

[REDACTED]

Dear Sir/Madam

Please see attached Story Homes representations to the Warrington Preferred Options Consultation and Call for Sites Consultation which closes at 5pm today.

To respond directly to the Preferred Options document we attach:

- Written representation 'Warrington Pref Opt Rep – Runcorn Rd, Higher Walton'
- Runcorn Road, Higher Walton - Story Homes vision document (please note a hard copy will be submitted to the council on Monday)

To respond directly to the call for sites consultation we attach:

- Higher Walton, Land at Runcorn Road – SHLAA site submission (copy version)
- Higher Walton, Land at Runcorn Road – SHLAA Location Plan

(For original pdf versions of SHLAA proforma please contact me if required).

Should you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Please acknowledge receipt of this email submission.

Kind Regards

[REDACTED]  
**Story Homes Ltd**

Kensington House, Ackhurst Business Park, Foxhole Road, Chorley, Lancashire, PR7 1NY

[REDACTED]  
[www.storyhomes.co.uk](http://www.storyhomes.co.uk)

[REDACTED]

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SHLAA Site Ref:	

# 'Call for Sites'

## Warrington Borough Council Local Plan Review

### Call for Sites Registration Form

October 2016

**Please note this 'Call for Sites' is for five or more dwellings or economic development on sites of 0.25 ha (or 500sqm of floor space) and above, Gypsy, Traveller and Show People and Minerals and Waste sites.**

The identification of sites does not imply that the Council considers that the site is suitable for development, either now or in the future. It cannot be taken as representing either an intention to allocate these sites, or as a material consideration in the determination of a planning application.

Potential sites that have been identified will be further tested through the Plan-making process, including through the Spatial Distribution and Site Assessment Process, Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment, several stages of public participation and independent examination.

Please also note that all the responses and information received as part of the 'Call for Sites' will be published and made available for public viewing as part of the open and transparent Plan making process.

**NOTE:** Please read the accompanying guidance note [here](#) before completing this form and complete a **separate** form for each site that you are submitting to the Council.

***Please return your completed form and any accompanying supporting material to Planning Policy, Warrington Borough Council no later than 5.00pm on Monday 05<sup>th</sup> December 2016.***


By e-mail: [ldf@warrington.gov.uk](mailto:ldf@warrington.gov.uk)

By post: Planning Policy, Warrington Borough Council, New Town House, Buttermarket Street, Warrington, WA1 2NH

Should you require further advice and guidance on completing this form, please contact the Planning Policy Team by telephone on 01925 442841 or by e-mail to [ldf@warrington.gov.uk](mailto:ldf@warrington.gov.uk)

## (1) Your Details

Please provide your contact details and those of your agent (if applicable). Where provided, we will use your Agent's details as our primary contact.

	Your details	Your Agent's details	
Name			
Position			
Organisation			
Address			
		Town	
		Postcode	
Telephone			
Email address			

## (2) Site Details

Please provide the details of the site you are suggesting. If you are suggesting more than one site, please use a separate form.

Name of site /other names it's known by	Land at Runcorn Road, Higher Walton	
Address	Land at Runcorn Road	
	Town	Higher Walton
	Postcode	WA4 5QR
Ordnance Survey Grid Reference	Easting : 359032	Northing : 384842
Site area (hectares)		
Net developable area (hectares)		
What is your interest in the site? (please tick one)	Owner <input type="checkbox"/>	Lessee <input type="checkbox"/>
	Prospective Purchaser <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Neighbour <input type="checkbox"/>
	Other <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Please state: Option to buy

**Please Note:** It is essential that you provide a map showing the site's location and detailed boundaries for each submission.

**(3a) Proposed future use(s)**

Please indicate the preferred use that you would like the site to be considered for. Please also indicate any other uses you would consider acceptable. If you wish the site to be considered for a mix of uses, please tick all uses that apply.

	Residential	Gypsy & Travellers	Employment	Retail	Leisure	Other*
Preferred future use	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Alternative future use(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Potential Capacity	houses: 450	Number of Pitches:	SqM	SqM	SqM	SqM
	or flats:					
Employment Use Class (E.g. B1)						
* If "Other", please indicate which use(s):						
Potential Density	Approximately 30 Dwellings per Hectare					
	Has any design, viability, master planning work or other studies been undertaken for any proposed use?			Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	

**(3b) Proposed future use(s) - Minerals and Waste**

Details:

#### (4) Site Ownership

Please record the site ownership details. If there are more than three owners, please record the fourth owner, etc. on a separate sheet. Please indicate the extent of individual landholding(s) on the site map.

If you do not know who owns the site, please state so below.

	Owner 1	Owner 2	Owner 3
Name			
Address			
	Town		
	Postcode		

Or: I do not know who owns the site

Has the owner (or each owner) indicated support for proposed redevelopment?

Please also record these details for the 4<sup>th</sup> and subsequent owners (where necessary).

Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Are there any Restrictive Covenants & Ransom Strips affecting the site?

No

#### (5) Market Interest

Please choose the most appropriate category below to indicate what level of market interest there is in the site:

		Any comments
Site is owned by a developer	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Site under option to a developer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Site is under option to Story Homes
Enquiries received	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Site is being marketed	<input type="checkbox"/>	
None	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Not known	<input type="checkbox"/>	

The site is under option to Story Homes, a family owned five star house builder based in the North West of England. Story Homes have multiple developments across the North of England and Southern Scotland, with an emphasis on high quality family homes that respond sensitively to local character and are set within attractive landscaped areas of open space.

The site is in an excellent market area and subject to policy change Story Homes will bring this site forward for development as soon as possible.

**(6) Site Condition**

Please record the current use(s) of the site (or for vacant sites, the previous use, if known) and the neighbouring land uses.

Current use(s)		Agricultural	
Neighbouring Uses		North; Industrial and Agricultural, East; Agricultural, South; Agricultural, West; Agricultural	
If vacant	Previous use(s)		
	Date last used		

What proportion of the site is made up of buildings, and what proportion is (open) land?

Proportion covered by buildings	0.83 %	Proportion not covered by buildings	99.17 %
---------------------------------	--------	-------------------------------------	---------

If there are buildings on the site, please answer the following questions:

How many buildings are there on the site?	2	buildings
What proportion of the buildings are currently in use?	% in use: 100	%
	% derelict:	%
	% vacant:	%
Are any existing buildings on the site proposed to be converted?	No	

For the **parts of the site not covered by buildings**, please answer these questions:

What proportion of the land is currently in active use?	100	%
What proportion is <b>greenfield</b> (not previously developed)?	100	% (A)*
What proportion is <b>previously developed</b> and cleared?	0	% (B)*
What proportion is <b>previously developed</b> but not cleared? (e.g. demolition spoil, etc.)	0	% (C)*

\* A plus B plus C should add to 100%.

Please provide any additional comments on a separate sheet if necessary.

## (7) Constraints to Development

Please tell us about any known constraints that will affect development for the proposed use, details of what action is required, how long it will take and what progress has been made.

Please use a separate sheet where necessary to provide details. If using separate sheets, it would be helpful to make reference there to the particular constraint, e.g (7)(e) – Drainage.

	Yes, No or Don't know	Nature and severity of constraint *	Action needed, timescales and progress	Confirmed by technical study or by service provider?	
				Yes	No
a) Land contamination	No			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Land stability	No			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Mains water supply	No			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Mains sewerage	No			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Drainage, flood risk	No			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Tree Preservation Orders	Yes	Minor severity (please refer to councils Development Framework document).		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Electricity supply	No			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h) Gas supply	No			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i) Telecommunications	No			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j) Highways	No			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k) Ownership, leases etc.	No			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l) Ransom strips, covenants	No			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
m) Other (Please provide details)				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



## **(8) Site Availability**

*Please indicate when the site may be available*

Excluding planning policy constraints, when do you believe this site could be available for development?

Immediately Yes (Note: to be "immediately available", a site must be cleared, unless being considered for conversions.)

If not immediately, please state when it could be available:

If the site is not available immediately, please explain why – e.g. the main constraint(s) or delaying factor(s) and actions necessary to remove these:

## **(9) Any Other Information**

Please tell us anything else of relevance regarding this site if not already covered above that will ensure that it contributes positively to the achievement of sustainable development. Please use a separate sheet/s if necessary.

Please refer to Story Homes (WYG) submitted representations to the Preferred Development Options consultation in addition to the Supplementary Vision Document.

This site will contribute to market housing, affordable housing and public open space, in addition to investment in the local community facilities. (Please see attached Location Plan)

**Planning Policy– Warrington Borough Council,  
New Town House, Buttermarket Street, Warrington, WA1 2NH**

[ldf@warrington.gov.uk](mailto:ldf@warrington.gov.uk)

01925 442841

This form is available in other formats or languages on request.



# Warrington Preferred Development Option

## Land at Runcorn Road, Higher Walton

Representation by Story Homes and [REDACTED]

September 2017



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## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This document presents Story Homes representation response to the Warrington Preferred Option consultation as part of the Local Plan Review by Warrington Borough Council (WBC).
- 1.1.2 Story Homes have an interest in land located at **Runcorn Road in Higher Walton**, which is the subject of this representation.
- 1.1.3 Please refer to Figure 1 to identify the site location. This is a sustainable site which we believe can make a significant positive contribution to helping meet Warrington's housing need. The representation is being made therefore to support the delivery of the proposed Warrington South-West Sustainable Urban Extension, which is within the Council's preferred option for growth. This will include the delivery of new housing to meet the needs of the Borough, with the retention of surrounding Green Belt land where appropriate. We consider the land at Runcorn Road to be a suitable and sustainable site to meet housing needs. We therefore propose the release of this site from the Green Belt and its allocation for housing.



- 1.1.4 WYG have been appointed by Story Homes and have prepared this representation on the behalf of Story Homes and the landowner, [REDACTED]. A wider team of specialists have been appointed and are providing supporting work streams that are summarised within this representation.
- 1.1.5 This document is structured to look first at the Preferred Development Option consultation



document, followed by a look at several key supporting evidence base documents, before then assessing the merits of the site.

- 1.1.6 We have also prepared a 'Vision Document' for the site. This is a visual, attractively presented A3 document that summarises key points from the representation in a shortened, non-technical and easy-to-read format, alongside relevant supporting images. The vision document is intended to support this representation (and is attached to the submission), and are chiefly intended for a wider community and stakeholder audience.

## 1.2 About Story Homes

- 1.2.1 The Story Difference – comprising a commitment to design quality, place-making and customer experience – will be instrumental in delivering an exemplary new development which Warrington Council can be proud of.
- 1.2.2 Story Homes is a privately owned housebuilder. Founded by Fred Story in 1987, it has a long and successful reputation of building quality and high specification homes across the North of England and South of Scotland. The family owned business has grown in size and status over the years but remains grounded, built on its original ethos of 'doing the right thing' and creating a brand synonymous with quality.
- 1.2.3 For nearly 30 years Story Homes has been the name most often associated with aspirational homes for sale throughout Cumbria, the North East and Lancashire. A passion for quality and excellence has seen Story Homes become a multi-award winning UK property developer; with modern and attractive homes instantly inspiring buyers.
- 1.2.4 Story Homes have been awarded the top '5 star' rating in the house building industry's annual customer satisfaction survey for the 4th year running since becoming eligible. Story Homes' success is underpinned by a determination to understand the needs of communities where we build and a goal to deliver design quality and high quality building specifications that enhance locations.
- 1.2.5 Story Homes' presence in the North West is growing significantly. They have been awarded 3 UK Property awards including 'Best Residential Development' in 2016 and 2015 for their sites, Brookwood Park in Kirkham and High Wood in Lancaster. In addition, they were also awarded 'North West Housebuilder of the Year' at the North West Insider Property awards in January 2017.
- 1.2.6 Story Homes strives to go that extra mile by:



## Representation for Story Homes

- Employing local people and supporting local trade
- Using local materials where possible
- Enrolling new apprentices into their 'Story Apprentice Scheme'. Story Homes will directly employ the apprentice on completion of the scheme or will support the candidate in setting-up their own business that would subsequently be a sub-contractor to Story Homes.
- Enrolling new Graduates to the 'Story Graduate Scheme' across our departments seeking new talent and fresh ideas.
- Supporting local communities and being a good neighbour in the communities we impact upon
- Building beautiful homes that continue to look great in years to come and enhance communities
- Providing 'affordable' homes for local people
- Collecting detailed feedback from customers and identifying and taking action on areas for improvement



### **2.0 General Commentary on Preferred Development Option**

2.1.1 This section presents Story Homes' response to the Local Plan Preferred Development Option (Regulation 18 Consultation) published in July 2017. This principally concerns strategic approaches to meeting housing needs across the Borough.

### **2.2 DCLG Consultation Proposals on Objectively Assessed Need (OAN)**

2.2.1 Story Homes also wish to provide some interim commentary on the proposed Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) consultation paper 'Planning for the right homes in the right places: consultation proposals' released Thursday 14th September.

2.2.2 The Government have announced proposals to simplify the calculation of OAN, reducing the time and cost for LPA's in arriving at their housing need figure and to encourage transparency and certainty for members of the public. We do not wish to go into detail here about the implication of the methodology in assessing housing need through the proposed formula; rather we only wish to support Warrington Council in their preparation of a local plan that seeks to balance housing delivery with economic growth.

2.2.3 We support the Council's economic aspirations and transition from new town to 'new city' and we would encourage the Council to maintain the envisaged housing target as set out in the Preferred Development Option going forward to submission stage of the Local Plan. Within the consultation document, DCLG encourage deviation from the proposed approach where, as a result of strategic infrastructure or increased employment, an LPA wishes to increase the housing requirement to realise its ambitions. DCLG confirm that they propose to amend planning guidance so that a Planning Inspector is advised to work on the assumption that this approach is sound (Para 46).

2.2.4 Story Homes will continue to support Warrington's growth aspirations and encourage the Council to maintain their proposed housing requirement through to the submission of the local plan. This will realise social and economic benefits throughout the Borough in addition to reducing any potential delay to the preparation and adoption of Warrington's Local Plan.

### **2.3 Meeting Housing Need – General Comments**

2.3.1 Story Homes support the identified OAN requirement to provide 1,113 new homes per year in the period 2017-37. Once the 5% buffer and provision for a backlog of 847 units is applied this requirement becomes 1,211 new homes per annum (in accordance with Table 1, p16, of



## Representation for Story Homes

the Preferred Development Option). We note that the Council conclude that Green Belt release will be required to meet this target and we agree with and support this conclusion.

- 2.3.2 Achieving the number of homes required within the plan period relies on a significant increase in the scale of housing delivery. The rate of 1,211 homes per year is approximately double the rate of annual provision over the last seven years (see below). However, it must be noted that the figure is lower than the rate of annual provision in the pre-recession years of 2006/07 and 2007/08. It is therefore clear that Warrington can accommodate and then sustain these rates of housebuilding which will coincide with the Council's economic growth aspirations.

**Table 2.1 - Previous rates of housebuilding completions (extracted from 2015 SHLAA Final Report Table 3.8 and Annual Monitoring Report 2016)**

Year	Completions
2006/07	1,362
2007/08	1,565
2008/09	633
2009/10	388
2010/11	527
2011/12	600
2012/13	647
2013/14	693
2014/15	687
2015/16	595

- 2.3.3 In order to meet this increase in the scale of delivery we believe that it will be very important to prioritise the release of the most deliverable sites, especially for the first five years of the Plan period. These are likely to be greenfield sites, relatively free of constraints, and located in attractive market areas. Green Belt sites put forward in the Call for Sites exercise, such as land at Runcorn Road, Higher Walton, would make a good candidate for a priority site.
- 2.3.4 The proposed strategy (as set out in Table 1 in the Preferred Development Option) relies on



## Representation for Story Homes

Green Belt sites being capable of delivering 440 units per year (8,791 in the 20 year plan period) and sites within the urban area delivering 771 units per year (15,429 in the plan period); result in an overall housebuilding rate of 1,211 units per year. We believe that this balance, with only 36% of the sites being located in the Green Belt, will not enable the required housebuilding delivery rate to be met. We also believe that the capacity of urban land has been overestimated (see 2.3.8 below).

- 2.3.5 In order to meet the required annual delivery rate we therefore believe that a greater number of Green Belt sites need to be identified for delivery in the first 5 years of the plan period in particular and that the ratio of Green Belt sites needs to substantially increased from 36% of the allocated land.
- 2.3.6 Allowing an appropriate buffer will also be important in helping to ensure that this ambitious delivery target can be met. At present the strategy allows only for the 5% buffer that is required by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). There is a very real risk that sites not being promoted by a developer may not come forward at the rate envisaged, especially if a high reliance on the urban area is maintained. A buffer that offers flexibility then becomes crucial, especially for the first five-year period. We believe that the Council's strategy should be flexible enough to allow Safeguarded Land to come forward within the Plan period if allocated sites are not proving deliverable within the required timescale. We provide further commentary on this under Safeguarded Land below.

### **Response to Evidence Base**

- 2.3.7 We note that the **Strategic Housing Market Assessment** (SHMA) has been updated following the Issues and Options Stage consultation. We welcome the fact that the economic activity rate forecast now more closely reflects best practice and as a result generates a more realistic picture of Objectively Assessed Need (OAN).
- 2.3.8 With regard to the 2015 **Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment** (SHLAA), we support the use of variable developable area ratios (75%, 90% and 100%) to estimate site capacity. This provides a useful 'rule of thumb' to estimate collective capacity across many sites. However, when more information is known about individual sites this should be used to provide a more accurate estimate of capacity that respond to site conditions. We will seek to work efficiently with constraints and opportunities to maximise the developable area within our site, subject to creating a development of appropriate character. Similarly, different densities of development will be appropriate for different sites, as will differing build rates. This can then inform a more accurate estimate of total capacity for the subsequent

Local Plan stage. We have provided such information with regard to our site in Section 7 of this document.

- 2.3.9 **Urban Land Capacity Study** – we note that the Preferred Option has been informed by the Urban Land Capacity Study in assessing the amount of housing that can potentially be accommodated in the inner urban area of Warrington. Whilst we support the principle of maximising the capacity of housing on brownfield development in the urban area, we have concerns with this Study, which we feel significantly overestimates the amount of development that could be accommodated within the urban area. As a result, we consider that more land will need to be released from the Green Belt than is currently proposed. These concerns are explained in Section 6 of this document.
- 2.3.10 **Green Belt Assessment** – the land at Runcorn Road in Higher Walton lies within the south-western part of the large WR65 land allocation. It also includes land, south of Runcorn Road, which has not been the subject of parcel assessment. The overall assessment for parcel WR65 is that it makes a ‘moderate’ contribution, which we do not disagree with. However, the analysis is a little broad, perhaps given the large size of the parcel. In particular, the Story Homes land is divided from Walton Village by both the A56 and a large mature tree belt, which prevents views to/from the conservation area and results in the site having little relationship with it. The inclusion of this land within the South West Warrington suburban expansion option reflects the need for ‘moderate’ contribution land to be released in order to meet housing needs.

## 2.4 Safeguarded Land

- 2.4.1 We welcome the approach to safeguard further land in the Green Belt for potential housing needs for ten years beyond the Plan period. The principle of safeguarding land reflects best practice in plan-making and guidance within the NPPF. However, we have serious concerns with the methodology for both calculating the amount of land to be safeguarded for housing and for deciding where this is to be geographically located. If the Council is going to identify safeguarded land to meet future needs then we feel it is important that this exercise is done accurately to properly plan for future needs. We have three following points to make in this regard.
- 2.4.2 Firstly, why is the lower annual provision target of 955 units per annum applied to the safeguarded land, and not the plan period target of 1,113 homes per annum? Is the Council assuming that a lower rate of economic growth will apply after the plan period? There are, of course, difficulties in making projections so far into the future but we feel the sensible

approach would be to apply the same figure beyond the Plan period as during it. We consider that to reduce this figure would have a significantly adverse impact upon economic growth, especially given the Council's ambitions to progress Warrington as a 'New City' from its current New Town status.

- 2.4.3 Secondly, whilst we accept that the housing target already has a 5% buffer applied, we do not agree that this buffer will no longer be required after the Plan period. The same issues are likely to apply, with not all sites being capable of being brought forward for delivery and so applying a 5% would be sensible, and in line with the NPPF. Therefore, we do not agree that a nine-year requirement should be applied for ten years beyond the Plan period. If the buffer has had to be used for the Plan period it is likely to be because allocated sites have not come forward and may not do so. We therefore consider it incorrect to see this buffer as additional supply beyond the Plan period. We consider that the correct approach would be to apply ten years at 1,113 units per annum plus a further 5% in order to identify a ten-year supply of Safeguarded Land, meaning that the Safeguarded Land should be capable of accommodating 11,168 units.
- 2.4.4 Thirdly, we consider that there is a weak logic and lack of justification to the consideration that 36% of the new homes will be delivered in the Green Belt in line with projections for the Plan period. As discussed elsewhere in this document, we feel that the Urban Capacity Study significantly overestimates the amount of housing that can be delivered in the urban area during the Plan period and so disagree that 36% is a realistic figure for Green Belt provision. Furthermore, the focus on developing urban land first during the Plan period is likely to mean that the supply of such sites will be exhausted by the end of the Plan period; therefore it is highly likely that the requirement for Green Belt land will be greater and not less for the period after the end of the Plan period (2037). In other words, with all potentially suitable urban sites having been allocated in the new Local Plan, what new urban sites, other than potential windfall sites, might remain for the period ten years after? We doubt that this would be sufficient to meet 64% of the projected demand.
- 2.4.5 With regard to the Fiddlers Ferry site (as referred to in para 3.6 of WBC's Preferred Development Option), on which the strategy heavily relies for potential brownfield development land, this is likely to be heavily constrained and contaminated given its existing use. However, even if we take a best-case scenario the full site is approx. 120 hectares, so assuming that this can be developed at the same rate as applied elsewhere (75% site area @ 30 dph) then this could deliver up to 2,700 units. This still only represents 24% of the projected need for the Safeguarded Land (11,130 as explained above, discounting the

buffer) and so does not materially affect the fact that future capacity within the urban area is being greatly overestimated. There is also an inherent risk to an approach that 'puts all the eggs into one basket' in this way and that large strategic sites can often take much longer to deliver.

### **Distribution of Safeguarded Land**

- 2.4.6 Safeguarded Land, by its nature and on inspection of other Local Plans, is greenfield land at the outer fringes of settlements. In fact, the NPPF (at para 85) specifically instructs local planning authorities to "*identify in their plans areas of 'safeguarded land' between the urban area and the Green Belt, in order to meet longer-term needs stretching well beyond the plan period*".
- 2.4.7 Our main objection regarding the location of Safeguarded Land is that it is proposed to be all located to the east of the Garden City Extension in Warrington. There does not appear to be any detailed analysis and justification for locating all of this land at Warrington. This approach does not allow any of the other areas of Warrington or outlying settlements to meet their housing requirements beyond the Plan period or to provide an additional land resource to offer the flexibility needed to enable their housing needs within the Plan period to be met. Further concentrating growth in the South East Warrington area may also weaken the ongoing sustainability of outlying settlements or other areas adjacent to the settlement boundary of Warrington, where local services need to be supported by sufficient housing numbers.
- 2.4.8 As the Plan develops there will then be a need to consider more accurately how much Safeguarded Land should be designated for each settlement. We feel that it is important to ensure that each settlement has an appropriate amount of safeguarded land to meet their own housing needs, and that this should be determined by a proper consideration of this need, rather than by an overly supply-led approach. This follows our same logic for the allocation of housing for each settlement, as set out in Section 3 of this document.
- 2.4.9 In addition to meeting housing needs beyond the Plan period, we consider that Safeguarded Land should also form the first line of supply if new housing is needed during the Plan period which cannot be delivered on allocated sites (whether by sites not coming forward or by unmet housing needs leaving the LPA without a five-year housing supply). This view has been supported by Inspectors in appeal decisions (for example APP/P2365/W/15/3132594 *Wainhomes Developments Ltd vs West Lancashire Borough Council*, 2015). The 'housing delivery test' in the Government's Housing White Paper (2016) requires action to be taken if



delivery rates fall below 95% of the annual housing requirement. We recommend that this is used as a trigger to allow the development of Safeguarded Land.



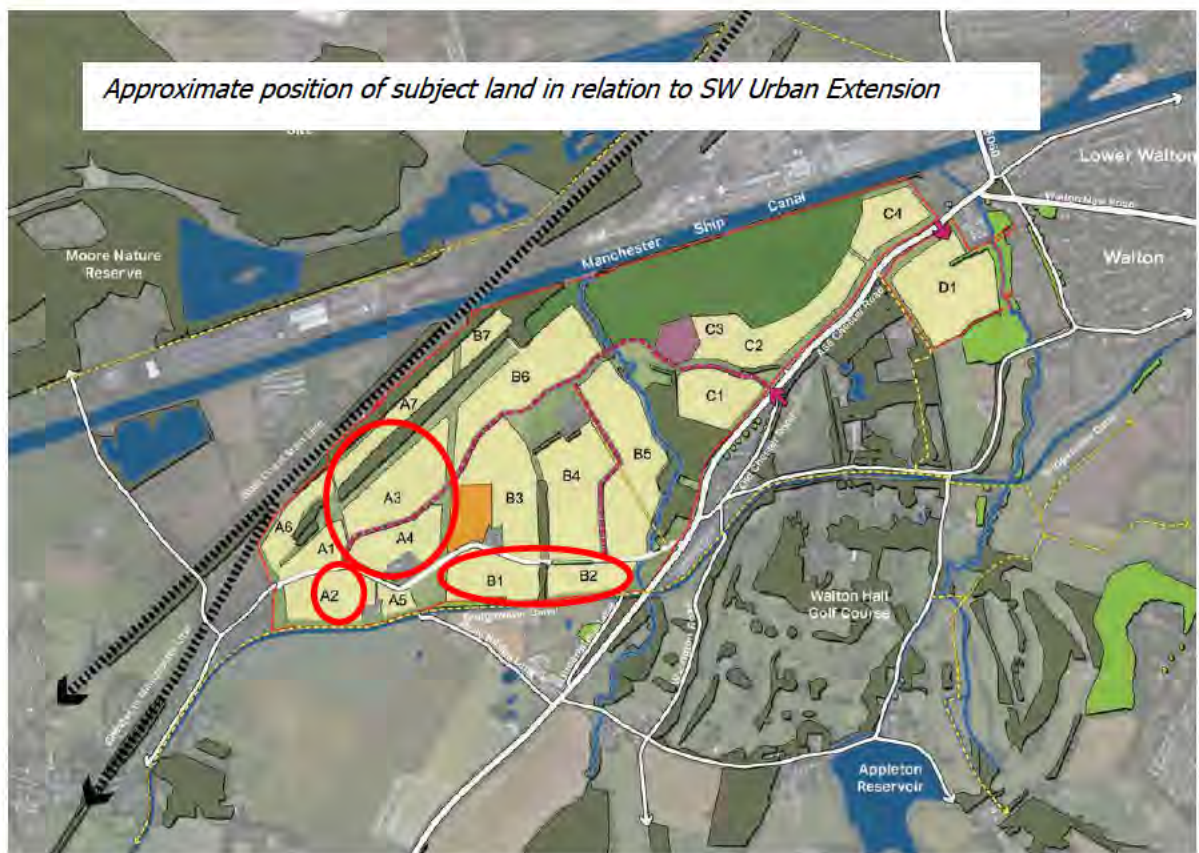
### 3.0 Growth Options for Warrington

- 3.1.1 The Preferred Development Options considers several growth options for the town of Warrington. Option 2, which represents a garden city suburb of 6,000 homes to the south-east and a sustainable urban extension of 1,800 homes to the south-west, is selected as a preferred option.
- 3.1.2 We agree that **Option 2** should be the Council's preferred option, and support the Council's intentions to meet housing need in the proposed locations south and south-west of Warrington. We encourage the Council to fully consider further evidence in relation to the site through detailed masterplanning, site capacity, site constraints and representations made to this preferred development options consultation, to fully scope-out likely deliverability. Should further evidence reveal that the proposed Garden City Suburb area cannot deliver the c.6,000 units envisaged then we consider that the remaining units should be redistributed to the outlying settlements and the South-West Warrington extension.
- 3.1.3 The majority of the greenfield allocations for new homes will be located in the Garden City Suburb extension to the south of the town. At approximately 6,000 units this places considerable risk in a strategy whereby a large proportion of the Council's housing need will be met in one location. The extent of the area appears to be largely determined by the Green Belt assessment of a pre-defined land parcel. The willingness and capacity of landowners to deliver this extension is also far from certain, with the area only partially covered by Call for Sites representations. This approach is not delivery or market-led and there may well be significant challenges in delivering all the land parcels within this extension area to deliver the full number of homes envisaged. We also note that there has been strong local opposition, including by local Members, adding further difficulties to delivery. The Area Profile summarises that this extension will require significant new infrastructure: four new primary schools, one secondary school, a district centre, up to three local centres and significant health and recreation infrastructure. Delivering a 6,000 home extension here within the timescales envisaged is therefore considered to be extremely challenging.
- 3.1.4 We feel that a better, more flexible approach, would be to follow Option 2 in principle but to allocate more land in the SW Warrington Extension and the outlying settlements, to provide better management of risk and security in delivering the required number of units.

## 4.0 Warrington South West Sustainable Urban Extension

- 4.1.1 We feel that the Warrington South-West extension will meet housing and economic growth needs whilst also protecting the future integrity of the Green Belt. This sustainable urban extension also makes Option 2 much more deliverable than other options because it matches developers' aspirations by proposing homes in areas where demand is high.

**Figure 5.1: Location of subject land within the SW Warrington Extension**



- 4.1.2 Although the new Western Link will be beneficial we do not consider that it is a pre-requisite to deliver the South West Warrington Urban Extension. We note that not all options for the Western Link Road pass through the SW Urban Extension and strategic options for the SW Urban Extension consider scenarios with and without the Link Road. Therefore, and with reference to the Area Profiles, we understand that the Council also do not feel that the Western Link Road is a pre-requisite for the SW Extension. We agree that the Link Road has the potential to deliver much wider economic benefits to the Borough and Western Warrington in particular. It is considered, however, that economic success can only meet its true potential when supported by a strategic and suitably flexible policy agenda. The delivery





## Representation for Story Homes

of Green Belt sites in the first five years of the Plan period will be critical in establishing the economic growth locally in South-West Warrington and across the Borough.

- 4.1.3 The SW Urban Extension is divided into three sites for the Call for Sites Assessment:
- R18/005
  - R18/125
  - R18/059
- 4.1.4 The vast majority of the extension land is within R18/125, of which our subject site forms a significant part.
- 4.1.5 Not all of the SW Extension area has been assessed within the Green Belt Assessment, but that which has is categorised as making a 'moderate' contribution to the Green Belt. We support this approach.
- 4.1.6 The whole extension area has been assessed as being Grade 3 in agricultural land classification. The site is therefore not within the best quality Grade 1 and 2 designations; and there is a need to develop on Grade 3 agricultural land in order to meet the housing and economic growth needs.
- 4.1.7 'The Settlement Profile – Main Urban Area' (July 2017) summarises that up to 2,800 new homes in south Warrington could support the provision of two new primary schools and additional health facilities. Health needs could be met by a satellite GP facility. It also concludes that a major urban extension could be achieved without impact on the strategic importance of the Green Belt. Therefore, there is no reason why an allocation supporting development of up to 2,800 homes should not be made here, and this would play a major role in helping WBC meet their housing requirement over the Plan period.

### **Delivery and Phasing**

- 4.1.8 Our first comment is on the delivery trajectory that has been projected. We note that no delivery has been projected until year 6 for any land within the SW Urban Extension. In practice, we feel that land here will be able to come forward in years 1 to 5 and the approach should be market-led and free of unnecessary limitations. The subject land here is ready for development once allocated and will be attractive to the market promoted by an able developer. It has a willing landowner, a housebuilder on-board and is not reliant on third party land coming forward to enable delivery. Development within years 1 to 5 of such sites will be important in positively launching the SW Warrington Urban Extension –



generating early interest and generating planning contributions that will subsequently allow infrastructure to be delivered, as required, in later phases. It will also play an important role in enabling the Council to meet their annual housing requirement and to avoid the risk of being in a position where they become unable to demonstrate a five-year housing supply. We believe that the current projected trajectory places unnecessary reliance, and consequently risk, on delivery of housing numbers within later years of the Plan period. Once land in the extension area is released and allocated therefore, we would not wish to see any policy restrictions that would prevent this land coming forward in the early years of the plan period.

- 4.1.9 We note that this proposed urban extension will include a new primary school, local centre and health facility in addition to a new local park. We support the provision of facilities, which we believe are necessary to support growth of the scale envisaged here. The phasing of delivery of these facilities, in addition to the Western Link Road and other strategic infrastructure, will need to be carefully phased with planning obligations fairly apportioned to the sites that they will serve. At the same time, it will be important to phase delivery of housing to enable an incremental approach to development in the early phases, allowing early sites to be served from existing infrastructure, below appropriate trigger points, to enable the SW Warrington Extension to be successfully launched before the strategic infrastructure can be delivered. A critical mass of housing will be required first to generate sufficient demand for local shops and services to be delivered. Any market operator will only find a local centre opportunity attractive when there is a well established customer base.
- 4.1.10 A good approach to strategic infrastructure provision would also be for the local authority to provide the infrastructure 'up-front' to enable subsequent delivery of housing. Funding could be acquired by local authority borrowing against the certainty of future planning contributions, within an agreed framework. The local authority could also make use of the HCA's Housing Infrastructure Fund. We understand that the Council are exploring such options currently and proposing bids for submission.
- 4.1.11 Our client's land at Higher Walton can be accessed and served by existing infrastructure in its early phases of development (within Years 1 to 5 of the Plan period). More information on this is provided in Section 6. This could play an important role in helping to launch the Urban Extension. Story Homes would be happy to contribute to the funding of strategic infrastructure that would be required to serve the later phases of the development of this land, provided that this is on a basis that is fairly and proportionately related to the total quantum of housing that the infrastructure will serve and is within an agreed framework. We



would not wish to see the delivery of early phases of development here constrained by awaiting the delivery of strategic infrastructure that is not required for the delivery of these phases. We understand that this will require detailed transport assessment and other work at the planning application stage, which Story Homes are committed to providing and discussing with the Council's Highway's team prior to the submission of a planning application.

### **4.2 Warrington South West Urban Extension Framework Plan Document**

- 4.2.1 We support the principles underlying the South-West Extension and agree that this is an excellent location for a sustainable urban extension of the scale envisaged. We note from WBC's Area Profiles that this area is well related to the existing urban area and can be well supported by existing and new infrastructure (the Area Profile concludes that up to 2,800 homes could be supported here). The proposed allocations would not harm the strategic importance of the Green Belt.
- 4.2.2 We note that the Framework has taken on board work undertaken by developers to support the Call for Sites exercise. We would like to explain that the subject site was not within Story Homes' interest at that time and this is why a response was not submitted at Call for Sites stage. The exclusion of this does not therefore indicate in any way that delivery is problematic or that the full anticipated capacity of this land cannot be realised. Story Homes are committed to working in partnership with the Council and adjacent landowners to undertake masterplanning and capacity assessments.
- 4.2.3 We agree that the four urban design concepts that underpin the Framework are sound and that the proposed masterplanning approach represents an effective organisation of land uses and integration with existing landscape features. Conceptual approach options 1 and 2 both propose our land for residential development, with green buffers to the railway lines and industrial uses to the north. High quality landscaping and link roads connect the development parcels. Our land is located around the proposed new local centre. We support the approach proposed in both of these options.
- 4.2.4 The Extension area is then subdivided into a number of land parcels. The extent of land within Story Homes' control extends to approximately 21.28 hectares and corresponds with the following parcels:
- The eastern half of A2
  - Most of A4



- Part of A3
- Part of A7
- All of B1
- All of B2

- 4.2.5 Now that this representation has been submitted we suggest that the parcels are redrawn to match the ownership boundaries of the sites put forward. This will result in parcels that will reflect subsequent development proposals that will be progressed, thereby making the Framework rooted in reality and supported by deliverability, in addition to simplifying subsequent consultation.
- 4.2.6 The Framework applies an average density of 28 dwellings per hectare (dph) to all land parcels to estimate the parcel areas. Firstly, we consider that planning for an average density below 30 dph does not make the most efficient use of land, and is therefore less sustainable and contrary to the spirit of the NPPF. The land parcels have already netted off infrastructure and open space, and as these are greenfield sites they will be relatively free of constraints. Average densities of 30 dph should therefore be an achievable and appropriate target.
- 4.2.7 We also consider that it would be beneficial to seek a variation in densities across land parcels, to create variety in the urban form and more accurately reflect historic settlement patterns and create pockets of local character and identity.
- 4.2.8 Finally, we note that there is nothing in the Framework on the phasing of development, and understand that the parcel names do not indicate the anticipated order in which they are to be brought forward. We agree that this is the optimum approach; phasing should be left to the market. Where there are willing landowners with unconstrained sites they should not be prevented from bringing these forward as soon as possible.



## 5.0 Critique of Evidence Base Documents

### 5.1 Urban Capacity Statement

5.1.1 Our first point regarding the Urban Capacity Statement (2016) is that the basis of estimating the capacity of the sites covered by the Masterplan (Figure 4 within the Preferred Development Option consultation document, page 35) has not been explained and is poorly presented. The Statement presents only the area-wide Masterplan and a summary table of sites, allowing no cross-referencing between the two. It would be useful to see the site boundaries on the masterplan and to know the size in hectares of each site so that an understanding of density can be gained. The masterplan notation does appear to suggest varying densities but it would be useful to understand the density range assumed for each and what this would mean in terms of the type of housing proposed.

5.1.2 We also have the following comments on the masterplan:

- The masterplan appears to propose housing on virtually all employment land and areas of other significant uses (Riverside Retail Park for example). Whilst we understand that this is a capacity exercise only it is unrealistic to consider a situation in which such a significant area of employment land is lost, especially given WBC's 'New City' aspirations. Many existing business will not wish to cease or relocate and those that do may often experience difficulty in finding appropriate alternative sites.
- The masterplan does not appear to have had any consideration of potential major constraints, showing for example new housing within areas flood zone 2 and even flood zone 3. This makes it highly unrealistic and casts major doubts on its credibility for estimating capacity.
- The masterplan includes all potential SHLAA sites within its extent but then subtracts the number of units from the SHLAA. However, it does not present any schemes proposed for these sites nor show the boundaries of the SHLAA sites, instead it washes over them with the masterplan proposals. In reality the need for these sites to come forward separately will result in reduced design efficiencies and consequently reduced capacities. The masterplan should have shown and worked with the boundaries of SHLAA sites.
- More generally, the masterplan assumes all the land coming forward as a comprehensive scheme. In reality, not all of the sites will come forward and fragmented land ownerships will create awkwardly shaped sites that will result in less efficient layouts. Different interfaces will also have to be considered for employment uses that are retained. This will lead to significantly reduced capacities.



## Representation for Story Homes

- Finally, the masterplan assumes that all of the land shown will come forward. This depends on the housing market being able to deliver viable schemes on all sites. This is not likely to be the case, especially as, by their nature, most of these are former employment sites and likely to require ground remediation, and many are in lower value housing areas.

5.1.3 For these reasons, we believe that the Urban Capacity exercise is significantly flawed and, at 15,429 units, significantly over-estimates the number of dwellings that the urban area may be expected to accommodate. It is therefore likely that a larger amount of Green Belt land will need to be released in order to meet the housing need.



### **6.0 Runcorn Road, Higher Walton – Site Assessment**

6.1.1 Story Homes' land at Higher Walton comprises a series of separate land parcels that represent a significant combined area of around 21.28 ha, representing a major part of the Warrington South West Urban Extension. These parcels are:

- Land south of Runcorn Road (east): approx. 7.34 ha
- Land south of Runcorn Road (west): approx. 1.39 ha
- Land east of Bellhouse Lane: approx. 10.75 ha
- Land north of former railway line: approx. 1.75 ha

**Total: approx. 21.28 ha**

### **6.2 Land ownership and commitment to delivery**

6.2.1 The Site is currently owned by one landowner under one single title. Story Homes have an agreement with the landowner to promote the site. The site is therefore under the control of a single housebuilder. There are no ownership or legal constraints to its delivery for housing.

6.2.2 Story Homes are committed to bringing the site forward for housing and will progress a scheme as soon as the site is allocated (as long as there are no onerous conditions attached to the allocation). This will involve pre-application discussions with Warrington Council and public engagement.

### **6.3 Environmental Context**

6.3.1 The land lies between the villages of Moore (to the west) and Higher Walton (to the east). It lies in a wedge of land between the railway line and Manchester Ship Canal to the north and the A56 (Chester Road) to the south. Both of these linear features serve to protect the surrounding countryside from the impact of development here. This area, which includes all of the above land parcels, has been identified by WBC as the site of the Warrington South West Urban Extension.

#### **Green Belt Assessment**

6.3.2 The Green Belt Assessment (Arup, 2016) places the subject land at Higher Walton within general area division parcel 14. This is assessed as making a 'moderate' contribution to the Green Belt overall.



## Representation for Story Homes

- 6.3.3 At the next level of analysis, the Green Belt Assessment places most of the land in parcel WR65, which covers a much larger area including land to the west. The only part of Story's land not included in WR65 is the smaller site to the south of Runcorn Road, which has not been considered in the Green Belt Assessment.
- 6.3.4 W65 has also been assessed as making a 'moderate' contribution overall to the Green Belt. The contribution in regard to safeguarding the countryside from encroachment is rated as 'strong', however this largely due to the parcel's 'weak eastern boundary' which is located away from the Story Homes land.
- 6.3.5 The Green Belt assessment is partly based on the contribution that the parcel makes to Walton Village Conservation Area. However, the Story Homes' land is not located adjacent to Walton Village and is separated from it by the A56. Development of this land will not therefore have a direct impact on the setting of the Conservation Area.
- 6.3.6 The site is therefore within a reasonably well enclosed area. Its impact on the character of the surrounding landscape character and the Green Belt will be limited by existing boundary features.

## 6.4 Sustainability

- 6.4.1 WBC's Area Profiles document considers service provision for the SW Extension Area within the context of Warrington. However, it is also useful to consider more local services, as the Story Homes' land is accessible to services in local villages that have not been included within WBC's Settlement Profiles for the outlying settlements.
- 6.4.2 We have undertaken analysis of the location of key community facilities in the vicinity and their accessibility from the subject site (see Figure 7.1 below).
- 6.4.3 New housing on the subject land will be served by existing local facilities at Higher Walton and Moore, in addition to services within Warrington. The centre of Moore (to the west) is within 10 minutes' walk of the site and Higher Walton (to the east) is within a 5 minute walk. Additionally, facilities are also available in Daresbury to the south, including a significant number of jobs, and in Stockton Heath. All of this is without considering the new local centre that is proposed to be constructed adjacent to the subject land as part of the SW Warrington Sustainable Urban Extension.
- 6.4.4 Moore has several local facilities:





## Representation for Story Homes

- Moore County Primary School
- Moore Village Pre-School
- Red Lion Inn PH
- Moore Village Store and Post Office

6.4.5 To the east, Higher Walton has the following services:

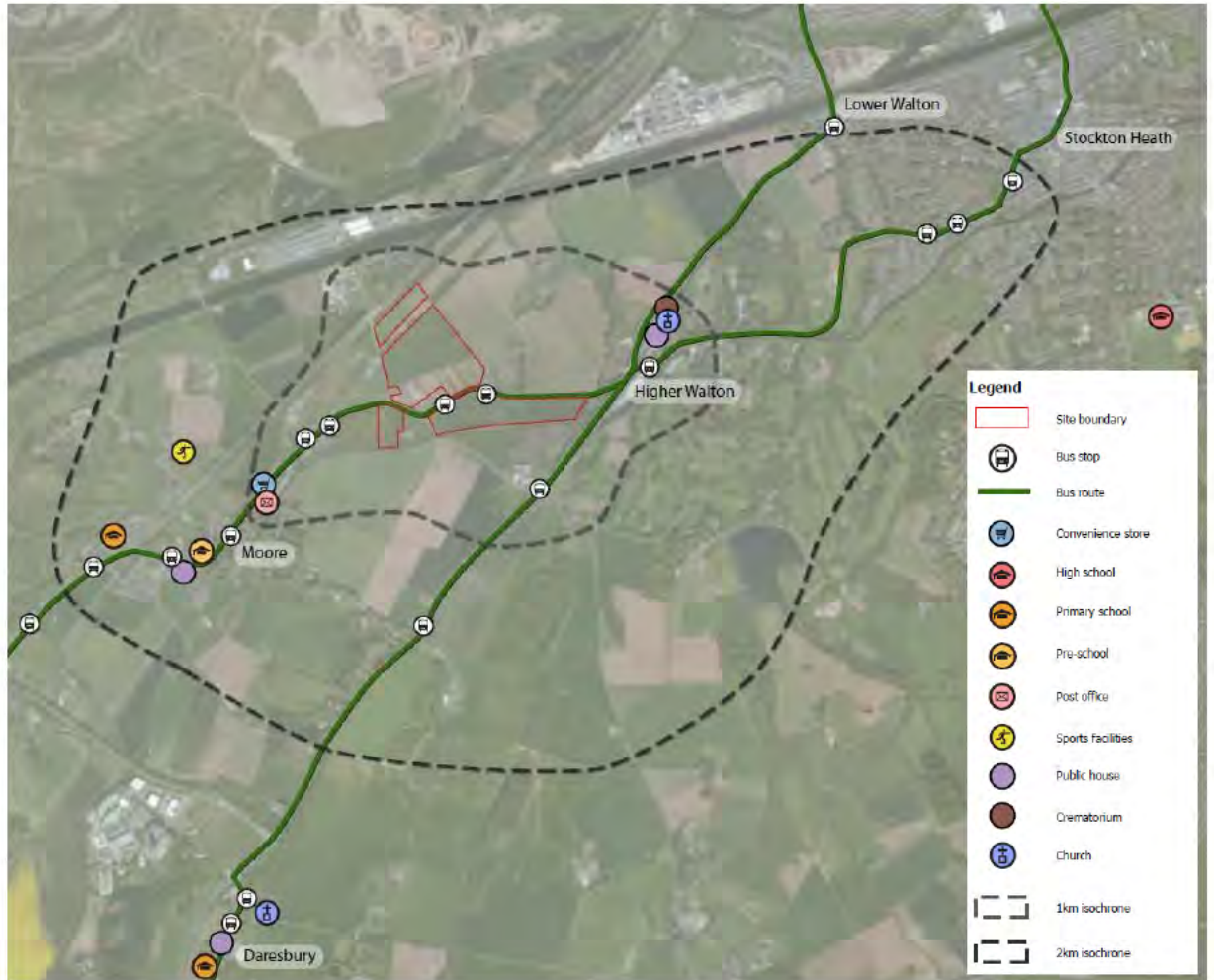
- St John the Evangelist's Church
- Walton Lea Crematorium
- The Walton Arms PH

6.4.6 The area is also well served by bus services with the 43A, 62, 62B, 66 and 70 routes all stopping on Runcorn Road. These services offer a bus every 15 minutes to both Warrington and Runcorn town centre.

6.4.7 A little further to the south lies Daresbury village, which also has:

- Daresbury Primary School
- All Saints Church
- Ring O'Bells PH
- A large amount of jobs at Daresbury Park

**Figure 7.1. Local Facilities**





## Representation for Story Homes

### **6.5 Understanding the site and development capacity**

- 6.5.1 Access can be taken from Runcorn Road, from several points, to serve all parcels. Evidence will be produced in due course to establish traffic impacts and support the access strategy. This work will include engagement with the local highways authority. The northernmost parcel will be accessed through the main central parcel, otherwise all parcels will be designed to be capable of being accessed and delivered independently.
- 6.5.2 Story Homes will be undertaking a number of additional technical studies to inform site capacity and potential form of development. Story Homes are keen to work alongside Warrington Borough Council to develop a deliverable and viable scheme which can be delivered as part of the wider South West Warrington allocation.
- 6.5.3 With a combined site area of approximately 21 ha we estimate that the Story Homes parcel could accommodate between 400 and 500 units, at an appropriate density of around 30 dwellings per hectare and allowing for constraints to be accommodated and open space to be provided. The site capacity will be confirmed through technical studies and masterplanning work.
- 6.5.4 The development form will follow the principles set out in the Council's Warrington South-West Urban Extension Framework Plan.

### **6.6 Community and economic benefits**

- 6.6.1 As part of this development Story Homes will be providing both market and affordable homes with a mix to be agreed through the subsequent planning application.
- 6.6.2 In addition to helping WBC meet the housing needs of the borough, the development of the site will provide significant social and economic benefits to the local community. The presumption in favour of sustainable development within the NPPF includes both social and economic sustainability. The provision of new housing (and especially the affordable housing element) is a clear social benefit.
- 6.6.3 The allocation of the subject site for housing will play an important role in contributing to this objective and realising the vision of the emerging Local Plan. It will provide an increase in the local catchment population, which will help to support the shops and public services that exist in Moore and Higher Walton with potential additional improvements funded through planning contributions. Furthermore, there will be additional economic benefits in

## Representation for Story Homes

terms of construction jobs and training, and additional tax revenues.

6.6.4 The Home Builders Federation have produced a useful tool to estimate the value of these wider economic benefits (<http://www.hbf.co.uk/index.php?id=3197>). Based on an estimate of 450 new homes, this could:

- Support the employment of 1,935 people
- Provide 18 apprentices, graduates or trainees
- Generate £4.5m in tax revenue, including £578,700 in Council Tax revenue.
- Generate a gross disposable household income of £18,507 per household.

6.6.5 More specifically, the development will contribute to supporting infrastructure required to facilitate the wider South West Warrington allocation. This will include the new primary school, health centre and link road (if required).

6.6.6 The site will include new recreational open spaces and play areas for children in addition to new landscaping, including tree planting and wetland areas. New and improved cycling and walking routes will also be provided through the development of the site.

6.6.7 Story Homes have provided further information about the values of the company within their vision brochure demonstrating their investment into apprentices and graduates as a key area of their business.

## 6.7 Summary and Comparison

6.7.1 In summary therefore, it has been demonstrated that, land at Runcorn Road, Higher Walton is a suitable, sustainable and deliverable site for new housing. It will only have a limited impact on the Green Belt and on the character of the surrounding landscape. The site has been shown to be a sustainable site: it is well located in terms of its accessibility to key local facilities and its development will provide significant social and economic benefits to the existing community.

6.7.2 Finally, technical work undertaken to date has demonstrated that the proposed residential development is deliverable. For these reasons, we believe there is a strong case for the allocation of this land for residential development.

6.7.3 Story Homes encourage the Council to consider the supplementary vision brochure as part of our submission.



SITE Land at Runcorn Road,  
Higher Walton

DRAWING  
Location Plan

DRAWN BY	ABC	DATE	Sept '17
CHECKED BY	-	SCALE	NTS @A3
ISSUE	DRAWING NUMBER	REVISION	
-	-	-	

Revisions

-	-	-
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# RUNCORN ROAD, HIGHER WALTON

VISION DOCUMENT, SEPTEMBER 2017





Street scene - Oakland Park, Morpeth



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# 01 INTRODUCTION



Site Boundary

This Vision Document has been prepared on behalf of Story Homes North West and [REDACTED] to set out how the land at Runcorn Road, Higher Walton ('the Site') can contribute to the proposed Warrington South West Sustainable Urban Extension. It supports the case for releasing this site from the Green Belt and allocating it for housing, as part of the Council's Local Plan Review. It demonstrates that it will provide a sustainable solution to help Warrington Borough Council meet its future housing growth requirements.

To ensure the appropriate development of the Site, Story Homes has instructed a professional development team with a proven track record in delivering successful schemes. This document assesses the sustainability and suitability of the Site and builds upon work already undertaken by Warrington Borough Council (WBC) on the Warrington South-West Sustainable Urban Extension.

At the outset, it is highlighted that the Site:

- Is in a highly sustainable location in close proximity to the existing services and facilities within the village centre of Moore;
- Will result in a relatively minimal harm to the key purposes of the Green Belt; and
- Provides an opportunity to create a high quality development which will maintain the positive character of the Higher Walton conservation area through good design and high quality landscape proposals.

This document is submitted to the Council alongside the representations to the Warrington Local Plan Preferred Option consultation (September 2017) produced by WYG. The representation should be read in conjunction with this Vision Document.



# INTRODUCTION TO STORY HOMES



Story Homes is a privately owned housebuilder, founded by Fred Story in 1987. It has a long and successful reputation of building quality and high specification homes across the North of England and South of Scotland. The family owned business has grown in size and status over the years but remains grounded, built on its original ethos of 'doing the right thing' and creating a brand synonymous with quality.

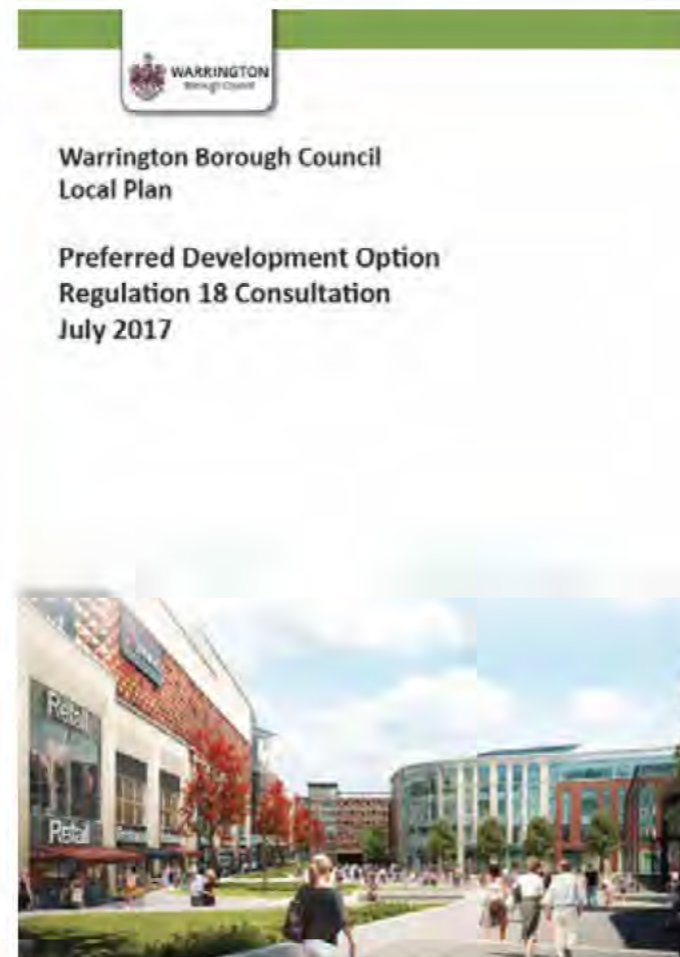
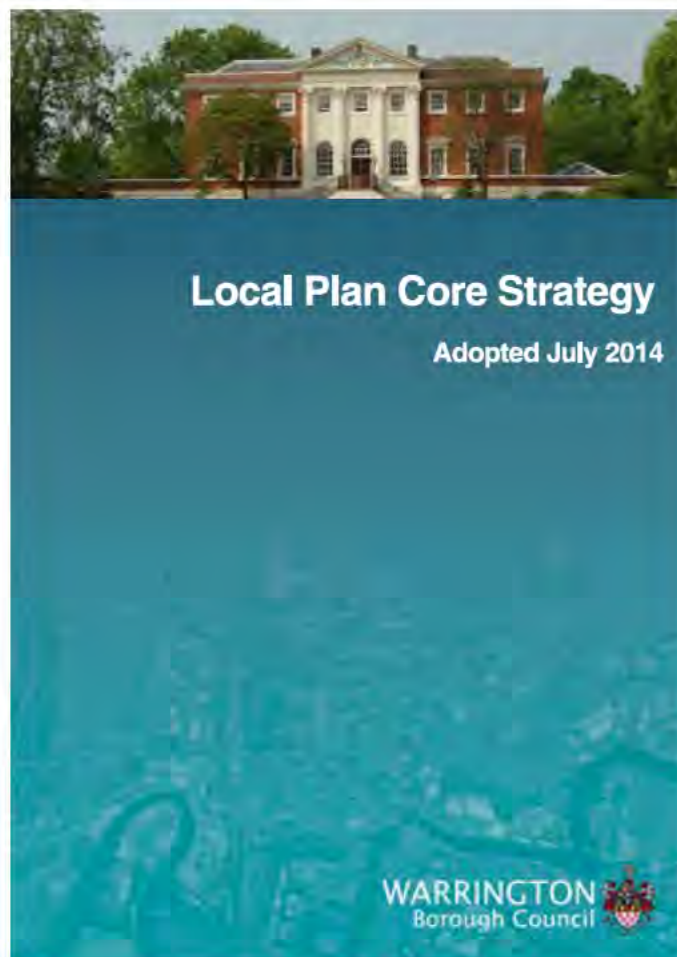
For nearly 30 years Story Homes has been the name most often associated with aspirational homes for sale throughout Cumbria, the North East and Lancashire. A passion for quality and excellence has seen Story Homes become a multi-award winning UK property developer, with modern and attractive homes instantly inspiring buyers. Story Homes have been awarded the top '5 star' rating in the house building industry's annual customer satisfaction survey for the 4th year running since becoming eligible for 4 years ago.

Story Homes' success is underpinned by a determination to understand the needs of communities where we build and a goal to deliver design quality and high quality building specifications that enhance locations. Story Homes' presence in the North West is growing significantly and has recently been awarded 3 UK Property awards for Brookwood Park in Kirkham, The Woodlands in Shotley Bridge and Pentland Reach in Biggar.

The Story Difference, comprising a commitment to design quality, place-making and customer experience, will be instrumental in delivering an exemplary new development which Higher Walton can be proud of.

# 02 THE PLANNING CONTEXT

## THE EMERGING WARRINGTON LOCAL PLAN REVIEW



Given the results of the High Court challenge and the emerging evidence underpinning the Borough's growth needs and economic development ambitions, the Council recognised the need to undertake a review of the Local Plan.

A Local Plan Scoping Stage consultation was undertaken in November 2016. The Council then published their Preferred Development Option for consultation in July 2017. This sets out the current housing and employment land requirement for the Borough and the preferred option strategy for meeting these needs.

To underpin the Local Plan review, the Council commenced the preparation of the Borough's housing and economic needs to the year 2037. The most up to date study assessing the housing objectively assessed need (OAN) for the Borough identified a need of 955 new homes per year to 2037.

The Council has also assessed the number of additional jobs that will be created through the Council's growth aspirations set out in the 'Warrington Means Business' economic development programme as well as the Local Enterprise Partnership's (LEP) Strategic Economic Plan and future growth ambitions. These growth aspirations will deliver 31,000 new jobs in Warrington up to 2040 which is approximately 30% above the baseline forecasts and there is a need to ensure a balance between the number of homes and jobs.

There is also a need to provide an additional 5% buffer to allow for flexibility (as directed by the National Planning Policy Framework) and to make up for an existing backlog of 847 homes. All of this means that it will now be necessary to increase the minimum supply of homes to around **1,200 per annum**. The Council are also seeking to identify 'safeguarded land' to meet further needs in the ten years beyond the Plan period.

The most recent Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), published in January 2016 has identified that Warrington's housing needs cannot be met on brownfield land, existing commitments and on greenfield sites outside of the Green Belt.

If Warrington is to meet its development needs, then based on the Preferred Development Option, sufficient Green Belt land will need to be released to deliver approximately 9,000 new homes and 213 hectares of employment land over the next 20 years [from Preferred Development Option, WBC, July 2017].

Warrington Borough Council adopted its Local Plan Core Strategy in July 2014. This set out a need to build 500 new homes every year up to 2027. This requirement is now out of date.

Following the adoption of the Core Strategy, a High Court Challenge subsequently quashed the specific parts of the Plan relating to:

- The housing target of 10,500 new homes (equating to 500 per year) between 2006 and 2027 and;
- References to 1,100 new homes at the Omega Strategic Proposal

The Council have sought to deliver as much housing as possible within the urban area. They commissioned an Urban Capacity Study which estimated that 15,429 homes could be delivered on existing urban sites, a figure which we feel is unrealistically high and is open to challenge. However, the Council nevertheless maintain that they will need to release sufficient Green Belt land to deliver 8,791 homes (see Table 1).

The Preferred Development Option is Option 2. This is for the majority of Green Belt release to be adjacent to the main urban area in Warrington, with incremental growth in the outlying settlements. This includes a Garden City Suburb of approximately 6,000 new homes to the south-east of Warrington and an urban extension in South-West Warrington of around 2,000 homes.

#### Warrington South West Urban Extension Framework Plan

The Council have commissioned a Framework for the proposed South West Urban Extension. The Framework Plan includes two options: Option 1 includes a new strategic link road (the 'Western Link') and Option 2 does not include this link road. The Council's evidence base documents establish that the Western Link is not required in order to deliver the South-West extension (see WBC's Area Profiles document). The Site is also not dependent on the Western Link for implementation. The Western Link has the potential to deliver much wider economic benefits to the Borough and the wider region. However, it is considered that economic success can only meet its true potential when supported by a strategic and suitably flexible policy agenda. The delivery of Green Belt sites in the first five years of the Plan period will be critical in establishing the economic growth locally in South-West Warrington and across the Borough and therefore this is likely to be delivered ahead of the link road. The Option 1 and 2 Framework Plans are provided on the following pages.

The Site forms part of the area identified for the Warrington South West Urban Extension (it actually represents around 25% of this proposed allocation), which is key to the delivery of WBC's new Local Plan. It has a total area of around 21.3 hectares and could deliver around 450-500 units, therefore representing a major contribution to this extension and to the delivery of new homes to meet identified future needs. It is identified for development within WBC's Warrington South West Urban Extension Framework Plan Document.

This represents very clear "exceptional circumstances" to justify the release of land from the Green Belt. The Site at Runcorn Road in Higher Walton has the potential to make a substantial contribution to the social and economic success of the Borough.

	955 p.a.	1,113 p.a.	1,332 p.a.
Housing Target 2017 to 2037	19,100	22,260	26,640
Flexibility at 5%	955	1,113	1,332
Backlog (from 2015 against OAN)	847	847	847
Total Requirement	20,902	24,220	28,819
Total Capacity within urban area	15,429	15,429	15,429
Green Belt requirement	5,473	8,791	13,390

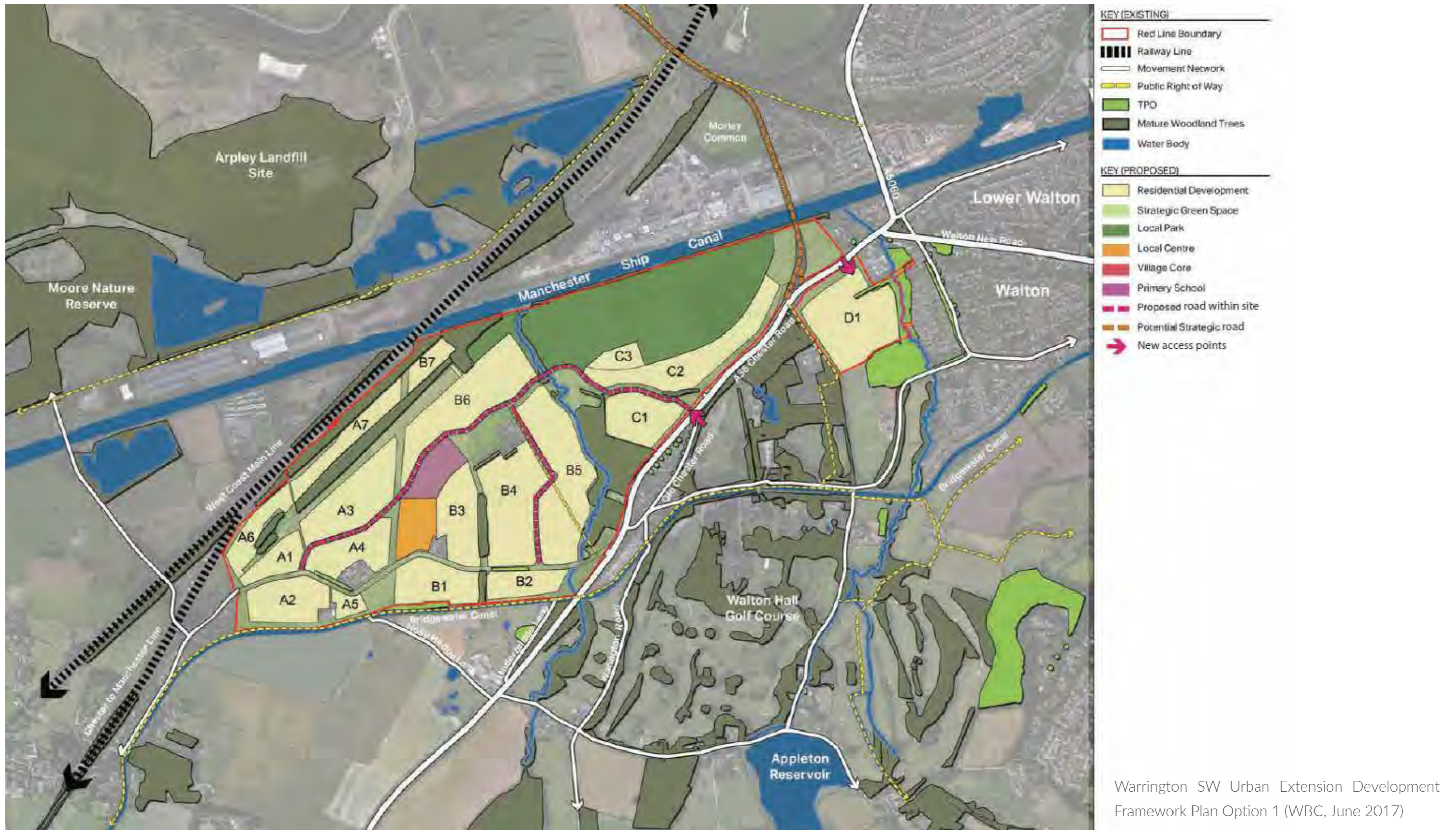
Table 1: Housing Land Requirements

Table extracted from Preferred Development Option, WBC, July 2017



Location of the proposed South-West Urban Extension (from Preferred Development Option WBC July 2017)

# FRAMEWORK PLAN - OPTION 1



# FRAMEWORK PLAN - OPTION 2



Warrington SW Urban Extension  
 Development Framework Plan Option 2  
 (WBC, June 2017)

# 03 THE SITE

## LOCATION AND OWNERSHIP



Story Homes' land at Higher Walton comprises a series of separate land parcels that forms a significant combined area of around 21 hectares, representing a major part of the Warrington South West Urban Extension. The Site is well located, being close to the strategic motorway with good access to both the M6 and M56, and lying only around 3.5 km from the Warrington town centre (to the north-east). The site lies in an area of land between the A56 (to the south-east) and Manchester Ship Canal (to the north). The Bridgewater Canal passes through this area, to the north of the Site. The village of Moore lies to the west of the site, and Higher Walton to the east.

These parcels are:

- Land south of Runcorn Road (east) – parcels B1 and B2 within the SW Urban Extension
- Land south of Runcorn Road (west) – part of parcel A2
- Land east of Bellhouse Lane – parts of parcels A3 and A4
- Land north of former railway line – part of parcel A7

Collectively these parcels are referred to as 'the Site.'

The Site is currently owned by one landowner under one single title whom Story Homes have an agreement with. The site is therefore under the control of a single housebuilder. There are no ownership or legal constraints to its delivery for housing.

Story Homes are committed to bringing the site forward for housing and will progress a scheme as soon as the site is allocated. This will involve pre-application discussions with Warrington Council and public engagement.

# 04 GREEN BELT ASSESSMENT

The land lies between the villages of Moore (to the west) and Higher Walton (to the east). It lies in a wedge of land between the railway line and Manchester Ship Canal to the north and the A56 (Chester Road) and canal to the south-east. Both of these linear features serve to protect the surrounding countryside from the impact of development here. This area, which includes all of the above land parcels, has been identified by WBC as the site of the Warrington South West Urban Extension. The Green Belt Assessment (Arup, 2016) places the subject land at Higher Walton within general area division parcel 14. This is assessed as making a 'moderate' contribution to the Green Belt overall.

At the next level of analysis, the Green Belt Assessment places most of the land in parcel WR65, which covers a much larger area including land to the west. The only part of the Site not included in WR65 is the smaller site to the south of Runcorn Road, which has not been covered in the Green Belt Assessment.

W65 has also been assessed as making a 'moderate' contribution overall to the Green Belt. The contribution in regard to safeguarding the countryside from encroachment is rated as 'strong', however this is largely due to the parcel's eastern boundary which is located away from the Site; with regard to the Site, we believe that this land does not make a strong Green Belt contribution.

The Green Belt assessment is partly based on the contribution that the parcel makes to Walton Village Conservation Area. However, the Site is not located adjacent to Walton Village and is separated from it by the A56. Development of this land will not therefore have a direct impact on the setting of the Conservation Area.

The Site is within a reasonably well-enclosed area meaning that the surrounding Green Belt, and landscape character, will not be harmed by its development.

Overall, therefore, the Site can be released without detriment to the wider Green Belt. This means that this is a positive context for development in comparison to other sites.





# 05 SUSTAINABILITY

WBC's Area Profiles document has considered service provision for the Warrington South West Sustainable Urban Extension Area within the context of Warrington and has concluded that development of the scale envisaged can be supported by existing and enhanced infrastructure.

It is also useful to consider more local services, as the Site's land is accessible to services in local villages that have not been included within WBC's Settlement Profiles for the outlying settlements.

We have undertaken analysis of the location of key community facilities in the vicinity and their accessibility from the Site (see the Facilities Plan).

New housing on the Site will be served by existing local facilities at Higher Walton and Moore, in addition to services within Warrington. Moore (to the west) is within 10 minutes' walk of the site and Higher Walton (to the east) is within a 5 minute walk. Additionally, facilities are also available in Daresbury to the south, including a significant number of jobs, and in Stockton Heath. All of this is without considering the new local centre that is proposed to be constructed adjacent to the subject land as part of the SW Warrington Sustainable Urban Extension.

Moore has several local facilities:

- Moore County Primary School
- Moore Village Pre-School
- Red Lion Inn PH
- Moore Village Store and Post Office

To the east, Higher Walton has the following services:

- St John the Evangelist's Church
- Walton Lea Crematorium
- The Walton Arms PH

The area is also well served by bus services with the 43A, 62, 62B, 66 and 70 routes all stopping on Runcorn Road. These services offer a bus every 15 minutes to both Warrington and Runcorn town centres.

A little further to the south lies Daresbury village, which also has:

- Daresbury Primary School
- All Saints Church
- Ring O'Bells PH
- A large amount of jobs at Daresbury Park



# FACILITIES PLAN



- Site boundary
- Bus stop
- Bus route
- Convenience store
- High school
- Primary school
- Pre-school
- Post office
- Sports facilities
- Public house
- Crematorium
- Church
- 1km isochrone
- 2km isochrone

# 06 BENEFITS AND INFRASTRUCTURE



In order to justify the release of this Site from the Green Belt the Council must in their plan making demonstrate exceptional circumstances but also ensure that this would constitute sustainable development. The NPPF states that “sustainable development is about positive growth – making economic, environmental and social progress for this and future generations: “At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable developments, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking.”

The development of this Site in Higher Walton will deliver significant and lasting economic, social and environment benefits to the local community.

## Social Benefits

- Family homes – the Site can address the growing need for new high quality and modern family homes in Higher Walton. It will deliver a wide range of new homes in terms of type and size, to meet the needs of different families in the community.

- Affordable homes – the new community will include a substantial number of new affordable homes, such as starter homes and affordable rented houses. This will significantly enhance opportunities for home ownership, helping less affluent families and young first time buyers to get onto the housing ladder.
- Open Space – the development will provide a significant amount of public open space for new and existing residents to enjoy. There will be enhanced connectivity to recreation facilities beyond the Site for the existing housing development to the west, south and east.

## Environmental Benefits

- Environmental improvements – the new high quality landscape proposed can provide new and enhanced habitats to increase the biodiversity value of the Site, whilst providing new landscape features and greenspaces for the community to enjoy.
- New drainage infrastructure – the landscape strategy for the Site includes a Sustainable Urban Drainage Scheme (SuDS).
- Recreational resources – the Site will provide new open space and green infrastructure for the local community to enjoy and spend time in.
- Access – as the Site is within a 5 minute walk of Moore and Higher Walton village centres, this will encourage new residents to use pedestrian and cycle routes into the village rather than the private car.
- Improvement of existing areas of poor landscape value, such as land around the disused railways.

## Economic benefits

- Economic growth – the Site will bring new working age families in Higher Walton. This will be crucial to ensure that there is a resident labour force in the area, which can underpin sustainable economic growth without resulting in large increases in in-commuting from elsewhere in the region.
- New jobs – building new homes creates significant numbers of new jobs in construction, in the supply chain and in related services such as shops and leisure centres.
- Increased spending power – new homes will bring new economically active families into Higher Walton, who will spend their disposable income in local shops and services. This will boost businesses and increase local vitality and the viability of local services and facilities.
- Increased revenue – the new homes will substantially increase Warrington Borough Council’s revenue base as a result of significant increases in Council Tax income.

## Site Related Infrastructure

- Catchment population to help support new local centre.
- New areas of public open space.

# BENEFITS AND INFRASTRUCTURE



The Site will provide a range of new and expanded infrastructure to ensure that the new development is sustainable and self-sufficient, has access to day-to-day services and facilities, and is capable of integrating successfully with the existing local community.



## Community Benefits

This could include investment in:

- New recreational open spaces and play areas for children
- New school places and improved facilities for primary and secondary children
- Expanded health services, including more places in GP surgeries and dental practices
- New landscaping, including tree planting and wetland areas
- New and improved bus services and cycle lanes

Story Homes can confirm that the Site is:

- Available for development. Story Homes has an agreement with all of the landowners with an interest in the Site, to bring it forward for residential development (subject to its release from the Green Belt). There are no legal or ownership constraints to its delivery;
- Achievable and viable for residential development. It is located in a strong market area which experiences high demand for new homes and there are no overriding constraints which present an obstacle to delivery.

# 07 CONCLUSION



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The emerging Local Plan recognises that Warrington must provide new homes both to meet the needs of its population and to underpin economic growth. Warrington Borough Council acknowledges that this cannot be achieved on brownfield land alone. Green Belt releases are essential.

This Vision Document sets out how the land at Runcorn Road, Higher Walton can provide a new, high quality residential development. It will provide attractive and well-built family homes as part of a sustainable natural and tranquil environment, integrated with new green and blue infrastructure. It will help Warrington to meet its growing and urgent housing needs.

The Site can be brought forward using a comprehensive masterplanning process, with significant involvement from both Warrington Borough Council and the existing local community.

This Vision Document provides the evidence to demonstrate that this Site in Higher Walton represents a logical and sustainable development opportunity where the exceptional circumstances to support its release from the Green Belt are clear. A number of technical assessments have confirmed that there are no physical constraints or other potential impacts or environmental conditions which could preclude the development of the Site for housing. The proposed development clearly accords with the three dimensions of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF.

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# NEXT STEPS

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The Site is in the control of a well-known high quality housebuilder (Story Homes), and is considered suitable and deliverable within the first 5 years of the emerging Local Plan period.

Story Homes are committed to progressing the emerging Concept Masterplan towards a high quality residential development that responds to the local housing need, whilst taking into account and reflecting the character of the surrounding area, and ensuring the development of the Site would form a new defensible Green Belt boundary to the south west of Warrington.

Story Homes looks forward to working with Warrington Borough Council to progress the proposals for the Site.

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