

Rethinking South Warrington's Future

Warrington Borough Council Updated PSV2021 (Local Plan)

Examination in Public Matter 12 – Warrington's historic, cultural, built and natural assets

I make this statement on behalf of Rethinking South Warrington's Future (Respondent Reference Number 0443) in connection with Matter 12.

I would submit that the Local Plan is not consistent with national policy in relation to the approach to the Borough's historic, cultural, built and natural assets, nor is it consistent with its own Policy DC2.

PSV 2021 Policy DC2 – Historic Environment says the following:

Proposals within or affecting the setting of a Conservation Area will only be permitted where it preserves or enhances the character and appearance of the area including those elements which have been identified within the Conservation Area appraisal as making a positive contribution to the significance of that area.

There are **conservation areas in Grappenhall: Grappenhall Village and York Drive / Victoria Road**. The proposed development that forms part of the South East Warrington Urban Extension, particularly at Stockton Lane / Parrs Wood / Beech Wood and off Broad Lane, Grappenhall will impact the setting and visual amenity of the environment in which these conservation areas are set.

Grappenhall Village is situated in a semi rural setting, and the approach to the village from the A56 over (the listed) Stanny Lunt Bridge into Church Lane forms a key part of that setting. To the right on Church Lane at present is the stunning landscape that borders Stockton Lane / Parrs Wood and which is currently agricultural land.

The story of Grappenhall Village's heritage is not limited to its architecture and built environment, it is also the story of the land used around it. It locates this conservation area in its unique, historical setting and enhances its sense of place.

The proposals for mass housing development, retail and public buildings and roads in this area would have a severe detrimental effect on the Grappenhall Village conservation area.

Similarly, although not directly impacted by the proposed urban extension, the conservation areas at York Drive and Victoria Road sit within an attractive area of period residential dwellings, the front line of which is on the A56, facing the Bridgewater Canal with views up the sweeping sandstone escarpment to Parrs Wood on the horizon. I would submit that the development of a new mass housing estate (unlikely to be sensitive to the architecture and character of the area based on the track record of development in South East Warrington) will have a deleterious impact on the open views and aesthetic amenity of the area.

There are also a number of listed buildings in the area, together with structures such as the Lumb Brook aqueduct on Lumb Brook Road and Stanny Lunt Bridge over The Bridgewater Canal. These enhance the historic character of the area and will be diminished by what is highly likely to be uninspiring housing estates.

The Heritage Impact Assessment in relation to the Grappenhall Village conservation area says the following;

Contribution the site makes to the heritage asset

*Grappenhall Conservation Area is located in very close proximity to the eastern boundary of the proposed allocation site. The conservation area is divided by two roads, Church Lane and Broad Lane. There is also a mixture of established and fairly recently planted woodland/landscaping around the southern fringes of the conservation area that limit any potential views. Although there are limited shared views, **it is considered that the rural area to the south attributes a positive appearance to the landscape around the conservation area.** It is therefore concluded that the rural character of the site makes a moderate contribution to the Grappenhall Village Conservation Area.*

Impact allocation may have on significance

*Although views between the site and the conservation area are fairly **limited it is considered that the close proximity between the conservation area and the site is significant to the heritage asset.** It is therefore concluded that allocation of the site has the potential to cause a moderate level of impact on the significance of the asset.*

Maximising enhancements and mitigating harm

Allocation of the site has the potential to cause loss to part of the rural setting surrounding the Conservation Area. However, with the relevant mitigation it is considered that harm to the heritage asset will be minimal.

In order to ensure that the allocation of the site is not detrimental to the setting of the asset, it is recommended that a substantial distance is kept between the GRAPPENHALL VILLAGE CONSERVATION AREA asset and any development on the proposed allocation site to ensure that the Conservation Area is experienced in its own setting without visual intrusion from development on the allocation site.

In order to achieve this the recently planted belt of woodland immediately to the south of the asset and the established landscaping to the east of the cricket ground should be retained and enhanced as part of the wider landscaping for the allocation site.

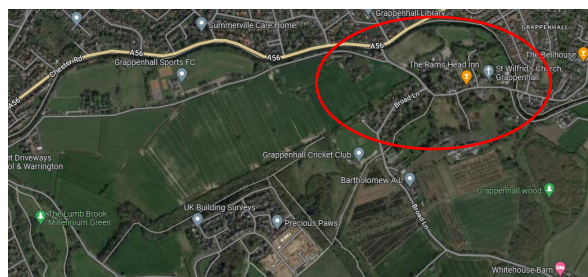
The proposed development site is

- a) Not at a substantial distance to Grappenhall Conservation Area. The rural landscape at Church Lane / Stockton Lane forms an integral part of the setting of the conservation area and this is the site of proposed mass residential housing, roads, retail and other built provision.
- b) *At the site* of the established landscaping to the east of the cricket ground – which means that it would not be possible for this landscape to be “retained and enhanced” as part of the wider landscaping for the allocation site, nor are there mitigation measures that would reduce the impact of the development at this site.

It would not be possible to meet the Heritage Impact Assessment recommendations at this site and therefore the location of the proposed development site cannot be compatible with Policy DC2.



Location of Grappenhall Village Conservation area and proposed development site



Location of Grappenhall Village Conservation area and proposed development site

In fact, the **Sustainability Appraisal** accompanying the PSV 2021 says the following;

Built and Natural heritage: historic environment

9.11.11

There are several designated heritage assets scattered across this location (South East Warrington). Currently the area is characterised by open countryside, which contributes to the setting of various listed buildings. The proposed residential development will change the character of the landscape surrounding these assets which could have negative implications with regards to their setting. There is also the issue of increased built up areas being proposed in proximity to existing settlements such as Grappenhall Heys, Appleton Thorn and Grappenhall. In particular, residential development is proposed adjacent to Grappenhall Conservation Area and given that the boundary extends to the urban fringes, there is likely to be notable changes in the character of this settlement.

I would also submit that the Grappenhall Village conservation area has not been adequately assessed in the Heritage Impact Assessment with regards to its proximity to proposed mass development on **the landscape between Stockton Lane and Parrs Wood**. This landscape is integral to the overall setting of Grappenhall Village and the proposed extent and nature of the development at this location will severely and adversely impact on the distinctive character of this area of Warrington.

The Heritage Impact Assessment makes the following observations in relation to Victoria Road/ York Drive:

The Conservation Area of Victoria Road/York Drive is located approximately 90m to the north of the proposed allocation site.

There will be the loss of the wider rural setting to the south of the Conservation Area. To mitigate any harm, development should be set away from the northern boundary of the allocation site an adequate distance and a substantial landscape buffer should be provided

along Stockton Lane to soften the appearance of the development...the design of the development along the northern boundary of the allocation site should be of a high quality and sympathetic to the heritage of the area...The site allocation has the potential to cause a slight impact to the heritage asset. Therefore, the development needs to encompass mitigation and enhancement methods which are outlined above.

I would submit that were the Inspector to visit this site and assess the landscape to the South of the Bridgewater Canal sweeping up to Parr's Wood they would consider that development at this site would have a *significant* impact on the setting of the conservation area, not a "slight" impact. Further, given the upwards gradient of the landscape south of the Bridgewater Canal towards Parr's Wood there are no mitigate polices that would ameliorate the harm that would be caused by mass development at this site.

With regards to the Heritage Impact's Assessment recommendation *that "the design of the development should be of a high quality and sympathetic to the heritage asset"* I would submit that given the nature of housing produced by the developers intended to be involved at this site location it will not be possible to deliver housing that is of high quality and sympathetic to the heritage asset. Having already rejected self and custom build properties at this site in their formal response to the Local Plan and being by their very nature volume developers with a track record of generic, bland housing estates it is highly unlikely that they would suddenly produce a scheme that genuinely reflects the character of the area and which is sympathetic to the heritage asset.

The proposed site of South East Warrington Employment area includes the site of Bradley Hall moated site ancient monument. Of this proposed employment site the Sustainability Assessment notes that *"the concept master plan seeks to mitigate potential effects by providing an area of open space in the immediate vicinity of the hall and moat. However, it is highly likely that the setting of the asset will be it adversely affected. There is currently a very open countryside setting, which contributes to the significance of the ancient monument. This will be entirely altered by large-scale employment units and **so negative effects are predicted.**"*

At the hearing in March 2022 of the Six56 planning application it was asserted by WBC planning department that the result of granting this application would lead to "enhanced access" to this historic monument. What was not conceded was that the enhanced access would be via a site full of HGV vehicles and massive distribution warehouses. It is inconceivable that mitigation measures can be taken to avoid a major negative impact on this historical monument and its surroundings. It is also noted that at paragraph 9.11.22 of the Sustainability Assessment it reads, *"the nearby employment area...has the potential to **give rise to major negative effects, as development will lead to the loss of open space that contributes to the setting of designated heritage assets. Development will also lead to changes to settlement form and character, which can affect historic and cultural value.**"*

I would therefore submit that the Local Plan is not consistent with national policy, including the NPPF and does not amount to sustainable development