

Groves Town

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Version/Date	John Groves BA(hons) MRTPI V2 10 May 2024
GTP ref	2301001
Application reference	2019/34799
PINS reference	APP/0655/V/22/3311877
Applicant	Langtree PP and Panattoni
Site	Land to the west of Junction 20 of the M6 Motorway, and Junction 9 of the M56 Motorway and to the south of, Grappenhall Lane/Cliff Lane (known as Six:56 Warrington) Grappenhall, Warrington

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Inquiry relating to the determination of the planning application described above has been ongoing since 9 May 2023, exactly one year ago at the time for preparing this additional note. Preparation of a number of the submissions relating to the proposed development and the matters relating to the Inquiry would clearly predate May 23.
- 1.2 It is clearly pertinent to review any changes in circumstances which have occurred since the Inquiry began. The opportunity to appraise the statement of case and proof of evidence presented in support of the South Warrington Parish Councils position having regard to the application is welcomed and appreciated.
- 1.3 This paper identifies those key changes in circumstances and considers impact on the position previously adopted
- 1.4 In summary those key changes are considered to relate to the following areas
- The adoption of the Warrington Local Plan
 - Changes to the National Planning Policy Framework
- 1.5 Unfortunately SWP does not have the resources to allow for a comprehensive review of all of the logistics based developments in the planning process or developments in progress across the North West, but there is awareness of the work undertaken to provide the infrastructure for the Parkside Rail Freight Interchange and the fact that other logistics based proposals have emerged across the NW. It would be expected that this matter is addressed by the appellants' by witnesses yet to give evidence.

2 The Warrington Local Plan

2.1 At the commencement of the Inquiry the emerging Local Plan had been through examination, the re-opening of the examination specifically to consider employment matters and the Inspectors had released a letter containing their view of the modifications needed to make the Plan sound. This included deletion of the proposed allocation of land, including the application site, for the South East Warrington Employment Area (SEWEA).

2.2 At the commencement of the Inquiry the Local Plan had not been adopted, although the Council had indicated that it was minded to accept the Inspectors' suggested modifications.

2.3 There was correctly debate and challenge early in the Inquiry over views as to how this position affected development plan policy relevant to the Green Belt, to the extent of and basis for employment land allocations.

2.4 That debate and discussion has now become irrelevant with the adoption of the Warrington Local Plan on 4 December 2023.

2.5 The decision to remove the SEWEA from proposed allocations followed robust assessment of the purpose and function of the Green Belt. This included detailed evaluation of the qualities of the area, which included SEWEA in terms of contribution to those purposes and that function and of the landscape value of the area. Submissions from the Council, the applicant and other parties failed to convince the Local Plan Inspectors that there were evidenced and justified exceptional circumstances to change the Green Belt boundary in the manner initially proposed.

2.6 The Council did not seek to contest this outcome but accepted the Inspector's justification for the continued protection of the area covered by SEWEA as Green Belt.

2.7 The proposal is therefore directly contrary to the Warrington Local Plan which has only just been adopted. It is hard to envisage how – in a plan led system and under s.38 (6) of the PCPA 2004 – a proposal which was expressly removed from the Warrington Local Plan can be considered acceptable in planning terms under the new Local Plan. There are no material considerations which could justify departing from the freshly adopted Local Plan.

2.8 It also remains the case that the proposed development is inappropriate development for which no very special circumstances exist. Rule 6 parties position Green Belt related harm has been outlined in paragraphs 4.17 to 4.42 of the Statement of Case dated 3 Feb 2023 and section 8 of the proof of evidence of John Groves dated 11 April 2023.

2.9 The position established in those submissions stands but is reinforced by the fact that assessment is made in a context of a thoroughly tested and now adopted development plan.

3 Changes to the NPPF

3.1 The version of the NPPF in place at the start of the Inquiry was that issued in July 2021. This has now been superseded by the version issued in September 2023 and then the version of December 2023.

3.2 Whilst changes which have occurred may have influenced the level of Green Belt release for housing advocated by the Council and accepted by the Local Plan

Inspectors, it is considered that policy relating to development in the Green Belt, definitional harm and the need to demonstrate very special circumstances to outweigh harm to the Green Belt and any other harm remains unchanged.

3.3 Changes to the Framework have included the integration of the term “beauty” as a consideration across policy. The NPPF itself does not include substantial detail on how to assess beauty; this exercise will primarily be the role of design codes, but the increasing emphasis on the concept of creating better places to live must be of relevance in terms of the weight given to harm to landscape and the visual character resulting from the development. The Local Plan Inspectors have previously identified this as reason for resisting Green Belt release in the form of the SEWEA – alteration to the NPPF can only reinforce weight given to such harm in the planning balance inherent in the determination of this application.

John Groves 10 May 2024