

Site Assessment – Area  
of Search for Mineral  
Development: Land at  
Moss Side Farm, Lapwing  
Lane, between the River  
Mersey and the  
Manchester Ship Canal.

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2018

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# 1 Introduction

## Scope of the study

- 1.1 National guidance requires Minerals Planning Authorities (MPAs) to provide for the future supply of minerals through identification of resources and should be supported by policies to provide clear guidance to operators on where minerals extraction is most likely to be acceptable. Paragraph 207 of the NPPF states that MPAs should plan for a steady and adequate supply of aggregates by making provision for the land-won and other elements of their Local Aggregate Assessment in their minerals plans taking account of the advice of the Aggregate Working Parties and the National Aggregate Co-ordinating Group as appropriate and that such provision should take the form of (in priority order) specific sites, preferred areas and/or areas of search and location criteria as appropriate. Mineral operators are encouraged to offer such sites for consideration at an early stage of plan preparation.
- 1.2 To support the Local Plan Review, Warrington Borough Council (WBC) undertook a call for sites exercise between October and December 2016 in order to identify any potential mineral sites. However, no sites were nominated by consultees for consideration as part of the Local Plan review.
- 1.3 In addition, as part of the Council's assessment of mineral resources in the borough<sup>1</sup>, Urban Vision reviewed the potential sites/areas identified within the previous minerals resource assessment of 2009<sup>2</sup>, including contacting those operators and landowners who originally nominated sites to establish whether they wished the sites to be considered within the Local Plan review. Only one landowner responded requesting their site be considered as part of this latest review as a potential Area of Search for Sand and Gravel. The site location is shown in Appendix 1.
- 1.4 The Council has recognised that if the site is allocated for mineral extraction it may have the potential to impact on the environment within and surrounding the site. As such, this report provides an appraisal of the potential impacts of the proposed allocation of the site upon the environment.

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<sup>1</sup> Urban Vision - Mineral Resource Study and Policy Review (March 2017).

<sup>2</sup> Urban Vision - Study into Minerals Resources in Warrington (November 2009).

## 2. Methodology

### General Approach

- 2.1 The methodology for assessment is based on that recommended in the Council's mineral resource assessment<sup>1</sup>, which was consulted on as part of the Preferred Development Option consultation in August/September 2017. There were no objections received in respect of the proposed methodology and hence it is now regarded as forming an agreed approach to identifying future areas of minerals working in Warrington.
- 2.2 The methodology uses a two stage approach to assessing nominated sites. The first stage considers constraints that are considered to be absolute in normal circumstances (Category 1). The second stage considers constraints (Category 2) include those that the Mineral Planning Authority would normally prefer mineral working did not take place, particularly where it can be demonstrated that adequate reserves exist elsewhere. The category 2 constraints proposed are not necessarily absolute constraints but will inform the assessment of the suitability of an area or not for future minerals development. The constraints are listed in the table below:

<b>Constraints to identification of future locations for mineral development</b>	
<b>Category</b>	<b>Constraint</b>
1	Special Protection Area and Candidate Special Protection Area
	Special Area of Conservation and Potential Area of Conservation
	Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
	Scheduled Ancient Monuments
	Listed Buildings
	National Trust sites
	Sites of Special Scientific Interest
	Grade 1 and 2 agricultural Land
	Country Parks
	Conservation Areas
	Public Open Space
	Registered Parks and Gardens
	Local Nature Reserve
	Ground water sources
	Registered Battlefields
2	Grade 3a agricultural land
	Woodlands
	River valleys
	Settings of registered Parks and Gardens
	Local non statutory designations as set out in the Local Plan

- 2.3 Where appropriate the Council will seek to achieve a buffer zone of 250m from residential properties to protect residents from the noise and dust that can be created through quarrying activities.
- 2.4 In line with Paragraph 146 of the NPPF, greenbelt land has not been included as a constraint for minerals development. This is recognising that minerals can only be worked where they are found.
- 2.5 Areas affected by flood risk have not been excluded as this is something which will be dealt with on a site by site basis through mitigation measures proposed by developers. Paragraph 204(f), requires LPAs to set out detailed environmental criteria in policy(s) to ensure that proposed mineral operations do not have an unacceptable impact on, amongst other things, the natural environment and human health. Flood related information may be used to refine a boundary of a site/area allocation prior to including in a Local Plan but is more likely to be required at the planning application stage or form part of a criteria based development policy.

#### **Stepped Approach**

- 2.6 The impacts on the constraints are assessed by undertaking the six steps identified below:
1. Identify which Category 1 constraints are affected by the proposed site/area allocation.
  2. Identify if there are any residential properties within 250 metres of the proposed site/area allocation.
  3. Understand what impact the allocation of the site might have on any identified constraints.
  4. Identify which Category 2 constraints are affected by the proposed site/area allocation (if no Category 1 constraints identified).
  5. Understand what impact the allocation of the site might have on any identified constraints.
  6. Determine whether the proposed site/area allocation is appropriate in light of the NPPF's tests of soundness.
- 2.7 Assessment of the six steps will be undertaken in accordance with the following guidance:

#### *Step 1: Identifying the Category 1 constraints*

This will involve identifying the constraints within the site and those within the immediate surrounding area that have the potential to be affected if the site is allocated for mineral development within the Council's emerging Local Plan.

*Step 2: Identifying any impact on residential properties*

This will involve identifying any residential properties within the site or the vicinity of the site and applying a 250 metres buffer to them.

*Step 3: Understand what impact the allocation might have on any identified constraints*

Category 1 constraints are assumed to be an absolute constraint under the methodology. Therefore if there are any of these within the site this is likely to result in the site being considered to be unsuitable for mineral development. However, an element of judgement will need to be applied to consider if part of the site/area could be allocated that would not impact on the identified constraint. In addition, consideration will need to be given to identified constraints that are not within the proposed allocation site boundary but are in close proximity to it and what impact the proposed allocation would have on them.

*Step 4: Identifying the Category 2 constraints*

This will involve identifying the constraints within the site and those within the immediate surrounding area that have the potential to be affected if the site is allocated for mineral development within the Council's emerging Local Plan.

*Step 5: Understand what impact the allocation might have on any identified constraints*

Category 2 constraints are not necessarily absolute constraints but will inform the assessment of the suitability of a site/area or not for future minerals development. Therefore, an element of judgement will need to be applied to consider if the site/area or part of the site/area could be allocated that would not impact on the identified constraint. In addition, consideration will need to be given to any identified constraints that are not within the proposed allocation site boundary but are in close proximity to it and what impact the proposed allocation would have on them.

*Step 6: Determine whether the proposed site allocation is appropriate in light of the NPPF's tests of soundness*

Once the constraints have been identified and assessment based on the steps 1 to 5 above, a conclusion will then be reached on whether the potential AoS allocation would reflect national and the planning reason for elimination of any site, or part of a site recorded.

### 3. Assessment

#### Site Area

- 3.1 The proposed Area of Search (AoS) is situated the south west of Warrington. The suburbs of Great Sankey and Penketh lie to the north of the site, whilst the eastern suburbs of Runcorn and the village of Moore lie to the south. The site is irregularly shaped bounded by the River Mersey to the north and west and the Manchester Ship Canal to the south. To the east of the site is Arpley Meadows landfill site, Moore Nature Reserve and Port Warrington, an existing inland port and warehousing facility located on the northern bank of the Manchester Ship Canal and accommodating a range of road-based storage and distribution uses. This land to the east of the site is proposed to deliver approximately 2,000 homes, employment uses and an enhanced port facility and country park.
- 3.2 The site area extends to approximately 190 hectares and consists of relatively flat, agricultural land which includes Moss Side Farm and Upper Moss Side Farm (See Appendix 1).

#### Category 1 Constraints Identification

- 3.3 An initial screening of Category 1 constraints likely to be affected by the potential allocation of the site for mineral development in line with Step 1 was undertaken. All constraints within the proposed AoS and those considered to be in close proximity where recorded along with details of the nature of the constraint. These are recorded in the table below:

<b>Assessment Summary - Category 1 Constraints</b>			
<b>Constraint</b>	<b>Present within site</b>	<b>Present in vicinity</b>	<b>Comments</b>
SPA and candidate SPA		✓	Mersey Estuary SPA located 5km down river from site.
SAC and potential SAC			
AON			
Scheduled Ancient Monuments			
Listed Buildings			
National Trust sites			
Sites of Special Scientific Interest			
Grade 1 and 2 agricultural Land			
Country Parks		✓	No Country Park within the site but

			proposed Country Park immediately to the east on Arpley Landfill site.
Conservation Areas			
Public Open Space		✓	No POS within the site but large of Natural/semi-natural green space (Gateworth Landfill); Green corridor (St Helens Canal) and Outdoor sports facility (Penketh Golf Course) immediately to the north on the opposite side of the River Mersey.
Registered Parks & Gardens			
Local Nature Reserves			
Ground water sources			
Registered Battlefields			

3.4 In addition, to the Category 1 constraints identified, those residential properties within 250 metres of the proposed site/area where identified (Step 2). These are shown on the plan in Appendix 2.

**Analysis of identified Category 1 constraints**

3.5 There are no Category 1 constraints identified within the proposed AoS but three Category 1 constraints are identified as being within close proximity to the Proposed AoS. The identified Category 1 constraints considered to be within close proximity to the proposed AoS are the Mersey Estuary Special Area of Protection, which is located approximately 5km down river from the proposed site; and an area of Natural/semi-natural; a Green Corridor and an Outdoor Sports Facility on the north side of the River Mersey, which are approximately 100metres from the proposed site at the closest points.

3.6 There is also the former Arpley landfill site immediately to the east of the proposed AoS, which has been partially restored and is proposed to be completed and enhanced as part of the emerging Local Plan to create a Country Park.

3.7 Whilst, these constraints are in close proximity of the proposed AoS it is not considered that they would be adversely impacted on to any significant degree by mineral workings if the proposed AoS where to be allocation.

3.8 Whilst, there are no residential properties within 250 metres of the boundary of the proposed AoS, there are two properties actually within the proposed AoS. Applying a 250 metre buffer to these properties would still mean significant portion of site could be allocated.

3.9 Therefore, in conclusion, there are not considered to be any absolute constraints to the allocation of the proposed AoS.



### Category 2 Constraints Identification

- 3.10 Following the assessment of Category 1 constraints concluding that there were no absolute constraints to the allocation of the proposed site/area, the identification of any Category 2 constraints was undertaken in line with Step 4. All constraints within the proposed AoS and those considered to be in close proximity were recorded along with details of the nature of the constraint. These are outlined in the table below:

<b>Assessment Summary - Category 2 Constraints</b>			
<b>Constraint</b>	<b>Present within site</b>	<b>Present in vicinity</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Grade 3a agricultural land			
Woodlands			
River valleys	✓	✓	River Mersey
Settings of registered Parks & Gardens			
Local non statutory designations as set out in the Local Plan	✓	✓	Local Wildlife Site – Moss Side Farm (15ha) Local Wildlife Site – Norton Marsh & Upper Moss Side Fields (50.7ha) Local Wildlife Site – Moore Nature Reserve (101.2ha) (10.56ha within application site) Local Wildlife Site – Upper Mersey Estuary (316ha) Locally Listed building – Moss Side Farm, Lapwing Lane Locally Listed building – Upper Moss Side Farm, Moss Side Lane CHER – Moss Side Cropmark (Ditched Enclosure) Locally Listed building – Ferry Inn, Fiddlers Ferry.

### Analysis of identified Category 2 constraints

- 3.11 There are two types of Category 2 constraints within and in the vicinity of the proposed AoS. These are river valleys and local non-statutory designations.
- 3.12 The proposed AoS is situated in the upper fringes of the estuary of the River Mersey, which lies within the wider river valley that extends from Liverpool in the west to Manchester in the east.

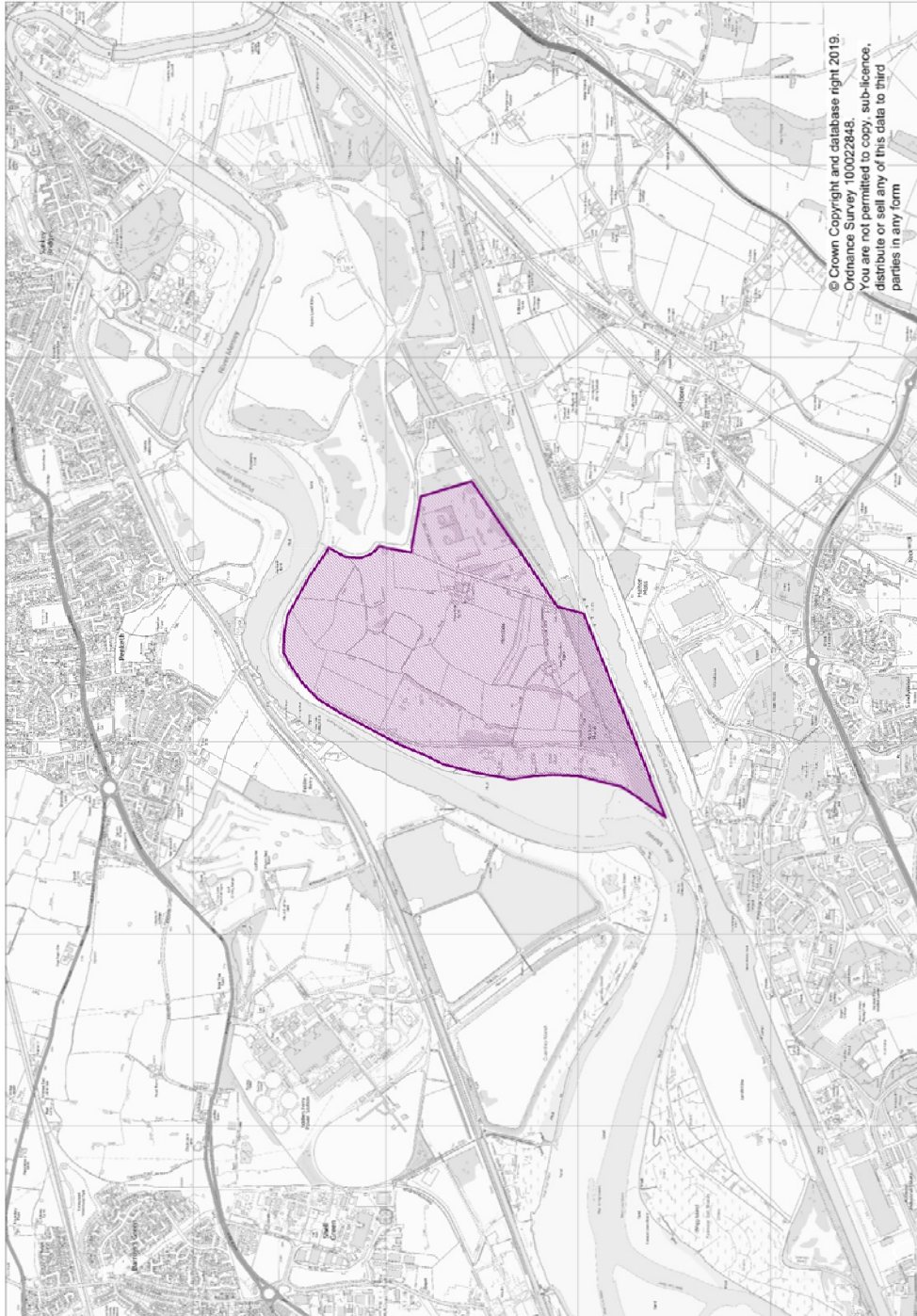
- 3.13 There are two Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) located within the proposed AoS (Moss Side Farm and Norton Marsh & Upper Moss Side Fields) and one (Moore Nature reserve) that is partially within the proposed AoS. The area of covered by these LWSs that lie within the nominated AoS amounts to approximately 76ha, which equates to about 40% of the nominated AoS.
- 3.14 There is another LWS (Upper Mersey Estuary) that abuts the western and northern boundaries of the proposed AoS. This together with Moor Nature Reserve mean that the nominated AoS is almost completely surrounded by locally designated wildlife sites, as well as containing two complete LWSs and part of a third within its boundary.
- 3.15 Also, there is a non-designated archaeological site (Moss Side Cropmark) identified on the Cheshire Historic Environment Record (CHER) that is located within the nominated AoS.
- 3.16 In addition, there are two locally listed buildings (Moss Side Farm and Upper Moss Side Farm) within the nominated AoS and one (Ferry Inn) approximately 100 metres to the north of the AoS on the opposite side of the River Mersey. These identified constraints are shown in Appendix 3.
- 3.17 Whilst, not forming part of the agreed approach to assessing the impact on the environment it should also be noted that there is a Major Accident Hazard Pipeline (MAHP) (NW Ethylene Pipeline) that runs almost the full length of the western portion of the proposed AoS.

#### **4. Conclusion**

- 4.1 This area is not identified in the BGS 1:100,000 Minerals Resource Map as a sand & gravel resource and there is no apparent record of investigations on this land. Whilst, there are no Category 1 constraints that would act as an absolute constraint to the allocation of the site (or parts of it) for mineral development there are two residential properties within the AoS and a number of local non-statutory designations that cover significant areas of the AoS and the areas immediately surrounding it. In addition, there is a MAHP that covers the western portion of the proposed AoS, which would also clearly impact on the potential of the site to be used for mineral extraction.
- 4.2 Given the above, the area at Moss Side Farm, Lapwing Lane is NOT proposed for allocation as an Area of Search for sand and gravel.

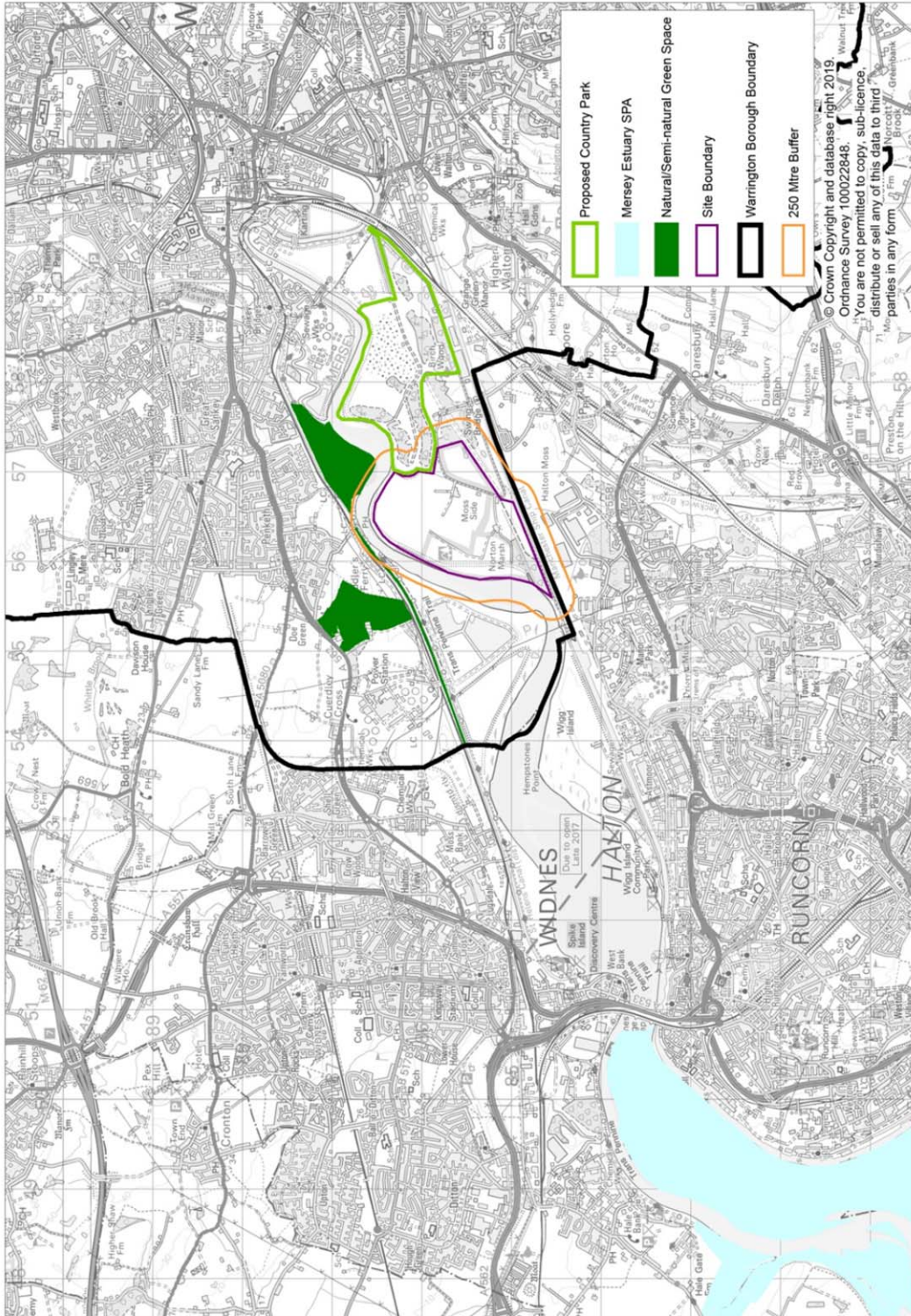
## Appendix 1

### Site Location Plan – Site nominated as Potential Area of Search for Sand and Gravel



## Appendix 2

### Identified Category 1 constraints (and residential properties within 250m)



## Appendix 3

### Identified Category 2 constraints

