

Warrington Local Plan Examination
Statement of Common Ground [SoCG]

between:

Warrington Borough Council

and

Bellway Homes Limited (Manchester)

August 2022



WARRINGTON
Borough Council

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this SoCG is to set out the latest position that has been reached between Bellway Homes Limited (Manchester) [Bellway] and Warrington Borough Council [the Council] to assist in the Examination of the Warrington Updated Proposed Submission Version Local Plan 2021-2038 (September 2021) [WUPSVLP] [SP1].
- 1.2 The content of this SoCG relates to 'Land to the north of Winwick' proposed for allocation in Policy OS6 – Winwick, as indicated on the proposed Policies Map. This SoCG covers the areas of agreement between the parties.

2 Site Allocation Information

- 2.1 The proposed site allocation is located to the north of the settlement of Winwick, between Golborne Road (A573) and Waterworks Lane. The site comprises predominantly greenfield land, although there is a small section of potentially contaminated land in the extreme north eastern corner of the site, as well as an on-site electricity pylon with overhead cables which run east-west. The southern part of the site abuts the existing settlement boundary. The site is within walking distance of a range of shops, services and facilities. Winwick is served by a wide range of facilities including Winwick C of E Primary School, a local centre, and community facilities including a village hall/leisure centre.
- 2.2 The site is allocated as follows in the draft Local Plan:

Site name	Winwick
Allocation reference number	OS6
Allocation Area	6.0 ha
Type of Development	Housing
Proposed Development	Minimum of 130 homes

- 2.3 Bellway has secured the site under an option agreement with the existing landowner to bring forward the site allocation for residential development. There are therefore no legal or ownership constraints to the delivery of housing on the site.

3 Evidence Base

- 3.1 Bellway has undertaken a number of environmental and technical studies during the preparation of the Local Plan, which have informed its own masterplanning and delivery schedule. This material has, where of direct relevance to the Local Plan's site selection process, been shared with the Council. However, the Council has relied upon its own evidence base to inform its decisions.

Exceptional circumstances

- 3.2 SP1 includes a demonstration of the exceptional circumstances for each area, including justifying the release of Green Belt land around the outlying settlements, including Winwick. This allocation site will increase housing choice, provide affordable housing and support the vitality and viability of local services in Winwick. The predominantly greenfield and relatively unconstrained nature of the land will enable the site to be delivered in the early period of the Plan, meeting identified housing needs in the shorter term.
- 3.3 This allocation also forms part of a wider spatial strategy that will ensure that sufficient land is provided to meet Warrington's development needs, that housing affordability is addressed and new sustainable communities are created, in a manner that will support the delivery of strategic infrastructure that will also unlock major brownfield development sites.
- 3.4 Bellway and the Council agree that exceptional circumstances exist to alter the Borough's Green Belt boundaries to remove this site from the Green Belt.

Five purposes of the Green Belt

- 3.5 As evidenced within the Council's Green Belt Assessment (Green Belt Assessment Collated Report – 2021) [GB4], the site makes a strong contribution to one purpose, moderate contribution to one purposes and no contribution to three purposes. In line with the methodology, the assessment concludes that the site makes a moderate overall contribution to the Green Belt. The Council's Green Belt Site Selection – Implications for Green Belt Release - August 2021 Report [GB3] also concludes that the site currently makes a moderate contribution to the Green Belt purposes.
- 3.6 The parties agree that the site represents a suitable location for Green Belt release.

4 The Scale of Development

- 4.1 The parties agree that, based on the technical assessment work undertaken by Bellway to date, and on the clear understanding of the site constraints, the site can accommodate a "minimum" of 130 dwellings.

5 The Deliverability of Development

- 5.1 The parties agree that the site is deliverable in the context of the NPPF – being available, suitable and achievable. The site is:
- 5.2 **Available** – Bellway has secured an option agreement with the landowner to promote the site for residential development. Bellway has a proven track record of delivering high-quality housing developments on suitable and sustainable sites, and can confirm that the site can be delivered for housing within the early phases of the Local Plan period.
- 5.3 **Suitable** – the site is a sustainable and logical option for Green Belt release with strong physical and defensible boundaries to the east, west and south, whilst the northern boundary can be strengthened through landscaping and tree planting. It is in a sustainable location immediately adjacent to the existing northern boundary of the settlement of Winwick. Bellway has demonstrated in its representations and extensive technical work (Respondent ID: 2297) that

there are no significant constraints that would prevent residential development from coming forward at the site early in the Plan Period.

- 5.4 In particular, Bellway can incorporate the required 10m easements to existing infrastructure serving Winwick Water Treatment Works and Service Reservoir (to the south of the site) within the site layout, and no objection has been raised by United Utilities. Similarly, Bellway will ensure any harm to the setting of the Registered Battlefield can be mitigated by ensuring development is designed sympathetically to its rural setting, buffers and adequate separation distances are implemented, and existing planting remains in situ and is enhanced where possible.
- 5.5 **Achievable** – the development of the site is achievable early in the Plan Period. The housing trajectory set out in the following section demonstrates how the site will be able to fully deliver the housing development broadly in line with the Council’s housing trajectory at Appendix 1 of SP1. The Council’s Local Plan Viability Assessment – August 2021 [V2] has demonstrated that the site is viable, taking into account the infrastructure and policy requirements set out in the allocation policy.

6 The Housing Trajectory

- 6.1 As set out in the previous sections, the parties agree that the site is available, suitable and achievable; and can deliver the amount of development proposed by draft Policy OS6 of SP1, as a “minimum”.
- 6.2 The parties agree that the site can start to deliver units within the first five years of the Plan Period. The parties agree that Table 6.1 sets out reasonable assumptions for an indicative programme and the key milestones from this point forward through to the occupation of dwellings.

Table 6.1 – Delivery timescales

Milestone	Date
Appoint full consultant team to progress planning application	August 2022
Develop scheme, undertake further technical work and surveys, pre-app engagement, pre-app meeting etc.	August-September 2022
EIA screening	August-September 2022
Submit full application	October 2022
Determination/committee resolution	June 2023 (based on the Local Plan adoption timescales)
S106 signed	July 2023
Discharge conditions	September 2023
Material start on site, site preparation works/ infrastructure etc.	September 2023
First unit completions	Spring 2024
Annual rate of delivery thereafter	40 dwellings per annum
Final unit completed and occupied	Summer 2028

7 Areas the Council and Bellway are in Agreement

7.1 The following Principles are of agreement between Bellway and the Council regarding Site Policy OS6:

- a) The site is deliverable (available, suitable and achievable) early within the plan period;
- b) The site can achieve a minimum of 130 homes;
- c) An average minimum density of 30 dph can be achieved on the site;
- d) A minimum of 30% affordable housing can be provided on site in line with Policy DEV2;
- e) The site can achieve the minimum level of high-quality open space in accordance with Policy DC5;
- f) Safe access to the site can be secured together with a package of transport improvements which will be provided as required (such as the provision of cycling and walking routes within the site, which connect into the wider footway network, and other necessary network improvements identified within an appropriate Transport Assessment);
- g) Bellway will work collaboratively with the Council to ensure a high-quality residential scheme is brought forward on the site;
- h) The site represents a suitable location for Green Belt release;
- i) There are no technical or environmental constraints that will preclude the delivery of housing on this site;
- j) There are no ownership constraints to the delivery of housing on this site in compliance with the emerging policy;
- k) The site represents a fully deliverable site, capable of being delivered in line with the Council's housing trajectory to help meet the borough's housing and affordable housing need;
- l) The Council's Local Plan Viability Assessment (V2) has demonstrated that the site is viable, taking into account the infrastructure and policy requirements set out in the allocation policy.

8 Modifications proposed by the Council

8.1 The Council has proposed selected modifications to Policy OS6 which are set out within Hearing Statement Matter 7e. The extent to which these are agreed is outlined below.

Compensatory Green Belt improvements

8.2 Within Matter 7e, paragraph 14.1, the Council has proposed the following wording to be included within Part 13 of Policy OS6:

*"A scheme of compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of land remaining in the Green Belt will be required. **In the first instance, the improvements should be made in the immediate vicinity of the site and delivered by the developer. The Council will consider improvements in the wider area where it can be demonstrated that the improvements cannot be delivered in the immediate vicinity of the site or where this will provide greater benefits.** Financial contributions will **only** be considered where this would help to ensure that the benefits of compensatory improvements can be maximised by providing them in the most **a more** appropriate location."*

- 8.3 Bellway has no objection to the principle of compensatory improvements, but has some concerns regarding the detailed wording of this modification.

Holcroft Moss

- 8.4 As result of concerns expressed by Natural England regarding the potential in combination impact of the Local Plan on Holcroft Moss within the Manchester Mosses Special Area of Conservation, the Council is currently working with Greater Manchester Combined Authority [GMCA] on potential mitigation measures for the Moss.
- 8.5 Therefore, within Matter 7e, paragraph 14.2, the Council is proposing a modification to the Plan, and specifically a modification to Part 19 of Policy OS6, which will require a project level HRA to be undertaken and, if required, provide a financial contribution towards appropriate mitigation measures. The mechanism for establishing any required contribution from individual developments and how this will be used to undertake the mitigation could then be set out in an SPD and therefore an addition to the supporting text will need to be made referring to this.
- 8.6 Bellway notes the Council's intention to implement this proposed change and reserves the right to comment further once the proposed modification wording is set out.
- 8.7 The Council has made Bellway aware that the cost of any mitigation works will be of an order within the contingency included in the Local Plan Viability Assessment and therefore will not impact on the viability of the site.

Signatories to Statement of Common Ground

Signed:



For Warrington Borough Council

Name: Steve Park

Position: Director of Growth

Date: 15/8/2022

Signed:



On behalf of Bellway Homes Limited (Manchester)

Name: Jonathan Penrose

Position: Planning Manager, Bellway Homes

Date: 11/08/2022
