at junction 20. Should proposals to develop the South East Warrington Employment Area further traffic will be loaded onto this part of the network.

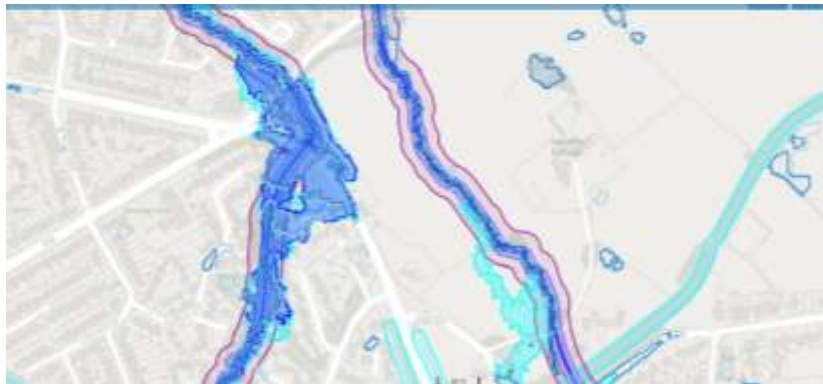
3.4 The need for extensive infrastructure provision would seem to go against the assertion that the site is speedily

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and viably developable. The main reason it has been included in later versions of the plan when it was excluded from the PDO and 2019 PSV.

4 Flood risk

4.1 The plan below is taken from the Borough Council's constraints mapping system.



4.2 The plan serves to show the complexity of hydrology at the western end of the site areas which are shown to be at risk of flooding and subject of issues with surface water.

4.3 The wider hydrology of the area is complicated land to the south and east, including land which is under development or proposed for development drains to the north along the escarpment falling towards the Mersey valley. This complexity is exaggerated as the construction of the Bridgewater and Manchester Ship Canals, the railway embankment and the diversion of the A50 from its original route has involved diverting and culverting watercourses.

5 Heritage

5.1 There are two listed buildings and structures affected by the site allocation – Thelwall Heys and Pickering's Bridge. There are a further 5 locally listed buildings in close proximity to the proposed allocation.

5.2 The listing for Thelwall Heys describes the building as an important early domestic commission by an architect of

national stature, dated 1864, which retains much of its high quality interior, and much characteristic exterior detail.

5.3 Allocation would place this building in on an island surrounded by development, wholly diminishing its intended setting. A number of the elegant, prestigious dwellings in South Warrington have been lost – Grappenhall Heys, Walton Lea. Others have had their status diminished through conversion – Grappenhall Hall. The architectural and social history of buildings such as Thelwall Heys should be protected. Proposals to allocate the site for development show a lack of awareness of local history and heritage.

5.4 SWP would support the consideration and designation as the Bridgewater Canal corridor as a conservation area, in common with the use of such designation on other parts of the Cheshire Canal network

6 Ecology and biodiversity

6.1 Whilst the site is classified as best and most versatile agricultural land it has not been intensively farmed for many years. It would appear to have been largely used for grazing of livestock rather than any arable use.

6.2 It has not been used for intensive cropping to the extent that its ecological value has been diminished.

6.3 Observation will show that the site contains water courses and ponds, older buildings and ground conditions likely to be highly suitable as habitat for protected and other species. The promoters of the site are dismissive of the current level of biodiversity offered by the site suggesting that the retention of open space will be sufficient to secure biodiversity nett gain.

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6.4 The site offers a valuable ecological resource and any allocation should include clear and specific policy requirements to secure biodiversity nett gain.

6.5 There is a range of mature trees across the site. These should be formally protected and identified in any policies relating to the pattern and form of development on the site

7 Conclusion

7.1 Contrary to the submissions made by the promoter of the site, it is considered that Thelwall Heys exhibits a range of constraints, not least contribution to the function and purpose of the Green Belt, which count against release of the land and allocation for development