



STONECROFT

CHESTER ROAD | WALTON

A Vision for a New Neighbourhood

December 2016

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Executive Summary



Illustrative Masterplan

Executive Summary

Land at Stonecroft – a comprehensive and sustainable extension to Walton that will:

- *Deliver an attractive and distinctive new residential destination for Warrington;*
- *Offer a choice of high quality new homes to meet local needs;*
- *Reinforce and enhance Stockton Heath's District Centre status;*
- *Create a place of character, strong community and a quality of life which is in-keeping with the existing settlement; and*
- *Improve the transition from the countryside into the town*

This statement has been prepared by Ashall Property to support the promotion of land at Chester Road, Walton for the development of 3, 4 and 5 bedroomed new homes. The proposed development site, which totals approximately 8.18 hectares (20.21 acres) comprises a single parcel of land to the south of Chester Road (A56).

It is Ashall Property's considered opinion that new housing provision within settlements such as Walton is essential in supporting the future vitality of the area and Warrington as a whole. It caters for new residents that can widen the demographic profile and sustain essential local facilities. Such development is firmly aligned with the principles of sustainable development. The development of land at Chester Road for housing, provides an opportunity to achieve these sustainability objectives, whilst at the same time making a significant contribution to the Borough's housing supply requirements.

Ashall Property encourages the support of Warrington Borough Council and other local stakeholders for the residential development of the site. It is considered that the land represents a suitable strategic site which should be included as an allocation within the revised Local Plan Core Strategy. It offers the opportunity to be brought forward as an early phase of new homes, and that by working in partnership with the Council, stakeholders and the local community, this would provide all parties with the ability to plan properly so that the immediate and future needs of Walton can be met in the most sustainable way possible, particularly when considering the absence of a 5 year deliverable land supply across the Borough.

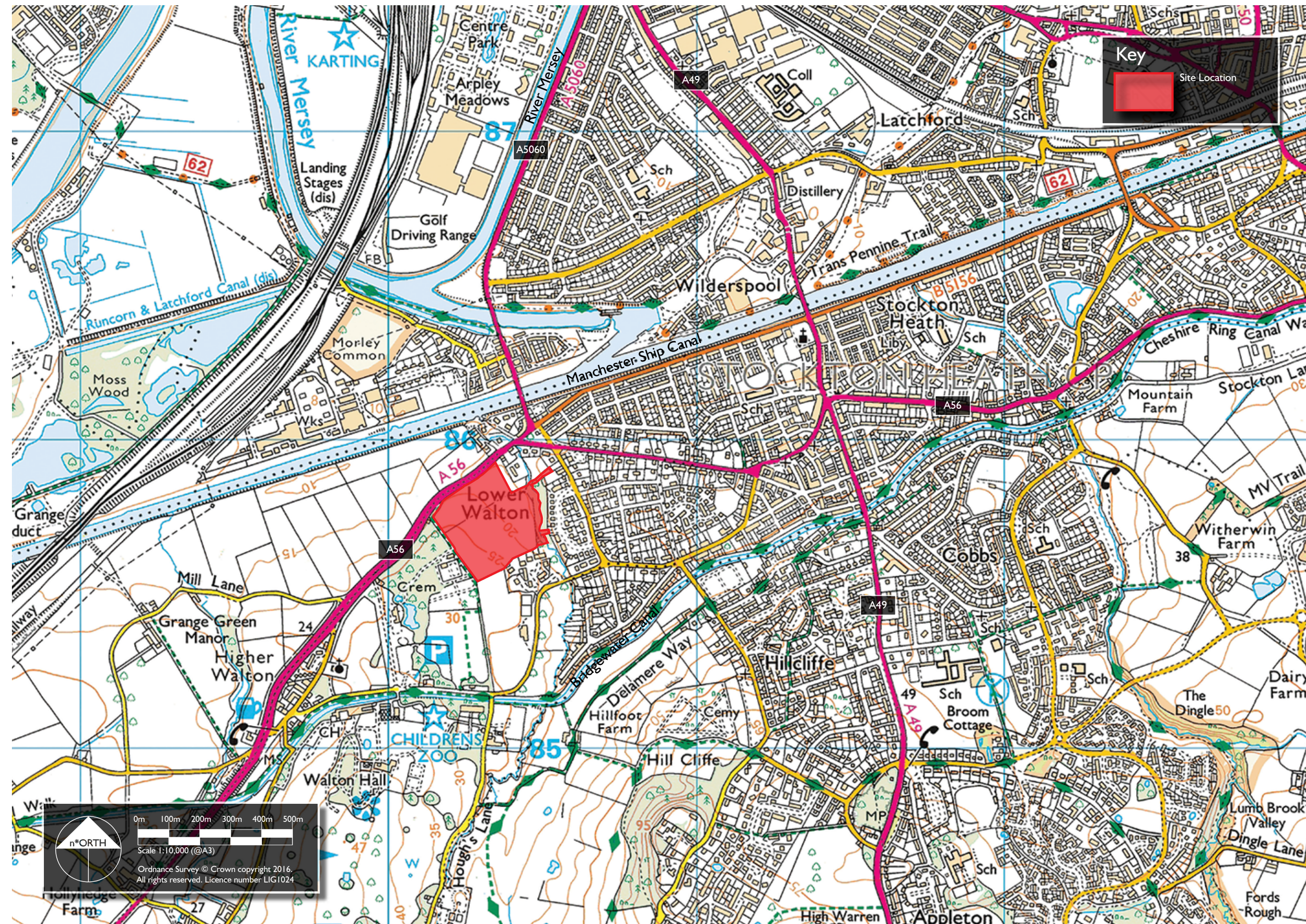
This Development Statement therefore seeks demonstrate the credentials of Stonecroft as a sustainable extension to Walton, boosting Warrington's five year housing land supply and its portfolio of residential development land over the full plan period to 2037.

In summary, the Development Statement will demonstrate that Land at Chester Road, Walton:

- Is a sustainable and deliverable site on the edge of Lower Walton, and the development accords with the principles of sustainable development;
- The site is available, suitable and achievable for residential development on land adjacent to the existing settlement boundary;
- The site is in a sustainable location for new housing, located in close proximity to public transport links, transport routes and a range of shops, services, schools, jobs and community facilities;
- The site could provide in the region of 200 new homes and therefore directly assist the Council in meeting their housing need and requirement;
- The development would contribute towards an identified need for both market and affordable housing in the Borough, and therefore help to meet the identified need for Walton and support Stockton Heath as a District Centre and focus for future development.
- Residential development of the site is compatible with the existing surrounding land uses, with the proposals being sensitive to the character of the local landscape in terms of scale, design, layout, building style and materials;
- The provision of new housing on this site will generate a number of local economic and social benefits, supporting the wider economy and helping to sustain existing services; and
- There are no significant technical, physical or environmental constraints to the development of housing at land at Chester Road.



Chapter 1 - Introduction



Introduction

- 1.1 This Development Statement has been prepared to consider the merits of land at Chester Road, Walton to be allocated for residential development as part of Warrington Borough Council's revised Local Plan Core Strategy (LPCS).
- 1.2 The suitability of the site for residential development is supported by a range of assessments which have informed the preparation of an initial masterplan (prepared by e*SCAPE Urbanists). This has included the following documents:
 - Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
 - Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
 - Phase 1 Geo-environmental assessment
 - Highways assessment
 - Arboricultural Survey
 - Utilities Report
 - Flood Risk Assessment
 - Agricultural Land Classification
 - Market Analysis

Site Location and Context

- 1.3 The site extends to 8.18 hectares (20.21 acres) and comprises a single parcel of land to the south of Chester Road (A56) as illustrated in Figure 01:01. The site lies adjacent to the western edge of Walton and is bound to the east by an unadopted road, leading to the Walton Lea Project and sports fields associated with Warrington Sports Club to the south. An established residential area is located to the site's eastern boundary and includes a mix of bungalows and primarily detached dwellings. Land to the north east is currently under construction by Elan Homes (Hall Gardens) for 14 no. 4 and 5 bed properties. Blocks of woodland are located to the site's eastern and western boundaries which are protected under Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs).
- 1.4 The site is generally flat with a rise in levels from approximately 17m AOD (Above Ordnance Datum) at the north eastern corner to approximately 31m AOD to the south west. The site is currently in use as agricultural land. A Public Right of Way (reference: 304/6) runs along the site's western boundary and provides access to the Walton Lea Project and 1-3 Walton Lea Cottages and 99 Chester Road.
- 1.5 In terms of the wider settlement, Walton forms part of the Hatton, Stretton and Walton ward and has a population of approximately 3,092 residents (2013 mid-year estimate) and 1,188 households (2011 Census). The settlement is currently identified by the Council as a Green Belt settlement in the proposed settlement hierarchy within the adopted Local Plan.
- 1.6 The site is within a sustainable location and is within:
 - 60m of a bus stop which provides frequent services to Warrington and St Helens;
 - 200m of a local 'one stop shop' and public house;
 - 900m of amenity open space at Walton Hall Gardens;
 - 10m of recreational playing fields at Warrington Sports Centre;
 - 0.6km of Stockton Heath Primary School;
 - 1.6km of Bridgewater High School and
 - 1.2km of shops and services within Stockton Heath district centre.
- 1.7 The site location and context is considered to demonstrate that the site is within a sustainable location for new development, and that the western edge is a natural and sustainable location for such development.

Figure 01:01 - Site Location



Chapter 2 - The Vision



Vision Statement:

“Land at Chester Road, referred to here as ‘Stonecroft’ will be a comprehensive and sustainable extension to Walton that will:

- Deliver an attractive and distinctive new residential destination for Warrington;
- Offer a choice of high quality new homes to meet local needs;
- Reinforce and enhance Stockton Heath’s District centre status;
- Create a place of character, strong community and a quality of life which is in-keeping with the existing settlement; and
- Improve the transition from the countryside into the town.

The development proposals for Stonecroft will deliver new market and affordable family homes to the benefit of the local community, at a time when there are severe challenges to housing supply across the Borough.”

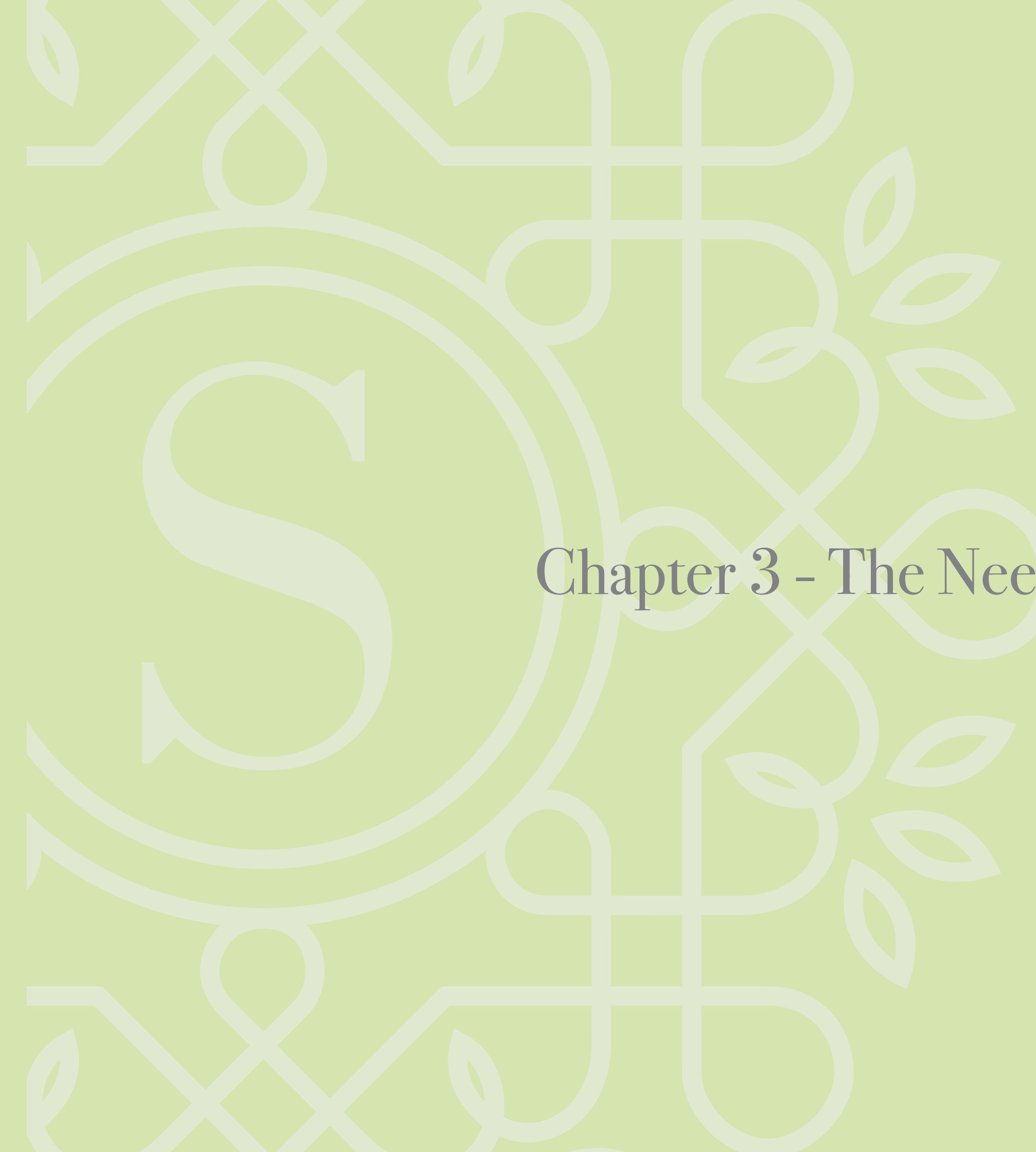
2.1 Our vision for the site is therefore underpinned by the following goals:

- **Delivering quality new homes** – the appointed developer will build quality new homes, which make use of and are sensitive to the distinctive character of the surrounding area.
- **Achieving a choice of housing** – The proposed development will offer a mix of housing in terms of type, tenure and size to satisfy local needs and help to broaden the demographic profile of Walton and Warrington as a whole.
- **Providing affordable homes** – The proposals will help to address a recognised local housing need for affordable homes, meeting the needs of those currently unable to afford a new home.
- **Investing in the community** – the proposed scheme will seek to strengthen the local economy through the provision of housing to attract the economically active.
- **Creating a safe, desirable place to live** – The proposals will aspire to create a safe and attractive environment, which discourages crime and engenders a strong community spirit, building upon the strengths of the wider area.
- **Supporting the community** – The proposals will sustain the local community by providing more places to live.
- **Promoting ecological conservation** – The proposals will seek to sustain and enhance the quality of the existing habitats and features of conservation value.
- **Incorporating environmental and sustainability measures** – The proposals will incorporate a range of environmental and sustainability credentials, aimed at reducing carbon emissions and improving energy efficiency.
- **Working in partnership** – The appointed developer will collaborate with local residents and other key stakeholders to create a development that delivers community-wide benefits for all.
- **Enhance the profile and standing of the town** – Located at its western gateway, Land at Chester Road will provide a positive statement of the quality of life and environment that can be enjoyed and experienced within Walton and Warrington more generally.





Chapter 3 - The Need for Sustainable Homes



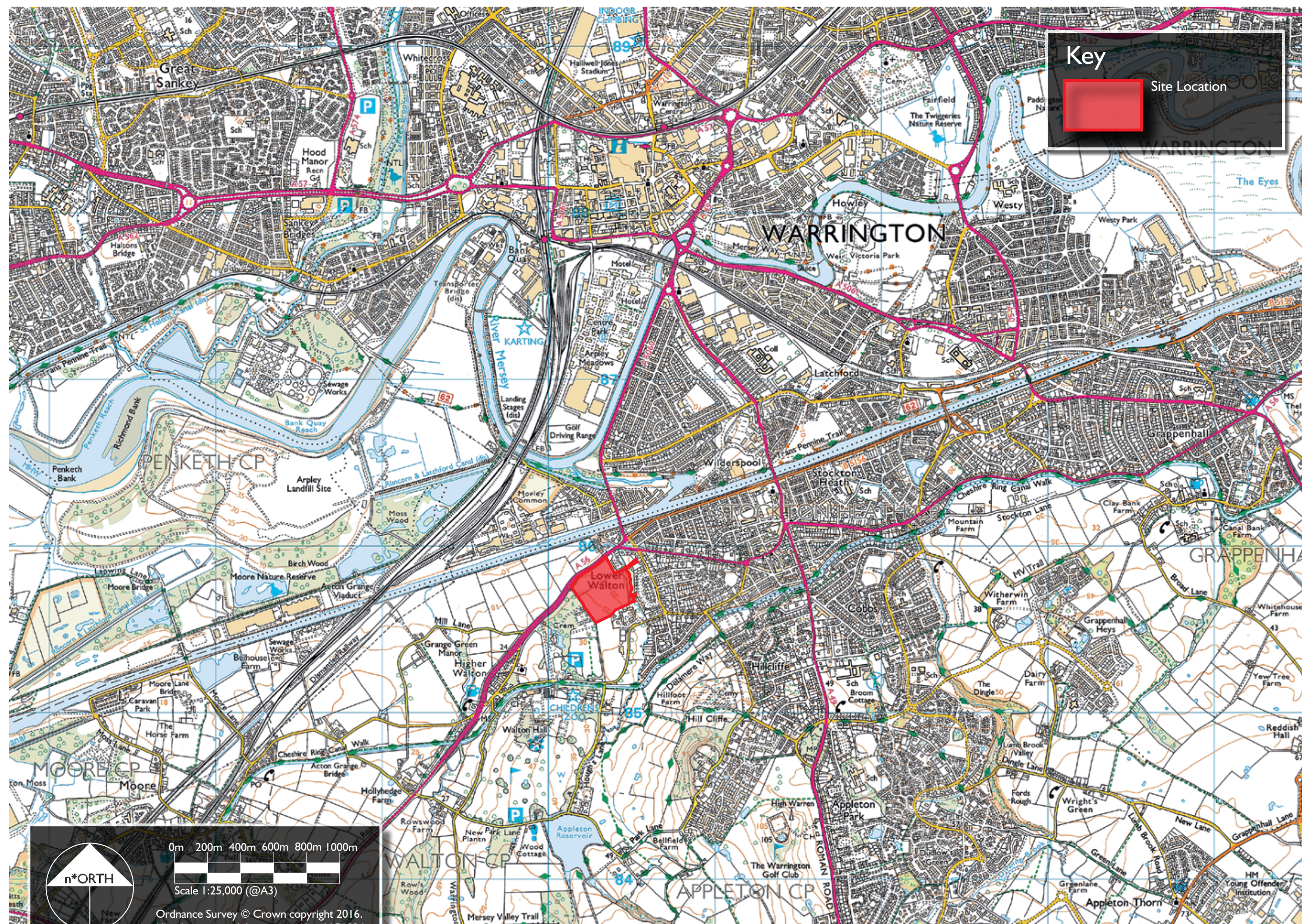


Figure 03:01 - Site Location Plan

The Need for Sustainable Homes

3.1 This chapter of the Development Statement summarises how the development proposals can support the Council in meeting their significant housing need through delivering quality new homes in a sustainable location which responds to planning policy at the national and local level, and therefore represents sustainable development.

The Need for New Housing in Warrington

3.2 There is a recognised national shortage of new homes; which is driving central government through the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and supporting Planning Practice Guidance to prioritise significantly boosting the supply of housing across the Country.

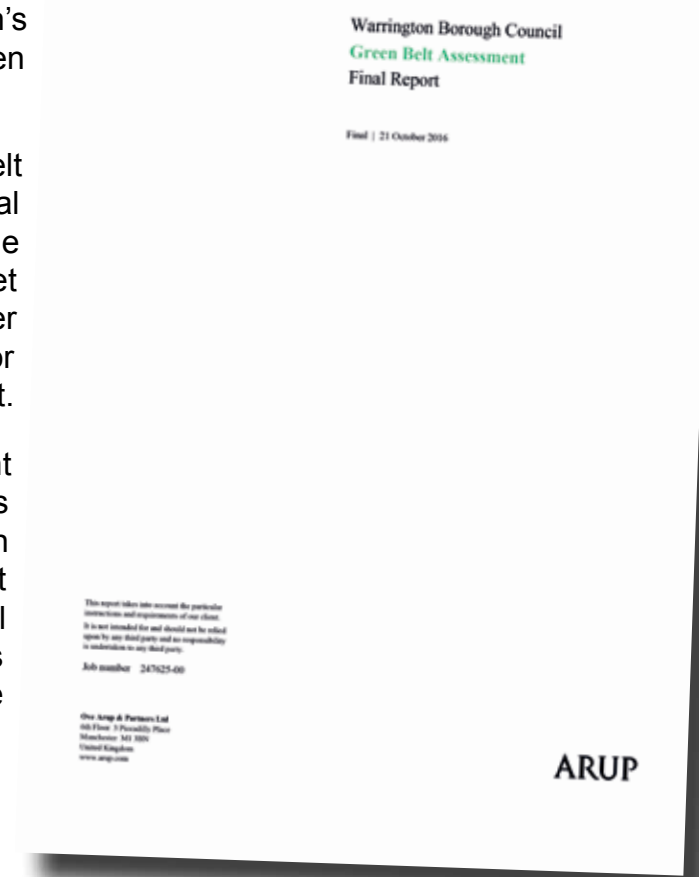
3.3 Warrington Borough Council has undertaken further evidence base work to establish the need for new homes in the Borough, the results of which will inform a review of the adopted Local Plan Core Strategy (LPCS). This has confirmed the need to provide land to accommodate around 20,000 new homes over the next 20 years, of which 5,000 will need to be accommodated within the existing Green Belt, given the constrained capacity of sites within the settlement area.

Green Belt Assessment

3.4 The Council has recently published its Green Belt Assessment (October 2016) which sets out an objective-based assessment of how Warrington's Green Belt contributes to the five purposes of Green Belt, as defined in national policy.

3.5 Within the Assessment, Warrington's Green Belt has been divided into large parcels, or General Areas which were defined using recognisable and permanent boundaries. Areas around inset settlements were then refined to create smaller Green Belt parcels and have been assessed for their contribution to the five purposes of Green Belt.

3.6 The Green Belt parcel containing the development site (reference WR64) has been categorised as making a moderate contribution to the Green Belt, which according to the Council's Green Belt Assessment confirms that 'on the whole the parcel contributes to a few of the Green Belt purposes however does not fulfil all elements'. The Assessment notes that the boundaries between the parcel and the countryside are durable which would serve to contain the development and would therefore not threaten the openness and permanence of the Green Belt. The site is also categorised as having a moderate contribution to checking unrestricted sprawl and in assisting urban regeneration.



Planning Policy

3.7 Warrington's Local Plan Core Strategy (LPCS) was adopted by the Council in July 2014 and provides the overarching strategic policies for guiding the location and level of development in the Borough up to 2027.

3.8 The housing target contained within the LPCS was quashed by the High Court in February 2016. In the absence of a housing target, the Council is therefore unable to demonstrate a five year housing land supply. This position is accepted by the Council in recent reports to the Development Control Committee which state that therefore any relevant policies for the supply of housing within the LPCS are not considered to be up-to-date, as set out within Paragraph 49 of the NPPF.

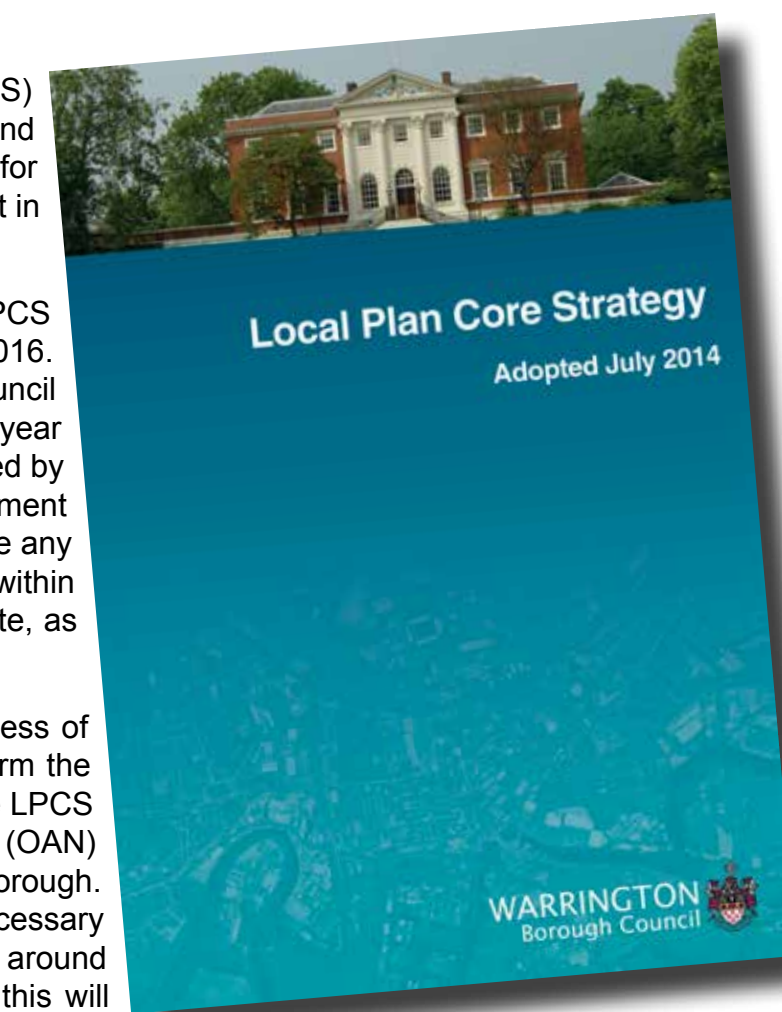
3.9 As set out above, the Council is in the process of refreshing the evidence base which will inform the review of the Local Plan, and ensure that the LPCS fully meets the Objectively Assessed Needs (OAN) for market and affordable housing in the Borough. The Council has confirmed that it will be necessary to increase the minimum supply of homes to around 1,000 per annum, and as outlined above, this will require the release of Green Belt sites.

3.10 The review of the Local Plan will be focused on three strategic matters:

- The provision of land and level of housing development that can be accommodated within Warrington, taking into account Objectively Assessed Needs (OAN);
- The provision of land for economic development and a growing local economy, taking into account OAN; and
- Ensuring the timely delivery of new and improved physical and social infrastructure required to meet the needs of new development and mitigate the impacts on existing communities.

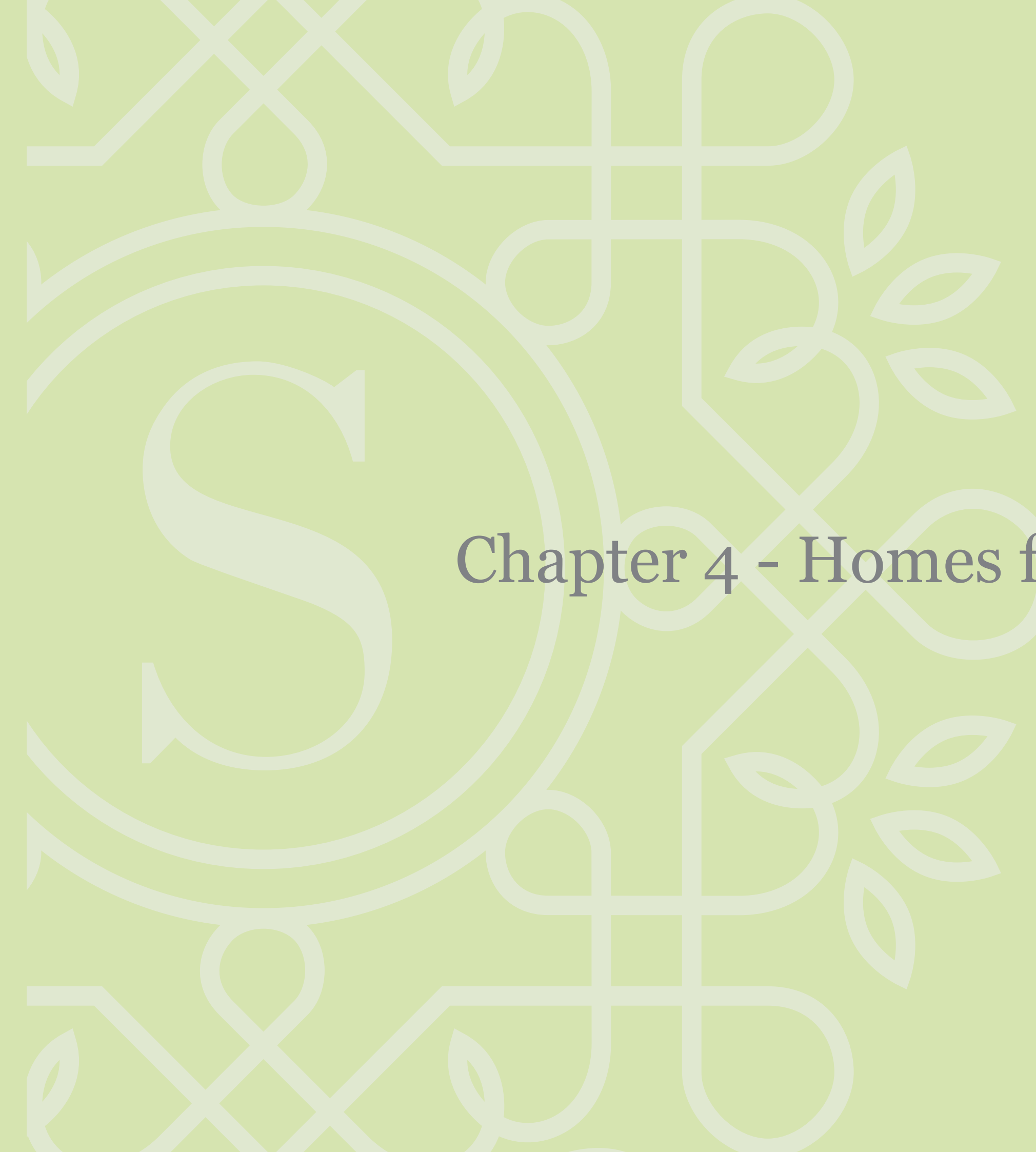
3.11 It is proposed that the Local Plan will be adopted by October 2018.

3.12 It is considered that land at Chester Road, Walton, is a prime candidate for allocation, and is able to directly assist the Council in meeting its significant housing need requirement over the plan period. Ashall Property welcomes the opportunity to work with the Council, its stakeholders and local community to bring new homes forward in this location, to assist in meeting the five year housing land supply shortfall and to maintain a flexible and responsive supply of land for housing over the plan period. In doing this, Ashall Property believe that they can directly assist the Council in demonstrating that their emerging Local Plan can be considered sound at its Examination in Public.





Chapter 4 - Homes for Now & the Future



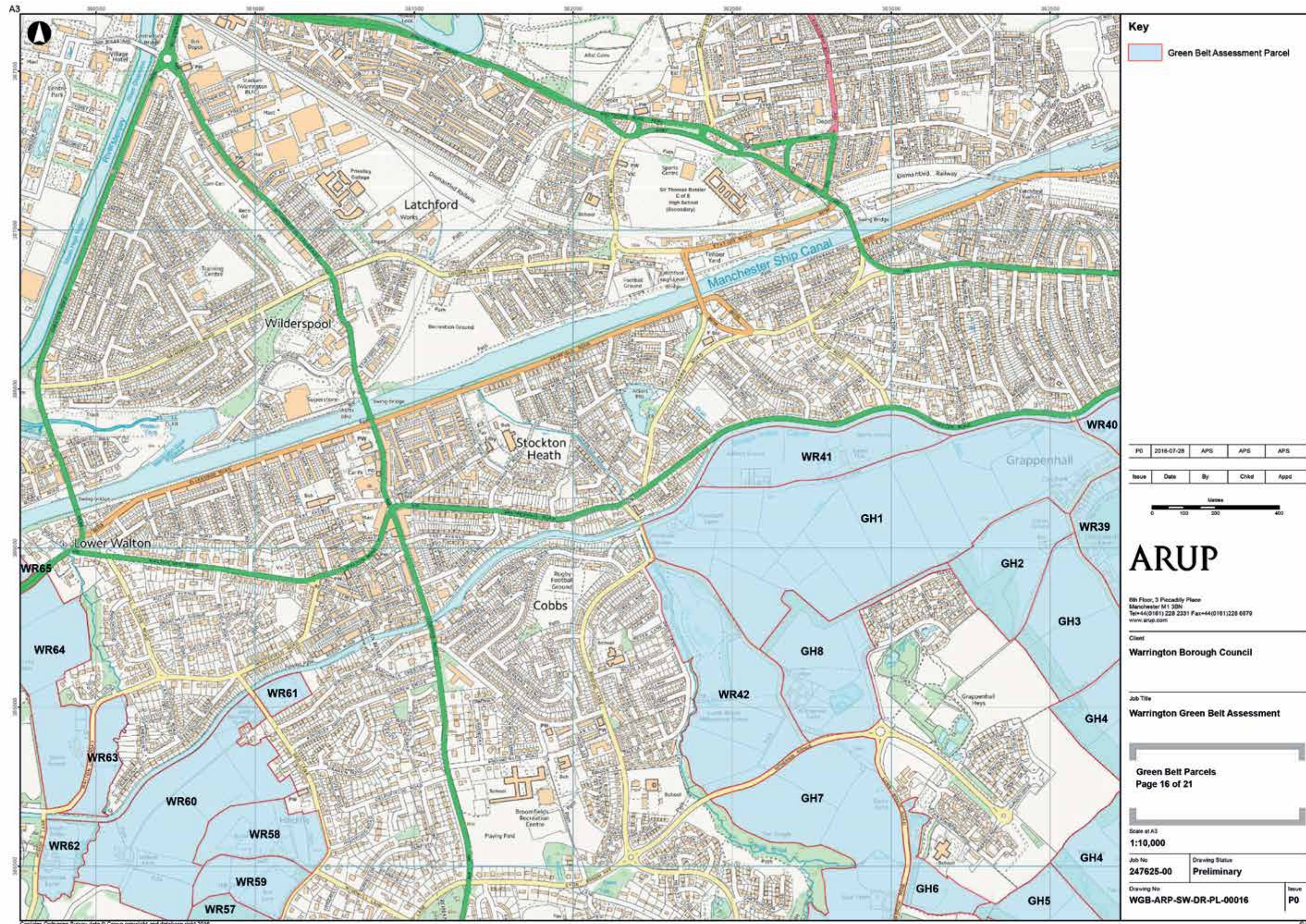


Figure 04:01 - Extract from Green Belt Assessment

Homes for Now & the Future

In line with Planning Practice Guidance, plan makers should assess the suitability of the identified use of a particular site and be guided by the development plan, market requirements in that housing market, as well as any physical constraints. These key elements have therefore been considered below.

Suitability

Planning Policy and Site Allocation

- The statutory development plan for Warrington Borough Council comprises the Local Plan Core Strategy (LPCS) (adopted 2014) which designates the site as Green Belt (Policy CS5) with the site lying directly adjacent to the South Area Boundary. Notwithstanding this, the Council has acknowledged that they do not currently have a five year supply of housing land in place and has recognised the need to release Green Belt sites for development as part of the Local Plan review process. Recent case law has also confirmed that local plan policies which restrict housing supply, including those related to Green Belt protection can be seen as being out-of-date where local planning authorities do not have a five year supply in place.
- There is therefore scope for the site to be released from the Green Belt as the revised Local Plan is developed.

A popular residential location with growing market interest/value

- The site is located within an existing and popular residential area that has growing market interest and value based upon Cushman & Wakefield's local agency intelligence. From our on-going dialogue with regional and national house builders the demand for sites in the immediate area is very strong and this is likely to result in a number of parties expressing interest in any residential development opportunity.

An Accessible and Sustainable Location

- The site is incredibly well located in terms of its proximity and accessibility to key modes of public transport and local amenities and facilities. The site is within close proximity from local bus stops (within 60 m) which provide regular services to Warrington, Runcorn and Chester. The site's location is also well placed to provide access to the strategic highway network, providing access to key local and sub-regional employment destinations.
- The site also provides positive accessibility and connectivity to local shops and services, within Walton itself, as well as within Stockton Heath, access to open space and sporting facilities (Warrington Sports Club and Walton Gardens) and Stockton Heath Primary School and Bridgewater High School are within 20-30 minutes of the site.
- It is clear therefore that the location of the site is inherently sustainable.

An Unconstrained and Available Development Site

The land is considered to be free from any significant impediments to delivery within the short term. Initial technical due diligence has been undertaken in support of the development of the site for residential uses:

- Landscape and Visual Overview prepared by Tyler Grange
 - Preliminary Ecological Appraisal prepared by Tyler Grange
 - Arboricultural Appraisal prepared by Tyler Grange
 - Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy prepared by WaterCo
 - Phase 1 Geo-Environmental Assessment prepared by Earth Environmental & Geotechnical
 - Highways/ Transport prepared by DTPC
 - Agricultural Land Classification prepared by Land Research Associates
 - Market Analysis Report prepared by Cushman & Wakefield
- The key physical, environmental and technical findings from these site assessments are summarised in the remainder of this chapter to demonstrate that there are no significant physical, environmental or technical constraints to residential development of the site.
 - All of the detailed site assessments can be made available upon request.



Tyler Grange LLP
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Landscape and Visual Character

- 4.9 An appraisal of the site has been undertaken by Tyler Grange which confirms that the site sits within the 'Mersey Valley' Character Area which includes densely populated urban and suburban areas, including Warrington, large-scale visible industrial development set within a natural landscape comprising large-scale, predominantly flat farmland, trees and woodland.
- 4.10 More specifically, the site is set within the Appleton Park & Grappenhall Character Area which comprises 'strongly sloping land to the north, affording sweeping long distance views, occasionally restricted by the presence of linear deciduous woodlands, coverts and tree groups'. This character area is also noted to have 'advanced' landscaping and 'entrance' features relating to proposed housing development'.
- 4.11 The site is also influenced by adjacent landscape character areas – the River Mersey/Bollin and Victoria Park to Fiddlers Ferry. This includes 'widespread residential and industrial development on the floodplain'.
- 4.12 Whilst the characteristics set out above provide some context to the site, the site itself has been characterised by Tyler Grange as being agricultural in nature but it has an urban fringe and an enclosed character. The site is influenced by the visual backdrop of Lower Walton and Warrington, and is associated with the surrounding established residential area due to the proximity and visual connectivity to the adjacent dwellings off Chester Road.
- 4.13 The site at Chester Road has generally limited visibility in the wider landscape due to the relatively flat nature of the land and existing vegetation at site boundaries and in the wider landscape. The site is well enclosed due to its vegetated boundaries of hedgerows and hedgerow trees, and the adjoining woodland blocks. This assists in filtering and screening views and is therefore likely to assist in reducing the visual impact of any new development within this landscape.
- 4.14 There are relatively few receptors that are likely to be impacted on and there is a limited visual relationship between the site and the wider Green Belt. The main receptor is from Public Footpath

304/6 which runs along the western boundary. This allows views towards the residential edge of Lower Walton and Warrington, including the spire of St Elphin's Church. Appropriate mitigation is proposed to be incorporated within the indicative design proposals (see Figure 05:03) which includes a comprehensive green infrastructure network, incorporating native tree, hedgerow and woodland planting.

- 4.15 Residential amenity from the properties adjoining the site will also be maintained through the addition of soft landscaping and screening.
- 4.16 Consideration has been given as to the site's suitability for release from Green Belt in relation to the principal Green Belt objectives as set out within the NPPF, and with reference to adopted Local Plan Policy CS 5. This confirms the following key points:
- That development on the site would reinforce the robustness of access to the Walton Lea Project and 1-3 Walton Lea Cottages as edge to the settlement;
 - The site is visually well enclosed by existing vegetation which separates it from any visual relationship to Higher Walton.
 - There is potential to retain and enhance the existing boundary vegetation and woodland block along the eastern boundary;
 - The existing public footpath (304/6) connects Walton Hall and Gardens to the south of the site and as such there is an opportunity to create a link through the site from Chester Road at the northern boundary;
 - The containment of the site afforded by the surrounding vegetation will limit the extent to which any proposed development would introduce uncharacteristic features into the landscape and the wider Green Belt landscape.
- 4.17 On this evidence it is considered that there are no landscape reasons to prevent the site being allocated for residential development.

Figure 04:02 - Photoviewpoint Locations Plan

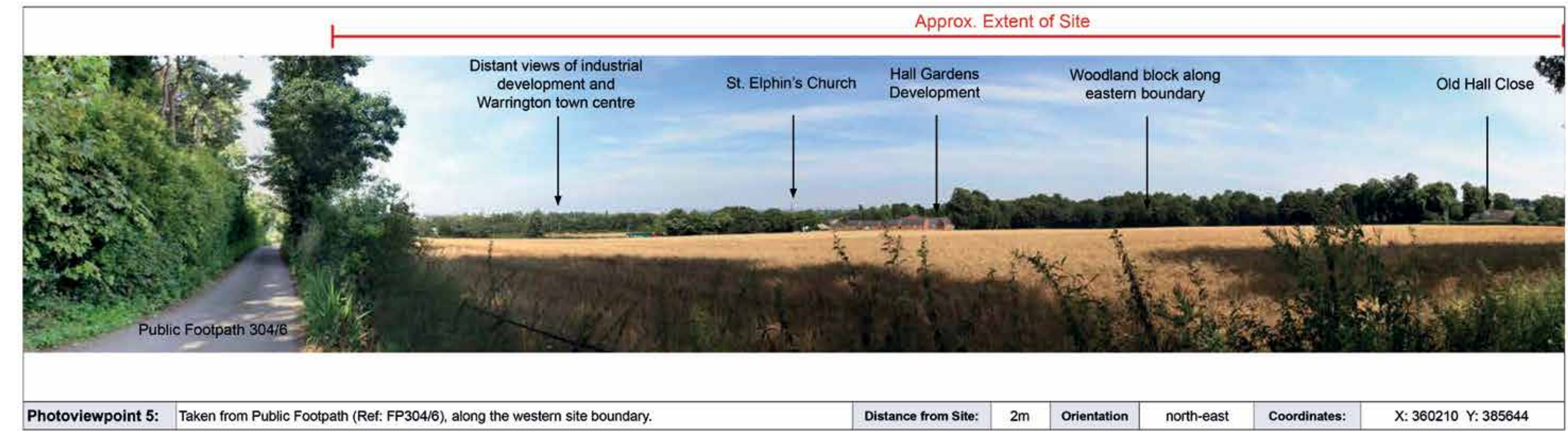
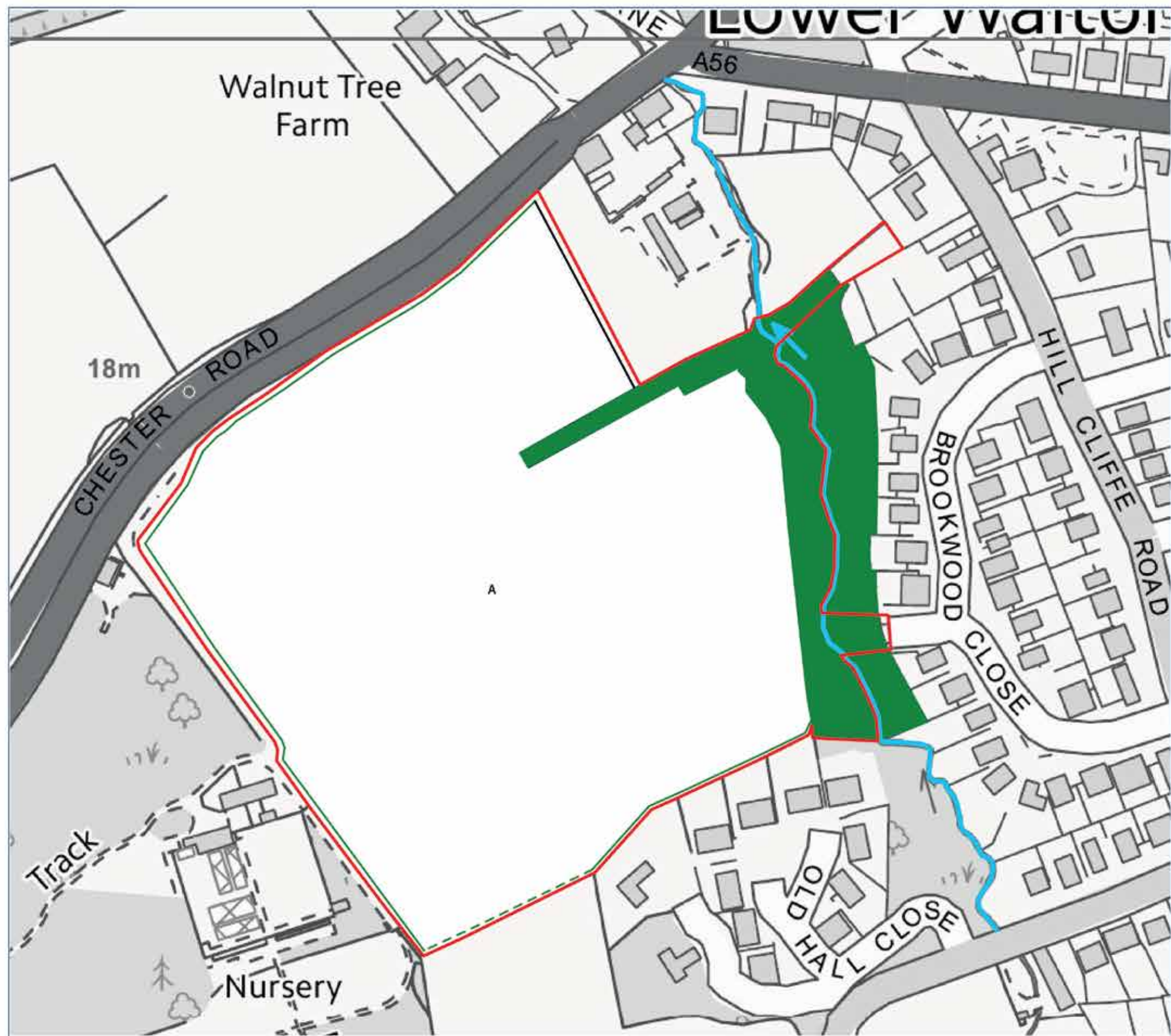


Figure 04:03 - Photoviewpoint 5



- Site Boundary
- A Arable
- Broadleaved Woodland
- Fence
- Hedge and Tree Line
- Hedgerow - defunct
- Hedgerow - intact
- Watercourse



Figure 04:04 - Habitat Features Plan

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

- 4.18 A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) has been undertaken by Tyler Grange to review the ecological features [resent within the likely zone of influence of the proposed development, and the ecological issues and opportunities that may arise as a result of the proposal.
- 4.19 The PEA has confirmed that the site is not covered by any statutory or non-statutory nature conservation designations.
- 4.20 The predominant feature of the site is the arable land which has been identified as being floristically poor and uniform in structure and having very limited field margins. Hedgerows and trees line the perimeter of the site and comprise a mix of species and trees of differing maturity.
- 4.21 A small brook which flows into the Manchester Ship Canal lines the eastern site boundary, within the broadleaf woodland. It provides an important linear feature which is considered to be of local importance as illustrated in Figure 04:04 opposite.
- 4.22 A belt of mature semi-natural broadleaved woodland lines the eastern boundary and extends into the middle of the field. It provides a strong boundary to the site and provides connectivity to habitats in the wider locality. It is considered to be of local importance.
- 4.23 Habitats on site have been identified as having the potential to support badger, bats, breeding birds, otter and water vole. The PEA therefore recommends that additional surveys are undertaken to support any future planning application, including a full badger survey, a preliminary roost assessment of trees for bats (if any trees are to be lost), a breeding bird survey and otter and water vole survey (if the brook is to be affected by development).
- 4.24 No ecological issues have been identified that could affect the principle of development on the site. Existing ecological features, including the woodland is proposed to be retained and there is an opportunity, as a result of the proposed development, to enhance the biodiversity of the site.
- 4.25 On this evidence it is considered that there are no ecological reasons to prevent the site being allocated for residential development.

Flooding

- 4.26 A Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy has been carried out by WaterCo. This confirms that the majority of the site is within Flood Zone 1 – an area considered to be outside of the extreme flood extent meaning it has a less than 1 in 1000 (0.1%) annual probability of flooding. The eastern extent of the site, adjacent to the unnamed watercourse, is situated in Flood Zone 2 – an area considered to be at risk of fluvial flooding with between a 1 in 100 (1%) and a 1 in 1000 (0.1%) annual probability and in Flood Zone 3 – an area considered to be at risk of fluvial flooding with less than a 1 in 100 (1%) annual probability as illustrated in Figure 04:05.
- 4.27 Notwithstanding this, given the steepness of the catchment, the flood extent is minimal and confined to areas immediately adjacent to the watercourse. The risk of fluvial flooding to the majority of the site is low and the flood extent is confined to the wooded area to the east of the site. Locating all properties outside of the wooded area would mitigate the potential fluvial flood risk.
- 4.28 The site is also at a low risk of flooding from artificial sources.

- 4.29 An initial drainage strategy has also been undertaken which has confirmed that there is potential to dispose surface water via soakaways or via the existing watercourse to the eastern boundary of the site.
- 4.30 The majority of the site is therefore within an area considered to have a low risk of flooding (i.e. less than a 1 in 1,000 annual probability of flooding) and is sequentially preferable in terms of the NPPF and associated technical guidance. These indicate that all uses of land, including housing, are appropriate within this zone.
- 4.31 On this evidence it is considered that there are no flood risk constraints preventing the site coming forward for development.

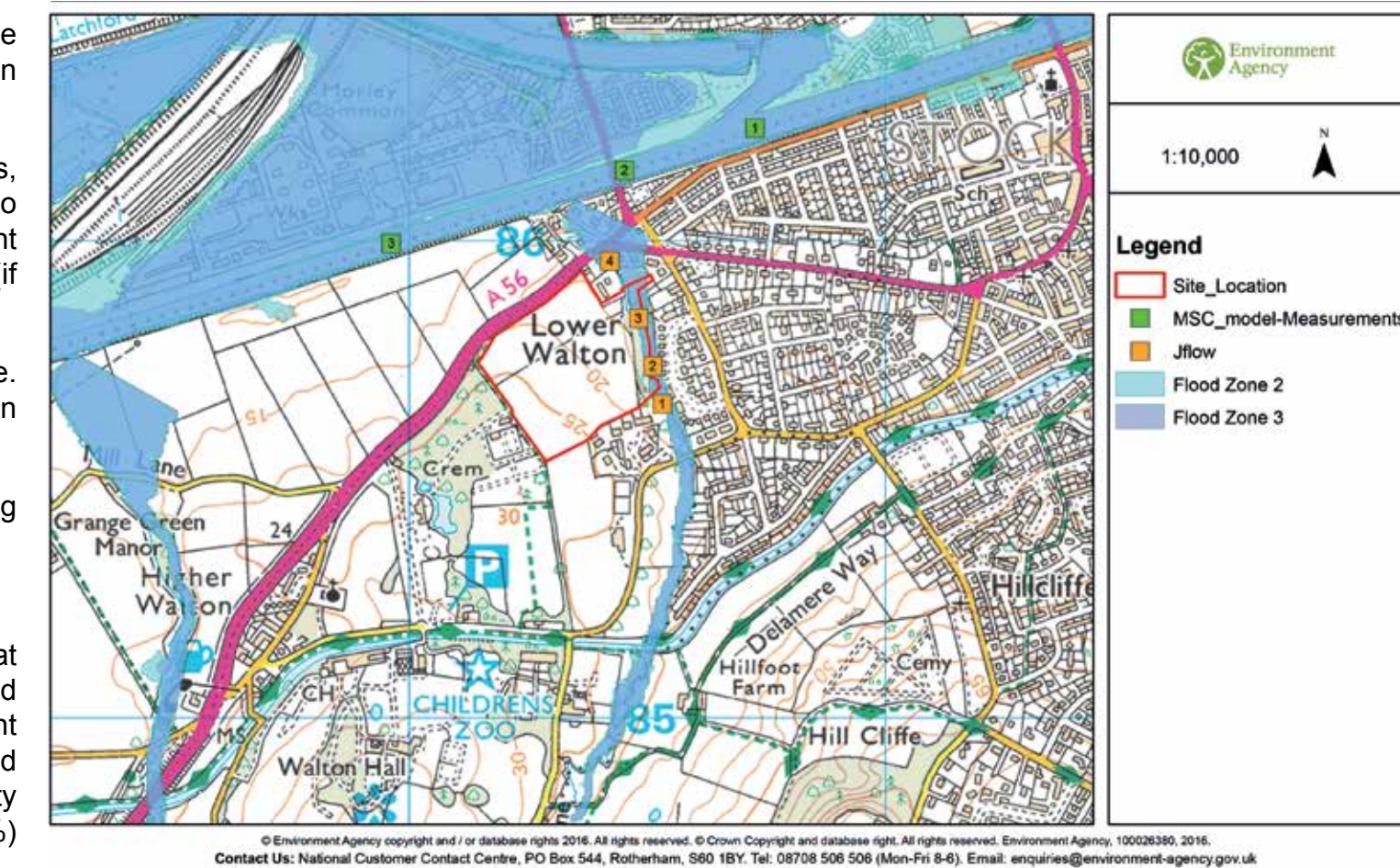


Figure 04:05 - Detailed Flood Map

Phase 1 Geo-Environmental Scoping

4.32 A Phase 1 Geo-Environmental Site Assessment report for the site was produced in September 2016 by Earth, Environmental & Geotechnical. The report identifies the underlying environmental setting of the site, including the geology, hydrology, flood risk and ecology.

4.33 The majority of the site is underlain by superficial deposits which comprises Shirdley Hill Sand Formation and Tidal Flat Deposits (Clay, Silt and Sand). This is shown to be underlain by bedrock deposits consisting of the Wilmslow Sandstone Formation.

4.34 According to the Environment Agency's online Groundwater Vulnerability Mapping, the superficial Shirdley Hill Sand Formation and Tidal Flat Deposits are a Secondary (undifferentiated) aquifer. These are layers which have typically previously been classed as aquifers and non-aquifers due to the variable characteristics of the rock type. The Wilmslow Sandstone Formation bedrock is classified as a Primary aquifer. These are permeable layers capable of supporting water supplies at a local rather than strategic scale and in some cases form an important source of base flow to rivers.

4.35 The likelihood of contamination on the site has been identified as low to medium, however further ground investigations would be required to determine the nature of proposed foundations, ahead of submitting a planning application.

4.36 It is therefore considered that there are no geo-technical reasons why the site could not come forward for residential development.

Highways/ Transport

4.37 DTPC has undertaken an initial highways assessment of the site.

4.38 The site is located off Chester Road (A56). East of the site, Chester Road consists of a single carriageway which provides a northbound lane, northbound right-turn lane and a single southbound lane. The carriageway is approximately 11.5m wide and provides 2m wide footways, dropped kerbs and street lighting. This section of Chester Road is subject to a 30mph speed limit.

4.39 Along the frontage and west of the site, Chester Road forms a dual carriageway which provides two lanes in each direction of travel. Each carriageway is approximately 8m wide and a shared footway/cycleway is provided alongside the northbound carriageway. A grass verge approximately 1m wide separates the carriageway from the footway/cycleway and street lighting is provided along the length of the carriageway. The dual carriageway is subject to a 40mph speed limit.

4.40 Chester Road forms a priority controlled junction with the A5060 Chester Road, approximately 255m northeast of the site and extends in a south-westerly direction towards a junction with the M56. Approximately 200m northeast of the existing site access Chester Road forms a priority junction with Walton New Road and Pool Lane.

4.41 The proposed development site is thus considered to be in a strategic location for access to key road networks within Warrington and the wider region.

4.42 The proposed development is located on the edge of an existing urban area with a range of services and facilities. There are existing pedestrian routes within the vicinity of the site that will assist the accessibility of the site for pedestrians, as well as easy access to an existing bus stop to provide additional opportunities for sustainable travel. Bus services (62 and X30) are provided from the bus stop within 60 m from the site, providing access to Warrington, Runcorn, Widnes, Hough Green and Chester.

4.43 Opportunities are also identified for cycling, as Warrington, Grappenhall and Great Sankey are all within 5km of the site. Traffic free cycle routes exist heading west on Chester Road (A56) and heading east along the northern bank of the Manchester Ship Canal, approximately 700m from the application site. A mixed on-road and traffic free cycle route extends west towards Runcorn along the St Helen's Canal.

4.44 As such there are considered to be no identified highways constraints that would prevent the site being allocated and developed for residential purposes, and the application site has good potential to be accessible by sustainable modes of transport.

Arboricultural

4.45 Tyler Grange has prepared an arboricultural appraisal to inform the indicative masterplan for the site, and to fully understand the tree constraints and associated root protection areas.

4.46 A total of 11 no. individual trees, 6 no. groups of trees, 4 no. hedgerows and a woodland have been identified.

4.47 The wooded area to the eastern boundary of the site is subject to a Tree Preservation Area (reference 13 ref A1 and 9 ref W1) and as such the approximate extent of the root protection area associated with this has been determined and has influenced the indicative masterplan for the site. Trees within the TPO have been identified as category A and will be retained and protected as part of any future development.

4.48 The scheme has been designed to incorporate and retain as many B quality trees as possible, and further consideration will be given to the ecological and amenity value of the trees when the scheme is developed further.

4.49 A residential scheme on the site would also likely lead to a net-gain in tree cover due to the provision of new street trees, incidental landscaping and residential gardens.

4.50 On this basis it is considered that there are no arboricultural issues which would prevent the site from coming forward for residential development. The protected trees within the Tree Preservation Order (TPO) would be retained and protected as part of any future scheme.

Agricultural Land Classification

4.51 An agricultural land assessment has been undertaken by Land Research Associates which has confirmed that the agricultural quality of land is limited by droughtiness and soil wetness. The majority of the site is identified as subgrade 3a which will affect crop yields and the flexibility of cropping in winter and early spring, and the potential profitability of the land through economies of scale for agriculture or horticulture is limited due the scale of the site and that the site is separated on all sides from other agricultural land.

4.52 There are no land quality issues which would prevent the site being allocated for residential development, given that there is adequate good quality agricultural land available in and around Warrington.

Availability

4.53 The site is wholly within Ashall Property's control and there are no known legal or ownership problems which could impact the deliverability of the site. The site is vacant and is used for occasional crop planting by way of an agricultural lease which can be easily surrendered. It can therefore come forward for delivery in the short term.

Achievability

4.54 The site is economically viable for an appropriate residential development and, as previously stated, there is likely to be significant market interest in this location.



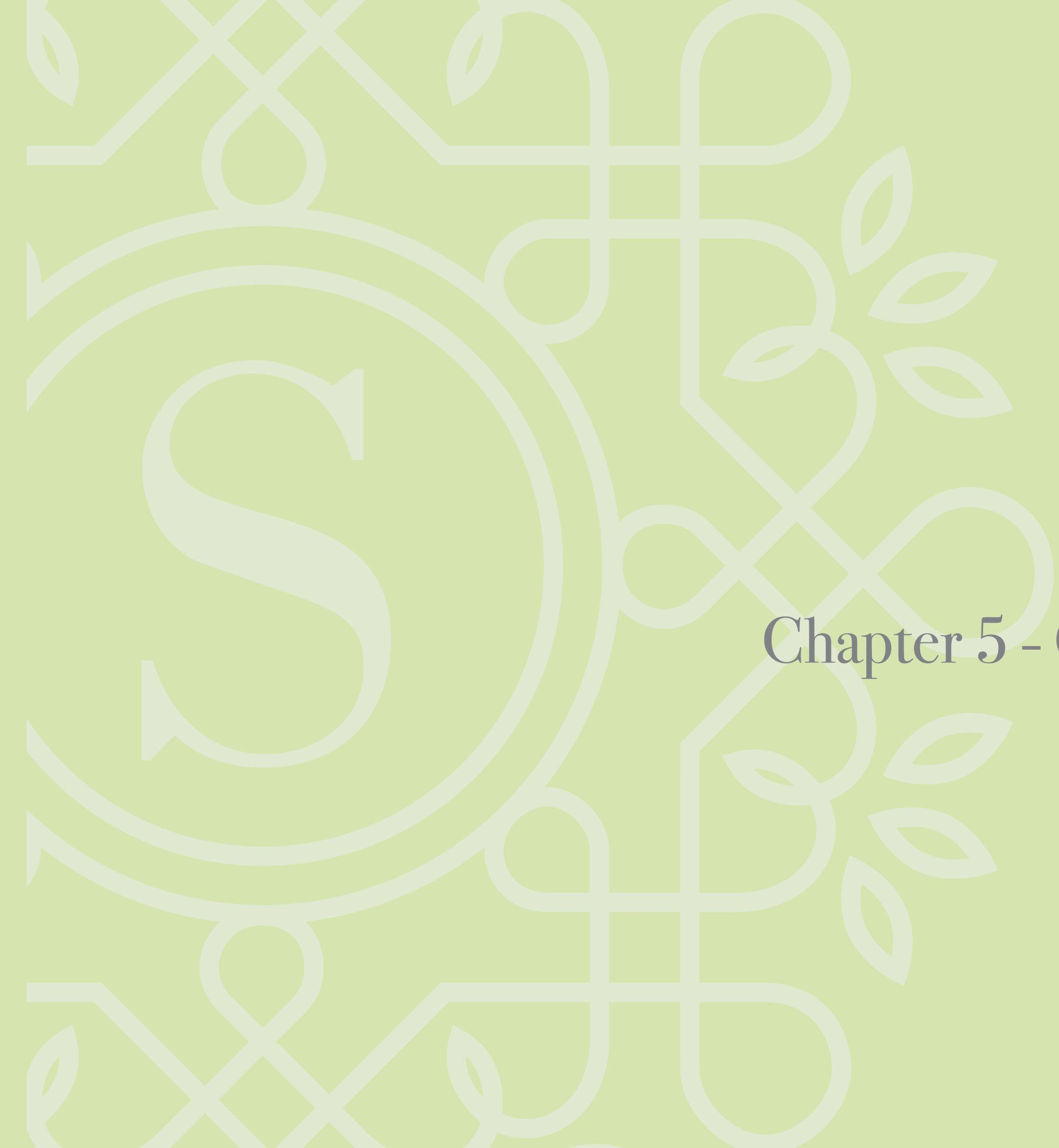
Figure 04:06 - Aerial Photograph of Site

Conclusions on the Deliverability of the Development

It has been demonstrated that the Chester Road site is deliverable in terms of the relevant tests within the NPPG. The site is not subject to any technical or environmental constraints that would prevent it coming forward for housing. It is considered that it should be released and allocated in preference to other suggested sites.

These matters can be summarised as follows:

- **Available:** Ashall Property owns the freehold of the site and as such the site is within the control of a developer with phase(s) that can be brought forward for development at the earliest opportunity.
- **Achievable:** Ashall Property is keen to develop the site for residential uses at the earliest opportunity and as a well-financed developer, has the resources to do so. Ashall Property is committed to delivering such housing at this site and in turn, helping to create a sustainable community for all.
- **Suitable:** The preceding sections have demonstrated that land at Chester Road is suitable for housing by virtue of its setting, relative to adjacent residential and leisure uses, its accessibility by public transport and major transport routes, and its proximity to a range of local facilities and services.
- **Developable:** Initial supporting investigations have identified no physical, environmental or technical constraints to residential development at the site, and have established that the proposed development can be accommodated within its boundaries and appropriately to its context.
- **Deliverable:** It is considered that the site is readily deliverable in the current market and would be capable of contributing towards housing land supply within the five year period and across the wider plan period.



Chapter 5 - Creating a Place to Live



Design & Form of Development

- 5.1 Ashall Property has prepared the scheme layout presented in this Chapter to demonstrate how the design and form of development will respond sensitively to the characteristics of the site and the wider area, and to demonstrate the contribution that the site could make to the sustainable growth of Warrington.
- 5.2 The vision for the site is based on present analysis. It is intended that these ideas will evolve further in consultation with the Council, local community, and key stakeholders at the appropriate time.
- 5.7 Existing residential properties adjoin the site to the east, south and west. Properties to the east and west are screened from the proposed development areas of the site by the extensive mature woodlands, whilst the properties to the south back onto the site. Any proposed development to the south shall back onto the established properties to finish the development blocks and provide suitable and sympathetic stand-off distances, ensuring visual amenity and appropriate privacy in maintained in their rear gardens.

Site Constraints and Opportunities

- 5.3 The vision for the site derives from a careful analysis of the characteristics for the site, its context, and the opportunities and constraints which arise. Those characteristics are illustrated in Figure 05:01 opposite and in the supporting narrative below.
- 5.4 The site is bordered by hedgerows and woodlands which in turn link into a wider established green infrastructure network as illustrated. The site offers the opportunity to connect into this network and further enhance and provide greater connectivity in terms of green spaces and wildlife corridors.
- 5.5 The site has a limited visual relationship with the wider landscape and is well enclosed due to the boundaries being vegetated with hedgerows and hedgerow trees, as well as the adjoining woodland blocks. The visual envelope is limited to only the immediate surroundings. The visible areas of the site provide an opportunity to create a transitional edge between the urban and rural area, and ensure that the site responds well to the surrounding context through ensuring appropriate development offsets, additional landscaping and the retention of existing established vegetation.
- 5.6 A vista runs from the western boundary north east towards the spire of St Elphin's Church in Warrington. This has played a key role in determining the masterplan layout of the site.
- 5.8 Within the site the landform is broadly flat with a rise in levels from approximately 17m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) at the north eastern corner, to approximately 31m AOD to the south west. The site is bounded by woodland vegetation to the east and west which provides an opportunity to create focal features within the development which can also benefit wildlife and ecology. There is also an opportunity to provide additional landscaping within the development which would complement the existing character of the site.
- 5.9 There is potential to provide safe highway access into the site from Chester Road (A56). The access would most likely comprise a roundabout. Properties shall front Chester Road and shall be set back into the site to provide a visual and acoustic buffer from the road. In addition acoustic mitigation to the building facades shall be incorporated to ensure noise levels are reduced internally and that rear garden noise levels are kept to a minimum.
- 5.10 There are no existing underground services within the site as confirmed by an initial utilities strategy. There are therefore no easements which would prevent development coming forward on the site.
- 5.11 The site is in agricultural use but is interspersed by hedgerow and scattered hedgerow trees. There is also an established woodland area along the eastern and western edge. Existing high quality vegetation adds character and maturity to development and should be retained where possible. Any loss of vegetation can be mitigated by providing extensive new tree and hedgerow planting throughout the development.

Figure 05:01 - Constraints & Opportunities Plan



Panorama from public right of way looking east across site to mature woodland adjoining Brookwood Close



5.12 An existing Public Right of Way (PROW) lies adjacent to the site, to the site's western boundary. Development on the site therefore provides an opportunity to promote and improve pedestrian and cycle access through the site and to connect into the existing footpath network.

5.13 The key principles of development arising from the opportunities and constraints are:

- Strengthen existing site boundaries and create a positive and finished edge;
- Improve the western 'gateway' into Higher Walton;
- Retain existing valued landscape features;
- Retain existing PROW's and their setting;
- Provide appropriate landscape buffers where necessary.

5.14 There is potential on the Chester Road site to develop a high quality residential scheme with a coherent landscape structure which conserves the natural assets present on the site, as well as enhancing the western edge of Higher Walton.

Parameters Masterplan

5.15 The masterplan parameters have been informed by the site constraints and opportunities as illustrated in Figure 05:02 opposite.

5.16 The existing mature woodlands are retained. To maximise site permeability a pedestrian/cycleway link is provided onto Brookwood Close. Impact on the retained woodland is minimised and will be sensitively designed and located to ensure the retention of these protected trees. This connection links the site to the existing settlement and also provides direct pedestrian access from the existing settlement out to the surrounding countryside, public rights of way, Walton Hall, Crematorium, the Bridgewater Canal and Higher Walton.

5.17 The green infrastructure network within the site provides public open spaces in the form of greens and linear parks around and through the proposed development linking and joining with the woodlands, watercourses and surrounding green spaces.

5.18 The proposed roundabout creates a new gateway into Walton on Chester Road and will aid in slowing traffic speeds before vehicles enter the village and provide an announcement of arrival.

5.19 Secondary gateways into the site are created to the east between Brookside Close and the site as well as from the public right of way to the west.

5.20 The development parcels have been located to create complete outward facing blocks. Where existing development or development currently under construction backs onto the site the proposed development blocks back onto these boundaries to complete these development blocks, following best urban design practice.

5.21 The movement and public realm hierarchy has been designed to create a legible and permeable network of avenues, streets, lanes and associated spaces, as illustrated in Figure 05:02. The Avenue creates a strong vista through the site from the roundabout south east, terminating in a focal element.

5.22 Streets and lanes branch off the avenue providing a variety of routes around and through the site, each of which is unique and aids in the legibility of the development.

5.23 The avenue visually connects the development and creates a direct pedestrian and cycle link, but is broken in terms of vehicular access so that traffic speeds are reduced. Vehicles move through the site via the surrounding street hierarchy ensuring low traffic speeds throughout the development.

5.24 In addition to the shared routes through the site, pedestrian and/or cycleway routes and links are provided which encourages walking and cycling through the site and into the wider settlement or out to the surrounding countryside.

5.25 The development blocks shall be outward facing overlooking the movement network, public realm or surrounding green spaces providing surveillance and activity onto those areas.

5.26 Landmark elements in the form of architectural statements/header buildings shall be created at the head of avenues, streets, lanes and vistas or in gateway locations to provide visual interest or statements of arrival.



View west from Lower Walton along Chester Road site frontage



View south west from Chester Road across site to Walton Lea woodlands



Vista to St Elphin's Church Spire

Figure 05:02 - Parameters Masterplan



Figure 05:03 - Illustrative Masterplan

Illustrative Masterplan

5.27 The high quality residential scheme proposed will deliver the following key features:

- Up to 177 dwellings at a maximum net density of 29 dwellings per hectare;
- Approximately 2.11 hectares of accessible, safe and multi-functional greenspace, providing recreational and environmental benefits;
- A softened western edge and new 'gateway' into Higher Walton;
- Extensive new footpaths and cycleways;
- Extensive new tree and hedgerow planting.

5.28 A lot of work has gone into understanding the area and the site itself. This chapter clearly demonstrates that all the work culminates in an exciting and vibrant Masterplan, which not only delivers residential development on this site, but creates a three dimensional place with varied spaces, built form and layers of interest.

5.29 This depth and breadth is picked up in the form of the street hierarchy and public realm, the variety and choice of homes proposed, as well as the naturalistic and ecological nature of the open spaces. All these elements come together to create a thoughtful masterplan which has all the physical attributes to create a strong 'sense of place'.

5.30 It must be stressed that this masterplan is only the start and as stated it is an 'initial masterplan' solidifying the parameters and illustrating how it can be delivered. It also demonstrates site capacity and viability. We anticipate that the design shall further evolve and develop over the coming months.

5.31 The Initial Masterplan in Figure 05:03 over page is supported by the following narrative and other supporting technical documents submitted as part of this proposal. The plan demonstrates site access, movement, overlooking distances, plot sizes and depths, street widths, sufficient space for on and off street parking and the relationship of the development to the existing surrounding neighbourhoods.

5.32 The following narrative therefore covers:

- Land Use and Quantum of Development
- Scale and Massing
- Spatial Layout - A Legible Hierarchy
- Amenity
- Secured by Design
- Access
- Landscape

Land Use & Quantum of Development

5.33 The density of homes varies according to their position within the development. Around the main gateway the number of houses increases as more semi-detached dwellings are used to create a more enclosed, intimate character.

5.34 Overall the number of homes illustrated in the masterplan stands at circa 177 over a site of some 8.18ha. This provides a gross density of circa 22 units/ha, similar to that found in the surrounding settlement. The residential development itself covers just over 6ha of the site, leaving more than 2ha as public open space in the form of village greens, linear parks and woodlands, providing new open

spaces for the benefit of the wider community.

5.35 The public realm within the development is also considered to be part of the wider open space network, with the Streets, Squares, Lanes and Mews offering additional formal spaces within this new neighbourhood for the community to interact within.

Scale and Massing

5.36 In order for this development to positively add to the existing townscape, create a statement at gateways and provide variety in terms of a skyline, the building storey heights shall vary according to their position in the layout. At the heart of the development around the Village Street some 2.5 storey properties are proposed, as housing densities drop the storey heights also drop from 2.5 to 2. At other key locations, for example around the secondary gateways the storey heights rise back up to 2.5.

5.37 The massing in key locations will not only add variety to the streetscape, but also to the skyline with varied ridge heights offering relief to the usual 'one height house types' of past developments.

Spatial Layout - A Legible Hierarchy

5.38 The hierarchy of routes, as touched upon previously is expanded on here. In effect the development should be legible; a visitor should be able to find their way around the development intuitively by understanding the importance of the streets and spaces through which they are moving. It should also be permeable; a visitor should be able to get from 'A' to 'B' without having to literally go round the houses.

5.39 Therefore the proposals illustrated in the Initial Masterplan are both legible and permeable, a movement and street hierarchy has been developed as discussed previously and set out below in the order of importance:

- The Gateway
- The Avenue
- The Streets
- The Squares
- The Lanes
- The Mews

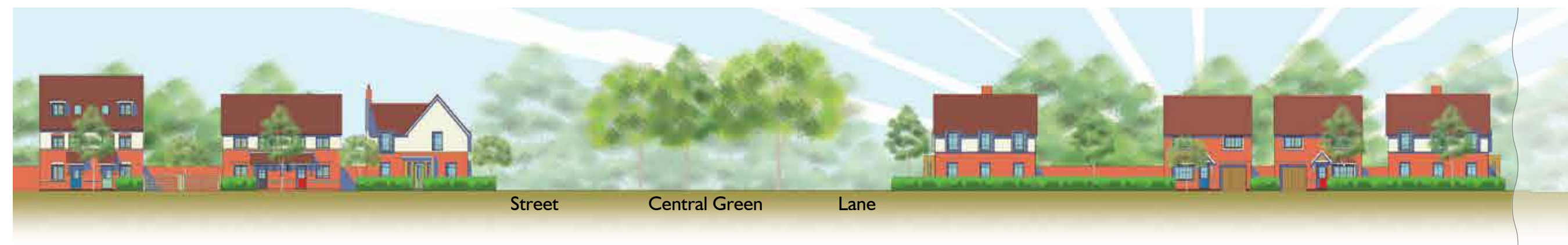
5.40 This interlinked hierarchical approach to the Movement and Public Realm ensures that variety, and uniqueness to each and every route and space is integral to the Masterplan. Each route changes in width, location of the footpaths, varied planting and street tree species, enclosure and boundary treatments, relationship to built forms etc. This approach makes each route unique and legible within the development.

Amenity

5.41 The amenity of existing and future residents of the development and surrounding neighbourhoods will be protected as part of the masterplan. Existing neighbours are not overlooked by the development, many of the existing properties are also screened from the development by the mature woodlands which surround the site. In terms of overlooking, the proposals follow best practice, striking the balance between urban design and guideline overlooking distances.



ILLUSTRATIVE STREET SCENE A - A1: CHESTER ROAD



ILLUSTRATIVE STREET SCENE B - B1: MAIN ACCESS STREET

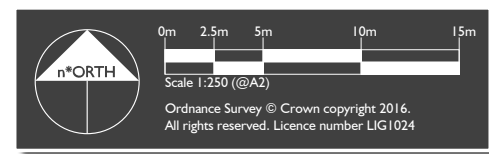


Figure 05.04 - Illustrative Streetscenes

Secured by Design

5.42 The layout responds to Secured by Design principles in terms of maximising the opportunities for overlooking of the streetscape, public realm and open spaces from habitable rooms. The streets and spaces are designed to be legible in terms of movement and their public, semi-private or private nature. All spaces, streets and paths will be lit to a suitable standard as agreed with the local authority. Pedestrian/Cycle routes are safe, secure, overlooked and direct to ensure they reflect the aspirations for the reduction of the occurrence and perception of crime.

Access and Accessibility

5.43 The site is intended to be highly permeable, allowing and offering easy access into the development for all forms of movement. Access and movement is an integral element in the design process. Vehicular access to the development is via the main gateway, with traffic speeds reduced using a number of traffic calming techniques which are seamlessly part of the design proposals. Vehicles are dispersed from the avenue via the streets. Provision for the turning and manoeuvring of larger vehicles, including refuse and emergency vehicles has been allowed for within the masterplan.

5.44 Pedestrian and Cycle access is a strong integral element of the masterplan, the new footpath/cycleways link into existing road/footpath network ensuring good connectivity between the site, wider settlement and countryside beyond. The footpaths also provide good direct access to the surrounding bus stops and public transport network.

Landscape Strategy

5.45 As described above, the landscape within the public realm and open spaces is key to creating a development of quality and character.

5.46 In terms of soft landscape elements; formal planting and ornamental species shall be restricted to the avenue. Street trees shall be selected which are of a size and shape to complement the streets width. Gardens shall be enclosed by railings and/or native hedgerows.

5.47 Planting within the public open spaces shall utilise locally indigenous native species of trees, shrubs and herbaceous planting to create a naturalistic landscape. The parks shall also provide variety in terms of grasslands; with wet meadows, hay meadows and general amenity grasslands providing habitat diversity, as well as space for informal play. Where possible allotments and orchard trees shall also be incorporated into the open spaces.

5.48 Hard landscape elements shall be drawn from a simple pallet to reflect those found in the surrounding areas. Street furniture including benches, lighting and signage shall all come from a common suite to ensure consistency and unification of the development, as will fences and railings.

5.49 The final detailing of the external environment will be tackled in more detail as part of any planning application, as would be expected.

Creating a Sustainable Neighbourhood

5.50 The site location, linked as it is with the existing urban edge of Lower Walton, the road and public transport networks means that Stonecroft is in a highly sustainable location.

5.51 Specifically the form and layout also ensures it is sustainable in terms of orientation, social gain, variety and choice of homes, character and sense of place, landscape setting, biodiversity and accessibility. This sites specific approach to sustainability shall also be delivered at the detailed individual building level later on in the design development process, looking to delivering energy efficiency to minimise impact on the environment.

5.52 The masterplan demonstrates that the site is capable of delivering a high quality scheme which will complement the wider area and deliver a range of attractive benefits.

Delivery Phasing

5.53 It is anticipated that the site could be developed over the first five years of the plan period.

5.54 There is a recognised need for investment in infrastructure to open up the wider site and enable the delivery of the development. The development of the highways infrastructure in the form of the roundabout will also bring forward key utilities connections from the A56.

5.55 The development of the site from Chester Road allows for maximum sales and marketing visibility from the A56, calming traffic approaching Lower Walton and making a statement about the quality of life to be realised at the scheme.

5.56 In landscape and visual terms, the southern parcel represents the most logical location for Phase 1. The site is best related to the existing settlement of Walton and is considered to have a limited visual connection with the wider landscape.

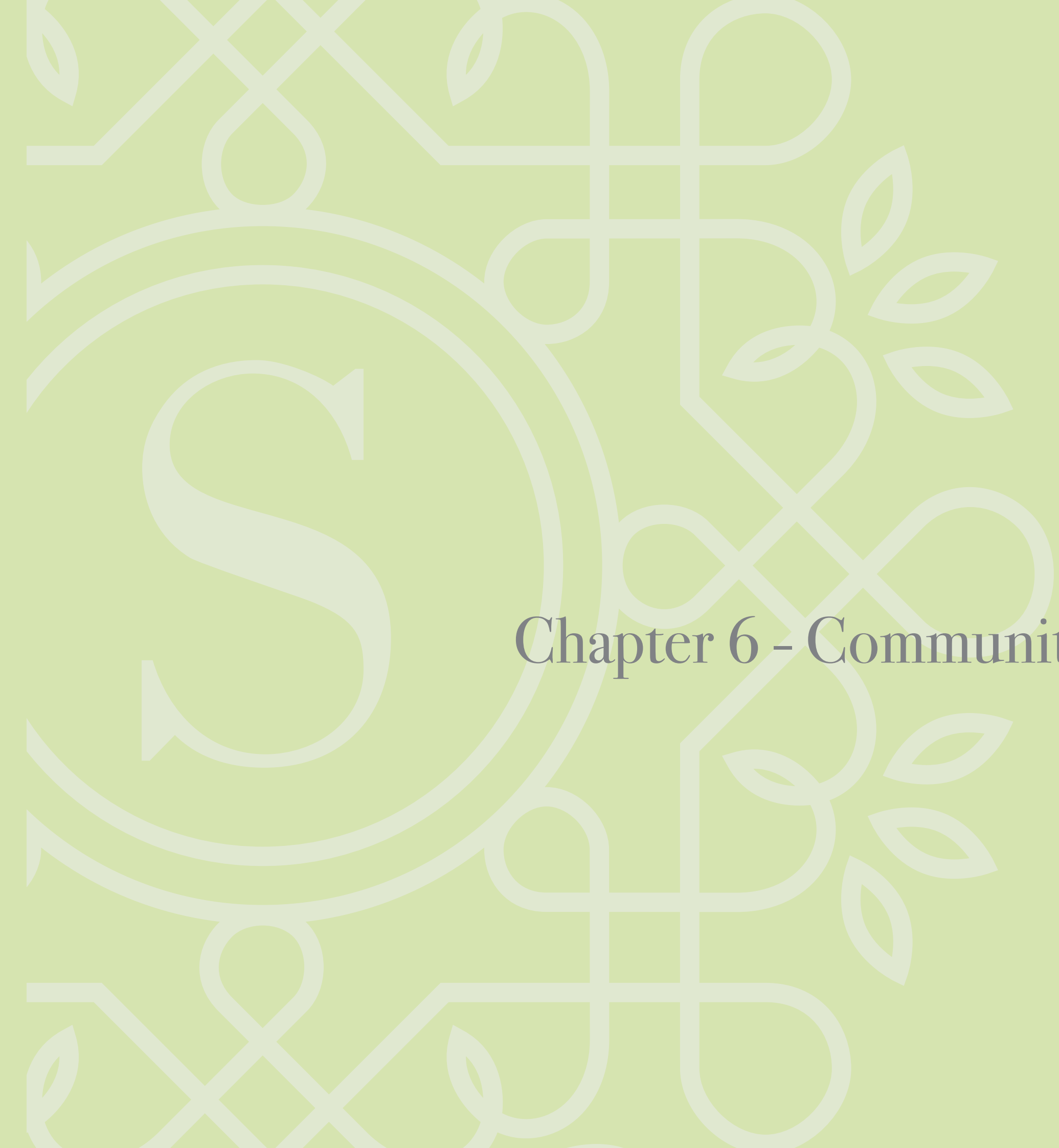
5.57 There is the opportunity to bring forward additional land, north of Chester Road (A56) as part of a future development proposal. Ashall Property has an interest in approximately 10 hectares (up to 25 acres) of land to the north of Chester Road. There is therefore the opportunity to create a more comprehensive sustainable extension to the west of Walton, which would help support the Council meeting local housing need over the plan period.



Figure 05:05 Massing Model - View from Chester Road South East across Site



Figure 05:06 Massing Model - Indicative view North East from Public Right of Way towards St Elphin's Church Spire



Chapter 6 - Community & Economic Benefits



Figure 06:01 Massing Model - View from Chester Road South East across Site

Associated Benefits of Development

- 6.1 The development of land at Chester Road for residential dwellings will generate a number of local economic and social benefits.
- 6.2 The delivery of up to 177 new homes in Walton will generate both construction benefits (in the form of direct and indirect employment) and on-going benefits arising from the completion of the development and the occupation of new homes over time. The proposals will also make an important contribution to meeting local policy objectives and priorities. The associated benefits of development at the site can be summarised as follows.

- **Construction Related Benefits** – Capacity to generate an additional jobs associated with the construction process and to sustain over further additional indirect jobs within the local economy. There is associated potential to reduce levels of unemployment and increase economic activity locally, alongside diversifying the population profile to include greater proportions of younger working age people.
- **Population Benefits** – Potential to increase the population by approximately 200 households. Given the potential appeal of the site, there is an opportunity to introduce young, family households which will help to sustain essential services within the settlement.
- **Spending Power** – Potential to create additional expenditure within the local economy, which will help to sustain local shops and businesses essential to the vitality of the District Centre. Importantly, this can provide the impetus to support existing and new retail provision and essential facilities in Walton and Stockton Heath.
- **Enhancing Council Tax Revenues and New Homes Bonus** – Potential to generate additional Council Tax revenue and contribute a significant amount in New Homes Bonus.
- **Apprenticeships** – Potential to work with education providers and others to incorporate appropriate opportunities for apprentices supported by recognised training and development programmes for young and unemployed people in the area.
- **Connectivity** – Development of the site provides the opportunity to enhance the existing Public Right of Way as well as provide new pedestrian and cycle routes through the site connecting onto the existing networks and providing access to Higher Walton and the wider landscape.



Chapter 7 - Conclusions



Figure 07:01 Massing Model - View from Brookwood Close West across Site

Conclusion

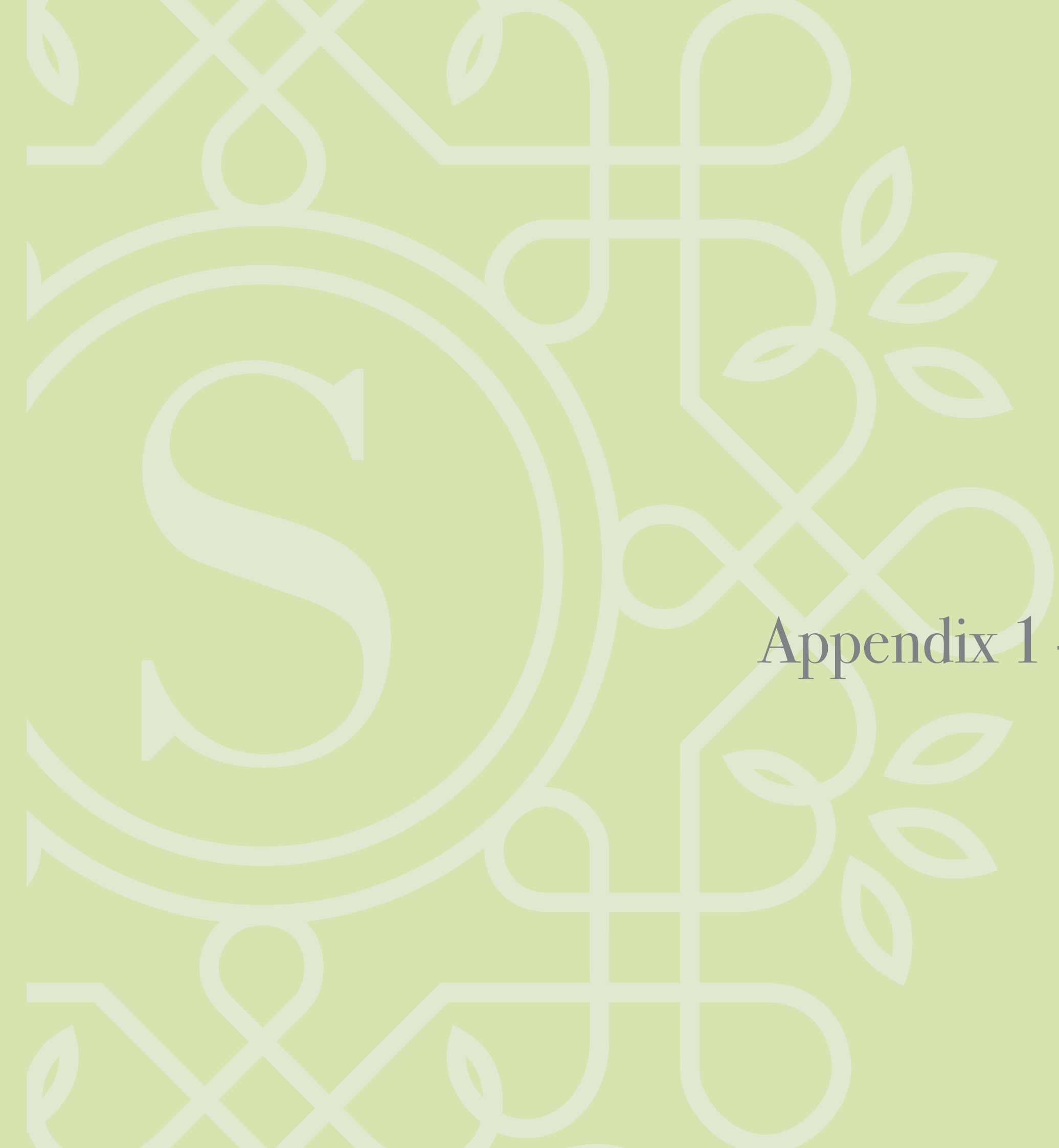
- 7.1 This Development Statement has demonstrated that the development of the site for approximately 177 new homes would make a substantial, and necessary, contribution towards a recognised local housing need – a need for more family homes and more affordable homes to help support the future vitality of Walton and Warrington as a whole. Further justifications are set out in the box opposite.
- 7.2 It is considered that this site represents the most appropriate and logical location for a sustainable extension without harming the wider sensitive landscape surrounding the settlement, with the site largely being contained by existing development and sitting well within its countryside context.
- 7.3 In our view, the release of the site from Green Belt is wholly justified as the scheme will provide a high quality residential environment which is balanced with the provision of social and physical infrastructure and supports the economic and regeneration ambitions of the Council.
- 7.4 It is considered that this Development Statement provides compelling reasons for development of the Chester Road site for new homes to be supported by Warrington Borough Council, other local stakeholders and the existing and future community. It is a starting point for exploring and shaping the development vision for the site, with Ashall Property firmly committing to engage with the local community and stakeholders to develop these concepts further.

Summary

- 7.5 There is a compelling need to deliver additional development in Walton in the short term. The site provides the best fit in terms of location and environmental capacity within the wider constraints of the suburb.
- 7.6 The proposals can be sensitively designed to have no significant adverse visual impact and will contribute towards meeting the development needs of the area. The allocation of this site will help meet this need and contribute to Warrington's housing requirement.

As set out in this statement, Ashall Property has demonstrated that:

- The site is located close to a District Centre, which is identified as a top tier settlement in the settlement hierarchy and a focus for new development.
- The site could accommodate in the region of 200 residential dwellings and therefore assist in meeting the Borough's housing targets.
- That the site will contribute towards meeting the identified and planned development needs within Walton, and to Warrington's five year housing land supply.
- The site adjoins residential development to the east and leisure to the south which are compatible with residential development.
- The development proposals can provide for a choice of high quality homes and in terms of type, tenure and size to meet local needs.
- The development would contribute towards the need for affordable housing in the Borough.
- The site is available, suitable and achievable for residential development.
- This site represents the most appropriate location for residential development to meet Walton's needs and will result in less harm than alternative options.
- The development proposals are economically viable and will be financed by a reputable developer.
- The site is in a sustainable location for new housing, located in close proximity to public transport links, transport routes and a range of shops, services, schools, jobs and community facilities.
- The provision of new housing on this site will benefit the wider economy and help to sustain existing services.
- The immediate delivery of the development would help meet housing needs in the short term and assist the Council in demonstrating a five year housing land supply.
- The development would generate a number of local economic and social benefits;
- There are no technical, physical or environmental constraints to the development of housing at land at Chester Road.
- The proposals will be sensitive to the character of the local landscape in terms of scale, design, layout, building style and materials.



Appendix 1 - About Ashall Property



Ashall
P R O P E R T Y

About Ashall Property

Ashall Property is a private property investment and development company which focuses on creating investment value through property development and asset management.

Ashall Property was established in the 1930s in Padgate, Warrington and as such has strong local connections and interest, and over 70 years' experience in the property construction and development sector. Land at Chester Road, Walton was acquired by JR Ashall (Ashall Property) in 1943.

Ashall Property has developed circa 4,000 dwellings since across Appleton, Padgate, Woolston, Thelwall and Lymm and in Walton on land adjoining Stonecroft.

Ashall Property thrives on collaboration and long-term engagement with its partners to create high quality schemes and mutually working relationships. We look forward to the opportunity of working with Warrington Borough Council for land at Chester Road, Walton.





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