



Your ref:  
Our ref: EW/JC/PI1788

29 September 2017

Warrington Borough Council  
Planning Policy and Programme  
New Town House  
Buttermarket Street  
Warrington  
Cheshire  
WA1 2NH

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

Dear Sirs,

**REPRESENTATIONS TO THE LOCAL PLAN REVIEW - PREFERRED DEVELOPMENT OPTION  
CONSULTATION: LAND AT THELWALL HEYS, GRAPPENHALL**

On behalf of Liberty Properties Developments Limited ("Liberty"), thank you for the opportunity to submit representations to Warrington Borough Council ("WBC") on the Preferred Development Option Regulation 18 consultation.

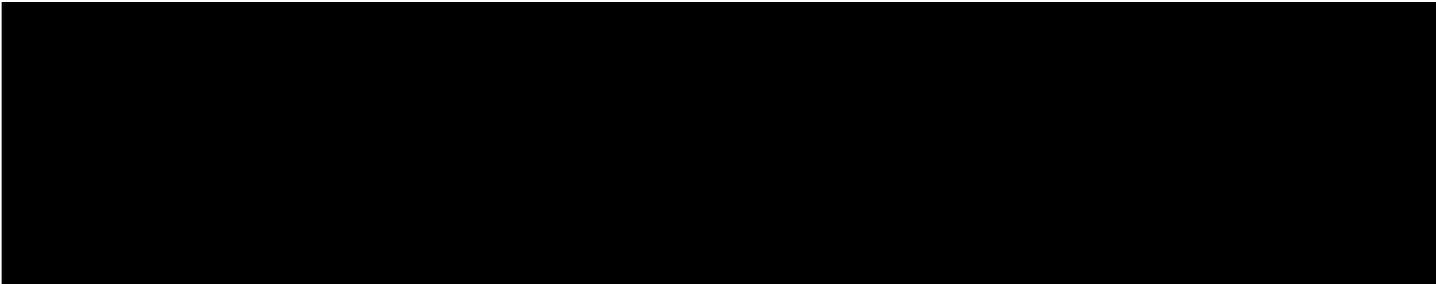
These representations are submitted in relation to Liberty's land interests at the site at Thelwall Heys, Grappenhall. HOW Planning has also been instructed to prepare the enclosed Development Statement, which demonstrates the site's suitability for residential development over the plan period and should be read in conjunction with these representations. We respectfully request that these representations are taken into account in the preparation of the next version of the Local Plan.

**BACKGROUND TO THE SITE**

The site extends to approximately 20.1 hectares and comprises a well-contained, undeveloped parcel of land adjoining the eastern edge of the settlement of Grappenhall and southern edge of Thelwall. The site comprises land which is currently located within the Green Belt. The site is largely flat in topography and irregular in shape, comprising a series of fields used for arable crop production. The boundaries of the fields and the site are made up of hedgerows and hedgerow trees. Thelwall Heys is a Grade II listed property located within the centre of the site, however the property has not included within the Site boundary. A site location plan is enclosed with this letter.

Representations have previously been submitted by HOW Planning on behalf of Liberty to the Call for Sites exercise in December 2016 to promote the site for housing. As noted above, we have also prepared the enclosed Development Statement, which assess the site in terms of its contribution to the Green Belt and provides the following:

Planning and Environmental Advisers



- A description of the site and its surrounding including a review of the site's sustainability credentials;
- An overview of planning policy and guidance;
- The case for the release of the site from the Green Belt. In particular, the Development Statement demonstrates that the site does not perform the purposes and functions of the Green Belt as required by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- An analysis of the economic, social and environmental benefits that the proposed housing scheme will deliver including a review of key technical considerations;
- An assessment of the site's deliverability; and
- A vision for the development including an illustrative masterplan demonstrating how the site could be developed.

The Development Statement demonstrates that the removal of the site from the Green Belt and its allocation for housing in the Warrington Local Plan would make a positive contribution towards the Borough's housing land supply. The site could also deliver a series of significant material benefits whilst still protecting the purpose and function of the Green Belt. The Development Statement is underpinned by a series of technical studies which have informed the preparation of the Development Statement and demonstrate that there are no physical limitations which would prevent or delay the site from coming forwards for residential development in the short term.

Overall, the Development Statement concludes that the development of the Thelwall Heys site would provide a logical extension to the existing settlement of Thelwall and Grappenhall and is a sustainable location to deliver residential development with access to a range of existing services and facilities.

#### **PREFERRED DEVELOPMENT OPTION (REGULATION 18 CONSULTATION DOCUMENT) (JULY 2017)**

In this section we comment on the evidence base produced as part of the current consultation in detail in the supporting Development Statement. The Local Plan Preferred Development Option (Regulation 18 Consultation Document) sets out WBC's proposed approach to meeting Warrington's need for new homes and jobs between now and 2037. We comment on the Preferred Development Option document as follows:

#### **Development Need**

The Preferred Development Option proposes a housing target of 1,113 homes per annum over the 20-year Plan period as well as an overall employment land target of 381 hectares. A detailed assessment of urban capacity through its SHLAA and Economic Development Needs Assessment (EDNA) has been undertaken by the Council as well as identifying the significant additional capacity that can be delivered through regeneration plans. As part of this process the Council has confirmed a total urban capacity for 15,429 homes.

The following requirements have been identified in the table below<sup>1</sup>:

	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

<sup>1</sup> Preferred Development Option - Consultation (July 2017), Table 1: Housing Land Requirements, page 14

This table identifies a total requirement of 24,220 homes based on an annual requirement of 1,113 per annum over a 20 year Plan period. It specifies a total capacity within the urban area of 15,429 dwellings which leaves a requirement of 8,791 new houses to be provided on sites to be located in the Green Belt. This is made clear in paragraph 4.17 of the Preferred Development Option:

*"Despite maximising the capacity of the existing urban area, it is apparent that if Warrington is to meet the development needs arising from its growth aspirations, it can only do so through the release of Green Belt land to provide for 8,791 homes and 251 ha of employment land."<sup>2</sup>*

These figures are in keeping with the content and conclusions of the evidence base document.

### Strategic Objectives

The Preferred Development Option Consultation document sets out the strategic objectives for the Local Plan, which includes:

*"To facilitate the sensitive release of Green Belt land to meet Warrington's long term housing and employment needs, whilst ensuring the revised Green Belt boundaries maintain the permanence of Warrington's Green Belt in the long term."<sup>3</sup>*

This strategic objective is supported by Liberty.

### Defining High Level Spatial Options

The Preferred Development Option Consultation document states the three options were considered for the spatial distribution of new development:

- **Option 1:** Green Belt release only in proximity to the main Warrington urban area;
- **Option 2:** Majority of Green Belt release adjacent to main urban area with incremental growth in outlying settlements; and
- **Option 3:** Settlement extension in one or more settlement with remainder of growth adjacent to the main urban area.

The consultation document confirms at paragraph 4.50 that the difference in the above options is their approach to the allocation of Green Belt land for housing. It has been confirmed that Option 2, focusing Green Belt release adjacent to the main urban area of Warrington, with incremental growth in the outlying settlements, is the Council's preferred option.

Overall this approach to strategic Green Belt release is supported by Liberty, as it recognises the need to release land adjacent to the main urban area, such as Thelwall and Grappenhall, in order to contribute to a sustainable, viable and deliverable option for meeting Warrington's development needs. However, some of the edge of settlement locations identified within the Preferred Options Document, such as Thelwall and Grappenhall have the ability to accommodate a higher level of development than identified.

### Main Development Locations

The Preferred Development Option Consultation document establishes approximately 8,000 dwellings would need to be accommodated adjacent to the main urban area in order to meet the housing requirement. The following options have been considered for accommodating the 8,000 homes:

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<sup>2</sup> Preferred Development Option - Consultation (July 2017), paragraph 4.17, page 15

<sup>3</sup> Preferred Development Option - Consultation (July 2017), Table 5 - Local Plan Strategic Objectives, page 18

- **Option 1** - A Garden City Suburb to the south east of the Warrington main urban area of approximately 8,000 homes;
- **Option 2** - A Garden City Suburb of approximately 6,000 homes and an urban extension to the south west of Warrington of up to 2,000 homes;
- **Option 3** - A Garden City Suburb of approximately 6,000 homes and an urban extension to the west of Warrington of up to 2,500 homes;
- **Option 4** - A Garden City Suburb of approximately 4,000 homes and an urban extension to the south west of Warrington of up to 2,000 homes and urban extension to west of Warrington of up to 2,500 homes; and
- **Option 5** - A more dispersed pattern of Green Belt release adjacent to the main urban area.

The Council have assessed Option 2 to be the most appropriate option and this conclusion is met through a detailed assessment.

Liberty endorse the Garden City Suburb concept in principle. This approach would utilise Green Belt release in a sustainable location adjacent to the existing urban area. However, Liberty do not agree with the part of the methodology that has been used to define the development concepts. The Council has prepared a development concept for the Garden City Suburb for the area within 'General Area 10' of the Council's Green Belt Assessment<sup>4</sup>. The Council consider using the boundaries of the General Area's plan as being wholly appropriate when considering this scale of urban extension, in order to ensure that the long term Green Belt boundaries that will remain following release of Green Belt land will have a high degree of permanence. The Council also notes at Paragraph 4.69 of the Preferred Development Options document that it has considered safeguarding the adjacent 'General Area 9', which extends up to the M6, again using the principle of securing long term permanent Green Belt boundaries.

Liberty agree in principle of the use of the General Area's to define an area suitable for a development concept which has been assessed as performing poorly in the assessment. However, the General Areas should not be regarded as the defined boundaries for the consideration of development but informed by the detailed Parcel Assessments. Liberty do not agree with the methodology that has been adopted for the inclusion of the site within General Area 9 and subsequently to be only considered for safeguarded land in line with this principle.

The site has been assessed under Parcel WR35 of the 2016 Green Belt Assessment, which concludes that the site makes an overall weak contribution to the Green Belt. The Assessment comments that there are durable boundaries between the site and the built-up area and therefore its development alongside other adjacent areas of land could be seen as 'rounding off' the settlement pattern. It is therefore reasonable to suggest an adapted methodology for the assessment of the development concepts should be considered. Such that where Parcels are assessed to make a weak overall contribution to the Green Belt, these should be more favourably considered for residential development in the short term.

#### **ALLOCATION OF LAND AT THELWALL HEYS, GRAPPENHALL FOR HOUSING**

The enclosed Development Statement has been informed by a series of technical studies which have been commissioned by Liberty to demonstrate that this site is physically suitable to accommodate residential development. The development of the site for housing would constitute sustainable development in accordance with the NPPF when taken as a whole. Housing development at the site would also deliver significant and positive economic, social and environmental benefits which should be afforded significant weight in considering the site for removal from the Green Belt and an allocation for housing. Importantly, the development at the site will deliver the type, quality and quantity of new homes

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<sup>4</sup> The Green Belt Assessment was produced by Arup and published in October 2016. The General Areas map is included at Page 23 of this document.

that will support the growth of the Warrington Borough over the Plan Period and is suitably and sustainably located to access public transport and local facilities.

The Development Statement demonstrates that the site is physically suitable to accommodate residential development and can deliver a high-quality scheme in response to the surrounding opportunities and considerations. The illustrative masterplan indicates the streetscapes and character areas that could be created, whilst ensuring the development remains sensitive to the sites local surroundings. The layout seeks to retain the village character of Thelwall and Grappenhall and be sympathetic to the surrounding rural context. The development will be of higher density in the north-west corner decreasing to the south and east, with generous new planting, open space, in keeping with the locality. The dwellings will be a mix of housing types and sizes to reflect the varied local vernacular and needs of Thelwall and Grappenhall.

It is recognised at Page 41 of the Preferred Development Option that a new strategic road or public transport route could be incorporated across the site to provide a linkage to surrounding areas. However, it should be noted that the northern section from Stockport Road to Knutsford Road is located on the Trans Pennine Trail and may not form the most sustainable route. At this stage, Liberty have not considered this strategic road or public transport route within the design of the masterplan, however they are committed to working collaboratively with WBC and their key stakeholders to ensure that the Borough's housing needs are met in a sensitive and sustainable manner, and that development responds to the Councils wider strategic objectives.

### *Suitable*

The Thelwall Heys site can be developed with definitive and permanent boundaries to restrict any further potential development into the Green Belt to the south and east of the site in the future beyond All Saints Drive and the Bridgewater Canal. The site would form a natural extension to the established Thelwall and Grappenhall residential areas and can be considered as a 'rounding off' of the settlement pattern. The site could also utilise existing infrastructure surrounding the site and there are no utilities, drainage, infrastructure or environmental constraints preventing the site coming forward for development. The site is situated in a highly sustainably location within close proximity to public transport options and local services and facilities. Safe and satisfactory vehicular access can be delivered off Cliff Lane. Highways studies prepared to inform the Development Statement have confirmed that the local highway network has the capacity to accommodate the proposed level of residential development shown on the illustrative Masterplan.

In summary, the Development Statement illustrates that the site could suitably accommodate residential development and offers an appropriate location for development in the short term.

### *Available*

Liberty has in place a Promotional Agreement with the landowners of the site. Therefore should the site be released from the Green Belt within the emerging Warrington Local Plan Review, then site is within the control of a highly-experienced land promoter who would seek to secure planning permission within the shortest possible timescales which would ultimately contribute to the Borough's five-year housing land supply and deliver highly anticipated new homes early in the Plan Period. The site should therefore be considered 'available' for development in the short term as it is able to deliver residential development within the first five years of the Plan period.

### *Achievable*

The Illustrative Masterplan shown on Page 37 of the enclosed Development Statement demonstrates that the site is capable of delivering approximately 310 residential dwellings. The assessment of the site within the Development Statement indicates that there are no physical constraints which would prevent development from coming forwards in the short term. A planning application can be submitted alongside

supporting information, which identifies necessary mitigation measures required to overcome any limited deliverability barriers.

The Development Statement also highlights that there are a wide range of facilities located within close proximity to the site, including community services and amenities, leisure activities and employment opportunities, which would attract home buyers. Liberty has considered the level of market demand and projected sales rates in Warrington and consider the site economically viable and therefore achievable in accordance with the NPPF.

#### **SUMMARY**

In summary, this letter representation supported by the enclosed detailed Development Statement demonstrates that the site at Thelwall Heys in Grappenhall, presents an exceptional residential development opportunity which could make a significant contribution towards the Council's 5-year housing land supply.

The delivery of new homes at Thelwall Heys would make a positive contribution towards meeting the short-term housing needs of the Borough. These representations have demonstrated that the site is suitable, available and achievable for development and if the site were to be released from the Green Belt within the emerging Warrington Local Plan Review then it is within the control of a highly-experienced land promoter who would seek to secure planning permission within the shortest possible timescales. This would ultimately contribute to the Borough's five-year housing land supply, delivering high quality new homes early within the Plan Period.

We would be grateful if you could confirm safe receipt of these representations. Liberty are committed to working collaboratively with the Council to bring this site forward for the allocation for housing and subsequently the release from the Green Belt. Should you require any further information then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Enc. Site Location Plan; and  
Development Statement

REFERENCE  
PL1699

PROJECT

**THELWALL HEYS,  
GRAPPENHALL**

DOCUMENT

**DEVELOPMENT STATEMENT**

CLIENT

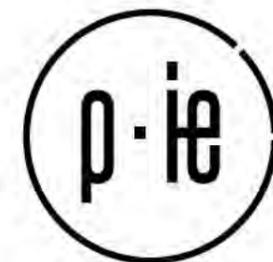
LIBERTY PROPERTIES

STATUS

FOR REVIEW

DATE

28/09/17



Liberty  
Properties





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# 1

## INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Introduction

This development statement has been prepared on behalf of HOW Planning's client Liberty Properties Developments Limited ("Liberty"), to support the release of land at Thelwall Heys, Grappenhall from the Green Belt and an allocation for housing within the emerging Warrington Local Plan.

The site forms a sustainable and natural extension to the existing area of Grappenhall and Thelwall in Warrington and offers a unique opportunity to deliver circa 310 high quality family and affordable homes with immediate access to a range of existing services and facilities.

The site should be considered as having the short-term development potential which will contribute to the boroughs housing needs. The site is within the control of a highly-experienced land promoter who would seek to secure planning permission within the shortest possible timescales which would ultimately contribute to the Borough's five-year housing land supply and deliver highly anticipated new homes early in the Plan Period.

The purpose of this Development Statement is to demonstrate the exceptional circumstances that exist to support an alteration to the Warrington Green Belt and an allocation for housing in order to sustainably meet the future housing needs of the District without having an adverse impact on the wider purpose and function of the Green Belt. The site in its entirety comprises 20.1 hectares (49.6 acres) of land located to the south of the village of Thelwall and to the east of the village of Grappenhall. The site is currently within the Green Belt; however, it forms a natural extension to the existing settlement and could be seen as rounding of the settlement pattern that would form a logical and deliverable site for new housing. This document seeks to clearly articulate the unique opportunity that exists at the site by providing:

- An analysis of the site and its surroundings;
- A review of the planning policy position and the critical need for new homes in Warrington;
- The case for the removal of the site from the Green Belt;
- Analysis of the sustainability of the site, including a review of key technical considerations;
- A masterplan and vision that articulates and illustrates the opportunity presented by the site;
- A demonstration that the site is deliverable, available and achievable; and
- A summary of the key benefits of the site.

In summary, the site presents a highly sustainable location that offers an opportunity for sensitive land release from the Green Belt and allocation for housing development as part of the forthcoming Warrington Borough Council Local Plan Review. Liberty welcomes the opportunity to work collaboratively with the council and key stakeholders throughout the Local Plan Review and would welcome an ongoing dialogue in order to fully assess the merits of the site.

This development statement has been informed by a series of technical studies which have been commissioned by Liberty to demonstrate that this site is physically suitable to accommodate residential development. The results of these technical studies are detailed within this Development Statement.



# 2

## SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

## 2.1 Site and surroundings

The site is located on the southern edge of Thelwall and eastern edge of Grappenhall, which lies approximately 4 kilometres to the south east of Warrington Town Centre. The site is located within the Parish of Grappenhall and Thelwall and forms a natural and logical physical extension to the existing settlement boundary, with immediate access to a range of local services and facilities.

### THE SITE

The site in its entirety comprise 20.1 hectares (49.6 acres) of land located to the north of the Bridgewater Canal, to the east of Knutsford Road and to the south of the Trans Pennine Trail in Thelwall Heys, near Thelwall and Grappenhall. The site is largely flat in topography and comprises a series of fields used for arable crop production with internal hedgerows and hedgerow trees forming boundaries between the fields.

The northern boundary of the site is formed by the Trans Pennine Trail (Sustrans Route 62). A belt of tree planting separates the site from the Trail. The southern boundary of the site is formed by hedgerows and scattered trees between the periphery of the site and the Bridgewater Canal and Cliff Lane.

The eastern boundary is adjacent to public footpath ref: FP196/12#3, which is separated from the site with small woodland blocks and tree planting. The western boundary is formed by Knutsford Road and a small number of individual properties that back on to the site. Hedgerows and scattered trees are also present along this boundary.

### SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

The site is located at the southern periphery of the village of Thelwall which sits on the south bank of the Manchester Ship Canal and to the west of the M6. The village extends east to west in a nucleated form centred around All Saints Church with a variety of property types and forms with many historic buildings including brick cottages, farm buildings, schools, a church, post office and public houses.

The site is also situated at the eastern periphery of the village of Grappenhall on the south bank of the Manchester Ship Canal. The majority of the village extends east to west in a nucleated form centred between the Bridgewater Canal and Knutsford Road, with the old village centre on Church Lane. There is a mix of property types and forms with many historic buildings including brick villas and cottages, rectory, schools, church and public houses.

To the south of the site and on the south bank of The Bridgewater Canal is the linear hamlet extending along Weaste Lane. The settlement is largely concentrated in the west becoming increasingly sporadic towards the east.

The Grade II listed Thelwall Heys (list entry number: 1380268) is located centrally on the site, although the site boundary wraps around the curtilage of the property, separated from the site with areas of hedgerow and tree planting. W. Long commissioned the architect Alfred Waterhouse (later famous for the Natural History Museum in London) for the Gothic Revival style house dated 1864. The house is predominately of built red-brown brick with yellow and blue brick banding and decoration, ashlar sandstone dressings, and steeply pitched slated roofs with truncated ridge and gable stacks. It

was built to an asymmetrical form; the main range aligned north-west to south-east, with a lower attached range extending north-eastwards from the entrance front, and a single storey service court extending from the north-western end. The historic building's significance is primarily derived from it being an early domestic commission by an architect of national stature, which retains much of its high quality interior, and much characteristic exterior detail.

The site is bounded to the north by the Grappenhall & Thelwall Royal British Legion Club and a small number of residential dwellings situated between the Trail and Stockport Road. Further north is Stockport Road and the residential area of Thelwall. To the east is Halfacre Lane and Victorian properties situated within the wider Green Belt which extends towards Statham 1.9 kilometres away. The Green Belt also extends southwards towards the administrative boundary of Warrington.

The site is situated in a sustainable location and has access to key local services and facilities in Thelwall and Grappenhall. Access to the strategic highway network can be gained via Knutsford Road, adjacent to the west of the site, which provides a link to the M6 (junction 20) and M56 (junction 9). The site has access to the primary public transport network within Warrington with bus stops located adjacent to the site along Knutsford Road.

A range of photographs which illustrate the visibility of the site from surrounding public vantage points are provided on the following pages.

## 2.2 Site location plan



## 2.3 Viewpoints







VIEWPOINT 4



VIEWPOINT 5



VIEWPOINT 6



VIEWPOINT 7



VIEWPOINT 8



VIEWPOINT 9

## 2.4 Visual analysis & landscape character

### 2.4.1. VISUAL ANALYSIS

The site has a settlement fringe character due to its location on the southern edge of Thelwall, with visibility towards the urban edge of Thelwall north of Stockport Road and Grappenhall to the east of Knutsford Road. Beyond the southern boundary of the site, development is scattered and the landscape context becomes open and increasingly rural, although the urban context of the site is still evident, influenced by residential development south of the canal. The current agricultural use of the land gives it a relatively open character, however it has a more contained feel than surrounding fields; views are foreshortened by internal hedgerows and hedgerow trees, woodland blocks to the east, and hedgerows with scattered trees that comprise the majority of the site boundary.

The visual envelope of the site is limited to close surroundings due to the existing framework of site boundary vegetation between the adjacent urban edges and woodland. Where more distant visibility towards the site is possible, views are largely obscured by intervening boundary vegetation and woodland blocks.

### 2.4.2. POTENTIAL VISUAL EFFECTS

As stated, visually, the site is relatively well enclosed due to the boundaries being vegetated with hedgerows, hedgerow trees and areas of woodland. 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. There are opportunities to utilise the screening provided by the framework of green infrastructure already present surrounding the site to create a sensitive settlement extension to Thelwall village that does not impact upon the perceived openness of the wider Green Belt landscape or sensitive receptors.

The key consideration in terms of visual impact will be to ensure that the visual amenity of users of the Trans Pennine Trail and surrounding public footpaths is maintained or mitigated through appropriate development layout design. This may include the incorporation of development offsets, the enhancing of the vegetation at the site boundaries to filter views of the new built form, the retention of open views where already existing to the grade II listed Thelwall Heys and the edge of Thelwall, and the provision of links to new public open spaces and the creation of new permissive routes.

### 2.4.3. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

At a national level, the site lies within the 'Mersey Valley' Character Area (National Character Area 60). At a district level, the site is identified within the 'Red Sandstone Escarpment' (Type 3 as set out within the Warrington: A Landscape Character Assessment (2007)) and more specifically identified within the 'Appleton Park & Grappenhall' Character Area.

Although the site is agricultural in nature, it has a relationship with the urban edge of Thelwall and Grappenhall. The site has some association with the surrounding residential built form owing to the proximity and visual connectivity to adjacent dwellings off Stockport Road and Knutsford Road, however the context becomes

increasingly rural and open to the east and south of the site. Consideration of the density of development and the siting of built form as well as the balance of open space provision with regards to the existing settlement edge will be an important to ensure the development complements and enhances the existing residential area in terms of adjacent residential amenity and functionality.

#### MASTERPLAN PROMTS

- Maintain hedgerow and tree boundaries and enhance where practical to do so.
- Offset development and provide landscaped buffer to mitigate visual impact to the immediate surroundings.
- Views of the listed building framed with screen and buffer planting.
- Development density to decrease where visibility to the existing urban edge is less prevalent and the character becomes increasingly rural.
- The proposed landscape should seek to retain features that are typical of the receiving landscapes such as mature hedgerows and trees.
- Retain the scale and form of the villages through the design of the developments against Knutsford Road and the vernacular appearance and type of the new housing.
- Density of development and the siting of built form as well as the balance of open space provision with regards to the existing settlement edge will be important to ensure the development complements and enhances the existing residential area in terms of adjacent residential amenity and functionality.



# 3

## PLANNING POLICY & CASE FOR ALTERATION TO GREEN BELT

## 3.1 Planning policy & case for alteration to green belt

There is a compelling case for removing the site from the Green Belt. The justification for the release of the site from the Green Belt is underpinned by the evidence base which supports the Local Plan Review, the inherent sustainability of the site, the housing demand and land supply position, the overarching tests of the NPPF and the exceptional circumstances which support an alteration to Warrington's Green Belt.

### 3.1.1. NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

The NPPF provides the overarching planning framework that underpins decision making and the plan making process in the UK. The NPPF supports the Government's housing growth agenda, which seeks that Local Authorities boost their supply of housing, plan positively for objectively assessed needs and adopt a presumption in favour of proposals for sustainable development. Releasing the site from the Green Belt to facilitate new housing development would be consistent with the core objectives of the NPPF because:

- It would meet the three pillars of sustainable development by delivering economic, social and environmental benefits (NPPF Paragraph 7);
- It would be entirely consistent with the presumption in favour of sustainable development - the golden thread for both plan making and decision taking (NPPF Paragraph 14);
- It would offer a sustainable location on the edge Thelwall and Grappenhall, which is accessible by a range of sustainable modes of transport and has access to a range of services and facilities (NPPF Chapter 4 'Promoting Sustainable Transport', Paragraph 29-41);
- It would boost the supply of housing and provide a deliverable housing site that is available, achievable and viable (NPPF Paragraph 47); and
- There are exceptional circumstances which justify alteration to the Green Belt in accordance with Chapter 9 of the NPPF (Paragraph 83) and it will consider the consequences for sustainable patterns of development (Paragraph 84); and
- It does not entail the development of more valued and important landscapes in accordance with the NPPF (Paragraph 113).

### 3.1.2. LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

#### Current Development Plan:

The Development Plan for the site currently comprises the Warrington borough Council Local Plan Core Strategy July 2014 ("the Core Strategy"). The document sets out the overarching strategic policies for guiding the location and level of development in the Borough up to 2027. At present, the site is allocated within the Green Belt in the Warrington Core Strategy under Policy CS 5. Policy CS 5 states that:

- "The Council will maintain the general extent of the Green Belt for as far as can be seen ahead and at least until 2032, in recognition of its purposes:
  1. to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
  2. to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another;
  3. to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; and
  4. to assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land".
- "Development Proposals within the Green Belt will be approved where they accord with relevant national policy"

The 2014 Core Strategy sets an overall housing target of 10,500 net new homes between 2006 and 2027 which equates to an annual housing target of 500 dwellings between 2006 and 2027. Upon adoption of the Local Plan Core Strategy, a High Court Challenge was made against the adoption of parts of the Core Strategy. The challenge was heard on 3 and 4 February 2015 with a judgement given on 19th February 2015. Mr Justice Stewart ruled that parts of the Core Strategy relating to the housing target of 10,500 new homes between 2006 and 2027, as well as reference to 1,100 homes at the Omega Strategy Proposal should be overturned.

Following this decision, the Council has now formally commenced a review of the Local Plan Core Strategy in order to set a new and up to date housing requirement for the number of new homes that will need to be delivered in Borough over the Plan period between 2014 and 2037.

The Local Plan Core Strategy Review is underpinned by an evidence base which forms the basis for understanding the future needs of the Borough, including various analyses of the Borough's housing land supply.

### 3.1.3. EVIDENCE BASE DOCUMENTS

The council is required Under Paragraph 47 of the NPPF to ensure that there is sufficient land allocated over the Plan Period that is deliverable and available to be considered within five years and developable sites within six to ten years. The five-year housing requirement for the borough is outlined in the Local Plan Preferred Development Option being 1,113 dwellings per annum plus an additional 5% buffer required. The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) 2017 calculated the Housing Land Supply of 2674 dwellings deliverable between 0-5 years. Warrington Borough Council can therefore only demonstrate a 2.28-year supply of housing.

The Urban Capacity Assessment published in July 2017 confirms the capacity for development in the urban area and green field sites outside of the Green Belt in the Borough of a total capacity of 15,429 new homes. The urban capacity figure is a product of the updated SHLAA (2017) figure and the updated master planning work undertaken in partnership with Warrington & Co.

The updated SHLAA identified a housing land supply figure of 9,721 dwellings that includes an allowance of 1305 dwellings on windfall sites. The master planning work undertaken by Warrington & Co produced a figure of an additional 5,273 dwellings. 435 dwellings were included for additional small site allowance of fifteen and more years. Totalling these figures together, the Urban Capacity Study identifies an urban capacity of 15,429.

The site has been considered within the 2017 SHLAA which identifies the site as 'Thelwall Heys Farm' (ref. 1865). The report states that there are no issues regarding the development of the site, such as contamination, hazardous Installations, ground conditions, access, surrounding land issues, infrastructure, amenities; although it determines the site is within the green belt and within flood zones 1, 2 and 3. The report concludes that the site is a 'constrained' site, however the only justification provided for this categorisation is the Green Belt designation.

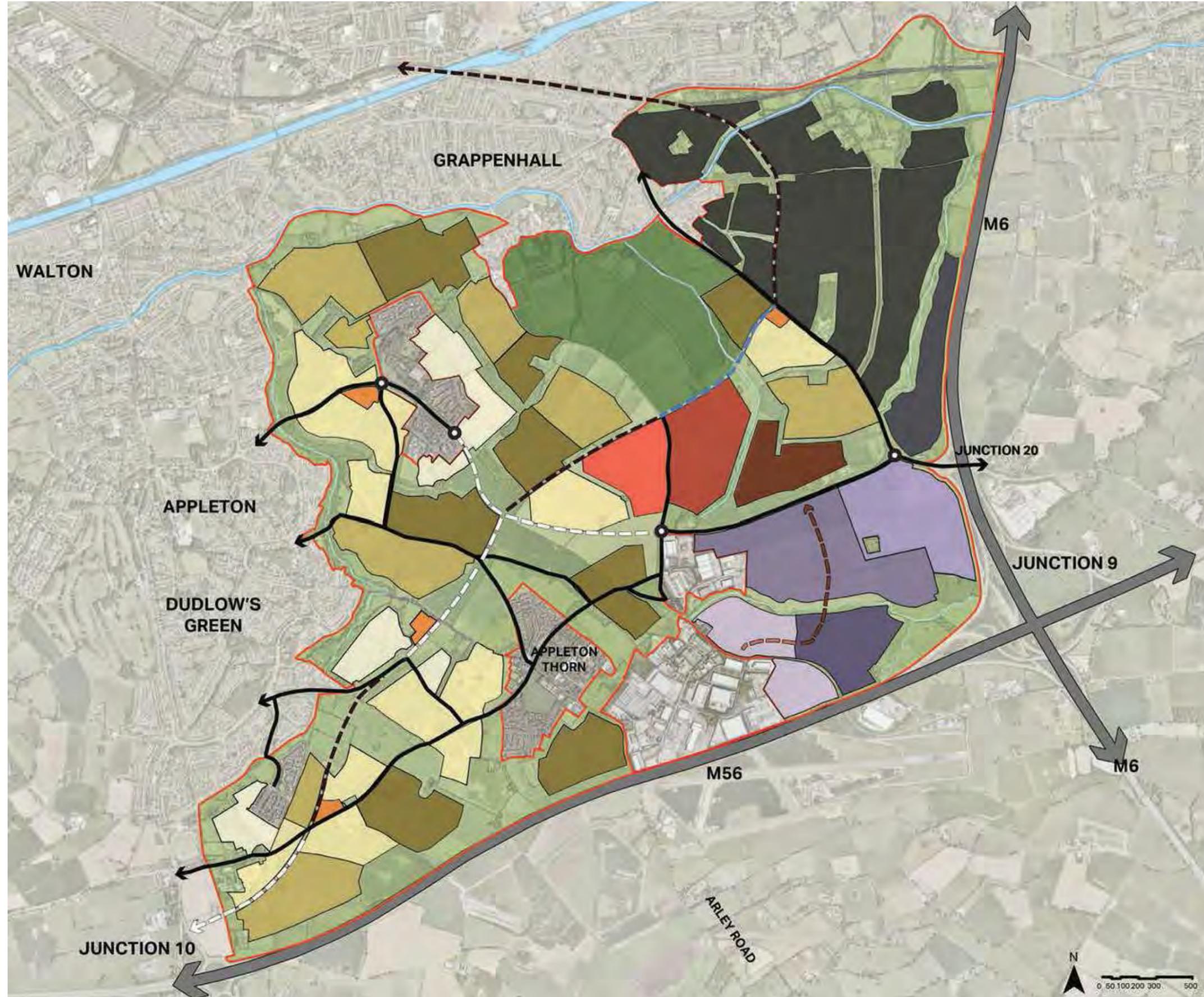
Warrington's need for new homes over the next 20 years is outlined at Paragraph 4.11 of the Local Plan Preferred Development Option, where the land requirements to meet this need are given as 1,113 dwellings per annum (22,260), flexibility at 5% (1,113) and a backlog (847) resulting in a total requirement of 24,220 dwellings. Whilst the Council has an identified an urban capacity of 15,429 dwellings, this is not sufficient to meet the Councils housing as required by the Mid-Mersey SHMA Update – Warrington Addendum, May 2017. Should Warrington wish to meet the development needs arising from its growth aspirations, it can only do so through the release of Green Belt land to provide for 8,791 homes (Paragraph 4.11 of the Local Plan Preferred Development Option).

The deliverability of housing sites can be influenced by environmental matters and land assembly issues. This includes issues surrounding contamination, ownership disputes, hazardous installations, access or ecological issues. A review of the SHLAA sites indicates that some of the sites that have been deemed 'suitable' may encounter such problems which may affect their deliverability of the number of dwellings by the given timescales. Sites where these constraints have not been identified, including this site where the only constraint is the Green Belt, are more likely to be able to deliver estimated dwellings by given timescales. As such, this reinforces the need for Green Belt release to ensure that sites which have the least deliverability issues are able to contribute to the much needed housing supply.

### The Local Plan Preferred Development Option (July 2017)

The Local Plan Preferred Development Option (July 2017) has considered five development options for the main development locations and concludes the most favourable option being Options 2 - A Garden City Suburb of approximately 6,000 homes and an urban extension to the south west of Warrington of up to 2,000 homes. The Thelwall Heys site has been considered as part of this Garden City Suburb concept and identified within the South Warrington Urban Extension Framework Plan Document (June 2017) as suitable for safeguarded land for residential development. The garden city concept utilises the vision of a district centre with smaller local and village centres to serve the proposed residential development. It is anticipated that the proposed development will be served by the local facilities and services located within close proximity to the site within Thelwall and Grappenhall, as well as those located further afield in Warrington Town Centre.

**SOUTH WARRINGTON COMPLETION PHASE PLAN** *South Warrington Urban Extension Framework Plan Document (page 38)*



**KEY (LAND USE)**

Residential Development

- Phase 1
- Phase 2
- Phase 3
- Phase 4
- Safeguarded Land

Employment Development

- Phase 1
- Phase 2
- Phase 3
- Phase 4
- Safeguarded Land

District Core Development

- Phase 1
- Phase 2
- Phase 3

Local/Village Centre Development

- Phase 1
- Phase 2

**KEY (STRATEGIC ROAD)**

- Existing
- Phase 1
- Phase 2
- Phase 3

**KEY (POTENTIAL LINK)**

- Phase 1
- Phase 2

**Warrington Borough Council Local Plan Green Belt Assessment July 2017:**

The Warrington Green Belt extends some 11,500 hectares of open land in and around Appleton Thorn, Burtonwood, Cadishead, Croft, Culcheth, Grappenhall, Glazebury, Hollins Green, Lymm, Newton-Le-Willows, Warrington Urban Area and Winwick. The Green Belt boundaries have not changed significantly since they were first established in 1979.

The Green Belt Assessment aims to provide the Council with an objective, evidence-based and independent assessment of how Warrington’s Green Belt contributes to the five purposes of Green Belt set out within National Planning Policy. A total of 203 sites were assessed in the first assessment completed in October 2016. An updated assessment has been completed in July 2017, which assessed or reassessed approximately 173 sites.

The Thelwall Heys site has been considered in both assessments as making an overall weak contribution towards the 5 purposes of the Green Belt. The results are outlined in the table adjacent.

<b>Site Name</b>	R18/017
<b>Purpose 1: to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas</b>	<b>Weak contribution:</b> The boundary between the site and the built-up area consists of Stockport Road to the north west and Knutsford Road to the west, both of which represents durable boundaries which could prevent sprawl into the site. The site is connected to the built-up area along these western and north western boundaries. Given the pattern of the built-up area, development of the site alongside the adjacent area of land to the north could be seen as rounding off the settlement pattern. Overall the site makes a weak contribution to checking unrestricted sprawl.
<b>Purpose 2: to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another</b>	<b>No contribution:</b> The site does not play a role in preventing towns from merging.
<b>Purpose 3: to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;</b>	<b>Moderate contribution:</b> The boundaries between the site and the built-up area are durable consisting of Stockport Road and Knutsford Road. The boundaries between the site and the countryside consists of the Bridgewater Canal and Cliff Lane to the south and All Saints Drive to the east, these represent durable boundaries which could prevent encroachment beyond the site if the site was developed. A small section of the southern boundary follows a private access road and field boundary which are not durable boundaries, however the Bridgewater Canal is within 100m of this and represents a durable boundary. The existing land uses consists of open countryside in agricultural use. Thelwall Hays manor is located in the middle of the site however it is excluded from the site. The site contains no built form. The topography of the site is slightly undulating and the land is higher to the north of the site. There are areas of dense vegetation which hinder long line views across the site. The site supports a moderate degree of openness. Overall the site makes a moderate contribution to safeguarding from encroachment due to its level of openness and predominantly durable boundaries.
<b>Purpose 4: to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns</b>	<b>Weak contribution:</b> Warrington is a historic town. The site crosses an important viewpoint of the Parish Church although it is separated from the historic centre of Warrington and it is not within 250m of the Warrington Town Centre Conservation Areas. The site therefore makes a weak contribution to this purpose.
<b>Purpose 5: to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land Justification for Assessment</b>	<b>Moderate contribution:</b> The Mid Mersey Housing Market Area has 2.08% brownfield urban capacity for potential development, therefore the site makes a moderate contribution to this purpose.
<b>Justification for Assessment</b>	The site makes a moderate contribution to two purposes, a weak contribution to two, and no contribution to one. In line with the methodology, the site has been judged to make a weak overall contribution. The site makes a weak contribution to safeguarding from encroachment as it lacks openness and has a limited connection to the open countryside. There are durable boundaries between the site and the built-up area and development of the site alongside other adjacent areas of land could be seen as rounding off the settlement pattern thus it makes a weak contribution to checking unrestricted sprawl. The site makes a moderate contribution to assisting in urban regeneration. It makes a weak contribution to preserving the setting and character of historic towns due to it crossing an important viewpoint of the Parish Church. It makes no contribution to preventing towns from merging.
<b>Overall Assessment</b>	<b>Weak contribution</b>

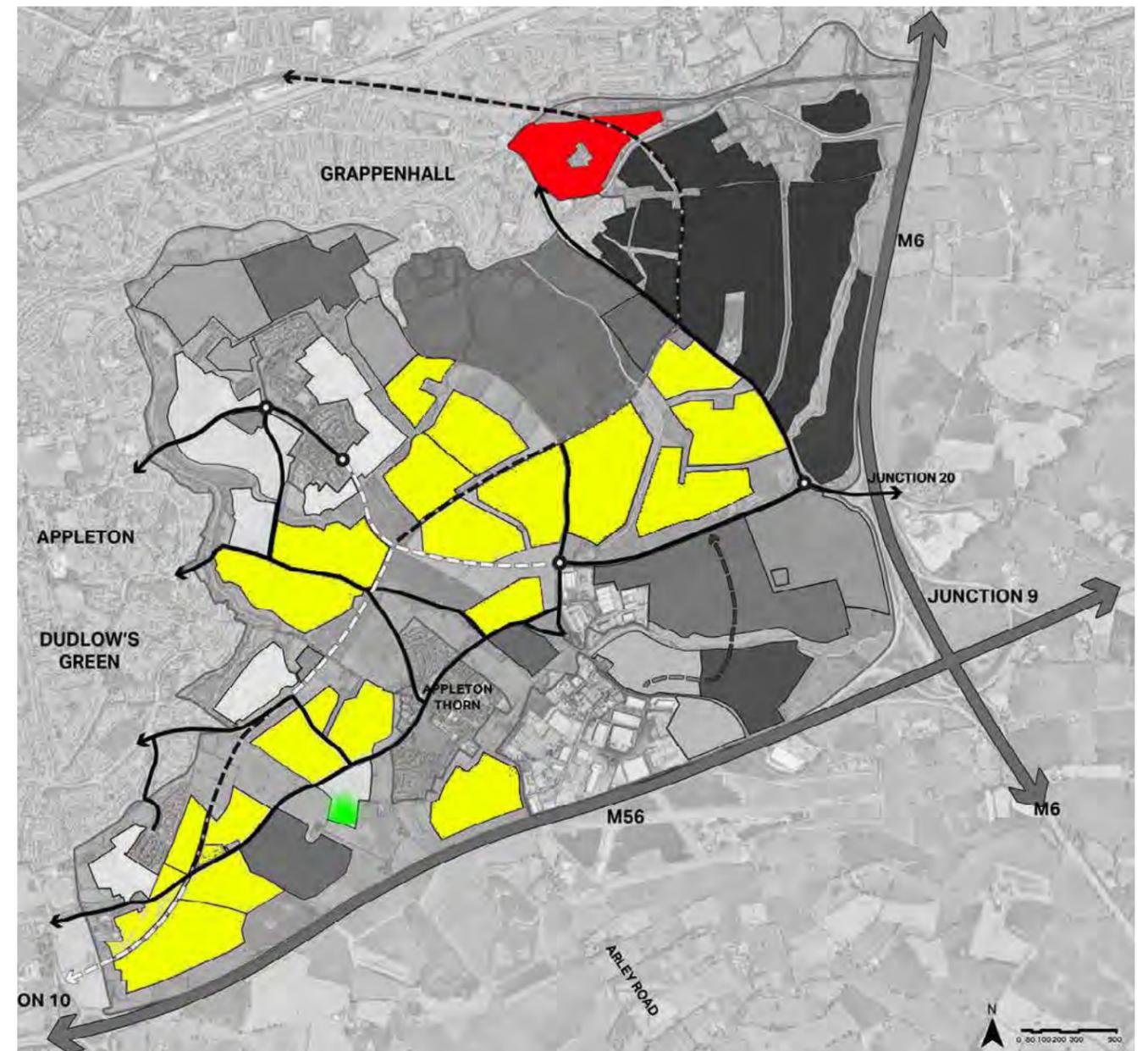
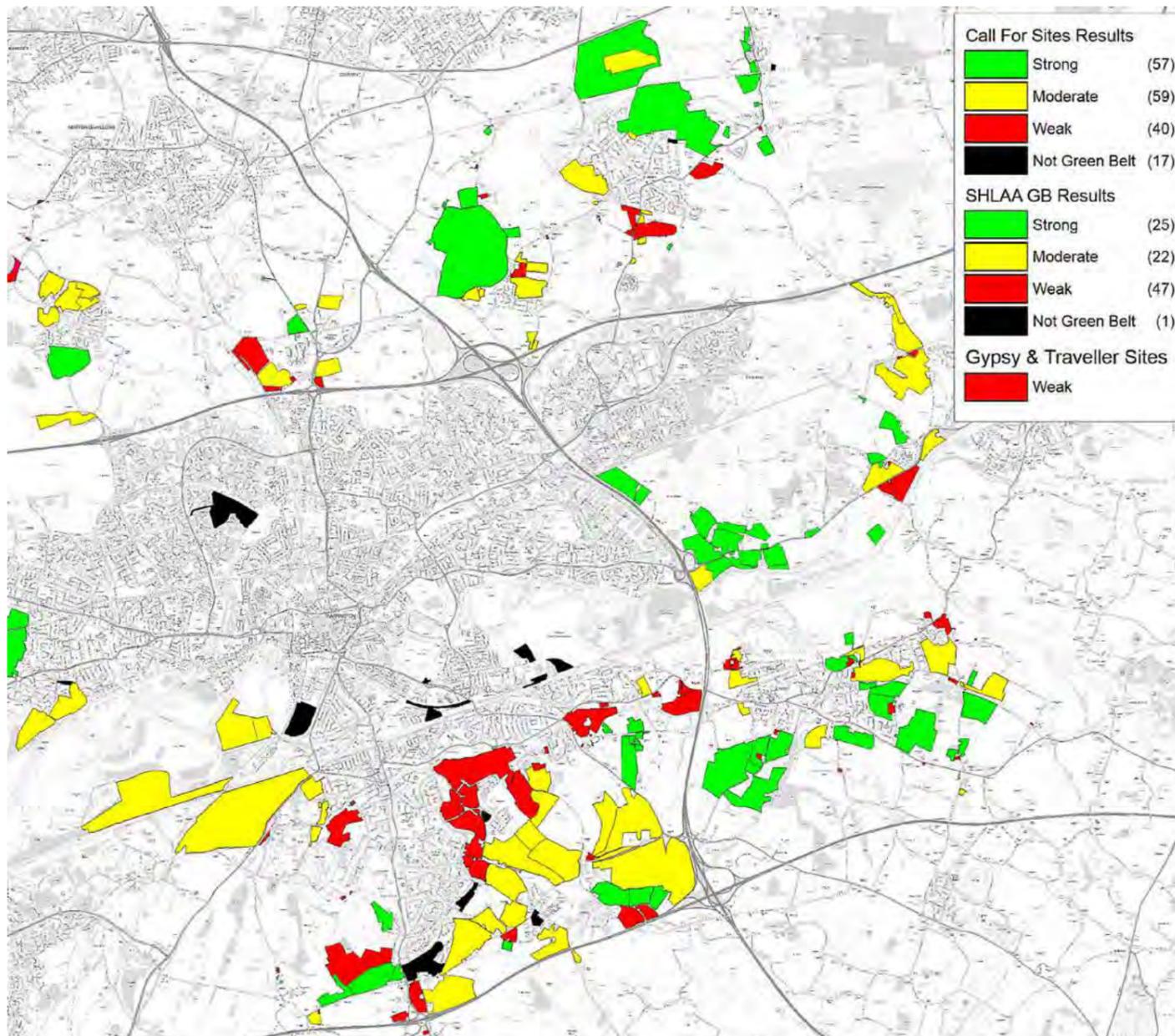
Table 1: Extract from Warrington Borough Council Local Plan Green Belt Assessment (Additional Site Assessments) July 2017 pg. 85



**Left:** South Warrington Completion Phase Plan - *South Warrington Urban Extension Framework Plan Document (page 38)*

**Below left:** Green Belt Assessment Sites - *Green Belt Assessment - Additional Site Assessments, July 2017 (page 3)*

**Below right:** Combined Completion Phase Plan with Green Belt Assessment - *Adapted South Warrington Completion Phase Plan showing Strong and Moderate sites from the Green Belt Assessment and the Thelwall Heys Site.*



As can be seen from the assessment on the previous pages, the site has been assessed as making a weak contribution towards the 5 purposes of the Green Belt. The recommendation is for the site to deliver residential dwellings early in the plan period over sites that have been assessed to have a moderate or strong contribution. The section below adds further discussion to the Green Belt Assessment and the immediate contribution the site can deliver without causing harm to the wider Green Belt.

### 3.1.4. THE CASE FOR ALTERATION TO THE GREEN BELT

#### The Purposes of the Green Belt:

When tested against the five purposes of the Green Belt and when considered against the exceptional circumstances that exist, the site at Thelwall Heys presents a significant opportunity to support a sensitively designed residential development on the edge of the existing urban area. 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, and with reference to the Warrington Borough Local Plan Core Strategy Policy CS 5 Green Belt.

- **To check unrestricted sprawl** - Scattered built form is already present along Knutsford Road, and a ribbon of residential properties stretches east-west along Weaste Lane, located south of the site beyond the Bridgewater Canal. Development of the site would therefore represent infilling between the existing urban edges and 'rounding off' the southern edge of Thelwall. Taking this into consideration, the development of the site would not constitute to any perceived level of 'sprawl'. The incorporation of a development offset to the southern and eastern edges of the site, and the retention and enhancement of existing boundary vegetation would reinforce the robustness of the Green Belt boundary and settlement edge to the east and south. The Bridgewater Canal also provides a definitive and permanent boundary to restrict any further potential development into the Green Belt in the future.
- **To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another** - Development of the site would not result in the coalescence of Thelwall due to the distance and existing physical boundaries between the site and neighbouring settlements to the east or south. To the east, the nearest settlement is Statham, located 2.2km from the site and beyond the M6 motorway. To the south, the village of Appleton Thorn is located 3.1km away, and separated from the site by extensive open green belt land. Grappenhall village is located immediately west of the site, however the urban form is already continuous between the villages of Grappenhall and Thelwall, and the two villages are perceived as the urban edge of the larger conurbation, rather than separate settlements. The development of the site would therefore constitute infilling and 'rounding off' the south-east urban edge of these two settlements and would not contribute to the coalescence of individual settlements.
- **Safeguarding the countryside from encroachment** - The site has a limited visual relationship with the wider open countryside of the Green Belt to the south and east, and the site is visually contained within existing permanent boundaries including the Bridgewater Canal and Trans Pennine Trail, along with mature existing vegetation. Any proposed development could be focussed to the north and west of the site against the settlement boundary. Where areas are potentially more sensitive to the south and east of the boundary with the Bridgewater canal towpath and public footpath ref. FP196/12#3, development offsets including landscape buffers along these edges could be incorporated and

could mitigate any visual encroachment into the wider Green Belt landscape.

- **To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns** - The site is not located within a conservation area and does not have a visual relationship with the Grappenhall Village conservation area to the west or Thelwall Village conservation area to the north. Development of the site would not have any influence with regard to these conservation areas. The Grade II listed Thelwall Heys building is located at the approximate centre of the site, outside of the red line boundary. Views of the building are possible from a number of locations across the site, and there are filtered views to the building from Stockport Road and the Trans Pennine Trail to the north, public footpath ref. FP196/12#3 to the east, and from the Bridgewater Canal towpath to the south. The periphery of Thelwall Heys already comprises existing mature vegetation, and a development offset in this area would mitigate the impact of development upon the setting and character of the building. Visual links to the building would also be maintained with appropriate open corridors through the proposed development at key locations, to assist in conserving the building as a local landmark and promoting legibility of the landscape.
- **To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land** - The Local Plan evidence base suggests that the supply of deliverable brownfield sites is becoming exhausted and, consequently, Green Belt release will be required over the life of the Plan Period.

#### Exceptional Circumstances for Green Belt Release:

Paragraph 83 of the NPPF states that once the general extent of a Green Belt has been approved, it should only be altered in 'exceptional circumstances' through the plan making process. The Council has set out six strategic objectives in the Preferred Development Option and considers that exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated to justify the release of Green Belt within the Borough (paragraph 4.40 of the Preferred Development Option - Consultation [July 2017]). These exceptional circumstances are not detailed within the draft Local Plan, however the following exceptional circumstances would endorse an alteration to the Green Belt in Warrington:

1. **Housing Requirement** – as demonstrated by the Council's existing and emerging evidence base, the housing requirement has increased in line with the Council's ambitions for growth as set out in the Warrington Means Business regeneration programme. The emerging Local Plan Review for Warrington Borough Council must consider the implications of not releasing sufficient land from the Green Belt over the whole plan period and the harm that will occur from failing to meet identified needs in the District; such as slower economic growth, a lack of labour force mobility, critical affordability issues, disruption to commuting patterns and the delivery of housing choice.
2. **Insufficient Land** – Warrington currently can only demonstrate a 2.28 year supply and not the 5 year supply required by the NPPF. Warrington Borough Council must ensure that there is sufficient land allocated over the Plan Period that is deliverable and available. Available land in Warrington is constrained within the urban area with a Green Belt requirement of approximately 8,791 dwellings to be released. This is recognised in the Preferred Development Option Consultation (July 2017), Paragraph 4.17, stating that:

*"Despite maximising the capacity of the existing urban area, it is apparent that if Warrington is to meet the development needs arising from its*

*growth aspirations, it can only do so through the release of Green Belt land to provide for 8,791 homes and 251 ha of employment land".*

As such, it is clear that, during the life of the Plan Period, there will be insufficient land within the District's urban area to meet identified housing requirements.

3. **Affordable Housing Need** – the need to deliver affordable housing in Warrington was noted within the Mid-Mersey SHMA Update – Warrington Addendum, May 2017, which identified a requirement of 920 affordable homes per annum in the District. The delivery of large sites which are viable, deliverable and available, such as Thelwall Heys, can significantly contribute the identified affordable housing needs of the District.
4. **Economic Growth** – Building 'the right homes in the right places' can have a positive impact on economic and employment growth within the region. Delivering housing sites such as the Thelwall Heys site early within the plan period will help to meet the Borough's development needs and will assist in the transition of Warrington from a New Town to a New City.

### 3.1.5. SUMMARY

It has been demonstrated that, based on the SHMA, SHLAA and Local Plan Review preferred development option, that the release of Green Belt sites will likely be required to meet the wider housing needs of the District. As a new Local Plan is developed, it will be critical to support the national growth agenda by delivering the quantity, type and quality of homes that is required across Warrington. The site at Thelwall Heys presents a sustainable, suitable and deliverable site that can deliver these new homes early in the Plan Period.

# 4

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

## 4.1 Sustainable development principles

The site represents a highly sustainable solution to the District's housing needs in line with Government guidance and the NPPF. The site will perform a positive economic, social and environmental role in accordance with the overarching pillars of sustainable development; and will deliver the type, quality and quantity of new homes that will support the growth of Warrington over the next Plan Period.

### 4.1.1. LOCATION AND ACCESSIBILITY

The site is located adjacent to the villages of Grappenhall and Thelwall which offers a range of amenities that can be accessed via existing pedestrian footways located along All Saints Drive, Knutsford Road and Bellhouse Lane. Within 800 metres of the site is a Springbrook Restaurant (560 metres), Tesco convenience store (650 metres), The Bellhouse Public House (650 metres), Bradshaw Primary School (750 metres), Alphaega Pharmacy (760 metres), Grappenhall Post Office (800 metres), Thelwall Community Infant School (800 metres), in addition to two hair salons and four restaurants and cafés. Within 2km of the site there is co-operative convenience store, two doctor surgeries, four schools, three churches and four public houses and various local businesses.

The site well served by the existing public transport network, with bus stops to the south and west of the site along Weaste Lane and Knutsford Road. Regular services are available to Warrington Town Centre, Altrincham and Lymm. Warrington is a 4 minute bus journey from the site. The bus routes passing the site can be used to interchange at Warrington bus station which provides access to further local and regional services, as well as the town's two railway stations.

Warrington Bank Quay and Warrington central are located approximately 5km north west and can be accessed via the Route 47, which has a journey length of around 20 minutes. In addition Routes 5, 6, 12 and 35 can be used to access the stations at a journey length of around 40 minutes. The Stations provide approximately 8 services per hour to destinations such as Edinburgh, Glasgow Central, Holyhead, Liverpool Lime Street, London Euston, Manchester, Norwich, Scarborough.

In accordance with the NPPF, the site is sustainably located on the edge of the Thelwall and Grappenhall urban areas and offers residents with opportunities to use sustainable modes of transport to access local services and facilities and employment opportunities within neighbouring towns and cities.



**KEY**

- |                           |                             |  |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| Site boundary             | School                      | Bus stop (within 400m of site)         |
| Public house / restaurant | Royal British Legion - Club | Trans Pennine Trail /Sustrans route 62 |
| Convenience store         | Church                      | Public Right of Way                    |
| Community centre          | Post office                 |  |

#### 4.1.2. ECONOMIC ROLE

The development of the site will contribute to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy for Warrington. In particular, the development of high quality family and affordable dwellings will secure a number of economic and fiscal benefits in terms of job creation, additional monies to the Local Authority and increased expenditure in the local economy.

Housing supply can play a key role in the flexibility of the local labour market which itself is an important component in local economic competitiveness. This is because a shortage of housing or a lack of affordability can act as a barrier to people accessing employment opportunities or result in long-distance commuting with adverse transport and environmental impacts.

The site will bring significant investment and economic benefits to Thelwall Heys and the wider Warrington region. The delivery of circa 310 residential dwellings would bring:

- A significant amount of new investment into the local area through the construction process;
- Could deliver circa £493,383 of Council Tax Income per annum in perpetuity following the scheme's completion (Band D);
- Significant additional spending annually in the local economy from the site's new residents. This could support full time and part time jobs locally;
- Contribution to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy via the provision of much needed additional homes in the Borough.

#### 4.1.3. SOCIAL ROLE

A key objective of the social role of sustainable development is to support a strong, vibrant and healthy community. The allocation of the site for housing will provide:

- A sustainable development with good access to shops, services and transport links;
- New residents that could enhance the skills base available to employers in the local area and potentially benefit local business productivity;
- A range of open market housing comprising various types to meet the needs of Warrington and the region.
- An element of affordable housing if this is viable at the time of submitting a planning application.
- Landscape enhancements and public open space that integrates with the wider Green Belt to the south and east of the site.

#### 4.1.4. ENVIRONMENTAL ROLE

Development of the site for housing will not result in significant harm to the natural environment and will help to improve biodiversity as well as using natural resources prudently and addressing climate change through the design of the housing.

An assessment of the key environmental and technical considerations has been undertaken by a team of professional consultants to underpin the derivability of the site moving forward. The key considerations are as follows:

#### Ecology and Trees

A Phase 1 Habitat Survey has been conducted on the site by Bowland Ecology. It is considered that the majority of the site comprises habitats of lower ecological value, these include arable, PSI grassland and tall ruderal vegetation. Habitats that are of a higher value including scattered trees, hedgerows, watercourses and ponds are largely contained along field boundaries. The Phase 1 Habitat Survey concludes the following:

- **Plants** - the majority of the site comprises habitats of limited botanical interest, with the exception of the ground flora along the two brooks running through the site which has a more diverse assemblage of plant species.
- **Bats** - there are several mature trees on site that have features including ivy cladding, branch splits and cavities, flaking bark, woodpecker holes, and rot holes that provide varying potential to support roosting bats. The hedgerows, areas of scrub and scattered trees along the field boundaries provide suitable foraging and commuting habitat for bats and provide connectivity to the wider landscape, particularly habitats to the south of the site.
- **Badger** - a number of mammal holes were found scattered throughout the western section of the site, within the arable/PSI grassland and along the banks of Thelwal Heys Brook. It is considered likely that the holes are that of badger due to nature of the holes and data records indicating badgers on site and within the wider survey area.
- **Water Vole** - the watercourses and ditch on site provide potential habitat for water vole. Small mammal burrows were noted along the banks of Thelwal Heys Brook, however, no other evidence including latrines, feeding stations of water vole sightings was noted during the survey.
- **Other mammals** - small mammal holes likely to be that of wood mouse, field and common shrew were noted within PSI grassland to the north of the site. Hedgehog and brown hare have been recorded in the 2km survey area and may also be present on site utilising areas of dense and scattered scrub and arable fields.
- **Birds** - the scattered trees, hedgerows and areas of scrub provide suitable habitat for a variety of nesting birds. The grasslands to the north of the site may provide foraging habitat for raptors and owls. There have also been a number of other protected birds that were recorded on the site during the survey and recorded from the data search within 2km of the site.
- **Reptiles** - no evidence of reptiles was seen during the survey. The data search returned a single record for grass snake (*Natrix natrix*) within Woolston Eyes SSSI to the north of the Manchester Ship Canal. However, no suitable habitat for the species is present on site and the presence of grass snake and other common reptiles on site is considered to be low/negligible.
- **Amphibians** - there are three ponds within the site, a further two are located just outwith of the site boundary, and a further four ponds are located to the south west of the site beyond the Bridgewater Canal. These ponds potentially provide suitable aquatic habitat for the protected great crested newt and other common amphibians including common toad. The proportion of unsuitable habitat is more abundant on the site however there are opportunities for the species within the rank grassland, hedgerows, marshy grassland and areas of scrub.
- **Invertebrates** - the data search returned records of the white-letter

hairstreak butterfly within the survey area however it is considered unlikely that the species would utilise the habitats on site as elm was not recorded and this is the favoured breeding habitat for the species.

In summary, based on the Phase 1 Habitat Survey, there are a number of ecological features on site that may provide suitable habitat for a variety of protected species. However, it is assumed that with detailed surveys informing comprehensive mitigation strategies, impacts to protected species from future development of the site will be negligible.

#### MASTERPLAN PROMTS

- Retain and enhance habitats that are of a higher value.
- Opportunities to use existing features as habitat buffers such as the watercourses.
- Potential to link into the Boroughs Strategic Green Links Network providing further opportunities for wildlife within the area.

**Flood Risk and Drainage:**

Professional flood risk and drainage advice has been sought from a qualified drainage engineer (Integra Consulting). The Environment Agency Flood Map for planning indicates the site lies predominately within Flood Zone 1 which means there is less than a 0.1% (1 in 1000) chance of flooding occurring each year. There are two brooks that flow through the site, Thelwall Heys Brook and Morris Brook. The map also shows where some localised flood risk can occur around Cliff Lane and the north-west corner of the site where Morris Brook enters and leaves the site. These areas fall within Zones 2 and 3, however they are located on the periphery of the site and are not considered significant to the extent that they cannot be overcome by technical solutions.

The proposed new residential development of the site will naturally generate significantly more surface water runoff than the current surfaces and this post-development runoff will be collected and stored on site to enable the peak outflow rate to be limited to a greenfield runoff rate of 100 litres per second in accordance with DEFRA's SC030219 guidance document for new surface water flows from developments. This will provide a betterment to the current situation of the existing field areas generating unlimited runoff flows to the onsite brooks in storm conditions and will reduce runoff flows. New foul flows will connect to the existing public foul sewer network.

In summary, it is not considered that, with suitable mitigation, that there are any flood risk or drainage constraints preventing the site coming forward for residential development.

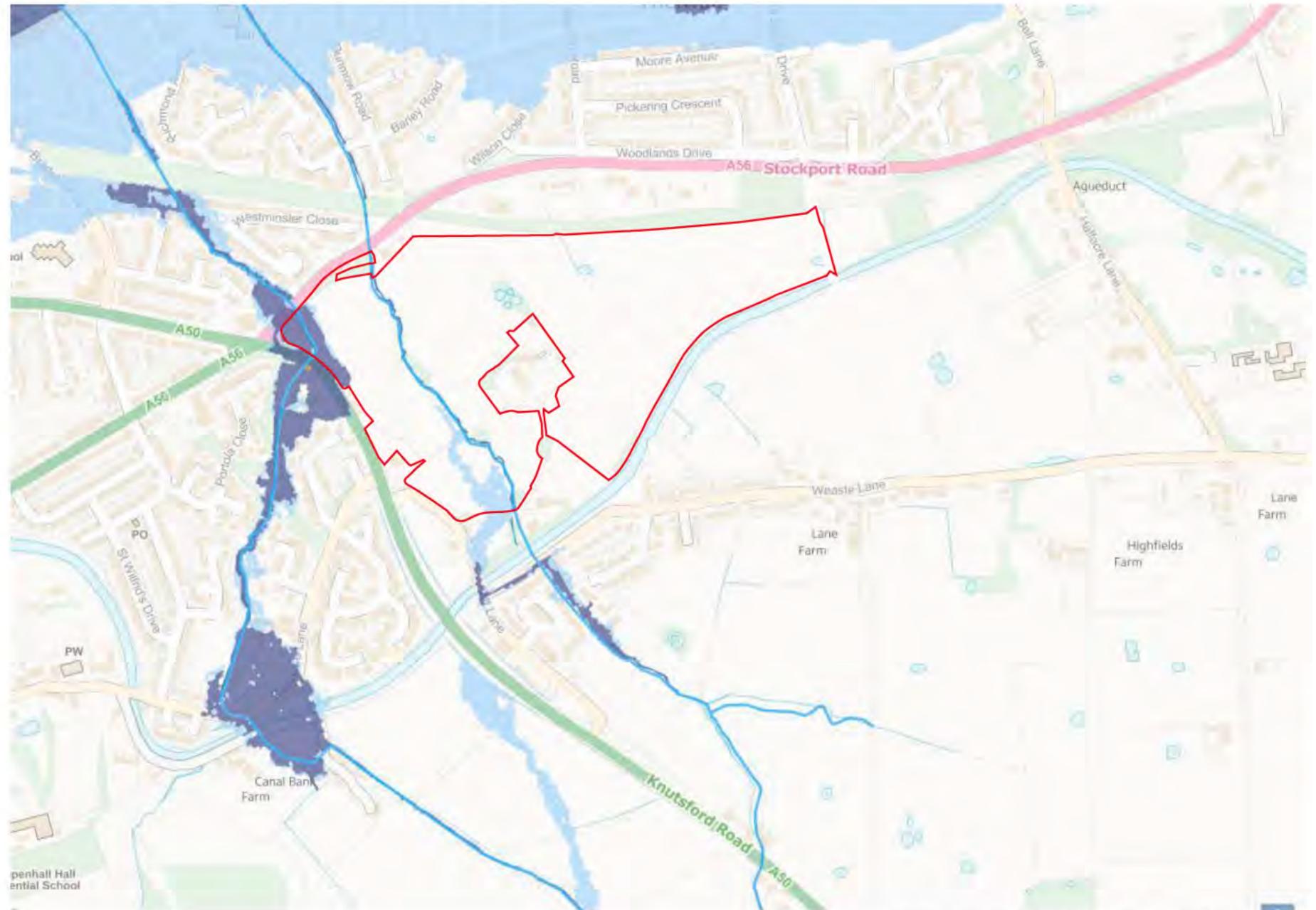


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### Geo-Environmental:

Professional geological and geotechnical and contamination advice has been sought from a qualified geo-environmental engineer (Integra Consulting). The desk study, identified the following:

- **Geology & Ground Conditions** - grassed topsoil overlays the site and it is anticipated that the western site section will be underlain by Sand with potential peat layers of the Shirdley Hill Sand Formation. It is anticipated that the eastern site section will be underlain by Silty clay with potential sand layers of glacial till underlain by Sandstone of the Helsby Sandstone Formation (may also underlay the Shirdley Hill Sand Formation).
- **Human Health Risk Assessment** - it is anticipated that there is a low risk to human health including construction workers, future occupants and the general public. The only identified contaminative sources are regarded to be of extremely limited in their respective potential and include an existing on-site sewage tank for private residential use and historic tanneries, defunct by the mid-20th Century, located 150m south of the site which have subsequently been redeveloped into residential housing.
- **Ground Gas Risk Assessment** - The risk posed from ground gas sources is anticipated to be low to moderate. The greatest potential risk is presented by peat layers within the Shirdley Hill Sand Formation. The presence or otherwise of peat deposits has not been proven by any available boreholes or previous site investigation works. Consequently, should site investigation works prove peat layers are not present within the sand formation, the risk from ground gas may be reduced.
- **Controlled Waters Risk Assessment** - As stated within the Human Health Risk Assessment, no significant contaminate sources have been identified on or within influence of the site and the risk to the identified receptors, namely the underlying Secondary A Aquifer and the on-site Primary Rivers, is considered to be a low risk.

Based upon the Phase 1 Geo-Environmental Investigation Report, the site is deemed suitable for the proposed residential development with no significant identified issues that would preclude development.

### Agricultural Land

An Agricultural Land Classification survey has previously been completed on the site by the Resource Planning Team in March 1996 (Job No: 171/95). The study demonstrated the site is on Grade 2 and Grade 3a (Wetness Class III) agricultural land. The main limitation to the agricultural use of land in Grade 2 is soil droughtiness and the main limitation to Subgrade 3a is soil wetness. An updated Agricultural Land Classification Assessment would be undertaken to support the planning application.

### Highways and Access

The Site is located adjacent to Knutsford Road in Grappenhall and provides access to the local highway network. There are opportunities to access key amenities within Thelwall and Grappenhall via the existing pedestrian footways including All Saints Drive, Knutsford Road and Bellhouse Lane. The site also has good access to the local public transport network, including via bus stops on Weaste Lane and Knutsford Road with regular services to Warrington Town Centre, Altrincham and Lymm. The bus routes passing the site can be used to interchange at Warrington bus station which provides access to further local and regional services, as well as the town's two railway stations.

The level of key local facilities within acceptable walking distances of the site and the access to excellent public transport links will reduce the number of single private car journeys generated by a future residential development.

The site has an extensive frontage to Knutsford Road and the potential exists to create new bus stops. The proposed site access arrangement will be formed as a new access point along Cliff Lane. The site access road will have a 5.5 metre wide carriageway with 2 metre wide footways on either side coming into the site. The site can be satisfactorily accessed and will generate a modest number of additional vehicular trips onto the local highway network which can potentially be mitigated by a range of improvements, which will assist in the capacity of the local network and enhance its safety for all users.

There are no highways or access constraints that would prevent the site coming forward for residential development.

#### MASTERPLAN PROMTS

- Potential improvements to footway and cycleway connectivity should be explored.
- Road access into the site is proposed from a new access point along Cliff Lane.

### Utilities & Infrastructure

The site is adjacent to the settlement boundary of Thelwall and Grappenhall. Therefore, it is anticipated utilities infrastructure comprising electricity, gas, broadband and water, should be accessible within the vicinity of the site.

### Archaeology and Heritage

There are no recorded archaeological assets within the Site. Surface finds of prehistoric artefacts have been recorded within the wider area of the site, and there is some limited potential for further residual prehistoric lithic finds to occur within the Site. However, any such remains would be of only limited heritage significance. The Site has served as agricultural land since at least the medieval period onwards, and any potential archaeological remains relating to this use would be of little, if any, heritage significance. There are no surface traces of historic agricultural activity within the Site, suggesting that modern agricultural activities may have removed any such remains. The historic parish boundary between Thelwall and Grappenhall extends through the western part of the Site, defined by a drainage ditch.

No recorded archaeological constraints to the proposed development have been identified. Built heritage sensitivities have been identified in relation to a Grade II Listed Building, a number of Locally Listed Buildings, and the alignment of a historic parish boundary. Sensitive design and any identified mitigation measures from further detailed Heritage Settings Assessment will be adopted to ensure the proposals are consistent with the provisions of the NPPF, the Planning Act (1990) and Policy QE8: Historic

Environment of the Warrington Local Plan.

### Air Quality

WBC has declared two Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA); surrounding the motorway network; and, the primary routes linking to and within the town centre. The site is not located within or in close proximity to these. The construction and future occupation of the site will consider the impacts of the proposals on the local air quality in the District however it is not considered that air quality impacts would preclude the development of the site.

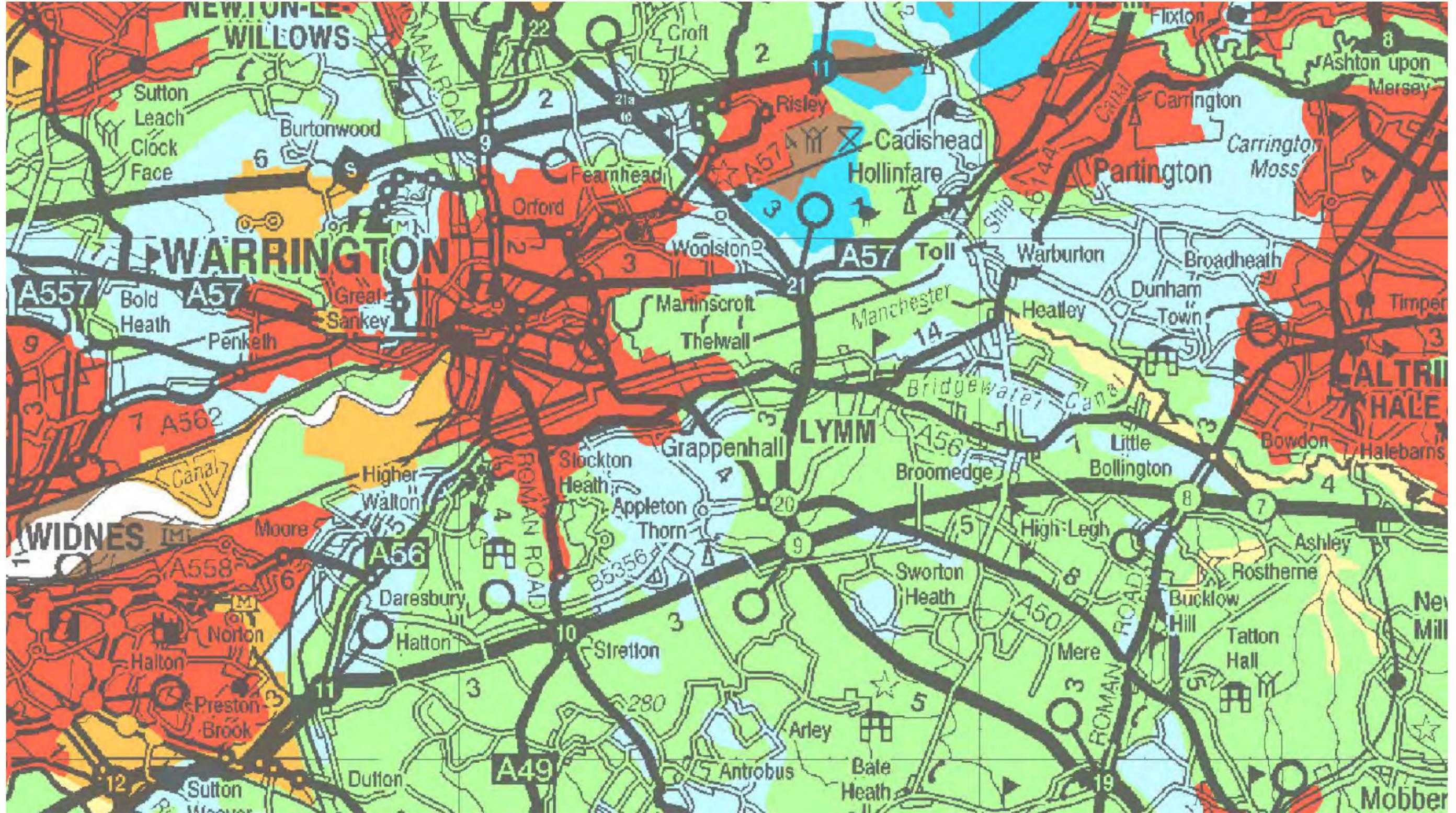
### Noise

The main source of existing noise would be that emanating from the nearby highways network and from the residential properties surrounding the site. Subject to appropriate building envelope design and layout of the development, it is not envisaged the existing noise environment would preclude the proposed development coming forward. Suitable mitigation measures could be implemented during the construction phase to minimise noise impacts on the surrounding sensitive receptors.

#### 4.1.5. SUMMARY

This development has been informed by a series of technical studies which have been commissioned by Liberty to demonstrate that this site is physically suitable to accommodate residential development. In summary, development of the site for housing would constitute sustainable development in accordance with the NPPF when taken as a whole. Housing development at the site would deliver significant and positive economic, social and environmental benefits which should be afforded significant weight in considering the site for removal from the Green Belt and allocation for housing. Importantly, the development at the site will deliver the type, quality and quantity of new homes that will support the growth of Warrington Borough over the Plan Period and is suitably and sustainably located to access public transport and local facilities.

AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION



KEY

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <span style="color: lightblue;">■</span> Grade 1 - Excellent    | <span style="color: yellow;">■</span> Grade 4 - Poor     | <span style="color: orange;">■</span> NON AGRICULTURAL LAND                        |
| <span style="color: lightblue;">■</span> Grade 2 - Very Good    | <span style="color: brown;">■</span> Grade 5 - Very Poor | <span style="color: orange;">■</span> Other land primarily in non-agricultural use |
| <span style="color: green;">■</span> Grade 3 - Good to Moderate |  | <span style="color: red;">■</span> Land predominantly in urban use                 |

5

SITE VISION & MASTERPLAN

## 5.1 Site vision & masterplan

The site at Thelwall Heys can deliver an attractive housing development with a distinctive character that offers a choice of high quality new homes to meet the Borough's needs.

Liberty is seeking to deliver an integrated, desirable, high quality residential development which meets the needs of the local community. It is envisaged that the proposed residential development will retain and enhance the existing landscape as part of a comprehensive landscape framework with strong connections to the existing form and vernacular of the village. The proposals respect and embrace the existing canal, forming a high quality edge to the town whilst creating a softer transition to the rural landscape. The residential development proposals will act as a catalyst to delivering a thriving and diverse economy, providing an enjoyable place to live. The development proposals for at Thelwall Heys will deliver new high quality market and affordable family homes to the benefit of the local community. The development sets out to achieve the following objectives:

- Delivering quality new homes: The building of high quality homes that recognise the existing form and quality of the village and is sensitive to this and the surrounding countryside;
- Sensitive design and integration into surroundings: The proposals will deliver a high-quality design which will complement and enhance the existing environment and create a good standard of amenity and living environment. The existing residential amenity will also be protected;
- Achieving a choice of housing: The proposals will offer a mix of housing in terms of type, tenure and size to meet identified local needs and help to rebalance the demographics of the area;
- Investing in the community: The development of this site will represent a significant private sector investment and result in the creation of additional direct and indirect employment both during and after the development;
- Delivering multifunctional greenspace: The proposed development will include both green space and urban spaces at key areas to perform a stand-off from the listed building, reflect the village location and provide amenity space for residents;
- Enhance ecological value and biodiversity: The habitats of higher value will be retained and enhanced including the watercourses, vegetation within the site and along the site boundaries;
- Creating a safe and desirable place to live: The proposals have been sensitively designed to ensure the creation of a safe and attractive environment which discourages crime and builds upon the strength of the local community.



1 LONG VIEWS OVER THE CANAL TO A FLAT OPEN LANDSCAPE | 2 FRAMED VIEWS TOWARDS LISTED BUILDING | 3 BAND OF MATURE TREES INDICATES MEANDERING STREAM BENEATH | 4 CONSIDER LOCALLY LISTED BUILDINGS

## 5.2 Design considerations

### KEY POINTS

- There are a number of locations surrounding the site from which filtered views of the grade II listed building can be seen. These views should be taken into consideration within the development of the site.
- The locally listed buildings contribute to an attractive rural setting, particularly to the south and west edges of the site. Any development should be sensitive to this character, providing an appropriate and positive aesthetic in terms of materiality, residential typology and density.
- Where the site's boundary runs along the canal, the character of the area is defined by long, wide open views of the flat agricultural landscape to the south. Any development should retain and enhance this character.
- The Trans Pennine Trail runs along the site's northern boundary, and a number of Public Rights of Way run along the southern and eastern edges of the site. Views from these routes should be carefully considered, with appropriate screening incorporated where necessary.
- The site features some significant areas of vegetation, including mature trees and hedgerows as well as several streams and ponds. These landscape elements should be sensitively incorporated into any development.
- A meandering country lane runs along a portion of the site's southern boundary, leading to the grade II listed building. Dotted with farm buildings, mature trees and hedgerows, the lane forms a characterful feature of the area and as such should be considered and integrated into any new development.
- According to the Environment Agency, there are two areas within the site that fall within Flood Zone 2 and 3. Whilst this does not prohibit development, it may affect the design and/or typology of residential development appropriate in these locations.
- The topography of the site is gently undulating with slightly steeper areas falling towards the existing streams. The A56 to the north of the site is elevated, providing an open viewpoint over the site.
- The site contains two hatched areas which respond to the site's characteristics; the pink-hatched area, represents a stand-off from the listed building to maximise the protection and enhancement of its setting; and within the purple-hatched area, a density of 4 dwellings per acre should be incorporated to maintain the residential amenity of the existing dwellings.



### KEY

	Site boundary		Mature trees		Trans Pennine Trail /Sustrans route 62
	Grade II listed building		Hedgerow		Public Right of Way
	Locally listed building		Trees / shrubs		Country lane
	Water body		Contours (0.5m)		Provide development offset to listed building
	Flood zone 2		Key views towards listed building		Low density zone to respect existing dwellings
	Flood zone 3		Key view over open landscape		

## 5.3 Opportunities & character areas

### OPPORTUNITIES

- The site provides an opportunity to incorporate a new semi-rural, sensitive character which makes a positive contribution to defining a new urban edge to Warrington.
- The existing trees, hedgerows and water bodies within the site provide an opportunity to create a green framework for the new development, maintaining the existing landscape features and the character they imbue within the site.
- Due to much of the site being bound by the Trans Pennine Trail and the canal, along with the proximity of junctions and access points in the north-western corner, the only viable opportunity for a main vehicular access point into the site is along Cliff Lane, to the south western corner of the site.
- There is an opportunity to improve pedestrian and cycle connectivity within the area, providing additional routes between existing public rights of way, the Trans Pennine Trail/Sustrans route 62 and existing areas of development.

### CHARACTER AREAS

- There are five distinctive character areas within the site which should be utilised to inform the design and place-making opportunities for any development:
  1. This area has a rural feel, defined by meandering lanes, clusters of farm buildings and open fields broken up by mature trees, hedgerows and the sinuous line of a watercourse.
  2. The Grade II Listed Thelwall Heys building is located at the centre of the site. Clusters of mature trees surround the building, filtering views towards it. This building should be considered as a valuable place-making asset for the site. Views towards the building should be enhanced by following the design principles as outlined in the following pages.
  3. This area feels slightly more urban - compared with the other character areas - due to its proximity to the existing development of Grappenhall / Thelwall and the A Roads that run along its northern and western boundaries. The elevated A56 provides clear views over this area towards the Grade II listed building. The area is bisected by a ribbon of mature trees and shrubs that follow the line of the watercourse beneath.
  4. This area is defined by the canal and long, open views out over the flat agricultural fields to the south. Development presents an opportunity to correspond positively to this canal setting, increasing observation and overlooking whilst also improving interconnectivity between the site and the canal.
  5. This area is bound by the Trans Pennine trail along its northern edge. The trail is separated from the site via a bund and a line of mature trees and shrubs, limiting views into the site. The area is flat and open, with a backdrop of distant vegetation providing filtered views of the listed building.



#### KEY

 Site boundary	 Character area 3
 Grade II listed building	 Character area 4
 Water body	 Character area 5
 Agricultural fields	 Green corridor
 Urban fringe	 Trans Pennine Trail /Sustrans route 62
 Character area 1	 Public Right of Way
 Character area 2	 Potential vehicular access
	 Potential pedestrian access

Right: incorporate views of Grade II listed building



Left: improve interconnectivity between the canal and the site

Below: retain rural character of lane as place-making feature

Above: potential vehicular access point off Cliff Lane



Left: incorporate existing landscape features as green corridors

## 5.4 Landscape & open space concept

### KEY POINTS

- A central landscape feature is introduced, surrounding the grade II listed building. This looped landscape creates a series of interconnected green spaces that provide amenity value for residents whilst giving the listed building space to breathe. The key spaces connected to this landscape loop help to frame views towards the building, adding character and identity to the new development whilst maintaining existing views to the building from the surrounding area.
- Existing linear landscape features, such as streams and hedgerows are retained and transformed into green corridors that run through the site.
- Additional existing landscape features, such as ponds, are also incorporated into the proposed green framework.
- A series of spaces are introduced at key locations within the site. These spaces are strategically placed to ensure views towards the listed building are maintained and enhanced. The spaces vary in scale and character depending on their location and context.
- Additional pocket spaces are introduced along the canal to take advantage of this waterside location and the long, open views out to the fields beyond.
- Boundary planting along the site's northern edge ensure that any development is screened from the Trans Pennine Trail / Sustrans Route 62.
- SUDS landscaping could be incorporated within the proposed green corridors and central landscape loop feature, ensuring that increased surface water run-off is managed sustainably on-site.



### KEY

	Grade II listed building		Landscape loop feature
	Key views towards listed building		Arrival space
	Key views over open landscape		Waterside space
	Existing water body		Village green / key space within development
	Existing agricultural fields		Boundary / screen planting
	Green corridor		Potential location for incorporated SUDS
	Vehicular access		
	Pedestrian access		

## 5.5 Design principles

### 5.5.1. LANDSCAPE



**KEY**

-  Green corridor
-  Central loop landscape feature
-  Key spaces
-  Existing hedgerow
-  Existing water
-  Existing trees
-  Urban edge
-  Rural edge
-  Boundary planting
-  Connections to canal
-  Country lane
-  Potential location for incorporated SUDS

A robust landscape framework is created utilising existing landscape features which are retained and integrated into the masterplan. Existing streams, mature trees and hedgerows form green fingers that thread through the site. These provide enhanced corridors for wildlife whilst improving pedestrian connectivity through the site and into the wider landscape.

A central landscape feature is created around the Grade II listed building, providing amenity space for local residents as well as framing views towards the landmark building.

### 5.5.2. ACCESS AND MOVEMENT

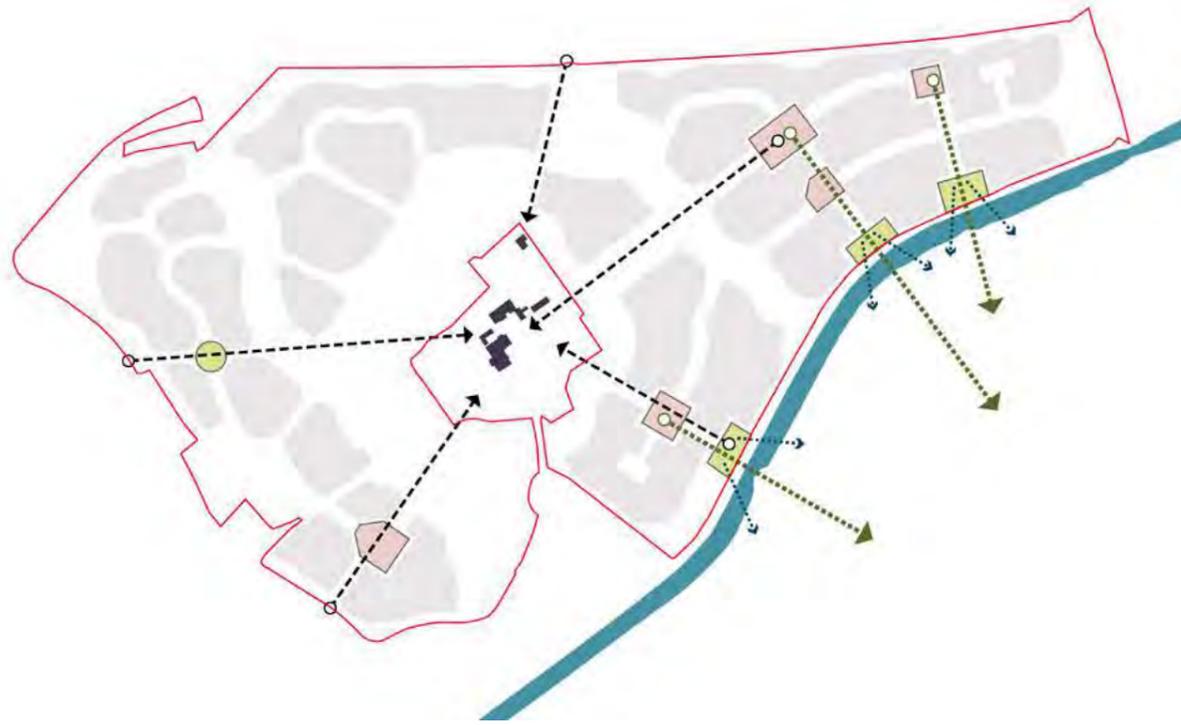


**KEY**

-  Primary movement
-  Secondary movement
-  Tertiary movement
-  Vehicular access
-  Pedestrian access
-  Existing road
-  Existing country lane
-  Trans Pennine Trail /Sustrans route 62
-  Public Right of Way

Main vehicular access is provided off Cliff Lane whilst various pedestrian/cycle access points provide improved connectivity through the site and into the wider network of cycleways and pedestrian footpaths.

### 5.5.3. LEGIBILITY



**KEY**

- Development blocks
- Key node: hard space
- Key node: soft space
- Key views towards Grade II Listed Building
- Key views to open landscape
- Views over canal

A series of key spaces are strategically placed throughout the development, utilising views towards the Grade II listed building to create characterful spaces that draw upon the site's existing qualities.

Key views over the canal and the open characteristics of the landscape to the south of the site are also considered as valuable place-making attributes, creating a positive interrelationship between the site and its surrounding context.

### 5.5.4. FRONTAGES



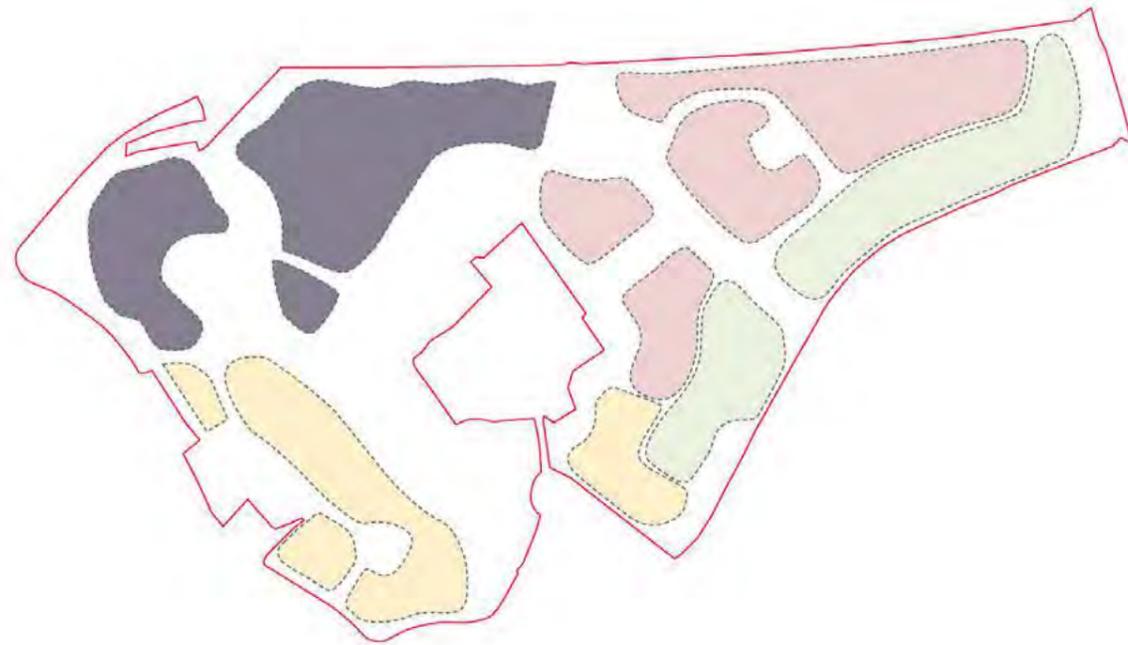
**KEY**

- Urban frontage
- Landscape frontage
- Key space

Frontages are utilised to generate attractive and active streetscapes and spaces throughout the development. Residential units front onto public open spaces, maximising views over the landscape whilst creating a safe, overlooked environment.

The development provides a new active edge to the canal, with units fronting out over the water to create an attractive, safe and animated boundary between the site and the existing landscape.

5.5.5. DENSITY



KEY

- 10 DPH Total area = 2.2 Ha  
= circa 20 UNITS
- 25 DPH Total area = 2.0 Ha  
= circa 50 UNITS
- 30 DPH Total area = 3.5 Ha  
= circa 115 UNITS
- 40 DPH Total area = 3.3 Ha  
= circa 125 UNITS

**TOTAL = APPROX. 310 UNITS**

The lowest density of the development is focused to the south west, where the existing character is more rural and existing residential dwellings are present.

Development along the canal edge is also of a lower density, in order to create a soft transition between the development and the rural landscape to the south.

Density increases slightly within the north eastern portion of the site, where the development is screened from the Trans Penine Trail by buffer planting along the northern boundary of the site.

The highest density of the development is focused to the north west of the site, where proximity to existing development and the presence of A-roads create a more urban character.

Right: Fairfield Park, Stotfold. Image credit: James Whitaker



Right: The avenue, saffron walden. Image credit: Pollard Thomas Edwards



Right: Fairfield Park, Stotfold. Image credit: James Whitaker



## 5.6 Overall development framework

- KEY**
-  Grade II Listed Building
  -  Development blocks
  -  Key node: hard space
  -  Key node: soft space
  -  Green corridor
  -  Central loop landscape feature
  -  Existing hedgerow
  -  Existing water body
  -  Existing trees
  -  Boundary planting
  -  Primary movement
  -  Secondary movement
  -  Tertiary movement
  -  Vehicular access
  -  Pedestrian access
  -  Trans Pennine Trail / Sustrans route 62
  -  Public Right of Way



## 5.7 Illustrative masterplan





6

DELIVERABILITY OF  
DEVELOPMENT

## 6.1 Deliverability of development

The NPPF and the Governments growth agenda seek to ensure that sufficient land is available in appropriate locations to increase housing supply and support economic growth. This section of the Development Statement demonstrates that the site is available, suitable and achievable and is therefore well positioned to meet the growth needs of the District in accordance with the NPPF.

To be considered as deliverable, sites should:

- **Be Available:** A site should be considered available where there is confidence that there are no legal or ownership problems
- **Be Suitable:** A site is considered suitable for development if it offers a suitable location for development and would lead to the creation of mixed, sustainable communities.
- **Be Achievable:** A site is considered achievable for development where there is a reasonable prospect that it will be developed on the site within five years. This is judgement about the economic viability of a site and the capacity of the development to complete and sell housing over a certain period taking into account market factors and delivery factors.

### 6.1.1. AVAILABLE

The site is currently located adjacent to, but outside of the settlement of Thelwall and Grappenhall. Liberty has in place a promotional agreement with the landowners of the site to promote the site through the Local Plan Process. The site should be considered as having the short-term development potential and an ability to contribute to the boroughs short term housing need. If the site were to be released from the Green Belt in the emerging Warrington Local Plan Review, the site is within the control of a highly-experienced land promoter who would seek to secure planning permission within the shortest possible timescales which would ultimately contribute to the Borough's five-year housing land supply and deliver highly anticipated new homes early in the Plan Period.

### 6.1.2. SUITABLE

The site is suitable to accommodate residential development because it:

- Offers a suitable location for development and can be brought forward immediately following any allocation;
- Would form a natural extension to the established Thelwall and Grappenhall residential areas;
- Could utilise existing infrastructure surrounding the site and there are no utilities or drainage or infrastructure constraints preventing the site coming forward for development;
- Has no identified environmental constraints that would prevent the site coming forward for residential development;
- Can deliver satisfactory vehicular access;
- Is situated within a local highway network that has the

capacity to accommodate the development;

- Has good access to public transport options;
- Is sustainably located and is close to local services and facilities; and
- Can be developed with definitive and permanent boundaries to restrict any further potential development into the Green Belt in the future beyond All Saints Drive and the Bridgewater Canal.

The site could be developed to meet local housing needs on a sustainable site that sits on the edge of Thelwall and Grappenhall and is therefore considered to be suitable in accordance with the requirements set out in the NPPF.

### 6.1.3. ACHIEVABLE

The Illustrative Masterplan in the following section demonstrates that the site is capable of delivering circa 310 residential dwellings. The assessment of the site within this Development Statement indicates that the site has no physical constraints that would prevent development coming forward. A planning application can be submitted alongside supporting information, which identifies necessary mitigation measures required to overcome any limited deliverability barriers.

This Development Statement has also highlighted that there are many facilities within close proximity to the site, including community services and amenities, leisure activities and employment opportunities, which would attract home buyers. Liberty has considered the level of market demand and projected sales rates in Warrington and consider the site economically viable and therefore achievable in accordance with the NPPF.

### 6.1.4. SUMMARY

The Thelwall Heys site has been considered as part of this Garden City Suburb concept and identified within the South Warrington Urban Extension Framework Plan Document (June 2017) to be suitable for residential development. This section has demonstrated the site is deliverable and can make a valuable and immediate contribution towards the Boroughs short term housing needs without impacting significantly on the wider Green Belt.

The development potential of the site was considered in the Council's previous SHLAA's, with the only constraint identified being its Green Belt status.

It is for the reasons outlined above that the site should not only be considered for Green Belt release but also allocated for residential development in the immediate term.



# 7

## SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

## 7.1 Conclusions

The site at Thelwall Heys presents an exceptional opportunity to contribute towards meeting the future housing needs in Warrington Borough. This Development Statement demonstrates the case for allocating the site for housing development during the emerging Local Plan Period and sets out the exceptional circumstances that support an alteration to the Warrington Green Belt. The development of the site could deliver circa 310 new homes of the type, quantity and quality of open market and affordable housing that will contribute to meeting the future growth needs of the Borough, without undermining the core purposes of the Green Belt.

This Development Statement has demonstrated that the Council has not identified enough additional units to be released from the Green Belt in order to meet their annual housing need of 1,113 dwellings. Furthermore, the Council are not able to demonstrate a five-year supply of housing land and currently can only demonstrate around a 2.4 year supply. It is therefore apparent that the Council need to identify more housing to be released from the Green Belt in order to meet housing need over the Plan Period and to produce a plan that is flexible in accordance with the NPPF. Despite maximising the capacity of 15,429 dwellings within the existing urban area, it is apparent that if Warrington is to meet the development needs arising from its growth aspirations, it can only do so through the release of Green Belt land to provide for 8,791 homes.

Paragraph 83 of the NPPF states that once the general extent of a Green Belt has been approved, it should only be altered in 'exceptional circumstances' through the plan making process. "When considered as part of the Council's strategic objectives, the Council considers that the exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated to justify the release of Green Belt" (paragraph 4.40 of the Preferred Development Option - Consultation [July 2017]). We agree with the Local Planning Authority that exceptional circumstances which support the alteration to the Green Belt in Warrington can be demonstrated; including the housing requirement, insufficient land and affordable housing.

In summary, this Development Statement has illustrated that the site at Thelwall Heys:

- Is located in a highly sustainable position on the edge of Thelwall and Grappenhall in close proximity to a range of amenities, services and facilities;
- Is available, suitable and achievable in accordance with the NPPF;
- Is appropriate for Green Belt release and allocation as a residential development site; as one that is well contained, has physical and defensible boundaries and will not impact on the core purposes of the Green Belt;
- Has no identified technical or environmental constraints that will prevent its delivery early in the Plan Period;
- Can deliver a well-planned, high quality housing development, including both market and affordable homes, that sensitively integrates with its surrounding landscape and its urban context;
- Would help the Council to meet or exceed their minimum housing targets and make a valuable contribution to their 5-year land supply; and

- Generates significant material social and economic benefits, by providing housing choice and stimulating economic investment and job creation.

### 7.1.1.1. SUMMARY

The development of the site provides a highly sustainable opportunity to support the national growth agenda and to assist in providing adequate housing land as part of the Warrington Local Plan Review to achieve long term sustainable development. The future development of the site would assist in the short term delivery of circa 310 dwellings on a site that represents a natural and logical extension to the settlement of Thelwall and Grappenhall.

The development statement has demonstrated this site is physically suitable to accommodate residential development and can deliver a high quality scheme in response to the surrounding opportunities and considerations. The illustrative masterplan indicates the streetscapes and character areas that can be created, whilst remaining sensitive to the local surroundings. The design seeks to retain the village character of Thelwall and Grappenhall and be sympathetic to the rural surroundings. The development will be of higher density in the north west corner decreasing to the south and east, with generous new planting, open space, in keeping with the local area. The dwellings will be a mix of housing types and sizes to reflect the varied local vernacular and needs of Thelwall and Grappenhall.

Moving forward, Liberty is committed to working collaboratively with Warrington Borough Council and their Key Stakeholders to ensure that the Borough's housing need is met in a sensitive and sustainable manner. To support these objectives, this Development Statement ultimately supports an alteration to Warrington's Green Belt and the allocation of the Thelwall Heys site for high quality and new housing that can be delivered early in the emerging Local Plan Review.



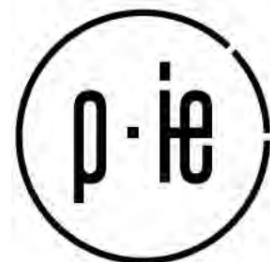


THELWALL HEYS,  
GRAPPENHALL

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DEVELOPMENT STATEMENT  
SEPTEMBER 2017

LIBERTY PROPERTIES



Liberty  
Properties



HOW