

FIDDLER'S FERRY POWER STATION REGENERATION VISION





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Fiddler's Ferry Regeneration Vision

This Vision Masterplan for Fiddler's Ferry demonstrates the deliverability of an exciting new regeneration project at the site of the former SSE power station just outside Warrington on the banks of the River Mersey. The regeneration of the Fiddler's Ferry site will deliver much needed private and affordable homes and new employment opportunities together with a substantive amount of public open space and parkland.

The masterplan demonstrates that the proposed development can be consistent with sustainable planning principles that would enable the development of this former power station site to be sensitively placed in the landscape and well connected to the local transport network including the impressive existing footpath and cycleway network of the Trans Pennine Way, linking Widnes and Warrington. Over 50% of the Fiddler's Ferry Masterplan area will be devoted to green infrastructure provision.

The site will undergo major remediation works which will see the demolition and removal of the power station and its eight cooling towers that has dominated the local skyline for generations. In its place will arise a new employment hub and two new urban villages set within an extensive parkland landscape, that will engage sensitively with the Mersey riverside and link with the Widnes Waterfront area.

Introduction

The purpose of this masterplan is to demonstrate and illustrate the deliverability of the impressive regeneration project at Fiddler's Ferry. The site represents one of the largest brownfield regeneration projects in the Mersey region on a sheltered and visually enclosed site on the western edge of Warrington. The vision presented here will inform Warrington Borough Council and its immediate neighbour, Halton Borough Council, about the development potential of the site, illustrating its deliverability and regeneration potential. The masterplan sets out how the site can deliver a mixed-use housing and employment project spanning the Warrington Local Plan period up to 2036.

The document briefly describes the site and its location and sets out the planning context for the proposals. A summary of the physical attributes of the site is presented highlighting the constraints and opportunities that have been considered in the proposals. It then sets out the proposals in the form of a design concept and Illustrative masterplan and describes these in a concise manner.

Site Location and Context

The former Fiddler's Ferry power station site represents a significant opportunity for urban regeneration, forming a strategic brownfield site between Liverpool and Manchester to the west of Warrington. The plan opposite illustrates this strategically important location and context.

The site has good access to the regional highway network and redevelopment proposals outlined in this document will benefit the wider community. This will include new homes, supporting mixed uses, and employment opportunities, together with extensive public open space.

The former power station site is located to the south of A562 Widnes Road. Together with associated land, the site comprises a total of 324 hectares, extending south beyond the St Helen's Canal and the Widnes to Warrington Railway Line, to the River Mersey. The railway and canal lie outside of the red line boundary, forming a wide corridor running east-west, creating two large site areas north and south linked by a bridge crossing over the railway. A description of the boundaries is given in the following section of this document.

The western boundary to the site also delineates the administrative boundary between Halton Borough and Warrington Borough. A small triangular piece of land to the south of the railway and on the foreshore of the Mersey forming the western-most part of the site, lies within Halton, whilst the majority of the site lies within Warrington Borough.

The existing employment areas at Shell Green, and Moss Bank slightly further west, are located immediately to the west of the site and include a number of industrial units including a chemical plant adjoining the boundary. The area known as Widnes Waterfront extends to the southwestern boundary of the site. With built up uses to the western boundary forming part of Widnes, the former power station infrastructure to the north of the railway therefore represents a built extension to the existing settlement area of Widnes.

To the north, large arable fields characterise the Mersey Valley landscape, with small pockets of development, predominantly in the form of farms and the small hamlet at Cuedley Cross on the Widnes Road opposite the former

power station site. To the west, True Fit Golf Centre and golf course provide a significant green buffer to Warrington lying further to the east.

To the south and east of the main northern site, the Fiddler's Ferry extension to the St.Helen's Canal runs east-west, with a small pocket of development around the canal lock area including a sailing club and boat yard, commercial units, and the Fiddler's Ferry Tavern. This forms a popular stopping point and destination along the Trans Pennine Way trail. The trail itself connects Warrington and Widnes and can be readily connected to the site via new footpath and cycle links as part of future planning approvals.



Aerial Image of Site

Planning Context

The redevelopment of the former Fiddler's Ferry power station represents a major opportunity for a mixed-use employment and housing project on one of the largest brownfield sites in the region. Fiddler's Ferry will be developed as a sustainable mixed-use neighbourhood to the south-west of Warrington adjacent to the borough boundary with Halton and the Widnes Waterfront. The intention is to create an attractive, well-designed and distinctive place set within a strong landscape framework of open spaces and parkland. The area will be well served by new community infrastructure with a network of sustainable transport links maximising travel by walking, cycling and public transport utilising the route of the Trans Pennine Way.

The former power station site extends north and south of the St. Helen's Canal and Widnes to Warrington railway line comprising some 324 ha (800 acres) accessed from the A562 Widnes Road. This is an integrated planning unit comprising the former power station site, engineered ash lagoons and ancillary operational space.

The site has been subject to detailed engagement with Warrington Borough Council on its inclusion with the Warrington Local Plan 2021-38. Working in partnership with the Planning Authority, a masterplan has been prepared which has the capacity to deliver a minimum of 1,760 homes and c89 Ha (4 million sq ft) of net employment land delivered over two phases. This is described later in this document. It will provide a high-quality environmental setting and enable development to be comprehensively planned with new homes and employment land phased in accordance with the delivery of wide-ranging supporting infrastructure.

The housing and employment provision will be delivered largely within the Local Plan period. It will make a major contribution to the Borough's development needs, predominantly using previously developed land and ensuring the permanence of the revised Greenbelt boundaries.

The infrastructure requirements for Fiddler's Ferry will be kept under review throughout the Plan period. The detailed infrastructure requirements for development later in the Plan Period and, if necessary, beyond the Plan Period, will be confirmed through future review of the Local Plan.

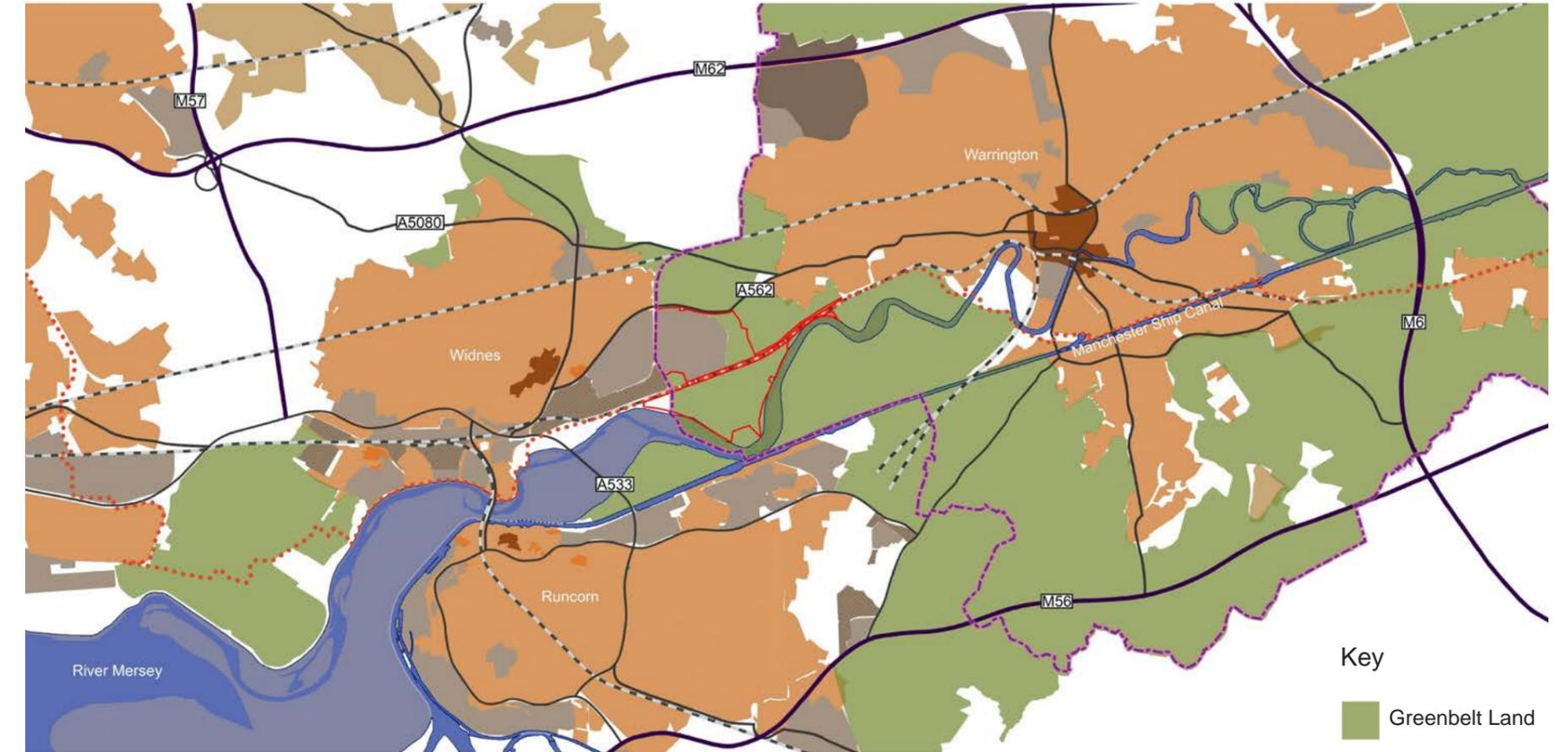


Diagram of the Adopted Local Plan Greenbelt

Site Description

The existing site plan opposite illustrates the site boundary in relation to the wider context. The northern boundary is delineated by the A562 Widnes Road. Leading from Widnes Road, Marsh Lane delineates the north-eastern boundary, north of the railway. On the other side of the lane towards Widnes Road is a small farm, Whitley Brook Farm, with associated buildings, and the golf course to the southeast. The golf course wraps around the farm complex and extends eastwards towards Warrington.

The site extends eastwards along the northern side of the Fiddler's Ferry extension to the St. Helen's Canal, which has become gradually infilled and overgrown to the west of Fiddler's Ferry boatyard lock as it passes between the boundaries of the former power station site. The site also includes a small parcel of land to the south of the canal, which includes the pump station on the Mersey at Ferry Meadows, previously used to pump cooling water for the power station. The river Mersey and railway line corridor delineates the entire boundary of the site to the south of the railway line, including an area also known as Cuerdley Marsh. As above, the north-western boundary is delineated by the existing employment area at Shell Green.

The site to the north of the railway line (the northern site) is currently dominated by the former power station infrastructure forming a 'power island', with its eight cooling towers, massive turbine hall, substation and numerous buildings and equipment in the form of conveyors, pipework and operational and administrative buildings. The site also encompasses welfare uses for former employees, including a sports pitch and angling lake to the north.

To the west of the 'power island' is a large coal storage area, or coal pad, with a rail loop connecting to the main line. The connection to the main line encompasses a number of rail sidings and other rail infrastructure. Coal has now been removed, leaving an extensive hard standing area. Separating the 'power island' from this former coal pad area is the Vyrnwy Aqueduct corridor - a wide green space that is currently farmed at its northern end and overgrown with scrub planting further south. This green corridor is also crossed by various power lines and associated pylons emanating from the National Grid substation.

To the north and east of the power island and welfare facilities, are fields in agricultural use. These form part of the site, and the three large fields to the east gently fall towards the eastern boundary and Marsh Lane.

The main area of site to the south (the southern site), delineated by the railway corridor and Mersey, is artificially elevated above the Mersey following the creation of large lagoons related to the water-cooling infrastructure and ash deposition. The Vyrnwy Aqueduct roughly 'divides' the southern site into two large triangular parts, with the aqueduct corridor itself running in a wide shallow valley down to the Mersey, where it passes underneath the river.

The large lagoon to the west of the aqueduct corridor is being used for ash extraction and is an extensive black ash area without vegetation. To the west and south of this are relatively steep vegetated embankments leading down to the Mersey foreshore, with views along the river towards the Mersey Gateway Bridge and south and west towards the wooded river edge surrounding Runcorn and the Manchester Ship Canal on the other side of the river. The foreshore also forms part of the site.

The lagoons on the east side of the Vyrnwy Aqueduct corridor are delineated by concrete and hard surfaced tracks and currently have an engineered appearance. Surrounding the lagoons on the embankments and unused areas, scrub planting has grown up over the years 'greening' the environment, whilst some reed beds and planting has grown on the foreshore of the lagoons in areas.



Photo of drainage water feature on site



Photo of eastern fields on the northern site



Photo of St Helen's Canal and railway corridor



Photo of Fiddler's Ferry railway bridge



Photo of farmed northern end of the Vyrnwy Aqueduct corridor



Photo of National Grid Sub-Station



Photo of a water lagoon



Photo of a track leading around a lagoon



Photo of the coal pad



Photo of the salt marsh and river view from the site



Photo of the ash lagoon currently under extraction

Site Analysis - Constraints and Opportunities

The site by nature is complex in terms of physical characteristics and has been subject to extensive surveys and analysis in 2021.

The following section provides a concise summary of the key issues relating to the site. SLR Consulting Limited has provided technical expertise in relation to planning, transport, landscape, masterplanning and urban design. SLR (HFL) Consulting has also undertaken a health and safety risk assessment relating to utilities and surrounding land uses. Arcadis UK Limited has provided technical input on all other matters relating to the environmental constraints, including ecology, heritage, geo-environmental, flood risk and drainage and utilities, together with specialist engineering services relating to the lagoons (including ash lagoons), railways, and the railway bridge crossing. Zetica Limited has also undertaken a UXO (Unexploded Ordnance) risk assessment.

These detailed environmental and technical assessments have informed the preparation of the vision masterplan and will support future planning applications for the site.

Access

A preliminary highways and transport review to inform the masterplanning process has been undertaken, including engagement with the Local Planning Authority. The Fiddler's Ferry site lies some 4 miles (6.5 kilometres) to the west of Warrington town centre and 3 miles (5 kilometres) to the west of Widnes town centre. The principal road access to the site is the A562 Widnes Road, which runs along the northern boundary, from which a traffic signal controlled junction provides the main point of access. Marsh Lane is also a minor road running along the eastern boundary, and there is a commercial access road to the west, known as Johnson's Lane. There is, in addition, a footpath and cycleway route that runs on an east-west alignment through the centre of the site, which is identified as part of the long-distance Trans-Pennine Trail route.

All vehicular access is taken from the traffic signal-controlled junction on the A562 Widnes Road, located at approximately the mid-point of this site frontage. An historic rail link exists from the railway line into the coal marshalling area

that is located in the western part of the site, but this has not been operational for a number of years. Access to the southern area of the overall power station site, is taken by way of an overbridge, which also accommodates a number of pipelines.

The access strategy for the redeveloped power station site will follow the following principles:

- The vehicular access will continue to be taken by way of the A562 Widnes Road, and the existing signalised junction will be upgraded to serve as a main site access, either in its current signalised form or a roundabout, depending upon the requirements of the layout and overall development scheme. Additional access points, again either as traffic signals or roundabouts as necessary, can be created onto this road and will link internally to enable suitable circulation for the development layout. These will segregate residential and commercial traffic and will enable internal access and circulation by the bus services that will be serving the site in future, as well as suitable access to all areas by emergency vehicles. Additional access for emergency vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians, may be taken from Marsh Lane to the east or Johnson's Lane to the west;
- The existing overbridge of the railway line and canal will be upgraded or replaced as necessary to create sufficient capacity for the level of development to be provided to the south of the site; and
- An integral part of the strategy for accessing the site by non-car modes will be promotion of the linkage from the site onto the existing cycleway and footpath that runs along the canal towpath – the Trans Pennine Way trail. This route will offer a direct, level and high-grade access to the town centres of Warrington to the east and Widnes to the west, free from traffic. The upgrade of the access points from the A562 Widnes Road will also incorporate suitable provision of cyclists, pedestrians and bus routes as necessary.

Traffic modeling that has been undertaken to assess the off-site and wider impact of traffic generated by the redevelopment of the site has identified a series of junctions for which infrastructure improvements will be required. These have

been assessed by the Local Authority and such works will be secured through the development process as part of the delivery of the redevelopment scheme.

Landscape and Visual

A Landscape and Visual Appraisal of the site and its wider context has been undertaken. The visual characteristics of the site and surrounding area vary and are strongly influenced by the pattern of vegetation and the terrain. The visual characteristics of the agricultural land to the north of the site is generally quite open, with large field compartments and limited landscape structure. By contrast, the area south of the Widnes Road (A562), including the existing power station and fields to the east, is more enclosed by tracts of woodland and the landform, which dips towards the Mersey Estuary.



Photo of Fiddler's Ferry marina

Moving further southwards, the next noticeable transition occurs when meeting the banks of the estuary with the area of open water and associated flood plain allowing more open views. The part of the site that lies to the south of the St. Helen's Canal is comprised of bunded lagoons that rise above the surrounding marshes and intertidal mud flats, so while the areas within them are well screened; their profile is generally consistent with the flat and relatively open nature of the river corridor.

The area to the east of the 'power island' on the northern site, together with the whole of the southern site, is currently in Greenbelt. In order to deliver much needed housing and additional employment land, some of this Greenbelt land will be required for development purposes and therefore would be removed from the Greenbelt via a revised Local Plan allocation. The characteristics of the site and surrounding context mean that the parts of the site that fall within the Greenbelt are generally well screened; particularly the areas where development is being proposed. These characteristics therefore increase the capacity of the landscape to accommodate development while not materially altering its performance as part of the Greenbelt in maintaining a visual landscape 'gap' between Warrington and Widnes. This gap also includes the golf course and fields further to the east on the edge of Warrington. The development proposals seek to bolster this gap by including an area of parkland or public open space between the proposed development and golf course. This would preserve an area of the Greenbelt within the site and include additional tree buffer planting.

The current power station site falls outside the Greenbelt with an existing allocation for employment together with a proposed extension to the 'employment' land use, forming a logical progression of the neighbouring industrial development that wraps around the south-eastern edge of Widnes.

While the proposals would undoubtedly have a direct effect caused by the loss of a discreet area of land currently in agricultural use on the site to the east of the power island, this is an area that is, and would continue to be influenced by adjacent industrial development to the west but is also well screened from the surrounding landscape. As such, the wider perception caused by the loss of this area of countryside on site would be limited. The proposals also seek to

retain the most valuable natural assets as shown on the Illustrative Masterplan in the next section of this document, which includes the retained woodland to the north, together with an enhanced landscape buffer around the periphery.

The southern part of the site falls within Greenbelt and is mostly comprised of the former lagoons and the ash tipping area. The engineered landforms have been defined as 'previously developed land' for the purposes of the Landscape and Visual Assessment. These areas do form an important part of the wider river corridor, and the outer edges of the site that include intertidal areas; marshland and floodplain would be unaffected by the proposals. The eastern part of the southern site would also be enhanced and has been kept free of development through the creation of an extensive public open space and wildlife area.

The overall pattern of development to the south of the St. Helen's Canal will therefore be concentrated in the area that is at present used for ash processing and extraction which has a much lower landscape value than the lagoons to the east of the aqueduct. This sensitive approach to the design would minimise disturbance of more valued aspects of the site and maximise the opportunity presented by the higher level of visual mitigation provided by the surrounding bunds and vegetation around the tip area. Overall, this approach would ensure that development within the site would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Greenbelt than the existing development, nor cause substantial harm to the openness of the Greenbelt, where the development would re-use previously developed land.

Overall, the development proposals are very unlikely to reduce the apparent gap between the nearby settlements of Warrington and Widnes or alter the perceived settlement pattern. This is principally because the site benefits from a substantial tract of Greenbelt that falls outside the site boundary and would preserve the key characteristics of the southern site, benefiting from the robust and well-established landscape structure that these provide. The area east of the aqueduct and to the south of the railway would remain undeveloped, retaining an extensive physical 'green' gap. These factors mean that the proposed development is unlikely to be seen as altering the separation between, and the pattern of the settlements, of Widnes and Warrington.



Photo of eastern fields on the northern site



Plan showing Landscape Constraints and Opportunities

Key Site Views



Photo of view taken from Mowcroft Lane, to the north of the site



Photo of view taken from Penketh Reach, to the east of the site



Photo of the view taken from South bank of Mersey, to the south of the site

Ecology

Ecological surveys have been undertaken on the site. Together with the landscape review, this has informed the masterplanning process and identified areas suitable for development, areas that need to be either protected for biodiversity and areas that can be brought forward for new parkland and recreational uses.

The site falls within the Impact Risk Zone of the Mersey Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest, Special Protection Area and Ramsar site and the site is potentially functionally linked to these designated sites.

Three Local Nature Reserves and 39 Local Wildlife Sites are located within 2km of the site. Of these, three Local Wildlife Sites are included within the site and two are adjacent to its boundary.

Within the site there are multiple areas recognised as priority habitat listed under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, including coastal saltmarsh and deciduous broadleaved woodland. Additionally, the site supports rare and diverse habitats including unimproved neutral grassland, native hedgerows, swamp and large areas of open standing water. Lesser Spearwort, a species listed as vulnerable, and the non-native invasive species Giant Hogweed, Japanese Knotweed and Indian Balsam have been confirmed to occur on site.

The site has also been confirmed to support, or likely supports, protected and /or notable invertebrates, fish, amphibians (including great crested newt), reptiles, breeding and overwintering birds, roosting and foraging / commuting bats, otter, water vole, badger and other mammals.

This is not surprising bearing in mind the scale of the site and its context, which includes the foreshore to the Mersey, lagoons and peripheral areas of the site which have been relatively unmanaged and used as foraging routes.

As such, the masterplan proposes development on the 'power island', the former coal storage area, and on the ash tipping area on the southern site. These are already classified as developed areas and the proposal is to redevelop

these for alternative uses. The area to the north alongside the Widnes Road and to the east encompasses predominantly fields with low quality and 'gappy' hedgerows and the sports pitches. Due to relatively intense agricultural activity, these areas have relatively low ecological value, and the proposals include these areas for development.

In seeking to mitigate the loss of green fields, a new woodland belt is proposed along the northern boundary which will provide connectivity for wildlife east-west, connecting the retained woodland area to the north-east and the green link of the north-south Vyrnwy Aqueduct corridor. Peripheral edges within the site along the canal and railway will also be retained as woodland belts where possible, whilst the aqueduct corridor will be managed and promoted as a wildlife and open space corridor.

Within both of the residential parcels, and around their periphery, large green spaces and tree planting is proposed alongside balancing basins which can also provide new wetland habitats. It is envisaged for example, that the number of new trees planted with the redevelopment scheme will be in excess of those lost through development, including those lost by necessity for new access proposals.

In addition, the retention and enhancement of much of the southern site as green space, with the lagoons and foreshore forming an extensive wildlife and parkland area, will provide opportunities for significant biodiversity gains as part of any future planning application proposals.

Heritage

A series of archaeological and heritage constraints principally dating from the Medieval and Post-Medieval periods have been identified in the footprint of the site, although consideration of other earlier periods in history cannot be discounted at this stage. Prior to the construction of the power station, starting in 1969, the site was predominantly agriculture in nature. Known heritage constraints include potential for agricultural and economic activity associated with the monastic influence of Norton Priory at Runcorn on its surrounding landscape, and a stretch of Medieval flood defence bank located within the site boundary known as Cromwell's Bank. The Severn Vyrnwy Aqueduct is also an

historic feature crossing the site.

There is also mapping evidence of industrial activity along the western boundary forming the eastern parts of Widnes today. Industrial activity also includes the development of the railway and canal which are located between the site boundaries.

With regards to the power station itself, its purpose was to contribute towards the national energy requirement. Its location on the banks of the Mersey was strategic, relating to the presence of existing industrial infrastructure for the transportation of coal along the Sankey Navigation (St.Helen's Canal) and railway.

There are some examples of built heritage in the site, including a reused Second World War Nissan hut and brick structure associated with the Vyrnwy Aqueduct. The site does not contribute to the setting nor significance of any listed or locally listed building. Despite some retention of agricultural land within the site boundary, the power station has negatively altered the setting of the buildings in proximity to the site.

The aqueduct and power station are considered to be of overall 'medium' heritage value, with the former power station identified in these proposals for demolition with the aqueduct remaining in situ.

Flood Risk

The site has a predominantly 'low' risk of flooding from rivers and the sea, and some areas of elevated risk around the periphery of the site. There are isolated areas of surface water flood risk shown on the site, but these are not associated with major flood flow paths and can be mitigated through Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) as part of a holistic approach to the management of surface water. The geology of the site suggests that there may be risk of ground water flooding, but this is not considered an onerous risk in relation to the land uses proposed. There is a residual risk from a breach of the ash settlement lagoons located on site, which can potentially be reduced with development.

The NPPF identifies the need for a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) to support any future redevelopment of the site as it is partly located in Flood Zone 3 on

the Flood Map for Planning (Rivers and Sea) and is greater than one hectare in area. The initial Flood Risk review undertaken for the site demonstrates that the site is at risk from flooding from other local sources that should be considered in a site-specific FRA. As part of the FRA the NPPF Sequential and Exception Tests should be applied where necessary.

An indicative surface water drainage strategy has also been developed as part of the masterplanning process and described in a little more detail in the following section. A drainage strategy should be prepared to meet national and local requirements and off-site flood risk is not increased as a result of the redevelopment proposals.

Geo-Environmental

A review of the geo-environmental constraints and risks on the site has been undertaken. The site has been operational as a coal fired power station since 1971, later closing in March 2021. There is evidence of potential contamination relating to several historic landfills and infilled areas of land. There are also numerous bulk storage tanks used for the storage of a variety of substances. Subsurface structures include the coal plant basements, from which water was pumped out to the coal pad and then into the surface water drainage system. Similarly, water pumped from the substation and turbine hall could have entered the surface water drainage system in this way. There are also records of asbestos containing materials on site.

The overall assessment has identified that although there are sources of contamination, these sources can be managed during the demolition of the site (e.g., source removal) and also during the site's redevelopment through the use of appropriate engineering controls (e.g., barrier/cover systems). The remedial measures undertaken would be risk based and specific to sensitivity of the proposed future site uses and implemented in accordance with relevant best practices and necessary regulatory approvals.

Unexploded Ordnance (UXO)

Records have been found indicating that two bombs fell on the site during World War Two and recorded as unexploded and removed. No other significant sources of UXO hazard have been identified in the risk assessment. There is no record of bombing or military activity on the site during World War One, whilst there is evidence of strategic targets outside of the site relating to weapons manufacture and transport infrastructure during World War Two. The risk on site is therefore considered to be low.

Utilities

A number of utilities either cross the site or are located in proximity to the site. Running north-south immediately to the east of the northern site, and running under the southern site, is a major Ethylene pipeline operated by Essar Oil (UK). A gas pipeline operated by Cadent Gas Limited, runs east-west, predominantly off-site along the railway corridor. Immediately to the west of the site on the western boundary is the chemical works. In all three cases there are safety zones with potential restrictions on land use which require consultation with the HSE when development is proposed. At this stage consideration has been designed into the masterplan and it is not believed these would cause a constraint to the land uses proposed. However, the HSE would need to be consulted as a statutory consultee, in relation to the location of any development, including outdoor formal recreation areas, in proximity to these predominantly off-site features.

Within the approximate centre of the northern site, and immediately to the east of the Vyrnwy Aqueduct corridor, is a major substation operated and owned by National Grid. This was built to transmit electricity from the power station to the national grid. Leading from this are a series of 400kV and other high voltage powerlines. To the east of the substation there are also two terminal towers towards the north and south boundary of the northern site, with an underground high voltage cable running between them through the site. The overhead high voltage lines follow the approximate route of the Vyrnwy Aqueduct corridor north and south, and the railway corridor to the east, then leading off-site to the wider network.

The intention is that the substation and its immediate setting, together with the high voltage power lines and associated infrastructure comprising pylons and underground cables, will be retained in situ. These have minimum standoff health and safety distances to development and would be subject to consultation with National Grid and any other relevant Distribution Network Operator (DNO). Hard standing areas, highways and open spaces are typically acceptable within close proximity to the pylons and under the power lines, with restriction on built uses and tree planting. The masterplan has shown these retained in situ within green space or accommodated within highway and hard standing areas. The exact nature of their retention in terms of surrounding land use, would be subject to more detailed design and approvals at the appropriate time.

Crossing the site north-south, and dividing the site almost in equal parts, is the Vyrnwy Aqueduct as mentioned previously. This 110 km aqueduct and associated pipework, operated by United Utilities, carries in excess of 200 million litres of water a day from a man-made lake in north Wales to Liverpool. It has legal restrictions preventing most development over it and will be preserved in situ within a green open space corridor. Development over it, including highway crossings require agreement. The green corridor has been identified in the masterplan.

The power station site encompasses many kilometres of other largely redundant services and pipework which will be removed during redevelopment.

Initial assessment has determined that the site can be readily served for all water, electricity, gas, foul water, and telecoms utilities with redevelopment.

The Local Plan Allocation Proposal

The Fiddler's Ferry site will provide for development in two distinctive sequential phases following demolition and remediation of the former power station, addressing a first phase north of the railway line and a second phase south of the railway line. Phase 1 will deliver a major employment hub of 89 ha together with an adjacent residential neighbourhood of a minimum of 860 homes. Phase 2 will deliver a second residential neighbourhood of a minimum of 900 homes. Both phases will deliver three integrated parkland areas. The proposed land use disposition for Local Plan allocation purposes is included opposite. The proposed allocation plan forms the 'framework' for more detailed masterplanning as part of any future planning application once adopted as part of the Local Plan.

This proposed allocation plan is supported by a slightly more detailed land areas plan which is also included on a following page. This provides a broad-brush indication of the predominantly built areas and an indicative location for the primary school and local centres. An illustrative masterplan is included later in this document as to what this could look like.

Both residential neighbourhoods will provide a range of housing types with a particular focus on family housing, homes for older people and provision of affordable housing. Each will be served by a local centre comprising local community and retail facilities with a shared single primary school provision located in the northern neighbourhood. The neighbourhoods will each provide local parks and smaller areas of green space and be linked to a network of greenways and cycle paths using the routes of the Verney Aqueduct and Trans Pennine Trail. These routes will connect to Cuedley in the north, Widnes Waterfront to the west and Penketh and Warrington to the east.

Over 50% of the Fiddler's Ferry Masterplan area will be devoted to green infrastructure provision. Three parkland spaces will be created, two in the first phase and one in the second. On Phase 1 to the north the existing woodland and wildlife area that provides a buffer to the A564 will be augmented by an area for recreation and sports pitches extending along the eastern boundary of the site providing a robust Greenbelt boundary between the site and the strategic gap to Warrington. A linear park will also be provided on the line of the Verney Aqueduct. On Phase 2 a park will be formed along the east and southern flanks of the masterplan on the area of the former ash lagoons, encompassing existing wildlife habitats and providing a strong green edge to the impressive Mersey River corridor. In addition to these, the service corridors of the Verney Aqueduct which runs north-south through the site and the Trans Pennine Way which runs east-west will be developed as greenways and active travel routes.

In summary, the new residential and working community will be relatively self-sufficient, supported by:

- Two new local centres local shops and other local community facilities, one north and one south of the Widnes to Warrington railway line;
- A new primary school, located in the northern neighbourhood;
- Three new park facilities and extensive areas of open space and recreation; and
- Extensive highways and public transport improvements.

Fiddler's Ferry will also provide a major new employment area as an extension of the Widnes Waterfront Masterplan development area. This will make a significant contribution to meeting Warrington's future employment land needs, whilst supporting the consolidation of the Widnes Waterfront project. It will have the potential to comprise large scale distribution, logistics, industrial uses and clean energy projects, benefiting from its accessibility to the regional road network and its established grid infrastructure.

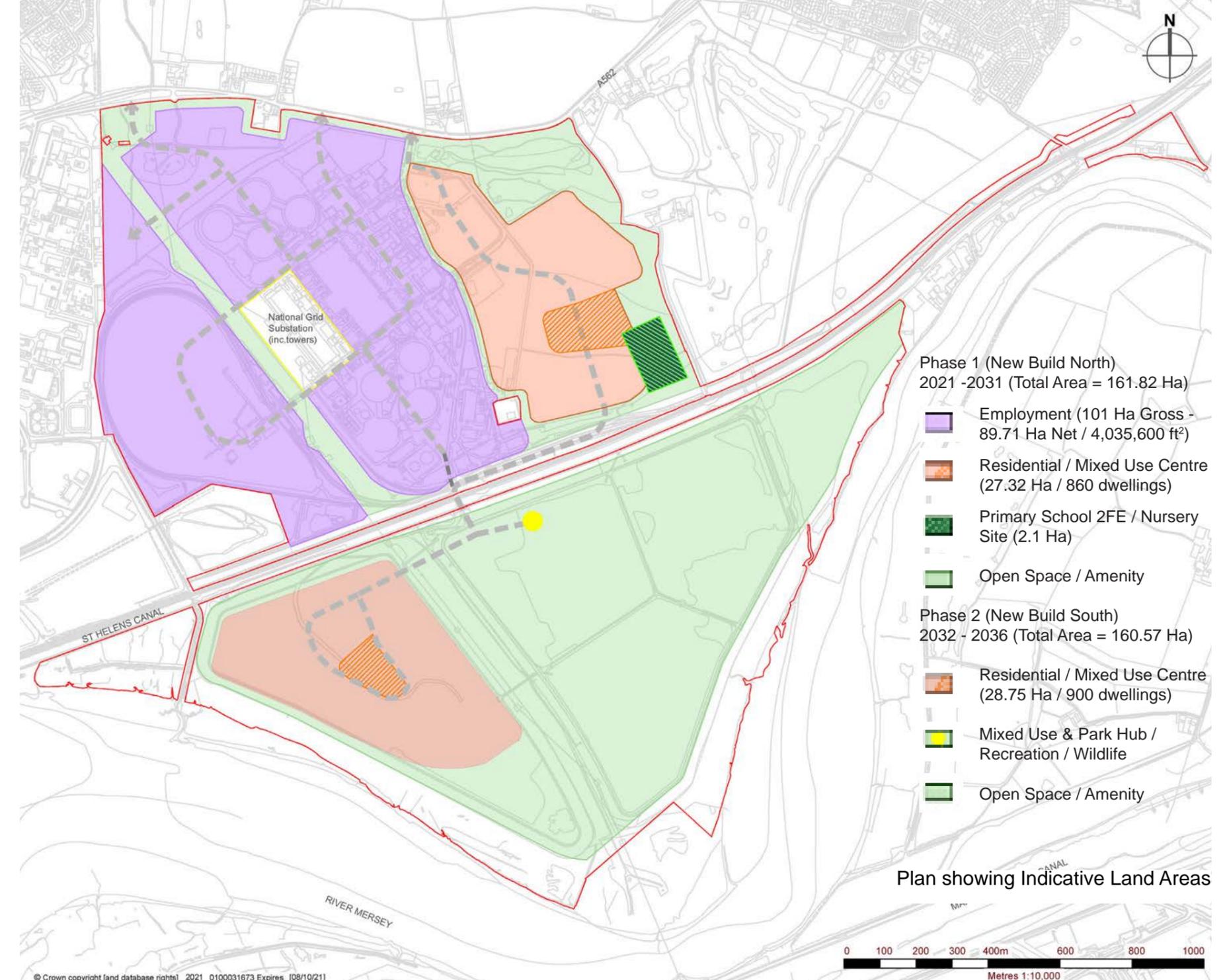
All new development will be designed to support walking and cycling for local journeys within the masterplan area and to other local destinations in both Widnes and Warrington. Improved public transport services will provide access to both towns and other employment areas in the wider Warrington / Widnes area.

The first phase of development will be supported by new junction connections to the A562 which will separate employment and residential traffic into the site and ease traffic flow. Further transport infrastructure will be required to support phase 2 of the development towards the end of the Plan Period. It is anticipated that this will potentially include a replacement crossing or upgrade of the existing bridge link across the railway line and canal serving Phase 2.

The development of Fiddler's Ferry will ensure that important ecological assets within the site are preserved and enhanced. Provision will be made within the masterplan for extensive areas of open space to provide additional habitats and enhance biodiversity, linking into Warrington's wider Green Infrastructure Network.

Phase 1 of Fiddler's Ferry can progress within the capacity of the existing transport infrastructure with potentially minor improvements to junctions east and west of the site access on the A562. The impact of phase 2 will be assessed in consultation with Highways England in terms of wider impacts with funding streams and trigger points identified for the delivery of the further mitigation measures should they be needed to enable development to come forward.

Community infrastructure within each of the phases will be required in early stages of development to ensure new residents have access to essential local services and to alleviate pressure on other facilities in south Warrington and Widnes.



The Masterplan Concept

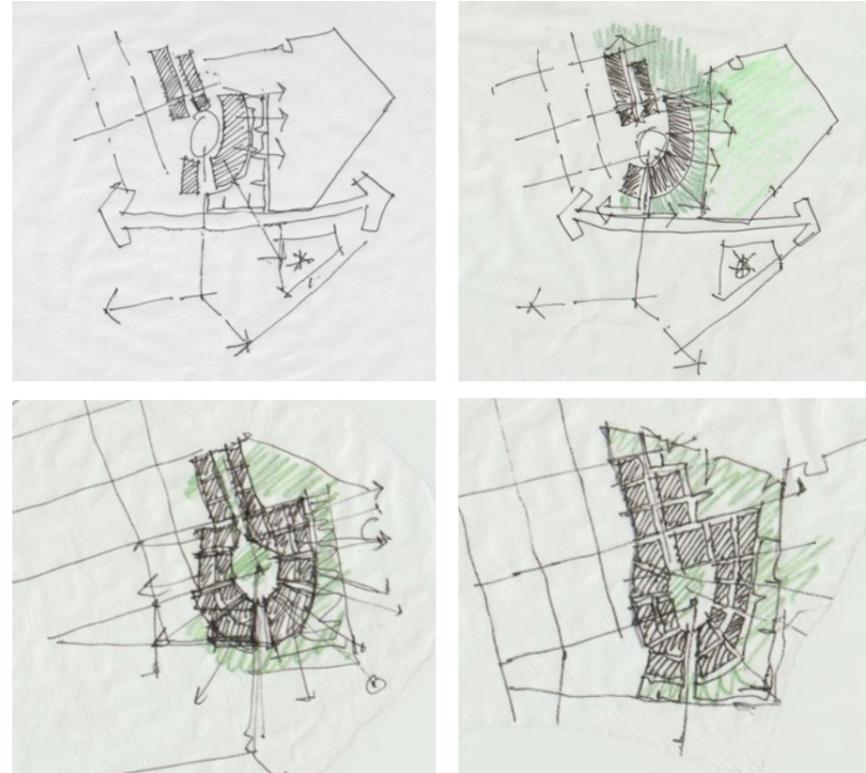
The site is effectively subdivided in four parts, with the Vyrnwy Aqueduct running north-south and the railway line and canal running east-west. This creates four 'quadrants' and a simple and logical basis to the structure of the masterplan proposals. The following pages identify the key components of the masterplan concept, articulated through a series of sketches in relation to urban structure and grain, and other influencing factors such as key views and green space disposition.

Northern Site

The north-eastern 'quadrant' encompasses the main power island and eastern fields, together with the woodland in the north-eastern corner. The power island area will remain in employment use, which has been extended eastwards to encompass some of the eastern fields area. The coal pad dominates the north-western quadrant to the west of the aqueduct. The east-west / north-south linearity of the aqueduct and railway corridors creates a logical basis for a semi-formal grid layout for the employment area, with the aqueduct corridor forming a central green spine running between the two employment parcels. Plots within the employment area should therefore be laid out in a simple grid with green links including avenue tree planting running east-west and north-south. A linear tree belt is proposed along the northern edge of the site, providing a visual buffer and green space to the road frontage.

The northern neighbourhood to the east is separated from the employment area by a landscape and open space buffer, with the housing and employment connected east-west with walking and cycling links as green routes.

The northern neighbourhood represents the proposed eastern-most extension of the town, and is structured to be outward facing, presenting a positive new edge to the eastern boundary and associated green spaces. A peripheral green space 'wraps' itself all around the neighbourhood, connecting the woodland to the north-east with the canal corridor to the south. The structure of the neighbourhood itself centres around a village green space at the heart of the



Sketches of northern neighbourhood concept

new community, with green links to the school, parkland and sports pitches to the east. A radial pattern of development parcels surrounds the green, with a mixed-use local centre creating activity and vibrancy fronting onto it and connecting with the school to the southeast.

Key vistas will also radiate from the centre of the green towards a possible art sculpture or landmark feature to the south within the proposed wildlife and parkland area, together with other vistas connecting the heart of the scheme to the peripheral green space. A central spine road or street continues on as the main connection to the southern site area.

Southern Site

The south-eastern 'quadrant' encompasses the water lagoons and other green space and forms an extensive opportunity to create a wildlife and open space parkland. In the north-western corner of this area, towards the aqueduct corridor, an opportunity to create a visitor centre and leisure hub exists, providing parking and a cafe and other leisure related uses.

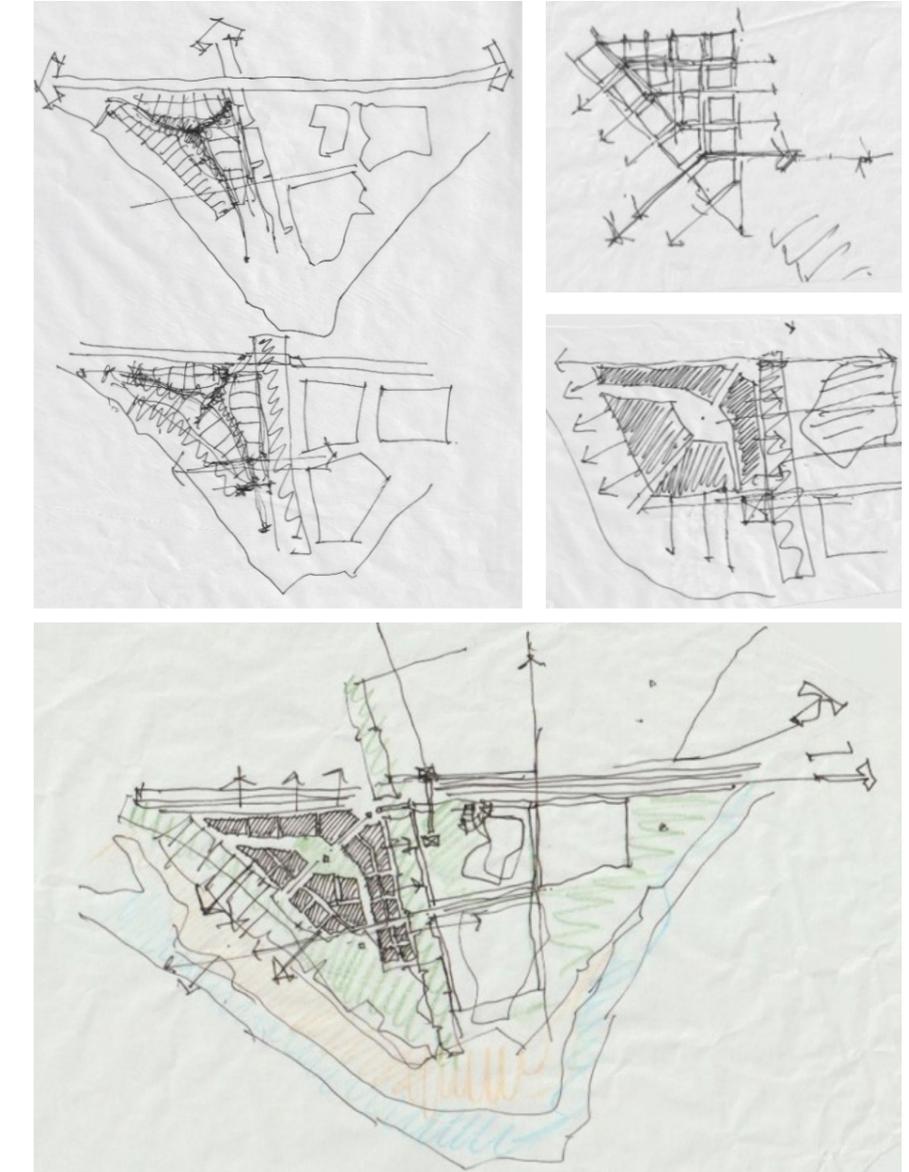
The southern neighbourhood to the west is separated from the wildlife and open space parkland by the Vyrnwy Aqueduct, and is surrounded by green space, leading down to the foreshore of the river Mersey to the west and south.

As with the northern neighbourhood, a central 'village' green space forms the heart of the community, orientated to benefit from outwards views over the Mersey River corridor and to the west over the parkland. As with the northern neighbourhood, the block pattern radiates out from the central green and responds to the triangular shape of the overall neighbourhood.

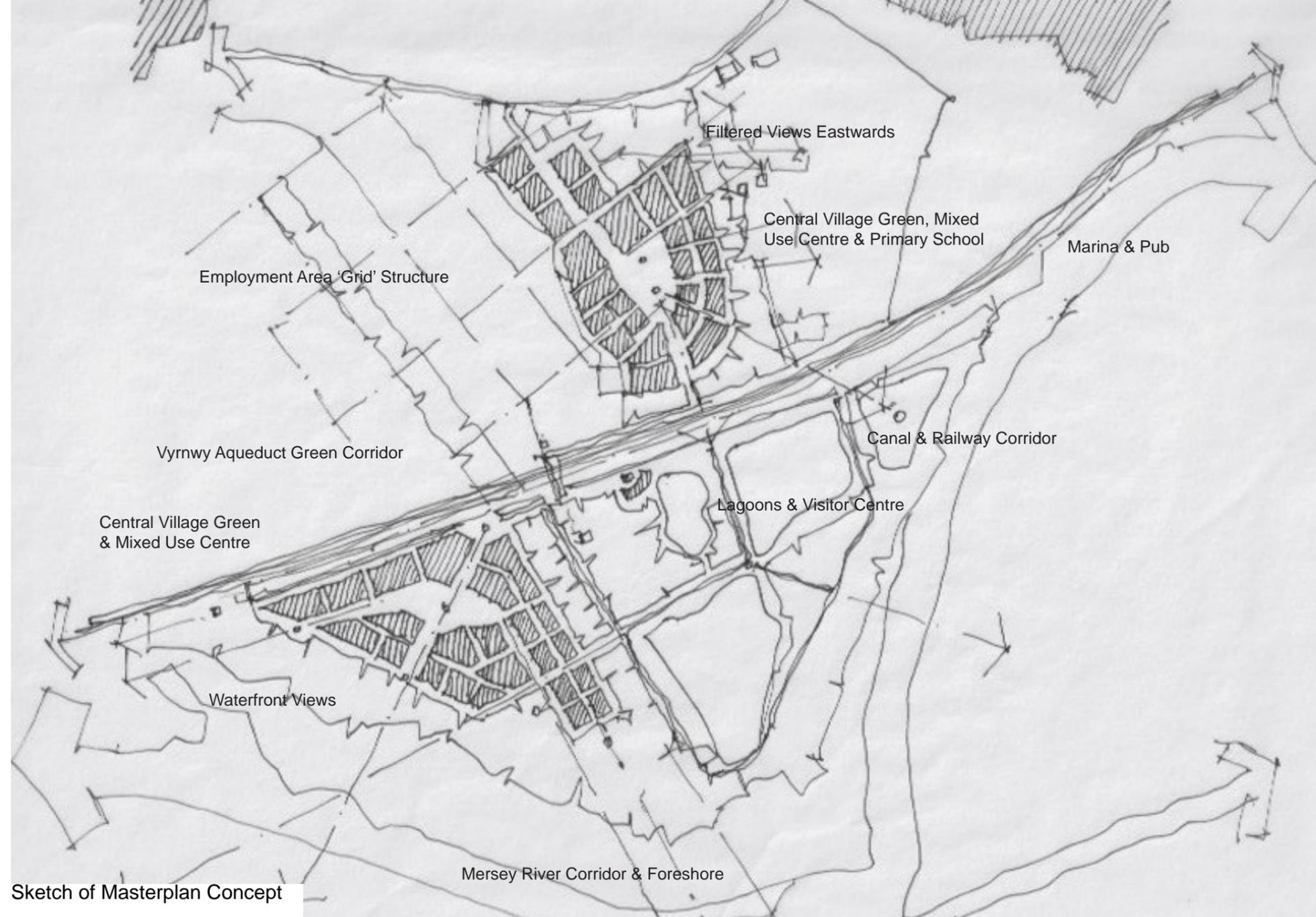
In order to avoid encroachment too far south into the Mersey River corridor, the southern edge of the development ends well short of the site boundary, with a large area of green space between the housing edge and the river edge. Sports pitches and more parkland will be created here to create a very positive setting to the housing and provide outdoor formal recreation facilities for the residents.

At the heart of the community, focused on the village green area will be a second smaller mixed-use centre bringing more life to the green space. Housing along the eastern and southern edges of the neighbourhood will have fantastic views over the river corridor, and housing to the east will have views over the green parkland aqueduct corridor and green spaces beyond.

The neighbourhood will be connected to the north and vehicular access into the site via a new or upgraded bridge over the railway. This will include a dedicated bus route to the employment area together with new links to the Trans Pennine Trail route.



Sketches of southern neighbourhood concept



The Illustrative Masterplan

The Illustrative Masterplan opposite represents the design concept, positively responding to the constraints and opportunities set out previously in this document.

The following represents a summary of the key features.

Access and Movement

Three points of vehicular access to the Widens Road are illustrated, with a dedicated residential and mixed-use access on the alignment of the current main access to the site, together with two additional points of access to the west for the employment area. Emergency only and pedestrian / cycle links are also indicated between the employment and northern neighbourhood. There would also be footway / cycleway connections to the Trans Pennine Trail and Marsh Lane. These are indicated on the plan opposite.

A bus route is also indicated, forming a loop connecting both neighbourhoods and the employment area via a bus-only access immediately to the north of the rail bridge crossing. This is indicated on the plan opposite by the blue dashed line over the highway. The scheme would be pedestrian and cycle friendly, with new connections along the Vyrnwy Aqueduct corridor and east-west through the employment area, with potential connections to the public right of way network off site immediately to the west.

A network of streets and spaces within the development areas provide a good degree of connectivity and are often aligned on the key vistas described previously. Proposed new pathways are included as brown lines on the plan opposite, which includes indicative connections to the off-site public right of way network.

Open Space

The two neighbourhoods have large village green spaces at their core, and together with some of the green links within the neighbourhoods, represents approximately 10% of the area identified for housing and mixed use on the land areas plan included in this document previously. This allowance is included in the provisions of the mixed-use development areas to ensure that green spaces form a key component of the urban form to create positive 'garden village' type schemes at the outline application stage. As previously set out, over 50% of the site is proposed as green space.

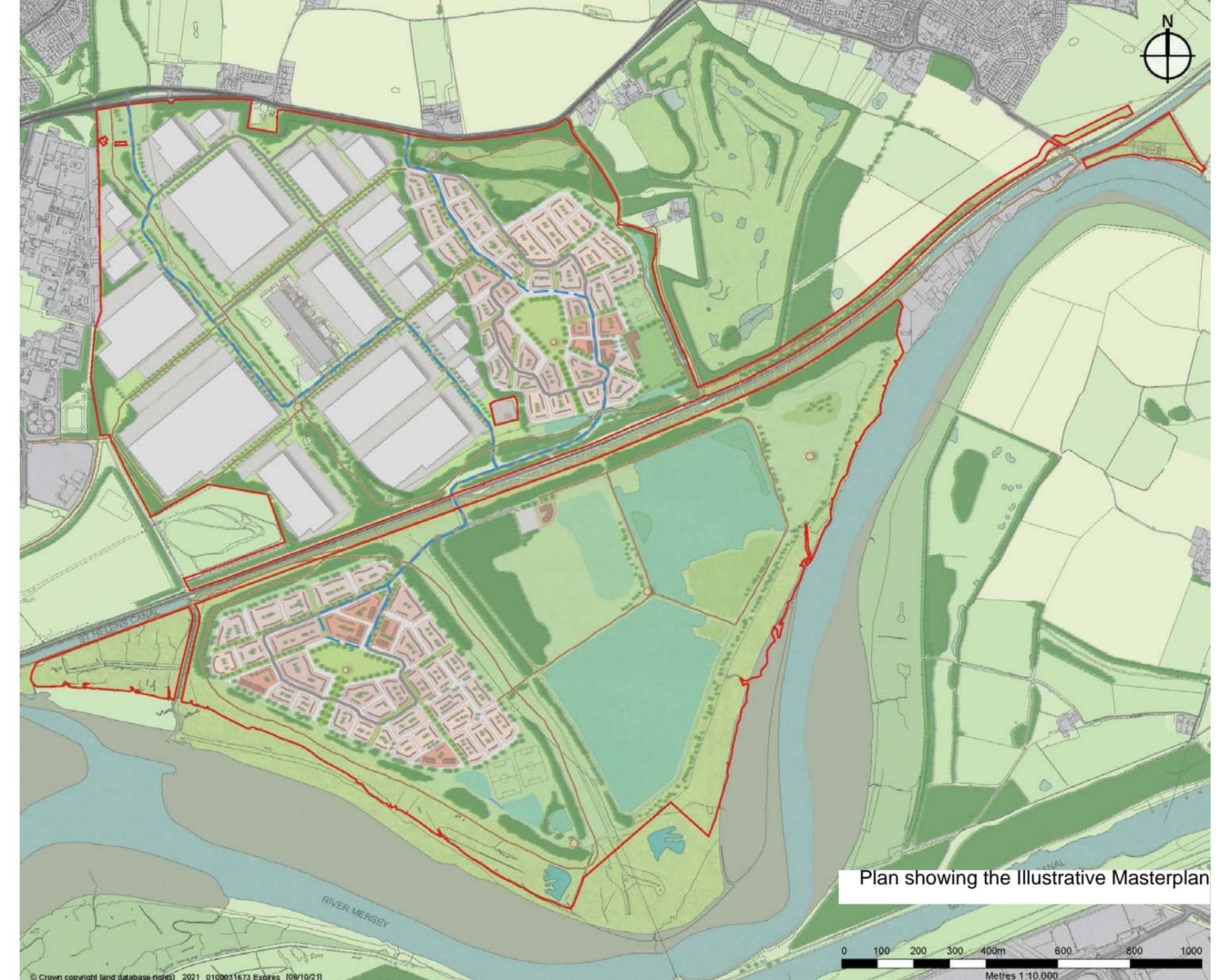
Green spaces would include the village greens, sports pitches, wildlife areas, informal and formal parkland, children's play areas and woodland planting.

Focal features such as art sculptures, will be placed in the village greens, with visual connections and vista leading from these to other nodal points. These are indicated on the plan opposite as yellow dots.

Developable Uses

As illustrated on the plan opposite, the employment units will be laid out on an informal grid and will be of varying size, with landscaping and pedestrian and cycle route between the plots. If possible, smaller units will be placed in close proximity to the housing than larger units.

The housing will include affordable housing, contributing towards local housing need. Housing densities will vary across the neighbourhoods, with higher density cores around the central village greens and mixed-use centres, emanating out to lower densities around the peripheral edges fronting green space. Mixed use parcels within the neighbourhoods are indicated with a slightly more reddish colour on the plan opposite.



Plan showing the Illustrative Masterplan



Artist Impression Looking Northwards Over Site



Artist Impression Looking Westwards Over Site

Indicative Character and Appearance

The following section of this document gives an indication of the character and appearance of the main areas of the Illustrative Masterplan, albeit the exact mix and type of unit is to be determined through the planning process.

Employment Area Character

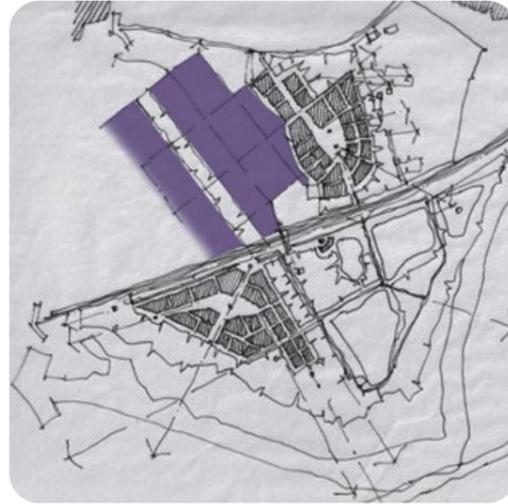
The employment area will comprise principally single storey large warehouse units, with examples of logistics and storage units opposite from the Omega site. These units will have hard standing areas around the buildings for car parking and HGV movement and storage.

The use of banded colours helps to assimilate the facades into the skyline better, and peripheral planting helps to visually break up the facades and soften their visual impact at closer distance. The area where they are proposed is very well enclosed on the masterplan and is currently visually dominated by the cooling towers and turbine hall, which will be removed and replaced with comparatively much lower buildings.

The landscaping around the buildings is also important, with the use of swales and drainage ponds and avenue planting to create a positive setting. The artistic impression on the following page is taken from the Vyrnwy Aqueduct corridor, forming the central green spine through the employment area.



Images of indicative employment buildings and landscaping



Artist Impression of the Employment Area and Green Spine

Mixed Use / Community Centre Character

Each neighbourhood will have its own mixed-use centre, with the northern neighbourhood centre being the larger of the two because of the co-location with the primary school and proximity to the employment area, which it will also serve.

The uses within the centres will be determined during the planning application process, and may include cafes, a nursery, community hall and other community facilities, retail outlets, a restaurant, and commercial office space. This will bring 'life' over a longer period of the day to the centre of neighbourhoods, and enable them to be relatively self-sufficient. However, it is expected that other than the day-to-day requirements, retail and other services will be accessed in Warrington or Widnes, whilst other local facilities such as the golf centre and Fiddler's Ferry Tavern, will benefit from the new residents and employees.

The character of the mixed uses will take the form of standalone buildings, such as the school, to ground floor mixed uses with residential above, reflecting a more traditional village centre approach. An artistic impression of the northern neighbourhood local centre looking eastwards, with cafes overlooking the central green with residential above and the school beyond, is included on the next page.



Images of indicative community uses and activity



Artist Impression of the Northern Neighbourhood Green and Mixed Use Centre

Residential Character - Northern Neighbourhood

This neighbourhood will have predominantly detached and semi-detached house types with some terraces and town housing, particularly towards the centre, with opportunity for apartments above mixed uses.

Consideration will be given to orientation of buildings to optimise solar collection from southern facing roofs. The nature of the grain and scale is to be drawn from study of local villages creating a garden village style sense of place.

Character too will be developed from the traditional use of style and materials. The neighbourhood will be primarily in red brick, selected from local sources to match the richness of nearby settlements. Brick detailing will be used to embellish openings and add some texture and colour variation, whilst some render could be introduced to add contrast echoing the eclectic nature of local design. Roofs will be varied for diversity in general style ie gabled or hipped and finished in grey flat or red tile.

A degree of contemporary interpretation of traditional Cheshire village form and detail could be considered. Examples of appropriate style and materials are included here, together with an artist impression on the next page.



Images of indicative appropriate houses and streets



Artist Impression of Northern Neighbourhood Lower Density Housing Overlooking Eastern Edge

Residential Character - Southern Neighbourhood

Similar in density range and type to the northern neighbourhood, this community is envisaged as having a different architectural style, with at least two character areas - the riverfront and the Vyrnwy 'valley' frontage. The riverfront is envisaged as using more 'natural' materials and softer tones, which could also include bleached timber and stone, with larger glazed windows to take advantage of views and a more contemporary approach.

The frontage looking eastwards over the wildlife and parkland area could include darker black, brown and red bricks and darker timber to reflect the woodlands. The edges in these areas would reflect this typology - the waterfront being set behind banks of grass, gorse / maritime planting with low light stone walls and bleached timber fencing; the Vyrnwy frontage could be more dense native planting taking reference from the valley itself - almost glimpsed views of buildings set at the top of the shallow valley with new planting.

This more contemporary approach, with buildings sitting comfortably in the natural setting, could create an exciting and unique place. An artist impression of the Mersey River frontage is included on the following page.



Images of indicative appropriate houses and streets



Artist Impression of the Southern Neighbourhood River Frontage

Lagoons / Wildlife and Open Space Parkland Area

The extensive lagoon and wooded areas to the west of the Vyrnwy Aqueduct corridor, and including the corridor and river foreshore itself, are proposed as a parkland for informal recreation and habitat creation. The lagoons will be planted around the edges to encourage new wetland habitat creation, and the woodlands and other green areas actively managed to encourage wildlife with new planting. Access to the foreshore will be managed to avoid detrimental impacts on the river corridor. A visitor centre and community hub is proposed, providing a space for a café and other leisure uses in the heart of the park. An artist impression is included below of the hub and on the next page.



Images of indicative open spaces and concepts



Artist Impression Overlooking Lagoon

Delivery and Timeline

The full delivery of the Fiddler's Ferry regeneration masterplan could span a 15-20 year period depending on the capacity of the local property markets. The site is divided into two phases addressing north and south of the railway line.

Phase one addresses everything north of the railway line. Following demolition this will deliver all of the employment hub (some 4m sq ft) and the first of the two residential neighbourhoods comprising of a minimum of 860 new dwellings and supporting community facilities. It is anticipated that this phase will be delivered in the period 2023- 2033.

Phase two will follow this and deliver the second residential neighbourhood (some 900 new dwellings) and the extensive new parkland area at the former lagoons. This is likely to commence around 2031 with completion anticipated by 2040.

