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Warrington Borough Council

Local Plan

Preferred Development Option

Regulation 18 Consultation

Standard Response Form

July 2017

EP3

Tanyard Farm, Lymm

Landscape, Ecology and Arboriculture Briefing Note (11151_R01b)

1.0 Introduction

1.1. This report has been prepared by Tyler Grange LLP on behalf of Emery Planning following desktop analysis and preliminary fieldwork undertaken in August 2017.

1.2. The overview provides advice relating to landscape character and visual amenity, ecology and arboriculture matters at a high level to appraise the feasibility of the future residential development of land off Rush Green Road between Lymm and Rushgreen (hereafter referred to as 'the site').

1.3. The overview report does not constitute a full Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) / Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) or BS5837:2012 Tree Quality Survey, nor is it a comprehensive assessment of ecology issues. It is intended that this work will inform potential development going forward and provide a review of the suitability of the land for release from the Green Belt.

1.4. The report should be read alongside plans and appendices which are contained at the rear of this report:

- **Landscape Context Plan**;
- **Photoviewpoints 1-6**;
- **Arboriculture Overview Plan**;
- **Ecological Overview Report, associated Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey and annotated Framework Plan**; and
- **Framework Plan** (produced by MCK)

2.0 Site Context

2.1. Lymm is a large village and civil parish within the Warrington borough of Cheshire, in North West England. It is situated approximately 4.5 miles east of Warrington, 1.8km east of the M6 and 2.6km north of M56. The civil parish of Lymm incorporates several hamlets, of which the site is located between Rushgreen to the east and Statham to the west.

2.2. The site comprises a 3.82 hectare parcel of greenfield land, centred on OS grid reference SJ 68875 87533. The site is adjacent to residential properties to the west, service businesses and derelict land to the east, the Bridgewater Canal to the south and Rushgreen Road to the north. The site is open, tall scrubby vegetation is the predominant vegetation type with patches of woodland and long grass also present, a sense of enclosure is created at the site boundaries by tall vegetation and built form. The field contains spoil mounds giving the site an undulating

appearance in what appears to be a fairly random pattern. The topography of the site grades c.7m from a high point of 24.09mAOD in the south west to a low point of 17.09mAOD in the north east.

2.3. This document is an assessment of the site described in section 2.1 and 2.2 of this report, the site boundary is shown in the 'Landscape Context Plan' in the appendices. This report assesses that this site can be released from green belt in terms of its landscape and visual, ecological and arboricultural context. Whilst this site can be delivered in isolation, land adjacent to the site is being promoted by Bellway Homes and there is no reason that this site could not come forward as part of a wider allocation incorporating both areas. This option is shown on the 'Framework Plan' appendix.

3.0 Landscape Context

3.1. A site walkover survey was conducted on the 23rd of August to assess the landscape character and visual amenity of the site. The weather was overcast during periods of the day but clear enough to be suitable for the level of study undertaken for this report. A desktop study of available data sources was also undertaken of national and local landscape designations and policies. As stated above, this work does not constitute a full Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) / full Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), but it does establish initial recommendations and conclusions associated with landscape matters.

Planning Policy Context

3.2. Warrington Borough Council's Local Planning Framework currently consists of the Warrington Local Plan Strategy which was adopted on 21 July 2014. However, the Local Plan is being updated, in particular the housing policies, and as part of this review, the Council is undertaking a review of the Green Belt to identify new land for development. The site is located wholly within the Green Belt and a review of the site's performance and suitability for release from the Green Belt is set out later in this report.

3.3. Local Policies relating to landscape character and visual amenity that will need to be considered as part of any site promotion / emerging development proposals include:

- Policy CS 1 Overall Spatial Strategy - Delivering Sustainable Development;
- Policy CS 2 Overall Spatial Strategy - Quantity and Distribution of Development;
- Policy CS 5 Overall Spatial Strategy - Green Belt;
- Policy CS 6 Overall Spatial Strategy – Strategic Green Links;
- Policy QE 3 Green Infrastructure;
- Policy QE 6 Environment and Amenity Protection;
- Policy QE 7 Ensuring a High-Quality Place; and
- Policy CC 2 Protecting the Countryside.

3.4. In relation to the Green Belt, the Strategic Vision for Warrington notes that: *"The focus on regeneration has limited outward growth of the town and has enabled the continued protection of the Green Belt."* This links into Strategic Objective W2*: "To maintain the permanence of the Green Belt and the character of the countryside in the borough and protect them from inappropriate development."*

3.5. In relation to Policies CS 1, CS 2 and CS 5, planning permission for new buildings in the Green Belt will not be given except in very special or specific circumstances, and development will only be allowed where it is considered to be appropriate in accordance with national policy.

3.6. Despite Policy CS 5 stating that:

"The strategic locations and proposals set out in Policy CS2 - Quantity and Distribution of Development provide for significant growth throughout and beyond the plan period. There is therefore no need to review Strategic Green Belt boundaries during the plan period."

3.7 The policy also notes that new buildings in the Green Belt *"will be approved where they accord with relevant national policy."*

3.8. The site is being considered for release from the Green Belt for the purposes of residential development in the emerging Warrington Borough Council's Green Belt Review. It will be important to ensure that development of the site does not contribute towards the urban sprawl of Lymm, coalescence between Lymm and Rushgreen, or significant encroachment into the countryside. Furthermore, development will need to respect the setting and character of Lymm, including the nearby open countryside.

3.9. The remaining applicable landscape and visual related policies deal with avoiding adverse impacts on the environment, ensuring development respects and protects the character of the countryside, protecting and enhancing existing green infrastructure and creating new links, including those that link with the identified Strategic Green Links, one of which is along the Bridgewater Canal (which runs along the southern boundary of the site). Development will also be expected to reinforce local distinctiveness and enhance character, appearance and function of local street scenes, areas and townscape, as well as include appropriate quantities of public open space.

Green Belt Context

3.10. A review of the site's performance and suitability for release from the Green Belt is summarised below in relation to the applicable principal Green Belt objectives as set out within the NPPF (the Framework) from a landscape perspective and in relation to the findings of the Warrington Borough Council Green Belt Assessment.

3.11. The NPPF framework sets out five key purposes for green belt:

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

3.12. Stage 1 of The Warrington Borough Council Green Belt Assessment (WBCGBA) marked out 24 General Areas based on common features and characteristics. Each area was then assessed against the NPPF five key purposes of green belt marked out above. The proposed site lies within General Area 7. Stage 2 involved defining smaller green belt parcels around settlements focussing on technical site assessments of the areas, looking at site constraints. The proposed site lies in LY16.

3.13. The site is reviewed within the context of the NPPF Green Belt objectives below:

- ***To check unrestricted sprawl***
  The WBCGBA defined General Area 7 and land parcel LY16 as making no contribution towards checking unrestricted urban sprawl with the reason being that it is not adjacent to the Warrington urban area.

  The site is bordered by residential properties and gardens to the west and north, Rushgreen Road also to the north and the Bridgewater Canal to the south. To the east the site boundary is aligned by a car park and access track associated with service businesses and an area of unmanaged greenspace containing a large pond.

  The site has an undeveloped nature with influences from surrounding housing in the west and north. Residential garden boundaries which adjoin the site to the west and north west could be considered vulnerable to urban sprawl as they are currently rear facing and directly visible in most places. The Bridgewater Canal presents a rigid boundary to the south and Rushgreen Road which is already fronted by development forms a robust permanent edge to the north. The site is influenced by the service businesses, associated hardstanding and an area of unmanaged greenspace to the east which provide containment and prevent the site from being perceived as part of the wider open countryside to the south-east and east beyond the adjacent field. The character of the site is influenced by the lack of direct open countryside directly adjacent to the site which creates a sense of enclosure to this pocket of land, a different character to that of the wider countryside in the green belt further towards the south east. In terms of urban sprawl, the site effectively lies between the existing urban edge of Lymm and the existing urbanising elements within the land to the immediate east of the site.

- ***To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another***
  General Area 7 and land parcel LY16 are considered to make no contribution to preventing towns merging into one another within the WBCGBA as these sections do not prevent towns from merging.

  In terms of the merging of settlements, a key consideration is the strength and permanence of existing boundaries. As set out above the site is physically well contained and would not contribute towards towns merging into one and other. The site lies between Lymm and the suburb of Rushgreen; however, these two urban areas are already connected through Rushgreen Road and houses and businesses which align this road. The development of the site would not contribute towards any merging of the settlements but would rather consolidate the existing urban edge and ribbon development along Rushgreen Road.

- ***Safeguarding the countryside from encroachment***
  Within the WBCGBA General Area 7 and land parcel LY16 are deemed to make a strong contribution towards safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. The GB Update Assessment (July 2017) has downgraded land parcel LY16 from making a strong contribution to moderate contribution to this green belt purpose. The parcel is assessed to make a moderate contribution to safeguarding from encroachment due to existing levels of built form and its durable boundary with the countryside.

  Despite the undeveloped nature of the site, tall vegetation and built form that surround the site boundary create a sense of enclosure. A relationship to Lymm is created through

filtered views available to nearby residential properties at the west, north and south and to the businesses within the land to the immediate east. A relationship to more rural landscape is created through middle distance views to the north beyond the existing development on Rushgreen Road, of a greenfield area and from longer distance views looking across agricultural land to the north. The topography of the site grades c.7m from a high point of 24.09mAOD in the south west to a low point of 17.09mAOD in the north east. This results in longer distance views being available from the south decreasing to limited views from a more enclosed setting in the north.

This site forms the western boundary of parcel LY16 adjoined by residences at the edge of Lymm. To the south the Bridgewater Canal creates a robust boundary as does Rushgreen Road to the north. Businesses and hardstanding areas to the east separate this parcel of land from the wider countryside, which would prevent further encroachment. The Greenbelt Assessment highlights that the western boundary of the site is vulnerable to encroachment. If development were to be introduced along this boundary, the existing site boundaries particularly to the east could be developed and enhanced to provide a strong landscape buffer with additional tree planting improving the capacity of this site to safeguard the wider countryside from encroachment. This would soften the existing settlement edge for recreational users of the Bridgewater Canal and the associated recreational pedestrian route. A footpath could be introduced north to south adjacent to new tree planting that would further strengthen this boundary and link these two important recreational routes of the Trans Pennine Trail (Lymm BR46) and Bridgewater Canal (Lymm FP43). This link could also be influential in providing circular routes for recreational walkers and cyclists from Lymm and the nearby popular visitor destination Dunham Massey Hall.

- ***Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns***
  Land parcel LY16 is assessed within the WBCGBA as making a weak contribution to preserving the setting and special character of Lymm. The reason being that the western edge of the parcel is located within the 250m buffer area around Lymm Conservation Area. The Conservation Area is separated from the Green Belt and from the parcel by three rows of modern residential development along Dairy Farm Court, Grasmere Road, and Mardale Crescent.

  The housing between the conservation area and site is of a more modern character than that of areas within the Lymm Conservation Area. The site is further influenced by warehouse style business units, nurseries and unmanaged land to the east which creates a character which does not appear to contribute to the special character of Lymm.

- ***Overall Green Belt Conclusions***
  The GB Update Assessment has downgraded the overall assessment for land parcel LY16 from a moderate contribution to weak contribution.

  Our site specific assessment has shown that the site is surrounded by the existing Lymm settlement edge, the Bridgewater Canal, Rushgreen Road and a business estate providing robust edges in all directions from the site. The site is enclosed by topography, surrounding built form and vegetation. There are in reality very few locations from which the site, can be viewed and perceived, making their influence and connection to the wider Green Belt limited geographically. In our assessment this would be the weakest of the 'weak' parcel.

Therefore, in terms of encroachment and urban sprawl, this land parcel could be brought forward for development with the appropriate mitigation and enhancement considerations incorporated into any future design layouts, to provide a more characteristic and defensible settlement edge than exists at present, with recreational and ecological enhancements that would benefit the wider Green Infrastructure of the area.

Landscape Character Context

3.14. At the national level, the site sits within the 'Mersey Valley' Character Area (National Character Area 60. At local level, the site is within LCT 3 Red Sandstone Escarpment and LCA 3C Lymm as part of The Warrington Landscape Character Assessment.

3.15. Key characteristics of LCA 3C are noted as:

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

3.16 Key objectives for managing this landscape character area are:

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

3.17. Whilst the character information set out above does provide some context relevant to the promotion of the site, it does not address the characteristics specific to the site. In response to fieldwork and desktop research, further observations have been made with regards the site and its immediate surroundings:

- The site is comprised of an overgrown field, predominantly consisting of scrubby vegetation, long grass and some pioneer tree species;
- The site is bounded by thick woodland vegetation to the west and north west, a shelterbelt of tall coniferous trees to the north east and east and a hawthorn hedge to the south;
- The site overlooks the settlement edge of Lymm, filtered views of houses in the immediate locality to the west, north and south are available;
- The Bridgewater Canal is to the south; service business units and greenfield to the east; properties in Lymm to the west; and Rushgreen Road to the north; and
- In the wider context of LCA 3C Lymm, the character of the countryside is diminished somewhat by intrusive adjacent business units to the east of the site.

3.18. It is evident from fieldwork, that although the site is somewhat open and agricultural in nature due to its current usage, the site's character is influenced by a combination of more urban and rural characteristics. Urban factors making up the site's landscape character include Rushgreen Road and the associated supermarket development to the north, business units to the east and the residential dwellings surrounding the site to the west.

Visual Context

*(See **Landscape Context Plan** and **Photoviewpoints**)*

3.19. The site varies in terms of visual enclosure. Views within the site are open but generally tall vegetation to the north, east and west filter views beyond the site boundary. Some residential properties to the west, south and north west are visible in the immediate locality. The greatest level of enclosure is achieved at the north of the site where the AOD is lowest and surrounding vegetation and built form create a localised visual envelope. Longer distance and less filtered views are available from the south of the site at a higher AOD, where the higher ground levels enable visibility of agricultural land to the north and a greenfield area to the south.

3.20. The approximate extent of the visual envelope (VE) is set out below:

- To the north - thick woodland, scrub and coniferous shelterbelt vegetation filter views. The site is graded from a high point at the south west to a low point at the north east so visibility markedly changes depending on the viewers position within the site. The north feels very enclosed with no views available beyond the immediate surroundings whereas from the south long-distance views across agricultural land towards Rixton can be seen;
- To the east - a shelterbelt of coniferous trees separates the site from views beyond. Filtered views at certain locations are available towards a car park and access track associated with service businesses, alongside an area of unmanaged greenspace;
- To the south - a hawthorn hedge runs along the boundary, screening views to the Bridgewater Canal and connected recreational route (Lymm FP43) running alongside it. There are a small number of gaps in the hedgerow allowing views into the site from the path, but the majority of these views are filtered. Views from the site look out to a small number of properties aligning the southern side of the Bridgewater Canal and to trees aligning a greenfield area; and
- To the west - a thick band of vegetation filters views to properties closest to this boundary. Public views from the west are generally limited and screened by surrounding built form and vegetation.

3.21. Overall, the existing framework of site boundary vegetation creates a sense of enclosure to the site. Views are either in the immediate locality or from the south of the site long distance views to the north. In the case of more distant visibility towards the north, views are obscured by intervening vegetation and development would be difficult to discern from this distance.

3.22. Potential visual receptors to development of the site include:

- Users of the Public Rights of Way to the south, including the recreational route Lymm FP43 alongside the Bridgewater Canal, Lymm BR31 and Lymm FP30;
- Middle distance views from the north for users of the national cycle route NCN 62 and bridleway Lymm BR46;
- Private residents associated with the adjacent residential edge of Lymm to the west, northwest and southwest (Rush Green Road, Fletchers Lane, Thirlmere Drive, and Cyril Bell Close);
- Users associated with service businesses to the east;
- Fleeting highway views from vehicular users of Rushgreen Road to the north; and
- Fleeting views from barge users on the Bridgewater Canal and from the associated recreational route (Lymm FP43) to the south.

3.23. The above is not an extensive list of all Public Rights of Way within the local area but lists those where users would be likely to experience discernible change as a result of development on site. Further Public Rights of Way are shown on the Landscape Context Plan 11151/P02.

3.24. It is evident that due to the visual context of the site and surrounding landscape, there are relatively few receptors that are likely to be impacted on and there is a limited visual relationship between the site and the wider Green Belt, despite the site's location on the settlement edge. There are opportunities to utilise the screening provided by the framework of green infrastructure already present within the site boundaries to develop the site sensitively in a way which does not impact upon the perceived openness of the wider Green Belt landscape.

3.25. A key consideration in terms of visual impact will be the visual amenity of the proximity residents which are located to the west, north west and south west of the site. Their amenity will need to be respected through appropriate development offsets and design considerations to ensure existing screening vegetation is retained and built upon where appropriate to ensure the new development is not overbearing.

Landscape Conclusion and Recommendations

3.26. In response to the desktop and fieldwork undertaken, the following conclusions and recommendations are presented:

- The existing character of the site is somewhat open and agricultural in nature, however development boundaries on all sides of this parcel of land separate it from the wider countryside and Green Belt;
- Topography within the site increases the opportunity for long distance views to be available from the north but these views will be filtered and seen in the context of the existing residential edge of Lymm to the north and west and service businesses to the east. Development within the site will be barely discernible from these long-distance locations;
- In terms of boundaries, the site is surrounded by strong boundaries in Green Belt terms. The site is surrounded by the existing settlement edge, the Bridgewater Canal, the A6144 Rushgreen Road and a service business estate.
- In terms of visual receptors, the main visual receptors will be residential properties along the existing settlement edge and secondly filtered views from footpaths to the north and south. The visual amenity of these receptors should be carefully considered in the development of the site; and
- In terms of Green Belt, this specific site is assessed from a landscape perspective, to not perform a Green Belt function in terms of preventing settlements merging and preserving the historic setting of Lymm. Any contribution the site makes to preventing urban sprawl, or preventing encroachment on the countryside could be addressed through a considered design response which strengthens landscape buffers particularly to the east. The site is only visible from a limited geographical area, and is not perceived as forming part of the Green Belt in landscape or visual terms due to the influence of surrounding urban uses and the visual containment provided by the existing context. Development of the site would be unlikely to affect the integrity of the wider Green Belt.

3.27. Whilst it is appreciated that only a broad level assessment has been undertaken, this technical note has demonstrated that residential development within the site could be accommodated with reference to the site-specific conditions.

3.28. The site is considered capable of being developed without resulting in unrestricted urban sprawl or coalescence of urban areas. Although the site is currently somewhat open as an unused greenfield, urban influences are present in the form of views towards the adjacent residential edge of Lymm and the presence of business infrastructure along the eastern boundary.

3.29. As a result of the containment provided by the surrounding vegetation and the local topography of the site and wider context, few receptors will be affected and the effects on landscape character will be localised.

3.30. The most likely adverse effects are deemed to relate to the change in views from users of residential properties along the adjacent urban edge. These will need to be sensitively considered as part of future design proposals for the site, with development offsets, the consideration of appropriate screen planting and the provision of new soft landscaping.

3.31. Furthermore, development of the site offers opportunities to provide strengthened green infrastructure connections along the Bridgewater Canal and site boundaries, as well as new recreational routes to increase connectivity for rights of way through the locality.

3.32. With the above conclusions taken into account and with respect to landscape and visual matters, this site should therefore be considered suitable for residential development and release from the Green Belt.

4.0 Ecology Context

4.1. An ecological walkover survey was conducted on the 24th August 2017 by Jon Guarnaccio, a Principal Ecologist at Dunelm Ecology Ltd., and a full member of Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). Following the survey, and the completion of a desk study, an Ecological Overview Report was produced by Dunelm Ecology Ltd.; their report is appended to this one, and the findings are summarised, below.

Desk study

4.2. The desk study returned one designated site (Woolston Eyes Site of Special Scientific Interest [SSSI]) and four Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) within 2km of the site.

Field survey – habitats and flora

4.3. The site is dominated by hardstanding which is of negligible ecological value, but it also supports areas of neutral grassland, tall ruderal vegetation, scrub, hedgerows, scattered trees, semi-natural broadleaved woodland, buildings, and streams, which all have ecological value. Hedgerows and wet woodland – found within the site – are priority UK habitat types.

4.4. Japanese knotweed *Fallopia japonica*, Himalayan balsam *Impatiens glandulifera* and giant hogweed *Heracleum mantegazzianum* were recorded on site. These are listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), which makes it an offence to cause these species to spread or grown in the wild.

Field survey – protected and priority species

4.5. Two trees and one building (T3, T4 and B1 on the Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey plan) adjacent to site were identified as having potential to support roosting bats, and the wider site has the potential to support foraging and commuting bats. Bat activity surveys across the site are recommended, conducted across the survey season of May to August, inclusive.

4.6. One pond was identified immediately adjacent to site, and several other ponds fall within 250m of the site. The site contains suitable aquatic and terrestrial habitat for great crested newt *Triturus cristatus* (GCN), and as such, all ponds within 250m of the site should be subject to further detailed surveys for GCN, between April and June, inclusive.

4.7. The site contains habitat which has the potential to support badger *Meles meles*, breeding birds, water voles *Arvicolid amphibious*, and reptiles such as grass snake *Natrix natrix*. Further ecological surveys for these species will be required prior to a planning application.

Ecology Conclusion and Recommendations

4.8. Whilst it is appreciated that only a broad level assessment has been undertaken, from an ecological perspective, it is considered that a residential development could be accommodated within the areas of hard standing, semi-improved grassland, tall ruderal, introduced shrub and most of the scrub habitats within the site (some scrub should be retained to provide nesting habitat for breeding birds).

4.9. Further surveys will be required (see paragraph 4.10) to more accurately establish the size and extent of any residential development and any specific mitigation required in respect of protected and priority species. However, there is an opportunity to enhance the biodiversity value of the site through the management of existing habitats and creation of new ones.

4.10. Suggested enhancements include:

- allowing woodland to mature;
- planting native woodland species;
- creation of species-rich grassland;
- introducing native woody species to the existing hedgerows;
- creation of a new pond as part of any SUDs; and
- incorporation of bat and swift boxes within the fabric of new buildings, and on retained mature trees.

4.11. The site has the potential to support a range of protected and priority species; in line with National Planning Policy Guidance, faunal surveys will be required at the site prior to any future planning application, in order to inform any mitigation which may be required. The following surveys have been assessed as being required:

- Badger survey;
- Bat activity surveys;
- Great crested newt surveys;
- Reptile surveys; and
- Water vole surveys.

4.12. Impacts on statutory and non-statutory sites are likely to be negligible, but Natural England will need to be consulted as part of the planning application process as the site falls within the Impact Risk Zone of Woolston Eyes Site of Special Scientific Interest [SSSI].

4.13. Woodland, hedgerow and aquatic habitats should be retained as should a suitable buffer between the site and Bridgewater Canal (designated as Green Link) in accordance with policy QE5 of the adopted local plan.

4.14. The site contains non-native invasive species and so bio-security control measures will need to be employed to ensure that these species are not spread during the development. Aquatic habitats should also be protected from any pollution generated by the development, as well as runoff from the site which could provide additional pollution inputs post development.

5.0 Arboricultural Context

5.1. A feasibility walkover survey was undertaken on the 25th of August to identify the principal constraints and opportunities of the site's existing tree cover. An **Arboricultural Opportunities and Constraints Plan** is enclosed to the rear of the report and illustrates the broad context and distribution of the site's tree cover.

Arboricultural Planning context

5.2. Under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) the requirement to consider trees as part of development is a material planning consideration and will be taken into account in the determination of planning applications.

5.3. The site falls within the administrative borough of Warrington. The Warrington Local Plan Core Strategy was adopted by the council on 21st July 2014. The Local Plan Core Strategy is the overarching strategic policy document in the Local Planning Framework. It sets out the planning framework for guiding the location and level of development in the borough up to 2027.

5.4. Local Policies relating to arboricultural matters that will need to be considered as part of any site promotion / emerging development proposals include:

Warrington Borough Council Local Plan Core Strategy (Adopted July 2014)

- **Policy CS 6** *Overall Spatial Strategy – Strategic Green Links* – The policy states that the Council *"is committed to supporting wider programmes and initiatives which seek to connect the borough's Strategic Green Links with employment areas, residential communities, and Green Infrastructure Assets"*. Further requirements in relation to Green Infrastructure are set out in Policy QE3 which provides more detail on the criteria against which applications will be assessed.
- **Policy QE 3** *Green Infrastructure* – The policy states that *"the Council will work with partners to develop and adopt an integrated approach to the provision, care and management of the borough's Green Infrastructure"*. The policy includes an objective to protect *"existing provision"* of Green Infrastructure *"and the functions this performs"*, as well as *"improving the quality of existing provision"*. The policy also seeks to protect and improve *"access to and connectivity between existing and planned provision to develop a continuous right of way and greenway network and integrated ecological system"*.

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)

Landscape Design Guide for New Developments

5.5. This document is to provide advice and guidance to developers who are required to submit landscape schemes as part of detailed planning applications. The document sets out a series of development objectives, including seeking to address existing and proposed Green Infrastructure, namely to "*Ensure high quality environments in which to live and work through excellent landscape designs in new developments", "ensure the design of new landscapes feature at an early stage in the design process to ensure they are well integrated into new developments", "ensure biodiversity and geological features are conserved and enhanced through landscape improvements",* and to "*promote quality landscape schemes which are sensitive to the locality and provide local distinctiveness".*

Open Space and Recreation Provision (September 2007)

5.6. This document details a number of key objectives for open space within the borough including to "*create opportunities for and enhance biodiversity"* and to *"assist in tackling climate change through the plantation of trees and creation of green 'breathing' spaces".*

Planning Obligations (September 2007)

5.7. This SPD details the Councils approach to the use of planning obligations to facilitate decision making, relevant key objectives including to *"ensure appropriate environmental and biodiversity protection and enhancement and mitigation measures where appropriate".*

5.8. In summary, the local policy set out by Warrington Borough Council seeks to enhance and protect existing arboricultural features, and to promote new planting for biodiversity and amenity derived from local green infrastructure.

Statutory Protection

5.9. As shown on the Warrington Borough Council interactive mapping tool, a Sycamore tree located offsite on the western side of the existing entrance is subject to a Tree Preservation Order referred to as 'The Rushgreen Road Service Station, TPO 2006'. (accessed 15th September 2017).

5.10. The site is not located within a Conservation Area.

5.11. There are no Ancient Woodlands present within or adjoining the site following as review of the interventive mapping service provided on the Magic Maps website (accessed 15th September 2017).

Arboricultural Context

5.11. Much of the surveyed tree stock is naturalised regenerative growth with limited arboricultural value. Trees and most hedgerows on site are generally unmanaged and overgrown and provide limited amenity value in their current condition.

5.12. The Sycamore (TPO) established just beyond the north-east boundary line is considered to represent the principal arboricultural feature within influence of the site. The tree is of moderate to high arboricultural value and is therefore considered desirable to safe-guard as part of the a future development scheme.

5.13. Several mature Leyland Cypress groups dominate the eastern boundary. The combination of the characteristic rapid growth associated with this species and a lack of management has led to substantial overgrowth, resulting in a tall naturalised structure that is undesirable from an arboricultural perspective. The fastigiate morphology, considerable height, and congested crowns of the trees in this groups can make them prone to structural failures, making them unsuitable to retain within a development context. Attempts to reduce the height of sections of the Leyland groups through topping has caused vascular disruption and dieback, potentially increasing the risk of structural issues. These groups do however provide screening from the business uses to the east.

5.14. Internal tree stock is predominantly sporadic blackthorn and goat willow, interspersed with widespread thick understory scrub. Although intermittent shrubs and scrub persist over much of the site, tree and shrub density is much higher within a large area of regenerative growth to the west. This area of high stem density is predominantly made up of Goat Willow *Salix caprea,* Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa,* and Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna,* interspersed with a thick understory and perimeter of Bramble, Nettle, And Rosebay Willowherb. To the northwest of this group is an area of well-established Crack Willow *Salix fragilis,* which constitute the largest internal trees on the site. Although few defects were observed on this group of larger trees, they are of low-arboricultural quality and value, and as a species are considered less desirable for retention within a residential scheme given their propensity for rapid growth and structural weakness.

5.15. The hedgerow running along the southern boundary is dominated by Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, and also contains a young Oak *Quercus robur* with some future potential. Although well-maintained and able to provide some screening value from the public footpath along the canal, this hedgerow is considered to be of low arboricultural value given its limited age and species diversity.

5.16. The northern boundary tree stock comprises naturalised trees, ornamental structure planting that has become naturalised, and offsite ornamental trees in residential gardens. Selected removals of the lower-value stock could be undertaken to increase the developable area. However, sufficient offsets will need to be provided from those retained and those falling off-site to allow for root protection areas.

5.17. Trees aligning the south-western boundary comprise a belt of early mature self-set Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* (to 400mm stem diameter) with canopy heights to 10m. Such trees are afforded a low individual and collective value in terms of arboricultural quality and condition, however exhibit potential to provide some amenity value as established mature specimens. Given the poor level of well-established existing tree cover on and around the site, there is potentially greater emphasis on retaining and protecting these trees as part of an emerging scheme design.

Further Survey Requirements

5.18. Should the site be considered for a future planning application the implementation of BS5837:2012 survey and assessment work will likely be required for compliance with local planning policy and validation purposes. This work will provide full details on the above and below ground characteristics of trees, including their constraints and opportunities in the context of development proposals.

5.19. Root Protection Areas (RPAs) are considered to contain sufficient rooting volume to ensure the survival of the tree and should be left undisturbed in order to avoid damage to the roots or

rooting environment surrounding the tree. Particular care is needed regarding the proximity of trees which may become enclosed within new development. RPAs will be calculated as part of a full BS5837:2012 Tree Quality Survey.

5.20. Where high canopy trees are present on and adjacent to sites such as this, the RPAs and below ground context of trees should also be considered in association with above ground constraints. The current and ultimate height of any tree also needs to be appreciated in terms of its size, dominance, shade and movement in strong winds. Proposed habitable rooms and garden areas will need to be sited to avoid the principle shadowing constraints to reduce tree resentment issues and adverse residential amenity impacts for future site occupants. Retained mature tree cover of merit must also be located outside of proposed gardens to ensure future retention and appropriate management.

5.21. A full BS5837:2012 Tree Quality Survey will need to be based on measured topographic survey data in order to obtain accurate locations of trees, detailed measurements of tree canopies, RPAs and cast shading.

Arboricultural Conclusions and Recommendations

5.22. In response to both desktop assessment and preliminary fieldwork undertaken to date, a series of arboricultural recommendations have been established to guide the emerging development of the site. These observations are set out on the plan contained at the rear of this report. The key themes include:

5.23. Consider removal of the Leyland cypress groups to the east of the site and replacement with trees that provide a similar screening function but that have a higher arboricultural and ecological value, lower management requirements, and greater structural robustness.

5.24. Consider clearance of the low-quality regenerative internal tree growth to unlock developable area. Balancing losses with a new tree planting scheme that engenders the site with greater arboricultural diversity, resilience, and character.

5.25. Allow for development offsets from retained trees and hedgerows to accommodate RPA and canopy shading. The details and full extent of the required development offsets will be known following detailed BS5837 Tree Quality Survey work and can be refined as part of the later detailed design and planning stages of the proposed development.

5.26. Development will need to consider the future growth requirements and current root protection areas associated with any retained tree stock whilst incorporating tree canopy shading offsets to ensure adverse residential amenity impacts are reduced across the development once detailed arboricultural survey information is obtained.

5.27. Should the site be considered for a future planning application the implementation of BS5837:2012 survey and assessment work will likely be required for compliance with local planning policy and validation purposes. This work will provide greater detail on the above and below ground characteristics of trees, including their constraints and opportunities in the context of development proposals.

5.28. A full BS5837:2012 Tree Quality Survey will need to be based on measured topographic survey data in order to obtain accurate locations of trees, detailed measurements of tree canopies, root protection areas (RPAs) and cast shading.

5.29. Future development on-site is considered feasible at this stage, as the site contains few trees that can be considered a notable constraint on development. The widespread clearance of low-value tree stock that is necessary to unlock developable area should be met with a design response that seeks to offset these losses, increase species diversity, and increase the overall arboricultural amenity derived from the site in future decades.

6.0 Overall Recommendations and Conclusions

6.1 Whilst it is appreciated that only a broad level assessment has been undertaken, this technical note has demonstrated that residential development could be accommodated within the site with reference to the site-specific circumstances and the ability to deliver sustainable growth in Lymm.

6.2 Overall, the site is considered developable in landscape terms the enclosed nature, and the existing residential and service business backdrop. Development could be absorbed into the local landscape without harming the rurality of the wider landscape and through the provision of a robust defensible settlement edge.

6.3 From an ecological perspective, it is considered that a residential development could be accommodated within the areas of hard standing, semi-improved grassland, tall ruderal, introduced shrub and most of the scrub habitats within the site (some scrub should be retained to provide nesting habitat for breeding birds).

6.4 Future development on-site is considered feasible in arboricultural terms, as the site contains few trees that can be considered a notable constraint on development. The widespread clearance of low-value tree stock that is necessary to unlock developable area should be met with a design response that seeks to offset these losses, increase species diversity, and increase the overall arboricultural amenity derived from the site in future decades.

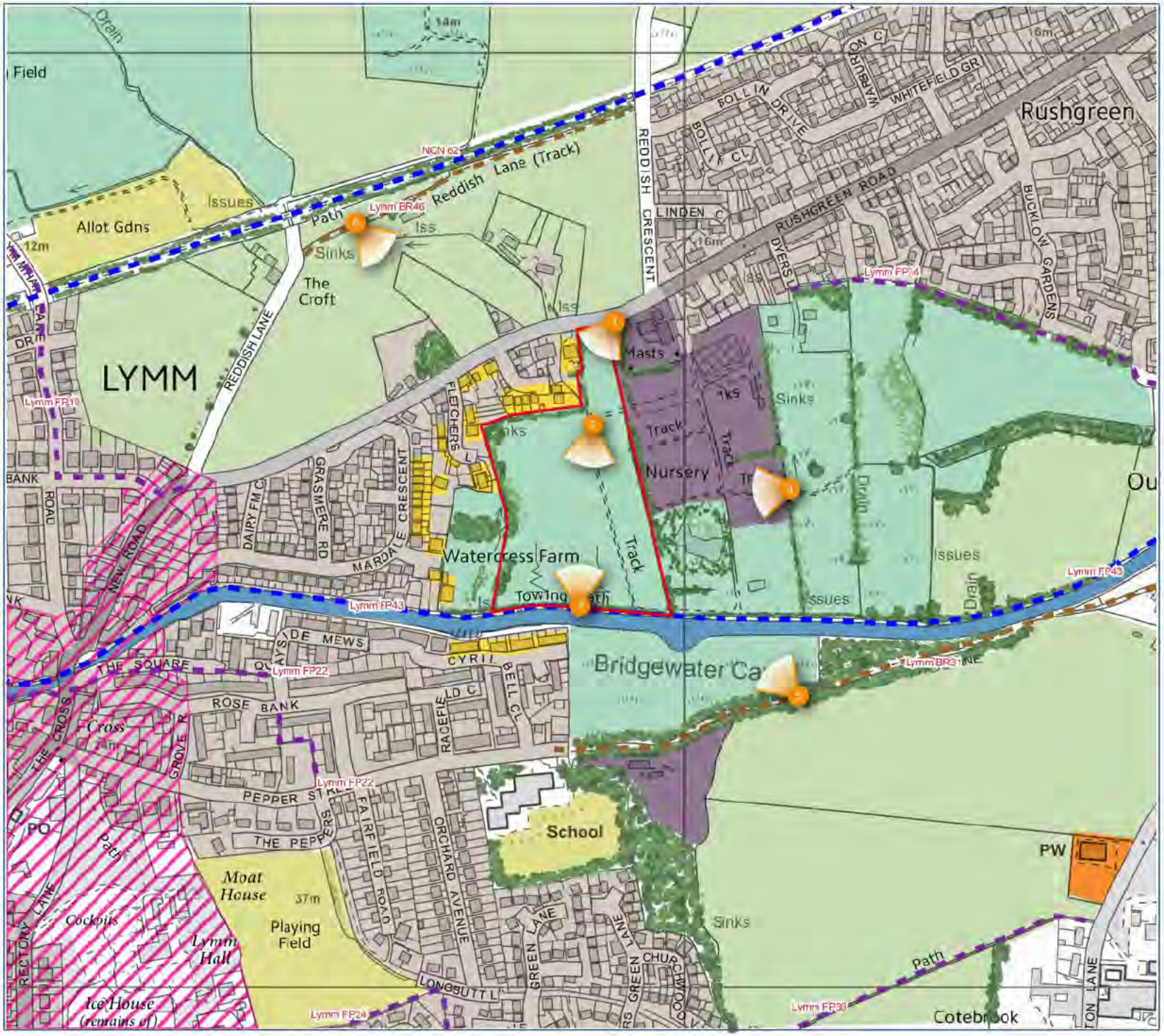
6.5 With the above conclusions taken into account and with respect to landscape and visual, ecological and arboricultural matters, this site should therefore be considered suitable for residential development and release from the Green Belt.

6.6 Whilst this site can be delivered in isolation, land adjacent to the site is being promoted by Bellway Homes and there is no reason that this site could not come forward as part of a wider allocation incorporating both areas. This option is shown on the 'Framework Plan' appendix and the Framework Plan shown is broadly consistent with the recommendations set out within this Note. This demonstrates a clear scope for the ability to accommodate development within the site, as well as the retention of existing features. The plan also includes sufficient offsets / green infrastructure quantum to accommodate any specific landscape, arboricultural and ecological mitigation and enhancement measures that would be proposed in association with a more detailed development layout for a future application on the site.

7.0 Plans and Appendices

Landscape Context Plan;
Photoviewpoints 1-6;
Arboriculture Overview Plan;
Ecological Overview Report, associated Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey and annotated Framework Plan; and
Framework Plan (produced by MCK).

The contents of this report are valid at the time of writing. Tyler Grange shall not be liable for any use of this report other than for the purposes for which it was produced. Owing to the dynamic nature of ecological, landscape, and arboricultural resources, if more than twelve months have elapsed since the date of this report, further advice must be taken before you rely on the contents of this report. Notwithstanding any provision of the Tyler Grange LLP Terms & Conditions, Tyler Grange LLP shall not be liable for any losses (howsoever incurred) arising incurred as a result of reliance by the client or any third party on this report more than twelve months after the date of this report.



- Site Boundary
- Primarily residential with other built form
- Bridgewater Canal
- Principal vegetation
- Landscape Detractor
- Dwellings with primary views of the site
- Conservation Area
- Public Footpath
- Bridleway
- Recreational Route
- Photo Viewpoint Locations
- Rough Grassand
- Mixed Farmland
- Sport and Recreation
- St. Peters C of E Church

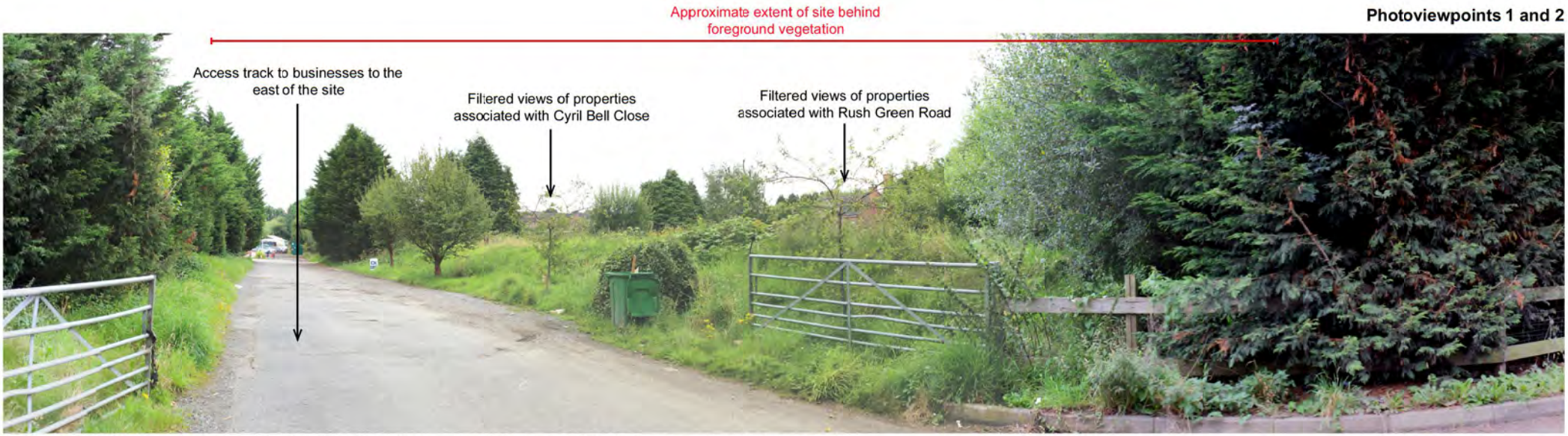
N

0 250m

Project	Tanyard Farm, Lymm
Drawing Title	**Landscape Context Plan**
Scale	[redacted]
Drawing No.	
Date	
Checked	

Tyler Grange

11 Market Place, Macclesfield, Cheshire, SK10 1EE



Photoviewpoint 1: View from north of the site at junciton between unnamed access track to businesses and Rush Green Road.

Photoviewpoint 2: View from north east corner within the site facing south.

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Photoviewpoints 1 and 2 | Drawing Title
Tanyard Farm, Lymm | Project
11151/P04 | Drawing No.

Photoviewpoint 3: View from south of the site facing north with glimpsec long distance views.

Photoviewpoint 4: View across car storage and boundary vegetation to the east of the site approximately 150m from site.

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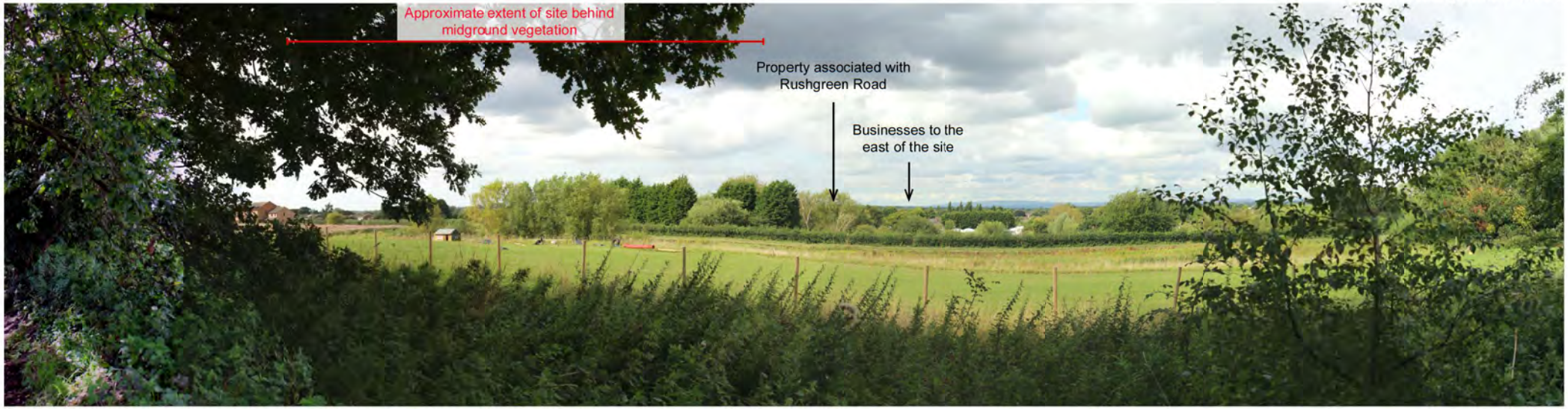
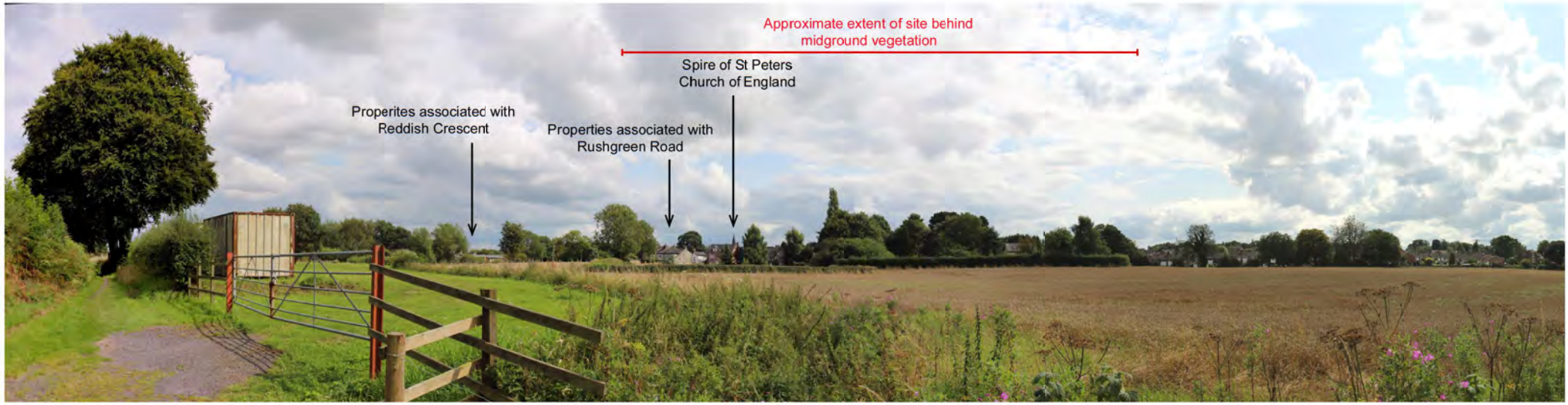
Photoviewpoints 3 and 4 | Drawing Title
Tanyard Farm, Lymm | Project
11151/P04 | Drawing No.



Photoviewpoint 5: View from bridleway (Lymm BR31) between Pepper Street and Outrightington Lane approximately 170m from site



Photoviewpoint 6: View from Bridleway (BR46) between Reddish Lane and Reddish Crescent facing south east approximately 300m from site.

Key:

Tree Cover

Maintained Hedgerow

Project Name

Tanyard Farm, Lymm

Drawing Title

Arboricultural Opportunities and Constraints Plan

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Tanyard Farm, Lymm
Ecological Overview Report

September 2017

Dunelm Ecology
consultant ecologists

Contents

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

1.1.1 This report has been prepared by Dunelm Ecology on behalf of Emery Planning following desktop analysis and preliminary fieldwork undertaken at land off Rush Green Road between Lymm and Rushgreen. The overview provides advice relating to ecological matters to inform proposals to develop the area for residential housing. The site is located on the eastern fringes of Lymm, situated between the Bridgewater Canal and A6144 Rush Green Road. The report does not constitute a full ecological assessment and its main purpose is to inform potential development going forward and provide a review of the suitability of the land for development with recommendations to maximise the biodiversity value of the scheme.

1.2 Legislative and Planning Context

1.2.1 A range of international and national legislation has been established in the UK to protect important nature conservation sites and priority species. At the international level, European Union (EU) Directives require individual member states to implement their conservation provisions nationally for the benefit of Europe as a whole. These Directives have been transposed into UK law by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010.

1.2.2 Other international conventions include: the Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (1979), which requires the maintenance of populations of wild flora and fauna, giving particular protection to endangered and vulnerable species; and the Bonn Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (1979), which requires the protection of migratory species throughout their entire range. The above conventions are implemented in England and Wales via the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) (1981) (as amended) and Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000. This legislation also protects important habitats and sites such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Section 14 of the WCA 1981 also makes it an offence to release into the wild certain plants and animals which may cause ecological, environmental, or socio-economic harm. These are listed under Schedule 9 of the Act.

1.2.3 The Hedgerows Regulations (1997) regulate hedgerow removal and affords increased protection to those meeting certain ecological, landscape, cultural or archaeological criteria.

1.2.4 The Protection of Badgers Act (1992) protects badgers and their setts from persecution. The purpose of this Act was, therefore, animal welfare as opposed to concern over the conservation status of this mammal, which is common and widespread across much of rural Britain. However, the Act also contains restrictions that apply more widely, and have relevance to developers.

1.2.5 At the national level, the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework published in 2012 is the government's response to the Convention on Biological Diversity (1992). It describes the UK's biological resources, commits a detailed plan for the protection of these resources within the UK's devolved framework across

England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The document identifies future priorities for nature conservation and adopts a more strategic approach, including ecosystem services and sustainability alongside biodiversity. Despite administrative changes following devolution, there is still an underlying objective of protecting and enhancing a range of priority species and habitats, often still based on the objectives and classifications of the original UK Biodiversity Action Plan. Biodiversity 2020 is England's national biodiversity strategy. Building on the Natural Environment White Paper published in 2011, this provides a means of delivering the international and EU commitments to biodiversity. Under Biodiversity 2020, Priority Species and Habitats referred to are those of 'Principal Importance' for the conservation of biodiversity in England listed on Section 41 (England) of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006.

1.2.6 Finally, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in 2012 provides guidance for local authorities on the content of the Local Plans and is a material consideration in determining planning applications. The NPPF has replaced much existing planning policy guidance, including Planning Policy Statement 9: Biological and Geological Conservation. Briefly, with an overall focus on sustainable development, the NPPF states that developments should aim to engender positive outcomes for biodiversity, with a particular focus on the maintenance and creation of ecological networks. Furthermore, the NPPF also states that any planning proposals for which significant negative impacts on biodiversity cannot be avoided, mitigated or compensated should be refused.

1.2.7 The NPPF states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural environment through a range of actions, including:

- Protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological interests and soils;
- Recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services; and

1.2.8 Minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.

2 Methods and Approach

2.1 Desk Study

2.1.1 Information was sought on existing designated statutory and non-statutory nature conservation sites within 2km of the application site. This principally involved using online resources such as Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) and Warrington Borough Council's website. No protected and priority species records have been collated at this point.

2.2 Field Survey

Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey

2.2.1 Habitats present within the site boundary were surveyed on 24 August 2017 following the Phase 1 habitat survey methodology (JNCC 210) which is the standard technique for classifying and mapping British habitats. The survey aimed to provide a record of habitats that are present and investigate further those that are likely to be ecologically important, with features of interest target noted. Consideration was also given to the 'importance' of hedgerows within the site. This involved undertaking a hedgerow regulations assessment of each hedgerow (DEFRA 2007).

2.2.2 The survey was 'extended' to include a general assessment for the presence or potential presence of protected and priority species, noting any areas of suitable habitat and the location and type of any field signs recorded. Owing to the location of the site and its character, this element of the survey mainly focused on bats, great crested newt (GCN), badger and reptiles.

2.3 Survey Personnel

2.3.1 The survey was carried out by Jon Guarnaccio who is a Principal Ecologist at Dunelm Ecology Ltd with 14 years continuous experience in the field of ecology. He is a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) and holds survey licences for a wide range of protected species including bats, GCN and barn owl.

2.4 Survey Constraints

2.4.1 The survey was completed during summer which is an optimal time of year for phase 1 habitat surveys as most plant species are in flower and more readily identifiable than at other times of the year (JNCC 2010). Summer is also an ideal time of year to undertake faunal surveys as most species are active. Undertaking tree surveys for bats during August, after leaf-burst, meant that some potential roosting features may have been concealed by foliage.

2.4.2 A significant constraint was the amount of dense tall herb, scrub and woodland habitat across the site (particularly in the western half of the site) which prevented access to large swathes of land. Such areas could therefore not be fully investigated and habitats had to be mapped from vantage points with the aid of binoculars. Consequently, some habitats and species may have gone unrecorded.

3 Results and Preliminary Assessment

3.1 Desk Study

3.1.1 The only statutory designated site within 2 km is Woolston Eyes SSSI which is located 1.7 km to the north west. The SSSI is a nationally important site for its breeding bird assemblage of lowland open waters and their margins (including nationally important numbers of black-necked, gadwall and pochard) and for wintering wildfowl. The site falls within the Impact Risk Zones of this SSSI as well as Rixton Pits SSSI/SAC which is located 2.3 km to the north.

3.1.2 There are four Local Wildlife Sites within the search area including Heatley Flash, Helsdale Wood & Newhey's Plantation, Lymm Dam Complex and Statham Ox-Bow the closest of which is 600 m from the site.

3.1.3 Given the distance of the above designated sites from the proposed development area and the absence of impact pathways (e.g. hydrological connectivity), impacts are likely to be negligible. Nonetheless, the site falls within IRZ of the sites and Natural England will therefore need to be consulted as part of the planning application process.

3.2 Field Survey

Phase 1 Habitat Survey

3.2.1 Figure 1 shows the results of the extended Phase 1 habitat survey, while the main habitat types present within the site are described in detail below. Approximately half of the site was formerly used for horticultural purposes but is now occupied by several business premises including airport car parking which has resulted in large areas of hard standing.

Neutral grassland

3.2.2 Relatively small, discrete patches of poor semi-improved grassland occur within the site. These are generally tall and unmanaged comprising coarse grasses such as cock's foot, Yorkshire fog and false oat grass with herbs typically being restricted to a few species such as creeping buttercup, broadleaved dock, ragwort, white clover and black medick. A more diverse thin strip of grassland has developed on a slope near the site's entrance. This comprises species typical of better quality grassland such as red fescue, red clover, bird's foot trefoil, vetch spp. and common knapweed. A very small patch of mown amenity grassland can also be found within the site and is currently used for dog training.

Tall Ruderal

3.2.3 Along with scrub (see below), this represents the dominant habitat type within the site forming some verse dense and tall stands. Species composition is limited and restricted to a handful of species such as willowherb spp., common nettle, creeping thistle, mugwort, comfrey and common hogweed.

Introduced shrub

3.2.4 Himalayan balsam is ubiquitous across the site, often being mixed amongst the areas of tall ruderal as well as forming some discrete stands. Two patches of Japanese knotweed were also recorded along with an area containing montbretia crocosmia while several giant hogweed plants were found in the south of the site. All these species are listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 which makes it an offence to cause such species to spread or grow in the wild.

Scrub

3.2.5 Scrub is particularly prevalent within the western half of the site and principally comprises dense swathes of bramble sometimes several metres tall. Grey willow, goat willow and raspberry are occasionally intermixed within these areas.

Hedgerows

3.2.6 Two hedgerows were recorded: one along the southern site boundary and the other on the eastern site boundary. Both are species poor, principally comprising hawthorn with a paucity of ground flora species. The hedges also lack any associated features and therefore do not qualify as important under the Hedgerow Regulations. The hedges do however qualify as UK Priority Habitat as they support at least 80% native woody species.

Scattered trees

3.2.7 Lines of mature leyandii are common throughout the site while a few mature oak and crack willow trees were also recorded.

Semi-natural Broadleaved Woodland

3.2.8 Two areas of crack willow dominated woodland were recorded. These are dominated by semi-mature trees and occur alongside silver birch with bramble, goat willow and grey willow in the understorey. The ground flora typically comprises tall ruderal species such as those listed above although ferns are also present. The woodland areas are likely to meet the BAP definition of wet woodland which is a UK Priority Habitat type.

Ponds and Streams

3.2.9 One pond (P1) was recorded within the site and while aerial photography suggests a further pond is located adjacent, this could not be located although it could have been concealed by dense vegetation. Pond P1is surrounded by willow spp. Yellow flag iris, reed mace and pendulous sedge represent the only emergent vegetation present. Without further assessment it is not possible to state whether the pond can be regarded as a Priority Habitat Type but it has the potential to support a wide variety of fauna.

3.2.10 A ditch (W2) flows north to south through the south east corner of the site. This is heavily shaded by dense hawthorn scrub and oak trees. Bramble scrub and tall herbs such as willowherb spp. can also be found along the sides of the ditch while the water surface is covered by duckweed.

3.2.11 Another ditch (W1) is located on the site's western boundary but again, dense vegetation prevented closer inspection of the watercourse.

Buildings

3.2.12 The site includes several commercial units and a variety of more temporary structures such as dilapidated polytunnels, greenhouses and a caravan, plus portacabins and steel containers. The commercial units comprise single storey block built structures with pitched/mono pitched roofs and timber or corrugated metal cladding.

Protected and Priority Species

Bats

3.2.13 Two trees were identified as offering potential bat roosting habitat. One of these is a dead willow with significant amounts of peeling bark while the other is an oak tree with a cavity within a limb at 8 m high. Building B1 was also found to offer potential roosting habitat in the form of knot holes and gaps within/behind timber panelling.

3.2.14 All buildings and mature trees which are to be affected by the development should be subject to more detailed inspections prior to any planning application and detailed nocturnal surveys conducted on any buildings or trees, where potential roost features exist. The site is likely to be used by foraging and commuting bats, particularly around aquatic and wooded habitats. As such, it is recommended that bat activity surveys should be conducted to better understand how bats use the site both spatially and temporally. The above surveys should be completed between May and August with surveys spread over these months as opposed to being clustered together.

GCN

3.2.15 P1 provides suitable aquatic habitat for this species while most of the terrestrial habitats are highly suitable for GCN. There are several other ponds within 250 m of the site but these were not viewed during the survey. All ponds within and up to a distance of 250 m from the site should be subject to further surveys between April and June to determine GCN presence/absence. If GCN are recorded, population estimate surveys are likely to be required. eDNA techniques can be used but these should be undertaken between mid and late April to allow sufficient time for population estimate surveys to be undertaken if GCN presence is confirmed.

Badger

3.2.16 Snuffle holes were found at the edge of the willow woodland in the west of the site but it was not possible to definitively state these were made by badgers without further field evidence. However, badger setts could be concealed within inaccessible dense woodland and scrub habitats.

Reptiles

3.2.17 The mosaic of grassland, tall ruderal and scrub habitats provides optimal reptile habitat. The presence of waterbodies and the Bridgewater Canal increase the likelihood of grass snake being present. Reptile presence/anbsence surveys should be completed between April and September as part of the planning process.

Water vole

3.2.18 The watercourses and pond represent potential water vole habitat although heavy shading reduces the quality of these habitats to water voles. Nonethe less water vole surveys should be undertaken if these habitats are affected by the planning proposals.

Birds

3.2.19 Woody habitats within the site provide suitable nesting habitat for numerous bird species while tall herbs may provide a source of seeds. The vegetation is considered too dense to provide suitable barn owl foraging habitat.

4 Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1.1 No uncommon plant species or habitats were recorded during the survey and all are considered to be widespread across Cheshire and England. However, hedgerows and wet woodland are priority UK habitat types. No conclusive evidence of protected species was recorded but the site provides suitable habitat for a variety of species and dense vegetation made it difficult to investigate large parts of the site so some field signs may have gone unrecorded. Common garden birds are highly likely to nest within woody habitats within the site. The site supports several non native plant species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act which makes it an offence to cause these species to spread or grown in the wild. Specific measures will therefore need to be implemented to eradicate/remove these species, particularly Japanese knotweed.

4.1.2 It is considered that a residential development could be accommodated within the areas of hard standing, semi-improved grassland, tall ruderal, introduced shrub and most of the scrub habitats within the site (some scrub should be retained to provide nesting habitat for breeding birds). However, woodland, hedgerow and aquatic habitats should be retained as should a suitable buffer between the site and Bridgewater Canal (designated as Green Link) in accordance with policy QE5 of the adopted local plan. Aquatic habitats should also be protected from any pollution, such as fuel spills, which could be generated by the development, as well as runoff from the site which could provide additional pollution inputs post development.

4.1.3 In line with National Planning Policy Guidance it is recommended that detailed surveys for protected species including bats, GCN, badger and reptiles are undertaken at optimal times of year to inform any future planning application. However, it may be necessary to employ the use of a drone to survey large parts of the site given they are currently inaccessible due to dense vegetation growth. Winter surveys could prove useful in detecting species such as badger as vegetation cover is likely to be reduced. Additionally, pathways could be made through the vegetation to facilitate access.

4.1.4 Further surveys will be required to more accurately establish the size and extent of any residential development and any specific mitigation required but there is an opportunity to enhance the biodiversity value of the site through the management of existing habitats and creation of new habitats. For instance, willow woodland could be allowed to mature and select thinning of the canopy may encourage other native species to colonise the woodlands while additional species could be introduced such as alder and native woodland ground flora. Species rich grassland could be created through the sowing of a wildflower seed mix suited to the soil conditions enhancing the value of the site and providing a substantial amenity benefit by virtue of their colour and diversity. Existing hedgerows could be enhanced be introducing new native woody species while the pond could also be improved by reducing shading and introducing new aquatic plant plugs around the waterbody's margins. A new pond could be created as part of any SUDS along with associated habitats such as reedbeds and wet grassland.

4.1.5 The ecological value of buildings could be maximised by incorporating bat and swift boxes within the fabric of the buildings. Additional boxes could be installed on retained mature trees.

4.1.6 Such enhancements are in accordance with the NPPF which advises that planning decisions should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity by applying a number of principles, including the encouragement of opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments.

Legend

Habitat

- Broadleaved semi-natural woodland
- Dense/continuous scrub
- SI Neutral semi-improved grassland
- SI Poor semi-improved grassland
- Tall herb and fern - ruderal
- Open water
- A Amenity grassland
- Bare ground
- Building
- Hardstanding
- Introduced shrub
- Running water
- Species-poor intact hedge
- Ditch
- Fence
- Broadleaved tree
- Coniferous tree
- Scattered scrub
- Target note

Dunelm Ecology
consultant ecologists

Extended Phase 1 Habitats Survey

Land Off Rushgreen Road, Lymm

Scale	Drawing No.
1:1,250 @ A3	Figure 1

Drawn By	Originator	Date
CC	JG	SEP 2017

Ref.	Revision
	A

Key

- Site boundary
- Primary route
- Secondary route
- Pedestrian/Cycle footpath
- Pedestrian/Cycle footpath within ecological area
- Proposed development platform
- Proposed vegetation
- Existing pond
- Existing properties
- Trim Trail Activities
- Potential focal/landmark building locations
- POS

Visualisation 1

Visualisation 2

Example Residential Development

Bellway

mck associates limited

Drwg: 13-145 FP02 Rev C • Date: August 2017 • Sheet Size: A1 • Drawn: P.Miller • Scale: 1:1000

0m 10m 20m 30m 40m 50m 100m 150m 200m

1:1000

Key

- Site boundary
- Primary route
- Secondary route
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- Pedestrian/Cycle footpath within ecological area
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Visualisation 1

Visualisation 2

Example Residential Development

Bellway

mck associates limited
architecture | building surveying | urban design

Drwg: 15-145 FP02 Rev C • Date: August 2017 • Sheet Size: A1 • Drawn: P.Miller • Scale: 1:1000

0m 10m 20m 30m 40m 50m 100m 150m 200m
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