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# Warrington Local Plan Preferred Development Option

Representations on Behalf of Anwyl Land Ltd and  
Anwyl Construction Company Ltd

September 2017

## **Representation to the Warrington Local Plan Preferred Development Option**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This representation has been prepared by Barton Willmore on behalf of our Client Anwyl Land Ltd and Anwyl Construction Company Ltd ("the Client") in response to the Preferred Development Option of the Warrington Local Plan currently subject to consultation by Warrington Borough Council ("the Council").
- 1.2 The Local Plan will define the strategic approach to development within Warrington Borough between 2017 and 2037. This includes establishing a new housing and employment requirement, as well as the identification of new sites for development to meet these requirements in full.
- 1.3 The consultation provides a first view of the Council's proposals for the new Local Plan, further to the conclusion of key evidence gathering exercises which took place in 2016.
- 1.4 The preparation of a new Local Plan in Warrington follows the successful High Court Challenge of the proposed housing requirement of the Core Strategy which saw this being quashed. This left the Council without an up-to-date housing requirement on which to plan for new sites and monitor housing supply.
- 1.5 Further to a review of the consultation document and supporting evidence, these representations have been structured to consider the "soundness" (as defined in Paragraph 182 of the NPPF) of the Local Plan in response to the following matters:
- Defining the housing requirement (Section 2);
  - Meeting housing needs (Section 3); and
  - Sites for Development (Section 4).
- 1.6 Our Client holds land interest within the Borough at land off Mill Lane, Lymm. The Site is being promoted through the Warrington Local Plan as a potential allocation for housing. Section 5 of this representation provides greater detail as to the availability, suitability and deliverability of this site for housing. This is further supplemented by the submission of a Landscape and Visual and Green Belt Appraisal Report and Traffic Impact Note which have been prepared alongside this representation.

## **2. DEFINING THE HOUSING REQUIREMENT**

### **Objectively Assessed Housing Need**

- 2.1 In order to derive the future housing needs of the Borough, the Council has sought to update its housing evidence from that previously used to support its Core Strategy housing requirement. The updated assessment of future housing need is provided through the Mid Mersey Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2016 and subsequent addendums. The 2016 document provides an assessment of future housing needs for the Mid-Mersey Housing Market area which comprises Warrington, Halton, and St Helens. The most recent addendum (published May 2017) focusses solely on Warrington with the updated housing needs for Halton and St Helens assessed as part of the SHELMA through the Liverpool Combined Authority.
- 2.2 Our Client considers the Mid-Mersey Housing Market Area to represent an appropriate area of study for the assessment of housing need for Warrington. The Council has shown a joined up approach in the assessment of housing need with Halton and St Helens, and this has since continued with the Liverpool Combined Authority. The Council must however ensure that moving forwards this joined up approach is continued to fully satisfy the Duty to Cooperate. The Council should also encourage the Cheshire authorities to adopt a similarly positive approach to development in support of the LEP devolution bid, and ensure that the emerging GMSF is consistent with its planning strategy.
- 2.3 Our Client does not disagree with the conclusions of the SHMA which confirms a need for the Council to adjust the housing requirement upwards above the level implied by demographic evidence on the basis of projected economic need to ensure a sufficient local labour supply.
- 2.4 Our Client also agrees that the affordable housing need of the Borough (assessed at 230 dwellings per annum) would suggest the need for the adoption of a housing requirement which is above the demographic driven needs of the Borough.
- 2.5 Our Client does however hold some concerns regarding the report's treatment of Market Signals and economic growth as reported within the latest Addendum to the SHMA. These are addressed in subsequent sections overleaf.

*Market Signals*

- 2.6 Paragraph 020 Reference ID: 2a-020-20140306 of Planning Practice Guidance outlines that a worsening trend in any indicator will require an upward adjustment to planned housing numbers compared to ones based solely on household projections. To assess these, PPG outlines that appropriate comparisons of indicators should be made, this includes a comparison with long terms trends within the housing market area, similar demographic and economic areas; and nationally (our emphasis).
- 2.7 Despite the reference made within guidance, our Client does not consider that a national comparison is an appropriate way in which to define whether there is market pressure in the case of Warrington. The national average is highly skewed by the London, South East, and East of England housing markets, which exhibit characteristics and pressures which are rarely shown within the North West. In order to ensure that an appropriate policy response is made to the housing requirement to this local context, greater weight should be applied through the assessment in the difference between Warrington and the HMA and Regional averages. As required by PPG a worsening trending in any indicator will require an upward adjustment to planned numbers in contrast to demographic needs.
- 2.8 Reviewing assessed market signals there are a number of examples where there is sufficient evidence of a market suppression and a worsening trend. The presence of both require a response from policy makers.
- 2.9 For Median and Lower Quartile House Price Warrington is shown to hold a more acute position than either the wider HMA or Regional average. This is illustrated by Table 17 of the Addendum SHMA with a 30-40% swing against those Median and Lower Quartile House Prices exhibited for Halton and St Helens for Warrington.
- 2.10 Furthermore the affordability ratio is later confirmed as 6.12 in Warrington, in contrast to 5.27 in the wider HMA. Table 21 of the Addendum illustrates that this is not a static position, confirming a trend whereby lower quartile house prices have increased over the last five year period in Warrington which has outpaced that experienced within the wider HMA.
- 2.11 A further market signal demonstrating market suppression is shown by changes to Rental cost. In the period 2011-2016, a 1.7% increase in rental cost has been shown in Warrington. This contrast to 0.2% in Halton, 0% in St Helens, and 1.3% in North

West England. Figure 6 of the Addendum illustrates that whilst the consumer price index and North West changes in rent have been steady since May 2015, rents have continued to increase within Warrington.

- 2.12 It must be recognised that throughout the period which informs these Market Signals, housing delivery within Warrington has been significantly in excess of identified requirements. Over the past 10 years the average rate of delivery has typically been twice above the adopted housing requirement (defined as 380 dwellings per year within the North West Regional Spatial Strategy). In all years, even during the deep recession of 2008-2010 (a unique position for any part of the country), housing completions in Warrington have been in excess of the adopted housing requirement. Therefore even against a period of elevated delivery market signals in Warrington show the need for the adoption of an increased housing requirement.
- 2.13 The data provided through the SHMA addendum illustrates that there is pent up demand through three market signal indicators. As a result there is therefore sufficient justification for the adoption of a housing requirement which in excess of the demographic needs of the Borough.

#### *Economic Growth*

- 2.14 It is noted that four economic growth scenarios of the Borough are assessed through the SHMA. The SHMA concludes that the OE baseline represents the most realistic appraisal of future economic growth for Warrington. Our Client disputes the soundness of this conclusion in the case of Warrington.
- 2.15 The Borough has seen a strong trend in job creation over the past 25 years. This level of job growth is not an accident of specific economic conditions or the result of a one off investment but is rather typical of the Borough over an extensive period of time. The trend has allowed the town to emerge as a new strategic location for employment separate rather than reliant upon Liverpool and Manchester. In order to secure the strategic objectives of the Plan the Council should ensure that the adopted planning strategy does not prevent the achievement of these levels of growth moving forwards.
- 2.16 The adoption of a housing requirement which reflects OE baseline could serve to cap job creation in Warrington to a level which is below that experienced in previous years, adversely affecting the economic and city-status aspirations of the Borough Council. It could also serve to increase the level of unsustainable inward commuting into the

Borough. The adoption of an OE based housing requirement would therefore be counterproductive to the aspirations of the Plan.

### **Housing Requirement**

- 2.17 Reviewing the consultation document, it is apparent that the Council propose to adopt a housing requirement which is in excess of the amount of housing needed to fulfil its projected economic needs. Our Client supports this decision, as the adoption of a requirement based on the OE baseline employment projection risks increasing the rate of inward commuting, and reducing job growth within the borough in contrast to previous performance. The occurrence of either would not sit easily with the aspirations of the Council to transform Warrington from a town into a City.
- 2.18 Instead and in the aim of achieving the objectives of this plan period, the Council propose to adopt an annual housing requirement of 1,113 dwellings per year. This requirement reflects the assessed level of housing which is required to support the delivery of the Warrington and Chester Devolution Bid as advanced by the local LEP. The housing requirement therefore reflects a “policy-on” position and is broadly supported by our Client, noting that its adoption will:
- Deliver in full the assessed demographic needs of the Borough;
  - Meet the affordable housing need of the Borough; and
  - Provides a 50% increase on assessed demographic needs, considered more than sufficient to address Market Signals.
- 2.19 Whilst supportive of the adoption of a “policy-on” approach, our Client considers that the housing requirement should be treated as a minima and not a ceiling to new development proposals. This takes into account the fact the findings of the Council’s SHMA addendum which finds the need for the adoption of an annual housing requirement of 1,332 dwellings per year to support the continued delivery of the previous employment growth. Our Client acknowledges that there is no guarantee that this rate will continue to 2037, but housing delivery should nevertheless support its continued achievement as far as possible.



### **3. MEETING HOUSING NEED**

#### **Deliverability of Proposed Housing Requirement**

- 3.1 Over the past 10 years there has been a strong record of housing delivery across the Borough with annual average completions at 770 dwellings over twice that in excess of the annual requirement (380 dwellings per year as defined by the revoked North West Regional Spatial Strategy). This has been achieved in Warrington without recent significant releases from the Green Belt, with development concentrated to brownfield sites or former new town urban extensions.
- 3.2 The Local Plan Review provides the opportunity to refresh this supply of sites, with the proposed for new strategic extensions, brownfield sites, and other greenfield and Green Belt sites at locations across the borough to boost housing land supply.
- 3.3 Warrington is a desirable location for people to live and work. This is largely due to its strategic location between the major cities of Liverpool and Manchester, excellent access to the motorway network (M6, M62, and M56), abundance and quality of intercity railway connections (to Liverpool, Manchester, London, Birmingham and Glasgow), as well as the town's reputation and importance as a key employment hub for office, manufacturing, and distribution sectors.
- 3.4 The attraction of Warrington is further demonstrated by the level of land promotional activity which has taken place within the Borough. This can be seen by the number of sites which have been submitted to the Council through the 2016 Call for Sites exercise promoting locations around the borough for housing and employment uses.
- 3.5 Reflecting on the above, it is clear in our Client's view, that there is sufficient evidence of market demand and activity within the borough to deliver this level of housing consistently over the plan period. The proposed housing requirement therefore represents an aspirational but realistic requirement in line with NPPF. The issue of plan deliverability will therefore be subject to the adoption of the most suitable and realistic development strategy.

### **Spatial Approach to Development**

- 3.6 The Council make clear early on in the consultation document of their desire to adopt an urban focussed approach to development, with the majority of new housing to be delivered at or within the Warrington Urban Area. The extent of this area is defined within Figure 3 of the consultation document.
- 3.7 Of the 24,744 dwellings identified through the Local Plan, 15,429 dwellings or around 60% of new housing will be delivered on brownfield sites. This follows findings of the Urban Capacity Study which considers that 15,429 dwellings can be delivered within the urban area of Warrington. Whilst our Client does not object to the Council's aims to adopt a strategy to concentrate growth towards the urban area, the pursuit of this strategy should not risk the overall deliverability of the Plan.
- 3.8 A review of the Urban Capacity Study shows that a large part of this assessment is based on the findings of the masterplanning process conducted for the City Centre and Waterfront Strategic sites. The assumption that actual development will align to the findings of a high level masterplanning of these areas represents a significant risk to the deliverability of the plan. It will only be at the detailed design stage when specifics are known about site conditions, constraints and infrastructure requirements are known, influencing site capacity and deliverability.
- 3.9 The extensive area which is covered by both the City Centre and Waterfront strategic sites means that they are both subject to a patchwork of landownerships with some areas subject to active uses. These factors mean that beyond the extensive use of CPO powers the Council will be unable to actively put into effect their aspirations for these areas.
- 3.10 In addition, whilst a proportion of existing urban capacity will reflect those sites which benefit from live planning permission, it is unlikely that 100% of these will be implemented, such is the scope for change between design conception to construction. Given the potential for this, and the absence of any buffer within the urban capacity supply from that found within the Study's conclusions, there should be a discount made to this source of supply based on evidence of delivery and/or evidence or past non-implementation. This approach will provide for a more accurate reflection of the amount of permissions within the supply which will actually be implemented.

3.11 Beyond this, it is also noted that the Council make a small sites allowance for 1,740 dwellings. This is based on the rate observed of past delivery from smaller windfall sites. Whilst our Client does not object to the inclusion of windfalls within the overall supply, our Client is concerned with two aspects of this as drafted:

- 1) The inclusion of a small sites allowance within the first five years of the plan – Our Client does not agree to this approach as this may amount to double counting of extant planning permissions. Our Client would suggest a small sites allowance within years 4 and 5 of the five year supply taking into account the 3 year timeframe for the implementation of planning permission; and
- 2) That the overall level of the small sites allowance should not reflect forward provision previously recorded within the Borough. Our Client’s reasoning for this is for twofold:
  - a) The Local Plan will provide for a significant boost to the amount of allocated land available for development within the Borough. This will increase substantially competition within the market for selling new homes and will see many housebuilders engaged in developing sites within the authority area. Collectively these factors may serve to reduce the commercial attractiveness of windfall schemes; and
  - b) The Local Plan will be produced supported by a thorough and robust assessment of potential housing land supply. As a result a proportion of sites which might otherwise have come forward as windfall will be known to the Council and may either form part of strategic sites – for example within the City Centre allocation.

3.12 For the reasons above, our Client considers that the small sites allowance currently outlined in Table 11 of the Local Plan is reviewed.

3.13 It is also noted that of the 15,429 dwellings identified within the urban area (in non-green belt locations), 4,298 dwellings are to come forward within the next 5 years, and 5,687 dwellings are to come forward within the next 6 to 10 years. When contrasted to delivery on Green Belt sites, urban site delivery makes up for 93% of total delivery for the first 5 years of the plan and 74% of total delivery for the first 10 years of the Plan.

- 3.14 Whilst a proportion of this urban capacity will be greenfield, there is a significant reliance made by the plan on development at brownfield sites within the earlier part of the plan period. The timely delivery of housing from such sites is not guaranteed given the typical characteristics and constraints of this type of development site. Of the sites which make up this element of the Council's land supply, a proportion will not yet benefit from planning permission, will require demolition or land remediation, will not be available due to landownership or existing active use.
- 3.15 The failure of the Council to achieve its identified annual requirements within the early years of the plan period will place the authority on the back foot in terms of housing delivery, given the Government's preference towards Sedgefield and the requirements of Paragraph 47 of the NPPF. Shortages in housing provision may adversely affect the achievement of the economic objectives of the plan and is likely to lead to social problems within the plan area due to the lack of access to housing, increasing unaffordability, and overcrowding.
- 3.16 To address this issue, the Council should ensure that the spatial strategy makes sufficient provision to allow for greenfield sites to come forward within the early part of the plan period in order to rebalance the supply between brownfield and greenfield.

### **Distribution of Development amongst Settlements**

- 3.17 The consultation document indicates that it is the Council's preference for new housing to be concentrated at strategic locations within and adjoined to the main Warrington Urban area with organic levels of growth identified for selected outlying settlements within the Borough. The result will see 94% of new housing provided over the plan period delivered at Warrington (23,345 dwellings) with 6% provided at settlements beyond Warrington (1,429 dwellings).
- 3.18 The soundness of this approach is questionable. Very little regard appears to have been given to what level of future housing needs within the Borough emanates from the rural parts of the Borough. The Council should undertake a review of sub-district housing needs of the area in order to help define more robustly which parts of the Borough are in need of new housing in response to need and demand. The provision of housing in the parts of the Borough where homes are not needed will not address local housing need or issues of affordability.

- 3.19 It is also questionable how a 6% growth proportion will help support and maintain rural services and facilities, promoting rural vitality and vibrancy in line with the NPPF and PPG. Though a detailed account is provided within the supporting service proformas as to the level of existing services within each identified outlying settlement, very little review is made as to the quality of these services and the prospect for retention over the plan period, account for the growth attributed within the Plan.
- 3.20 The Council should seek to justify the distribution of development based on a robust assessment of need and rural sustainability.
- 3.21 Table 22 of the Local Plan provides a breakdown of the considered distribution of new housing amongst the outlying settlements of the Borough. This table is provided below (Table 1). Our Client does not object to any of the outlying settlements identified.

Table 1: Distribution of Green Belt releases amongst outlying settlements

Settlement	Indicative Green Belt Capacity
Lymm	500
Culcheth	300
Burtonwood	150
Winwick	90
Croft	60
Glazebury	50
Hollins Green	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,190</b>

- 3.22 Of the outlying settlements, our Client notes and supports the identification of the largest proportion of growth towards Lymm over the plan period. Lymm is the largest free standing settlement outside of the main urban area within the Borough. It possess a wide range of shops, services and facilities. Is served by good public transport links. And is easily access to nearby employment centres at Burtonwood, Warrington Town Centre, and the planned strategic employment site within the Garden City Suburb. The town has been subject to limited housing development over recent years, and is in need of growth to satisfy local needs, address high levels of unaffordability and support existing services, facilities and local businesses.

- 3.23 Though supportive of Lymm’s acknowledged need for growth, our Client is concerned by the very little justification which appears to be provided by the Council as to the reasoning for each apportioned figure.
- 3.24 Supporting evidence shows that in most cases three scenarios are tested for each outlying settlement. The scenarios are dictated by SHLAA submissions made to the Council.
- 3.25 The first scenario considers the sustainable capacity of each settlement to grow “incrementally” over the plan period. The second considers the potential for a strategic urban extension. Whilst the third considers the potential for a new settlement. It is unclear why the Council has not selected scenarios beyond these including an increased proportion of growth owing to the role and scale of the settlement within the Borough wide context.
- 3.26 The Sustainability Appraisal considers that the first scenario would be most sustainable given that this level of growth could be accommodated without expansion of existing services. This conclusion forgets, the potential benefits larger sites could provide in supporting an expansion to local school or land for a new school, investing in health services, and supporting the continued vitality and vibrancy of existing key services, facilities and shops in line with NPPF. Our Client therefore views the conclusions of the Sustainability Appraisal to be questionable.
- 3.27 As set out above, our Client considers that a more robust position is for the Council to first define the specific housing need for each settlement (or broadly amongst settlements) on the basis of an appraisal of local housing need including issues of affordable in settlements most in need (as demonstrated within the supporting SHMA) and the need to support rural vitality and vibrancy. The scope to accommodate this then to be made with reference to an Assessment of the Green Belt, assessment of potential sites through the SHLAA, conformity with strategic objectives, and the need to ensure that the proportion identified secures a sustainable pattern of development.

## 4. STRATEGIC SITES

4.1 A total of four Strategic Sites are identified by the Council through the consultation document. Indicative capacities for each are outlined as:

- City Centre – 3,526 dwellings;
- Waterfront – 4,032 dwellings;
- Garden City Suburb – 7,274 dwellings; and
- South West Warrington – 1,831 dwellings.

4.2 Whilst our Client holds concerns about the overall deliverability of these sites, our client does not object to the identification of some growth at these sites over the plan period, and acknowledges the broad suitability of each strategic site as a location for housing.

4.3 A housing trajectory outlining the assumptions made for the delivery of each strategic site identified within the Preferred Approach document. For ease of reference, a merged copy of this trajectory is provided in Table 2 below.

Table 2, Strategic Site Trajectory

Site	0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	Total
City Centre	980	1,629	569	348	3,526
Waterfront	728	795	1,790	719	4,032
Garden City Suburb	406	2,610	2,144	2,144	7,274
South Western Extension	0	610	610	611	1,831

4.4 The housing trajectory shows completions from the City Centre, Waterfront and Garden City Suburb within the first five years. With completions expected from all sites from year 6 of the Plan onwards. It should be noted that the Plan period commenced in April 2017.

**City Centre**

- 4.5 The City Centre Strategic Site covers an extensive area of the existing town centre, with various retail, business and residential areas identified for development over the plan period. Documentation supporting the consultation provides an overview of how this might be developed, including indicative phasing proposals.
- 4.6 In these representations we have already expressed concern as to the deliverability of housing within the City Centre Strategic Site with the first five years and over plan period. These concerns largely relate due to the uncertainty created due to the significant variance in landownership, existing land uses, physical constraints and condition, and commercial attractiveness in developing the various parcels making up the strategic location. These factors will all influence whether a site comes forward for developed as hoped by the Council and are issues which are largely beyond the control of the Council.
- 4.7 The City Centre Masterplan seeks to transform large parts of the town centre aiming to create new areas of the town which are suitable and desirable for living within. Securing this in an ad hoc manner will be difficult, particularly within the initial parcels located in areas which currently are not desirable or suitable locations in which to live.
- 4.8 Having cross referenced the Council's City Centre Phasing Plan with those areas which are subject to pending planning applications (extant planning consents should already be accounted for within the Council's trajectory under "urban sites"), minimal developments which might be considered developable within the next five years are found.
- 4.9 The lack of submitted applications within the City Centre Strategic Site raises questions as to whether the level of development envisaged by the Council for the first five years is deliverable. Based on this search, our Client considers that the trajectory for the first five years of the plan for the City Centre should be revised, with the amount of development considered to be deliverable within this period reduced.



**Waterfront**

- 4.10 The Waterfront Strategic Site extends to the west of the Town Centre broadly following the course of the River Mersey and Manchester Ship Canal. The area is intended by the Council to be developed for a mixture of uses including residential, retail and commercial. A total 4,032 dwellings is to be delivered at the Site over the plan period, with 728 of these expected over the next five years.
- 4.11 The Waterfront is currently subject to a mixture of uses, with some areas in use for industrial purposes, whilst others are agricultural. To bring forward large parts of the Site for development significant upfront investment will be required in order to demolish existing structures, remediate the land, and minimise any risk from flooding.
- 4.12 An added complication to the delivery of the Waterfront development is the evidence reliance on the western link. Paragraph 5.26 of the Consultation Document sets out that the Waterfront development is dependent on the delivery of the "Western Link" connection. Paragraph 5.27 continues adding that the final layout of the Waterfront will need to be amended following confirmation of the preferred route of the western link, which may impact on overall site capacity. The Council also accept that the trajectory for the site is also dependent on the alignment and delivery of the western link connection.
- 4.13 The western link will provide a new road connection between the A57 (Sankey Way) in the North and the A56 (Chester Road) in the south. To deliver this will as a minimum require new crossings of the West Coast Mainline, Liverpool to Warrington Railway line, St Helens Canal, the Manchester Ship Canal, and Sankey Brook. It may also require a new crossing of the River Mersey.
- 4.14 The Council consulted on route options in Summer 2017. A total of six route options were considered. The programme for the road indicates that a preferred option for the route is to be selected by the Council in Autumn 2017. This is ready for the submission of a business case to the Department for Transport in Winter 2017.
- 4.15 As the Council admit, the route, costing and funding of the road is currently uncertain, and as such any change made away from the assumptions currently outlined by the Council through its masterplan for the Site could substantially affect the deliverability and capacity of the Site for new development.

- 4.16 In addition, it is clear from the projected timescale of the delivery of the road (with construction estimated to commence in the early 2020's) that, should delivery of the Site be tied to the development of the link road, delivery of housing on this site could not reasonably be expected to occur within the first five years of the plan to 2022. The trajectory should, as a minimum be adjusted to reflect this with delivery moved back five years. The result of this action would remove 719 dwellings from the trajectory.
- 4.17 Beyond the first five years of the plan, our Client remains concerned as to whether any dwellings could be delivered on this site within the plan period. Though based on current timescales the link road may be expected to be open by 2025 (year 8 of the plan period), it is at this stage uncertain whether the link road will be delivered. Significant questions relating to the cost and funding of the link road remain unanswered. If the project cannot be supported by a sound business case, or government funding for the link road is not forthcoming, its development will become increasingly at risk.
- 4.18 In view of this, our Client does not believe that there is sufficient certainty to establish what level of housing delivery might be considered to occur at this site over the plan period. Instead, mindful of this uncertainty, and evident lack of overall flexibility within the plan, our Client believes that the Site should be treated as a windfall, with completions treated above that required as minimum in the plan. Sufficient capacity to accommodate the 4,000 dwelling contribution made by the Site should be found elsewhere within the plan area.

### **Garden City Suburb**

- 4.19 The Garden City Suburb will see a large part of the open countryside located to the east of Grappenhall (south of the Warrington Urban Area) developed for housing and other land uses. The Site is located within a desirable part of Warrington, with good accessibility to the Town Centre, Motorways and planned Strategic Employment Sites.
- 4.20 The area is comprises both Green Belt and non-Green Belt land, with the non-Green Belt land subject to ongoing planning applications (see planning references 2017/29929, 2017/29930 and 2016/28807). Beyond this area, the adoption of the Local Plan will be necessary in order to release this land from the Green Belt and enable its development for housing amongst other uses. Taking into account the

above, delivery from this site within the plan period and first five years of the plan is both acknowledged and accepted by our Client.

- 4.21 Our Client's principle concern with the allocation of this site is the implied rate of annual delivery which is set out within the Council's supporting housing trajectory. The trajectory of the Site (averaged over a five year period) is set out in Table 3 below.

**Table 3: Garden City Suburb Trajectory**

5 year period	Five year Average			
	2017-22	2022-27	2027-32	2032-37
Dwellings per year	81	522	429	429

- 4.22 The table illustrates that throughout its projected delivery significant completions are expected on this site. It is acknowledged that the Site extends to a relatively large geographical area, faces limited constraints and infrastructure requirements, and is located within a strong housing market. This will boost the level of housing which might otherwise be expected for a site of this size. However even when assuming a strong outlet delivery rate of 50 dwellings per year, the achievement of the implied delivery rate will still require a total of 10 housebuilders (or outlets) to be delivering on site at the same time.
- 4.23 Competition, availability of material, machinery and labour, access to credit, buyer confidence, market/political stability are all factors which could influence the delivery rates at this site over the plan period. The requirement to deliver new housing in accordance with garden city principles adopting specific design principles could also delay delivery on this Site.
- 4.24 The reliance made within the Local Plan for such a high rate of delivery within broadly a single geographical location and market increases substantially the risk that the plan will not be delivered in full within the plan period. To address this, the Council should make a reasonable reduction to the reliance made within the Preferred Approach Local Plan on housing delivery from the Garden City Suburb, and identify sites elsewhere for this to be met.

**South Western Extension**

- 4.25 The entirety of the South Western Urban Extension is designated Green Belt, and requires the adoption of the Local Plan before it can be developed. As a result our Client considers the assumption that this site will commence housing delivery within the 6-10 year period rather than the 0-5 year period would appear to be sound.
- 4.26 An annual rate of delivery of around 122 dwellings is assumed by the Council throughout the plan period from its commencement in year 6 of the plan. This rate of delivery could be secured on site should the site be developed through 3-4 outlets. This could be possible depending on how the site is brought forward by its promoters. Consistent delivery of this over the plan period may prove a challenge if the market changes, and subject to cost and availability of materials/labour. The Council should be prepared to be flexible in its decision making should this occur during the course of the Site delivery.
- 4.27 There are two constraints related to this Site which will affect its overall capacity for residential development. The first is the relationship of the Site to the Chemical Works located to the north of the Manchester Ship Canal and proposal site. The consultation document advises this is a significant health and safety risk to potential new residents influencing the developable areas of the Site. The exact extent of which parts of the Site are developable will need to be determined during the detailed design stage and may reduce the overall numbers for the site.
- 4.28 The second constraint is the western link road. Several route options will see the link road extend into developable areas of the site impacting on potential overall housing numbers. It is unknown at this stage whether the 1,800 dwellings identified by the Council for the Site through the masterplanning process allows for the link road or not. The preferred route for the Western Link will be confirmed by the Council in Autumn 2017. If a route which cuts through the site is selected by the Council then a reappraisal of site capacity may be required.

## 5. MILL LANE, LYMM

### Introduction

- 5.1 Our Client holds land interests at Mill Lane, Lymm, and is actively promoting this Site for allocation through the Warrington Local Plan. The extent of the Site is shown in figure 1 below.

Figure 1 Land at Mill Lane, Lymm



- 5.2 The Site is located to the east of Oughtrington in Lymm, and is comprised of existing agricultural land adjoined to the existing urban area located between the Trans Pennine Trail (a long distance footpath and cycleway) in the north, and the Bridgewater Canal in the south. The Site is contained on all sides by existing prominent features, including extensive built development to the north and west.

**Deliverability**

- 5.3 A Development Framework promoting the identification of this site as a housing allocation has already been submitted to the Council. For completeness an electronic copy of this document is again submitted as part of these representations.
- 5.4 The Development Framework provides an initial overview of the Opportunities and Constraints of the Site to development, confirming that the Site is in principle developable for housing. This includes confirmation that the Site is located within Flood Zone 1, and is not subject to any overwhelming ecological, historical, or landscape local, national or international designations which would prevent or significantly reduce the scope for residential development at this Site.
- 5.5 This appraisal has in turn informed the vision, and design principles which will be used to inform any detailed proposals for the site's development. This includes a parameters plan which shows the approximate locations within the Site for development areas, over 55's provision, land for a new school, public open space and landscaping. The Parameters Plan demonstrates how proposed land used can be sensitively and logically incorporated into the Site, and includes proposals to enhance recreation opportunities through provision within the site, and improving access through the Site to the Trans Pennine Trail and Bridgewater Canal. The Parameters Plan also illustrates how the existing pond which is a local nature conservation interest will be safeguarded and enhanced.
- 5.6 Work to further demonstrate the suitability and capacity of the Site for the development of housing is continuing. Alongside this representation we also submit a Landscape and Visual and Green Belt Appraisal Report. This report seeks to provide a critical review of the Green Belt Assessment undertaken for the Council (see below) and identifies key landscape and visual opportunities and constraints for developing the Site. The Appraisal confirms that the site is suitable for development and provides recommendations of features to be retained and enhanced within the site through the master planning process.
- 5.7 A Traffic Impact Note has also been prepared in support of this representation. The Note demonstrates that a safe and sufficient vehicular access can be created from Stage Lane, Lymm into the Site in accordance with highway design standards. Nearby junctions and roads to the site are demonstrate to operate with sufficient spare

capacity once the Site has been developed. As a result the development of Land at Mill Lane, Lymm is not considered to have a severe impact on the local highways network.

### **Suitability for Release from the Green Belt**

5.8 It is noted by our Client, that the Site has been subject to review through the Council's Green Belt Assessment. This assessment finds that the Site fulfils a moderate contribution to the Green Belt. This is on the basis that:

- The Site makes no contribution to checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas given that the Site is not adjacent to the Warrington Urban Area;
- The Site makes no contribution to preventing neighbouring towns merging into one another given that the Site is not located between two towns;
- The Site makes a strong contribution to assisting safeguarding the countryside from encroachment due to the site's connection with the wider countryside (on two sides) and that Mill Road may not be sufficiently durable to prevent further sprawl in this location. The Site is considered to support a strong degree of openness given that it contains no existing built form and is covered by minimal vegetation;
- The Site makes no contribution in preserving the setting and special character of historic towns despite adjoining a historic settlement, it is beyond 250m of the boundary of the Conservation Area; and
- The Site makes a moderate contribution to the assistance of urban regeneration given that identified brownfield land within the HMA could meet a proportion of future housing needs.

5.9 Our Client holds a number of concerns with the approach and methodology of the Green Belt Assessment which would affect the robustness and accuracy of this assessment. This includes:

- The Parcels derived within the assessment as inconsistently derived, with some utilising boundaries along roads which others relate to fields;
- The Assessment was not undertaken by the authors of the report, and instead undertaken by a number of officers at the Council allowing for divergence from the methodology and approach to the assessment;

- There is an inconsistent approach within the assessment towards parcels which relate to settlements and urban areas within neighbouring authorities;
- The Assessment stops short of appraising how a development could alter or improve existing Green Belt boundaries consistent with Paragraph 85 of the NPPF; and
- The Assessment fails to consider the urban influences and how this alters the perception of the Site and its character when determining openness.

5.10 In addition to the above it is questionable why all sites are determined to have a moderate or stronger contribution to the Green Belt in terms of their role in urban regeneration. The Council has determined that the very special circumstances required to justify the need to review the Green Belt is provided by the significant housing needs of the Borough, and shortage of available, deliverable and suitable brownfield sites on which to deliver. As a result all Green Belt sites should be found to hold a weak contribution to this function in this regard.

5.11 The Assessment attempts to apply a standardised weighting to determine overall Green Belt function taking into account the role found for each of the five purposes of Green Belt within the assessment. Our Client considers that across Warrington, Green Belt predominantly fulfils the first three purposes of the Green Belt namely; check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas, prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another, and assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. The prominence of these functions will vary per parcel and therefore the application of a standardised approach would be inappropriate and fail to capture the appropriate function of the Green Belt.

5.12 Beyond concerns with the methodology and approach of the Council's Green Belt assessment our client also disagrees with the Council's assessment of this site. A Green Belt Appraisal of the Site was undertaken by Barton Willmore on behalf of Anwyl Land Ltd and Anwyl Construction Company Ltd through the submitted Development Framework. This has since been updated through the Landscape and Visual and Green Belt Appraisal prepared by Barton Willmore. This assessment is provided in Table 7.2 of this report and concludes a weak/limited contribution by the Site towards the purposes of the Green Belt.



5.13 Specific areas of disagreement between our Client's and the Council's assessment of Green Belt function relate to Purpose 3: to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment and Purpose 5: to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land. This on the basis of:

- In relation to Purpose 3, the Site is completely surrounded on two sides and along part of two further sides by existing development. The Site is therefore well related to the existing urban form of Lymm and its development would not give rise to an extension of the urban area of Lymm further east or south than current built extents. The visibility of the Site is limited to the rear properties surrounding the Site, intermittent views from Stage Lane and Mill Lane, and limited viewpoints from the Bridgewater Canal. Overall there is limited visibility of the Site and as such there would be limited impression of encroachment into the wider open countryside. For these reasons the Site is considered to have a limited role for Purpose 3.
- In relation to Purpose 5, the Council has found an insufficient capacity to accommodate its future housing needs, as a result, given substantial housing needs and constraints of the borough, there is an acknowledged need to review and potentially release land within the Green Belt. In view of this, no greenfield site within the green belt should be assessed for this purpose.

5.14 Based on the findings above, it is our Client's view, that Land off Mill Lane, Lymm performs a weak role within the Green Belt and as such not in need of being permanently kept free from development. In reflection of Paragraph 85 of the NPPF, the Site should therefore be released from the Green Belt.

### **Site Trajectory**

5.15 The Site is available now and is considered deliverable in full within the plan period. Subject to the adoption of the Local Plan in 2019, it is considered that the delivery of new housing on site is likely to commence in 2020, with first completions recorded by March 2021.

5.16 The Site is likely to be built via two developer outlets. A total of 90 dwellings could be delivered within the first five years of the plan (to March 2022), with the development as a whole completed by 2029. Should delivery slip at all for whatever

reason, there will be 9 years remaining of the plan period in which for the site to be delivered without adverse implications for the wider Plan. An overview of this trajectory is set out in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Housing Trajectory for Mill Lane, Lymm

Year	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Dwellings	0	0	0	30	60
Year	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Dwellings	60	60	60	60	60
Year	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32
Dwellings	10	Complete	Complete	Complete	Complete

### Benefits

5.17 The release and allocation of Land at Mill Lane, Lymm for housing will provide for the following benefits:

- Suitable for the accommodation of a wide range of house types and sizes all built to a high quality design and standard;
- 105 to 120 new affordable housing of appropriate mix and tenure, to be pepper potted across the site and undisguisable in terms of design and quality of materials;
- The delivery of a 6 to 7 acre over 55 C2 Care/Extra Care Village responsive to the needs of an ageing population;
- 15-20 self-build plots;
- Diversification of sites identified by the Local Plan providing for increased market choice and boosting housing land supply;
- Contribution to the short term housing land supply requirements of the Local Plan;
- Accessible location to the centre of Lymm, with close proximity to existing public transport routes, minimising reliance on travel by car;
- Land reserved for the delivery of a new school and nursery;
- Generous levels of public open space, including a Multi-use Games Area (MUGA), child's playspace, and allotments;

- Footpath and cycleway connections through the site to enhance the connectivity of the wider area to sources of recreation;
- Strengthening of the settlement edge and boundary of the Green Belt ensuring the durability of this boundary;
- Support to existing services, facilities and businesses within Lymm due to increased spend and use from new residents;
- Direct and indirect support to construction sector jobs during the build programme. Support to care worker jobs following completion of development;
- Support to skills in design, project management and construction for residents of self-build plots;
- Annual contributions to the local economy from economically active residents of the site;
- Annual Council tax contributions; and
- New Homes Bonus to enhance public funds and supporting the delivery of wider infrastructure needs.

### **Summary**

- 5.18 It has been demonstrated in that Land at Mill Lane, Lymm represents a sustainable and suitable location for housing. The Site holds the potential to accommodate between 350 and 400 new family homes, of which 30% will be affordable. 15-20 self-build plots could be created on site with an opportunity for over 55's provision, and land for a new Primary School/Nursery. The Site would make an important contribution to the housing supply needs of Lymm and the wider Borough responding to a diverse range of housing need including housing which is suitable for first time buyers, families and the elderly.
- 5.19 The Site is actively being promoted for its development and is considered capable of delivery in full within the plan period, as well as making a contribution to the five year supply subject to progress on the Local Plan. Its allocation would diversify the existing supply in terms of scale and location of allocations enhancing the overall deliverability of the Plan by increasing market choice and competition.
- 5.20 The Site is not subject to any physical constraints that would prevent or unduly limit the potential for the residential development of the Site. The Site relates well to the

existing urban edge of Lymm, and is surrounded on all sides by existing easily definable features. The Site is considered by the applicant to fulfil a weak role within the Green Belt and as such should not be kept permanently open from development. A new stronger boundary along Mill Lane can be created which will prolong the Green Belt in this location.

- 5.21 Based on the above, our Client considers that the Council should identify the Site for 400 dwellings, plus 6 acres of over 55's C2/Extra Care provision through the Warrington Local Plan.
- 5.22 Should the Council consider that the Site is more suitable for a smaller scheme than promoted through this representation, our Client would be open to consider this and would welcome further engagement with the Council.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1 This representation has been prepared for Anwyl Land Ltd and Anwyl Construction Company Ltd providing their responses to the Preferred Options Document of the Warrington Local Plan.

6.2 In summary, our Client welcomes:

- The opportunity to review and comment on the Council's preferred options for the Local Plan. We acknowledge the importance of the adoption of this Plan in the short term. The Local Plan is fundamental to ensure that the objectives for the future development of the Borough can be delivered sustainably and in full;
- The Council's decision to revise and update its housing needs evidence in support of the Local Plan;
- The Council's decision to adopt a housing requirement which reflects a policy on approach and will help support the delivery of LEP Devolution aspirations. The raised housing requirement will also ensure that affordable housing needs of the Borough are provided for and provides a sufficient response to identified market signals;
- The Council's acknowledgement of the need to review and release land from the Green Belt in response to housing need and shortfall of deliverable supply in non-green belt locations; and
- The identification of Lymm as a location for identification of sites within the Green Belt for development over the plan period.

6.3 Our Client is however concerned that the following issues risk the overall deliverability and effectiveness of the Local Plan, and as such there is a danger that if submitted in its current form, the Local Plan would not be found sound by the examining Inspector:

- The Plan places overwhelming reliance on the delivery of non-green belt sites within the first 10 years of the plan increasing risk of shortfall in provision;
- There is little flexibility within the supply to deal with under provision. The plan also relies on all extant planning permissions being implemented and makes unrealistic assumptions about windfall sites;
- The Plan fails to respond to the needs of the rural parts of the Borough including its outlying settlements;

- The scale of development proposed at the four strategic sites is supported by limited evidence and is subject to known uncertainty;
- The Local Plan is reliant on ambitious rates of annual delivery throughout the plan period;
- The Plan requires substantial delivery from selected strategic sites within the first five years of the plan period despite the fact that some of these sites are not subject to existing planning applications and affected by substantial constraint; and
- Strategic sites identified are broadly within the same geographical location and as a result may be subject to increased competition.

6.4 To address this Our Client considers that the following measures should be considered by the Council:

- Additional flexibility is required in the overall amount of development which is planned for through the Local Plan should sites not come forward as envisaged;
- Further allocations should be made within the rural area;
- The Council should review its assumptions made regarding existing planning permissions and windfalls;
- The Council should reduce the amount of development it expects from the City Centre strategic site within the first five years of the plan period;
- The Council should not include provision from the Waterfront allocation at this stage given its reliance on the development of the western link and current uncertainty that this will be constructed. Development provided from this site should be considered as windfall and provide additional flexibility to fulfilling the housing requirement and achievement of past employment trends. Sufficient provision should be found elsewhere within the borough to make up for lost capacity;
- The Council should look to reappraise the identified capacity of the South Western Urban Extension should decisions made in relation to the western link affect overall deliverability and capacity of this site for development.

6.5 As part of this representation, and in response to the Council's approach to the allocation of land within its outlying settlements, we have submitted Land off Mill Lane, Lymm for consideration as a site for housing within the Local Plan.

- 6.6 In this representation we have demonstrated that this site represents a suitable, sustainable and deliverable location for housing development over the plan period. The Site does not fulfil an important role within the Green Belt and therefore does not need to be kept permanently free from development.
- 6.7 If allocated, the Site would make an important contribution to the Council's housing land supply, delivering within the short and medium term of the plan period. The Site would be responsive to a diverse range of housing needs, providing for up to 400 new family dwellings, including 30% affordable, self-build housing plots and over 55's C2/Extra Care provision. Its allocation would increase the range of housing sites identified through the plan, enhancing its overall deliverability through providing for increased market choice.
- 6.8 For the reasons set out within this representation, and accompanying documentation, our Client considers that the Council should release Land off Mill Lane, Lymm from the Green Belt and allocated it within the Local Plan for up to 400 dwellings







# LAND AT STAGE LANE AND MILL LANE, LYMM, WARRINGTON.

**DEVELOPMENT  
FRAMEWORK**

MAY 2017

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND CONTENTS

This Development Framework has been prepared by Barton Willmore on behalf of Anwyl Land (hereafter referred to as ‘our Client’). It demonstrates that land to the north of Stage Lane and west of Mill Lane, Lymm, Warrington (the Site) represents a sustainable solution to deliver new family and affordable housing to contribute to the future housing needs of Warrington Borough and the wider Mid-Mersey Housing Market Area, as part of a mixed use scheme.

The Site is submitted to Warrington Borough Council as an option for mixed use development in response to work being undertaken by the Council in progressing its Local Plan Review. Our Client will make representations to that process.

The Council’s Scope and Contents Document Draft of its Local Plan identified that if Warrington is to meet its development needs, then based on the updated assessment of urban capacity, sufficient Green Belt land will need to be released to deliver at least 5,000 homes and 261 hectares of employment land over the next 20 years.

The Site is located to the east of Lymm and is currently designated as Green Belt. Lymm is a Second Tier Settlement within the Warrington Core Strategy (2014) and a location which we consider to be a sustainable location in which to help Warrington meet its housing needs. Lymm is the largest and most sustainable settlement outside of Warrington within the borough. The Site has access to public transport and a range of local amenities and employment opportunities. At this time, Lymm is significantly constrained by its being inset into the Green Belt, however, given the need to release Green Belt land across the Borough, we consider that the Site, by virtue of its limited contribution towards the Green Belt, can be developed without harming the overall integrity of the Green Belt to the east of Lymm.

This document has been prepared to take into account key technical and spatial considerations to inform the preparation of a Concept Masterplan which demonstrates the suitability of the Site for mixed use development. Moreover, it sets a clear case for allocating the Site for development within the emerging Local Plan.

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HEATLEY

OUGHTRINGTON

LYMM

Stage Lane

Mill Lane

— Site Boundary

# VISION

Our Vision for the Site is the creation of a sustainable mixed use development which makes a positive contribution to the surrounding context. This will include a range of new homes, comprising affordable properties, starter homes, self-build plots, and elderly accommodation. Moreover, new footpath and cycleways will provide enhanced links with the surrounding area, including links to the Bridgewater Canal and the Trans Pennine Trail.

Key to the delivery of the Site successfully will be the phasing of the Site to ensure its integration with surrounding land uses and provide opportunities for the development to assimilate with the surrounding area.

We see the Site providing a range of development uses set within a network of accessible landscaped spaces. This will include the retention and enhancement of the existing Public Rights of Way through the centre of the Site and to create areas of recreation and amenity value for current and future residents in Lymm.



Figure 1: Indicative Perspective of New Homes

# PLANNING CONTEXT

The adopted Development Plan for Warrington comprises the Warrington Local Plan Core Strategy (Adopted July 2014) which provides the overarching strategic policy document in the Local Planning Framework. It sets out the planning framework for guiding the location and level of development in the Borough up to 2027.

The High Court Challenge to the adoption of parts of the Warrington Local Plan Core Strategy was heard and decided in February 2015 by Mr Justice Stewart. The Judge quashed the Local Plan with regard to its housing target of 10,500 new homes and reference to 1,100 new homes at the Omega Strategic Proposal.

The Council published its Initial Scope and Contents Draft of the Local Plan in October 2016 and is due to publish its Preferred Options Draft at the beginning of Summer 2017. The revised Local Plan will set the housing target for the number of new homes that will need to be delivered in the Borough over the Plan period. National Planning Policy requires the Local Plan to fully meet the 'Objectively Assessed Needs' (OAN) for market and affordable housing in the Borough.

The most up to date study assessing the housing OAN for the Borough is the Mid-Mersey Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2016 (SHMA). For Warrington, the Mid Mersey SHMA identified an

Objectively Assessed Need of **839 new homes (to include 220 Affordable units)** per year up to 2037, and an additional 62 bed spaces in Care Homes (specialist housing for elder people), per year up to 2037. The OAN figure is only the starting point and in line with the requirements of national planning policy, the OAN figure should be tested against the Borough's land supply position, infrastructure capacity, environmental constraints, improved affordability and market signals, as well as the Council's economic growth aspirations in order to arrive at a housing target within the Local Plan. This ensures the alignment of all relevant strategies, which might result in a higher or lower housing target within the Local Plan, other than the identified OAN.

As set out above, the likely increased housing needs for the Borough result in further requirements on housing land across the Borough. The initial draft of the Local Plan identified that if Warrington is to meet its development needs, then based on the updated assessment of urban capacity, sufficient **Green Belt land will need to be released to deliver approximately 5,000 homes and 261 hectares of employment land over the next 20 years.**

Clearly, the above changes in relation to the identified housing needs within the Borough will rightly require the re-visitation of the Council's strategy for development as a whole; including an assessment as to

whether 'exceptional circumstances' exist to justify a review of the Green Belt boundaries. This is clearly a task for the emerging Local Plan and its evidence base to undertake in the round. However, at this stage we consider that there is sufficient evidence to suggest that a Green Belt review is likely to be necessary.

Currently, the Local Plan Core Strategy Policy SN1 seeks to distribute some 40% of new homes within the suburban areas of the town of Warrington and development within the Borough's defined outlying settlements; including Lymm. However, this model for distribution is likely to be revised in light of new emerging evidence.

We support the Core Strategy's recognition that Lymm is a sustainable location within which to locate new housing development. Clearly, in previous iterations of the Local Plan, Lymm has been significantly restrained as a location for new development. However, in light of the emerging evidence base, we consider that it is likely that a review of the Green Belt will be necessary and that the Site can be removed from the Green Belt without significantly undermining the purposes or function of the Green Belt at Lymm. We consider that the Site, and Lymm as a settlement are a sustainable location to help meet the Borough's housing needs.

In October 2016 the Council published a Green Belt Assessment (GBA) undertaken by

ARUP which assesses large strategic parcels of land within the Green Belt and their contribution that they make towards the five purposes of including land within the Green Belt. The Green Belt assessment provides a strategic overview of those parcels and then goes on to assess individual sites. This Development Framework provides a more focussed assessment of our Client's Site set out later in this document and concludes that the Site performs a limited Green Belt function. It is not the purpose of this document to address whether 'exceptional circumstances' exist to justify the review of Green Belt boundaries.

The Site is considered to be a strong housing market area that provides the potential to provide a mix of densities and a range of value homes. The size of the Site and its ability to be phased across the Plan Period will enable the development to deliver housing to help meet the Council's housing requirements across the Plan Period. In total, it is envisaged that the Site will be able to deliver **c.350-400 dwellings** and other uses as part of a mixed use scheme across the Site area of 20.9 hectares.

# SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

## LOCATION

Lymm is identified as a second tier Settlement within the Council's established Settlement Hierarchy, and is the largest settlement outside of the town of Warrington. The Site is located adjacent to local convenience shopping facilities at Heatley Mere to the north, 1.8km from Lymm Neighbourhood Centre to the west and 13km from Warrington Town Centre to the north west.

## DESCRIPTION

Oughtrington is part of Lymm's urban area and has a predominantly residential character. The majority of existing properties in Oughtrington take the form of semi-detached and detached dwellings and bungalows with newer development to the north of the Site comprising higher density town houses. Some employment uses are available off Millers Lane which runs between the north of the Site and Rush Green Road to the north west.

The Site is outside the settlement boundary and is designated as Green Belt land. To the south of the Site is Stage Lane with the Bridgewater Canal beyond, both of which run in an east-west direction with Spud Wood beyond to the south. To the east the Site is bound by Mill Lane with open countryside beyond comprising predominantly of agricultural land.

To the north of the Site is Heatley Flash lake which sits between the Site and residential development to the north; the lake is designated as a feature of Biodiversity Importance.

The Site is currently used as agricultural land split into 4 irregular shaped fields separated

by hedgerows of various condition and quality and interspersed with a number of mature native trees. The north easterly field includes a small pond surrounded by a few mature trees; the pond is designated as a feature of Biodiversity Importance. There is a Public Right of Way running roughly west to east across the Site between the junction of Sandy Lane and Stage Lane in the west and Mill Lane in the east. The Site boundaries along the perimeter of the Site comprise similarly mixed condition of hedgerow planting with sporadic mature native trees; some groups of trees are subject to Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs).

To the south east corner of the Site there are a mix of sporadic land uses including residential, horticultural and agricultural plots and groups of commercial buildings. To the south of those buildings is a small car park providing access to the canal and Spud Wood.

The Site sits entirely within Flood Zone 1 as denoted by the Environment Agency's Indicative Flood Zone Mapping as an area of least flood risk. There are no features of heritage significance near the Site or within a range where development of the Site would be considered to affect their setting.





Heatley Mere

Millers Lane

Heatley Flash Lake

OUGHTRINGTON

Mill Lane

Stage Lane

Spud Wood

— Site Boundary



# CONTEXT ASSESSMENT

The Site is located in a sustainable location at the urban edge of Oughtrington, which forms part of the wider settlement of Lymm. The adopted Warrington Core Strategy identifies Lymm as a sustainable and suitable location for new development in the Borough.

Existing services and facilities in Oughtrington are located adjacent to the Site in between a 1 minute and a 5 minute walk from the Site and include Heatley Mere Co-op food store, hairdressers and beauty salon, independent cycle shop and some small local employment uses. Oughtrington Community Primary School is within easy walking distance from the Site to the south west.

## FACILITIES

Within the main settlement of Lymm, local residents can enjoy access to a range of services and amenities within comfortable walking and cycling distance from the Site. These include, but are not limited to:

- Lymm Village Pre-School;
- Sainsbury's Supermarket;
- Boutique and Independent Retailer;
- Coffee Shops and Bakeries / Delicatessens;
- Restaurants and Takeaways;
- Lymm Community Centre;
- Maple Lodge Scout Group;
- Lymm United Reform Church;
- Public Houses;
- Banking Facilities;
- Post Office;
- Newsagent;
- Dental Practice;
- Hairdressers and Barbers;
- Beauty Salon(s);
- Pharmacy; and
- Doctors.

Lymm Centre provides a full range of shops and services associated with a higher order centre. It has a strong retail offer, night time economy and a wide range of employment opportunities.

## SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT

The Site has access to public transport in the form of existing bus stops/services on Sandy Lane and on Rush Green Road and onwards via Lymm Centre. The closest bus stop is located on Rush Green Road, 700m from the centre of the Site and provides regular direct connections via services number 5 and 43 between Warrington and Altrincham.

- 5, 43, 191– Rush Green Road
- 191 - Sandy Lane

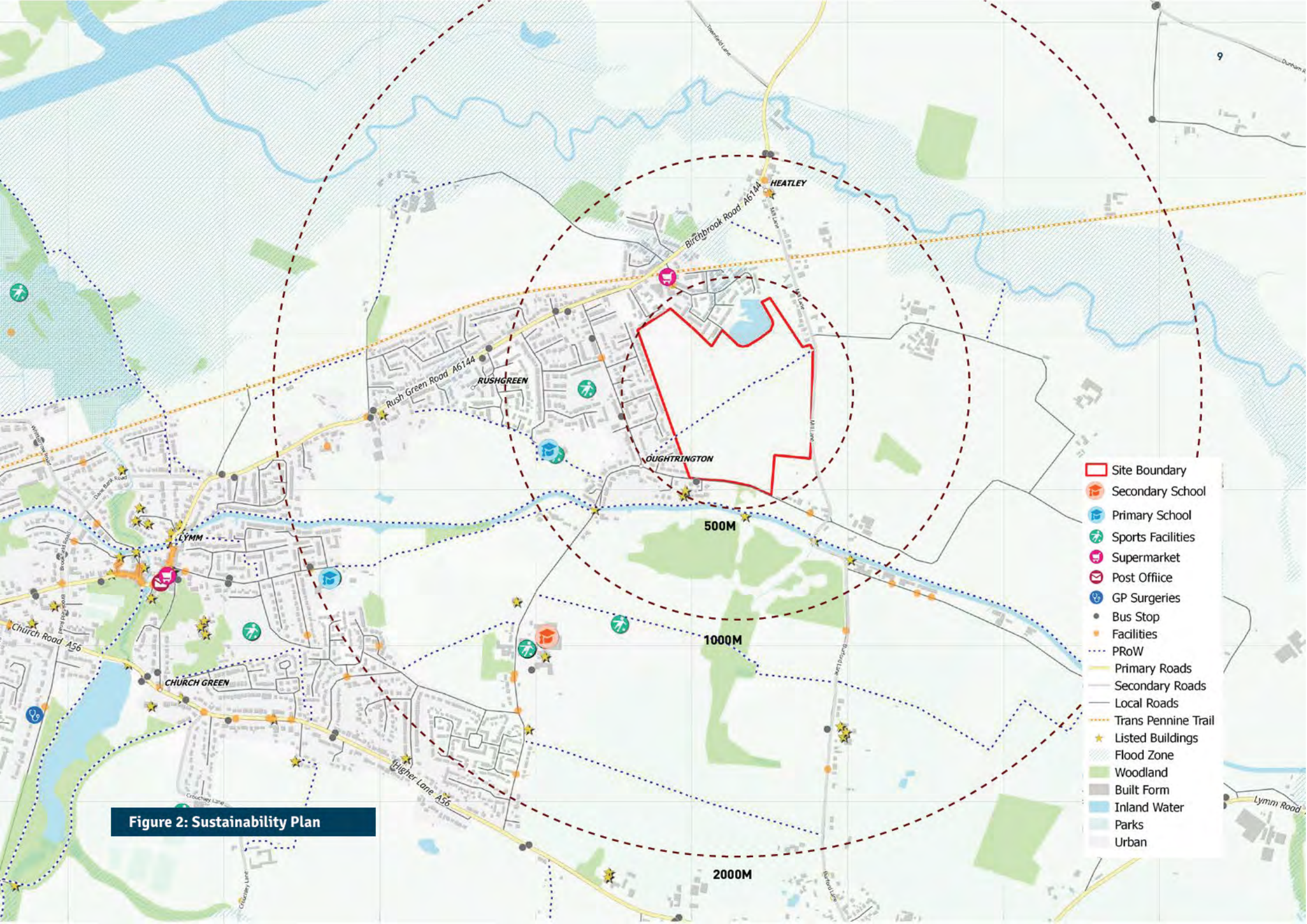
Onward travel via public transport is available via bus connection to Warrington Station which is located on the national rail network providing links to major towns and cities across the region such as Manchester and Liverpool as well as links further afield to Birmingham and London.

## WALKING AND CYCLING

The Site is well connected in terms of walking and cycling links. Links into Oughtrington provide a residential area with pedestrian walkways and safe cycling routes which extend to Lymm Centre. A Public Right of Way runs through the centre of the Site from west to east and provides access to the residential areas to the west of the Site as well as providing public access to the wider open countryside. To the south of the Site are recreational walking and cycling facilities along the Bridgewater Canal. To the north of the Site is the Trans-Pennine Way which provides access to the national cycle network.

The proximity of these routes provides opportunities to connect to existing facilities and services at Lymm, and recreational opportunities within the wider open countryside.

The plan opposite demonstrates that a significant proportion of facilities and public transport opportunities are within a convenient and safe walking and cycling distance from the Site.



- Site Boundary
- 🏫 Secondary School
- 🎓 Primary School
- 🏃 Sports Facilities
- 🛒 Supermarket
- ✉️ Post Office
- 🏠 GP Surgeries
- Bus Stop
- ★ Facilities
- ⋯ PRow
- Primary Roads
- Secondary Roads
- Local Roads
- - - Trans Pennine Trail
- ★ Listed Buildings
- Flood Zone
- Woodland
- Built Form
- Inland Water
- Parks
- Urban

**Figure 2: Sustainability Plan**

### TOWNSCAPE CHARACTER

The urban area of Oughtrington adjoins the Site and typically comprises Post-War residential housing interspersed with historic residential development, employment uses and community facilities.

Immediately adjacent to the western Site boundary is an area of Post-War housing served off Sandy Lane, which comprises both private and social housing. This area includes privately built 1980s bungalows characterised by brown/red brick, grey roof tiles and the occasional render (image 1), and examples of council built semi-detached and terraced properties (image 2).

Sandy Lane itself provides a varied street scene characterised by different Post-War house types and the occasional example of more historic development, including agricultural worker's cottages and Victorian Villas (image 3). This tightly knit street is softened by several mature trees (image 4) and the presence of a landscape strip adjacent to residential development fronting its northern section (image 5).

To the west of Sandy Lane is a further area of Post-War development, comprising bungalows backing onto an area of public open space. Development is typically arranged in cul-de-sac fashion with more generous road and pavement widths and the presence of front gardens and on-plot parking (image 6).

Adjacent to the northern Site boundary is an area of higher density modern residential development at Chaise Meadow (image 7 and 8). Comprising a mix of three storey flatted blocks, town houses, and two and a half storey detached units, properties are constructed in red brick with grey roof tiles and examples traditional detailing around the cills, lintels, and doors. The area also includes a small parade of shops (image 9) which provides a clear gateway to the residential area and welcoming interaction with the adjacent Trans Pennine Trail.

To the east of the Site, along Mill Lane, are examples of more historic residential development with the occasional modern infill development. This includes large detached and semi-detached properties (images 10 and 11) set within generous plots and typically constructed with red brick and grey slate roof tiles.



Figure 3: Photo Location Map



# GREEN BELT ASSESSMENT

## GREEN BELT ASSESSMENT

The Warrington Green Belt is contiguous with the Green Belt in Merseyside, Greater Manchester and North Cheshire. Lymm is the largest of the outlying settlements surrounded by the Green Belt. As a whole, settlements within the Borough are tightly constrained by Green Belt. Warrington Borough Council's evidence base points towards the need to review the Green Belt boundaries within across the Borough to meet its development requirements. This will necessitate an evidence based review of sites suitable for release should a Green Belt Review take place.

In October 2016 the Council published a Green Belt Assessment (GBA) which assesses large strategic parcels of land within the Green Belt and their contribution that they make towards the five purposes of including land within the Green Belt. The Green Belt assessment provides a strategic overview of those parcels before going on to assess individual sites.

The Site is assessed as part of strategic 'Parcel 7' comprising land to the east of Lymm before a focussed assessment of the Site is undertaken as part of 'Parcel LY14'. Parcel LY14 predominantly comprises the Site but includes additional land including Heathley Flash Lake to the north, adjacent residential development at the north east of the Site fronting Mill Lane and the farm buildings to the south east corner of the Site.

Notwithstanding the additional land included within Parcel LY14, it is considered that the Parcel assessed is reflective of our Client's Site in terms of its character and Green Belt function.

The Green Belt assessment assesses the proposed Site against the 'five purposes' of including land within the Green Belt as outlined within paragraph 80 of the NPPF. We consider the Site to be suitable for release from the Green Belt.

Overall, the GBA concludes that the Site makes only a moderate contribution to the Green Belt. The GBA states that the parcel makes no contribution in terms of its affect on urban sprawl of Warrington, no contribution towards preventing towns merging together and no contribution towards protecting the setting of a historic town. We agree with those conclusions.

The Site is considered within the GBA to make a moderate contribution towards urban renewal insofar as the Mid Mersey Housing Market Area has 2.08% brownfield urban capacity for potential development. Whilst we do not disagree with this conclusion, all greenfield Green Belt Sites within the Borough will inevitably make the same contribution in this sense. In light of a review of the Green Belt boundary being necessary for the borough to meet its housing needs, we consider that this function of Green Belt land can be discounted from the Site's contribution towards the purposes of the Green Belt.

The Site is considered within the GBA to make a strong contribution towards preventing the encroachment of development within the countryside which is the primary reason for its being considered to make a moderate contribution overall. The GBA notes that the parcel is connected to the settlement along its northern and western boundaries; with the western boundary lacking durability and the northern boundary having some weaknesses.

Importantly, the GBA identifies that the parcel is connected to the countryside predominantly along Mill Lane to the east and Stage Lane to the south both of which form durable boundaries which could prevent further encroachment if the parcel was developed.

The GBA also notes that the parcel supports long line views of the countryside and overall supports a strong degree of openness and therefore the parcel makes a strong contribution to safeguarding from encroachment.

We agree with the conclusions of the GBA with regard to the lack of durability with regard to the Site's existing boundaries with the settlement and the potential durability of Stage Lane and Mill Lane and defensible edges of the Green Belt. Whilst the Site is clearly open in its character when viewing outwards from the settlement, it is contained to a certain extent by its surrounding land uses, including residential and farm

development to the south and south-east and by woodland to the south; as well as residential development along its western and northern boundaries.

Whilst the Site clearly makes a contribution to the openness and function of the Green Belt, we consider that function is limited by the factors above. When considered in the context of the Green Belt as a whole, and in light of the likely need to release Green Belt land within the Borough, we consider that there are unlikely to be other sites which are capable of delivering the scale and quality of development within such a sustainable location that would perform less of a Green Belt function. At settlements that are enclosed by the Green Belt the loss of land which protects against encroachment into the countryside is considered to be an inevitability. However, what is considered to be vital, is the ability of the Council to release land from the Green Belt whilst minimising harm and which provides new strong and defensible boundaries to the Green Belt; as is the case with the Site.

We believe that the Site makes a weak overall contribution to the Green Belt, but we do agree with the Conclusions of the GBA summary with regard to the Site which states:

“In line with the methodology, professional judgement has therefore been applied to evaluate the overall contribution. The parcel has been judged to make a moderate overall contribution as, while it supports a strong degree of openness and it has non-durable boundaries with the settlement, the durability of its boundaries with the countryside means that any encroachment resulting from development would be contained and would therefore not threaten the openness and permanence of the Green Belt as a whole.”



**BARTON WILLMORE GREEN BELT ASSESSMENT**

Overall our Client’s Site performs well when judged against the five purposes; in particular the assessments notes that the Site:

- Is well connected to the built-up area;
- Has well defined boundaries and a low potential for unrestricted sprawl;
- Will not result in the merging of two settlements;
- Does not impact the special character of historic settlements; and
- Provides an opportunity to ‘round-off’ the settlement.

As set out within the accompanying table, we have also undertaken our own Green Belt assessment of the Site.

**Table 1 : Green Belt Assessment**

PURPOSE	CRITERIA AND DEFINITIONS	ASSESSMENT	CONCLUSIONS
1. Check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	Would development of the Site lead to / constitute ribbon development?	No. The Site forms part of a very distinct parcel of physically and visually contained land with very definite identifiable boundaries. The Site offers a logical extension to the east of Lymm.	No unrestricted sprawl.
	Would development result in an isolated development Site not connected to existing boundaries?	No. The Site would adjoin the built-up area to the east of Lymm.	
	Is the Site well connected to the built-up area? Does it have 2 or more boundaries with the existing built-up area?	Yes. The Site is bound by residential development on its western and northern boundaries. The Site therefore has two boundaries that are urban in character.	
	Would development of the Site effectively ‘round off’ the settlement pattern?	Yes the proposed development would help round off the east of Lymm.	
	Do natural and physical features (major road, river etc.) provide a good existing barrier between the existing development and undeveloped land, which if breached may set a precedent for unrestricted sprawl.	Stage Lane to the south and Mill Lane to the east provide significant defensible boundaries to further development. To the south beyond Stage Lane is the Bridgewater Canal.	
2. Prevent neighbouring towns from merging	Do natural features and infrastructure provide a good physical barrier or boundary to the Site that would ensure development was contained?	Yes. The Site is currently bound to the north and west by residential development. To the south and east by Stage Lane and Mill Lane respectively.	Development of the Site would not result in the merging of settlements.
	Would development of the Site lead to physical connection of two or more settlements?	No. The nearest other main settlement to the Site to the east is Altrincham which is over 6km away. By virtue of distance, physical barriers, topography and surrounding land use, development of this Site would not lead to coalescence between the two settlements.	
	Would the development of the Site help preserve the physical separation of settlements across the district?	Yes. As a strategic parcel of land, the Green Belt to the east of Lymm is less constrained and less important in terms of its function or preventing the urban sprawl of Warrington and the merging of settlements across the Borough than most strategic areas of Green Belt.  Development of the Site will make a significant contribution to meeting the housing needs of Warrington, alleviating development pressure in the more constrained parts of the Borough.	

PURPOSE	CRITERIA AND DEFINITIONS	ASSESSMENT	CONCLUSIONS
3. Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	Is there a strong, defensible boundary between the existing urban area and the Site – wall, river, main road etc (as opposed to garden boundaries)?	No.	The Site does perform a role in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment but a role that is considered to be less important than most Green Belt land within the Borough.
	Does the Site provide access to the countryside – footpaths, bridleways across the land, or it is designated park / green space?	The Site comprises agricultural land that does not provide access to the wider public. There is a Public Right of Way that runs through the centre of the Site to provide access to open countryside to the east of Lymm. The Public Right of Way would be retained and enhanced to provide usable and accessible public amenity space and enhancing access to the countryside as part of the development proposals. The Site is not a designated park/green space.	
	Does the Site include national or local nature conservation designation areas?	No. There is a pond feature within the Site which is designated for its nature conservation interest. The development of the Site offers an opportunity to enhance that interest and access to nature.	
	Does the Site include areas of woodland, trees, hedgerow that are protected (protected ancient woodland) or significant unprotected tree / hedge cover?	Yes. There are several trees across the Site which are protected by Tree Preservation Orders. Those trees would be retained and enhanced as part of the proposed development to encourage new wildlife habitats and to ensure the trees are protected in the future.	
	Does the Site include any best and most versatile grade 1,2,3a (where known) agricultural land?	Unknown.	
	Does the Site contain buildings?	No.	
4. Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	Lymm is a town of historic importance but the Site is not considered to interact with any feature of historical importance or its setting.		Development of the Site would have no effect on the setting and special character of a historic town.
5. Assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling or urban / derelict land	N/A	No. The Site is promoted as a suitable housing site for Green Belt release to meet the future housing needs of Warrington and the Mid-Mersey Housing Market Area. There is insufficient brownfield land to achieve this. Development of this Site will be to pick up the shortfall and will not conflict with the Council's regeneration strategy aimed to assisting urban regeneration through the re-use of urban land.	Development of the Site would not have any impact on regeneration within the Borough.



As set out within this Development Framework, the Site would provide development within clearly defined boundaries, using prominent and permanent physical features. The development of this Site would not compromise the integrity of the surrounding landscape, moreover, as above the development of the Site would lessen development pressure elsewhere in the area in more sensitive locations, thus helping to preserve the openness of the Green Belt as a whole.

The Site is adjacent to the existing urban edge of Lymm, and its located between Stage Lane and Mill Lane which means the Site will not encroach into the open countryside and will provide a logical extension to the settlement. It is clear from the Sustainability Assessment set out earlier in the Framework that the Site is located close to a number of facilities and services in Oughtrington and accessible to Lymm Neighbourhood Centre.

The Site is accessible to a public transport route along Rush Green Road. Frequent bus services are available to Altrincham and Warrington where there is a wider range of services and employment opportunities. There are also extensive bus, rail and tram services from Warrington and Altrincham to Manchester City Centre as the wider Greater Manchester conurbation and the national public transport system.

The development of the Site will continue to provide an attractive and accessible residential area as well as help to safeguard and enhance the vitality and viability of Oughtrington Centres as well Lymm Neighbourhood Centre for retail and service provision. Warrington will at least need to meet its own housing needs to maintain its anticipated population growth but will also require housing to meet the needs of an expanding workforce associated with employment growth in the district.

### **OVERALL CONCLUSIONS FROM GREENBELT ASSESSMENT**

National Planning Policy acknowledges that in order to fulfil housing requirements, a review of the Green Belt may be necessary. We consider that a future spatial strategy for Warrington that relies predominantly on the renewal of urban areas will not deliver the housing needs of the Borough. Due to the urban nature of the land to the west and north of the Site and the tightly drawn Green Belt at Lymm and throughout the Borough, any significant alternative development opportunities are likely to necessitate development within the Green Belt.

Clearly, preference should be given to those sites that no longer meet at least one of the five purposes for its inclusion within the Green Belt as defined at paragraph 80 of the NPPF.

This assessment demonstrates that the Site is an appropriate location to allocate new housing development within the Borough and can be achieved without conflicting with the purposes or function of the Green Belt; including conflicted with the regeneration principles proposed by the Council.

We welcome further discussions with the Council regarding the assessment of the Site.





# SITE ASSESSMENT

This Section presents our initial Site investigations that future development proposals should consider.

## **VISUAL ASSESSMENT**

Established boundary treatments and land uses restrict short and medium distance views into the Site from the east and the south. The flat topography of the Site will assist in restricting visibility from short, medium and longer distances views.

Residential development to the north and west of the Site as well as the area of woodland located along the southern edge of the Site are considered to be permanent and impermeable landscape features that will prevent views of the Site.

An initial appraisal suggests the arboricultural, ecological and amenity value of the Site could be enhanced further subject to the appropriate development of the Site and through careful management. The PROW through the Site can be enhanced with additional amenity land and the development of the Site can be used to enhance access to the countryside beyond Mill Lane to the east.

An arboricultural survey has yet to be undertaken, however, there is the potential to retain existing landscape features within the proposed development. Suitable replacements should be provided to compensate for any losses.

There may also be opportunities to use land to the south of the Site to provide facilities to improve access to the Bridgewater Canal.

## **ECOLOGY**

The Site is largely within agricultural use. In the main, the agricultural parts of the Site are considered likely to have relatively low ecological value, and limited suitable habitats for protected species. Notwithstanding this, the lake, hedgerows and protected trees may have some ecological value, however, the proposed development provides the opportunity to integrate any features of value in to a landscape framework capable of supporting and enhancing biodiversity through the provision of species rich planting.

## **TOPOGRAPHY**

The Site is generally flat and is typical of many of the open field patterns that lie between Lymm and Altrincham in this area.

## **FLOOD RISK AND DRAINAGE**

The entirety of the Site is located within Flood Zone 1 of the Environment Agency's indicative Flood Map which means that it is considered to have a low risk of flooding. There are two water bodies to the northern part of the Site, however, indications from the Flood Map show this would not increase the risk of flooding on the Site.

Further investigations will be necessary to understand if the Site drainage can be achieved via an appropriate designed Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SuDs).

## **ACCESS**

The Site is currently accessed via a gated access off Mill Lane and Stage Lane. There is the potential to create two new vehicular junctions on Mill Lane and an emergency access on Stage Lane. There is also currently access via a gated access from Millers Lane via an unclassified track.

Pedestrian access can also be achieved via the PROW through to Sandy Lane to the west of the Site as outlined above. The proposed development provides the opportunity to integrate, enhance and add to this route.

## **VISUAL SENSITIVITY**

Established boundary treatments and land uses along the northern, southern and western edge of the Site restrict long and medium distance views into the Site; giving the Site a low sensitivity to built development in visual and landscape terms.

To the east views are relatively open and will require sensitive landscape screening. Views of the existing urban edge of Lymm are available from Mill Lane currently and additional planting and landscaping will help to strengthen this edge.



# OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS

In account of our initial Site investigations a series of opportunities and constraints have been identified to help inform the proposed development.

The opportunities and constraints presented have informed the preparation of a Concept Mastepplan (see Figure 5) .

## CONSIDERATIONS

Achieve suitable vehicle access from Mill Lane and Stage Lane.

- Integration of existing woodland and trees within and surrounding the Site.
- Consider a range of house types to reflect local character.
- Consideration of the surrounding character.
- Consideration of views west from Mill Lane.

## OPPORTUNITIES

- Provide pedestrian and cycle connections to the established PRoWs within and surrounding the Site.
- Provide subtle references to the materiality featured within the wider settlement through the occasional use of modern equivalent materials.
- Provide public well overlooked and usable public open space.
- Provide public open space and woodland planting.
- Enhance the amenity, ecological and arboricultural value of the existing landscape features within the Site.
- Provide pedestrian links through the Site.
- Strengthen the western boundary with appropriate landscaping



- Site Boundary
- Watercourse / Drainage Ditch
- ProW
- Woodland Areas
- Existing Hedgerow
- Existing Trees
- ⋯ 5m Contours
- ▲ Potential Site Access
- ▲ Potential Emergency Access
- ▨ Priority Habitat Inventory
- ▨ Woodland Trust
- ▨ Risk of Flooding
- Listed Building

**Figure 4: Site Assessment Plan**

■ Bridgewater Canal

■ Stage Lane

■ OUGHTRINGTON

■ Heatley Flash Lake

■ Mill Lane

10 20 50 100m

# DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The Site provides a unique opportunity to deliver a high quality residential development along with significant community uses and benefits.

The opportunities and considerations previously presented have informed the preparation of the Concept Masterplan opposite, which illustrates a truly sustainable mixed use development.

Our thinking is not limited to the community uses and benefits illustrated and we are open to any other ideas that the Council might have. We firmly believe that this Site offers a solid opportunity to do something beyond simply becoming another housing estate.

- 01 **Residential development** with the potential to deliver between 350 to 400 new homes including 30% affordable housing
- 02 **C2 Care / Extra Care Village:** the delivery of 6 to 7 acres as a care village for the over 55's.
- 03 **Self build units** will be provided to deliver between 15-20 plots.
- 04 **Land reserved for a new primary school and nursery** with the Council to deliver this.
- 05 **Public Open Space** will be provided within the centre of the development to aid orientation and provide an attractive, functional and accessible place for leisure and recreation. This is likely to accommodate the existing PRoW, a multi-use games area and a children's play space.
- 06 **Pedestrian and cycle connections** to the surrounding area will be provided throughout the development and within areas of public open space. The existing PRoW traversing the Site will be maintained, and new paths will provide new pedestrian and cycle connections to the surrounding area, including links to the Bridgewater Canal to the south of the Site, and links to existing amenities and the Trans Pennine Trail to the north.
- 07 **Landscape features** will be retained, enhanced, and incorporated into a green infrastructure network. This will create a setting and identity for the new development, whilst providing increased biodiversity, recreation opportunities and landscape visual mitigation.
- 08 **The street hierarchy** will be designed to priorities pedestrians whilst creating a hierarchy of routes to aid orientation.
- 09 **Access** to the Site will be delivered from the surrounding road network, including proposed access points off Mill Lane.
- 10 **Community Allotments** could be provided and will accommodate a number of different sized plots, for use by the development and those living in the surrounding areas.

Trans Pennine Trail

Local Shops

Pedestrian/ Cycle Connections to Local Shops and Trans Pennine Trail

Additional Landscape Area Adjacent to Heatley Flash Lake

Additional Landscape Area Adjacent to Heatley Flash Lake

Heatley Flash Lake

Over 55's/ Extra Care Village:

Defensible Green Belt Boundary

Residential Plots

Play MUGA Allotments

Primary School

Public Right of Way

Parkland Views Towards St Peters Church

Self Build Plots

Bridgewater Canal

Pedestrian/ Cycle Connections to the Bridgewater Canal



- █ Site Boundary
- █ Residential Plot
- █ Over 55's Accommodation
- █ Self Build Plot
- █ Potential School



# BENEFITS AND CONCLUSION

## ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

The Site represents an available, suitable and sustainable site to be released from the Green Belt, having regard to the following benefits:

### Economic Role

- The proposed development will secure a number of economic and fiscal benefits in terms of job creation (direct and in-direct through construction and new workforce provision);
- The proposed development will provide for an increased expenditure in the local economy which will support the continued vitality and vibrancy of nearby services and facilities in Oughtrington and Lymm Neighbourhood Centre.

### Social Role

- The Site has the potential to deliver a high quality residential-led mixed use development delivering approximately 350-400 dwellings within Lymm, one of the preferred locations for housing growth in the Borough. The proposed development would make a valuable contribution towards meeting the housing needs of the Borough.

- The Site provides the opportunity to deliver new housing, serving as a logical extension to the existing settlement.
- Housing on the Site will be well-integrated with its surroundings, in particular existing housing to the west and north.
- The Site occupies a sustainable location for development, with easy access to a range of services and facilities located in Lymm.
- The Site has the potential to secure safe vehicular access from multiple places along Mill Lane and Stage Lane, without having an unacceptable impact on the local highway network.
- The Site benefits from access to local bus services, in turn providing access to Altrincham and Warrington, and further beyond via connections at both locations.
- There is the opportunity to create integrated pedestrian and cycle linkages as part of the Site's development, encouraging alternative modes of transport to the private car and contribution towards a low-carbon community.

### Environmental Role

- The Site has the potential to accommodate a residential development without having any adverse impact on the local landscape character.
- The proposed development will be set within a strong landscape framework which will assist in absorbing the proposed development into the surrounding landscape character.
- The Concept Masterplan for the Site has taken full account of local landscape and nature conservation interest.
- The proposed development will retain and enhance existing land features, including the existing trees, hedgerows and water features, and this will be strengthened through the implementation of new soft landscaping at the edges of and within the Site.





### **CONCLUSION**

This Development Framework has undertaken an assessment of the Site, its context and its development potential. In doing so, it has been demonstrated that there are sound planning and design reasons for the Site to be released from the Green Belt for housing.

We consider there is likely to be a clear need for Green Belt release within Warrington to meet future housing need. Lymm is an appropriate strategic location for housing growth within the Borough and should accommodate some of the future needs of the Borough.

In conclusion, the Site is available and offers a suitable location to help Warrington Council meet its future housing growth needs across the plan period.

### **Next Steps**

The Site is considered deliverable and could start to deliver within the next five years and our Client is committed to progressing the emerging Concept Masterplan towards a high quality residential-led mixed use development that responds to the local housing need, whilst taking into account and reflecting the character of the surrounding settlement.

We look forward to working with Warrington Council to progress the proposals for the Site and welcome any feedback and/or the opportunity to meet and discuss.

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# Land at Stage Lane & Mill Lane: Landscape and Visual Appraisal with Green Belt Review

Prepared on behalf of Anwyl Land Ltd and  
Anwyl Construction Company Ltd

September 2017



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Ltd

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## **ILLUSTRATIVE MATERIAL**

Figure 1: Site Context Plan

Figure 2: Topographical Features Plan

Figure 3: Landscape Character Plan

Figure 4: Site Appraisal Plan

Figure 5: Visual Appraisal Plan

Site Context Photographs 1-9

Site Appraisal Photographs A-I

## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1: Published Landscape Character Extracts

Appendix 2: Extracts from Green Belt Reviews





## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Barton Willmore Landscape Planning and Design were commissioned by Anwyl Land Ltd and Anwyl Construction Company Ltd to undertake a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) with Green Belt Review (GBR) in relation to proposal for a residential development ('the Proposed Development') on Land at Stage Lane and Mill Lane, Lymm ('the Site').
- 1.2 As demonstrated by **Figure 1: Site Context Plan**, the Site is located on the eastern edge of Oughtrington, bordered by Mill Lane to the east, Stage Lane to the south and existing development within Oughtrington to the north and west. More detail about the Site and the landscape baseline are included within the following chapters.
- 1.3 The objectives of this study are to:
- Assess the landscape characteristics of the Site and its surroundings;
  - Assess the landscape character baseline of the local area at a national, county and local scale, and the contribution of the Site to that character;
  - Identify the landscape planning policy relevant to the Site and the Proposed Development;
  - Assess the visibility of the Site and the nature and quality of the existing views from the surrounding area;
  - Assess the contribution of the Site to the function of Green Belt; and
  - Identify opportunities and constraints to development that may be used to inform the masterplan process and design.
- 1.4 This document should be read in combination with the following illustrative material:
- Figure 1: Site Context Plan;
  - Figure 2: Topographical Features Plan;
  - Figure 3: Landscape Character Plan;
  - Figure 4: Site Appraisal Plan;
  - Figure 5: Visual Appraisal Plan;
  - Site Context Photographs 1-9; and
  - Site Appraisal Photographs A-I.

## 2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) and Green Belt Review (GBR) are separate assessments. However, the information ascertained through the LVA is used to aid the assessment of the contribution that the Site makes to the purposes of the Green Belt, such as through the assessment of the relationship of the Site with the existing built form, the identification of defensible boundaries that may prevent sprawl, and the physical and visual encroachment into the countryside and merging of settlements.

### **Methodology for Landscape and Visual Appraisal**

2.2 The LVA has been prepared with reference to the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition<sup>1</sup>.

2.3 A desktop review of the Study Area was undertaken to identify landform, landscape features, landscape designations and relevant landscape policy, and to review published landscape character information. This information was used as the initial basis against which to appraise the Site, and site visits were undertaken in April and June 2017.

2.4 A visual appraisal was undertaken of the Site to consider the nature of existing views from publicly accessible viewpoints including roads, Public Rights of Way (PRoW) and public open space. Views were considered from all directions and from a range of distances. The viewpoints chosen are not intended to be exhaustive, but rather to represent the potential views obtained towards the Site.

2.5 The Landscape and Visual Appraisal was used to identify opportunities and constraints to future development to inform the development of masterplan designs for the Site.

### **Methodology for Green Belt Review**

#### *Assessment against the purposes of the Green Belt*

2.6 The Site was assessed against the first four purposes of the Green Belt as set out in Paragraph 80 of the NPPF, which are:

- ***"To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;***
- ***To prevent neighbouring towns from merging in to one another;***
- ***To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; and***

---

<sup>1</sup> Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment and the Landscape Institute (2013) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition

- ***To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns...***

- 2.7 The fifth purpose of the Green Belt ***"to assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land"***, has been scoped out of the assessment as the Council is considering greenfield sites and, therefore, should the Site be brought forward for development, it would not prejudice derelict or other urban land being brought forward for development.
- 2.8 The NPPF states in Paragraph 83 that ***"once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances, through the preparation or review of the Local Plan"***.
- 2.9 The NPPF states that the key characteristics of the Green Belt are ***"their openness and their permanence"***. In defining new boundaries to the Green Belt, it must be ensured that these characteristics are not diminished for the areas remaining within the Green Belt designation as a direct result of development.

*Assessment against the characteristics of the Green Belt*

- 2.10 The table below sets out the assessment criteria used within this LVA GBR to assess the contribution that the Site makes to the purposes of the Green Belt.

**Table 2.1: Purposes of the Green Belt - Assessment Criteria**

Purpose	Criteria	Contribution
Check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	Protects open land against disorganised and unattractive extension	<p>Considerable – the area borders a built-up area and / or the area exhibits substantial defensible and recognisable boundaries.</p> <p>Some – the area borders a built-up area but only exhibits defensible and recognisable boundaries in part.</p> <p>Limited – the area borders a built-up area but does not exhibit defensible or recognisable boundaries.</p> <p>None – the area does not border a built-up area.</p>
Prevent neighbouring towns from merging	<p>Prevents development that would result in the merging of settlements.</p> <p>This would also take into consideration the extent of visual connectivity between settlements.</p>	<p>Considerable - Development would result in the physical unification of two (or more) towns</p> <p>Some - Development would substantially reduce the physical or perceived separation between towns</p> <p>Limited - Development would result in a limited reduction in the physical or perceived separation between towns</p> <p>None - Development would not physically or perceptibly reduce the separation between towns</p>

Purpose	Criteria	Contribution
Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	Protect the openness of the countryside and perceived rurality	<p>Considerable: No built or engineered forms present and perceived as inherently undeveloped and/or rural in character</p> <p>Some: Built or engineered forms present but retaining a perception of being predominantly undeveloped and or rural in character</p> <p>Limited: Built or engineered forms present and a minimal perception of being undeveloped and or rural in character</p> <p>None: Built or engineered forms present and perceived as inherently developed and / or urban in character.</p>
Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	Conserve the setting and special character of heritage assets	<p>Considerable: Within or adjoining the historic part of a town.</p> <p>Some: Strong physical, visual or character connection with the historic part of a town, whilst not adjacent to it.</p> <p>Limited: No physical but potentially some visual or character connection with the historic part of a town.</p> <p>None: No physical, visual or character connection with the historic part of a town</p>

*Description of terms:*

Openness

- 2.11 Openness is taken to be the degree to which an area is unaffected by built structures. It is considered that, in order to be a robust assessment, this should be considered from first principles, i.e. acknowledging existing structures that occur within the area, rather than seeing them as being 'washed over' by the existing Green Belt designation.

Sprawl

- 2.12 Disorganised and unattractive extension to an existing development area. Unrestricted sprawl could also be defined as areas where large expanses of land are being used for a relatively small amount of development. Sprawl also considers:

- How well the Site relates to the existing built form of the area (how well contained the Site is);
- How well the existing boundary performs in containing development. Where strong boundaries are formed by roads, rivers and railway lines, with smaller country lanes performing a more limited role; and

- The impact of encroachment on the countryside. Where sites that are surrounded on more than one side by development (i.e. where the landscape is less open), this impact is more limited.

#### Merging

2.13 This relates to the coalescence of settlements or the erosion of the gap between settlements. Interlying physical barriers, intervisibility between towns / settlements and the potential for coalescence are all taken into consideration.

2.14 Coalescence is the physical or visual linkage of two settlements or areas of built form.

#### Encroachment

2.15 Advancement of built development beyond the limits of the existing built up area into an area perceived as countryside either physically or visually.

2.16 Any development on greenfield sites would inevitably lead to encroachment, whether the land is within the Green Belt or not. Encroachment into the countryside takes into consideration the landscape character context, and the urbanising features present.

#### Defensible Boundaries

2.17 The NPPF states that ***"local authorities should define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent"***.

2.18 With regard to physical barriers, these would include roads, railway lines, large woodland or significant topographical features.

## 3.0 LANDSCAPE BASELINE

### Study Area

3.1 The Study Area has been determined through a desk based review of topography and vegetation patterns, and further refined via field work. As demonstrated by **Figure 1: Site Context Plan** and **Figure 2: Topographical Features Plan**, the Study Area is centred upon the Site, and extends across Lymm to the west, the M56 and an area of higher ground to the south, the Manchester Ship Canal and Red Brook to the north, and Dunham Massey Registered Parkland to the east.

### Topography and Hydrology

3.2 Topographical and hydrological features are demonstrated on **Figure 2: Topographical Features Plan**.

3.3 The main hydrological features within the Study Area include the Manchester Ship Canal, which crosses the north-western corner of the Study Area; the Bridgewater Canal, which extends approximately east-west through the centre of the Study Area and to the south of the Site; the River Bollin, which also extends approximately east-west through the Study Area to the north of the Site; Red Brook, which extends along the northern edge of the Study Area to the east of the Ship Canal; and the Bradley Brook, which extends approximately north through the centre of Lymm, where it forms the Lymm Dam, before crossing the Bridgewater Canal and meeting the Ship Canal in the west of the Study Area.

3.4 The valleys of the brooks are generally shallow with only Bradley Brook forming a steep sided valley passing through Lymm and in the vicinity of Lymm Dam. The Lymm Dam lake runs south to north from The Avenue to the A56 Church Road in the village of Lymm.

3.5 Generally, the land in the Study Area falls from the north to the south, with the highest area of ground in the centre of the southern edge of the Study Area at over 65m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD). Bradley Brook and the Lymm Dam form a valley extending north through the area of higher ground in the south-west of the Study Area. A ridge of land extends from east to west from over 60m AOD, south of the hamlet of Broomedge, to over 55m AOD in the village of Lymm. Higher Lane extends along the top of the ridge line for much of its route. The village of Lymm is located to the west of the Site on the lower ground at approximately 10m AOD and extends south of the Bridgewater Canal to the higher ground at approximately 55m AOD.

3.6 The landform across the Site varies from approximately 15m AOD on the north-east corner to approximately 20m AOD to the south-west of the Site, on the southern edge of the wide broadly level ground of the valley of the River Bollin.

- 3.7 The major water feature in proximity to the Site is Heatley Flash, a large pond location to the north of the Site, sitting at approximately 15m AOD and covering approximately an area of 1.25ha. A small pond with an area of approximately 560 m<sup>2</sup> is located in the north-eastern area of the Site at approximately 15m AOD.

### **Vegetation and Field Pattern**

- 3.8 The surrounding rural countryside is a balance of both pastoral and arable farming, in a more rectilinear field pattern in the centre and south of the Study Area whereas the field pattern in the north of the Study Area becomes larger in scale and more irregular in pattern. Woodland is mainly scattered in small blocks in the area with some more linear belts, and with some connecting to the wooded courses of the brooks and streams.
- 3.9 The area's topography creates an intimate landscape, often self-enclosed by woodlands and hedgerow trees. Therefore, the views from the area are less extensive with few internal views of note. Vegetation in the area generally is notably vigorous and healthy. Hedgerows and hedgerow trees appear more luxuriant, larger and more well-formed and include a more diverse range of species, including chestnut, lime, beech, willow and common oak.

### **Settlement Patterns, Land Use and Infrastructure**

- 3.10 The M56 extend east to west on the ridge of higher ground to the south of the Site. The village of Lymm is the largest settlement within the Study Area, situated to the west of the Site. A series of small sized villages, including Broomedge, Little Bollington and Warburton are located throughout the landscape in addition to the individual farms.
- 3.11 Dunham Massey Park, which covers an area of 147ha, is located to the east of the Site and partly falls within the Study Area.
- 3.12 The Manchester Ship Canal, a 58km long canal linking Manchester to the Mersey Estuary, is located to the north-west of the Study Area. This canal is a large-scale man-made feature, reaching a width of 160m in some areas within the Study Area.
- 3.13 The Bridgewater Canal, 66km long, linking Runcorn, Manchester and Leigh, runs east to west through the Study Area and is located approximately 70m from the south of the Site at the closest points.
- 3.14 The former London and North Western Railway line, which is now used as footpath/cycle route as part of Trans Pennine National Trail, runs east-west within the Study Area, approximately 100m from the Site at the closest point.
- 3.15 There is no existing development within the Site.



### **Public Rights of Way (PRoW)**

- 3.16 Overall, there is approximately 67km of Public Rights of Way within the Study Area. The PRoWs are generally long and mostly straight, extending perpendicular and parallel to the field patterns. The majority of PRoWs within the Study Area run east to west. The longest footpath is the Cheshire Ring Canal Walk National Trail (PRoW 00193/43), which runs along Bridgewater Canal. The Mersey Valley Way National trail runs alongside the Cheshire Ring Canal Walk for much of its route through the Study Area, with an additional loop through Lymm and alongside the Lymm Dam. The Trans Pennine National Trail extends along the route of the disused Warrington and Stockport Branch off the London and North West Railway Line, approximately 100m to the north of the Site.
- 3.17 Within the Site there is PRoW 00193/35 which runs west to east connecting Sandy Lane to Mill Lane and open arable fields beyond the eastern boundary of the Site, although there are no PRoWs on the arable fields immediately to the east of the Site. During the site visit, it was apparent that local access through the Site was not limited to the PRoW.

### **Designations and Cultural Heritage**

- 3.18 There are no landscape designations within the Study Area or the Site. The majority of the Study Area, with the exception of a small area of land in the north of the Study Area, forms part of the North West Green Belt which surrounds Manchester and Liverpool.
- 3.19 Small areas of Ancient Woodland occur within the south-west of the Study Area, primarily along the route of the Bradley Brook.
- 3.20 The centre of Lymm is designated as a Conservation Area. There is no physical or visual relation between the Site and the Conservation Area within Lymm. Dunham Massey is a Registered Parkland located in the east of the Study Area. There is no physical or visual relationship between the Site and Dunham Massey.
- 3.21 Listed buildings occur throughout the Study Area with the highest concentrations occurring within Lymm and Dunham Massey. Listed buildings also occur in the settlements of Warburton and Mossbrow, in the north of the Study Area, and along the route of the Bridgewater Canal. There are no listed buildings within the Site and the closest to the Site are the Nook and its coach house, approximately 50m to the south-west of the Site, and Grantham's Bridge on the Bridgewater Canal, approximately 100m to the south. The Nook is surrounded by existing built development to the east, west and north and there may be some limited intervisibility between the building and the Site. Views from Grantham's Bridge were obscured by intervening vegetation during the summer Site visit.

## 4.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

- 4.1 The character and features of the Site are illustrated by the **Site Appraisal Photographs** included as part of the illustrative material accompanying this appraisal. The locations of the photographs are set out on **Figure 4: Site Appraisal Plan**.
- 4.2 The Site is located to the immediate east of Oughtrington in Lymm, as demonstrated on **Figure 1: Site Context Plan**. To the east of the Site is Mill Lane with open countryside beyond comprising predominantly of agricultural land. To the south of the Site is Stage Lane with the Bridgewater Canal beyond, both of which run in an east-west direction with Lower Helsdale Wood beyond to the south. To the north is Heatley Flash, a former brine pumping site, which is designated as a Local Wildlife Site (Policy LPCS QE5) on Warrington Borough Policies Map. Beyond Heatley Flash is new housing development, formerly occupied by the salt works. These, together with residential properties at Springbank Gardens, cover the land to the north of the Site. Beyond the housing development is the former London and North Western Railway line which is now the Trans Pennine National Trail.
- 4.3 The Site, as demonstrated on **Figure 4: Site Appraisal Plan**, is currently used as agricultural land split into three fields by hedgerows of varying condition and quality. There are a number of mature native trees and an area of scrub on a north-south alignment in the southern field Left of centre in **Site Appraisal Photograph C**). On the north-eastern field, there is a small pond surrounded by a few mature trees (**Site Appraisal Photograph G**); the pond is designated as a Local Wildlife Site (Policy LPCS QE5) on Warrington Borough Policies Map. There is a Public Right of Way (00193/35) running north-east to south-west across the Site.
- 4.4 The western boundary of the Site is formed by the rear gardens of properties on White Broom, Hopefield Road, Woodbine Road and Cedarfield Road. The rear gardens are generally relatively small and are separated from the Site by mainly fences, with some short stretches of hedgerows and mature hedgerow trees. The northern boundary is formed by a hedgerow running along the southern boundaries of properties on Springbank Gardens (right side of **Site Appraisal Photograph D**), an unpaved stretch of Millers Lane which is bordered on both sides by large trees (right side of **Site Appraisal Photograph E**), tree planting around Heatley Flash and the rear gardens of properties facing Mill Lane. The southern boundary is formed by the hedgerow running along Stage Lane (**Site Appraisal Photograph C**) and the boundary of properties around the junction to the east of Mill Lane is Oak Villa Farm with agricultural plots and buildings.

## 5.0 VISUAL BASELINE

- 5.1 The rear gardens on White Broom, Hopefield Road, Woodbine Road and Cedarfield Road are generally relatively small and are separated from the Site by mainly fences, with some short stretches of hedgerows and mature hedgerow trees. Views from the rear of this line of properties are possible, likely limited to views from the top storey. Views from the streets themselves and the houses further to the east are restricted by the intervening built form (**Site Context Photograph 2**). The gardens of properties on Springbank Gardens are longer with a mature hedgerow forming the boundary with the Site (**Site Appraisal Photograph D**). Views from these properties will be mainly limited to the first and second story windows. Properties on School Drive and Millington Gardens are separated from the Site by the unpaved section of Millers Lane which is further separated from the Site by a line of mature trees (**Site Appraisal Photograph E**). Views towards the Site will be filtered by the intervening trees and lane. Houses on Longcroft Place and Chaise Meadow are separated from the Site by Heatley Flash and its surrounding tree planting, which will likely prevent most views towards the Site. The properties on Mill Lane have longer gardens in the north and shorter in the south, separated from the Site by an overgrown hedgerow with sporadic large trees. As such, views from these properties are likely to be limited to the upper storeys.
- 5.2 Views into the Site are possible from Mill Lane (**Site Appraisal Photograph A**) and Stage Lane (**Site Appraisal Photograph B** and **Site Context Photograph 1**). Mill Lane is bordered by a footway along its western side, providing safe pedestrian access. Pedestrians, due to their slower pace, will have more opportunity to experience the Site as they pass, whereas views from vehicles will be more fleeting. Stage Lane is a narrow country lane with no footway and is unlikely to be used by many pedestrians, particularly given the nearby and parallel National Trails along the Bridgewater Canal.
- 5.3 Views from the footpath crossing the Site and from the informal tracks and paths will be affected by the introduction of new areas of built form and open space. Long distance views across the Site will be interrupted by the built form. The visual setting of the footpath must be considered within any future masterplan design.
- 5.4 Isolated views from the south were identified from a 90m stretch of the Cheshire Ring Canal Walk National Trail between houses on The Paddock and Spud Wood, close to Grantham's Bridge (**Site Context Photographs 8 and 9**). Elevated views from the top of Grantham's Bridge were screened by the intervening woodland within Spud Wood. Isolated and heavily filtered views were also possible from the Trans Pennine National Trail to the north-east (**Site Context Photograph 7**).

- 5.5 Longer distance views towards the Site, including from the footpaths and Higher Lane on the elevated land to the south were screened by the vegetation in lower Helsdale Wood (**Site Context Photograph 5 and 6**). Views from Wet Gate Lane and Bradshaw Lane to the east, were screened by the intervening vegetation and landform (**Site Context Photograph 3 and 4**).

### **Visual Summary**

- 5.6 Overall, the visual envelope of the Site is limited and, where views are possible, they are generally towards the existing built edge. Views into the Site are possible from the following locations:
- Mill Lane (softened by hedgerow with trees);
  - Stage Lane (softened by hedgerow);
  - Isolated viewpoints from the Bridgewater Canal;
  - Filtered views from properties on northern and western boundaries.
- 5.7 Views from the footpath crossing the Site will be obstructed by new development and views from, and the setting of, the footpath will be considered within the emerging masterplan proposals.

## 6.0 PUBLISHED LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENTS

6.1 The Study Area is covered by a number of published landscape character studies which describe the key characteristics of the landscape. The locations of the different landscape character areas are identified on **Figure 3: Landscape Character Plan**. A summary of the key characteristics and recommended guidance for management at national and local level are included in this chapter. The relevant extracts from these published assessments are included in **Appendix 2: Extracts from Published Landscape Character Assessments**.

### National

6.2 At a national level, the whole Study Area is located within National Character Area (NCA) 60: Mersey Valley<sup>2</sup>. The divide between NCA 60 and the neighbouring NCA 61: Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain, extends along the southern boundary of the Study Area.

6.3 The key characteristics of NCA 60 which are of relevance to the Site and the Proposed Development include the following:

- *'The landscape is low-lying, focusing on the broad linear valley of the River Mersey; it is estuarine in the west and has extensive areas of reclaimed mossland in the east.*
- *Trees and woodland are mainly associated with settlements, occasional parkland and isolated woodland blocks; and in recent years new community woodlands have been planted.*
- *Large-scale, open, predominantly flat, high-quality farmland occurs between developments, with primarily arable farming to the north of the valley and a mixture of arable and dairying to the south.*
- *The field pattern is regular and large scale, often defined by hedgerows with isolated hedgerow trees; many hedgerows are intermittent and have been replaced by post-and-wire fencing, while field boundaries on the mosses are marked by ditches.*
- *A range of important wetland habitats remain, including estuarine mudflats/sand flats and fringing salt marshes in the west, remnants of semi-natural mosslands and pockets of basin peats in the east, with the broad river valley in between.*
- *The predominant building material is red brick though some sandstone construction remains, and some survival of earlier timber frame.*
- *There are densely populated urban and suburban areas, with major towns particularly at the river crossings, including Runcorn, Widnes and Warrington.*
- *There is large-scale, highly visible industrial development, with docks, chemical works and oil refineries.*

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<sup>2</sup> Natural England (2013) [NCA Profile 60: Mersey Valley](#)

- ***The river valley has a dense communication network with motorways, roads, railways and canals running east–west, and power lines are also prominent.***

### Local

6.4 At local level the Study Area is covered by three local authorities, each of which has published a landscape character assessment. The Site is located within Warrington Borough as shown on **Figure 3: Landscape Character Plan**. The Warrington Borough Landscape Character Assessment<sup>3</sup> identifies Landscape Character Types (LCT) which are comprised of one or more Landscape Character Areas (LCA) of similar character. The majority of the Site falls within LCT 3: Red Sandstone Escarpment, and within LCA 3C: Lymm. A small portion of the Site on the north-eastern corner falls within LCT 5: River Flood Plain and LCA 5.A: River Mersey/Bollin.

6.5 The key characteristics of LCT 3: Red Sandstone Escarpment include the following:

- ***'Escarpment runs along a generally east/west axis***
- ***Dominant slope down to the north, with a more gentle slope to the south***
- ***Red sandstone outcrops, cuttings and quarries***
- ***Red sandstone walls and older buildings***
- ***Locally excellent views to the north and east***
- ***Red sandy soil exposed in ploughing***
- ***Mainly pasture on the escarpment face with arable land towards the crest***
- ***Mainly deciduous woodland, generally in linear form down the slope***
- ***Presence of small marl pit ponds'***

6.6 The assessment also identifies key cultural elements of the landscape for each character type. The key cultural elements in LCT 3: Red Sandstone Escarpment relevant to the Site include:

- ***'***
- ***The London and North Western Railway line of 1853, closed 1989, (now the Trans-Pennine Trail)***
- ***Red sandstone quarries***
- ***Red sandstone buildings, walls, quoins etc***
- ***Large, mainly C19th estates, such as Grappenhall Heys, Oughtrington Hall etc.***
- ***Old houses and properties.'***

6.7 LCT 3 is divided into three LCAs and the Site is located within LCA 3.C: Lymm. The key characteristics of Area 3.C are as follows:

- ***'Smaller scale, more intimate rural landscape***
- ***Luxuriant hedgerow trees with diverse range of species***

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<sup>3</sup> Warrington Borough Council (2007) [Warrington: A Landscape Character Assessment](#)

- ***Rolling landscape***
- ***Restricted views***
- ***Strong feeling of high landscape quality'***

6.8 The cultural elements of LCA 3.C relevant to the Site are outlined as:

- ***'The Bridgewater Canal and its bridges, aqueducts, warehouses etc.***
- ***The former London and North Western Railway – now the Trans Pennine Trail***
- ***St Peter's Church, Oughtrington***
- ***Heatley Flash'***

6.9 The LCT 5: River Flood Plain falls to the east of the Site and covers a small area of the north-eastern corner of the Site. The key characteristics of LCT 5: River Flood Plain include:

- ***'Flat, linear, alluvial areas***
- ***Often developed on used or permanent pasture***
- ***Close association with water course***
- ***Raised levees and river channel restrictions***
- ***Contain a multitude of communication links – canals, roads, railways etc.***
- ***Bridge and viaduct crossings'***

6.10 The key cultural elements of the landscape of LCT 5 relevant to the Site include the following:

- ***'River meadows, used for grazing over a period of at least 1,000 years***
- ***The London and North Western Railway line of 1853, closed 1989 and now the Trans Pennine Trail***
- ***Crossing points of major communication routes'***

6.11 The character area of relevance within LCT 5 is LCA 5.A: River Mersey/Bollin. The key characteristics of LCA 5.A are:

- ***'The River Mersey and River Bollin***
- ***Slurry and dredging lagoons***
- ***Importance for nature conservation***
- ***Dominance of floodplain crossings (road and rail bridges)***
- ***Residual floodplain meadows***
- ***Widespread residential and industrial development on the floodplain***
- ***Artificial levee and channel constraints to the river***
- ***Lack of visual importance of the river (normally screened from views)'***

### Site Level Landscape Character

- 6.12 The Site comprises three arable fields bordered by the built edge of Oughtrington to the north, north-east and west, by existing roads to the east and south, and by low density residential and agricultural development to the south-east. The fields are separated by existing hedgerows and surrounded by hedgerows with trees. Further field trees occur within the Site, the remnants of removed hedgerows. The hedgerows are in varying condition and this, together with the hedgerow removal within the Site, creates a slightly degraded character.
- 6.13 The immediacy of the roads to the east and south, together with the existing residential development to the north, west, north-east and south-east, combine to emphasise the context of the Site on the urban-rural edge.

### Guidance and Management

#### *National*

- 6.14 There are four Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEO) relating to NCA 60, the relevant statement to the Site is set out below:
- 6.15 SEO 2 states:

***'Promote the Mersey Valley's historic environment and landscape character and positively integrate the environmental resource with industry and development, providing greenspace within existing and new development, to further the benefits provided by a healthy natural environment, as a framework for habitat restoration and for public amenity.'***

- 6.16 Examples of measures to achieve this include:
- The careful design and integration of green infrastructure and improved linkages within new development and connecting to the wider GI network;
  - Conserve open views of the landscape; and
  - Incorporate sustainable drainage systems (SuDS).
- 6.17 Landscape opportunities identified for this character area include the following:
- Improve urban fringe landscapes through woodland planting and hedgerow restoration to soften development edges;
  - Conserve and create accessible and connected green spaces and habitats, and protect and plant trees, woodlands and meadows;
  - Protect and enhance hedgerows and the field pattern; and
  - Conserve and enhance the historic character of settlements.



*Local*

- 6.18 Warrington Borough Landscape Character Assessment identifies that one of the key elements of landscape sensitivity, and one of the greatest landscape changes for LCA 3.C as the vulnerability of the local landscape to the expansion of Lymm.
- 6.19 Recommended Management and Landscape Objectives for LCA 3.C: Lymm set out by the assessment are as below:
- Maintain, enhance and plant new hedgerows, hedgerow trees and areas of woodland;
  - Connect existing and new habitats;
  - Extend the footpath network, particularly in relation to woodlands and watercourses.

**Summary of Published Landscape Character Assessments and their Applicability to the Site and the Study Area**

- 6.20 The Site is reflective of local LCA 3.C with its small scale and limited views. However, hedgerow loss is evident and the character of the Site is influenced by the proximity of the surrounding development.
- 6.21 Key guidance from the published landscape character guidance includes the following:
- Maintain and enhance existing trees, woodlands and hedgerows and plant new such landscape elements;
  - Connect existing and new landscape features into a wider Green Infrastructure network which may incorporate SuDS and open space;
  - Extend the footpath network and access to open spaces;
  - Ensure all new development reflects local vernacular and protect the historic character of settlements.

## 7.0 LANDSCAPE PLANNING POLICY

7.1 This chapter contains extracts of the planning policies at national and local level which relate to landscape and visual issues.

### **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2012)**

7.2 The NPPF aims to provide a planning framework within which the local community and local authorities can produce distinctive local plans which respond to local needs and priorities.

7.3 The NPPF promotes a presumption in favour of sustainable development, defined as **"meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"**, providing it is in accordance with the relevant up-to-date Local Plan and policies set out in the NPPF, including those identifying restrictions with regard to designated areas.

7.4 Twelve Core Planning Principles are set out at Paragraph 17, of which the following are relevant to landscape and visual matters, stating that planning should:

- ***"not simply be about scrutiny, but instead be a creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which people live their lives;***
- ***always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;***
- ***take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas, protecting the Green Belts around them, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it;***
- ***contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution. Allocations of land for development should prefer land of lesser environmental value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; and***
- ***promote mixed use developments, and encourage multiple benefits from the use of land in urban and rural areas, recognising that some open land can perform many functions (such as for wildlife, recreation, flood risk mitigation, carbon storage or food production)."***

7.5 The NPPF then identifies thirteen aspects which should be considered in developing local plans and reviewing planning applications. Those of relevance to the landscape and visual considerations of the Site and proposed development include Section 7: 'Requiring Good Design'. Paragraph 58 of Section 7 states that planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments, inter alia:

- ***...Establish a strong sense of place,***
- ***...respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings***
- ***...are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping."***

7.6 Paragraph 61 states that:

***"planning policies and decisions should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment."***

7.7 Section 11: Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment notes in paragraph 109 that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by ***"protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils"***.

7.8 Paragraph 110 sets out that, in preparing plans for development, the aim should be to minimise adverse effects on the local and natural environment, and that plans should allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value.

7.9 Paragraph 114 notes that furthermore, local planning authorities should:

***"set out a strategic approach in their Local Plans, planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure."***

7.10 Paragraph 125 states that:

***"By encouraging good design, planning policies and decisions should limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation."***

#### *National Green Belt Policy*

7.11 Chapter 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)<sup>4</sup> is dedicated to issues of Green Belt.

7.12 The NPPF states: 'the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the most important attributes of Green Belts are their

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<sup>4</sup> Department for Communities and Local Government (2012) [National Planning Policy Framework](#)

openness and their permanence,' (Para 79). It then goes on to list the five purposes of Green Belts:

- ***To check unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;***
- ***To prevent neighbouring towns from merging in to one another;***
- ***To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;***
- ***To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and***
- ***To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.***

7.13 The NPPF states that inappropriate development is that which is ***'harmful to the Green Belt.'*** (Paragraph 87).

7.14 The NPPF states that, when adding new areas to Green Belt, local planning authorities ***'should demonstrate why normal planning and development management policies would not be adequate,'*** (paragraph 82) and, when defining Green Belt boundaries, that they should be clear, ***'using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent,'*** (paragraph 85).

7.15 Paragraph 86 states that Green Belts should not be used to protect the setting of villages but that development can be prevented within a village if it should be detrimental to the Green Belt. The paragraph goes on to say that if the village needs protecting ***'then conservation area or normal development management policies should be used.'***

### **Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)**

7.16 Under the heading of Natural Environment, sub-heading Landscape, paragraph 001, PPG supports the use of landscape character assessment as a tool for understanding the character and local distinctiveness of the landscape and identifying the features that give it a sense of place, as a means to informing, planning and managing change. The PPG makes reference to Natural England guidance on landscape character assessment which is explored in this chapter.

7.17 Under the heading of Natural Environment, sub-heading Green Infrastructure (GI), paragraph 27 and 28 state that GI is a network of multifunctional green space and is important to the delivery of high quality sustainable development, and provide multiple benefits. Paragraph 30 states that GI should be well designed to create a sense of place by responding to local landscape character, and help create safe and accessible environments and regeneration of brownfield sites in existing built up areas.

## Local Planning Policy

7.18 The Site is located within Warrington Borough Council. Warrington's Local Planning Framework consists of a suite of documents including *The Local Plan Core Strategy (2014)*, *The Local Development Scheme (LDS)* and *Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)*. The council has also issued the *Regulation 18 Consultation Local Plan Document (July 2017)*.

### *Adopted Policy*

7.19 The basis for the planning framework and guiding the location and level of development in Warrington Borough up to 2027 is the Local Plan Core Strategy which was adopted in July 2014. A Policies Map which shows the boundaries of the policies within the Council's adopted Local Plans has also been produced alongside the Local Plan Core Strategy.

7.20 The following policies from the Core Strategy are of relevance to the Site and Proposed Development:

- Policy CS1: Overall Spatial Strategy – 'Delivering Sustainable Development' states that new development should protect the Green Belt and the character of the countryside, sustain and enhance the borough's built heritage, biodiversity and geodiversity, deliver high standards of design and construction that have regard to local distinctiveness and improve quality of access. Policy CS5: Overall Spatial Strategy – 'Green Belt' states that the extents of the Green Belt will be maintained until at least 2032 in recognition of its purposes of restricting sprawl, preventing towns from merging, safeguarding the countryside from encroachment and encouraging the reuse of derelict and brownfield land.
- Policy CS6: 'Overall Spatial Strategy – Strategic Green Links' states the council's intention to adopt a strategic approach to the care and management of the borough's Green Infrastructure, including through the maximisation of the benefits of the Strategic Green Links, which include the Trans Pennine Trail, and any proposals which connect those Strategic Green Links with important green spaces and local communities.
- Policy QE3: 'Green Infrastructure' states that the council will develop and adopt an integrated approach to the provision and management of green infrastructure.
- Policy QE6: 'Environment and Amenity Protection' states that the council will consider light pollution and impacts upon the night sky caused by new development.
- Policy QE7: 'Ensuring a High Quality Place' states that the council will consider more positively developments that reinforce local distinctiveness and enhance local landscape and townscape character, are reflective of the materials and scale

etc of nearby buildings, use an appropriate mix which optimises the potential of the site without damaging the local character and which is visually attractive.

- Policy CC2: 'Protecting the Countryside' states that development proposals which accord with Green Belt policies will be supported provided that they respect the rural setting and local character.

### *Emerging Policy*

- 7.21 Paragraph 4.17 of the Consultation Draft of the Local Plan states that, **"if Warrington is to meeting the development needs arising from its growth aspirations, it can only do so through the release of Green Belt land"**. This is reflected in Strategic Objective W2 which is to **"facilitate the sensitive release of Green Belt land to meet Warrington's long term housing and employment needs, whilst ensuring the revised Green Belt boundaries maintain the permanence of Warrington's Green Belt in the long term"**.
- 7.22 Strategic Objective W5 is to secure high quality design **"which reinforces the character and local distinctness of Warrington's urban area, its countryside, its unique pattern of green spaces and its constituent settlements whilst protecting, enhancing and embracing the borough's built and natural assets"**.

### **Summary of Landscape Policy**

- 7.23 The planning policy that relates to the landscape of the Study Area relates to a number of key issues:
- Protection of the Green Belt;
  - Protection and enhancement of local landscape character through the protection of existing landscape elements, such as trees, hedgerows, woodland etc and the planting of new such elements;
  - Protection and enhancement of local townscape character through the reflection of local scale, massing, materials, typologies etc;
  - Protection, creation and improved integration of the Green Infrastructure network.

## 8.0 CONTRIBUTION OF THE SITE TO THE GREEN BELT

8.1 A review has been undertaken of published Green Belt assessment relating to the site. A further assessment of the contribution that the Site makes to the Green Belt has been undertaken in accordance with the methodology set out in Chapter 2.0.

### Review of Published Green Belt Reviews

8.2 A Green Belt Assessment was produced by Arup in October 2016 to support the Regulation 18 consultation of the emerging Warrington Local Plan in October 2016. It was intended to ***"provide the Council with an objective, evidence-based and independent assessment of how Warrington's Green Belt contributes to the five purposes of the Green Belt set out in national policy"***<sup>5</sup>. An addendum was undertaken to address issues raised as part of the Regulation 18 consultation process, including those relating to HS2, and was released in June 2017. None of the amendments relating to the route of HS2 were relevant to the Site. In July 2017, an assessment was undertaken of further sites submitted as part of the Call for Site process.

8.3 The Warrington Green Belt was divided into 24 large parcels, called 'General Areas', which were each assessed against the five purposes of the Green Belt as set out within the NPPF. The Site is located within General Area 7 which comprises all of the land to the east of Oughtrington.

8.4 Smaller parcels were then defined round the edge of settlements on the edge of, or inset from, the Green Belt. Where General Areas were not bounding an existing settlement and where they were identified as making a poor contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt, they were also divided into smaller parcels.

8.5 Each of the smaller parcels were assessed against each of the five purposes of the Green Belt as set out within the NPPF as making either none, a weak, a moderate or a strong contribution. In terms of purpose 1 which relates to sprawl, this was taken to only refer to Warrington, as the only 'large' built up area. Purpose 4, which relates to the setting of historic towns, has been taken to apply only to Lymm and Warrington.

8.6 The Site situated within Parcel LY14, which includes the Site, Heatley Flash, the houses fronting Mill Lane between the Site and the Trans Pennine Trail, and the area of paddocks and residential dwellings to the south-east of the Site.

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<sup>5</sup> Warrington Borough Council Evidence Base [online] cited 5<sup>th</sup> September 2017 [https://www.warrington.gov.uk/info/200564/planning\\_policy/1905/evidence\\_base/3](https://www.warrington.gov.uk/info/200564/planning_policy/1905/evidence_base/3)

8.7 General Area 7 was assessed as making a moderate contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt. Parcel LY14 was assessed as making a moderate contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt. These are summarised in the table below:

**Table 8.1: ARUP assessment of Contribution of General Area 7 and Parcel LY14 to the Purposes of the Green Belt**

	GA7	LY14
<b>Purpose 1: check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas</b>	No contribution: The GA is not adjacent to the Warrington urban area and therefore does not contribute to this purpose.	No contribution: The parcel is not adjacent to the Warrington urban area and therefore does not contribute to this purpose.
<b>Purpose 2: to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another</b>	No contribution: The GA does not play a role in preventing towns from merging.	No contribution: The parcel does not contribute to preventing towns from merging.
<b>Purpose 3: to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment</b>	Strong contribution: The GA is well connected to the open countryside given it is only connected to the inset settlement of Lymm along the western boundary. The boundary between the GA and the inset settlement consists of the limits of development which is not durable and may not be able to prevent encroachment. The boundary between the GA and the open countryside consists of the River Bollin, the A56, Spring Lane and field boundaries. Not all of these features are durable and may not be able to prevent encroachment in the long term. The existing land use predominantly consists of open countryside although includes the washed over village of Broomedge and Heatley as well as Lymm High School and Lymm Marina. The GA supports a moderate to strong degree of openness given that it has less than 20% built form and low levels of vegetation. Overall the GA makes a strong contribution to safeguarding from encroachment.	Strong contribution: The parcel is connected to the settlement along its northern and western boundaries. The western boundary consists of garden boundaries which would not be durable enough to prevent encroachment into the parcel. The northern boundary is durable in some sections along Longcroft Place and Chaise Meadow, although other sections consist of garden boundaries and an unmade section of Millers Lane which are less durable. The parcel is connected to the countryside predominantly along Mill Lane to the east and Stage Lane to the south, both of which form durable boundaries which could prevent further encroachment if the parcel was developed. The parcel is also connected to the north along a short section of the Transpennine Trail, which is not lined with vegetation and would not be durable enough to prevent encroachment. The existing land use mainly consists of open countryside. There is an active farm in the south-eastern corner of the parcel and a number of internal hedgerows. There are a significant number of residential properties in the north-eastern corner of the parcel and the parcel contributes to preventing further encroachment along Mill Lane. The parcel supports long line views of the countryside and overall supports a strong degree of openness. Overall the parcel makes a strong contribution to safeguarding from encroachment.
<b>Purpose 4: to preserve the setting and</b>	No contribution: Lymm is a historic town however the GA is over 250m from Lymm Conservation Area. The GA does not cross	No Contribution: Lymm is a historic town however the parcel is not within 250m of its Conservation Area. The parcel does not



<b>special character of historic towns</b>	an important viewpoint of the Parish Church.	cross an important viewpoint of the Parish Church.
<b>Purpose 5: to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land</b>	Moderate contribution: The Mid Mersey Housing Market Area has 2.08% brownfield urban capacity for potential development, therefore the parcel makes a moderate contribution to this purpose.	Moderate contribution: The Mid Mersey Housing Market Area has 2.08% brownfield urban capacity for potential development, therefore the parcel makes a moderate contribution to this purpose.
<b>Justification for Assessment</b>	The GA makes a strong contribution to one purpose, a moderate contribution to one and no contribution to three. Professional judgement has been applied and the GA has been judged to make a moderate contribution overall to the Green Belt. While the boundaries between the GA, Lymm and the open countryside are weak and would not prevent the town from encroaching into the countryside, the GA contains a considerable amount of development including two washed over villages. This compromises its openness and means that the GA does not contribute to the Green Belt in a strong and undeniable way as would be required to make a strong contribution overall. The GA also does not prevent towns from merging, does not check unrestricted sprawl as it is not adjacent to the urban area and does not preserve historic towns as it is not close to the Lymm Conservation Area.	The parcel makes a strong contribution to one purpose, a moderate contribution to one and no contribution to three. In line with the methodology, professional judgement has therefore been applied to evaluate the overall contribution. The parcel has been judged to make a moderate overall contribution as, while it supports a strong degree of openness and it has non-durable boundaries with the settlement, the durability of its boundaries with the countryside means that any encroachment resulting from development would be contained and would therefore not threaten the openness and permanence of the Green Belt as a whole.
<b>Overall Assessment</b>	Moderate contribution	Moderate contribution

8.8 The *Green Belt Assessment (Additional Site Assessments of Call for Sites Responses and SHLAA Green Belt Sites)* included an assessment of the Site, designated as R18/107. This was also assessed as making a moderate contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt with an analysis that was similar to that of Parcel LY14.

### **Barton Willmore Assessment of the Site**

8.9 Whilst this assessment agrees with the majority of the conclusions of the Warrington GBR, it disagrees with the assertion that parcel LY14 and site R18/107 make a strong contribution to purpose 3: safeguarding the countryside from encroachment, or a moderate contribution to purpose 5: assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

8.10 With regards to purpose 3, the ARUP assessment acknowledges that the existing garden boundaries of the parcel, particularly to the west and north **"would not be durable enough to prevent encroachment into the parcel"**. In the case of the Site, this was amended to state **"may not be durable enough..."**. Therefore, the existing boundary to the Green Belt,

along the western and northern boundaries of the parcel, is not defensible. The ARUP assessment further acknowledges that Mill Lane and Stage Lane both **"form durable boundaries which could prevent further encroachment if the parcel was developed"**.

8.11 The assessment of the Site states:

***"The site's north eastern boundary is comprised of a water body (Heatley Flash) which is durable and of garden boundaries close to Mill Lane as there is development within the Green Belt up to the durable boundary of Mill Lane. To the south east of the site, field boundaries form a non-durable boundary however Stage Lane and Mill Lane are in close proximity and would therefore limit any encroachment."***

8.12 The assessment of the Site states:

***"Overall the site makes a strong contribution to safeguarding the countryside from encroachment due to its openness and the nondurable boundaries between the site and the settlement."***

8.13 The Site is bordered by existing residential development to the north, west, south-east, north-east and south-west. Development within the parcel would cause physical encroachment into the countryside of the Site itself, but this would be the case with the development of any greenfield site. Development within the Site would not, however, extend further east or south than the existing built edges of Oughtrington and would not, therefore, cause further physical encroachment into the wider landscape.

8.14 In terms of visual encroachment, development within the Site would be viewed set back against the existing built edge of Oughtrington from views from the east and south. Development within the Site would cause the built edge of Oughtrington to appear in closer proximity to the isolated viewpoints along Stage Lane, a narrow road with no footways and poor visibility, unlikely to be used greatly by pedestrians, and from a very limited number of isolated viewpoints along the Bridgewater Canal. New development would be visible from the footway extending along Mill Lane and from the footpath crossing the Site. However, the visual appraisal demonstrates that there is limited visibility of the Site in the wider landscape and therefore there would be limited visual encroachment into the wider landscape. The parcel and the Site make a limited contribution to purpose 3.

8.15 The assertion that the Site makes a strong contribution to purpose 3 as there is currently no strong defensible boundary to the north and west, but a defensible boundary to the east and south, is incorrect and, rather, the opposite is true. Development within the Site would bring the south-eastern urban edge of Oughtrington to a defensible boundary where there is currently none.

8.16 With regards to purpose 5, the purpose of the Green Belt Review is to assess parcels of land which are currently within the Green Belt, the majority of which are on greenfield land. As such, all greenfield sites contribute equally to purpose 5 and it is often scoped out of assessments for this reason. The parcel makes a limited contribution to purpose 5.

8.17 The contribution of the Site to the purposes of the Green Belt has been assessed, taking into account the discussion above, and is summarised in the table below:

**Table 8.2: Contribution of the Site to the Purposes of the Green Belt as Compared to Assessment of site R18/107**

	R18/107 (ARUP)	Site (Barton Willmore)
<b>Purpose 1: check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas</b>	No contribution: The site is not adjacent to the Warrington urban area and therefore does not contribute to checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.	No contribution: The site is not adjacent to the Warrington urban area and therefore does not contribute to checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.
<b>Purpose 2: to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another</b>	No contribution: The site does not contribute to preventing towns from merging.	No contribution: The site does not contribute to preventing towns from merging.
<b>Purpose 3: to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment</b>	Strong contribution: The site is connected to the settlement along its northern and western boundaries. The western boundary consists of garden boundaries which, while clear and contiguous along the boundary, may not be durable enough to prevent encroachment into the site. The northern boundary is durable in some sections along Longcroft Place and Chaise Meadow, although other sections consist of garden boundaries and an unmade section of Millers Lane which are less durable. The site is connected to the countryside predominantly along Mill Lane to the east and Stage Lane to the south, both of which form durable boundaries which could prevent further encroachment if the site was developed. The site's north eastern boundary is comprised of a water body (Healey Flash) which is durable and of garden boundaries close to Mill Lane as there is development within the Green Belt up to the durable boundary of Mill Lane. To the south east of the site, field boundaries form a non-durable boundary however Stage Lane and Mill Lane are in close proximity and would therefore limit any encroachment. The existing land use is open countryside. There is no built form and minimal vegetation, which mainly consists of internal field boundaries. The site is connected to the open countryside on two sides, to the east and south. The site supports a strong degree of openness	Limited: The site is connected to the settlement along its northern and western boundaries. The western boundary consists of garden boundaries which, while clear and contiguous along the boundary, may not be durable enough to prevent encroachment into the site. The northern boundary is durable as it relates to the existing built edge of Oughtrington and Heatley Flash, a protected area and large waterbody. The site is connected to the countryside predominantly along Mill Lane to the east and Stage Lane to the south, both of which form durable boundaries which could prevent further encroachment if the site was developed. The site's north eastern boundary is comprised of a water body (Healey Flash) which is durable and of garden boundaries close to Mill Lane as there is development within the Green Belt up to the durable boundary of Mill Lane. To the south east of the site, field boundaries form a non-durable boundary however Stage Lane and Mill Lane are in close proximity and would therefore limit any encroachment. The existing land use is open countryside. There is no built form and minimal vegetation, which mainly consists of internal field boundaries. The site is visually connected to the open countryside on two sides to a limited extent, to the east and south, but is physically separated by Mill Lane and Stage Lane, the intervening hedgerows

	as it contains no built form, minimal vegetation and supports long line views to the east. Overall the site makes a strong contribution to safeguarding the countryside from encroachment due to its openness and the nondurable boundaries between the site and the settlement.	and trees. The site supports a moderate degree of openness as it contains no built form but is surrounded on two sides, and partly along two others, by existing residential development within Oughtrington. There are limited medium distance views towards the Site from isolated viewpoints along a short stretch of the Bridgewater Canal, and short distance views from Mill Lane (which has a footway) and Stage Lane (which has not). There are no longer distance views to the south and east, due to the intervening topography and vegetation. Overall the site makes, at most, a moderate contribution to safeguarding the countryside from encroachment due to its openness and the nondurable boundaries between the site and the settlement.
<b>Purpose 4: to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns</b>	No Contribution: Lymm is a historic town however the site is not within 250m of its Conservation Area. The site does not cross an important viewpoint of the Parish Church.	No Contribution: Lymm is a historic town however the site is not within 250m of its Conservation Area. The site does not cross an important viewpoint of the Parish Church.
<b>Purpose 5: to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land</b>	Moderate contribution: The Mid Mersey Housing Market Area has 2.08% brownfield urban capacity for potential development, therefore the site makes a moderate contribution to this purpose.	Limited to no contribution: All greenfield sites make a similar contribution to purpose 5.
<b>Justification for Assessment</b>	The site makes a strong contribution to one purpose, a moderate contribution to one and no contribution to three. In line with the methodology, professional judgement has therefore been applied. The site has been judged to make a moderate overall contribution. Whilst the site supports a strong degree of openness and there are nondurable boundaries with the settlement, the boundaries between the site and the countryside are mostly durable and would therefore contain any development preventing it from threatening the overall openness and permanence of the Green Belt. The site also makes a moderate contribution to assisting in urban regeneration.	The Site makes a limited contribution to three purposes and no contribution to the remaining two. The Site makes a limited contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt.
<b>Overall Assessment</b>	Moderate contribution	Weak/limited contribution

## 9.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The Site comprises three arable fields, separated and surrounded by hedgerows with trees. Isolated trees occur within the Site, remnant field boundaries, and there is a pond surrounded by trees in the north-eastern corner.
- 9.2 The Site is bordered to the north, north-east, west, south and south-east by existing residential development within Oughtrington and is, therefore, within the context of the existing settlement. The trees and hedgerows are of landscape value and should be retained and enhanced as part of any future scheme. The fields within the Site have been subjected to hedgerow loss and forms an unremarkable example of countryside within the local area.
- 9.3 The Site could accommodate new development whilst protecting and enhancing the existing landscape features within the Site, and creating new areas of habitat and Green Infrastructure, in line with planning policy and the published landscape character guidance.
- 9.4 The visual appraisal has demonstrated that views towards the Site are limited to those from the rear of properties immediately abutting the Site, Stage Lane and Mill Lane immediately adjacent to the Site, and from a limited number of short distance viewpoints along the Bridgewater Canal.
- 9.5 The Warrington Green Belt review produced in 2016 and the later assessment of the contribution of SHLAA sites to the purposes of the Green Belt, assessed the Site (R18/107) and the parcel in which it is located (LY14) as making a strong contribution to purpose 3 of the Green Belt (protecting the countryside from encroachment) and a moderate contribution to purpose 5 (recycling brownfield land) and, therefore, as making a moderate contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt.
- 9.6 The Green Belt Review undertaken in 2017 by Barton Willmore has disputed the conclusions of the Warrington Green Belt Review in relation to the Site, particularly in relation to the contribution of the Site to purpose 3. The Warrington GBR acknowledges that the existing Green Belt boundary is not defensible but that the southern and eastern boundaries of the Site are defensible. This Site is also surrounded completely on two sides and along part of two further sides by existing residential development within Oughtrington. Development within the Site would not cause the extension of Oughtrington further east or south than the existing built extents. The visual appraisal has also demonstrated that the visual envelope of the Site is limited to immediate views and isolated short distance views from the Bridgewater Canal, resulting in the Site causing limited visual encroachment into the wider countryside. This review has therefore concluded that the Site makes a limited contribution to purpose 3 of the Green Belt as set out within the NPPF.

- 9.7 This assessment also disputes that the Site makes a moderate contribution to purpose 5. Due to purpose 5 applying equally to all greenfield sites, this is screened out of many assessment methodologies. On this basis, this assessment concludes that the Site makes a limited contribution to purpose 5. The Site makes a limited contribution to three of the purposes of the Green Belt and no contribution to a further two. The Site makes a limited contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt and is therefore suitable for release.
- 9.8 The landscape and visual appraisal has demonstrated that the Site is suitable for release from the Green Belt and can accommodate new, well-designed, residential development set within a strong landscape structure, without compromising the existing landscape features and views of the Site.
- 9.9 New development should accommodate the following features:
- Protect and enhance the existing hedgerows within and surrounding the Site;
  - Protect the existing trees and plant new trees within hedgerows and new areas of open space to create a more varied age structure, to soften views of the development and to break up the mass of the development;
  - Protect and enhance the pond in the north of the Site and provide a positive frontage to Heatley Flash;
  - Incorporate existing and new landscape features within a connected Green Infrastructure and accessible open space network;
  - Ensure new development reflects and enhances existing townscape character through the use of appropriate typologies, materials, scale and massing;
  - Ensure new development provides a positive and sensitive frontage to the countryside to the east and south.

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## **ILLUSTRATIVE MATERIAL**

Figure 1: Site Context Plan

Figure 2: Topographical Features Plan

Figure 3: Landscape Character Plan

Figure 4: Site Appraisal Plan

Figure 5: Visual Appraisal Plan

Site Context Photographs 1-9

Site Appraisal Photographs A-I

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## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1: Published Landscape Character Extracts

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National Character  
Area profile:

## 60. Mersey Valley

Supporting documents

Introduction & Summary

Description

Opportunities

Key facts  
and data

Landscape  
change

Analysis



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## Summary

The Mersey Valley National Character Area (NCA) consists of a wide, low-lying river valley landscape focusing on the River Mersey, its estuary, associated tributaries and waterways. It is a varied landscape that extends from the mosslands near the Manchester Conurbation NCA in the east, to the Merseyside Conurbation NCA and the wide estuary with intertidal mudflats/sand flats and salt marsh in the west. The River Mersey is tidal from Howley Weir in Warrington. The area encompasses a complex mix of extensive industrial development and urban areas, with high-quality farmland in between.

Farmland in the north of the Mersey Valley NCA is predominantly arable, while in the south there is a mix of arable and pasture. Field pattern is regular and large scale, often defined by degraded hedgerows with isolated hedgerow trees. In the east, open, flat farmland is found on the rich, dark peaty soils of the former mosses, with a complex network of drainage ditches.

Urban and industrial developments line the banks of the River Mersey. Industrial infrastructure is often prominent, with large-scale, highly visible development including chemical works and oil refineries. The Manchester Ship Canal links the estuary to the heart of Manchester, perpetuating the industrial development of the area. There is a dense communication network of major roads, railways, canals and transmission lines. The urban and suburban areas provide housing for those working in neighbouring conurbations, as well as in the industries of the Mersey Valley.

The Mersey Estuary's extensive intertidal mudflats/sand flats and fringing salt marshes sustain internationally significant bird populations. There are remnant pockets of lowland raised bog, including the Manchester Mosses Special Area of Conservation, centring on a once extensive area of mossland. Rixton Clay Pits are a mosaic of pools and other habitats, with an internationally designated population of great crested newts.

The habitats around the rivers and the estuary provide a natural defence against flooding. Positive management of the area's organic soils and wetlands such as lowland raised bogs could result in significant gains in carbon sequestration. Local Nature Reserves and country parks offer opportunities for people to enjoy the natural environment.

Key challenges include integrating the development pressures associated with the towns, industry and transport, with the protection and enhancement of the landscape and the internationally significant habitats. Understanding, planning for and adapting to climate change, particularly in the dynamic estuary and river environment, is a further challenge. There are opportunities for providing accessible greenspace and recreational provision, as well as improving habitat quality and distribution. Other benefits could include providing better water quality and storage, minimising soil erosion and increasing carbon storage. All these can strengthen landscape resilience and adaptation to climate change.



Click map to enlarge; click again to reduce.



Part of a relict mossland on a farm in Glazebury, which has been restored under environmental stewardship.

### Statements of Environmental Opportunity

- **SEO 1:** Conserve and enhance the Mersey Valley's rivers, tributaries and estuary, improving the ability of the fluvial and estuarine systems to adapt to climate change and mitigate flood risk while also enhancing habitats for wildlife and for people's enjoyment of the landscape.
- **SEO 2:** Promote the Mersey Valley's historic environment and landscape character and positively integrate the environmental resource with industry and development, providing greenspace within existing and new development, to further the benefits provided by a healthy natural environment, as a framework for habitat restoration and for public amenity.
- **SEO 3:** Manage the arable and mixed farmland along the broad linear Mersey Valley, and create semi-natural habitats, woodlands and ecological networks, to protect soils and water, enhance biodiversity, increase connectivity and improve the character of the landscape, while enabling sustainable food production.
- **SEO 4:** Manage and enhance the mossland landscape in the east, safeguarding wetlands including the internationally important lowland raised bogs, to conserve peat soils, protect and enhance biodiversity, conserve archaeological deposits, contribute to landscape character and store carbon.

## Description

### Physical and functional links to other National Character Areas

The Mersey Valley and Merseyside Conurbation National Character Areas (NCAs) lie within the same river basin and share a similar ecological character. The River Mersey forms a central, low-lying area and a corridor of movement for wildlife. The Mersey Estuary, an area of transition from marine to freshwater habitats, supports marine, subtidal and terrestrial maritime species. The significant mosaic of remnant mosses to the west of Manchester forms an important corridor of wetland habitats, linking with the Lancashire Coal Measures NCA in the north.

The River Mersey starts at the confluence of the River Tame and the River Goyt in the Manchester Conurbation NCA. It flows west, passing through Warrington where the river becomes tidal. It widens to form the upper Mersey Estuary between Warrington and Runcorn. The Mersey Estuary continues towards the Merseyside Conurbation NCA, and flows into Liverpool Bay in the Irish Sea. The Mersey Estuary Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site crosses both the Mersey Valley and the Merseyside Conurbation NCAs.

There are expansive views available from open and elevated land and the Mersey Estuary. In the west of the NCA, the Mersey is estuarine in character with intertidal mudflats/sand flats, salt marsh and low exposed cliffs. This creates an almost flat landscape with broad panoramic views. The vast industrial developments at Runcorn dominate views from across the Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain and the Cheshire Sandstone Ridge NCAs and from the M56 motorway. To the west of Runcorn, the valley widens out and intertidal areas, along with neighbouring NCAs, become more evident. In contrast, views from urban areas are typically limited by the relative flatness of the flood plain.

The Mersey Valley and Merseyside Conurbation NCAs share a number of major communication routes, with roads, rail and electricity power lines crossing the area. Motorway and mainline railway networks are dominant features of the landscape as major east-west and north-south infrastructure routes cross, for example the M6, M56 and M62. There are a number of significant waterways, including the Manchester Ship Canal. Many of the settlements provide housing for those working in the Merseyside and Manchester conurbations, as well as in the industries of the Mersey Valley.



Expansive views from open and elevated land, including intertidal mud/sand flats and saltmarsh in the Mersey Estuary. The vast industrial developments at Runcorn dominate many views.

### Key characteristics

- The landscape is low-lying, focusing on the broad linear valley of the River Mersey; it is estuarine in the west and has extensive areas of reclaimed mossland in the east.
- Underlain by Triassic sandstone, the surface geology is principally drift material: marine and river alluvium in the valley bottom, extensive areas of till, pockets of glacial sands and gravels, with peat in some drainage hollows.
- The Mersey Estuary is a defining element in the landscape, with expansive intertidal mudflats/sand flats and low exposed cliffs.
- The River Mersey flows from east to west, joined by associated tributaries, although the Mersey itself is often obscured from view.
- Trees and woodland are mainly associated with settlements, occasional parkland and isolated woodland blocks; and in recent years new community woodlands have been planted.
- Large-scale, open, predominantly flat, high-quality farmland occurs between developments, with primarily arable farming to the north of the valley and a mixture of arable and dairying to the south.
- The field pattern is regular and large scale, often defined by hedgerows with isolated hedgerow trees; many hedgerows are intermittent and have been replaced by post-and-wire fencing, while field boundaries on the mosses are marked by ditches.
- A range of important wetland habitats remain, including estuarine mudflats/sand flats and fringing salt marshes in the west, remnants of semi-natural mosslands and pockets of basin peats in the east, with the broad river valley in between.
- The predominant building material is red brick though some sandstone construction remains, and some survival of earlier timber frame.
- There are densely populated urban and suburban areas, with major towns particularly at the river crossings, including Runcorn, Widnes and Warrington.
- There is large-scale, highly visible industrial development, with docks, chemical works and oil refineries.
- The river valley has a dense communication network with motorways, roads, railways and canals running east-west, and power lines are also prominent.

### Landscape opportunities

- Positive management of urban fringe landscapes including woodland planting and hedgerow restoration and planting to assimilate development.
- Conserve green spaces and create greenspace, including individual trees, groups of trees, woodlands, urban parks, canals and other habitats, in appropriate urban and industrial areas and settlements, such as school playing fields, open spaces, streets, highway verges, institutional grounds, derelict land, tipped and industrial land and development sites, for their many benefits, including providing places for recreation, to improve quality of life and to create places of relative tranquillity locally.
- Ensure that greenspace is provided within urban and industrial areas, providing access opportunities, and pockets of tranquillity, and enhance the ecological diversity, such as providing new planting and leaving uncut areas of grass and wildflowers.
- Conserve woodlands, including ancient woodlands, and plant woodlands as a buffer.
- Establish woodlands, copses, hedgerows and other habitats to assimilate new and existing industrial and residential development into the landscape.
- Manage and restore hedgerows and field boundary trees in the farmland areas away from the mosses, wetlands and estuary, to strengthen field patterns, and aim to link fragmented and degraded habitats.
- Maintain agricultural productivity on good quality land between settlements.
- Manage agricultural land to improve the landscape and as a habitat resource, particularly for farmland birds such as corn bunting, grey partridge and lapwing.
- Conserve open and expansive views of the landscape, such as views from the top of Runcorn Hill, Helsby Hill, Overton Hill and the Cheshire Sandstone Ridge.
- Plan to link and connect potentially fragmented habitats into a more cohesive whole and enable movement of species.
- Protect, restore and buffer the mosslands and wetland areas, including lowland raised bogs.
- Conserve the historic buildings and character of the villages ensuring high quality design.
- Maintain and enhance the estuarine habitats, in particular mudflats/sand flats and salt marshes, that contribute to landscape character, provide tranquil places and support the wide range of wildlife.
- Conserve the open and expansive estuary views, including mudflats/sand flats and salt marshes along the Mersey Estuary.
- Allow for the continuing dynamic estuarine processes. Plan for and proactively seek opportunities to enhance estuarine habitats alongside coastal adaptation programmes.
- Provide improved interpretation and educational facilities to increase visitors' understanding and enjoyment of the NCA's natural and historic features, and engage the local community in its future management.
- Conserve and manage the banks of the linear features such as canals, roads, railways, for their biodiversity interest.
- Conserve the river corridor and enhance the visual unity of the Mersey river valley.
- Promote links between a healthy environment and economic growth, for example by promoting the benefits of a clean and healthy waterside environment as a positive focus for regeneration.



### Photo credits

Front cover: The Mersey Estuary is of international significance, with large areas designated as a Ramsar site and as a Special Protection Area with extensive intertidal habitats such as mud/sand flats supporting internationally important bird populations. © Natural England/Ruth Critchley

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# WARRINGTON: A LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT



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Prepared 2007

## **2.0 METHODOLOGY**

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### **2.1 BACKGROUND**

The methodology for carrying out the landscape character assessment follows the guidelines provided by the Countryside Agency and Scottish National Heritage as set out in their document '*Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland*' published in 2002.

### **2.2 THE PROCESS ENTAILED**

- Scoping
- Desk top study
- Field survey
- Landscape classification and description
- Consultation
- Analysis, judgements and recommendations

### **2.3 BASE PLAN**

Information was provided by Warrington Borough Council, together with Geographic Information System (GIS) and printing services.

### **2.4 SCOPING**

A scoping exercise was initially carried out to ascertain the level of detail required and the aims and uses of the study, together with an outline of the form of report required. This was carried out in liaison and agreement with Warrington Borough Council Officers.

The study specifically excluded the main urban core and suburban areas associated with Warrington.

### **2.5 DESK TOP STUDY**

Data and plans were collected from a variety of sources for several months prior to commencing field survey work. The major sources included:

- Landscape Character Assessment reports for surrounding Boroughs
- Warrington Unitary Development Plan
- A Nature Conservation Strategy for Warrington
- Agricultural Land Classification
- National Countryside Character
- Cheshire County Council Landscape Character Assessment
- A Landscape Strategy for Lancashire
- Solid and drift geology
- Ordnance Survey Plan 1:25,000

- The Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation
- Biodiversity Action Plan for Warrington

## **2.6 FIELD SURVEY**

Field survey work was undertaken over a 6 month period between April and September 2007. This enabled an assessment of the landscape at different times of the year, providing a more balanced assessment of the landscape character. All parts of the Borough were either assessed or viewed from a series of field station points and a comprehensive number of photographs were taken, both across the Borough generally and specifically at the field station point. Locations of those photographs selected for use in this report, can be found in Appendix 3.

## **2.7 FIELD STUDY SHEETS**

These were produced at every field station point, setting out and assessing the following:

- Topography
- Hydrology
- Communications
- Land Cover
- Trees & Woodland
- Buildings
- Boundaries
- Perception
- Local Materials
- Architectural Style
- Condition
- Key Characteristics

Copies of these can be found in the Appendix 1.

## **2.8 CLASSIFICATION AND DESCRIPTION**

Desk top studies and field study work were combined to confirm various areas of differing landscape character, setting out the different landscape character types. Further site surveys confirmed the more detailed boundary line between each area within the character type. This information was plotted onto 1:25000 O.S. base plan which was considered appropriate for the level of study.

Although villages have been included within the landscape character type boundaries, no specific urban or suburban character assessment has been carried out.

## **2.9 AREA DELINEATION**

It must be stressed that in most locations the Landscape Character Type does not form a neat junction line between one 'type' and another. The junction often forms a zone of transition which, in some instances, may be of considerable width.

The boundary lines illustrated on the Landscape Character Types and Areas Plan (Figure 15 on page 49) should therefore be viewed as approximate, although a careful judgement has been made of the boundary line on site in each case.

## **2.10 CONSULTATION**

Consultation, mainly in the form of meetings, has continued throughout the study between February and December 2007. In addition, regular progress meetings have taken place with Warrington Borough Council Officers to ensure that the report fulfils the Council requirements.

The following individuals and organisations have been consulted:

- The Mersey Forest - Clare Olver, Project Development Officer
- Cheshire Landscape Trust - John Gittins, Director
- Cheshire County Council –  
David Blackburn, Landscape Design Project Leader  
Rob Edwards, Historic Environment Records Officer
  
- Warrington Borough Council -  
Roger Haigh, Landscape Architect  
David Ringwood, Minerals and Waste Planning Officer  
Helen Lacey, Wildlife Conservation Officer  
John Thorpe, Footpaths Officer

The aim of the consultation work was to provide input to the following stage of Analysis and Judgements.

## **2.11 ANALYSIS AND JUDGEMENTS**

Following the description of specific landscape types and areas, it was possible to evaluate key points and negative elements and traits in the landscape. These were highlighted under the following headings:

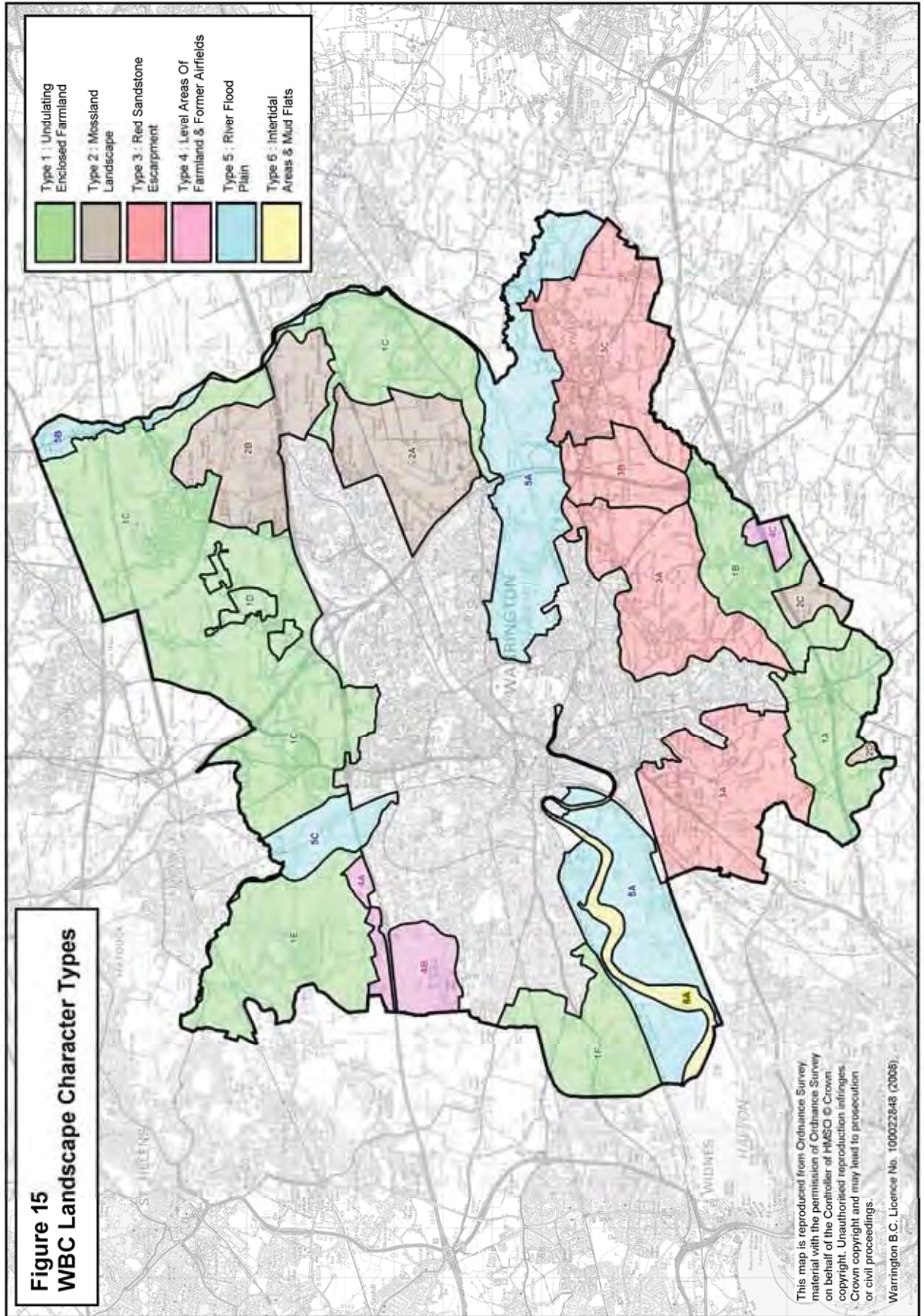
- Landscape Sensitivity
- Landscape Change

Together they formed the basis for a series of Management and Landscape Objectives for each area, specifically tailored to either improve existing positive landscape character or mitigate against current adverse trends in management or development.

A similar analysis was made of the settlement areas, together with suggested guidelines for future development.

## **2.12 EVALUATION**

The purpose of the evaluation work was to aid in strategic landscape planning and management and to assist in providing a more informed approach in responding to development proposals, both in the landscape and the villages.



## **TYPE 3. RED SANDSTONE ESCARPMENT**

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### **Description**

The Red Sandstone Escarpment dominates the landscape to the south of the Borough, south of the Manchester Ship Canal. The escarpment slopes generally down to the north with crest elevations of 70-85 m above O.D., and frequently affords excellent long distance views to the north and east. From the escarpment crest, the land falls more gradually back to the south, forming the Cheshire Plain. The Triassic red sandstone geology underlying the area heavily influences the landscape character and is often exposed as rock outcrops in cuttings or present in the construction of older vernacular houses and walls.

The degree of northerly slope varies considerably from often deeply dissected steep slopes to the west in the vicinity of Appleton, to more gentle and generally undulating slopes in the east around the village of Lymm. The northerly slopes tend to be mainly used for pasture, with some arable land toward the escarpment crest.

A number of streams cut into the escarpment and also strongly influence the local landscape character. To the west, in the Appleton area, these are characterised by their northerly direction, lack of tributary streams and locally deeply incised valleys. To the east, however, the streams have a greater number of branching tributaries and run through a more gently undulating landscape with a lower secondary escarpment ridge running to the north.

Although the area has a strong unity of character, subtle changes are identified travelling from west to east. These changes are considered sufficient to warrant the sub-dividing of the character type into three areas described as Area 3.A Appleton Park and Grappenhall, Area 3.B Massey Brook and Area 3.C Lymm. The key characteristics listed below describe the linking elements to all three areas.

### **Key Characteristics:**

- Escarpment runs along a generally east/west axis
- Dominant slope down to the north, with a more gentle slope to the south
- Red sandstone outcrops, cuttings and quarries
- Red sandstone walls and older buildings
- Locally excellent views to the north and east
- Red sandy soil exposed in ploughing
- Mainly pasture on the escarpment face with arable land towards the crest
- Mainly deciduous woodland, generally in linear form down the slope
- Presence of small marl pit ponds





Photo 128d. A view along Cinder Lane, Thelwall, typical of the Red Sandstone Escarpment.

## Cultural History

The crest of the Red Sandstone Escarpment of the south side of the Mersey Valley has been used as an east-west routeway from ancient times. The modern B5356 along the crest, follows the alignment of a Roman Road which almost certainly follows the route of an earlier road. A second Roman Road, King Street, runs north-south, at right angles to the escarpment and meets the east-west route at Stretton in the immediate vicinity of the church. King Street follows a gentle declination to the Mersey Valley floor via the knolls at High Warren and Hillcliffe. The road must have crossed the River Mersey at Bridgefoot having run along Wilderspool Causeway, where a Roman pottery is known to have existed.

In the Domesday Book, Lymm (Lime), Appleton (Epletune) and Grappenhall (Gropenhalle) were held for the Earl of Chester by Osbern Fitztezzon, who also held land in Warburton, Dutton and Winnington in Great Budworth. Clearly Fitztezzon was a local magnate, whose main landholdings seem to have been along the Red Sandstone Escarpment. The lighter, arenaceous soils derived from red sandstone would have been easier to work for pre-Roman and early medieval farmers and the escarpment would have been one of the first areas of

Warrington to have farms established on it. Farming on the summit of the ridge is mainly arable, but where the ground is more steeply sloping and broken up by streams, cattle grazing would have been practised until recent times.

The road running along the escarpment was situated to the south of the ridgeline, presumably taking advantage of some shelter while using the drier ground upslope of the Cheshire Plain to the south. A chain of settlements ran along the line of the crest road, beginning at Hatton in the west and running east through Stretton and Appleton Thorn. In addition to these settlements, a number of moated sites and halls are located to both sides of the road. From west to east, these include Spark Hall, Stretton; Mosswood Hall, Appleton; Reddish Hall and Bradley Hall. The moats were probably fed from the spring line on the escarpment.

The red sandstone of the area is extremely soft, easily dug out and worked. While 'green' i.e. before hardening in the atmosphere it can be cut with a knife, but hardens reasonably quickly. It was used from Roman times for building works of all types, from the bridges on the Bridgewater Canal to footings for timber framed medieval houses. The deeper bands of stone were generally the hardest and most durable and the best to produce sawn ashlar walling stone. The shallower bands of stone were used to produce rubble walling and hardcore. Conversely, red sandstone is brittle, cannot easily be used second-hand and is particularly prone to erosion from salt spray.

In 1759, the famous engineer James Brindley began construction of the Bridgewater Canal for Francis Egerton, the third Duke of Bridgewater. The canal dominates the landscape of the lower escarpment, running approximately along the 25m contour. A major feature of the Bridgewater Canal was that it had no locks for some 22 miles, allowing for fairly swift barge travel.

The Manchester Ship Canal was constructed in 1894, effectively canalising much of the River Mersey and cutting through the base of the escarpment. In more recent years the Ship Canal has lost much of its commercial function.

In 1958, construction commenced on the Warrington section of the M6 motorway, the longest motorway in the UK. The motorway used part of the Massey Brook basin as a more gentle way of crossing the Red Sandstone Escarpment. This only involved a shallow section of cutting at the Lymm junction and avoided the need for an extensive embankment before crossing the Mersey flood plain on the Thelwall Viaduct.

#### **Key cultural elements in the landscape:**

- Roman road running along the crest of the escarpment
- Roman road (Kings Road) running north – south through Stretton
- The Bridgewater Canal (1759)

- The M6 motorway (1958)
- The Warrington and Stockport Turnpike of 1821 (now the A56)
- Lymm Dam (1824)
- The London and North Western Railway line of 1853, closed 1989, (now the Trans-Pennine Trail)
- Red sandstone quarries
- Red sandstone buildings, walls, quoins etc
- Large, mainly C19th estates, such as Grappenhall Heys, Oughtrington Hall etc.
- Old houses and properties.

### **Landfill and Mineral Extraction**

There are no landfill operations because of the difficulties in achieving acceptable landform. The escarpment would accentuate the visual effect of any mounding. Historic land values are also considerably higher than those of the flood plain and mosslands and this has also dissuaded large-scale landfill operations.

Historically, mineral extraction has been limited to quarrying.

### **Agricultural Land Classification**

The whole of the escarpment is classified as Grade 2 or Grade 3. The Grade 2 land is in four distinct groupings; to the east around Heatley and east of Broomedge, to the east of Lumb Brook in a large area around Grappenhall Heys, to a smaller area around Hurst Farm, Appleton and to the area west of Chester Road, Walton.

### **Settlement**

Most of the settlements and buildings within the escarpment area have red sandstone featuring very heavily in the vernacular architecture. The red sandstone is extremely soft when first cut, but 'cures' in the atmosphere to become reasonably hard and durable. Many churches in the escarpment area are built from red sandstone and some of the older houses. However, sandstone was expensive to produce as a building material and many domestic dwellings were originally built as wattle and daub timber framed houses constructed on a plinth of red sandstone. In later years, as brick became more readily available the wattle and daub was either replaced with brick or the entire structure was encased in brick.

Thatched roofs were common as evidenced by the steep pitches of the gables in surviving older domestic buildings. Red sandstone was commonly used for quoins and lintels in some Georgian brick houses, but in many cases these were later painted to arrest the natural weathering of the stone. Wallspit (1791) a listed building on Tarporley Road, Stretton is a good example of a stone quoined Georgian brick building with a possibly older entirely stone dovecote immediately adjacent. Bellfield Farm, Appleton is a good example of a local farm built partially in red sandstone and partially in brick. The red sandstone quarries were located on the north side of the escarpment, probably in the Hill Cliff area. Some of these quarries are particularly ancient. Quarries for instance in the Pin Mill area of Lymm, have stones marked in pre-Roman times.

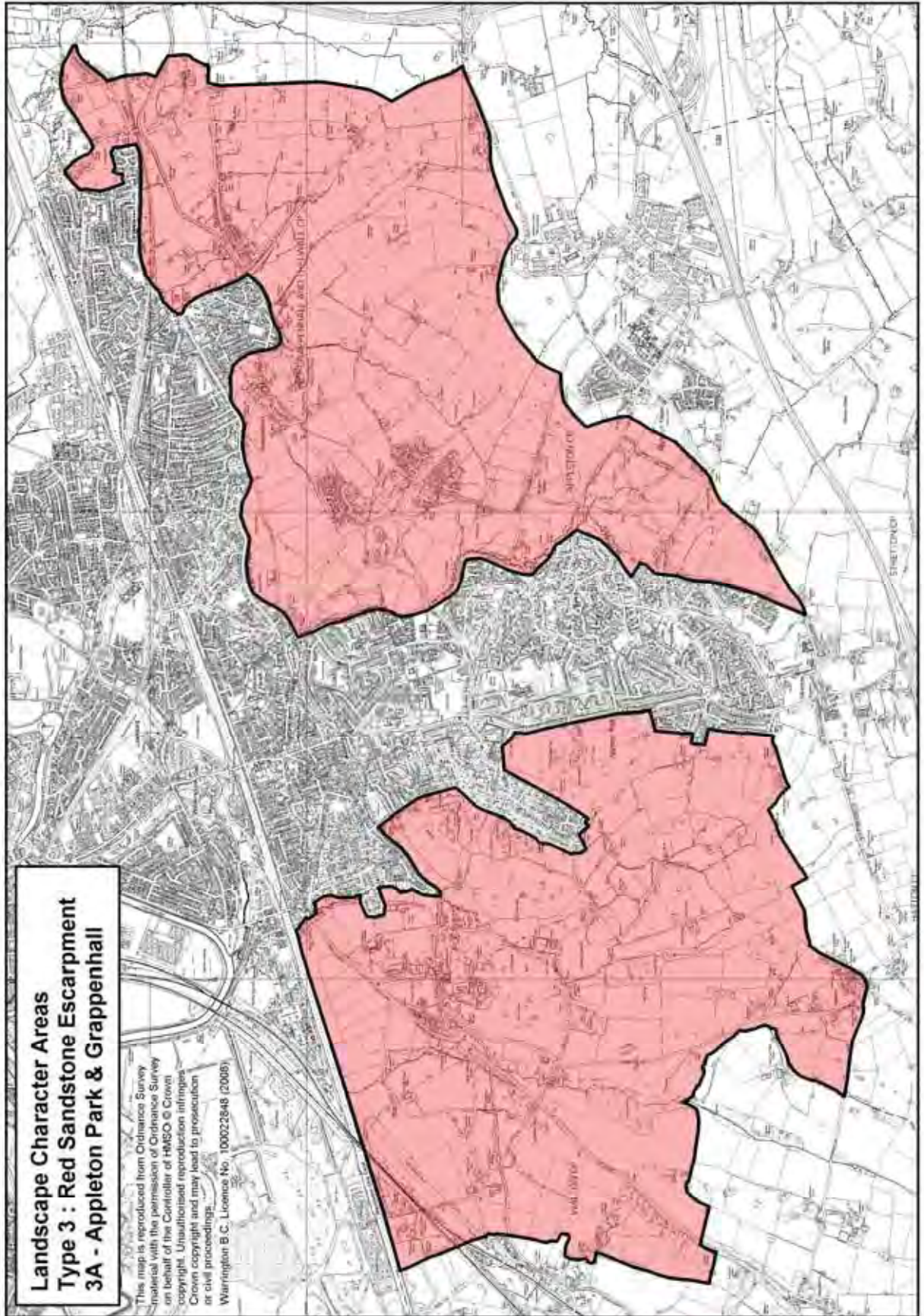
The villages of Oughtrington, Lymm, Thelwall, Grappenhall and Appleton are sited either at the base of the escarpment or halfway down the northern slope. These locations are linked by a lateral road, the A56, as well as the Bridgwater Canal. Roads running north-south intersect with the lateral road and these form the centres of the villages. The A49 runs through Appleton, the A50 through Grappenhall and the B5158 (Cherry Lane) into Lymm. The B5159 (Burford Lane) crosses the A56 and joins the A6144 at Heatley, 2.5km north of the A50.

Some of the villages have clearly expanded outwards from a village centre by ribbon development along the main roads, while later expansion has been by infilling and small housing estates.

Warrington New Town established the principle of development reaching up to and on the southern skyline of the escarpment. English Partnerships, and then the HCA, the successor organisations to the New Town continued this policy and slowly released land for housing development. Unfortunately, some of the later housing is three storey and is not as well screened with landscaping as the earlier New Town development. These buildings appear starkly on the escarpment crest and can be seen from several miles away. Entrance features and infrastructure are in place on the Stretton Road for further expansion at some future date.



Photo 106a: View west along the Bridgewater Canal from Agden Bridge, showing the open views of the Red Sandstone Escarpment's northern face.



## **TYPE 3    RED SANDSTONE ESCARPMENT**

### **AREA 3.C    LYMM**

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#### **Description**

The boundaries of the area are formed by the Massey Brook basin to the west; the Warrington Borough boundary to the south and east and by the Bridgewater Canal to the north. The land again falls generally to the north but is of a more rolling and undulating nature occasionally with back falls to the south. The agriculture is a balance of both pastoral and arable farming.

The streams passing through the area are more branched than in the adjoining areas, with tributaries running parallel to the ridge line. Stream valleys are generally shallow with only Bradley Brook forming a steep sided valley passing through Lymm and in the vicinity of Lymm Dam.

The area's topography creates an intimate landscape, often self-enclosed by woodlands and hedgerow trees. Views from the area are therefore less extensive with few internal views of note. Lymm water tower and St Peter's Church, Oughtrington are exceptions, forming local landmarks. To the east of Lymm, around Oughtrington, the landscape is more open and land less dissected by streams.

The main red sandstone ridge identified in Areas 3.A and 3.B runs outside and to the south of the Warrington Borough boundary towards the village of High Legh. There is a secondary, lower, ridgeline to the north at a lower elevation, running from east to west at 60-55m O.D. between the hamlet of Broomedge and the village of Lymm.

Vegetation in the area generally is notably vigorous and healthy, particularly when compared with the rest of Warrington Borough. Hedgerows and hedgerow trees appear more luxuriant, larger and more well-formed and include a more diverse range of species, including chestnut, lime, beech and willow, to accompany the more universally found common oak.

#### **Key Characteristics:**

- Smaller scale, more intimate rural landscape
- Luxuriant hedgerow trees with diverse range of species
- Rolling landscape
- Restricted views
- Strong feeling of high landscape quality

## Cultural History

Lymm village probably existed in Roman and possibly in pre-Roman times. The core of the village was based on a waterfall where a small stream cut back into the Red Sandstone Escarpment, producing a cliff.

Red sandstone was quarried here throughout historic times and the stone was used extensively in the local area. Pepper Street in Lymm is probably on the line of the original Roman Road, which ran through Oughtrington towards Heatley and probably crossed the River Bollin at or near the present crossing of the A6144.



Photo 104: View of Lymm Cross – sited on an outcrop of Red Sandstone.

In the centre of the village is The Cross, a distinctive feature marking the site of a market. It possibly dates back to the C14th, but has had several alterations over many years. It stands on top of a remnant pyramid of red sandstone, the sides of which have been sculpted into steps, much worn through use. It is Listed Grade I. Adjacent to The Cross are some restored stocks (Listed Grade II). The Moat House, the bridge over the moat, the moat walls and the cottage at Lymm Hall are Listed Grade II, Lymm Hall, the site of the original manor house of Lymm is Listed Grade II\*. Much of the area of the centre of Lymm is designated as a conservation area.



There are a number of remaining fustian cutters cottages in Lymm, the most intact being nos. 13 – 19, Church Lane, Listed Grade II. These are three storey buildings, the third storey being used communally as a workshop by the individual cottage owners. A slitting mill was operating in the Lower Dam area on Slitten Brook in the 1750s, using the power generated via a water wheel.

The Bridgewater Canal was constructed through Lymm in the 1770s, originally to transport coal from Worsley to Liverpool for transhipment elsewhere. Along the canal are a number of listed buildings and structures. Near the junction of Stage Lane and Burford Lane is the Burford Lane canal warehouse, (Listed Grade II) now rare example of one of the earliest canal buildings. The bridges of Grantham's Bridge (near Stage Lane), Lloyd Bridge (Sandy Lane) and Lymm Bridge (The Cross) are very characteristic of the Bridgewater Canal, as are the aqueducts at Burford Lane, Bridgewater Street and Barsbank (all Listed Grade II).

Adjacent to Lloyd Bridge is a converted sawmill, used during WWI to manufacture ammunition boxes from the plantations around Oughtrington Hall, which were almost entirely felled. In front of the sawmill is a ruin of the office reputedly used by James Brindley during the construction of the canal. Near the market place in Lymm, a dry tunnel is located south of the Bridgewater Canal, projecting some 25 metres into the sandstone (Listed Grade II). It was probably constructed as part of aborted works associated with the nearby Bridgewater Street aqueduct.

In 1821, the Warrington and Stockport Turnpike Trust was formed, to construct a new road, now the A56 between the two towns. In 1824, the Turnpike Trust built a dam over the Dingle valley to carry the new road, creating a substantial water body.

In 1853 the London and North Western Railway opened a line running east-west through Lymm. This was much used as a passenger line, but reverted to goods traffic only in the 1960s before being closed in 1989. The track bed has now been converted to a footpath and forms part of the Trans Pennine Trail. The influence of the railway was dramatic. To the east of Lymm, Heatley saltworks had its own sidings from the line. Many small orchards in Lymm, Oughtrington and Heatley supplied fruit to the markets in Manchester throughout the late Victorian and Edwardian eras. Few, if any, of these orchards are now left, although a small orchard was planted for the Oughtrington Primary School, now the Oughtrington Community Centre. Many of the now familiar local building materials, such as Welsh slate roof tiles, Accrington brick etc were brought in by rail.

In 1894, the Manchester Ship Canal was opened. Its route is to the north of Lymm, above the general level of the Mersey flood plain and cuts into the base of the Red Sandstone Escarpment.

The most characteristic feature of Lymm village is the valley in which it stands. To the south of the village Lymm Dam has created a large recreational water body with a spillway into a steep-sided section of the valley known as The Dingle. The bridge over the spillway on Church Road is Listed Grade II. In the centre of the village is the lower dam, from which the stream falls steeply into Slitten Brook. In all these features red sandstone is exposed, perhaps most dramatically near the lower dam where a cliff approximately 10m high stands behind adjacent cottages. Lymm Dam is a Site of Biological Interest (SBI) as well as containing a Regionally Important Geological Site (RIGS). The dam is fed by Mag Brook and

Bradley Brook via a well-wooded valley. The woodland associated with Bradley Brook has been designated as ancient woodland and is also scheduled as a Site of Biological Interest. The bridge over the brook and the dell at the head of Lymm Dam are Listed Grade II. The core of Lymm village and the envelope around Lymm Dam are protected as a Conservation Area.

The present Lymm centre is mainly of Victorian construction and complements the development built alongside the Bridgewater Canal in Georgian times, for example the fine houses at 1A and 3, Lymm Bridge, Listed Grade II. The Victorians also built a number of large houses along Higher Lane – the main Warrington to Altrincham road, running along the edge of the sandstone escarpment. Lymm remained a small village until recent times, when expansion was rapid.

North-west of Lymm is Statham, once a small independent village based on a secondary road into Lymm from Thelwall. This is now connected to and largely absorbed by Lymm. Statham contains the Statham Lodge Hotel, a fine Georgian building (Listed Grade II) with landscaped views to the south up the Red Sandstone Escarpment.

To the east of Lymm is Oughtrington, a satellite village which retains a distinctively different identity. It appears to have originally been sited at the junction between Sandy Lane and Rushgreen Road, but on construction of the Bridgewater Canal extended back up Sandy Lane to its crossing of the canal via Lloyd (Dog) bridge. At the same time, a canal staging station (now demolished) was built off Stage Lane for changing draught horses pulling barges along the canal. At the junction of Stage Lane and Oughtrington Crescent is the Oughtrington Community Centre, formerly Oughtrington Primary School, an attractive late Victorian building. At the upper end of Sandy Lane is Lymm (formerly Oughtrington) High School, occupying the site of Oughtrington Hall, Listed Grade II, a large Georgian building with a lodge (Listed Grade II) guarding the access off Sandy Lane. The visually dominant St Peter's Church (Listed Grade II) was consecrated in 1872, the gift of local landowner Charles Dewhurst. Just south of the church are two pairs of attractive Arts and Crafts period semi-detached cottages.

East of Oughtrington is Heatley Flash, a former brine pumping site, now flooded and a Site of Biological Interest (SBI). To the north of Heatley Flash new housing occupies the site once occupied by the saltworks. South-east of Oughtrington is Newhay's Plantation, planted as part of the Oughtrington Hall estate around the old quarries which were the source of stone for the nearby St Peter's Church. This woodland is also a Site of Biological Interest (SBI) and has recently been added to by a new community woodland known as 'Spud Wood'.

East of Oughtrington is the satellite village of Heatley. This a small village which appears to have been originally built at the junction of Birchbrook Road and Mill Lane, close to the crossing of the River Bollin. Heatley Manor stands very close to the road junction and is a Listed Grade II Georgian building. When the railway was built, a small station was located off Mill Lane and this led to the construction of The Railway public house, a rare example of an unspoilt country pub and a local landmark immediately north of the railway. South of the railway, several Victorian semi-detached houses were built, having the locally rare feature of 'side aspect' rather than the conventional front and rear aspect.

East of Lymm and based on the junction of Higher Lane with Burford Lane / High Legh Road is the hamlet of Broomedge.

In the more open country around Lymm are a number of outstanding buildings, including Burford Lane Farmhouse, a barn, granary, shippon, stable and cartshed building, all Listed Grade II. Wildersmoor Hall Farmhouse, associated barn, icehouse and well to the rear are all Listed Grade II. Lymm Water Tower, a distinctive feature on the summit of the lower red sandstone ridge is Listed Grade II.

### **Key cultural elements in the landscape:**

- Lymm Cross
- The Bridgewater Canal and its bridges, aqueducts, warehouses etc.
- The former London and North Western Railway – now the Trans Pennine Trail
- Lymm Dam
- The Dingle, Lower Dam and Slitten Brook
- Lymm Hall
  
- Lymm village centre (Conservation Area)
- Large Victorian villas / houses around Lymm
- St Mary's Church, Lymm
- St Peter's Church, Oughtrington
- Heatley Flash
- Oughtrington Community Centre

### **Landfill and Mineral Extraction**

There are no landfill operations within this area, but there are negative visual impacts from adjacent landfill sites, notably the Butchersfield site. This has a very prominent and artificial domed landform, partially mitigated by recent planting.

Mineral extraction was confined to quarrying red sandstone, but active quarries have long since closed. A group of small quarry pits are located in Helsdale Wood, Oughtrington (from

which St Peter's Church was reputedly built). Quarrying also took place in Lymm, possibly around the lower dam, but certainly around Slitten Brook.

### **Agricultural Land Quality**

The bulk of the Lymm area is of Grade 3 agricultural land. To the east of Oughtrington and running out to the south-east, parallel to the River Bollin is an area of Grade 2 agricultural land.

### **Landscape Sensitivity**

The nature of the landscape, with its luxuriance of hedgerows and hedgerow trees and more intimate landform, creates a less sensitive environment in which to absorb small scale development. The recent housing expansion of Lymm however into greenfield sites has fundamentally altered and reduced the rural character of the area for which it is renowned.

Although the Lymm area can be described as having a high quality landscape, it is nonetheless sensitive to changes in agricultural practices and development. Passive recreational uses within the landscape are more easily absorbed due to the screening offered by both landform and the well-vegetated nature of the area.

#### **Key elements of landscape sensitivity:**

- Prone to development expansion of Lymm village
- Vulnerable to changes in agricultural practices



Photo 105s. View north from near Burford Lane Farm, showing the listed Burford Lane Canal warehouse on the Bridgewater Canal at Agden in the foreground and the long views over northern and eastern Warrington.

## **Landscape Change**

Main areas of landscape change have been through the expansion of Lymm village, which has now absorbed many of the smaller outlying settlements. In consequence large areas of the rural landscape have now been lost. Previous changes have also included the construction of the Bridgewater Canal and Lymm Dam reservoir to the south of the village.

Further changes have seen the alteration from commercial to leisure uses on the Bridgewater Canal entailing pleasure craft and fishing. Fishing has also become exceptionally popular at Lymm Dam.

Apart from the loss of landscape to building development, the remaining areas of agricultural land have changed little since the Enclosures. This is, in part, due to the retention of the hedgerows as a barrier to stock.

**Landscape change to the area is summarised as follows:**

- Loss of agricultural land to the expansion of Lymm village
- Construction of Lymm Dam
- Construction of the Bridgewater Canal
- Increase in pleasure boats and fishing

**Recommended Management and Landscape Objectives**

Although the Lymm agricultural landscape is arguably one of the best in the Borough in terms of quality and condition, this position could easily change with alterations to the farming economy. It is therefore important to monitor future change with a view to safeguarding the areas of hedgerows and hedgerow trees in particular. The hedgerow trees are virtually all at a mature stage in life and will require a programme of progressive new planting to ensure continuance of the present landscape character.

The area is well-endowed with woodlands, mainly in linear form, in association with Bradley, Mag and Kaylone Brooks. The existing landscape character would be strengthened and visually improved if gaps and missing woodland sections were planted to create continuous

linear woodland links leading back to Lymm Dam. The expansion of the existing footpath system to follow the woodlands should also be considered.

## **Management of the Landscape**

- Monitor existing hedgerows and hedgerow trees
- Encourage a rolling programme of new hedgerow tree planting
- Investigate and encourage the creation of new native woodland planting to provide continuous woodland links along Bradley Brook, Mag Brook and Kaylone Brook
- Encourage traditional management of ancient woodland
- Investigate the opportunities for extended footpath systems associated with the brooks and linear woodland

## **Settlement**

Lymm village is built on the northern slope of the sandstone escarpment, with the oldest part of the village centred on the small but steep-sided valley known as the Dingle. It has expanded along the secondary ridgeline (Higher Lane – Church Road) as well as to the south of the ridgeline, along Cherry Lane. It has also expanded to the north-west, to Statham and to the east towards Oughtrington.

Oughtrington is also built on the northern slope of the sandstone escarpment, but unlike Lymm, it is not centred on a valley, but on a road, Sandy Lane. Heatley is similar to Oughtrington based at the junction of Mill Lane with Birchbrook Road. The settlement of Broomedge is sited again around a road junction, at Higher Lane/ Burford Lane (which becomes Mill Lane north of the Bridgewater Canal).

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Appendix 2: Extracts from Green Belt Reviews

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Warrington Borough Council  
**Green Belt Assessment**  
Final Report

Final | 21 October 2016

This report takes into account the particular instructions and requirements of our client

It is not intended for and should not be relied upon by any third party and no responsibility is undertaken to any third party

Job number 247625-00

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## 4 Methodology

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### 4.1 Overview

62. As identified previously, there is no single ‘correct’ method for undertaking Green Belt Assessments thus this methodology has been informed by national policy, guidance and good practice, as identified in the preceding section. The methodology is considerably detailed in order to ensure transparency in approach and consistency in application. The inclusion of the rationale behind each element of the method is intended to provide clarity and aid consistent application. The methodology was agreed in advance with WBC.

### 4.2 Summary of Approach

63. In order to cover the whole extent of the Warrington Green Belt, a two stage approach was applied, this is summarised below and is illustrated in Figure 6.

#### **Stage 1 – General Area Assessment**

64. Stage 1 involved dividing the entire Warrington Green Belt into large parcels (‘General Areas’) which were then assessed against the five purposes of Green Belt. The General Areas were defined using recognisable and permanent boundaries. Further details on the approach to boundary definition are provided in Section 4.3.2.

#### **Stage 2 - Green Belt Parcel Assessment**

65. Stage 2 involved defining smaller Green Belt parcels around settlements on the edge or inset from the Warrington Green Belt and assessing these parcels for their contribution to the five purposes of Green Belt.
66. In relation to those General Areas which did not encompass any of WBC’s inset settlements and/or were not adjacent to the settlement boundary, the findings from the Stage 1 Assessment were used to determine whether these General Areas should be divided into parcels. Where the General Area made a lesser contribution to Green Belt purposes (categorised as ‘no’ or ‘weak’ contribution), it was divided into smaller Green Belt parcels and assessed.

#### Stage 2A

67. In relation to those General Areas which performed poorly in Stage 1 (categorised as ‘no’ or ‘weak’ contribution), this stage provided the opportunity to consider whether a broader width of parcels (beyond the initial parcel width outwards from the settlement boundary) needed to be defined and assessed to provide a finer grain understanding of the General Areas’ contribution to Green Belt purposes.

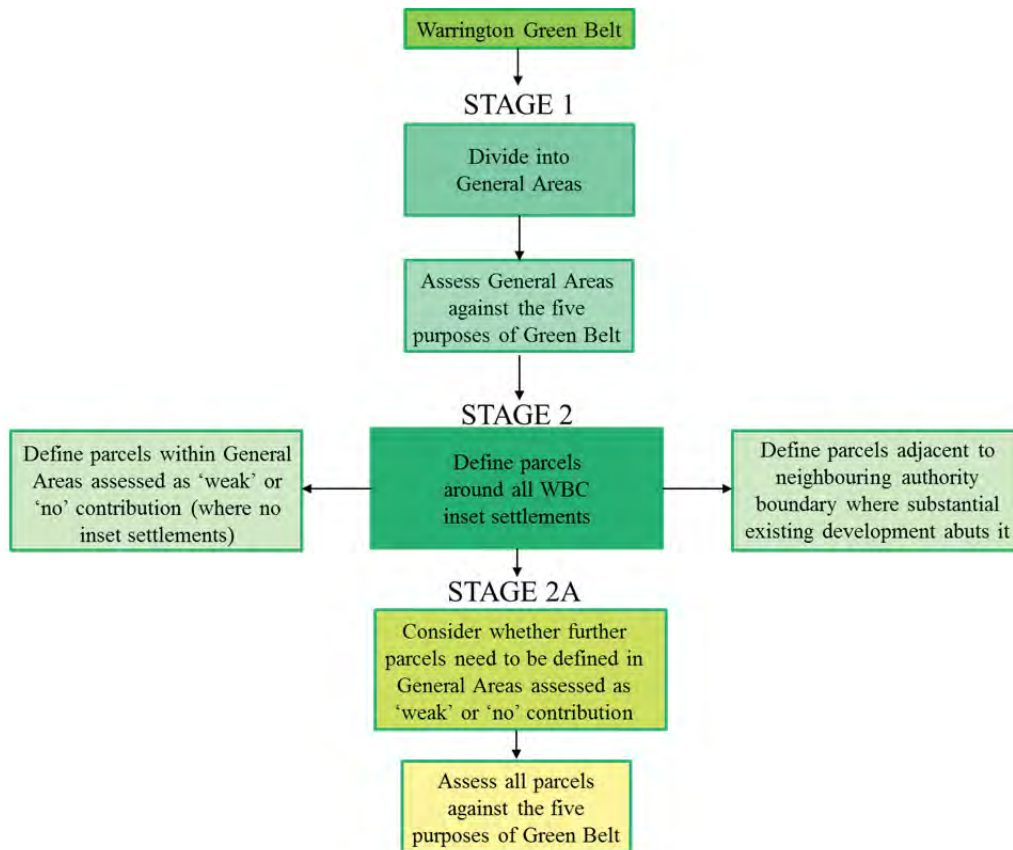


Figure 6: Overview of methodology

## 4.3 Stage 1 Methodology

### 4.3.1 General Area Overview

68. The PAS Guidance from February 2015 emphasises that Green Belt is a strategic issue. It notes that an assessment of the “...*whole of the Green Belt*” should be undertaken. The use of General Areas therefore represents a holistic approach which helps to take into account strategic thinking and acknowledges the cumulative effect of smaller parcels to Green Belt purposes. It also provides an assessment for more rural areas of the borough including villages ‘washed over’ by the Green Belt.

### 4.3.2 General Area Boundary Definition

69. To ensure coverage of the whole of the Warrington Green Belt, the Green Belt was divided into General Areas using the most recognisable boundaries with the most permanence in order to encompass large areas. In accordance with paragraph 85 of the NPPF, local planning authorities should define boundaries clearly, “...*using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.*” An element of professional judgement was used in deciding how boundaries should be defined linked to the purpose of identifying General Areas. The good practice review set out in Section 3 demonstrates that a number of authorities have identified motorways, A roads, waterways, and operational or

safeguarded railway lines as representing strong ‘permanent’ boundaries. Whilst other natural and man-made elements can also create strong boundaries, it was decided that these elements represented the most recognisable and permanent physical features with which to divide the whole of the Green Belt.

70. The General Areas were therefore defined by motorway boundaries (consisting of the M6, M62 and M56), A roads, main waterways (the River Mersey, St Helens Canal and the Manchester Ship Canal) and railway lines (the West Coast Main Line and Liverpool to Manchester Line) via a desk top exercise. The settlement inset boundary was used to define the inner extent of the Green Belt and the WBC administrative boundary was used to define the outer extent. The inner extent of the Green Belt reflects the boundary defined in the adopted Local Plan Core Strategy (July 2014) and the GIS layer for this was provided by WBC.
71. The map at Appendix A (Map GA1) demonstrates the division of the Warrington Green Belt using these boundaries. This resulted in a number of disproportionately small General Areas which were more akin to parcels and therefore did not accord with the purpose of undertaking a General Area assessment. As a result of this, professional judgement was applied and a number of these ‘small’ General Areas (150ha or less) were merged together. The size threshold of 150ha was considered to maintain the strategic emphasis on this part of the review. In merging these General Areas, the following rules were applied:
- The ‘small’ General Area should not be merged across motorway boundaries given the permanence of such boundaries.
  - The ‘small’ General Area should not be merged across the Manchester Ship Canal given its permanence and role separating the north and south of the borough.
  - Subject to the above, the ‘small’ General Area should be merged with the smallest adjacent General Area.
  - The ‘small’ General Area should only be merged once unless the merged General Area is still below 150ha, in which case it can be merged again. The exception to this is where the General Area makes an important contribution to one of the purposes in its own right and professional judgement should be applied.
72. The table at Appendix A identifies which General Areas on Map GA1 were merged and the justification for this. The resultant General Area division is shown on Map GA2 below. These were reviewed with WBC and were agreed to represent a sensible division of the Warrington Green Belt.

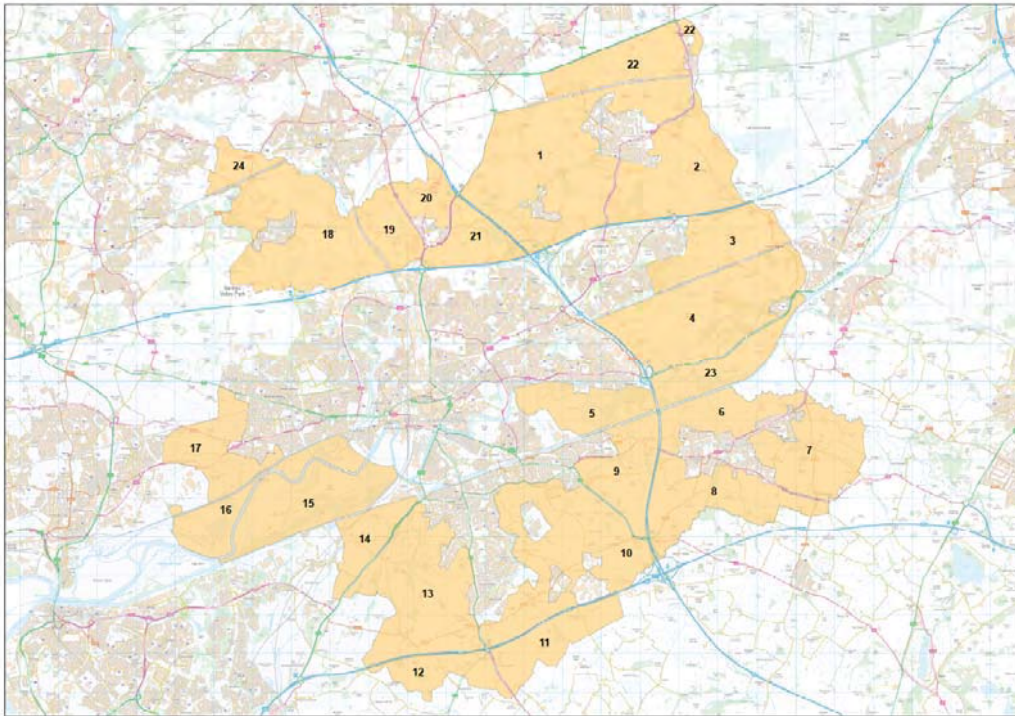


Figure 7: General Area Division (Ref: Map GA2)

### 4.3.3 General Area Assessment

73. A desk based assessment of these General Areas was then undertaken to determine the contribution each area makes to the five purposes of Green Belt, as set out in the NPPF. This utilised the GIS datasets provided by WBC and the Green Belt Purpose Assessment Framework agreed with WBC. The Green Belt Purpose Assessment Framework sets out the methodology for applying the five purposes of Green Belt. This was applied in assessing the Stage 1 General Areas and the Stage 2 Parcels to ensure a consistent approach was taken. The Assessment Framework is set out in Section 4.4.3 below.

## 4.4 Stage 2 Methodology

### 4.4.1 Parcel Boundary Definition

74. Following the Stage 1 Assessment, all areas of the Green Belt adjacent to WBC's inset settlements (as set out in Policy CC 1 of the adopted Local Plan Core Strategy)<sup>1</sup> were divided into smaller Green Belt parcels. The settlement inset boundary was used to define the inner extent of the Green Belt and parcels were always drawn from the settlement boundary outwards. Only one width of parcels was defined outwards. Stage 2A provided the opportunity for a further width of parcels to be defined in certain circumstances (see below).

<sup>1</sup> Appleton Thorn, Grappenhall Heys, Burtonwood, Hollins Green, Croft, Lymm, Culcheth, Oughtrington, Glazebury, Winwick

75. In relation to those areas of the Green Belt which were not adjacent to the settlement boundary (either WBC's settlements or settlements within neighbouring authorities), the results from the General Area assessment were referred to in order to determine whether it was necessary to define parcels in these areas. If the General Area assessment had concluded that these General Areas made a 'weak contribution' or 'no contribution' to Green Belt purposes, the General Area was divided into parcels. The reason for this was to provide a catch all approach to ensure all areas of the Green Belt were fully assessed particularly where there were lower performing against Green Belt purposes.
76. A desk based analysis was applied in the first instance, with site visits used as a sense check and in order to confirm these boundaries. Only existing boundaries were used. Boundaries relating to proposed development or infrastructure were not included.
77. Table 3 shows how parcel boundaries were defined and reflects Paragraph 85 NPPF requiring the use of "...physical features which are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent." Durable features were used in the first instance with parcels drawn from the settlement outwards to the nearest durable feature. Where this resulted in large expanses of countryside which was more akin to General Areas, features lacking durability were utilised in order to enable division of the Green Belt into manageable parcels. This required an element of professional judgement.

Table 3: Boundary Definition

<p><b>Durable Features</b></p> <p><b>(Readily recognisable and likely to be permanent)</b></p>	<p>Infrastructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motorway</li> <li>• Roads (A roads, B roads and unclassified 'made' roads)</li> <li>• Railway line (in use or safeguarded)</li> <li>• Existing development with clear established boundaries (e.g. a hard or contiguous building line)</li> </ul> <p>Natural:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water bodies and water courses (reservoirs, lakes, meres, rivers, streams and canals)</li> <li>• Protected woodland (TPO) or hedges or ancient woodland</li> <li>• Prominent landform (e.g. ridgeline)</li> </ul> <p>Combination of a number of boundaries below</p>
<p><b>Features lacking durability</b></p> <p><b>(Soft boundaries which are recognisable but have lesser permanence)</b></p>	<p>Infrastructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Private/unmade roads or tracks</li> <li>• Existing development with irregular boundaries</li> <li>• Disused railway line</li> <li>• Footpath accompanied by other physical features (e.g. wall, fence, hedge)</li> </ul>

	<p>Natural:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watercourses (brook, drainage ditch, culverted watercourse) accompanied by other physical features</li> <li>• Field boundary accompanied by other natural features (e.g. tree line, hedge line)</li> </ul>
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78. In relation to parcels which extended up to the WBC administrative boundary and the administrative boundary was not marked by durable features, parcels were drawn beyond the boundary to the nearest durable feature in the neighbouring authority.
79. Where settlements of neighbouring authorities abutted the Warrington Green Belt and there was substantial existing development immediately adjacent to the Green Belt, parcels were drawn from the outer Green Belt boundary inwards to the nearest durable feature. This was undertaken in the interests of Duty to Co-operate and due to the risk of cross boundary sprawl and encroachment from the neighbouring authority into the Warrington Green Belt.
80. Prior to being finalised, the parcels and the boundaries used were reviewed with neighbouring authorities and agreed under Duty to Co-operate arrangements.

#### 4.4.2 Stage 2A Further Division of General Areas

81. The outcome from the Stage 1 General Area Assessment fed directly into this stage. Those General Areas which were assessed as making a ‘no’ or ‘weak’ contribution to Green Belt purposes were reviewed in further detail in order to consider whether a second width of parcels (beyond the initial parcel width outwards) needed to be defined and assessed.

#### 4.4.3 Parcel Assessment

##### Overview

82. In undertaking the parcel assessment it was necessary to interpret the five purposes of Green Belt as set out in paragraph 80 of the NPPF given that there is no single ‘correct’ method as to how they should be applied.
- *“to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
  - *to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another’*
  - *to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*
  - *to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
  - *to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.”*



83. For each purpose a number of criteria were developed requiring quantitative and qualitative responses and an element of professional judgement. Methods of data collection (e.g. desk based analysis or site based analysis) have been documented against each purpose. A qualitative scoring system was developed for each purpose and for the overall assessment, consisting of a scale of the parcel's contribution to the Green Belt purpose, these are shown and defined in Table 4 below:

Table 4: Qualitative scoring system to be applied against each purpose and overall

Level of Contribution to Green Belt Purposes
<b>No</b> – the parcel makes no contribution to Green Belt purpose
<b>Weak</b> – on the whole the parcel makes a limited contribution to an element of the Green Belt purpose
<b>Moderate</b> – on the whole the parcel contributes to a few of the Green Belt purpose however does not fulfil all elements
<b>Strong</b> – on the whole the parcel contributes to the purpose in a strong and undeniable way, whereby removal of the parcel from the Green Belt would detrimentally undermine this purpose

84. As each of the five purposes set out in the NPPF is considered to be equally important, no weighting or aggregation of scores across the purposes was undertaken. An element of professional judgement was utilised in applying the scoring system however the 'Key Questions to Consider' for each purpose was intended to break down the purpose in the interests of ensuring a transparent and consistent approach. This is set out in detail below including definitions applying to the purpose and to the approach. Furthermore the rationale for the score applied and the justification against the criteria were recorded as part of the assessment.
85. Prior to undertaking any parcel assessments, all assessors were fully briefed on the methodology in order to ensure comprehensive understanding of the approach and consistency in assessments. Furthermore, prior to the assessors commencing the site visits, an initial batch of site visits and assessments were undertaken by an Arup assessor accompanied by WBC officers to provide a quality control check and to ensure there was consistent thinking and agreement in the application of the methodology.

## Purpose 1: To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas

### Definitions for Purpose 1

**Sprawl** – “*spreading out of building form over a large area in an untidy or irregular way*” (Oxford English Dictionary)

**Large built-up areas** – this has been defined as the Warrington urban area and does not include any

of WBC's inset settlement or settlements within other neighbouring authorities

### Definitions for this Approach

Well connected (or highly contained) – well connected to the built up area, i.e. to be surrounded by high levels of built development.

Open land – land which is lacking of development.

Round-off – where the existing urban area is an irregular shape, will the parcel fill in a gap and / or complete the shape

Ribbon development – a line of buildings extending along a road, footpath or private land generally without accompanying development of the land to the rear. A “ribbon” does not necessarily have to be served by individual accesses nor have a continuous or uniform building line. Buildings sited back, staggered or at angles and with gaps between them can still represent ribbon development, if they have a common frontage or they are visually linked.

### Approach to the Assessment

86. A desk and field based assessment was applied to this purpose.
87. As this purpose only applies to the Warrington urban area, if the parcel was not adjacent to the Warrington urban area it was assessed as ‘no contribution’.

Key Questions to Consider	Recommended Approach
1. Is the parcel adjacent to the large built up area (defined as the Warrington urban area)?	If yes, proceed to Stage 2...  If no, conclude parcel makes no contribution to purpose 1
2. Existing boundary with built up area: Is there an existing durable boundary between the built up area and the Green Belt parcel which could prevent sprawl?	a. Describe existing boundary between built up area and parcel.  b. If a durable boundary between the parcel and built up area exists, conclude parcels makes a weaker contribution to checking unrestricted sprawl.
3. Connection to built up area:  a. Is the parcel well connected to the built up area along a number of boundaries?  b. Would development of the parcel help ‘round off’ the built up area, taking into account the historic context of the Green Belt?	a. Describe degree of connection to the built up area. If parcel is well connected (highly contained), conclude parcel makes a stronger contribution to checking unrestricted sprawl (unless part (b) applies).  b. Identify potential for ‘rounding off’. If development of the parcel would ‘round off’ the built up area, conclude parcel makes a weaker contribution to checking unrestricted sprawl.

Key Questions to Consider	Recommended Approach
4. Ribbon development: What role does the parcel play in preventing ribbon development? (may not be relevant in all circumstances)	Describe whether there is existing ribbon development or potential for ribbon development.  If existing ribbon development within parcel and potential for further ribbon development, conclude parcel makes a stronger contribution to checking unrestricted sprawl.
Overall assessment: What level of contribution does the parcel make to purpose 1?	Bring together all conclusions from above to determine overall assessment (taking balanced view)  Apply scoring system:  No / Weak / Moderate / Strong

### Justification for the Approach

88. Given that the terminology of the purpose specifically refers to the ‘large built-up area’ it was important to define this. It is notable that none of the other purposes include such terminology and instead make reference to ‘towns’ (see purpose 2 and 4). It was considered that in the case of Warrington, purpose 1 should only apply to the Warrington urban area. Warrington’s inset settlements and settlements within other neighbouring authorities have not been included for consideration under this purpose.
89. As the good practice review at Appendix B demonstrates, Bath and North East Somerset also adopted this approach only regarding Bristol and Bath as ‘large built-up areas’. As Rotherham acknowledge in the best practice review, there is an overlap between purposes 1 and 3, thus this approach does not risk any factors being overlooked for WBC’s other settlements and instead it better reflects the terminology and intention of the purpose. Furthermore the approach links back to the original purpose of the Warrington Green Belt in restricting the outward expansion of Warrington, as discussed in Section 2 of this report.
90. The good practice review at Appendix B demonstrates that the focus of this purpose has been on the level of connection of the parcel with the urban area and also the boundary treatment of the parcel in order to understand its vulnerability to the risk of development.
91. The approach takes the position that parcels which are well connected to the built up area along a number of boundaries make a higher contribution to preventing sprawl given there is more of a risk that development may sprawl out from the area into the parcel. The exception to this is where development of the parcel could be considered to ‘round off’ the built up area.
92. In considering the boundary treatment of the parcel, only the boundary with the built up area is considered within this purpose given that this will indicate the parcel’s vulnerability to sprawl occurring within it. The boundaries adjacent to the open countryside are considered as part of Purpose 3.

93. The approach considers the potential for “rounding off” the built up area taking into account the historical context of the Warrington Green Belt in terms of the New Town Outline Plan.
94. Given that the PAS Green Belt Guidance from February 2015 identifies the restriction of ribbon development as a benefit of the Green Belt, the approach incorporates the identification of existing ribbon development within it. The position is taken that the presence of existing ribbon development means that there has already been sprawl into the Green Belt and dependent on the level and potential for further ribbon development, the parcel is likely to make a strong contribution to preventing further ribbon development and thus to this purpose.

## Purpose 2: Prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

### Definitions for Purpose 2

Neighbouring towns – this refers to the Warrington urban area and the settlements of Culcheth and Lymm. This also includes settlements in adjacent neighbouring authorities consisting of: St Helens, Newton-le-Willows, Runcorn, Golborne, Cadishead, Partington, and Widnes.

Merging – combining to form a single entity (Oxford English Dictionary)

### Definitions for the Approach

Openness – the visible openness of the Green Belt in terms of the absence of built development, a topography which supports long line views and low levels of substantial vegetation. Consider both actual distance (the distance between settlement and countryside) and perceived distance (e.g. a wooded area located between a new development and the settlement would not impact the perception of openness from the settlement). Openness should be assessed from the edge of the settlement / inset boundary outwards.

Essential gap – a land gap between two or more towns where development would significantly reduce the perceived or actual distance between towns resulting in the merging of towns.

Largely essential gap – a land gap between two or more towns where limited development may be possible without merging of towns.

Less essential gap – a land gap between towns where development may be possible without any risk of merging of towns.

## Approach to the Assessment

95. A desk and field based assessment was applied to this purpose.

Key Questions to Consider	Recommended Approach
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<p>a. Would a reduction in the gap between towns compromise the openness of the Green Belt?</p>	<p>Describe existing gap between towns and compare to resultant gap if development of parcel were to take place.</p> <p>Existing gap should be described using the following terminology:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Essential gap</li> <li>b. Largely essential gap</li> <li>c. Less essential gap</li> </ul> <p>Comparison should consider if a reduction in the gap would lead to the actual or perceived merging of towns. (This is on a case by case basis and not set by distance measurements).</p>
<p>Overall assessment: What level of contribution does the parcel make to purpose 2?</p>	<p>Bring together above factors to determine overall assessment (taking balanced view)</p> <p>Apply scoring system:</p>

**Justification for the Approach**

- 96. A key consideration for this purpose was the definition of ‘neighbouring towns’. It was decided that this should include the Warrington urban area and two of the inset settlements (Lymm and Culcheth), which are defined as Neighbourhood centres in the Warrington Retail Centres Report (2012) and the Local Plan Core Strategy and which have the highest levels of population outside of the main urban area. Furthermore, it also includes any settlements in neighbouring authorities which are adjacent to the Warrington Green Belt boundary.
- 97. The NPPF sets out what a town centre should be defined as and identifies what ‘town centre uses’ are deemed to be. These definitions were used in the interpretation of ‘town’ within the Warrington context.
- 98. The good practice review at Appendix B demonstrates that different authorities take varying approaches to the definition of ‘neighbouring towns’, with some taking into account factors such as population or the presence of town councils, amongst other factors.
- 99. The Core Strategy states that there are nine settlements inset from the Green Belt boundary, however, it does not set out a settlement hierarchy to establish which of these could be classified as a town for purpose 2. The justification for selecting Lymm and Culcheth as ‘towns’ alongside the Warrington Urban Area is based on the Warrington Retail Centres Report (2012) which demonstrates that these settlements have significantly more retail provision than the other outlying inset settlements within the Borough, reflected in the designation of Neighbourhood Centres within these settlements. It is also based on the population size of these

two settlements, as reviewed from Census data, which is significantly higher than the other outlying settlements. The other smaller inset settlements have therefore not been deemed to be ‘towns’ for this purpose.

100. This is consistent with the PAS Green Belt guidance from February 2015 which highlights that purpose 2 does not strictly refer to the separation of small settlements near to towns. This also follows the approach taken by Rotherham MBC, who in their methodology concluded that the assessment of purpose 2 relates more to land at the higher or broader level between towns, rather than to more localised wedges or tongues of Green Belt that lie within the ‘towns’. This is because the more localised areas are covered under the assessment of purpose 1 and purpose 3. It also highlights the interpretative nature of assessing ‘towns’ in relation to the local context and local need.
101. The PAS Green Belt guidance from February 2015 states that a ‘scale rule’ approach for purpose 2 is not appropriate given that identity is not always determined by distance. The guidance does however state that a ‘Landscape Character Assessment’ is a useful analytical tool for use in undertaking this type of assessment. Whilst the approach has not gone so far as to include landscape character considerations, the consideration of openness includes the perceived openness taking into account land form, topography and vegetation.
102. The good practice review demonstrates that the approaches adopted by the authorities take into account the sensitivity and integrity of the gap if development of the parcel were to take place. Rotherham and Rushcliffe both categorise the gap in terms of size (e.g. essential, narrow, and wide) whilst Cheshire West and Chester uses a distance categorisation. In light of the PAS February 2015 guidance, the size categorisation is preferred and therefore has been adopted in this approach.

### **Purpose 3: To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment**

#### **Definitions for Purpose 3**

Safeguarding - Protect from harm or damage with an appropriate measure (Oxford English Dictionary).

Encroachment - a gradual advance beyond usual or acceptable limits (Oxford English Dictionary).

#### **Definitions for the Approach**

Durable boundaries – refer to boundary definition in Table 3 above.

Built form – any form of built development excluding buildings for agriculture and forestry (e.g. residential properties, warehouses, schools, sports facilities).

Settlement - this refers to the Warrington urban area and settlements which are inset from the Green Belt as set out in Policy CC 1 of the adopted Local Plan Core Strategy<sup>2</sup>. This also includes

<sup>2</sup> Appleton Thorn, Burtonwood, Croft, Culcheth, Glazebury, Grappenhall Heys, Hollins Green, Lymm, Oughtrington, Winwick.

settlements in adjacent neighbouring authorities consisting of: St Helens, Newton-le-Willows, Runcorn, Cadishead, and Widnes.

Openness – the visible openness of the Green Belt in terms of the absence of built development, a topography which supports long line views and low levels of substantial vegetation. Consider both actual distance (the distance between settlement and countryside) and perceived distance (e.g. a wooded area located between a new development and the settlement would not impact upon the perception of openness from the settlement). Openness should be assessed from the edge of the settlement/inset boundary outwards, with reference to the matrix set out in Table 5 below.

Strong degree of openness – contributes to openness in a strong and undeniable way, where removal of the parcel from the Green Belt would detrimentally undermine the overall openness of the Green Belt.

Moderate degree of openness – contributes to openness in a moderate way, whereby removal of part of the parcel would not have a major impact upon the overall openness of the Green Belt.

Weak degree of openness – makes a weak contribution to openness, whereby the removal of the parcel would not impact upon the overall openness of the Green Belt.

No degree of openness – makes no contribution to the openness of the Green Belt.

Beneficial uses – as set out in paragraph 81 of the NPPF, these include: providing access; providing opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; retaining and enhancing landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; and improving damaged and derelict land.

## Approach to the Assessment

103. A desk and field based assessment was applied to this purpose.

Key Questions to Consider	Recommended Approach
<p>a. Future encroachment: Are there existing durable boundaries which would contain any future development and prevent encroachment in the long term?</p>	<p>Identify any durable boundaries <i>between the parcel and settlement</i> which would prevent future encroachment <i>into</i> the parcel. If there are durable boundaries between the parcel and settlement, conclude that parcel makes a weaker contribution to safeguarding from encroachment given that development would be contained by the durable boundary and thus the parcel itself plays a lesser role.</p> <p>Identify any durable boundaries <i>between the parcel and countryside</i> which would <i>contain encroachment</i> in the long term if the parcel were developed. If there are durable boundaries between the parcel and countryside, conclude that parcel makes a weaker contribution to safeguarding from encroachment.</p>
<p>b. Existing encroachment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the existing land use/uses?</li> <li>• Is there any existing built form within or adjacent to the parcel?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe existing land use/uses (e.g. open countryside, agricultural land, residential, mix of uses).</li> <li>• Describe any existing built form. If considerable amount of built form within the parcel, conclude that parcel makes a weaker contribution to safeguarding from</li> </ul>

	encroachment.
<p>c. Connection to the countryside:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the parcel well connected to the countryside?</li> <li></li> <li>Does the parcel protect the openness of the countryside?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Describe degree of connection to the countryside (e.g. along a number of boundaries). If parcel is well connected to the countryside, conclude parcel makes a stronger contribution to safeguarding from encroachment.</li> <li>Describe degree of openness taking into account built form, vegetation and topography using matrix below in Table 5.</li> </ul>
<p>d. Does the parcel serve a beneficial use of the Green Belt (NPPF para 81) which should be safeguarded?</p>	<p>Identify any beneficial Green Belt uses served by parcel, as per NPPF para 81, on a high level basis. If parcel serves 2 or more beneficial uses, conclude parcel makes a stronger contribution to safeguarding from encroachment. Note: if parcel serves 1 or no beneficial uses this does not weaken its contribution to purpose 3</p>
<p>Overall assessment: What level of contribution does the parcel make to purpose 3?</p>	<p>Bring together all conclusions from above to determine overall assessment (taking balanced view)</p> <p>Apply scoring system:</p> <p>No / Weak / Moderate / Strong</p>

Table 5: Degree of Openness Matrix

Built Form	Long-line views	Vegetation	Degree of Openness
Less than 10%	Open long line views	Low vegetation	Strong degree of openness
		Dense vegetation	Strong-moderate degree of openness
	No long line views	Low vegetation	Strong-moderate degree of openness
		Dense vegetation	Moderate degree of openness
Less than 20%	Open long line views	Low vegetation	Strong-Moderate degree of openness
		Dense vegetation	Moderate-Weak degree of openness
	No long line views	Low vegetation	Moderate degree of openness
		Dense vegetation	Weak degree of openness
Between 20 and 30%	Open long line views	Low vegetation	Moderate-Weak degree of openness
		Dense vegetation	Weak degree of openness
	No long line	Low vegetation	Weak degree of openness



	views	Dense vegetation	No degree of openness
More than 30%	Open long line views	Low vegetation	Weak degree of openness
		Dense vegetation	No degree of openness
	No long line views	Low vegetation	No degree of openness
		Dense vegetation	No degree of openness

### Justification for the Approach

104. The good practice review at Appendix B demonstrates that the focus of this purpose has been on the relationship and connection of the parcel with the open countryside. As a result this purpose applies to the Warrington urban area, all inset settlements, and settlements within neighbouring authorities given that these are all connected to the open countryside.
105. Given this focus on the open countryside, the ‘degree of openness’ of the parcel is a key factor to consider within the approach, albeit it is one of a number of factors. The matrix above therefore enables an assessment of this to be carried out. The matrix is intended to guide this assessment and it may not strictly apply to all parcels, thus a level of professional judgement must be applied.
106. The approach takes the position that parcels which are well connected to the open countryside along a number of boundaries make a higher contribution to safeguarding the countryside from encroachment given the relationship to the countryside. However the presence of existing built form within the parcel can alter this level of contribution. The definition of built form set out above does not include buildings for agriculture and forestry given that these are considered to be appropriate Green Belt uses which do not require their impact upon openness to be considered, according to paragraph 89 of the NPPF.
107. With regards to the beneficial Green Belt uses set out in paragraph 81 of the NPPF, the position is taken that their presence adds to the contribution of the parcel to this purpose however the lack of such uses does not weaken its contribution to this purpose.
108. Boundary treatment is considered within the approach given that this indicates the parcel’s vulnerability to encroachment within it and also for development encroaching beyond the parcel boundary into the open countryside should the parcel be developed.

## Purpose 4: To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

### Definitions for Purpose 4

Historic Town– for the purposes of this assessment these have been identified with reference to the Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation (November 2007) and the Cheshire Historic Towns Survey (2003) and consist of Lymm and Warrington. In relation to the neighbouring authorities the Cheshire Historic Towns Survey (2003), the St Helens Historic Settlement Study (December

2011) and the Trafford Urban Historic Landscape Characterisation Interim Report (July 2008) have been reviewed. The following historic towns within the neighbouring authorities have been identified: Widnes and Runcorn (including Halton Village).

**Definitions for the Approach**

Relevant Conservation Areas – This includes the Conservation Areas within Warrington Town Centre and also Lymm Conservation Area. These Conservation Areas reflect the important characteristics of the historic towns.

Important viewpoints of the Parish Church – WBC have mapped the location of these viewpoints and this is provided on the map at Appendix C.

Designated heritage assets – a World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated under the relevant legislation (National Planning Policy Framework, p51).

Buffer area – for the purposes of this assessment this has been drawn from the historic towns’ relevant Conservation Area boundaries outwards by 250m. This has been mapped for the relevant Conservation Areas in WBC and this is included at Appendix C. The buffer for the Conservation Areas in neighbouring authorities’ historic towns have not been formally mapped and the buffer was calculated on a parcel basis where required.

Built development – buildings of any type or use.

**Approach to the Assessment**

109. A desk based assessment only was applied to this purpose.

Key Questions to Consider	Recommended Approach
<p><b>Stage 1</b></p> <p>Is the parcel adjacent to a ‘historic town’ and/or crosses an important viewpoint of the spire of the Parish Church of St Elphins?</p>	<p>Identify whether the parcel is located adjacent to a historic town and/or whether the parcel crosses an important viewpoint of the spire of the Parish Church of St Elphins? (See Appendix C for map of viewpoints).</p> <p>If the parcel is adjacent to a historic town, continue to Stage 2.</p> <p>If the parcel is not adjacent to a historic town but it crosses the viewpoint of the Parish Church, conclude that the parcel makes a weak contribution to purpose 4 overall.</p> <p>If the parcel is not adjacent to a historic town and does not cross an important viewpoint, conclude the parcel makes no contribution to this purpose.</p>
<p><b>If not adjacent to historic town, conclude ‘no contribution’ unless it crosses a viewpoint of the Parish Church in which case conclude ‘weak contribution’</b></p> <p><b>If yes, undertake Stage 2...</b></p>	

<p><b>Stage 2</b></p> <p>Assess the proximity of the town's relevant Conservation Areas to the Green Belt</p>	<p>Identify whether there are any relevant Conservation Areas within 250m of the Green Belt parcel by reference to the 250m buffer map at Appendix C. The relevant Conservation Areas include those within Warrington Town Centre and also Lymm Conservation Area.</p> <p>If there are no Conservation Areas within 250m of the Green Belt, conclude that the parcel makes no contribution to the purpose, unless it crosses the viewpoint of the Parish Church in which case conclude that the parcel makes a weak contribution to purpose 4 overall.</p>
<p><b>If Conservation Area within 250m buffer, undertake Stage 3... If outside 250m buffer, conclude 'no contribution', unless it crosses an important viewpoint in which case conclude 'weak contribution'.</b></p>	
<p><b>Stage 3</b></p> <p>Is there modern built development which reduces the role of the Green Belt in preserving the setting and special character?</p>	<p>Describe the built development separation between the Green Belt and the Conservation Area. For example: two rows of residential streets separate the Conservation Area from the Green Belt boundary.</p> <p>If the Conservation Area is located adjacent to or within the Green Belt boundary, conclude that parcel makes a strong contribution to purpose 4.</p>
<p><b>Stage 3A</b></p> <p>Are there any other designated heritage assets within the 250m buffer which add to the setting and special character and / or does the parcel crosses an important viewpoint of the spire of the Parish Church of St Elphins?</p>	<p>Identify whether there are any other designated heritage assets within the 250m buffer and their proximity to the Green Belt.</p> <p>If there are listed buildings located adjacent to the Green Belt boundary, conclude that parcel makes a stronger contribution to purpose 4.</p> <p>If the parcel cross an important viewpoint, conclude that parcels makes a stronger contribution to purpose 4.</p>
<p>Overall assessment: What level of contribution does the parcel make to purpose 4?</p>	<p>Stage 3 will determine the level of contribution: No / Weak / Moderate / Strong</p>

### Justification for the Approach

110. The approach to assessing this purpose differs between LPAs. A number of LPAs have chosen to follow the PAS Green Belt guidance from February 2015 which states that the assessment of this purpose relates to very few settlements in reality, due largely to the pattern of modern development that often envelopes historic towns. In practice, this has resulted in LPAs removing this purpose from the assessment.
111. Unlike cities such as Chester and York, Warrington is not commonly regarded as a 'historic town' however given that the interim conclusions drawn by the Inspector regarding the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (December 2014) stated

that there were ‘several shortcomings within the evidence itself’, as the Green Belt Assessment 2013 ‘does not consider all the purpose of the Green Belt, omitting the contribution to urban regeneration and preserving the setting and special character of historic towns’, this differs from the advice offered by PAS.

112. The methodologies in the good practice review in Appendix B which did assess purpose 4 seek to assess the role which the Green Belt plays in preserving the historic core of settlements and the setting of key historic features (such as Conservation Areas, Listed Assets and Key Views).
113. The proposed approach for assessing this purpose is therefore based on a review of background documents to define ‘historic towns’ within the borough and an assessment of the contribution the Green Belt makes to these ‘historic towns’ with reference to the proximity and separation from the Green Belt of the relevant Conservation Areas. Assessment of this purpose therefore adopts a three step process which represents a high level approach to assess purpose 4, it does not provide an in-depth site analysis of the historic environment which would form part of any site appraisal.

#### *Stage 1*

114. In defining ‘historic town’, sound evidence from established historic sources relied on by WBC were used consisting of the Cheshire Historic Towns Survey (2003) and the Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation (November 2007) which identified Warrington and Lymm as historic towns. The Historic Towns Survey analyses the historic development and archaeological potential of Warrington and complements the Historic Landscape Characterisation project. The Historic Towns Survey for Warrington highlights that Warrington has been of importance since prehistoric times due to its location at the lowest fordable point of the River Mersey. Thelwall is included as a historic town within the Historic Towns Survey although it is acknowledged that strictly speaking Thelwall does not qualify as a town. For this reason, it has not been included as a historic town in its own right in the interpretation of purpose 4.
115. The Warrington Archaeological Assessment which accompanies the Cheshire Historic Towns Survey, discusses the importance of St Elphin and the church which lies within the centre of the town, north of the River Mersey. Warrington’s position at the centre of a major estate, at a fording of the River Mersey and on a major north-south route, would have made it an attractive trading centre and stopover point. The assessment also suggests that there was a religious centre located here before the church was constructed, based upon a sacred well. St Elphin’s well is known to have been located close to the church. The report outlines that originally the urban centre was focused around St. Elphin’s church and the castle, perhaps along Church Street. Many of these important historical features are reflected in the designation of the Conservation Areas within the town centre.
116. The accompanying Lymm Archaeological Assessment details that Lymm is recorded in 1086 as having been divided into two estates of equal value, including a church which was shared between the two. The medieval town developed in two distinct areas: in the vicinity of St Michael’s Church and to the north in the area of

the crossing of the Slitten Brook. During the post medieval period the town experienced industrial development and two important monuments from this period remain: the Bridgewater Canal passes through the village and Lymm slitting mill lies immediately to the north. During the late post medieval period, the town developed an important function as a tourist attraction and this persists today. These historical characteristics are reflected in the designation of the Lymm Conservation Area.

117. For these reasons it is therefore considered appropriate to include the Warrington Town Centre Conservation Areas (to capture the historic importance of the central area of the town) and Lymm Conservation Area in the assessment of purpose 4. The other conservation areas within the borough are considered to be of localised heritage value and therefore have not been included in the assessment of purpose 4.
118. It is noted that whilst the Warrington Archaeological Assessment also places importance on the Wilderspool area of Warrington due to Roman history, it is considered that this is due to its archaeological importance, rather than reflecting the special character of Warrington as a historic town today.
119. All of the relevant Conservation Area appraisals have been reviewed and the following has been raised as significant in terms of viewpoints. The Church Street Conservation Area Appraisal (March 2007) specifically notes that the: *“Parish Church with its 86 metre high spire is the dominant visual feature of the conservation area and is also visible from a distance especially from the flatter farmland to the north of the Borough. The views from the south are often more restricted, especially along the built up road frontages such as the A49 but there is a fine prospect of a spire from the high ground at Knutsford Road about 5km to the south east”*
120. Given that viewpoints extend beyond areas which may be adjacent to the historic towns, these important viewpoints have been mapped by WBC in order identify and acknowledge where a parcel might cross an important viewpoint. This map is provided at Appendix C. The parcels highlighted make a contribution to preserving the views of the the spire of the Parish Church of St Elphins. Where the parcel is not adjacent to a historic town however it crosses an important view, the assessment for purpose 4 should be ‘weak contribution’. This acknowledges the importance of the parcel along this viewpoint however takes into consideration the level of separation from the historic centre of Warrington.
121. The proceeding stages are only undertaken if the nearest settlement to the parcel is Warrington or Lymm (the historic towns). If the nearest settlement is not Warrington or Lymm the conclusion should be ‘no contribution’ to purpose 4, unless the parcel crosses an important viewpoint (as per the map on Appendix C)
122. In terms of neighbouring authorities, the following settlements are regarded as historic towns: Widnes and Runcorn (including Halton Village).
123. The Cheshire Historic Towns Survey (2003) identifies Widnes as a historic town due to the Farnworth Medieval Borough which is a medieval settlement dating back to the 14th century and also the industrial heritage of Widnes with industrial sites linked to chemical manufacturing. The Survey also identifies Halton and

Runcorn as historic towns due to their early medieval origins. Halton was a medieval settlement with the remains of Halton Castle which was first built in c1071, however Halton Village is now part of Runcorn. Runcorn was a medieval settlement with an early medieval burh (defensive stronghold) having been constructed in AD 915 and the medieval All Saints church having been built by the 12th century.

124. The St Helens Historic Settlement Study (December 2011), part of the Merseyside Historic Characterisation Project was reviewed however it does not categorically define Newton-le-Willows or St Helens as a 'historic town'.

### *Stage 2*

125. This stage is intended to capture whether the Green Belt parcel in question has a role in preserving the setting of the setting and special character of the historic town by reference to its relevant Conservation Areas.
126. A buffer was applied from the historic towns' relevant Conservation Areas outwards by 250m. The relevant Conservation Areas as discussed above include those within Warrington Town Centre and also Lymm Conservation Area. The use of this 250m buffer provides a spatial container to assess the relationship between the Conservation Area and the Green Belt. 250m is based on consideration of the overall scale of the settlements and utilises an element of professional judgement given the lack of formal guidance on this matter. Without the buffer, the relationship between the Conservation Area and Green Belt would not be brought into focus.
127. The justification for focusing on relevant Conservation Areas is to provide a high level approach to provide consistency and clarity and to ensure that the focus is on the setting and character of these 'historic' assets which are given significant protection both through legislation and policy. This sieves out parcels which are adjacent to Conservation Areas which are of local heritage value and individual listed buildings given that this would provide too much of a fine grain assessment which would be less focused on the 'historic town' as a whole.
128. Where the Green Belt parcel is not directly aligned with the 250m buffer of the Conservation Area, it is not necessary to undertake Stage 3 and the conclusion should be 'no contribution' to purpose 4, unless the parcel crosses an important viewpoint identified in Stage 1.

### *Stage 3*

129. The final stage captures whether the role of the Green Belt in preserving the setting and character of the Conservation Area has been diluted through modern in-fill development within the development limits.
130. Stage 3A also includes the consideration of other 'designated heritage assets' and important views given that these may add to the setting and special character of the Conservation Area.

## Purpose 5: To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land

### Definitions for Purpose 5

Urban land - this refers to the Warrington urban area and settlements which are inset from the Green Belt as set out in Policy CC 1 of the adopted Local Plan Core Strategy.<sup>3</sup> This also includes settlements in adjacent neighbouring authorities consisting of: St Helens, Runcorn, Newton-le-Willows, Cadishead, and Widnes. Parcels which are isolated from the urban area should be assessed as 'no contribution' for this purpose.

### Approach to the Assessment

131. A desk based assessment only was applied to this purpose.

Key Questions to Consider	Recommended Approach
What is the nearest urban land to the parcel and what is its brownfield capacity?	See Table 6 below for brownfield capacity information and contribution to purpose. It is noted that given the approach adopted, all parcels will perform equally against this purpose  Parcels which are not connected to the urban area along any boundaries should be assessed as 'no contribution'

Table 6: Brownfield capacity

Borough/Settlement	Area (Ha)	Unconstrained PDL SHLAA Sites (only PDL) (Ha)	Unconstrained brownfield land as a % of the area	Purpose 5 Assessment
Warrington Borough	6390.18	298.72	4.67%	-
St Helens Borough	13590	238	1.75%	-
Halton Borough (Excl. Mersey)	7939.91	44.32	0.56%	-
Mid Mersey Housing Market Area	27920.09	581.04	2.08%	Moderate contribution
Irlam and Cadishead 'Settlement' Urban Area <sup>4</sup>	527	17	3.23%	Moderate contribution

<sup>3</sup> Appleton Thorn, Burtonwood, Croft, Culcheth, Glazebury, Grappenhall Heys, Hollins Green, Lymm, Oughtrington, Winwick.

<sup>4</sup> This relates to the Census urban area covering the main residential area within these wards, which ends at Boysnope Golf Club. This is different from the whole urban area within the wards of Irlam and Cadishead.

Table 7: Purpose 5 Assessment Thresholds

Brownfield Capacity Thresholds	Purpose 5 Level of Contribution
0%	No contribution
>0 – 1%	Weak contribution
>1 – 5%	Moderate contribution
>5%	Strong contribution

### Justification for the Approach

132. A number of authorities have chosen to follow the PAS Green Belt guidance from February 2015 which states that the value of various land parcels is unlikely to be distinguished by the application of this purpose and have therefore screened out purpose 5 from the assessment.
133. In light of the Cheshire East Inspectors' Interim and Further Views, purpose 5 has been included within the methodology, taking a pragmatic approach. This ensures that each of the purposes is considered and given equal weighting in the overall assessment of Green Belt purposes. The Mid Mersey Strategic Housing Market Assessment (January 2016) covering the boroughs of Halton, Warrington and St Helens defines these authorities as forming a single housing market area. This single housing market area has been applied in calculating the brownfield capacity. This therefore means that all parcels adjoining the Warrington urban area, the inset settlements and the neighbouring authorities of Halton and St Helens are assessed as having an equal role in assisting in urban regeneration across the borough.
134. The proportion of unconstrained previously developed land for Warrington has been taken from the WBC SHLAA (January 2016). St Helens Council have provided information from their SHLAA (2012) (the updated SHLAA is to be completed in late 2016). Halton Borough Council's figures include all brownfield sites considered in the preparation of their Delivery and Allocations Local Plan or within their SHLAA (2012). The unconstrained previously developed land across all three boroughs has then been calculated as a percentage of the total area of all three boroughs' settlements. This provides the percentage of brownfield urban potential within the Mid Mersey Housing Market Area. This is shown in Table 6 above.
135. In relation to the settlements of Irlam and Cadishead within the neighbouring authority of Salford City Council, figures were provided by Salford Council from their Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (base date 31 March 2015). Given the level of connection of these wards to the Warrington Green Belt it would be illogical to take a comparative approach and base these figures on the Greater Manchester Housing Market Area, thus applying these wards alone



provides a more rational approach. A threshold was then applied relating to the scale of potential for urban regeneration. The threshold levels are set out in Table 7 above. These thresholds are comparative to those applied in the Cheshire East Council Green Belt Assessment Update (2015).

136. Given there is no single correct method in assessing purpose 5, this provides a high level view on the role of the Green Belt in encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land. It requires an element of professional judgement and it is important to emphasise that this is a theoretical exercise and it is acknowledged that as it is an assessment of ‘potential’ and there is no guarantee that all parcels will have a blanket role in assisting urban regeneration across the borough. The alternative approach of assessing the urban potential by individual settlement within WBC would result in a skewed assessment given the size of WBC’s inset settlements. The approach has been discussed and agreed with WBC officers.

### Overall Assessment

137. The purpose of the overall assessment is to consider the outcomes of each of the five purposes and then make a judgement on the overall contribution the parcel makes to the Green Belt.
138. The same qualitative scoring system as applied to each of the five purposes was also applied to the overall assessment, as set out below:

Table 8: Qualitative scoring system to be applied to overall assessment

Level of Contribution to Green Belt Purposes Overall
<b>No</b> – the parcel makes no contribution to Green Belt purposes
<b>Weak</b> – on the whole the parcel makes a limited contribution to Green Belt purposes
<b>Moderate</b> – on the whole the parcel contributes to a few of the Green Belt purposes however does not fulfil all purposes
<b>Strong</b> – on the whole the parcel contributes to Green Belt purpose in a strong and undeniable way, whereby removal of the parcel from the Green Belt would detrimentally undermine the overall aim of the Green Belt

139. In order to ensure a consistent and transparent approach, the following guidance was used in determining the overall assessment:
- No parcels should be assessed as ‘no contribution’ overall unless each of the five purposes is assessed as a ‘no contribution’.
  - Where there was a 4 / 1 split – the majority contribution should always be applied, unless the majority is ‘no contribution’ in which case, the overall should be ‘weak’.

Example:

Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	No	<b>Moderate</b>
----------	----------	----------	----------	----	-----------------

Exception:

No	No	No	No	Moderate	<b>Weak</b>
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140. Where there was a 3 / 2 split – the majority contribution should always be applied unless the ‘2’ contributions are ‘strong’. In this case, the overall would be ‘strong’. The exception to this would be if the majority was ‘no’, in this case the overall would be the minority or if the ‘3’ was moderate, the contribution would be weak given that this is between the two levels.

Example:

Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Weak	Weak	<b>Moderate</b>
----------	----------	----------	------	------	-----------------

Exception:

Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Strong	Strong	<b>Strong</b>
No	No	No	Weak	Weak	<b>Weak</b>
No	No	No	Moderate	Moderate	<b>Weak</b>

- Where there was a 3 / 1 / 1 split – the majority contribution should always be applied unless one of the minority contributions is ‘strong’ and one is ‘moderate’. In this case, professional judgement should be applied (see below). Where the majority is ‘no’, the middle category from the split should be the overall.

Example:

Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Strong	Weak	<b>Moderate</b>
----------	----------	----------	--------	------	-----------------

Exception:

Weak	Weak	Weak	Strong	Moderate	<b>Apply professional judgement</b>
No	No	No	Moderate	Weak	<b>Weak</b>

- Where there was a 2 / 2 / 1 split – the contribution to be applied depends on what the split and the minority leans towards. For example where the minority contribution is ‘no’, the lower contribution of the split should be applied. The exception to this is where the minority contribution is ‘strong’, in which case professional judgement should be applied.

Example:

Weak	Weak	No	Moderate	No	<b>Weak</b>
Moderate	Moderate	Weak	Weak	No	<b>Weak</b>
Moderate	Moderate	No	No	Weak	<b>Weak</b>

Exception:

Moderate	Strong	Moderate	No	No	Apply professional judgement
----------	--------	----------	----	----	------------------------------

- Where 2 purposes are the same and the remaining 3 are all different application of professional judgement would be required.

Example:

Weak	Weak	No	Moderate	Strong	Apply professional judgement
------	------	----	----------	--------	------------------------------

### Applying Professional Judgement

141. Whilst all five Green Belt purposes should be given equal weighting, the overall assessment is not intended to be a numbers balancing exercise and a certain level of professional judgement must be applied to all of the above rules and particularly where one of the purposes is assessed as ‘strong’. In order to do this, it is necessary to refer back to the overall aim and purpose of Green Belt as set out in paragraph 79 of the NPPF:

*“The fundamental aim of the Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open, the essential characteristics of Green Belt are their openness and permanence.”*

142. Paragraph 79 refers to the prevention of ‘urban sprawl’ and keeping land permanently open. These aims are fundamentally subsumed within Purposes 1, 2 and 3 and thus where the development of a parcel would particularly threaten these purposes additional weight should be applied to its contribution to Green Belt purposes. This is matter for the professional judgement of the assessor however the justification for the assessment should provide a transparent explanation behind their reasoning.

## 4.5 Duty to Cooperate

143. The Duty to Cooperate was a principle originally established within the Localism Act 2011 and further detailed within the NPPF and NPPG. Paragraph 178 of the NPPF requires joint working to be diligently undertaken by LPAs on planning issues that cross administrative boundaries in the interests of mutual benefit.
144. Following sign off of the methodology by WBC, the methodology was shared with AGMA and the following neighbouring authorities:

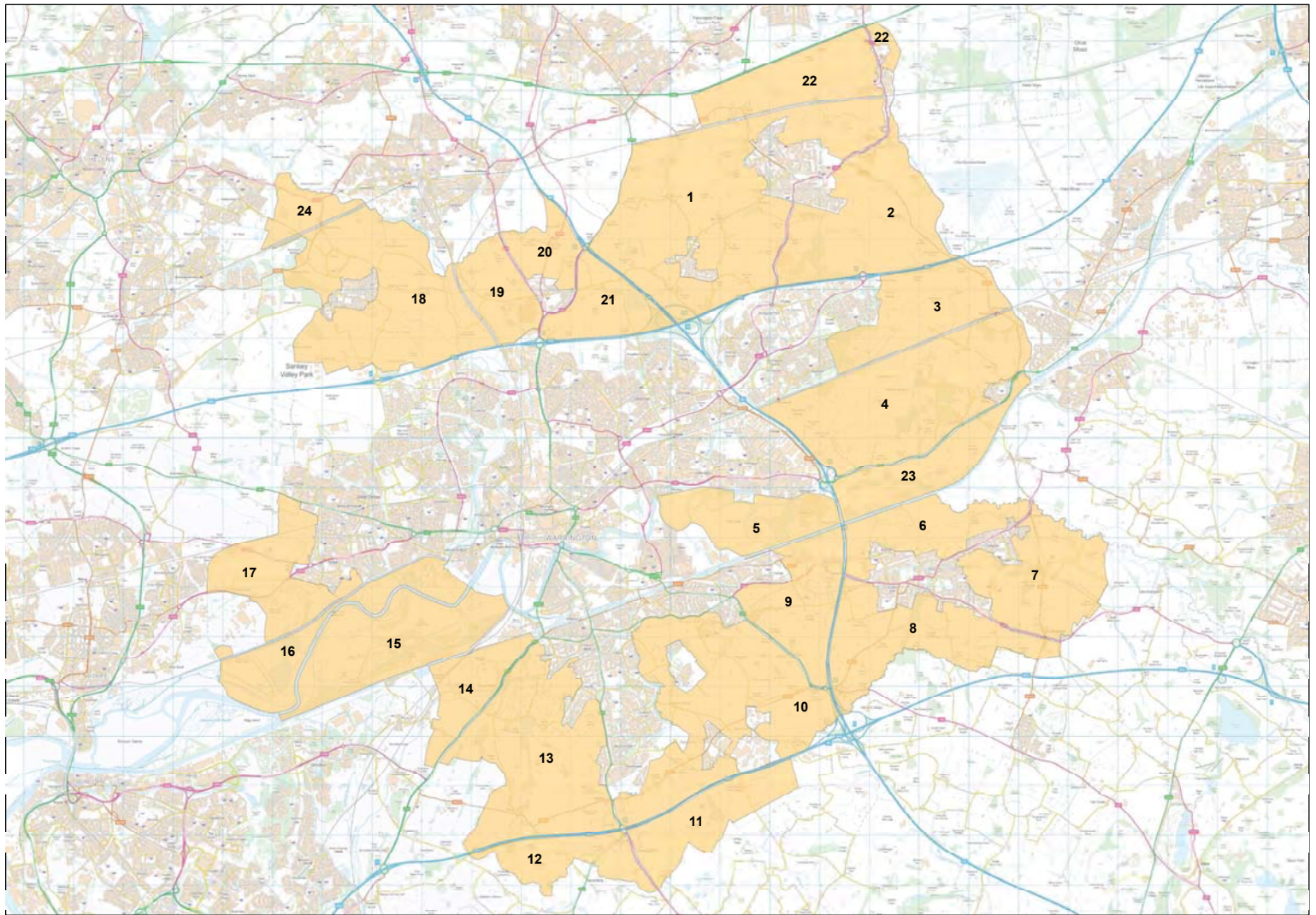
- Trafford Council
- Wigan Council
- Cheshire East Council
- Halton Council
- Salford Council

- Cheshire West and Chester Council
- St Helens Council

145. Comments were received by a number of authorities and a number of minor amendments were made to the methodology in accordance with these comments.

## Appendix D

### General Area Map



## Appendix E

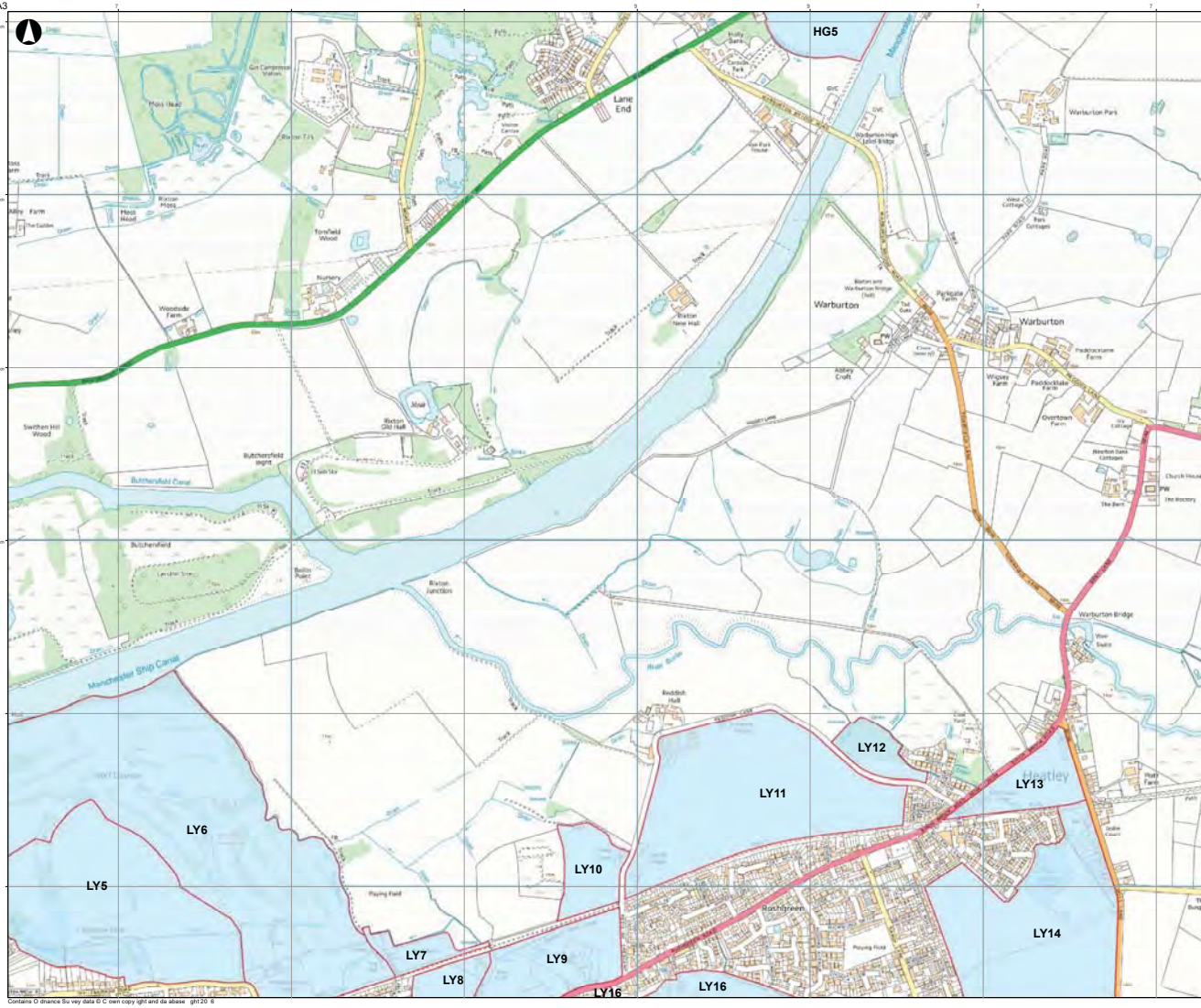
### General Area Assessment Table

			form and low levels of vegetation. Overall the GA makes a strong contribution to safeguarding from encroachment.				
7	No contribution The GA is not adjacent to the Warrington urban area and therefore does not contribute to this purpose	No contribution The GA does not play a role in preventing towns from merging.	Strong contribution The GA is well connected to the open countryside given it is only connected to the inset settlement of Lymm along the western boundary. The boundary between the GA and the inset settlement consists of the limits of development which is not durable and may not be able to prevent encroachment. The boundary between the GA and the open countryside consists of the River Bollin, the A56, Spring Lane and field boundaries. Not all of these features are durable and may not be able to prevent encroachment in the long term. The existing land use predominantly consists of open countryside although includes the washed over village of Broomedge and Heatley as well as Lymm High School and Lymm Marina. The GA supports a moderate to strong degree of openness given that it has less than 20% built form and low levels of vegetation. Overall the GA makes a strong contribution to safeguarding from encroachment.	No contribution Lymm is a historic town however the GA is over 250m from Lymm Conservation Area. The GA does not cross an important viewpoint of the Parish Church.	Moderate contribution The Mid Mersey Housing Market Area has 2.08% brownfield urban capacity for potential development, therefore the parcel makes a moderate contribution to this purpose.	The GA makes a strong contribution to one purpose, a moderate contribution to one and no contribution to three. Professional judgement has been applied and the GA has been judged to make a moderate contribution overall to the Green Belt. While the boundaries between the GA, Lymm and the open countryside are weak and would not prevent the town from encroaching into the countryside, the GA contains a considerable amount of development including two washed over villages. This compromises its openness and means that the GA does not contribute to the Green Belt in a strong and undeniable way as would be required to make a strong contribution overall. The GA also does not prevent towns from merging, does not check unrestricted sprawl as it is not adjacent to the urban area and does not preserve historic towns as it is not close to the Lymm Conservation Area.	Moderate contribution
8	No contribution The GA is not adjacent to the Warrington urban area and therefore does not contribute to this purpose	Moderate contribution The GA forms a largely essential gap between the Warrington urban area and Lymm whereby development would significantly reduce the actual distance between the towns without resulting in them merging. The M6 ensures that the separation is retained. Overall, the GA makes a moderate contribution to preventing towns from merging.	Strong contribution The GA is well connected to the open countryside given it is only connected to the inset settlement of Lymm along part of the northern boundary. The boundary between the GA and inset settlement consists of the limits of development which is not durable and may not be able to prevent encroachment. The boundary between the GA and open countryside consists of the M6, the A56, and the heavily tree lined Mag Brook and Bradley Brook which represent durable boundaries. The remainder of the southern boundary consists of field boundaries which are not durable and may not be able to prevent encroachment beyond the GA in the long term if the GA were developed. The existing land use predominantly consists of open countryside although includes part of the washed over village of Broomedge as well as Lymm Services and ribbon development along Massey Brook	Strong contribution Lymm is a historic town. The GA does not cross an important viewpoint of the Parish Church. The southern section of Lymm Conservation Area is located within the Green Belt in the north of the GA. The GA therefore makes a strong contribution to preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.	Moderate contribution The Mid Mersey Housing Market Area has 2.08% brownfield urban capacity for potential development, therefore the parcel makes a moderate contribution to this purpose.	The GA makes a strong contribution to two purposes, a moderate contribution to two, and no contribution to one. The GA has therefore been judged to make a strong overall contribution to the Green Belt. While the boundaries between the GA, Lymm and the open countryside are largely weak and would not prevent the town from encroaching into the countryside, the M6 forms a strong boundary which prevents further encroachment to the west of the GA and prevents Lymm from merging with the Warrington urban area. The GA also contains a considerable amount of development which compromises its openness. The GA also makes a strong contribution to preserving the Lymm Conservation Area, although this is not significant enough to mean that the GA makes a strong overall contribution.	Strong contribution



## **Appendix F**

### Parcel Maps



**Key**  
 Green Belt Assessment Parcel

PO	2016 07 28	APS	APS	APS
Issue	Date	By	Checked	Approved

0 50 100 400  
Metres

**ARUP**

6th Floor, 3 Piccadilly Place  
 Manchester M1 3BN  
 Tel: (0161) 228 2331 Fax: (0161) 228 6879  
 www.arup.com

Client  
**Warrington Borough Council**

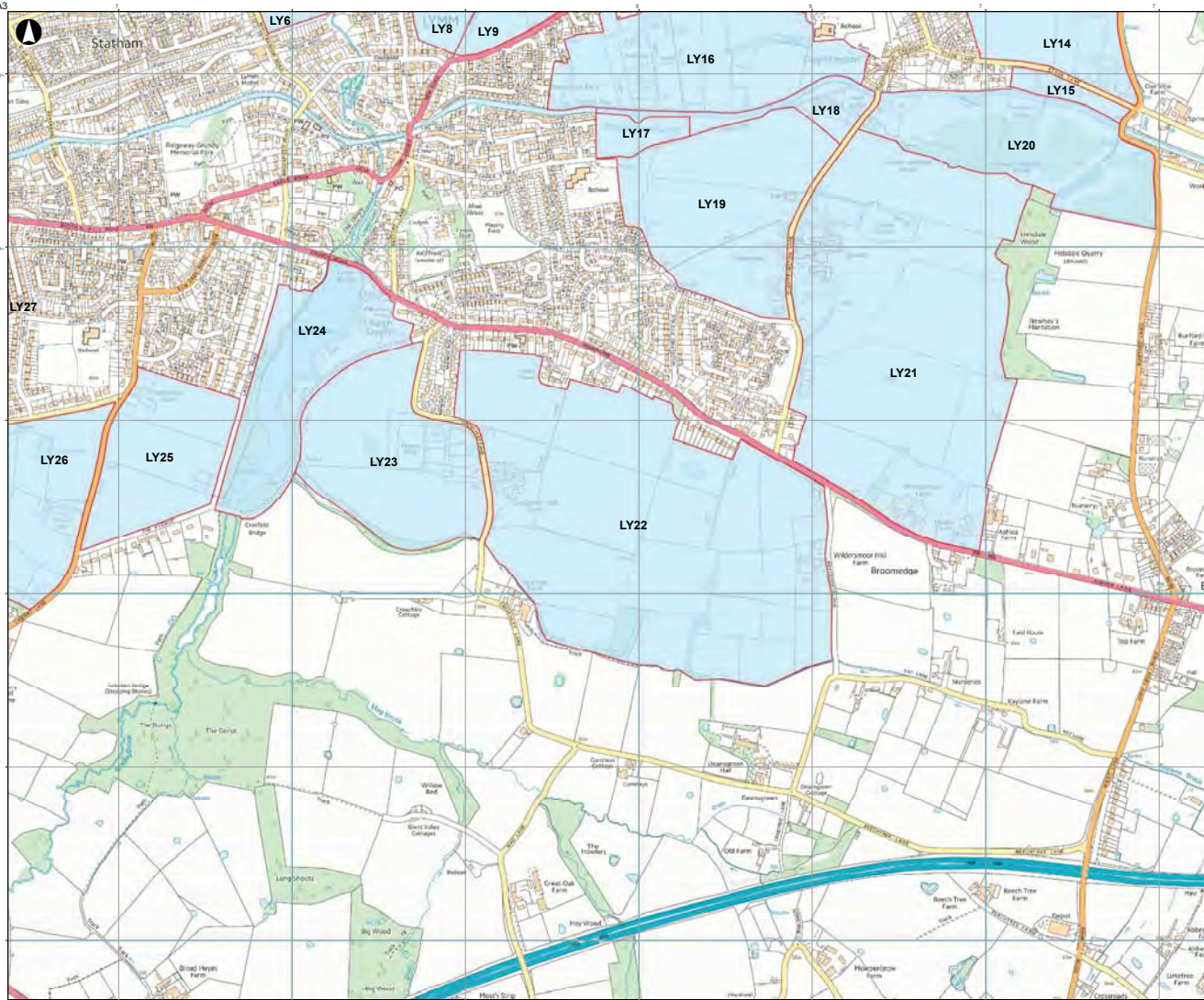
Job Title  
**Warrington Green Belt Assessment**

**Green Belt Parcels**  
 Page 13 of 21

Scale of A3  
**1:10,000**

Job No. <b>247625 00</b>	Drawing Status <b>Preliminary</b>
Drawing No. <b>WGB ARP SW DR PL 00013</b>	Issue <b>P0</b>

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**Key**

Green Belt Assessment Parcel

PO	2016-07-28	APS	APS	APS
Issue	Date	By	Checked	Approved

0 100 200 400  
Metres

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Client  
**Warrington Borough Council**

Job Title  
**Warrington Green Belt Assessment**

**Green Belt Parcels**  
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Scale at A3  
**1:10,000**

Job No. <b>247625 00</b>	Drawing Status <b>Preliminary</b>
Drawing No. <b>WGB ARP SW DR PL 00018</b>	Issue <b>P0</b>

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## Appendix G

### Parcel Assessment Table

Ref	Purpose 1: to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	Purpose 2: to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another	Purpose 3: to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;	Purpose 4: to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	Purpose 5: to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land	Justification for Assessment	Overall Assessment

## G1 Parcel Assessment Table

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LY12	No contribution The parcel is not adjacent to the Warrington urban area and therefore does not contribute to this purpose	Weak contribution The parcel forms a less essential gap between Lymm and Partington (within the administrative authority of Trafford) whereby development of the parcel would slightly reduce the actual gap but not the perceived gap between the towns. Overall, the parcel makes a weak contribution to preventing towns from merging.	Strong contribution The parcel is connected to the settlement along its eastern boundary. This consists of garden boundaries along Rushes Meadow which are not durable in the long term and would not be able to prevent encroachment into the parcel. The parcel is well connected to the countryside on three sides along non-durable boundaries consisting of field boundaries and an unmade section of Reddish Lane. The existing land use consists of a mix of woodland and open agricultural land. There is no built form and over half of the parcel is filled with dense vegetation. The parcel supports long line views to the south west and overall supports a strong to moderate degree of openness. Overall the parcel makes a strong contribution to safeguarding from encroachment due to its weak boundaries with the settlement and the countryside.	No Contribution Lymm is a historic town however the parcel is not within 250m of its Conservation Area. The parcel does not cross an important viewpoint of the Parish Church.	Moderate contribution The Mid Mersey Housing Market Area has 2.08% brownfield urban capacity for potential development, therefore the parcel makes a moderate contribution to this purpose.	Green Belt. The parcel makes a strong contribution to one purpose, a moderate contribution to one, a weak contribution to one and no contribution to two. In line with the methodology, professional judgement has therefore been applied to evaluate the overall contribution. The parcel has been judged to make a strong overall contribution as it supports a strong to moderate degree of openness and there are non-durable boundaries between the parcel and the countryside therefore the parcel has a strong role in preventing encroachment into the open countryside. The parcel therefore makes a strong contribution to fulfilling the fundamental aim of the Green Belt under paragraph 79 of the NPPF in protecting the openness of the Green Belt.	Strong contribution
LY13	No contribution The parcel is not adjacent to the Warrington urban area and therefore does not contribute to this purpose	Weak contribution The parcel forms a less essential gap between Lymm and Partington (within the administrative authority of Trafford) whereby development of the parcel would slightly reduce the actual gap but not the perceived gap between the towns. Overall, the parcel makes a weak contribution to preventing towns from merging.	Moderate contribution The parcel is partly connected to the settlement on two sides along largely durable boundaries. The north western boundary along Birch Brook Road is largely durable and would be able to prevent encroachment into the parcel, as is the majority of the southern boundary along the Transpennine Trail which is lined with vegetation on either side. The eastern end of this boundary is considerably less durable and may not be able to prevent further encroachment into the parcel along Mill Lane. The parcel is connected to the countryside along the remaining section of Birch Brook Road and its eastern boundary consists of Mill Lane. These are both durable and could prevent further encroachment if the parcel was developed. The existing land use mainly consists of open countryside and there is little vegetation except along boundaries. There are however a number of residential properties in the parcel s south western and north eastern corners. The parcel supports some long line views looking north across Birch Brook Road and overall supports a moderate degree of openness. There has already been encroachment into the parcel and further along Birch Brook Road and Mill Lane and the parcel contributes to preventing further encroachment. Overall the parcel makes a moderate contribution to safeguarding from encroachment.	No Contribution Lymm is a historic town however the parcel is not within 250m of its Conservation Area. The parcel does not cross an important viewpoint of the Parish Church.	Moderate contribution The Mid Mersey Housing Market Area has 2.08% brownfield urban capacity for potential development, therefore the parcel makes a moderate contribution to this purpose.	The parcel makes a moderate contribution to two purposes, a weak contribution to one and no contribution to two. In line with the methodology, the parcel has been judged to make a moderate overall contribution. The parcel supports a moderate degree of openness and makes a moderate contribution to encouraging urban regeneration, and there are durable boundaries between the parcel, the settlement and the countryside.	Moderate contribution
LY14	No contribution The parcel is not adjacent to the Warrington urban area and therefore does not contribute to this purpose	No contribution The parcel does not contribute to preventing towns from merging.	Strong contribution The parcel is connected to the settlement along its northern and western boundaries. The western boundary consists of garden boundaries which would not be durable enough to prevent encroachment into the parcel. The northern boundary is durable in some sections along Longcroft Place and Chaise Meadow, although other sections consist of garden boundaries and an unmade section of Millers Lane which are less durable. The parcel is connected to the countryside predominantly along Mill Lane to the east and Stage Lane to the south,	No Contribution Lymm is a historic town however the parcel is not within 250m of its Conservation Area. The parcel does not cross an important viewpoint of the Parish Church.	Moderate contribution The Mid Mersey Housing Market Area has 2.08% brownfield urban capacity for potential development, therefore the parcel makes a moderate	The parcel makes a strong contribution to one purpose, a moderate contribution to one and no contribution to three. In line with the methodology, professional judgement has therefore been applied to evaluate the overall contribution. The parcel has been judged to make a moderate overall contribution as, while it supports a strong degree of openness and it has non-durable boundaries with the	Moderate contribution

			both of which form durable boundaries which could prevent further encroachment if the parcel was developed. The parcel is also connected to the north along a short section of the Transpennine Trail, which is not lined with vegetation and would not be durable enough to prevent encroachment. The existing land use mainly consists of open countryside. There is an active farm in the south eastern corner of the parcel and a number of internal hedgerows. There are a significant number of residential properties in the north eastern corner of the parcel and the parcel contributes to preventing further encroachment along Mill Lane. The parcel supports long line views of the countryside and overall supports a strong degree of openness. Overall the parcel makes a strong contribution to safeguarding from encroachment.		contribution to this purpose.	settlement, the durability of its boundaries with the countryside means that any encroachment resulting from development would be contained and would therefore not threaten the openness and permanence of the Green Belt as a whole.	
LY15	No contribution The parcel is not adjacent to the Warrington urban area and therefore does not contribute to this purpose	No contribution The parcel does not contribute to preventing towns from merging.	Moderate contribution The parcel is connected to the settlement along its short western boundary. This consists of garden boundaries and would not be durable enough to prevent encroachment into the parcel. The parcel is well connected to the countryside on three sides by durable boundaries consisting of Stage Lane, Mill Lane and the Bridgewater Canal. These are durable enough to prevent further encroachment if the parcel is developed. The existing land use mainly consists of open countryside and there is extensive vegetation as well as a small surface car park. The parcel supports some long line views to the south from certain areas and overall supports a strong to moderate degree of openness. Overall the parcel makes a moderate contribution to safeguarding from encroachment.	No Contribution Lymm is a historic town however the parcel is not within 250m of its Conservation Area. The parcel does not cross an important viewpoint of the Parish Church.	Moderate contribution The Mid Mersey Housing Market Area has 2.08% brownfield urban capacity for potential development, therefore the parcel makes a moderate contribution to this purpose.	The parcel makes a moderate contribution to two purposes and no contribution to three. In line with the methodology, the parcel has been judged to make a weak overall contribution. The parcel supports a strong to moderate degree of openness, makes a moderate contribution to encouraging urban regeneration and there are largely durable boundaries between the parcel and the wider countryside.	Weak contribution
LY16	No contribution The parcel is not adjacent to the Warrington urban area and therefore does not contribute to this purpose	No contribution The parcel does not contribute to preventing towns from merging.	Strong contribution The parcel is well connected to the settlement on three sides along its northern, western and eastern boundaries. These predominantly consist of garden boundaries which would not be durable enough to prevent encroachment into the parcel. The parcel is connected to the countryside on one side. This consists of the Bridgewater Canal, which is durable enough to prevent encroachment beyond the parcel if the parcel was developed. The existing land use mainly consists of open countryside with moderate vegetation. There is also a mix of greenhouses used for agriculture and warehouses, with hedgerows separating the parcel into several sections. There is one residential property in the south western corner of the parcel and another in the north. The parcel supports some long line views looking south and overall supports a strong to moderate degree of openness. Overall the parcel makes a strong contribution to safeguarding from encroachment.	Weak contribution Lymm is a historic town. The parcel does not cross an important viewpoint of the Parish Church. The western edge of the parcel is located within the 250m buffer area around Lymm Conservation Area. The Conservation Area is separated from the Green Belt and from the parcel by three rows of modern residential development along Dairy Farm Court, Grasmere Road, and Mardale Crescent. Therefore the parcel makes a weak contribution to preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.	Moderate contribution The Mid Mersey Housing Market Area has 2.08% brownfield urban capacity for potential development, therefore the parcel makes a moderate contribution to this purpose.	The parcel makes a strong contribution to one purpose, a moderate contribution to one, a weak contribution to one and no contribution to two. In line with the methodology, professional judgement has therefore been applied to evaluate the overall contribution. The parcel has been judged to make a moderate overall contribution as, while it supports a strong degree of openness and it has non-durable boundaries with the settlement, the parcel only has a limited connection with the countryside along one boundary and the durability of this boundary with the countryside means that any encroachment resulting from development would be contained and would therefore not threaten the openness and permanence of the Green Belt as a whole.	Moderate contribution
LY17	No contribution The parcel is not adjacent to the Warrington urban area and therefore does not contribute to this purpose	No contribution The parcel does not contribute to preventing towns from merging.	Strong contribution The parcel is connected to the settlement along its western boundary, which consists of garden boundaries which are not durable and would not be able to prevent encroachment into the parcel. The parcel is well connected to the countryside on three sides along a mix of durable and non-durable boundaries. The parcel's northern boundary consists of the Bridgewater Canal.	No Contribution Lymm is a historic town however the parcel is not within 250m of its Conservation Area. The parcel does not cross an important viewpoint of the Parish Church.	Moderate contribution The Mid Mersey Housing Market Area has 2.08% brownfield urban capacity for potential	The parcel makes a strong contribution to one purpose, a moderate contribution to one and no contribution to three. In line with the methodology, professional judgement has therefore been applied to evaluate the overall contribution. The parcel has been judged to make a strong	Strong contribution



**WARRINGTON**  
Borough Council

# **Warrington Borough Council Local Plan**

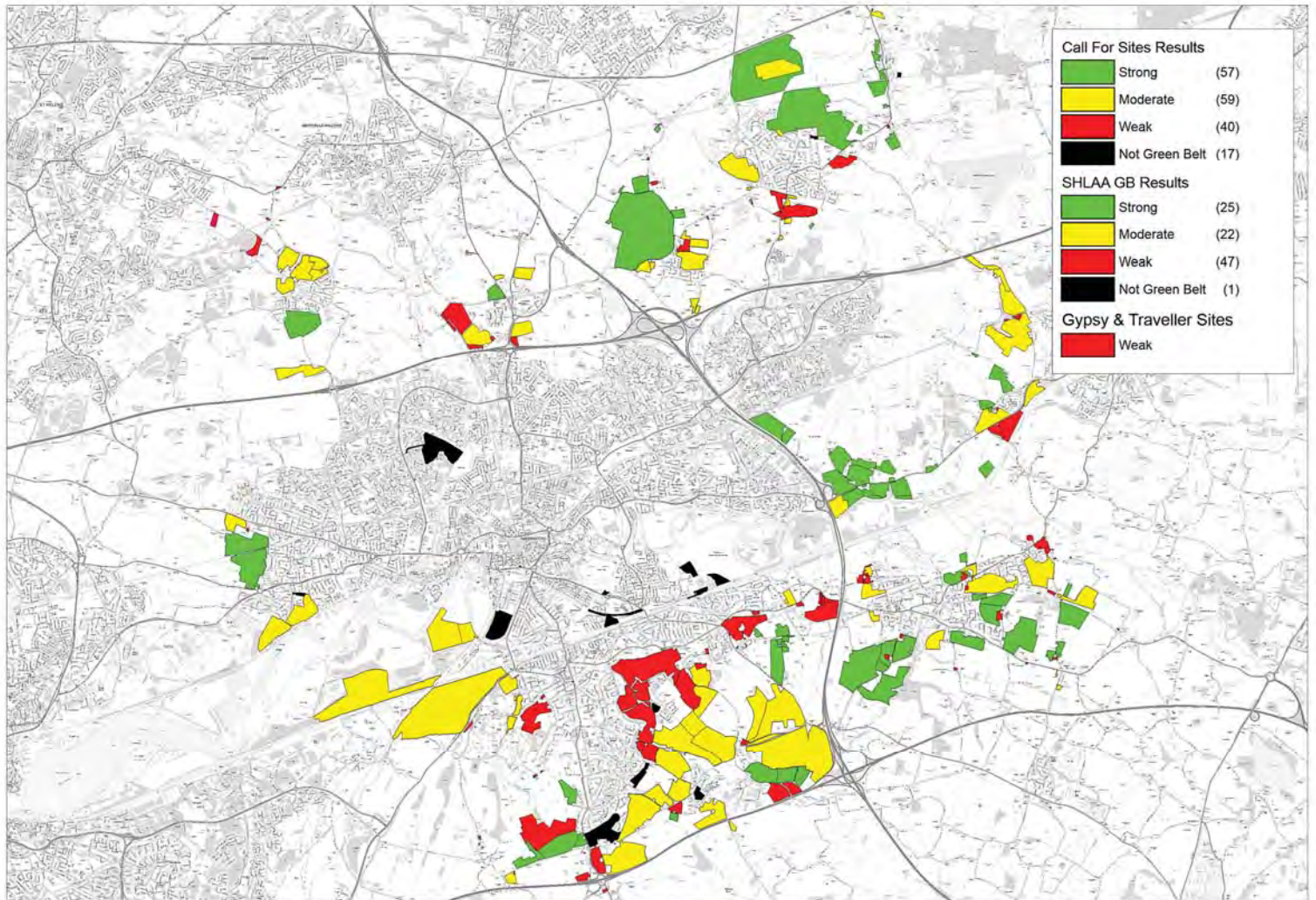
## **Green Belt Assessment**

**(Additional Site Assessments of Call for Sites Responses and SHLAA Green Belt Sites)**

**July 2017**







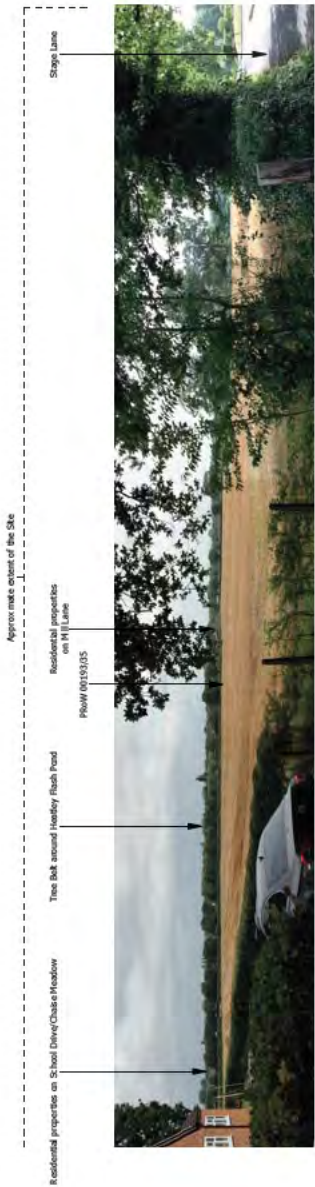
			boundary, which is not durable and may not be able to prevent further encroachment if the parcel was developed. The site is currently being developed for a residential property. This property and its associated garden will take up the entire site. There is minimal vegetation within the site. The site is only connected to open countryside to the north as Green Belt to the east and south of the site. The site supports no degree of openness as it contains around 30% built form, minimal vegetation and does not support long line views of the countryside. Overall the site makes a weak contribution due to its current land use and lack of openness.		therefore the site makes a moderate contribution to this purpose.	regeneration, the site only makes a weak contribution to safeguarding the countryside from encroachment due to its lack of openness and current land use.	
R18/107	No contribution The site is not adjacent to the Warrington urban area and therefore does not contribute to checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.	No contribution The site does not play a role in preventing towns from merging.	Strong contribution The site is connected to the settlement along its northern and western boundaries. The western boundary consists of garden boundaries which, while clear and contiguous along the boundary, may not be durable enough to prevent encroachment into the site. The northern boundary is durable in some sections along Longcroft Place and Chaise Meadow, although other sections consist of garden boundaries and an unmade section of Millers Lane which are less durable. The site is connected to the countryside predominantly along Mill Lane to the east and Stage Lane to the south, both of which form durable boundaries which could prevent further encroachment if the site was developed. The site's north eastern boundary is comprised of a water body (Healey Flash) which is durable and of garden boundaries close to Mill Lane as there is development within the Green Belt up to the durable boundary of Mill Lane. To the south east of the site, field boundaries form a non-durable boundary however Stage Lane and Mill Lane are in close proximity and would therefore limit any encroachment. The existing land use is open countryside. There is no built form and minimal vegetation, which mainly consists of internal field boundaries. The site is connected to the open countryside on two sides, to the east and south. The site supports a strong degree of openness as it contains no built form, minimal vegetation and supports long line views to the east. Overall the site makes a strong contribution to safeguarding the countryside from encroachment due to its openness and the non-durable boundaries between the site and the settlement.	No Contribution Lymm is a historic town however the site is not within 250m of its Conservation Area. The site does not cross an important viewpoint of the Parish Church.	Moderate contribution The Mid Mersey Housing Market Area has 2.08% brownfield urban capacity for potential development, therefore the site makes a moderate contribution to this purpose.	The site makes a strong contribution to one purpose, a moderate contribution to one and no contribution to three. In line with the methodology, professional judgement has therefore been applied. The site has been judged to make a moderate overall contribution. Whilst the site supports a strong degree of openness and there are non-durable boundaries with the settlement, the boundaries between the site and the countryside are mostly durable and would therefore contain any development preventing it from threatening the overall openness and permanence of the Green Belt. The site also makes a moderate contribution to assisting in urban regeneration.	Moderate contribution
R18/111	No contribution The site is not adjacent to the Warrington urban area and therefore does not contribute to checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.	No contribution The site does not play a role in preventing towns from merging.	Strong contribution The site is connected to the settlement along part of its western boundary. This consists of a short section of Oughtrington Lane, which is durable, and a row of garden boundaries for properties on Oughtrington Lane, which may not be durable enough to prevent encroachment into the parcel. The site is connected to the countryside along mainly non-durable boundaries consisting of tree lines and field and garden boundaries, which may not be able to prevent further encroachment if the site was developed. Part of the eastern boundary consists of Helsdale Wood which represents a durable boundary however the remainder of this eastern boundary is not durable. The site has a southern boundary along Higher Lane which is durable. The existing land use is open countryside.	No Contribution Lymm is a historic town however the site is not within 250m of its Conservation Area. The site does not cross an important viewpoint of the Parish Church.	Moderate contribution The Mid Mersey Housing Market Area has 2.08% brownfield urban capacity for potential development, therefore the site makes a moderate contribution to this purpose.	The site makes a strong contribution to one purpose, a moderate contribution to one and no contribution to three. In line with the methodology, professional judgement has therefore been applied. The site has been judged to make a strong overall contribution. While the site does not contribute to checking unrestricted sprawl, preventing towns from merging or preserving historic towns, its openness and predominantly non-durable boundaries mean that it makes a strong contribution to safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. It therefore supports Paragraph 79 of the NPPF by keeping land permanently open. The site also makes a moderate contribution to	Strong contribution



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Planning Policy & Programmes  
Warrington Borough Council  
New Town House  
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WA1 2NH

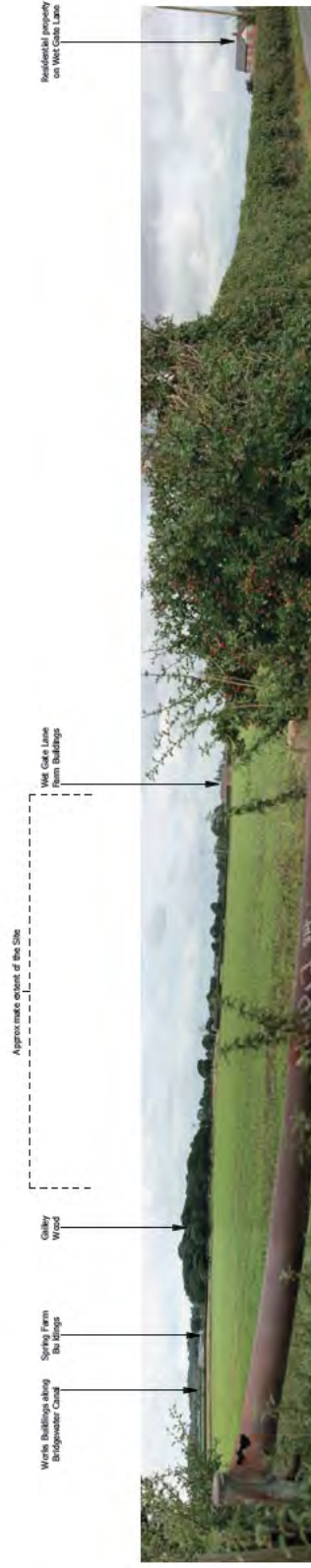
Tel: 01925 442826  
Email: [ldf@warrington.gov.uk](mailto:ldf@warrington.gov.uk)



SITE CONTEXT PHOTOGRAPH 1: VIEW NORTH-EAST FROM STAGE LANE



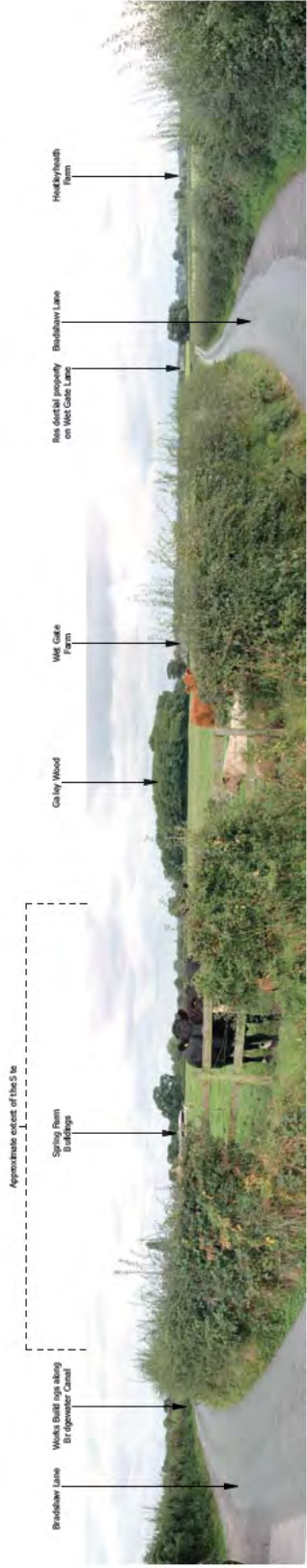
SITE CONTEXT PHOTOGRAPH 2: VIEW NORTH-EAST FROM WOODBINE ROAD



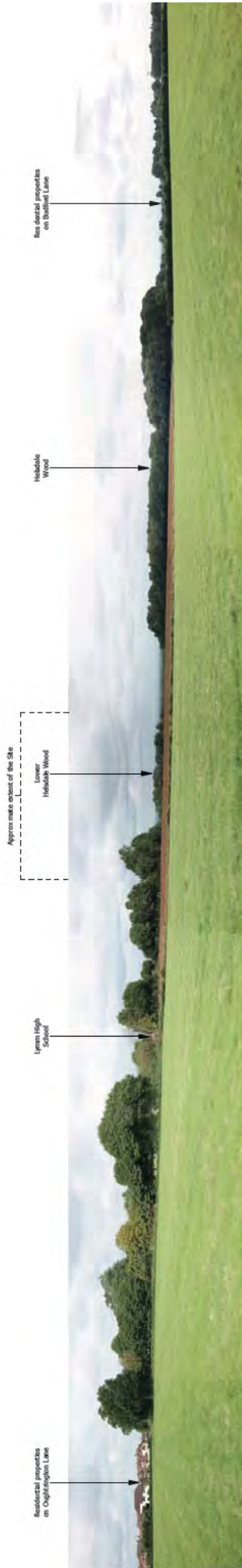
SITE CONTEXT PHOTOGRAPH 3: VIEW WEST FROM WET GATE LANE

LAND AT STAGE LANE,  
LYMM

SITE CONTEXT  
PHOTOGRAPHS: 1 - 3  
RECOMMENDED VIEWING  
DISTANCE: 20CM @A1  
DATE TAKEN: AUG 2017  
PROJECT NUMBER: 27432



SITE CONTEXT PHOTOGRAPH 4: VIEW NORTH-WEST FROM BRADSHAW LANE



SITE CONTEXT PHOTOGRAPH 5: VIEW NORTH FROM PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY 00193/29



SITE CONTEXT PHOTOGRAPH 6: VIEW NORTH-EAST FROM OUGHTTRINGTON LANE

LAND AT STAGE LANE,  
LYMM

SITE CONTEXT  
PHOTOGRAPHS: 4 - 6  
RECOMMENDED VIEWING  
DISTANCE: 20CM @A1  
DATE TAKEN: AUG 2017  
PROJECT NUMBER: 27432



SITE CONTEXT PHOTOGRAPH 7: VIEW SOUTH-WEST FROM MERSEY PATH



SITE CONTEXT PHOTOGRAPH 8: VIEW NORTH FROM BRIDGEWATER CANAL TOWPATH



SITE CONTEXT PHOTOGRAPH 9: VIEW NORTH FROM BRIDGEWATER CANAL TOWPATH

LAND AT STAGE LANE,  
LYMM

SITE CONTEXT  
PHOTOGRAPHS: 7 - 9  
RECOMMENDED VIEWING  
DISTANCE: 20CM @A1  
DATE TAKEN: AUG 2017  
PROJECT NUMBER: 27432

## **PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT, STAGE LANE, LYMM TRAFFIC IMPACT NOTE – SEPTEMBER 2017**

### **Introduction**

This Traffic Impact Note will consider the likely traffic impact of proposals for a residential development site off Stage Lane in the village of Lymm in the Borough of Warrington.

The development site is located to the east of the village centre of Lymm, it is bound to the north by undeveloped land and to the south by Stage Lane. To the west the site is bound by residential development whilst the B5169 Mill Lane bounds the site to the east.

### **Development Proposals**

It is proposed to provide a total of 400 residential units on the development site with vehicular access being provided off the B5169 Mill Lane via the provision of a priority controlled junction. The proposed vehicular access will be designed to satisfy all relevant design guidance. It should be noted that the proposed vehicular access arrangement can be located at several locations along Mill Lane subject to the required visibility requirements being satisfied. The potential vehicular access arrangement is displayed in **Plan 1**.

### **Surveyed Flows**

In order to preliminarily assess the traffic impact of the proposed development on the local highway network traffic surveys were undertaken at the following junctions on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> September 2017;

- A6144 Birch Brook Road/A6144 Mill Lane/B5169 Mill Lane priority controlled junction.
- B5169 Mill Lane/B5169 Burford Lane/Bradshaw Lane/Stage Lane signal controlled junction.

The weekday am and pm peak hours were identified as 0730 to 0830 hours and 1730 to 1830 hours. **Figures 1** and **2** show the 2017 surveyed traffic flows converted into passenger car units (PCUs), the unit of analysis, for the weekday am and peak periods respectively.

### **Growthed Flows**

For the purpose of this Report, assessments have been undertaken for a design horizon of 2027 which represents when the site is likely to be fully built out.

**PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT, STAGE LANE, LYMM (1913)  
TRAFFIC IMPACT NOTE**



Our Reference: TSB/1913

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In order to factor the surveyed traffic flows to the future assessment years, NTEM adjusted National Road Traffic Model growth factors have been applied for the Warrington 021 MSOA.

The resultant growth factors are shown below:

- 2017 to 2027 AM Peak - 1.0937.
- 2017 to 2027 PM Peak - 1.0944.

The resultant 2027 growthed traffic flows are shown in **Figures 3** and **4** for the weekday am and pm peak periods respectively.

### **Trip Distribution**

In order to assign the proposed development trips to the local highway network, reference has been made to the existing distribution of traffic, taken from the traffic surveys. This provides a robust assessment as it results in the greater levels of development traffic being added onto the already heaviest traffic movements.

The resultant trip distribution for the weekday am and pm peak periods is contained on **Figure 5** for both peak periods.

### **Potential Traffic Flows**

In order to establish the number of trips which the proposed development is forecast to generate, reference has been made to the trip rate information contained within the TRICS database for all 'private housing' sites in the range of 100 to 1000 units excluding those located in Greater London or Ireland.

The resultant peak hour trip rates and forecast traffic generation for 400 residential units is contained within Table 1 below.



Peak Hour	Trip Rates		Trip Generation	
	Arr	Dep	Arr	Dep
AM	0.124	0.371	50	148
PM	0.313	0.168	125	67

**Table 1 - Forecast Trip Generation of Potential Residential Development (400 Units)**

In order to assign traffic forecast to be generated by the proposed development, the trip distribution displayed in Figure 5 has been utilised. The resultant proposed residential traffic flows are displayed in **Figures 6 and 7**.

To calculate the 2027 'With Development' Flows, the proposed residential traffic flows displayed in Figures 6 and 7 have been added to the 2027 Base Flows shown in Figure 3 and 4. The resultant 2027 'With Development' Flows are displayed in **Figures 8 and 9**.

### **Junction Modelling**

For the purposes of this Report detailed analysis of the following junctions has been undertaken to assess the impact of the proposals on their operation;

- B5169 Mill Lane/Site Access priority controlled junction.
- A6144 Birch Brook Road/A6144 Mill Lane/B5169 Mill Lane priority controlled junction.
- B5169 Mill Lane/B5169 Burford Lane/Bradshaw Lane/Stage Lane signal controlled junction.

#### ***B5169 Mill Lane/Site Access Priority Controlled Junction***

To assess the operation of the proposed priority controlled junction the computer program PICADY 5 has been utilised using the junction layout displayed in **Plan 1** and the 2027 'With Development' Flows.

Table 2 below summarises the results of the PICADY for the B5169 Mill Lane/Site Access priority controlled junction.

Arm	2027 With Development			
	AM Peak		PM Peak	
	RFC	Max Q	RFC	Max Q
Site Access	0.344	1	0.170	0
B5169 Mill Lane Right-turn	0.033	0	0.090	0

**Table 2 – Summary of PICADY Output for B5169 Mill Lane/Site Access Junction – 2027 ‘With Development Flows’**

As can be seen in Table 2, the proposed priority controlled B5169 Mill Lane/Site Access junction is forecast to operate within its theoretical capacity in both of the 2027 ‘With Development’ scenarios.

***A6144 Birch Brook Road/A6144 Mill Lane/B5169 Mill Lane Priority Controlled Junction***

The A6144 Birch Brook Road/A6144 Mill Lane/B5169 Mill Lane priority controlled junction has been assessed using the PICADY 5 program. Table 3 below, summarises the results of the 2027 base and ‘with development’ capacity assessments for this junction.

	2027 Base				2027 ‘With Development’			
	AM		PM		AM		PM	
	RFC	Max Q	RFC	Max Q	RFC	Max Q	RFC	Max Q
B5169 Mill Lane Left-turn	0.058	0	0.195	0	0.102	0	0.269	0
B5169 Mill Lane Right-turn	0.458	1	0.728	3	0.599	1	0.815	4
A6144 Birch Brook Road Right-turn	0.183	1	0.111	0	0.202	1	0.155	0

**Table 3 – Summary of PICADY Output for A6144 Birch Brook Road/A6144 Mill Lane/B5169 Mill Lane Junction – 2027 Base and ‘With Development Flows’**

**PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT, STAGE LANE, LYMM (1913)**  
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As can be seen in the above table, the A6144 Birch Brook Road/A6144 Mill Lane/B5169 Mill Lane junction is forecast to operate within its theoretical capacity in both of the am and pm peak scenarios and can therefore accommodate the traffic forecast to be generated by the proposed development. The impact of the proposals on the operation of the junction can also be seen to be fairly minimal with the maximum queue, even during peak periods, only increases from 3 to 4 vehicles.

***B5169 Mill Lane/B5169 Burford Lane/Bradshaw Lane/Stage Lane Signal Controlled Junction***

The B5169 Mill Lane/B5169 Burford Lane/Bradshaw Lane/Stage Lane signal controlled junction has been assessed using the LINSIG 3 program. Table 4 below, summarises the results of the 2027 base and 'with development' capacity assessments for this junction.

	2027 Base				2027 'With Development'			
	AM		PM		AM		PM	
	DOS	MMQ	DOS	MMQ	DOS	MMQ	DOS	MMQ
<b>B5169 Mill Lane Left Ahead Right</b>	38.1	2	32.8	2	54.2	3	44.2	3
<b>Bradshaw Lane Left Ahead Right</b>	1.8	0	3.0	0	2.5	0	5.5	0
<b>B5169 Burford Lane Left Ahead Right</b>	16.6	0	31.5	3	18.4	0	37.1	4
<b>Stage Lane Left Ahead Right</b>	51.6	3	22.4	1	58.8	3	27.2	1
<b>B5169 Burford Lane (s/b) North of Canal</b>	29.0	2	22.8	2	38.6	4	28.8	2
<b>B5169 Burford Lane (n/b) South of Canal</b>	53.5	4	90.8	10	56.5	4	93.6	13

**Table 4 – Summary of LINSIG Output for B5169 Mill Lane/B5169 Burford Lane/Bradshaw Lane/Stage Lane Signal Controlled Junction – 2027 Base and 'With Development Flows'**

As can be seen in the above table, the B5169 Mill Lane/B5169 Burford Lane/Bradshaw Lane/Stage Lane junction is forecast to operate within its theoretical capacity in both of the am and pm peak base scenarios. With the addition of the development traffic there is forecast to minimal increases in the Degree of Saturation and forecast queuing.

It should be noted that the above analysis assumes that the Stage Lane and Bradshaw Lane arms, which are demand activated run every cycle. However, due to the level of traffic in the Weekday pm peak it is unlikely that these stages are called every cycle. Therefore, the results summarised below provide an extremely robust analysis of the operation of the junction, especially in the weekday pm peak period.

### **Summary**

This note has considered the impact of the proposed residential development at Stage Lane in Lymm. The following conclusions can be drawn from this note:

- The proposed vehicular access junction into the site have been designed to accord with highway design standards and will have more than sufficient capacity to accommodate the proposed development traffic.
- A6144 Birch Brook Road/A6144 Mill Lane/B5169 Mill Lane priority controlled junction is forecast to operate within it theoretical capacity in all of the base and 'with development' scenarios.
- At the B5169 Mill Lane/B5169 Burford Lane/Bradshaw Lane/Stage Lane signal controlled junction is forecast to operate within capacity in the 2027 base scenarios.
- The addition of the traffic associated with 400 residential units is forecast to result in minimal impact on the operation of the junction in both peak periods even based on the onerous assumptions regarding its operation.

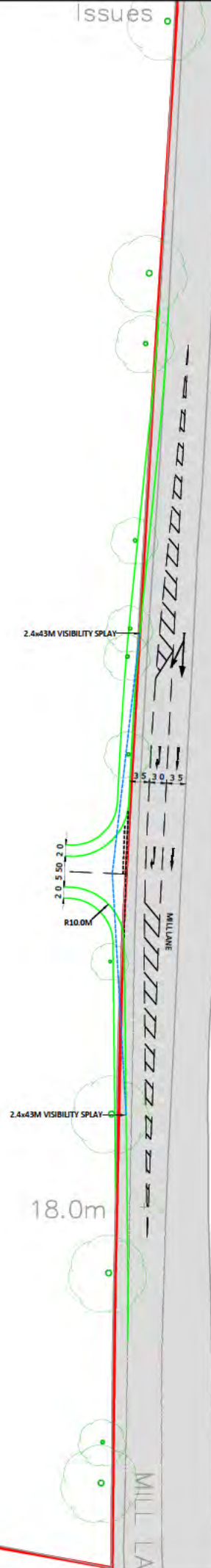
Based on the above, the initial work undertaken as part of this note has demonstrated that there is sufficient spare capacity on the local highway network to accommodate the levels of traffic forecast to be generated by the proposals to provide 400 residential units on land off Stage Lane in Lymm.

It is therefore concluded that the Stage Lane development can be accessed from the local highway network and that there are no highways constraints that would prevent the future allocation and development of the site.

## PLANS



NORTH SOUTH AERIAL VIEW



- NOTES**
- THIS IS NOT A CONSTRUCTION DRAWING AND IS FOR INDICATIVE PURPOSES ONLY. IT IS SUBJECT TO FURTHER DESIGN ANALYSIS, TOPOGRAPHICAL MAPPING & HIGHWAY/THIRD PARTY LAND BOUNDARIES.
  - INDICATIVE SITE BOUNDARY
  - DENOTES NEW KERBS
  - ADOPTED HIGHWAY
  - APPROXIMATE EXISTING TREE LOCATIONS

REV.	DETAILS	DRAWN	CHECKED	DATE

CLIENT:  
**ANWYL LAND**

PROJECT:  
**STAGE LANE, LYMM**

DRAWING TITLE:  
**PROPOSED ACCESS JUNCTION WITH GHOST ISLAND RIGHT TURN LANE ARRANGEMENT**

SCALES:  
**1:1000 @ A3**

DRAWN: JC	CHECKED: PJW	DATE: JUN 17
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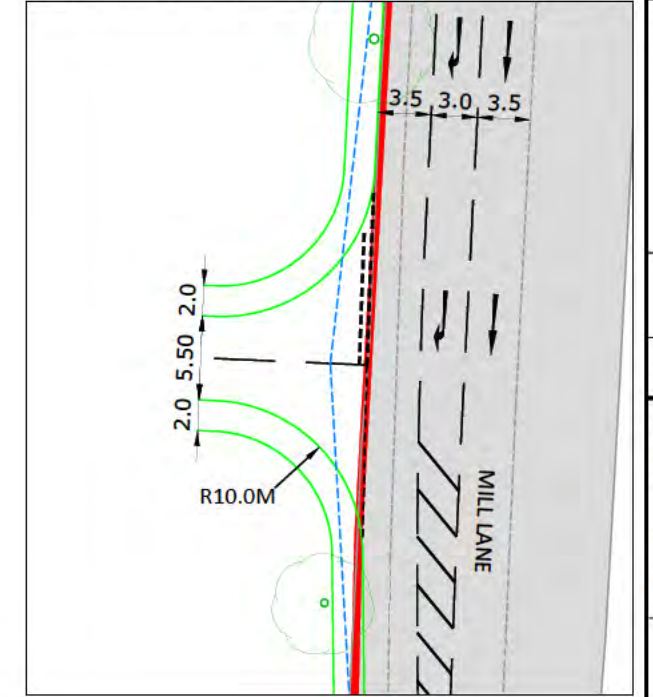
9 Jordan Street,  
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M15 4PY

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Tel: 0161 667 3746  
Web: [www.crofts.co.uk](http://www.crofts.co.uk)

**croft**  
Transport Solutions

DRAWING NUMBER: **1913-F01**      REVISION: .

INSERT OF JUNCTION @ 1:500 SCALE



## FIGURES

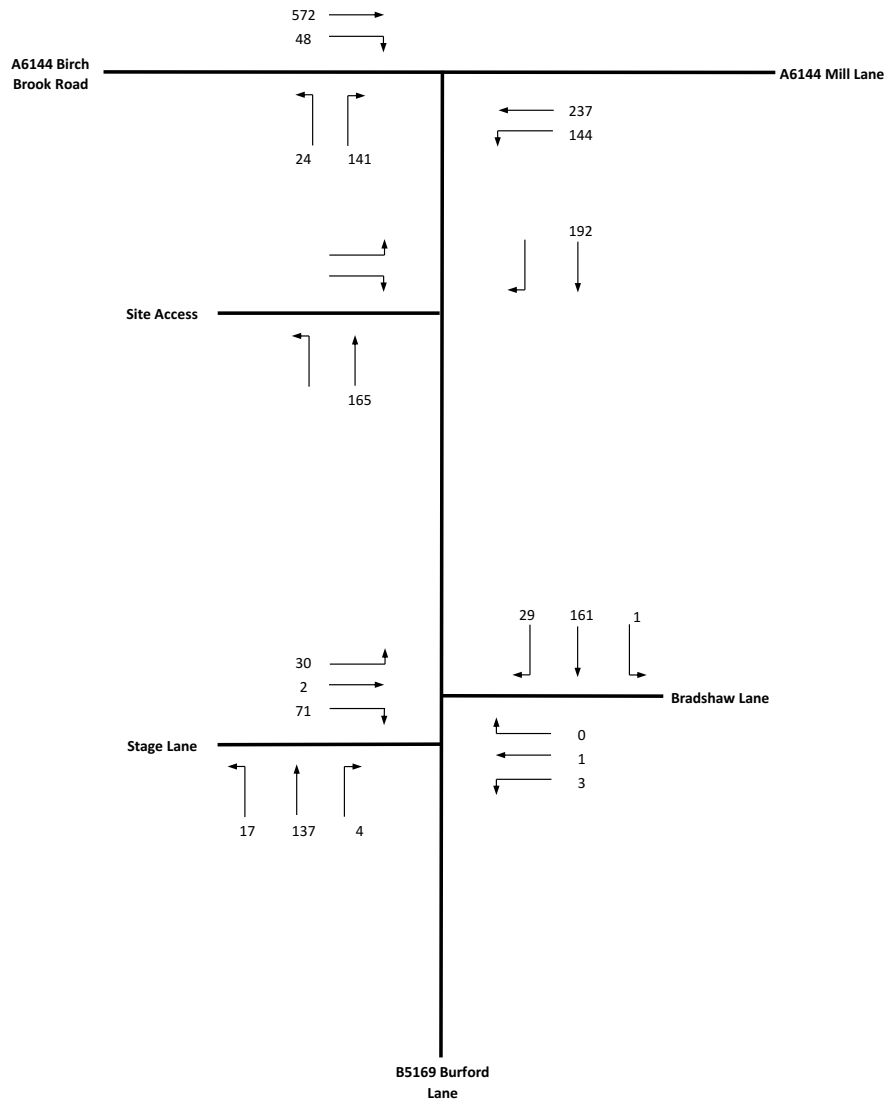


Figure 1 2017 Surveyed Flows  
Weekday AM Peak (0730 - 0830)



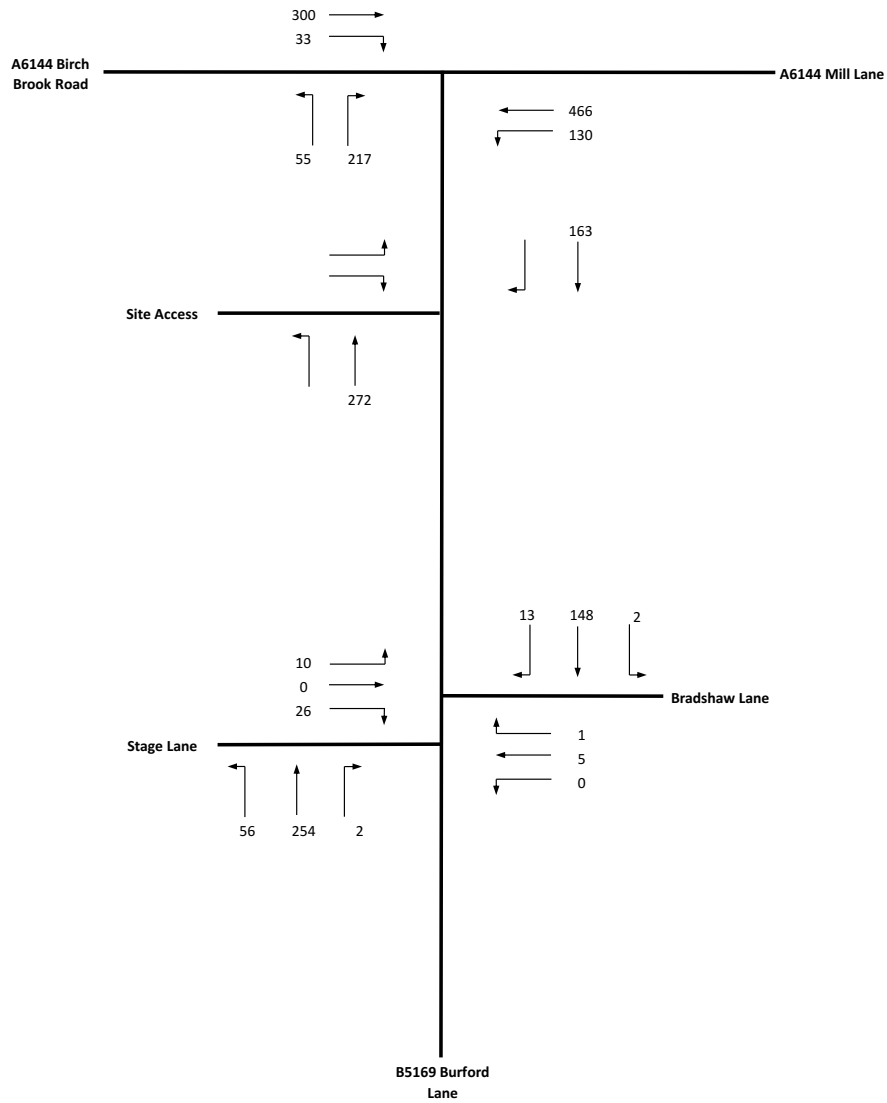
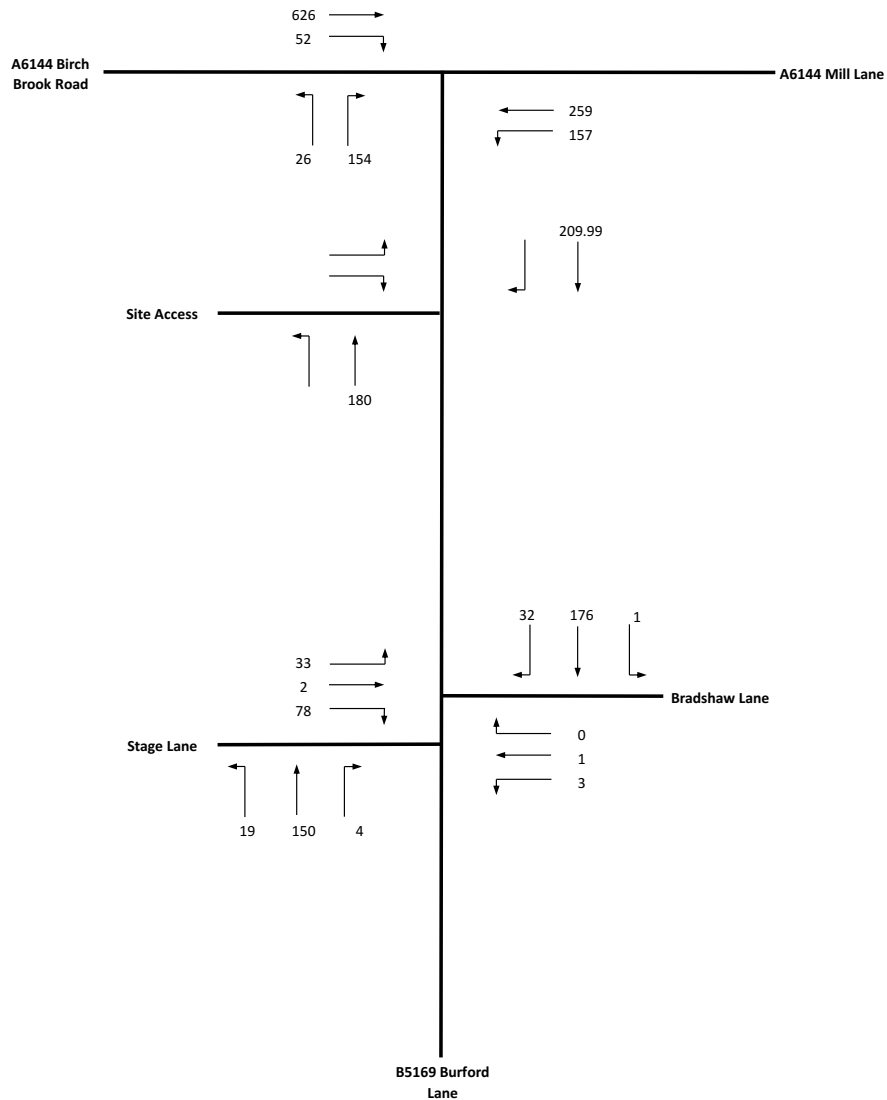
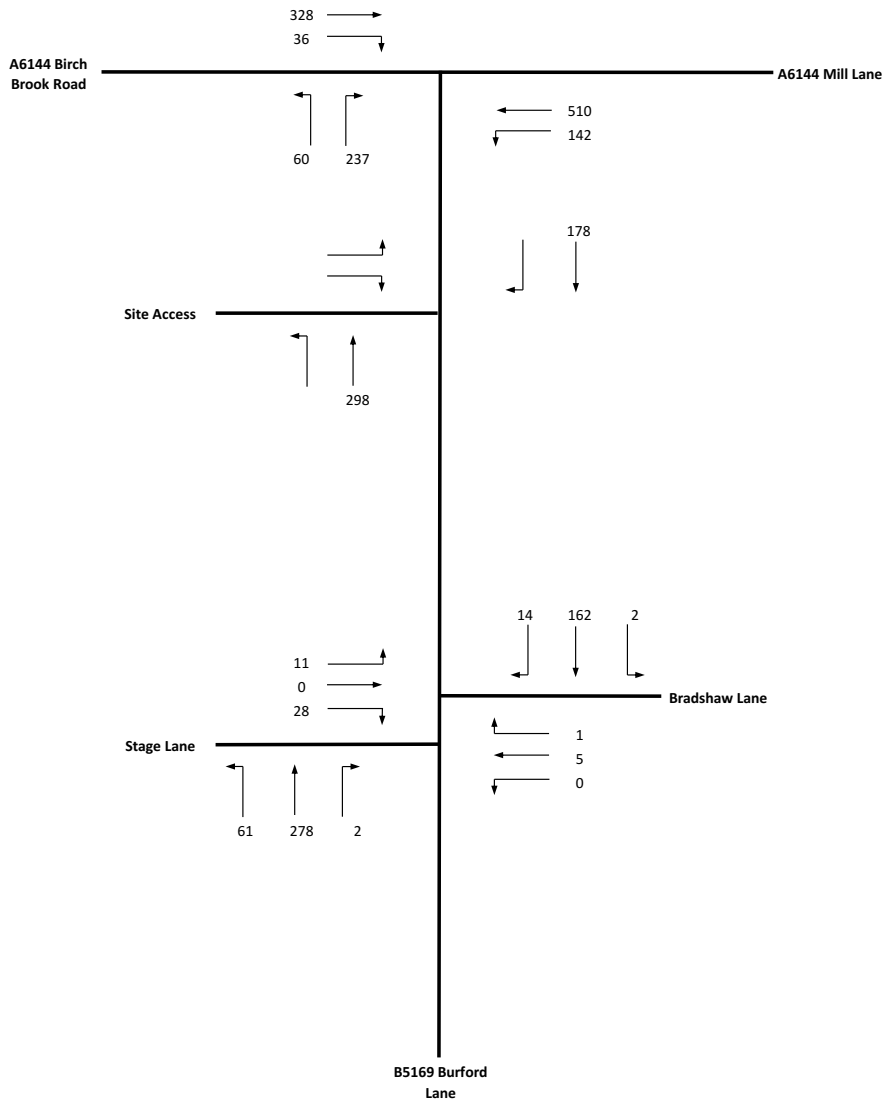


Figure 2 2017 Surveyed Flows  
Weekday PM Peak (1630 - 1730)



NTM Adjusted Growth Factor 2017-2027 1.0937

Figure 3 2027 Growthed Flows  
Weekday AM Peak (0730 - 0830)



NTM Adjusted Growth Factor 2017-2027 1.0944

Figure 4 2027 Growthed Flows  
Weekday PM Peak (1730 - 1830)

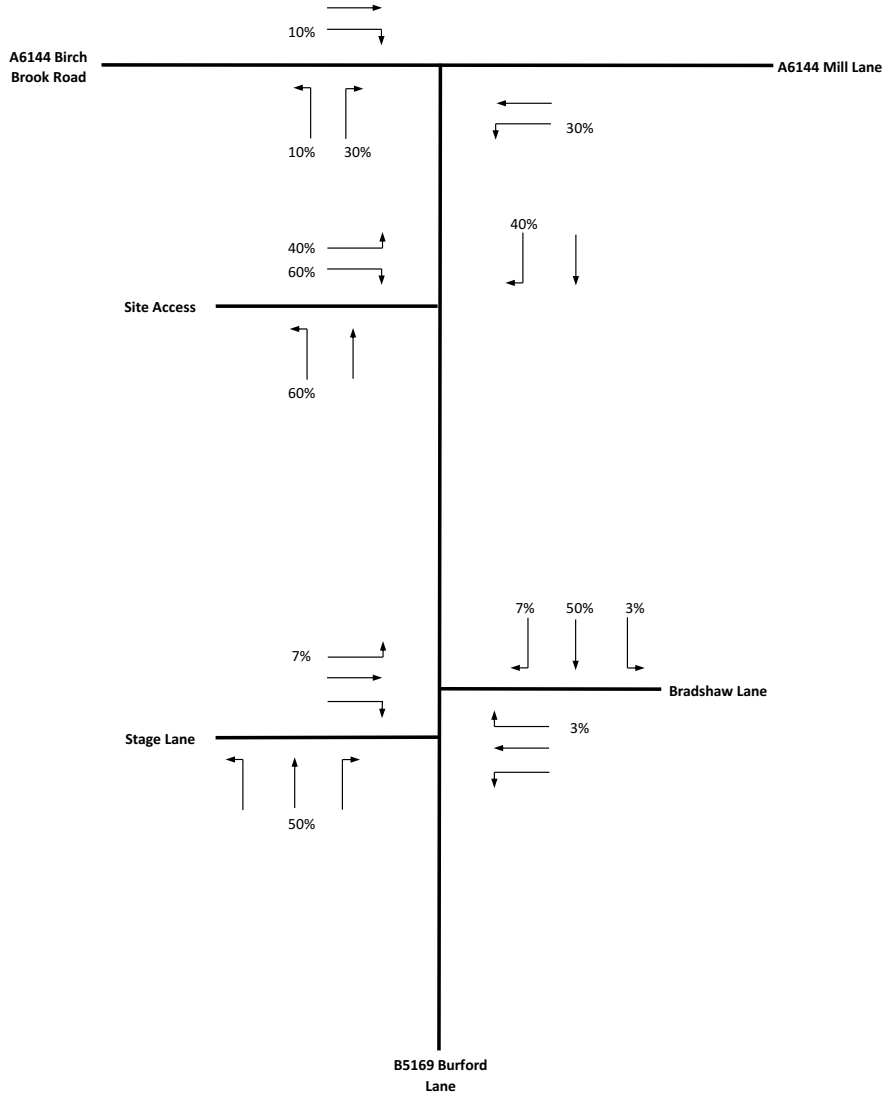
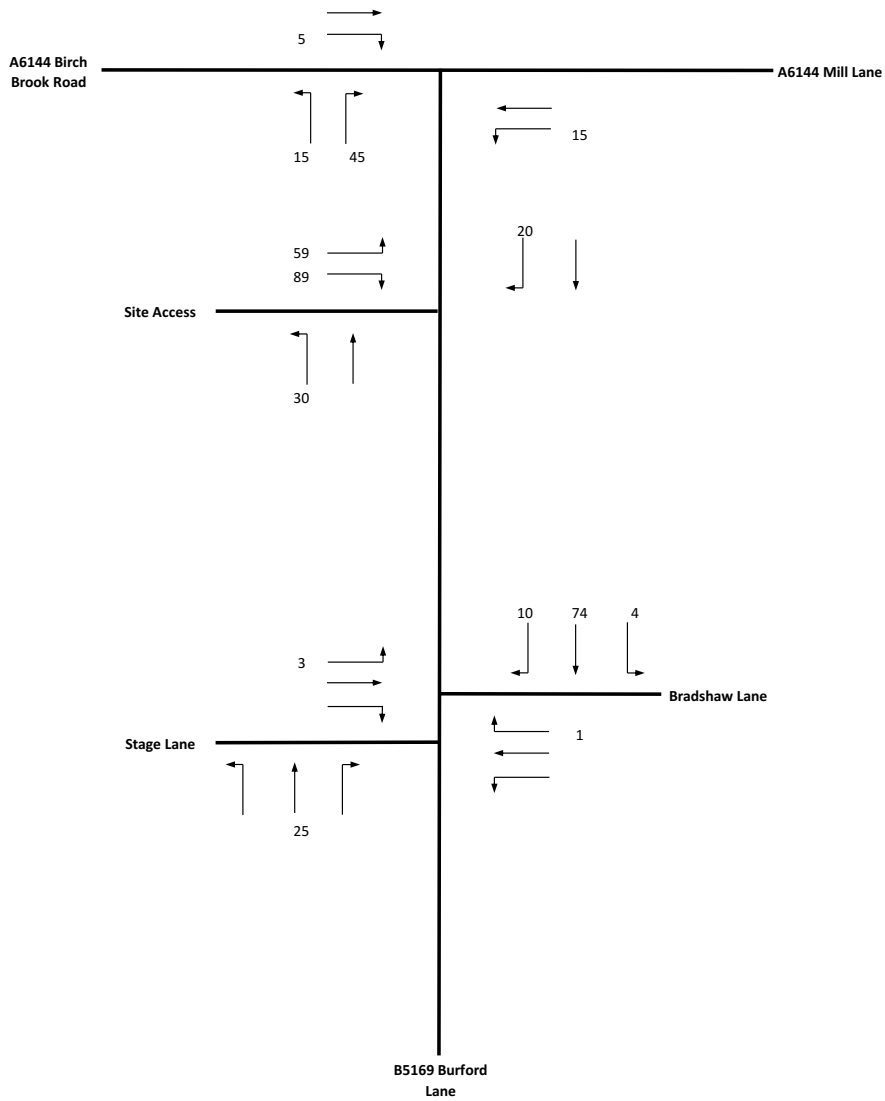
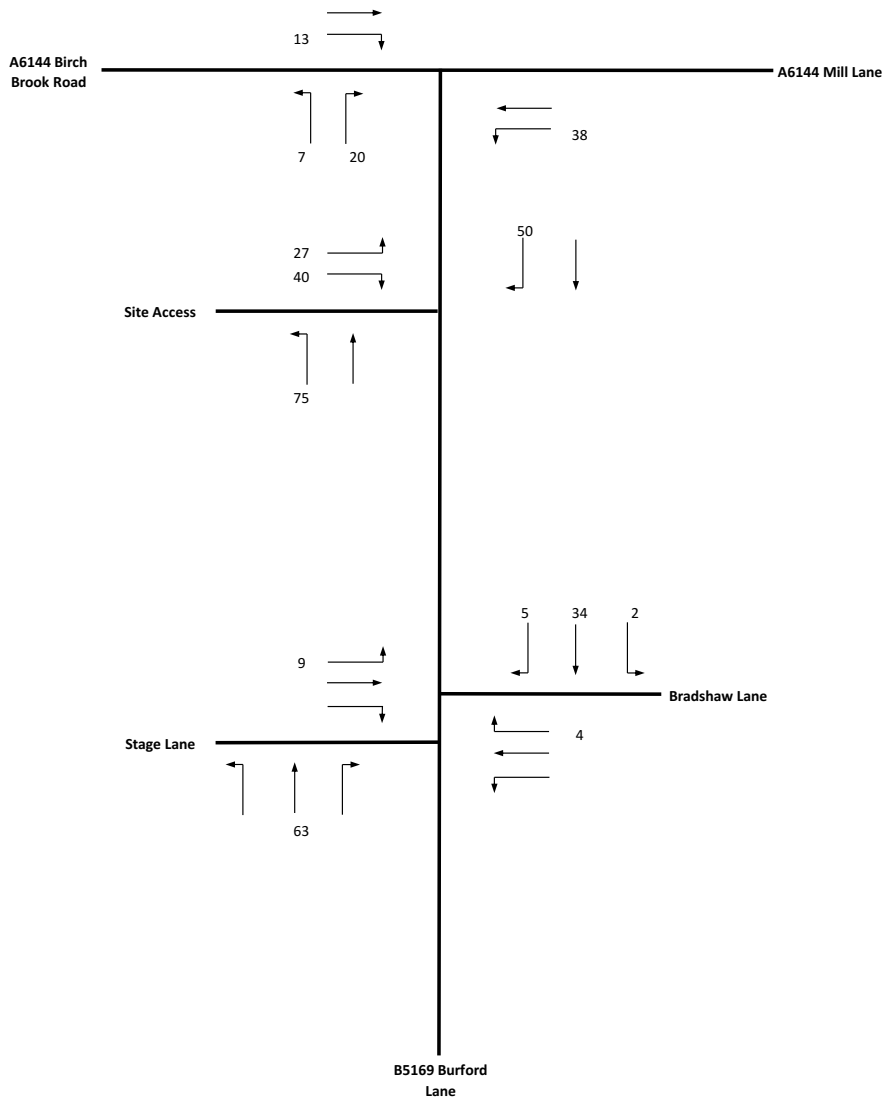


Figure 5 Proposed Trip Distribution  
Weekday AM & PM Peak



ARR 50  
DEP 148

Figure 6 Proposed Residential Development Flows  
Weekday AM Peak (0730 - 0830)



ARR 125  
DEP 67

Figure 7 Proposed Residential Development Flows  
Weekday PM Peak (1630 - 1730)

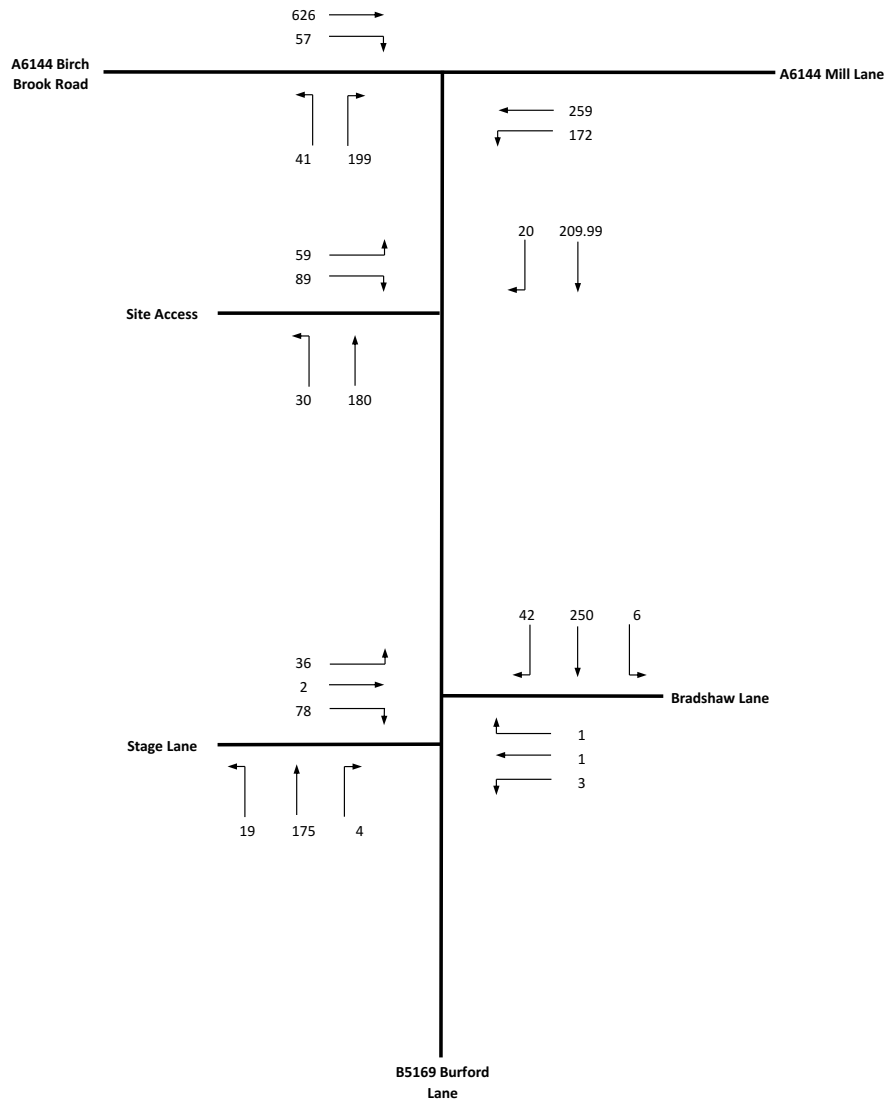


Figure 8 2027 With Development Flows  
Weekday AM Peak (0730 - 0830)

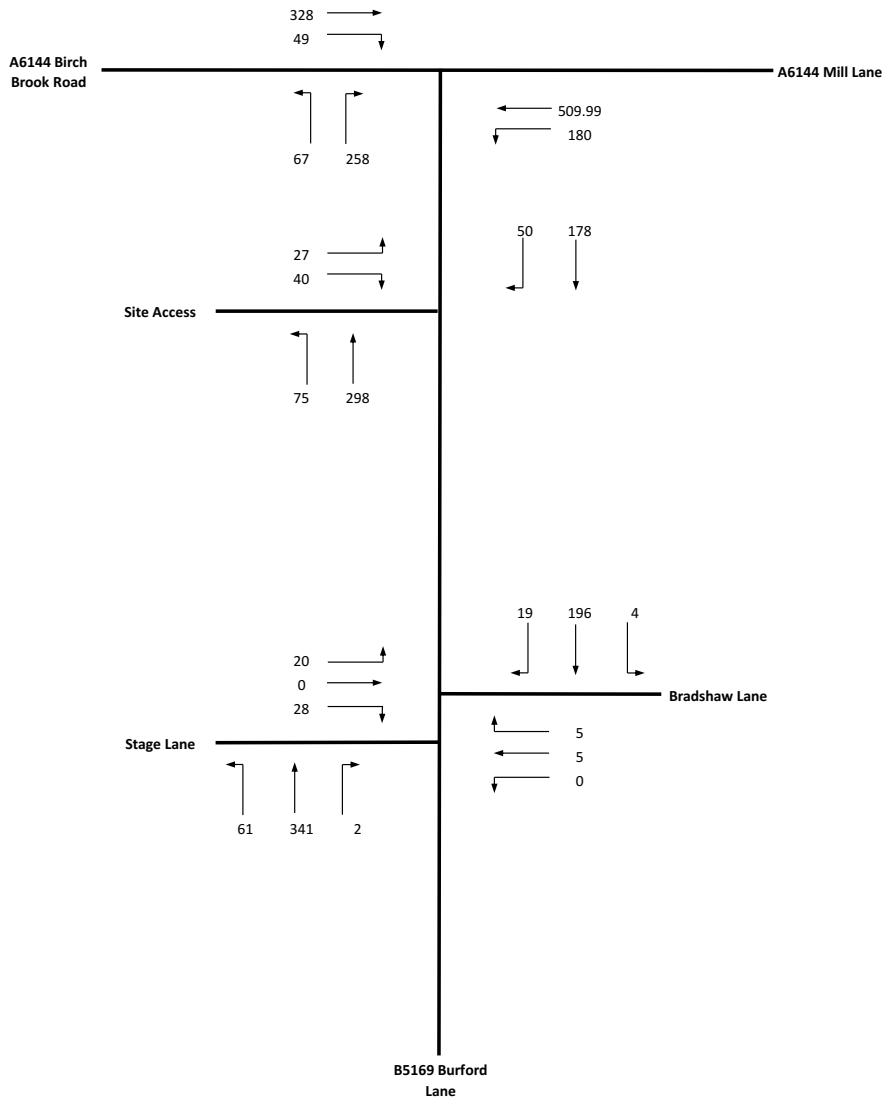


Figure 9 2027 With Development Flows  
Weekday PM Peak (1730 - 1830)