



Your ref:
Our ref: 1611/JS/RJ

29 September 2017

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

Dear Sir / Madam

WARRINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN REVIEW: PREFERRED DEVELOPMENT OPTION CONSULTATION

On behalf of Bellway Homes Ltd ("Bellway"), thank you for the opportunity to submit representations to Warrington Borough Council ("WBC") on the Preferred Development Option Regulation 18 Consultation Document.

These representations are submitted in relation to Bellway's land interests at the site at Heathcroft Stud, Croft. 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 3.3 hectares and comprises a well-contained, undeveloped parcel of land adjoining the eastern edge of the settlement of Croft. The site comprises part brownfield, part greenfield land in the Green Belt. It is flat in topography and rectangular in shape and the boundaries of the site are made up of trees and hedgerows. Heathcroft Stud Equestrian Centre is located at the south of the site and currently operates as a commercial livery (with 56 stables) and stud farm. A site location plan is attached at Appendix 1.

Representations have previously been submitted by HOW Planning on behalf of Bellway to the Call for Sites exercise in December 2016 to promote the site for housing.

To accompany this letter we have prepared a Development Statement, which assesses the site in terms of its contribution to the Green Belt and provides the following:

- A description of the site and its surrounding including a review of the site's sustainability credentials;
- An overview of planning policy and guidance;

Planning and Environmental Advisers

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- 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 outline of the proposed alteration to the Green Belt is also provided;
- 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 Bellway Homes' masterplan proposals for the site.

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 and would deliver significant material benefits whilst still protecting the purpose and function of the Green Belt. Overall, the Development Statement concludes that the site would provide a logical extension to the existing settlement of Croft 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)

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 in 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 below¹:

| | 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 |

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:

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

*"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."*²

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."*³

This strategic objective is supported by Bellway.

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 preferred option.

This approach, is generally supported by Bellway as it recognises the need for some Green Belt release in outlying settlements, such as Croft, to contribute to longer term sustainability of local services and local businesses. Whilst option 2 is generally supported by Bellway, some of the outlying settlements, such as Croft, have the ability to accommodate a higher level of development than identified in the Preferred Option document.

Main Development Locations

The Preferred Development Option Consultation document establishes that the outlying settlements would be capable of accommodating a minimum of 1,000 dwellings, which then leaves approximately 8,000 dwellings 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:

- **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;

² Preferred Development Option - Consultation (July 2017), paragraph 4.17, page 15

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

- **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. We comment on each option as follows:

Option 1 - A Garden City Suburb for 8,000 homes

WBC regard the option to have a Garden City Suburb to the south east of Warrington as having potential to perform positively against the majority of the Plan objectives and the ability to maintain the permanence of the Green Belt at a strategic level through managed Green Belt release. However WBC's concerns with the option of having a development of this scale in a single location raises issues about deliverability and the impacts on the character of this part of Warrington.

Bellway object to option 1 being the preferred option for similar reasons to WBC on matters relating to deliverability and the impacts this size of development would have on this area of Warrington.

Option 2 - A Garden City Suburb for 6,000 homes and Urban Extension for 2,000 homes

The second option to have 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 is the preferred option of WBC. The Council consider that this option has the potential to perform positively against the majority of plan objectives and will have the ability to provide infrastructure to support the Garden City and South West extensions themselves and the town as a whole. The Council consider that by providing a second development location, the South West extension provides benefits in terms of broadening the supply base of new homes, although accepts that it could impact on the character of the wider area.

Whilst Bellway broadly accept this approach as the preferred option, more homes should be allocated in the outlying settlements to compensate for the time it will take to deliver the necessary infrastructure required to support the Garden City Suburb. It is clear that WBC require housing now, so smaller sites should be released from the Green Belt in the outlying settlements, such as Croft, in order to deliver housing in the immediate future.

In summary, it is Bellway's view that the Council should look to rely more heavily on the delivery of smaller edge of settlement sites within outlying settlements to deliver its short term housing requirements, as opposed to the Garden City Suburb, which will require the delivery of complex infrastructure to fulfil its delivery requirements of 6,000 homes within the Plan period. This will enable the Council to guarantee that its short term housing aspirations can be delivered without the need for the delivery of any additional infrastructure.

Option 3 - A Garden City Suburb for 6,000 homes and Urban Extension for 2,500 homes

Option 3 is similar to option 2 in terms of the Garden City Suburb however the urban extension is located to the west rather than the south west and increases the number of houses from 2,000 to 2,500.

The Council's assessment acknowledges that this option could have significant impacts on the strategic and local importance of the Green Belt and also refers to the deliverability of the site being a concern

as this is to be provided over a number of individual sites, which could impact the required primary school and health facilities.

Bellway support the Council's decision to not accept this as the preferred option due to the issues relating to school capacity and deliverability.

Option 4 - A Garden City Suburb for 4,000 homes and Urban Extension to the South West of Warrington for 2,000 homes and an urban extension to the West of Warrington for 2,500 homes

This option would include three separate urban extensions including a Garden City Suburb of approximately 4,000 homes, an urban extension to the south west of Warrington of up to 2,000 homes and an urban extension to the west of Warrington of up to 2,500 homes.

WBC comment that the smaller Garden City suburb could provide potential benefits in terms of reducing the impact on the character of the wider south east Warrington area and also reducing infrastructure requirements.

As noted under option 3, there are serious concerns over the provision of schools and their capacity to accommodate 2,500 homes as part of an urban extension to the west of Warrington alongside deliverability. For these reasons, Bellway support the Council's decision to not accept this as a preferred option.

Option 5 - Green Belt release adjacent to Main Urban Area

Option 5 proposes to have a more dispersed pattern of Green Belt release adjacent to the urban area which would likely have a reduced risk with regards to infrastructure, however we agree with WBC that this raises concerns about the deliverability of the infrastructure required to support growth and the risk that development of this kind would exacerbate existing congestion and infrastructure constraints in the Warrington urban area.

Given the concerns with regards to infrastructure, Bellway support the Council's decision to not accept this as a preferred option.

Outlying Settlements

The Council has not identified specific development sites for the individual settlements at this stage of the Plan making process. It is stated that the allocation of individual sites will be identified in the Submission Version of the Local Plan.

Table 22 (Outlying Settlements - Indicative Green Belt Capacity)⁴ of the Preferred Development Option Consultation document does define an approximate number of homes the Council considered can be accommodated by each of the outlying settlements as follows:

⁴ Preferred Development Option - Consultation (July 2017), Table 22 - Outlying Settlements - Indicative Green Belt Capacity, page 46

| Settlement | Indicative Green Belt Capacity |
|---------------|--------------------------------|
| Lymm | 500 |
| Culcheth | 300 |
| Burtonwood | 150 |
| Winwick | 90 |
| Croft | 60 |
| Glazebury | 50 |
| Hollins Green | 40 |
| TOTAL | 1,190 |

It is noted that Croft is considered to accommodate 60 units for incremental growth and release from the Green Belt which is supported by Bellway. As noted in the 'Settlement Profiles - Outlying Settlements (July 2017) document, this level of incremental growth could be achieved without impact on the strategic importance of the Green Belt. As such, the Council should consider the possibility of accommodating more housing in Croft especially when sites such as Heathcroft Stud have been identified as having a weak contribution to the Green belt and have the ability to deliver more than 60 dwellings. It is understood that the final numbers assigned to Croft will depend on the detailed assessment of potential development sites which is ongoing.

ALLOCATION OF HEATHCROFT STUD, CROFT FOR HOUSING

The Preferred Development Option document acknowledges that there is an annual housing need of 1,113 dwellings. WBC is not able to currently demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing land supply and so in order to meet the development needs arising from its growth aspirations, it is necessary to release Green Belt land for housing. The Preferred Development Option allocates 60 houses to Croft for release from the Green Belt to try and meet the overall housing need of 24,220.

The Development Statement submitted alongside this representation demonstrates the site at Heathcroft Stud as being a suitable site to provide sufficient housing to meet the needs of Croft to support the Council's overall housing needs. In summary, the Development Statement illustrates that the site at Heathcroft Stud would:

- Positively contribute to the identified need for new housing in the Borough over the Plan period based on WBC's Local Plan Review evidence base and any subsequent uplift in this figure to account for affordability issues;
- Create a range and mix of housing types that will make a positive contribution to the Borough's housing requirements by providing a mix of types and tenures of dwellings including new affordable homes;
- Be available, suitable achievable and viable for housing development in accordance with national planning policy;
- Generate growth and provide significant benefits to the local economy including the creation of new jobs, construction spend and investment generated by new residents;
- Deliver an overall development vision for the site that provides a well-designed and sympathetic development in a sustainable location in Croft, and;
- Sensitively integrate with its surrounding landscape features delivering a strengthened Green Belt boundary to the north, east and south of the site.

In terms of the three dimensions to sustainable development; economic, social and environmental, Chapter 5 of the Development Statement assesses the site against these three dimensions as defined in the NPPF. It demonstrates how a 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 allocated for housing.

Overall, the delivery of new homes at Heathcroft Stud would make a positive contribution towards meeting the housing needs of the Borough and in particular in Croft. The site is deliverable, available and achievable for development and is under the control of an experienced house builder who can demonstrate an excellent track record in delivering new housing across Warrington and the North West. In addition, should the site be released from the Green Belt and allocated for housing, Bellway would be fully committed to bringing forward the site for residential development.

The site would be suitable for development from a technical perspective and can provide sufficient housing to meet WBC aspirations for Croft's housing numbers in full.

SUMMARY

In summary, this letter representation supported by the detailed Development Statement demonstrates that the site at Heathcroft Stud in Croft, presents an exceptional opportunity to contribute towards meeting the future housing needs in WBC and should be considered for allocation for housing.

We would be grateful if you could confirm safe receipt of these representations. Bellway would like to work with the Council to bring this site forward for allocation for housing and should you require any further information then please not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully



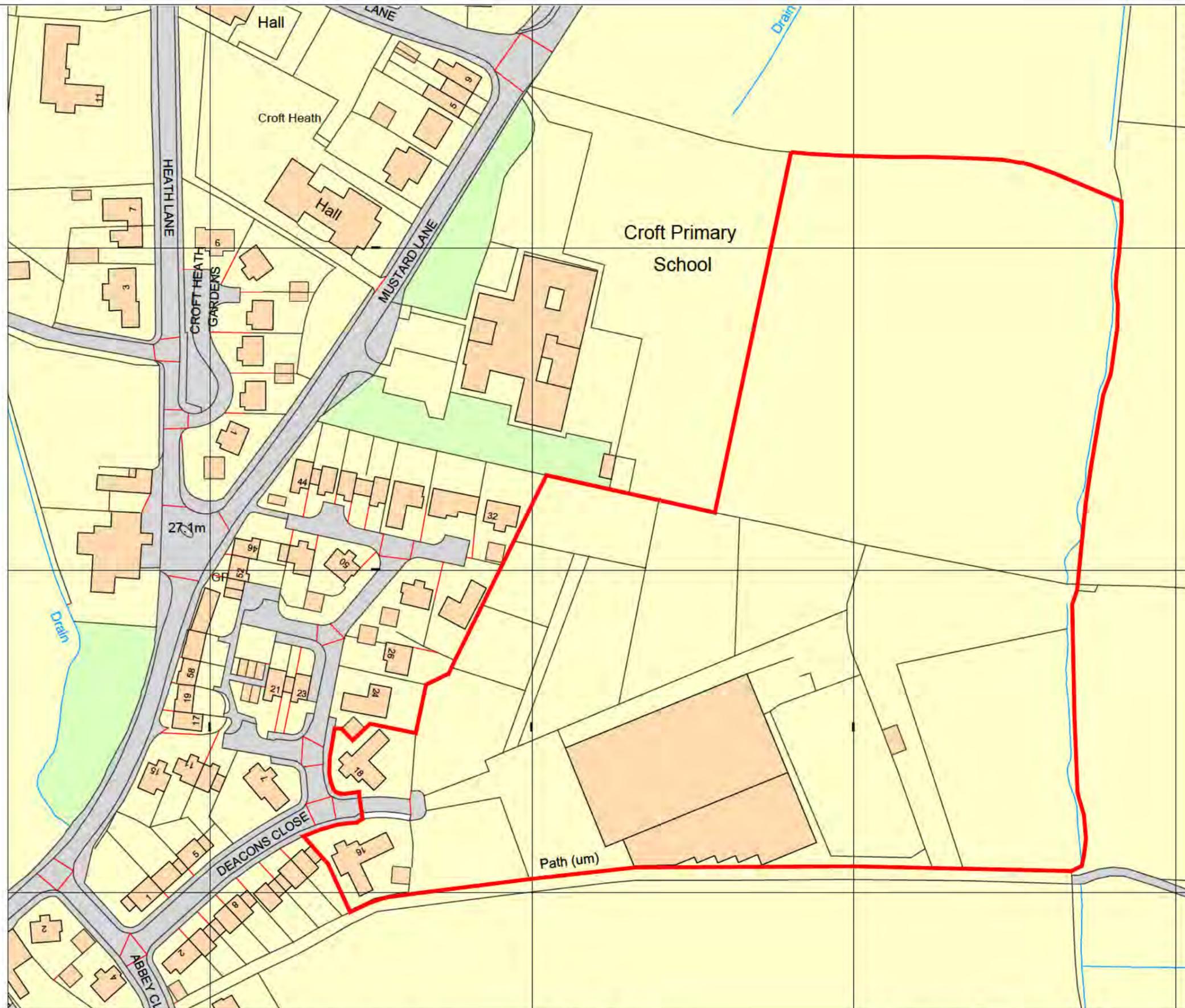
Planner

Direct Dial: [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

APPENDIX 1: SITE LOCATION

general notes:
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PLANNING

Client:
Bellway Homes MC

Project:
Deacons Close, Croft

Drawing Title:
Location Plan

Job No:
16-205

Drawing No:

Rev:

Drawn:
AM

Checked:

Scale:
1:1250

Date:
December 2016

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Bellway

Heathcroft Stud, Croft

Development Statement

September 2017



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Heathcroft Stud, Croft

Development Statement

September 2017



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1.0

Introduction

This Development Statement has been prepared to promote land at Heathcroft Stud, Croft (the 'site') for residential development by Bellway Homes. It 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 and would deliver significant material benefits whilst still protecting the purpose and functions of the Green Belt. The site constitutes part brownfield / greenfield land and provides a logical extension to the existing settlement of Croft and is a sustainable location to deliver residential development with access to a range of existing services and facilities.





This Statement assesses the site in terms of its contribution to the Green Belt and provides:

- A description of the site and its surroundings including a review of the site's existing use;
- An overview of planning policy and guidance;
- The case for the release of the site from the Green Belt. In particular the 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 outline of the proposed alteration to the Green Belt is also provided;
- 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 Bellway Homes' masterplan proposals for the site.

Bellway Homes is one of the most successful house builders in the UK. It sold 8,721 homes in 2016 with 32% sold to first time buyers and 16% sold as affordable homes. Bellway Homes has been awarded five star status by the Home Builders Federation, the highest accolade a new homes developer can receive, with more than nine out of ten customers saying they would recommend Bellway to a friend.

Bellway is committed to playing an important role in addressing housing shortage nationally and has increased the number of homes it builds by 27% since 2014 and 67% since 2012.

In summary, the site is in a sustainable location that offers an opportunity for sensitive land release from the Green Belt and allocation for housing as part of the Warrington Local Plan. Bellway Homes will work closely with WBC, key stakeholders and the local community throughout the planning process to ensure that a high quality and sensitive residential development is delivered.

2.0

The Site

The site extends to 3.3 hectares and comprises a well-contained, undeveloped parcel of land adjoining the eastern edge of the settlement of Croft. The site comprises part brownfield / part greenfield land, in the Green Belt. Its is flat in topography and rectangular in shape and the boundaries of the site are made up of trees and hedgerows.

Site Description

The site comprises part brownfield, part greenfield land. Heathcroft Stud Equestrian Centre is located at the south of the site and currently operates as a commercial livery (with 56 stables) and stud farm. Show jumping training and clinics by two veterinary surgeons also take place at the site.

The northern site boundary comprises the boundary of Croft Primary School as well as undeveloped land. The eastern and southern boundaries comprise undeveloped land. A brook adjoins the eastern boundary of the site and a public right of way route adjoins the southern boundary of the site. The western boundary comprises the rear of residential properties on Deacons Close.

Beyond the western and southern boundaries of the site is the main residential area of Croft. This is typically characterised by two storey semi detached and detached properties with rear and front gardens.

The site does not contain any designated heritage assets such as scheduled ancient monuments, listed buildings, registered parks and gardens, registered battlefields or Conservation Areas. A Grade II listed building, known as Christ's Church is located 0.5km to the east of the site (reference: 1329750). Eaves Brown Farmhouse is Grade II listed (reference: 1139385) and is located roughly 0.7km to the south of the site and both St Lewis Presbytery (reference: 1329751) and Church of St Lewis (reference: 1139383) are located to north of the site, approximately 0.7km away. The proposed residential development at the site will not affect the setting of any of these listed buildings.

Regular and frequent HGV and tractor movements are generated by the existing equestrian use of the site, with stables needing to be mucked out, horses hacked out, veterinary clinics, and show jumping events. The proposed development of the site for housing would remove the significant traffic generated by the existing use from the local highway network, resulting in less of an impact on the amenity of neighbouring residents.

A Sustainable and Accessible Location

The site is located in the administrative area of WBC, within the settlement of Croft which is approximately 9km north of Warrington Town Centre.

Croft is identified as a sustainable location and as an area for future housing growth by WBC in its Local Plan Review "Spatial Distribution".

The settlement of Croft has a range of services including; churches, primary schools, public houses, a playing field, youth centre, golf club, bowling green and a hairdresser.

There are two primary schools within the vicinity of the site to the north, including St Lewis Roman Catholic Primary school (1km) and Croft Primary School, (400m). Furthermore, Croft Early Years and Croft

Village Preschool is within walking distance of the site. The closest secondary school is at Birchwood Community High School, 5.5km south of the site.

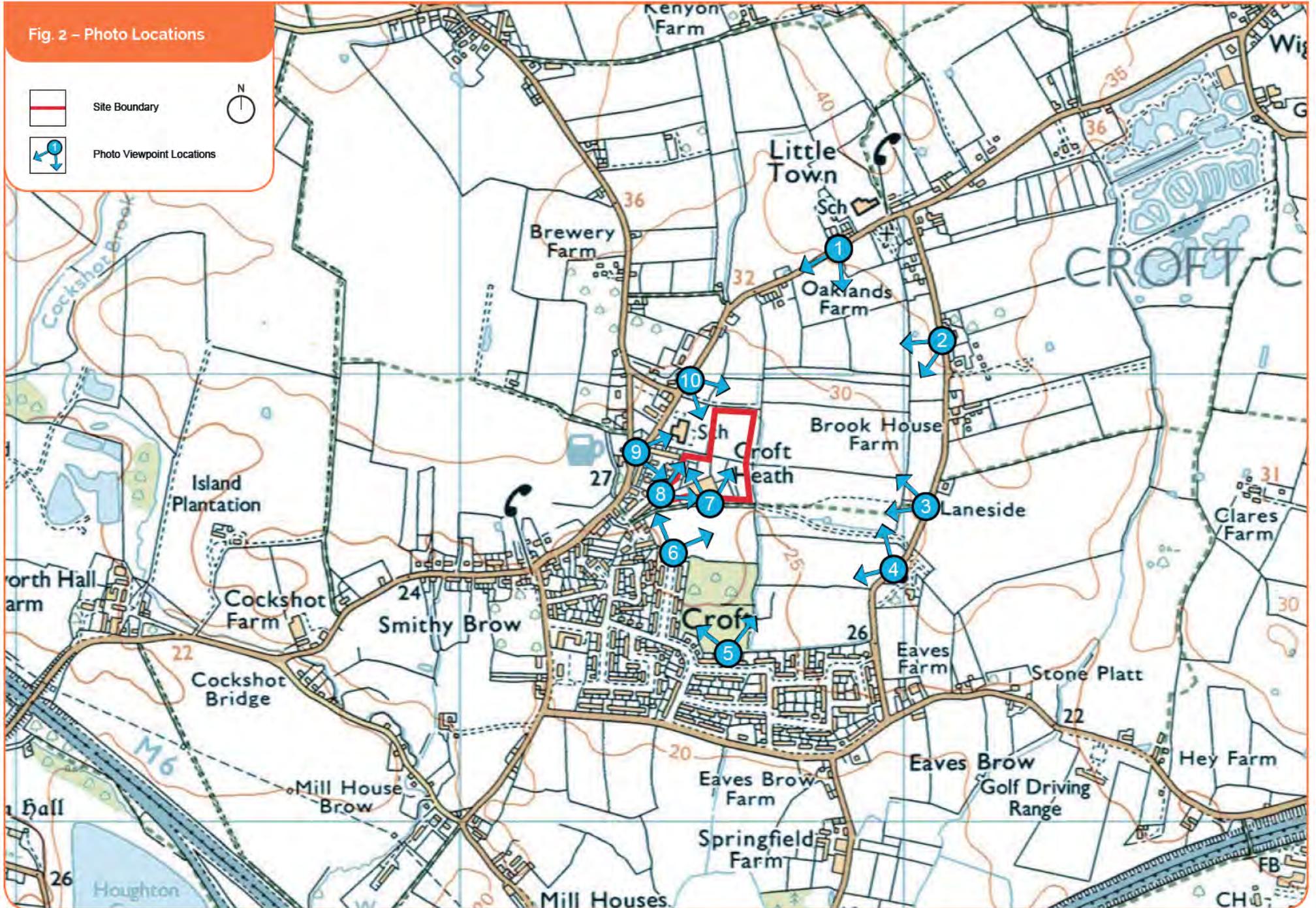
Bus stops are located approximately 175 metres north east of the site along Mustard Lane, which provide hourly services to Leigh and Warrington and other services to Glazebury. The bus journey to Warrington takes about 26 minutes and provides access to a range of services and facilities.

Access to the strategic highway network is available via Lord Street, Heath Lane and Stone Pit Lane, which connect to the A579 and provide a direct link to junction 22 of the M6 and onward travel to the north and south of England.

In summary, the site is situated in a sustainable and accessible location surrounded by established housing to the west and south. It is part brownfield, part greenfield and is well connected to the strategic road network, being accessible by a range of sustainable transport modes such as walking, cycling and public transport.

Fig. 2 – Photo Locations

-  Site Boundary
-  Photo Viewpoint Locations





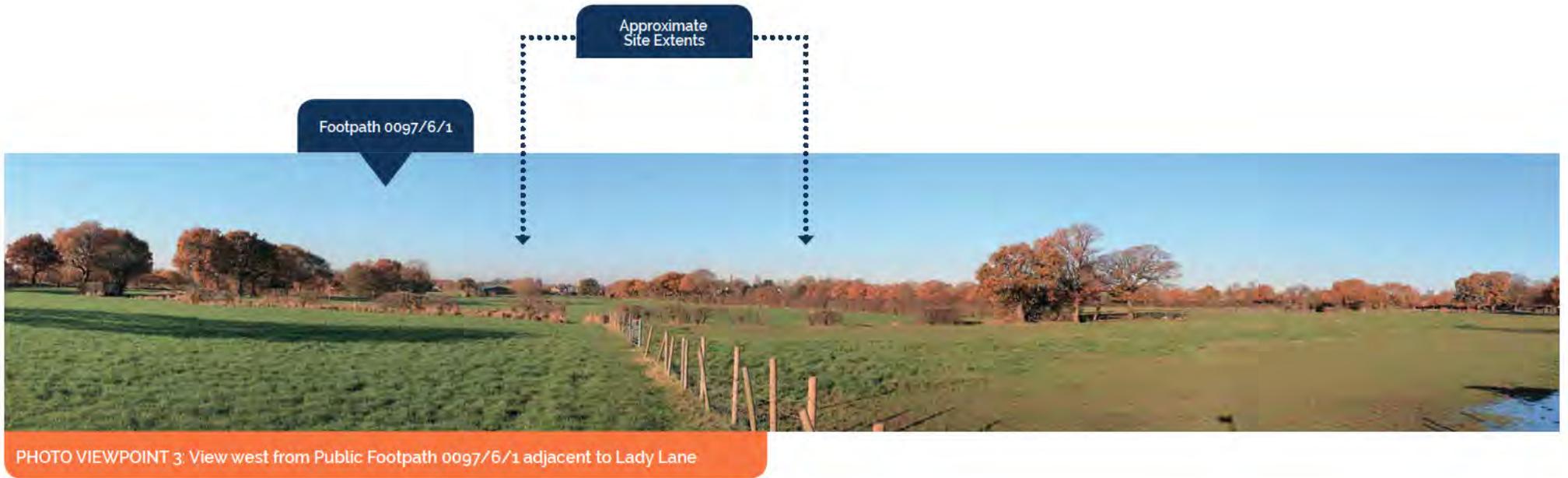




PHOTO VIEWPOINT 5: View north from Eaves Brow Road

Approximate
Site Extents



PHOTO VIEWPOINT 6: View north from Betsyfield Drive



Equestrian Centre

PHOTO VIEWPOINT 7: View north from Footpath 0097/6/1



Approximate Site Extents



Equestrian Centre

PHOTO VIEWPOINT 8: View east from Deacons Close



PHOTO VIEWPOINT 9: View east from Deacons Drive



PHOTO VIEWPOINT 10: View southeast from Mustard Lane

3.0

Planning Policy and Guidance

This Section demonstrates that the release of the land at Heathcroft Stud and allocation for housing in Warrington's Local Plan Review complies with relevant national and local planning policies.

National Planning Guidance

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on 27 March 2012 and is a key part of the Government's reforms to make the planning system less complex and more accessible. It vastly simplifies the number of planning policy pages previously found in Planning Policy Statements and Planning Policy Guidance. The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The overall emphasis of the NPPF is to reiterate the Government's key objectives of facilitating economic growth, securing sustainable development and boosting housing delivery.

Central to the NPPF is the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 14 of the NPPF sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development which is the golden thread for both plan making and decision taking.

The NPPF highlights that there are three interrelated dimensions to 'sustainable development':

- **Economic** – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy by ensuring sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation;

- **Social** – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities; and,
- **Environmental** – continuing to protect and enhance the nature, built and historic environment.

Taken together, these dimensions of sustainable development can contribute towards "positive growth" for this and future generations.

The NPPF is clear that these roles should not be considered in isolation, because they are mutually dependant. This is reiterated in Paragraph 8 which states that economic, social and environmental gains "should be sought jointly and simultaneously through the planning system."

Releasing the site from the Green Belt to facilitate new housing development would accord with the guidance contained in the NPPF because:

- Paragraph 7 It would constitute sustainable development and deliver economic, social and environmental benefits which are set out in Section 5 of this Statement;
- Paragraph 14 It would be entirely consistent with the presumption in favour of sustainable development;
- Paragraph 29 41 The site is situated in a sustainable location on the edge of Croft,

which is accessible by a range of sustainable modes of transport and has access to a range of services and facilities. It would boost the supply of housing and provide a deliverable housing site that is available, achievable and viable as demonstrated in Section 6 of this Statement;

- Paragraph 83 & 84 There are exceptional circumstances which justify alteration to the Green Belt in accordance with Chapter 9 of the NPPF. These exceptional circumstances are set out in Section 4 of this Statement; and
- Paragraph 113 It does not entail the development of more valued and important landscapes in accordance with the NPPF.



Development Plan

WBC adopted its Local Plan Core Strategy on 21 July 2014. The document sets out the overarching strategic policies for guiding the location and level of development in the Borough up to 2027. It 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 19 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 2007 as well as reference to 1,100 homes at the Omega Strategy Proposal should be overturned.

WBC subsequently 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 the Borough over the Plan period between 2014 and 2037. This review was underpinned by an evidence base which formed the basis for understanding the future needs of the Borough, including various analyses of the Borough's housing land supply.

Evidence Base Documents

Housing Needs in WBC

Housing need in Warrington is addressed in the Mid Mersey Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) Addendum for Warrington (May 2017). This identifies a housing need of 955 dwellings per annum 2015-2037, which is considerably higher than the adopted Local Plan Core Strategy target of 500 dwellings per year 2006-2027. It also considers housing need implications arising from job growth for Warrington, and provides a revised housing need of 1,113 dwellings per annum over the 20-year Plan period.

Based on the figure of 1,113 dwellings per annum for the period 2017-2037, the estimated housing need in the Borough is approximately 22,260 dwellings. This figure represents the Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) in the Borough.

Housing Supply in WBC

The Urban Capacity Assessment Update published in July 2017 confirms a total urban capacity for 15,429 homes, based upon the findings from the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) published in July 2017.

Whilst WBC has identified an urban capacity of 15,429 dwellings, this is not sufficient to meet the WBC's housing need of 22,260 dwellings as required by the SHMA. Furthermore, a review of some of the SHLAA sites brings into question the deliverability of those which have been deemed 'suitable'. Due to environmental matters and land assembly issues we consider that some sites in WBC's urban capacity figure are not deliverable and as such will not come forward for development. This includes issues surrounding contamination, ownership disputes, hazardous installations, access or ecological issues. As such it is likely that Warrington's urban capacity is overstated as a result of potential deliverability issues, which further reinforces the need for Green Belt release and in particular this site's immediate release from the Green Belt.

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.

Warrington's Urban Capacity

As part of the Local Plan Review, Mickledore was commissioned to review alternative forecasts for housing and employment land and also review historical housing completions. It is noted in the 'Review of Economic Forecasts and Housing Numbers' prepared by Mickledore (October 2016) that DCLG record an average number of housing completions in Warrington of 627 units per annum between 2003-2016 although WBC record an average of 840 units per annum over the same period due to different data sources.

However, WBC's Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) 2015/2016 provides an update on key performance indicators in Warrington during the period 1 April 2015 to the 31 March 2016. The report indicates that 595 net new homes were completed in Warrington, which is considerably less than the 687 completions during 2014/15. Furthermore, the AMR indicates that WBC cannot demonstrate a five-year land supply.

Spatial Distribution

WBC has prepared Area Profiles for the individual parts of the main urban area of Warrington (Central, North, South, East and West) and for each of the outlying settlements. These profiles provided a detailed assessment for the capacity of local schools, health facilities, open space, leisure facilities, community facilities and the transport network assuming that all sites within the urban area are built

out in accordance within the timescales set out in the SHLAA. This then enabled different gross scenarios to be tested to understand the level of growth that existing infrastructure could accommodate, the new infrastructure required to support higher levels of growth and comparison of the growth scenarios against Local Plan objectives.

Three options were defined for the spatial distribution of new development and WBC has selected Option 2 - Focusing Green Belt release adjacent to the main urban area of Warrington, with incremental growth in the outlying settlements as the preferred option. The preferred option defines an approximate number of homes WBC considers can be accommodated by each of the outlying settlements under the 'incremental growth' scenario (option 2). The Green Belt capacity for each of the outlying settlements is indicative and the final numbers will depend on the detailed assessment of potential development sites including a more detailed assessment of the implications for the character of the respective settlements, the permanence of the amended Green Belt boundaries, and transport impacts. The indicative Green Belt capacity for Croft is 60 new dwellings. WBC has undertaken an initial review of each of the Call Sites in terms of the land use and characteristics and Green Belt performance in WBC's Green Belt Assessment.

Green Belt Assessment

In response to the findings of the 2017 SHLAA and SHMA, which indicate that WBC is not currently able to identify sufficient urban land to meet its housing need, WBC published a Green Belt Assessment (Additional Site Assessments of Call for Sites Responses and SHLAA Green Belt Sites) in July 2017. The document provides an assessment of parcels of Green Belt in the Borough against the five purposes of the Green Belt, as set out in the NPPF, in order to enable WBC to consider whether there are 'exceptional circumstances' to justify altering Green Belt boundaries and enable existing Green Belt land to contribute to Warrington's housing land supply.

The site at Heathcroft Stud is identified in the Green Belt Assessment under site reference R18/095. The site is considered to make a 'weak' contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt and states that:

"The site makes a moderate contribution to two purposes, a weak contribution to one, and no contribution to two. In line with the methodology, the site has been judged to make a weak overall contribution. The site supports a moderate-weak degree of openness due to the built form however it has non-durable boundaries and therefore makes a moderate contribution to safeguarding the countryside from

encroachment. The site makes a moderate contribution to assisting in urban regeneration and a weak contribution to preventing towns from merging."

In relation to purpose 3 'to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment', the assessment states:

"The boundaries between the site and the settlement to the west are non-durable consisting of the rear gardens of residential properties on Deacon Close with fences/hedges and a tree lined boundary with the playing field at Croft Primary School to the west. The boundaries between the site and the countryside are of mixed durability, the southern boundary is a hedge lined made footpath which is durable, the northern boundary is a field boundary with intermittent tree line which is not durable and the eastern boundary is an unmarked field boundary which is not durable. These non-durable boundaries are not able to prevent encroachment beyond the site if the site were developed. The existing land use is in part open countryside, with a section of the site in use by Heathcroft Stud which is an equestrian centre. This also provides beneficial uses in terms of outdoor sports and recreation. The site is flat, with low levels of vegetation however has between 20 and 30% built form with low line views in some places albeit restricted in others by the built form.

Thus, the site supports a moderate-weak degree of openness. Overall, the site makes a moderate contribution to safeguarding the countryside from encroachment as it has a moderate-weak degree of openness however has non-durable boundaries and therefore has a moderate role in safeguarding the countryside."

In relation to purpose 5 'to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land', the assessment states:

"The Mid Mersey Housing Market Area has 2.08% brownfield urban capacity for potential development, therefore the parcel makes a moderate contribution to this purpose".

Overall, WBC is considering the site for Green Belt release in order to accommodate future housing requirements.

This Section assesses WBC's evidence base and concludes there is an annual housing need of 1,113 dwellings per annum and that WBC is not able to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply. 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 8,791 homes, in order to meet its housing requirements in the Plan period and produce a plan that is flexible in accordance with the NPPF.

The Council has identified Croft as a sustainable location and as an area for future housing growth. The site constitutes part brownfield, part greenfield land and has been assessed by the Council as making a weak contribution to the Green Belt.

It is therefore well placed to make a positive contribution to Croft and the Borough's housing requirements early on in the plan period.

4.0

The Case for the Removal of the Site from the Green Belt

There are exceptional circumstances for Green Belt release in Warrington as part of WBC's Local Plan Review. To assist the Council in meeting its housing requirement, there is also a detailed case in support of the removal of land at Heathcroft Stud from the Green Belt and allocation for housing.

Demonstrating Exceptional Circumstances for Green Belt Release

The exceptional circumstances which support an alteration to Warrington's Green Belt through WBC's Local Plan Review include:

Warrington's Housing Need

The adopted Core Strategy provided a housing target of 500 dwellings per year. The evidence base for the Local Plan Review indicates that WBC has an OAN of 1,113 dwellings per annum, which equates to 22,260 dwellings over the Plan Period 2017-2037. This OAN target is substantially larger than the Core Strategy target.

The Borough's housing target should only be less than the OAN figure as a result of land supply, constraints and sustainability appraisals. The target may be higher if it takes into account unmet need from other areas.

Affordable Housing Need.

The need to deliver 288 affordable homes per annum in the Borough is established in the 2017 SHMA. The 2015/2016 AMR indicates that there is a chronic lack of new affordable homes, with a shortfall against the requirement of 288 homes of 58 in 2014/15 and 119 in 2015/16. The delivery of sites which are viable, deliverable and available, such as the site at Heathcroft Stud, can significantly contribute to the identified affordable housing needs of the Borough.

Warrington's Urban Capacity

WBC cannot currently demonstrate a five year land supply. Furthermore, WBC has stated 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 8,791 homes. The 8,791 dwelling figure does not take into account unmet housing needs from other areas, or the likelihood that some of the sites identified in the SHLAA will not come forward for development due to lack of deliverability.

It is clear that to meet its OAN, WBC will need to release land from the Green Belt because its urban capacity falls significantly short of its housing requirement.



The Five Purposes of the Green Belt

It is clear, that there are exceptional circumstances for Green Belt release in Warrington in order to ensure that the amount of new homes required are delivered across the Plan period. Bellway Homes and its professional team has assessed the site against the purposes of the Green Belt.

The site represents a logical and appropriate option for Green Belt release to meet the future housing needs of the Borough. In accordance with Paragraph 80 of the NPPF the site:



1. Will not result in unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas

The site is not directly adjacent to the Warrington urban area and therefore will not lead to the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas. Furthermore, the site is surrounded on its western boundary by existing residential development and therefore forms a logical extension to the existing area. As such the site will not result in unrestricted sprawl and will have no contribution to this purpose,

2. Will not cause the merger of neighbouring towns

The functions, separation and context of the wider Green Belt in Warrington will be maintained, without diminishing the distance between the settlement of Culcheth to the north east of the site and Croft. As such the site will not result in the merger of neighbouring towns and will have a weak contribution to this purpose,

3. Will not create unacceptable encroachment into the countryside

The boundaries between the larger parcel of land which includes the site and the countryside consist of Mustard Lane to the north and Lady Lane to the east which are durable boundaries which could prevent encroachment beyond the parcel if it were developed. The development of the site would create a new strengthened long term Green Belt boundary and would align with the established residential area of Croft. Therefore, the site will make a weak contribution to this purpose,

4. Will not impact on the special character of historic towns

Croft is not an historic town and the parcel is not within a Conservation Area. The development of the site would also not impact upon the character of any listed buildings. Therefore, the site makes no contribution to this purpose,

5. Will not discourage urban regeneration

WBC's Local Plan evidence base confirms 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 to meet the Borough's housing needs. Warrington's urban capacity is not sufficient to meet the Borough's housing need and therefore, Green Belt release is required in addition to the urban sites coming forward for housing. The site will not prevent urban regeneration and as such it has a weak contribution to this purpose.

Proposed Alteration of the Green Belt

This Statement has highlighted that there is a large deficiency of housing land supply in the Borough of Warrington. The site at Heathcroft Stud presents a highly sustainable solution which would make a positive contribution to the Borough'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 could deliver the type, quality and quantity of new homes that will support the growth of the Borough over this Plan period. The site has no ownership, covenant or lease constraints and is wholly available, suitable and deliverable in accordance with the requirements of the NPPF.

In terms of the purposes of the Green Belt, it has been demonstrated that the site represents a logical and appropriate option for Green Belt release which would make a positive contribution towards the future housing needs of the Borough.

As such, this Statement proposes the removal of the site at Heathcroft Stud from the Green Belt. The boundaries of the site to be removed are illustrated at Figure 3.



This Section has demonstrated there are exceptional circumstances to alter the Green Belt through this Plan making process. It also sets out an assessment of the site's contribution to the Green Belt against Paragraph 80 of the NPPF and the five purposes of including land in the Green Belt. In summary, the assessment concludes that the site:

- Will not result in unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas – no contribution;
- Will not cause the merger of neighbouring towns – weak contribution;
- Will not create unacceptable encroachment into the countryside – weak contribution;
- Will not impact on the special character of historic towns – no contribution; and
- Will not discourage urban regeneration – weak contribution.

Overall the site makes a weak contribution to the Green Belt and as such is a sustainable and logical option for removal from the Green Belt and allocation for housing in the WBC Local Plan Review.

5.0

A Sustainable Development

The overarching policy objective of the NPPF is the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 6 of the NPPF highlights that the policies in Paragraphs 18-219, when taken as a whole, constitute the Government's view of what sustainable development means in practice.

The NPPF at Paragraph 7 indicates that there are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. An assessment of the site against the three dimensions of sustainable development as defined in the NPPF is provided opposite.

Economic Benefits

Development at the site will contribute to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy. In particular, the delivery of new homes at the site will bring:



A significant amount of new investment into the local area through the construction process;



Circa £140,361 of Council Tax per annum in perpetuity following the scheme's completion;



Significant additional spending annually in the local economy from the site's new residents. This could support full time and part time jobs locally;



It is anticipated the proposed development will take around 2-3 years to be constructed (assuming a development rate of 35 units per year);



The potential to provide apprenticeships and training opportunities with Bellway Homes and its suppliers for residents in the local area;



Circa £801,133 million through the Government's New Homes Bonus scheme over 3 years, to be spent by WBC at its discretion; and



Contribution to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy via the provision of much needed additional open market and affordable homes in the Borough.

Social Benefits

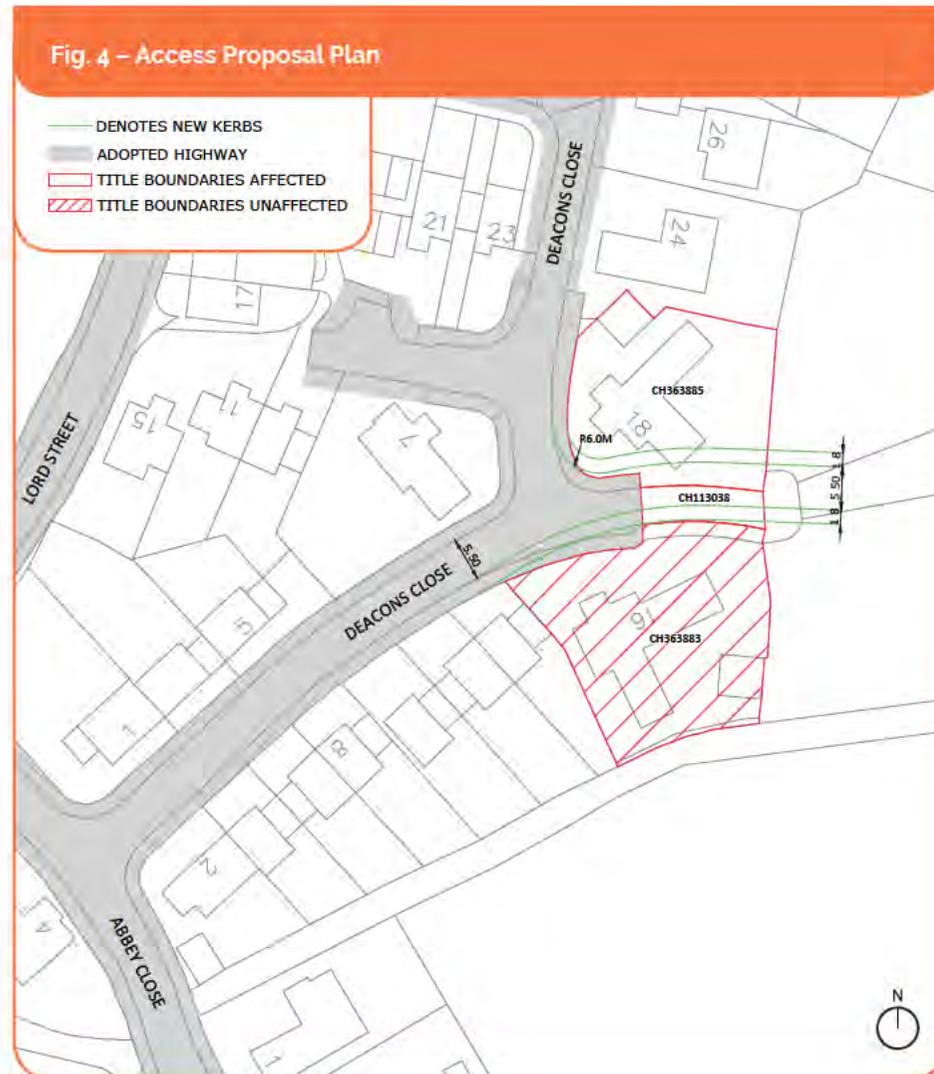
A key objective of the social role of sustainable development is to support a strong, vibrant and healthy community. The allocation of the site for housing and the development of new dwellings will provide:

- A sustainable development with good access to shops, services and transport links;
- New residents who 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 Croft;
- Affordable housing of the range and type to meet the identified need, as required by the Borough's 2017 SHMA, which identified a lack of new affordable homes across the Borough as a whole; and
- Landscape enhancements and public open space that integrates with the wider Green Belt to the north and east of the site.

Specifically, delivering housing at the site would contribute to WBC's housing land supply. In line with paragraph 47 of the NPPF, the Local Authority should seek to 'boost significantly the supply of housing'. The site provides an opportunity to develop a sustainably located site which will contribute to meeting the Borough's housing land supply, particularly over the next five years. It is evident that WBC is not able to maintain a five year housing land supply at present and also requires additional Green Belt sites to be identified for housing allocation as part of their Local Plan Review.

As demonstrated there are significant social benefits that will be delivered by the proposed housing development in accordance with the social dimension of sustainable development as defined in the NPPF.





Environmental Benefits and Considerations

Initial assessments of the key environmental and technical considerations have been undertaken by a team of professional consultants to underpin the deliverability of the site moving forward. If Officers would like to see these assessments, they can be sent upon request. More detailed assessments will be undertaken if the site is removed from the Green Belt and prior to the submission of a detailed planning application submitted. The key considerations are as follows:

Transport and Access

Deacons Close on the eastern boundary is considered to provide suitable vehicle access to the site from the main street running through Croft. The existing access will be improved to ensure that it will form an adoptable highway access into the site. Figure 4 shows the access proposal plan. The main vehicular access can accommodate a formal 5.5 metres wide carriageway and footways on both sides of 2 metres wide. All of this geometry can be accommodated within either the site boundary, land controlled by Bellway, or within the current limits of adopted highway.

The existing use of the site generates traffic throughout the day and also during the weekend. The site is currently operating as a commercial livery and stud farm that regularly hosts show jumping training events and veterinary clinics.

Regular and frequent HGV movements are generated by the existing use of the site and these will be removed from the local highway network with the proposed residential development of the site. This will ensure a substantial benefit for those residents living close by on Deacons Close. Furthermore, the current existing use of the site generates visitors, staff, horse boxes and delivery vehicles which will also be removed.

A technical note has been prepared on transport by Croft Transport Solutions which has underpinned this Development Statement. In terms of offsite impact, the technical note demonstrates the development proposals are likely to generate in the region of 50 to 60 vehicular trips in the two busiest hours of the day which are likely to be between 0800 and 0900 hours and 1700 to 1800 hours. The housing development will also remove the heavy and intense traffic associated with the existing equestrian centre.

It is not considered that there are any significant highways or access constraints that would prevent the site coming forward for development. In addition, ongoing surveys are being undertaken to advise the future development at the site.

Landscape and Visual Assessment

The site lies within the Landscape Character Type 'Undulating Enclosed Farmland' and within sub areas 'Croft' and 'Winwick, Culcheth, Glazebrook and Rixton'. Furthermore, the site sits within the National Character Area 'Mersey Valley'. A Landscape and Visual Appraisal has underpinned this Development Statement which assesses the overall landscape effect of the proposals as negligible upon the Mersey Valley NCA.

The site is not prominent within the wider landscape and there are a number of landscape features which could assist with the successful integration into the settlement edge character. A sensitively well designed scheme would not harm the wider rural landscape as it will not be highly visible or result in a significant change to key elements of the landscape characteristics.

There are no significant landscape or visual constraints that would preclude the development of the site, subject to appropriate massing, design, layout and design measures at the planning application stage.

Ecology and Trees

The site is not located within any designated ecological areas. A site of importance for nature conservation, known as Croft Grassland is located approximately 0.2km to the south of the site. However given the existing structure of Heathcroft Stud stables already at the site and the hedgerows along the southern boundary of the site, it is not considered that Croft Grassland will be adversely affected by the proposals.

The site comprises pastureland, which is flat in topography and rectangular in shape. It is bound by minimal vegetation of limited trees and hedgerows. Some hedgerows and trees also bisect the site. There are no Tree Preservation Orders that affect the site or nearby surrounding area. A future planning application would be supported by a Phase 1 Ecological Assessment and any relevant protected species surveys. Furthermore, all ecological features would be protected by suitable standoff distances and enhancement measures as necessary.

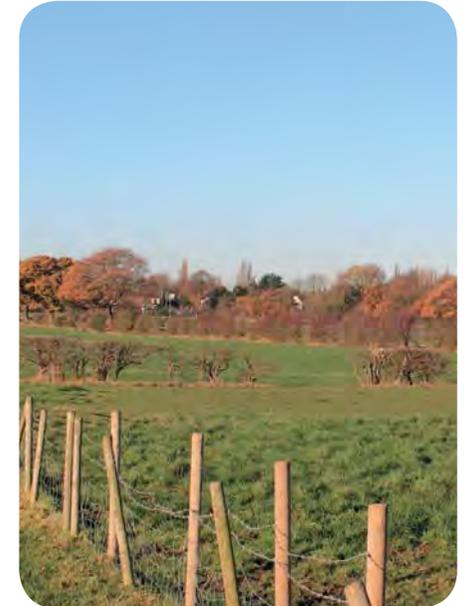
Initial assessments have indicated that the existing stables could have bat potential. Furthermore, the hedgerows and trees within and surrounding the site have potential for nesting birds and the brook along the eastern boundary could possibly

contain water voles or rats. Further surveys will be undertaken to establish the extent and level of mitigation recommended to accommodate any future development.

Subject to further surveys and the implementation of best practice mitigation measures, it is not considered that any ecological constraints would prevent the proposed development coming forward.

Ground Conditions

There are no active or historic landfills located on the site, according to the Environment Agency's Landfill Map. In line with the Coal Authority's mapping service, there are no records of mining activity or previously worked areas on the site. Croft is located within a Coal Mining Reporting Area which is used to determine whether a coal mining report is required for property transactions and the conveyance process. The site is currently developed in the southern parcel which comprises Heathcroft Stud stables and undeveloped land across the remaining site having historically been used for agricultural purposes. As such, there are limited potential sources of contamination. It is not considered that there are any significant contamination constraints that would prevent the site coming forward for development.



Flood Risk and Drainage

The Environment Agency Flood Map indicates the site lies within Flood Zone 1 which means there is less than a 0.1% (1 in 1000) chance of flooding occurring each year. Furthermore, a brook is located along the eastern boundary of the site.

The site is considered suitable for residential development in flood risk terms and appropriate sustainable drainage measures could be implemented to maintain existing runoff rates and suitably mitigate the flood risk on the site. A Flood Risk Assessment would be submitted with a planning application and it is not considered that the site would give rise to any increase in flood risk elsewhere.

Air Quality

WBC has declared two Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) and the site is not located within, or in close proximity to them.

The construction and future occupation of the site will consider the impacts of the proposals on the local air quality in the Borough, 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.



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.

The delivery of new homes at Heathcroft Stud would make a positive contribution towards meeting the housing needs of the Borough. A professional team of technical experts has been appointed to underpin the relevant assessments and support the delivery of the site moving forward.

6.0

A Deliverable Housing Site

The NPPF aims to deliver a wide choice of high quality homes and boost significantly the supply of housing. It requires Local Planning Authorities to use their evidence base to ensure that the Local Plan meets the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the market area. It is essential that Local Authorities identify deliverable sites in the right location to ensure that the Council meets its identified housing targets. An assessment of the site's deliverability has been undertaken against the tests set out at footnote 11 of paragraph 47 of the NPPF.

To be considered deliverable, sites should:

Be Available

A site is considered available where there is confidence that there are no legal or ownership problems. The site is within the control of a major house builder as Bellway Homes has secured legal agreements with the site's landowners. If the site were to be released from the Green Belt and allocated for housing, Bellway Homes' aspiration is to develop the site immediately to deliver sufficient homes to meet the WBC's aspirations for Croft in full. This in turn would contribute considerably to the Borough's 5 year housing land supply and deliver highly anticipated new homes early in the Plan period. This commitment to delivery is demonstrated by Bellway Homes' track record of the efficient delivery of high quality housing schemes across Warrington and the North West.



Be Suitable

A site is considered suitable for housing development if it offers a suitable location for development and would contribute to the creation of sustainable, mixed communities; and

The site is suitable for housing 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 Croft residential area;
- Could utilise existing infrastructure surrounding the site. There are also no utilities, 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 from Deacons Close. In addition, existing bus stops are located close to the site on Mustard Lane;
- Is situated within a local highway network that has the capacity to accommodate the development;
- Will deliver new open space for use by residents and the local community which could link with existing recreation networks and informal open space in the surrounding area; and
- Is part brownfield, part greenfield and is sustainably located close to local services and facilities.

The site is therefore considered to be suitable in accordance with NPPF requirements.

Be Achievable

A site is considered achievable for development where there is a reasonable prospect that housing will be developed on the site within five years. This is a judgement about the economic viability of a site and the capacity of the developer to compete and sell housing over a certain period taking into account market factors, cost factors and delivery factors.

The delivery of new homes at the site would make a positive contribution towards meeting the housing needs of the Borough. A full assessment of the site constraints has been undertaken which illustrates that delivery of the entire site is achievable and deliverable. In addition, a professional team of technical experts has been appointed to underpin this assessment and support the delivery of the site. Where any potential constraints are identified, Bellway Homes has considered the necessary mitigation measures and required investment to overcome any deliverability barriers.

This Section has demonstrated the site is deliverable, available, suitable and achievable for development and that it is under the control of an experienced house builder who can demonstrate an excellent track record in delivering new housing across the Warrington and the North West. Bellway Homes is fully committed to bringing forward the site for residential development.



7.0

A High Quality Development

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

Vision

Bellway Homes' vision of the site seeks to achieve the following goals:



- Delivery of quality new family homes which make best use of the land;
- Create a choice of housing with a mix of house types, tenures and sizes to meet identified local needs;
- Respect the character of the site and the setting adjacent to the Green Belt;
- Provide high quality, accessible, green space for the benefit of existing and future residents;
- Facilitate cycle and pedestrian links to community facilities and green spaces;
- Invest in the community with the creation of additional direct and indirect employment both during construction and after the development;
- Enhance the ecological value and biodiversity of the existing vegetation within the site and along the site boundaries;
- Create a safe and desirable place to live with a safe and attractive environment that builds upon the strength of the local community;
- Provide high quality design which will complement and enhance the existing environment and create a good standard of amenity and living environment; and
- Protect existing residential amenity.

Bellway Homes has developed a masterplan vision for the site which meets the key goals for the site. It demonstrates how the design and form of development will respond sensitively to the characteristics of the site and the wider area. It is intended that these ideas will evolve further in consultation with the local community and key stakeholders at the appropriate time.

Fig. 5 – Site Masterplan

-  Site boundary
-  Proposed development platforms
-  Tree lined avenue
-  Primary Movement Route
-  Secondary Movement Route
-  Public realm / green corridor
-  New landscaping
-  Existing trees
-  Access
-  Bus stop
-  Careful consideration given to relationship between proposed development and existing settlement
-  Views out of site
-  Existing public right of way

Improved access in accordance with detailed information provided by Croft Transport Solutions



Site Considerations and Opportunities

The development vision derives from a careful analysis of the site's characteristics, its context and the opportunities and considerations which arise and have been outlined earlier in this Statement.

The site has an existing access point off Deacons Close on the eastern boundary which is considered to provide suitable vehicle access to the site from the main street running through Croft.

An existing public right of way adjoins the southern boundary of the site, travelling west to east providing an opportunity to extend the existing pedestrian and cycle network to the site.

The brook and distinct hedgerows along the eastern boundary have the potential to become a clearly defined, defensible Green Belt boundary between Croft and the wider countryside whilst also including the site as part of the residential area of Croft. The same applies to the northern and southern boundary of the site which comprise a clear hedgerow and tree border.

A robust site analysis has been carried out to determine the principle considerations and opportunities that will underpin the development vision. The key considerations and opportunities presented by the site include:

- The need to complement the character of the surrounding area through appropriate development densities, street scenes and housing types;
- Safeguarding the existing landscape structure and connecting the established vegetation with new on site green corridors with multifunctional use;
- The need to provide an attractive infill to the residential area of Croft and an appropriate Green Belt boundary to the wider area;
- Enhance the connectivity between the site and its surroundings in order to promote sustainable local movement networks for both pedestrians and cyclists; and
- The need to retain the public right of way to the south of the site.

There is the potential to develop a high quality, characterful residential scheme with a coherent landscape structure which conserves the natural assets as well as creating a framework for recreation and extending the existing pedestrian and cycle network.

The masterplan illustrates how the site could be developed to ensure that the objectives illustrated by the key concepts can be met. The proposed Masterplan is set out at Figure 5.



A high quality residential scheme is proposed which could deliver the following key features:

- Delivery of sufficient market and affordable housing to meet WBC's aspirations for Croft in full;
- Provision of a high quality, centralised public open space;
- Enhanced landscaping within the site, especially along the site's boundaries;
- Retention of the existing public right of way to the south of the site;

- New pedestrian and cycle links to connect the proposed green spaces with the wider footpath network within the site and the surrounding area; and
- Retention of views into and out of the site.

The masterplan demonstrates that the site is capable of delivering a high-quality scheme which will complement its setting and deliver a range of attractive benefits.

8.0

Summary

This Development Statement has demonstrated that WBC has not identified enough additional units to be released from the Green Belt in order to meet its annual housing need. Furthermore, WBC is not able to demonstrate a five-year supply of housing land. It is therefore apparent WBC needs to release land 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.

Summary

The site at Heathcroft Stud 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 Plan period and sets out the exceptional circumstances that support an alteration to the Warrington Green Belt. The development of the site could deliver new homes of the type, quantity and quality of open market and affordable housing that will positively contribute to meeting the future growth needs of the Borough, without undermining the core purposes of the Green Belt.

In summary, this Development Statement has illustrated that the site at Heathcroft Stud would:

- Positively contribute to the identified need for new housing in the Borough over the Plan period, based on WBC's Local Plan Review evidence base and any subsequent uplift in this figure to account for affordability issues;
 - Create a range and mix of housing types that will make a positive contribution to the Borough's housing requirements by providing a mix of types and tenures of dwellings, including new affordable homes;
 - Be available, suitable, achievable and viable for housing development in accordance with national planning policy;
 - Generate growth and provide significant benefits to the local economy including the creation of new jobs, construction spend and investment generated by new residents;
 - Deliver an overall development vision for the site that provides a well designed and sympathetic development in a sustainable location in Croft; and
 - Sensitively integrate with its surrounding landscape features, delivering a strengthened Green Belt boundary to the north, east and south of the site.
- The site at Heathcroft Stud can support WBC in planning for its future development needs and achieving long term sustainable development. The site is appropriate for Green Belt release and allocation for housing because it is well contained, has physical and defensible boundaries, and will not impact on the core purposes of the Green Belt. The site forms a logical extension to the residential area and can demonstrate the exceptional circumstances that exist to justify an alteration to the Green Belt in the Borough. We have undertaken our own assessment of the site's contribution to the Green Belt and conclude that it makes a weak contribution as it:
1. Will not result in unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas – no contribution;
 2. Will not cause the merger of neighbouring towns – weak contribution;
 3. Will not create unacceptable encroachment into the countryside – weak contribution;
 4. Will not impact on the special character of historic towns – no contribution; and
 5. Will not discourage urban regeneration – weak contribution.

It is clear WBC needs further Green Belt release to accommodate its housing needs as it is not possible to locate all of its housing in the existing urban areas and greenfield sites outside of the Green Belt. This Development Statement establishes and reinforces the need to release sites from the Green Belt. The site at Heathcroft Stud can deliver housing within the next 5 years and should be released now.

Bellway Homes is committed to working collaboratively with WBC and key stakeholders to ensure the Borough's housing need is met in a sensitive and sustainable manner, and seeks support for an alteration to Warrington's Green Belt and the allocation of the site for high quality new housing.





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Development Statement

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