

Choosing A Location

Background information

Choosing a location is perhaps the most important decision for a leisure attraction. When considering where to locate Thorpe Park, the site had to fulfil the following requirements:

1. A large local population –

to fill jobs that would be created by the development, to build and run the site and to serve as a large base of potential visitors.

2. Transportation –

transport systems and accessibility had to be good to encourage as many visitors as possible. The site needed to be close to a motorway network, have good local roads capable of handling high volumes of traffic and a good public transport network.

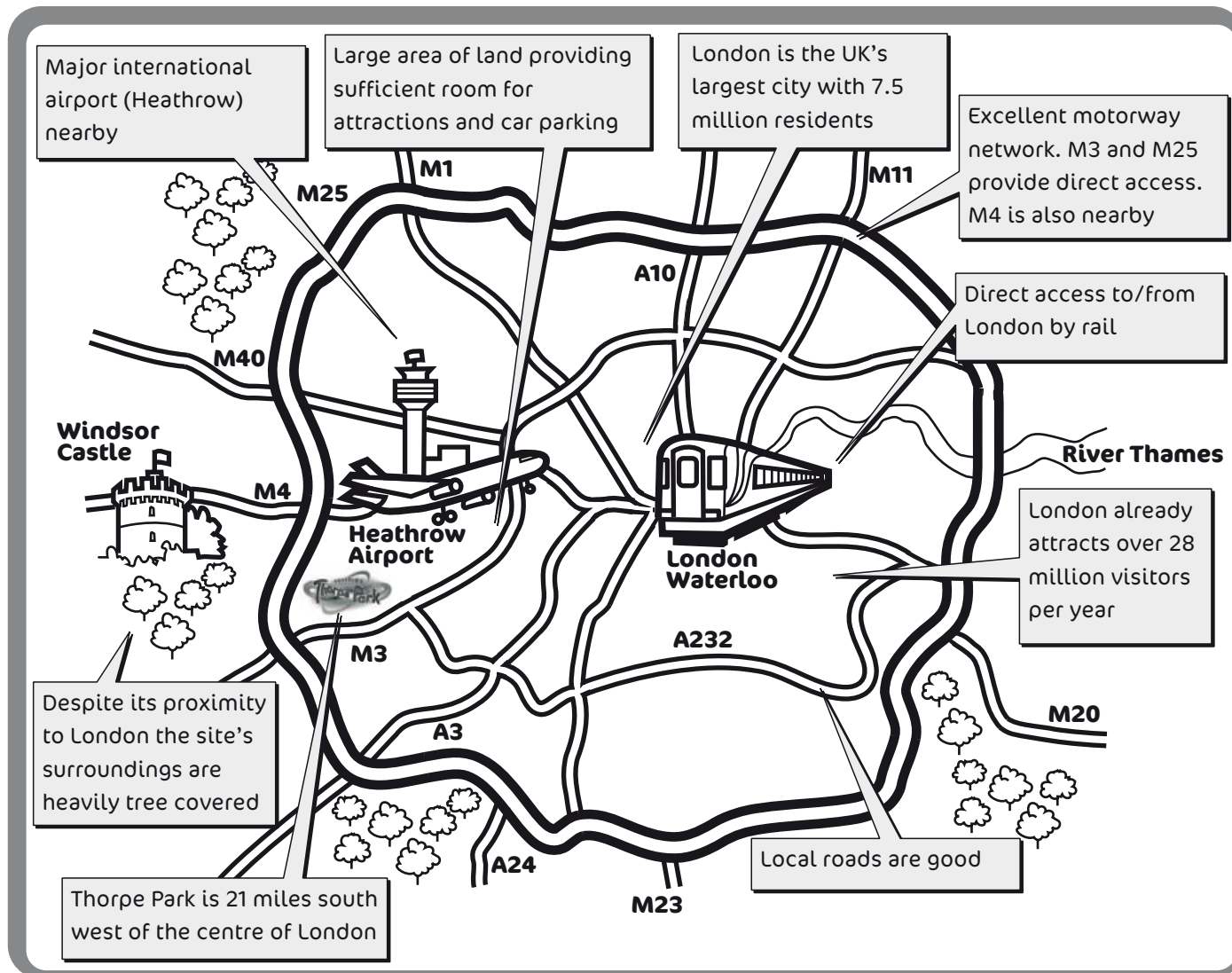
3. Resources –

- a large area of land available
- water and energy supplies large enough to support a major theme park
- good local services

4. An established tourist area –

to assist with planning permission and negotiations with local authorities.

5. Attractive rural surroundings



Impact of development on the local area

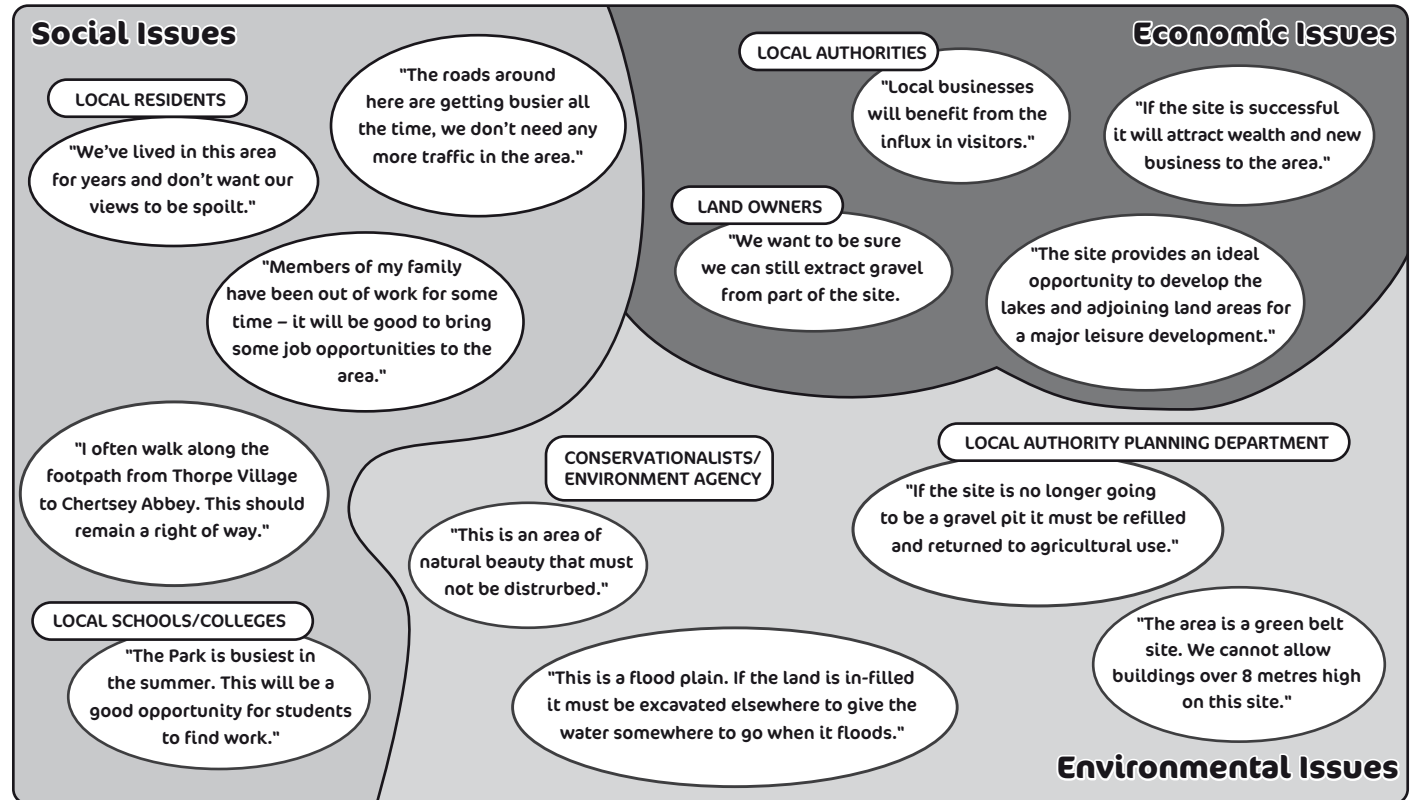
Background information

Planners have to try to decide how land should be used so that it brings the greatest benefit to the greatest number of people. This is often difficult as any development will affect different groups of people in different ways.

These are some of the opinions Thorpe Park had to address when development began in the 1970's.

How did Thorpe Park address these problems?

- 40,000 trees and bushes were planted to augment the existing waterside vegetation. Reeds and redmace were used to encourage wildlife.
- Ornamental waterfowl have been introduced.
- A new roundabout was constructed to satisfy highway requirements.
- Car parking was free at the Park to avoid traffic build up while cars passed through a pay point.
- Advance signposting enabled traffic to be directed around Thorpe Village.
- Extensive landscaping was conducted to grade all the banks to natural contours that were attractive and of interest ecologically.
- Use of temporary buildings - when Thorpe Park opened the only permanent building was the Dome.
- RMC continue to extract gravel from part of the site and retain the right to barge gravel across the lake to their site on the other side.



The impact of tourism

Tourist activities can bring enjoyment and create employment and wealth. Thorpe Park's successful development is due largely to a great effort to consider the social, economic and environmental impact of its development.

The following groups are consulted on all major proposed developments.

- Runnymede Borough Council
- Surrey County Council
- The Environment Agency
- Local residents
- Fire Officers and Police



Environmental practices

Consideration for the environment at Thorpe Park

Thorpe Park is continually developing its practises relating to care for the environment and sustainable development. This forms an important part of the five and ten year plans for the company.

Environmental practises

- The landscape department recycles all natural materials removed when building new rides.
- Policy for tree management – bark mulch is reused on the Park.
- A compost area has been established.
- If any in-filling of the lake is required, excavation is conducted elsewhere to allow water to drain if the area is flooded.
- The theme and design of rides are sympathetic to the environment. Extensive planting of shrubs and trees.
- Natural resources are selected wherever possible, for example planters and benches are made from recycled natural materials.
- Waste recycling policy is an important part of the five-year plans. Previous initiatives include recycling of cardboard, cans and glass with can crushers placed on site.
- Traffic is monitored on a daily basis. New parking bays have been introduced and the layout of the car park has been changed to avoid traffic build up on the access roads.
- Green travel plan – Thorpe Park actively encourages visitors to travel by public transport. As part of this policy it works with bus and train companies to offer special deals to visitors.
- Renewable energy – water is used to drive many of the rides, however the water is pumped to its starting point by electricity.



Activities

1. Investigate your own school's environmental policies. Think about the following in conducting your analysis.
 - What environmental issues does your school have?
 - What does your school do to preserve and conserve the local environment?
 - What does your school do to encourage sustainable development of the local area?
 - What could it do better? Make suggestions.
2. Compare the environmental policies of your school with those at Thorpe Park. Present your findings in a table and draw conclusions.



Choosing a Location - activities

Choosing a location

Activities

1. **a)** Locate Thorpe Park on a map of the UK, using four and six-figure grid references.
 - b)** Devise two different routes you could take from your school to Thorpe Park. Choose one route using public transport and one route using a car. Mark your routes on a photocopy of the map. Explain why you have selected these routes.
 - c)** Look at the statistics which show where visitors to Thorpe Park are most likely to travel from. Use proportional symbols to demonstrate this on the map.
2. Look at a detailed map of your local area. Consider where you would locate a theme park in your local area, as near to your school as possible. Some things you will need to think about:
 - What resources do you need?
 - How easy is it to travel to your site?
 - Should it be a new site or should you re-develop an existing site?

Extension activity

Use fieldwork to research your plan and find out about the local area

Impact of development on a local area

Activities

1. Create a mind-map using colours to show all the issues, good and bad, arising from this development.
2. Conduct an enquiry to decide whether you think the proposal is a good idea. Your enquiry should consist of three main parts;
 - Introduction - what is the enquiry about?
 - Plans for development
 - Conclusions. In your opinion, should the development go ahead?
 Use maps, sketches, lists and diagrams to support your plans. For example;
 - Show the proposed location on a map and explain its suitability
 - Describe the main features of the area
 - List the good and bad points about your proposal
 - Consider the views of local residents, businesses, employees, local authorities and environmentalists. Use your mind map to establish which of these groups would support or oppose your proposal.
3. In groups, consider your plans to build a theme park in your local area. Analyse all the pros and cons for the proposed sites. In particular, think about how they might affect different groups of people. Which do you think is the best proposal? What could you do to overcome any concerns?

The impact of tourism

Activities

1. Hold a class debate.
 - a)** Each group should choose to represent one of the following groups:
 - Visitors to the Park
 - Local council
 - Local residents
 - Local farmers/businesses
 - Conservationists
 - b)** In your groups brainstorm and discuss the point of view of each of these groups.
 - Do you think they will support or resist the new development?
 - What could the developers do to overcome these concerns?
 Draw up a list of key points - you may want to illustrate these using thought bubbles.
 - c)** Hold a debate to put forward the views of all the groups. Aim to provide solutions that will take in to account everyone's opinions.
 - d)** Write up the agreed proposition in report form.

Extension activity

Taking the viewpoint of a particular group, compose a letter to the Council stating why you are for or against the development of a theme park in your area.



Planning at Thorpe Park

Background information

Thorpe Park is continually looking to develop and improve the Park to meet the ever-changing needs of its visitors. A number of areas are reviewed on a regular basis. Much of this information is gathered by asking visitors a series of questions when they are leaving the Park. This is known as an 'exit survey'.

The rides

Introducing new rides is critical to Park success. The exit survey identifies the age/ type of visitor to be targeted, any areas of weakness and the type of rides that would satisfy guest requirements.

Ride design / selection

The designers consider options for rides to appeal to this market. A number of other factors must also be considered:

- budget
- location and available space
- will the ride differentiate the Park from its competitors?
- will the ride vary from others on the Park to give guests a new experience?
- timescale – can the ride be delivered on time?
- will planning permission be given for the ride – consider height, noise and visual impact.

Locating a new ride

Careful planning is required to use available space efficiently as the Park matures. Long term plans must also be considered – a ride must not take up valuable development space for the future.

Theme for the ride

Many areas at Thorpe Park have strongly established themes. If a ride is to be placed in one of these areas then it must follow that theme. New designs are researched with consumers.

Amenities (restaurants, shops, toilets)

When a new ride is developed, consideration is also given to providing amenities in that area. Close attention is paid to the type of visitor. What might be attractive to teenagers may not be desirable for families. To estimate the amount of amenities required, Thorpe Park calculates the average number of visitors over the 30 busiest days of the year to establish a 'design day'. Facilities must be sufficient to cater for this number of visitors.

Pedestrian movement around the park

The most popular rides are spread around the Park. Thorpe Park also has the facility to manage and manoeuvre visitors using timed entry to attractions and fast track entry to key rides.

Activities

1. Look at the Park layout. Draw up a plan to introduce a new ride at Thorpe Park. What type of ride should this be? Where would you position it?
2. Draw up a plan for your proposal. Think about the target audience, theme for the area into which it will be placed, pedestrian traffic flows, queuing and amenities.
3. Draw a sketch map of the selected area(s) to support your ideas.



Planning at Thorpe Park

Comparative Studies

Thorpe Park is one of the leading theme parks in the UK. When the Thorpe Park concept was conceived in the 1970s it was the first of its kind in England.

Over the years, theme parks have become popular tourist attractions and similar parks now exist in the UK, in Europe and throughout the world.

Thorpe Park is owned by The Merlin Entertainments Group. The Group also owns Warwick Castle, Alton Towers, Chessington World of Adventures and Madame Tussaud's in London, Amsterdam, Hong Kong, Las Vegas and New York and Heide Park in Germany.



Activities

1. Choose one of these theme parks and conduct a comparison between Thorpe Park and the park you have chosen.

Alton Towers Chessington World of Adventures Heide Park

Here is a framework for your comparison.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Total visitors per year | <input type="checkbox"/> Seasonality - when are the parks open, and when are their peaks and troughs? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Total size of the site (square metres) | <input type="checkbox"/> Find maps of the site and compare number/variety of rides |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Main transport links | <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental policy - what are they doing to encourage sustainable development? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Main areas of population locally | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Size of local towns/cities | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tourist traffic (i.e. non local visitors) | |

What other facts can you think of to compare?

You can research your parks by using library resources, such as books or the internet or contact local tourist offices.

2. Once you have gathered the information, conduct an analysis of the parks to assess;
- Accessibility
 - Facilities
 - Layout
 - Variety of rides
 - Activities for all ages
 - Environmental impact.
3. Design a poster or leaflet for Thorpe Park or one of the other parks to communicate its advantages. Use the internet to find images.

Useful websites

www.altontowers.com www.chessington.com
www.heide-park.de www.tussauds.com

