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*Submitted September 2017*





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# 1. Introduction

## Overview

The 37.6ha site is promoted to the Warrington Local Plan Review by Berrys on behalf of the landowners [REDACTED]. The site is in close proximity to the strategic motorway network and forms a natural extension of the successful Winwick Quay business park.

This document draws together and updates previous submissions, extending the area that is being promoted for consideration in the Local Plan. It addresses the Council's identified need for a range of employment land to meet demand.

## Previous submissions

33.9ha hectares of the site was originally submitted to the 2014 'Call for Sites' and was given SHLAA reference 2590. In light of the Arup Green Belt Assessment (2016) the southern 13.3 hectares was promoted in December 2016 for mixed uses and was given reference R18/140. The Council's subsequent Green Belt Assessment (July 2017) identified the northern half of the site as having a weak contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt. The landowner has therefore reverted to the larger site, together with adjoining land in his ownership, which is promoted for mixed uses in three phases.

## Strategic Location

The site lies 550 metres from the A49 and junction 9 of the M62, providing an attractive location for businesses and helping protect the borough's prosperity and economic position in an increasingly competitive world.

## The site and surroundings

Mill Lane defines the western edge of the site, with the railway line beyond. Delph Lane is on the southern boundary, parallel to the M62. To the east of the site are a large B&Q retail unit, a livery yard and residential development. To the north is Hollins Park Hospital and Watery Lane.

## Potential uses

The southern part of the site (phase 1) is promoted as a suitable extension to the Winwick Quay business park, suitable for office and industrial development (use classes B1, B2 & B8) and available for immediate development. The central part of the site (phase 2) and northern edges (phase 3) are suitable for employment, health-related and residential uses and will help Warrington Borough Council meet its long-term development needs.



## 2. Green Belt Review

### Green Belt parcels

The *Green Belt Assessment* (2016) considered parcel VR5 to have a 'moderate' contribution to the Green Belt. The Arup Study incorrectly consider the parcel to have "long line views" but this is not the case, due to mature trees that fringe the site on its northern and western boundaries and which make it impossible to see the wider countryside from the parcel.

The Council's *Green Belt Extra Assessments* (July 2017) assessed the residual area of SHLAA site 2590 as having a '**weak**' contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt, with durable boundaries. This is the more accurate assessment.

The Council's assessment for site 2590 states:

*"In line with the methodology, the site has been judged to make a weak overall contribution. The site makes a moderate contribution to safeguarding the countryside from encroachment as although it supports a strong-moderate degree of openness, the boundaries between the site and the settlement are durable, and the boundaries between the site and the countryside are also predominately durable. The site makes a weak contribution to checking unrestricted sprawl and from preventing towns from merging. The site does not contribute to preserving the setting of historic towns."*

### Safeguarded land

The National Planning Policy Framework requires any review of Green Belt boundaries to have, "*regard to their intended permanence in the long term, so that they should be capable of enduring beyond the plan period*" (NPPF para 84). Consequently this once-in-a-generation Green Belt review needs to consider the release of enough Green Belt land to cater for two plan periods, as neighbouring local planning authorities have done, in order to be consistent with the Framework.

### Decisions on Green Belt release

Contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt can only be part of the decision-making process. Equally important are sustainability considerations, as required by the National Planning Policy Framework which states, "*When drawing up or reviewing Green Belt boundaries local planning authorities should take account of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development.*" (NPPF 84)

The site's contribution to a sustainable pattern of development is therefore a crucial element of the decision in the Local Plan regarding its suitability for removal from the Green Belt.







### 3. Sustainability

The site scores relatively well against the councils sustainability criteria, key aspects of which are highlighted below and summaries by colour.

#### **Economy and Regeneration**

Development of the site for employment-related land uses will benefit the local economy and provide a natural extension to the successful Winwick Quay employment area to enable local companies to expand.

#### **Health and Wellbeing**

Landscaping and new tree planting around the site provides for new pedestrian routes and a liner park.

#### **Accessibility**

The site is within 500 meters of the A49 which leads directly to junction 9 of the M62, there is a frequent bus service on the A49 with 6 buses an hour, namely Arriva bus 329 to St. Helens twice hourly; and Network Warrington bus No. 19 every hour; and Network Warrington bus No. 22 every hour.

#### **Housing**

The site is being promoted for employment uses, but we are open to discussion on any other uses that the Council consider appropriate, including housing.

#### **Natural Resources**

Any development will be designed to ensure an overall enhancement of the natural environment. The majority of the site is over 100 metres from an AQMA and 0.05% of the site overlaps with contaminated land, which can be remediated. There is some grade 2 agricultural land. The site does not lie within a groundwater source protection zone and does not overlap with flood zones 2 or 3.

#### **Built and Natural Heritage**

The character of the site includes mature tree belts, which will be retained and enhanced by any development. There is only one listed building, the Lower Alder Root Farmhouse which lies to the far north-west of the site, but otherwise the site does not affect any heritage designations.

#### **Biodiversity and Geodiversity**

The site will not impact on any national designations, with the site over 3km from the nearest SSSI and over 6km from the nearest SAC/ SPA. There are TPOs on the site boundaries, but these would be respected and enhanced as part of a comprehensive landscaping scheme.

#### **Climate change and resource use**

The site is predominantly greenfield, however the southern half would not involve the loss of any agricultural land because it is in equestrian use.







## 4. Suitability

This site is particularly suitable for commercial development due to its proximity to Winwick Quay and Junction 9 of the M62 & the A49.

This site is very well served by existing infrastructure. It is relatively flat and well screened on its northern and western sides by mature hedgerows. Adjoining uses include a range of commercial and health-related businesses.

This site scores very highly against the criteria in the Council's *Economic Development Needs Assessment*, particularly against the 5 'market led' indicators:

EDNA site suitability	Score	Market-led
Road proximity – strategic: site adjacent to motorway	10	10
Road proximity – local: site within 1km of the A49	10	10
Prominence: site adjacent to, and visible from, M62	10	10
Public transport: site within 0.5km of a bus route	10	10
Planning status: available, subject to planning	1	
Services availability: available with no abnormal costs	7	
Constraints: electricity pylons on site	9	
Environmental setting: good quality/ greenfield location	10	10
Flexibility: site shape and ability to sub-divide	10	10
Availability: available to develop within 1-5 years	6	
<b>Total</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>50</b>

Compared to the sites included in the EDNA's realistic supply (table 23, reproduced below), this site scores more highly than any other competing site.

**EDNA Table 23 – Employment Sites Scoring (Realistic Supply)**

Site Ref	Name	Revised Site, ha	Score max 100	Market-led sub-total
Omega 7C	Plot 7C Omega South	7.65	78	33
Omega 1 4(L)	Omega North – Parcel 4(L)	2.06	76	40
381	Plots & Quadrant, Birchwood Park	11.66	75	37
336	Land off Bewsey Road	0.15	74	26
367	The Quadrant (S), Birchwood Park	1.87	74	32
-	Omega Phases 1 and 2 Remainder	26.27	71	46
357	Phase 1 Remainder – Lingley Mere	2.35	70	36
356	Gemini 8 Retail Park, Westbrook	5.21	66	33
360	Land at Stanley Street	0.05	64	32
15 A(c)	Phase 3 – Lingley Mere	3.62	64	38
Omega Zone 7	Omega South – Zone 7	33.70	63	35
382	Benson Road, Birchwood	0.24	59	20
36c	Gemini 16, Westbrook	2.20	52	29
309	Forrest Way Business Park	7.50	47	22
<b>R18/141</b>	<b>Land west of Delph Farm, Winwick</b>	<b>20.76</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>50</b>







## 5. Available and Deliverable

### Availability for commercial development

The site is in one ownership, held by [REDACTED]. Their intention is to bring forward development on the site as quickly as possible.

Berrys are a property consultancy company with six offices across the UK providing a wide range of services, including 9 chartered planners. If allocated in the Local Plan the site will be immediately marketed for development. Berrys' development agency team are very experienced at bringing land to the market and in structuring suitable land deals with a wide range of developers and end users. We are also able to promote leasehold development, with Berrys' commercial agency team having wide experience of managing commercial buildings on behalf of landowners.

### Freehold and leasehold

The site would be marketed as available both for freehold and leasehold development.

### Timescales

The site is readily developable with no land ownership problems. The timescales for development are:

- Phase 1—years 1-5
- Phase 2—years 6-10
- Phase 3—years 11-15

### Variety of sites

The Local Plan needs a variety and choice of sites of differing sizes, locations and characteristics. The Council's *Economic Development Needs Assessment* (October 2016) recommended that:

*“The Borough should also have a buffer to reflect a choice of sites by size, quality and location and to provide a continuum of supply beyond the end of the 2037 period. This also makes some allowance for the loss of further employment land to non B-Class uses over the period to 2037.”* (EDNA paragraph 10.41)

This site will assist Warrington Borough Council in fulfilling the Core planning principles set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, and in particular:

- *“To identify and then meet the housing, business and other development needs of an area, and respond positively to wider opportunities for growth. Plans should take account of market signals... taking account of the needs of the residential and business communities;*
- *Actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable.”* (NPPF para 17)

This site is well served by infrastructure and ready to meet development needs.



**Junction of Mill Lane and Delph Lane**



**The Sankey Valley Trail between Warrington & Newton-le-Willows**



**Bus stop on the nearby A49**



Site is screened behind the trees

Pylons on the site

**View of the site from the railway bridge on the Old Alder Lane 15**



## 6. Opportunities and Considerations

### Considerations & Opportunities

**Electricity Pylons** – the site is crossed by high voltage pylons. This will form part of a linear landscaped zone providing a pedestrian route parallel to Mill Lane.

**Surface water** – There is some ponding on the site, which will be managed through the creation of attenuation ponds as part of an attractive landscaping scheme.

**Current grazing uses** – the southern part of the site is in equestrian use and its development will therefore not involve the loss of any productive agricultural land.

**Biodiversity** – ecological enhancements will include a balancing pond and new planting with suitable native species to encourage an overall increase in the biodiversity of the site as a benefit of development.

**Tree-lined eastern corridor** – There are no formal public rights of way but a private unsurfaced road along the eastern edge of the site is regularly used by horses and pedestrians. This existing tree-lined corridor through the site will be retained.

**Tree preservation orders** – All existing trees will be retained and development kept at a distance from their root protection zones.

**Landscape** - The site is well contained in the landscape, being surrounded by trees on all sides.

**Cycling routes** - The Sankey Valley Trail provides an off-road cycle link to Warrington and Newton-le-Willows.

The Council's own Site Assessments found few constraints:

Constraints	Council's assessment		Good/ bad
	Southern parcel R18/141	incl. northern parcel 2590	
Floodzone 2 & 3:	No	No	✓
Green Belt:	Yes	Yes	*
TPO Issues:	TPOs adj. north	TPOs	*
Nature Designations:	None	None	✓
Conservation Areas:	No	No	✓
Statutory Listed Buildings:	No	No	✓
Locally Listed Buildings:	No	No	✓
Archaeological Assessment:	No	No	✓
Scheduled Ancient Monuments:	No	No	✓
Strategic Road Network Access:	None	No	✓
Local Highway Access:	Delph Lane / Mill Lane	Watery Lane / Hollins Lane	✓
Access comments:	Access from Delph Lane (S) and Mill Lane (W)	Existing access onto both local highways	✓
Neighbouring Uses:	Retail / Farm/ Medical	Agricultural	✓
Air Quality Management Areas:	No	No	✓
Agricultural Land Classification:	equestrian	2	*
Potentially Contaminated Land:	Yes	No	✓
Hazardous Installation Zone:	No	No	✓
Public Rights of Way:	No	No	✓
Green Belt Parcel (WR6) Result	Weak	Weak	✓







## 7. Development concept

This 37.6 hectare site is easily developable, with no over-riding constraints. The proposed development of the site includes the following:

Site characteristics	Response
Mill Lane access & Winwick Quay extension	An access point off Mill Lane will be provided for traffic from this direction
Delph Lane Access	A number of options exist, either using the existing access to Delph Farm or widening Mill Lane beyond the B&Q delivery yard.
Electricity Pylons	Utilise the buffer zone beneath the pylons for utilities, landscaping and car parking
Surface Water ponding	Attenuation ponds will provide an attractive water feature and new wildlife habitat
Tree Preservation Orders at Co-ney Grove Woods	No development within the root protection zones of any trees.
Large site subdivided by tree belt	The mature trees form a natural boundary between phases 1 & 2
Delph Farm Livery and Menage	There is potential to re-use existing buildings on this site
Local residential development	The landscaping scheme will provide suitable buffers and attractive areas of public open space to benefit all.

### Land uses

The site is promoted for a number of uses, including office, commercial, industrial (B1, B2, B8 uses), sui generis and health related developments.

The land owner is prepared to be flexible if the Council also wish to consider other uses including residential.

### Environmental Enhancements

Development will be accompanied by provision of attractive landscaping including attenuation ponds and the retention of all existing trees, enhancing the environment for people and wildlife alike.

### Infrastructure

The site is well served by utilities and by transport links, including frequent public transport. Development will make efficient use of Warrington's existing assets.

Development on this site reduces the amount of employment land required elsewhere, enabling the Council to maximise infrastructure contributions from residential development with higher values in other locations.







## 8. Conclusions

### Strategic Location

This site provides a natural extension to the successful Winwick Quay employment area, making it attractive to a range of commercial users and highly deliverable.

The site has excellent access to the strategic road network, being within 500 metres of the A49 and Junction 9 of the M62. Developable land in close proximity to motorway junctions is in relatively short supply and offers competitive advantages that the Council cannot afford to ignore.

The site makes only a weak overall contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt.

### Suitable, Available & Deliverable

The site is highly attractive to the market and has no significant site constraints. It is in one family's ownership and can be delivered within 5 years. The Council can therefore be certain that it will come forward to produce high quality development accompanied by environmental enhancements.

### Benefits

This 37.6 hectare site helps the Council provide a variety of sites and locations suitable to accommodate the growth of Warrington's economy and services into the future. It can help the Council meet its development needs for a range of uses, including B1, B2, B8, sui generis and health-related developments in a sustainable location that is already well served by infrastructure. In summary, this site offers:

- A natural extension to Winwick Quay;
- Excellent accessibility to the strategic road network;
- Close to frequent public transport;
- Well served by existing infrastructure;
- Willing landowners;
- High attractiveness to the market using EDNA criteria;
- Opportunities to create attractive public open spaces.

The landowners welcome on-going engagement with the Council, and will provide any further information requested as the Local Plan Review progresses.

