

NŪKO Planning

8th November 2021

To whom it may concern,

**Warrington Borough Council, Draft Local Plan 2021 representations on behalf of the ADS group, the Egerton Trust and Riverside Estates (NW) Ltd. Town and Country Planning Act, 1990**

This submission has been prepared by NUKO Planning jointly on behalf of ADS, Riverside Estates and The Egerton Trust as part of Warrington Borough Council's public consultation on their emerging Draft Local Plan 2021.

#### About us

NUKO Planning was formed in January 2020. Since that time the organisation has secured planning permission for more than 70 new homes (mostly in Warrington BC), in excess of 3,500sqm of industrial floorspace, multiple agricultural Green Belt and Change of Use applications, and planning permission for a 'peaking power plant' in Halton BC to support the UK's green energy agenda. NUKO Planning has also led and supported a number of planning appeals across the country.

ADS is a Warrington-based umbrella organisation with landholdings and business operations across a range of sectors - notably waste recycling and skip hire. In recent years the company has been behind a number of planning application fronted by NUKO Planning in both Warrington and Halton Borough Councils, including for housing and industrial uses.

Riverside Estates is a Warrington based development company with more than 30 years' history of successful housing delivery in and around Cheshire and the north west. The company holds land across Warrington and hopes to continue and strengthen their position as a private sector delivery partner of the LPA, particularly focussing on the provision of affordable and supported housing within the borough.

The Egerton Trust is a Warrington based landholding trust-fund. They are the umbrella organisation for community-led Woodlands Alpaca Farm on Stockport Road, whose profits are returned into the GAIN charity for Guillain-Barré Syndrome. The Trust has ambitions to diversify their commercial operations over the coming years and to work with Warrington BC and other authorities to better realise the potential of their land assets to mutually beneficial effect.

## Draft Local Plan 2021 - Land allocation representations

This part of the submission relates to general policy and land use allocations put forward for consultation in the Draft Local Plan 2021.

- The 2021 Draft Local Plan makes provision for 861 new homes per annum for the duration of the plan period (through to 2038). Whilst we very are supportive of the provision of new homes in Warrington, we note this is the minimum number required by government, and are disappointed that this figure has been reduced from the more ambitious figure of 945 homes per annum (as was proposed in the 2019 version of the plan). There has been a consistent significant under provision of housing in Warrington in recent years, and we feel the plan should set the bar higher in terms of home provision over the next 15 years, and rely less on the provision of housing beyond the duration of the plan period.
- The removal of Burtonwood, Mersey Brook Lane and the South West Urban Extension as housing land allocations is noted and considered acceptable. The inclusion of Fiddler's Ferry Power Station (for both employment and housing) and Thelwall Hays is strongly supported, for reasons set out later in this submission.
- The 'front loading' of community infrastructure such as health care, schools, highways and parkland is also strongly supported. This will enable smaller landowners and developers - such as ADS, Riverside Estates and The Egerton Trust - to bring forward windfall sites to further support the provision of housing in the borough. A number of these sites are put forward to the Council later in this submission, with the hopeful potential for threat inclusion within the Council's 'small sites' housing allocation list.
- The uplift in the total provision of allocated employment land from 276ha in 2019 to 289ha (subject to the Omega extension enquiry) in 2021 is supported. We consider this allocation and uplift presents off-setting opportunities over the plan period for the conversion of existing accessible and geographical desirable allocated and / or unallocated operational employment sites into housing - notably those at Station Road, Penketh, and ADS Recycling Centre, Camsley Lane (see below). Whilst these sites are proposed to remain in the Green Belt (for reasons understood because of their separation from any existing settlement), they both can be defined as 'previously developed land' and fall under the provisions of NPPF (2021) para 149(g) to enable redevelopment.
- The amended boundary of the Green Belt is supported in that it releases land at Woodlands Alpaca Farm, Stockport Road. This land is within the ownership of The Egerton Trust and is proposed to be re-allocated as being within 'Suburban Warrington', and in effect within the defined settlement boundary. This is something The Egerton Trust - and more recently NUKO Planning - have been promoting for a number of years. We feel there is opportunity to go further with additional Green Belt release, and ask the Council to consider the extent of the boundary covering land opposite Warrington Sports Club, WA4 6SL - see below. Here, a similar modest extension of the settlement boundary would seem to make sense, having Walton Lee Road as the defining edge of the Green Belt, rather than

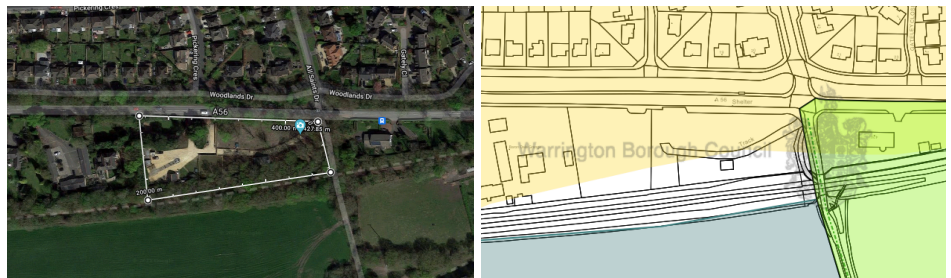
the current brook. This land is within the ownership of the ADS group, and a sensitive residential development in an existing suburban area would serve to support to the Council’s windfall housing supply over the plan period.

## Site specific representations

The following site specific representations are put to the Council for their consideration as part of the formal consultation process. Each site is introduced with a short ‘fact sheet’ to demonstrate its ownership and suitability for housing (from a flood risk and qualitative accessibility perspective), and therefore its deliverability within the 15 year plan period. It also includes an indicative number of homes based on site area and the minimum housing density criteria set out in Policy DEV1 – Housing Delivery of the emerging Draft Local Plan 2021 (or other online resources in the case of Hill Cliffe Cemetery).

### 1. Woodlands Alpaca Farm, Stockport Road, WA4 2TB

Ownership:	The Egerton Trust	Flood risk zone:	1
Site area:	0.9ha	Indicative no. of homes:	27-45
2021 Green Belt:	No	Existing access quality:	4



The site at Woodlands Alpaca Farm was the subject of a recently allowed appeal for three-year temporary planning permission for an essential farm worker’s dwelling to support the farm’s development as a specialist alpaca birthing and nursery facility. Working across two principal sites (here and another Green Belt site a short walk away at Lymm Road), Woodlands Alpaca Farm is a successful community-focused rural enterprise whose profits are donated to the GAIN charity for Guillain-Barré Syndrome.

The currently adopted 2014 Local Plan identifies this site as being within the Green Belt. For some time (and at least since 2017) The Egerton Trust has promoted its release from Green Belt and its suitability for the delivery of sustainable housing. The area to the north of Stockport Road is typified by mid-century suburban housing. Properties to the south are typically larger detached villas. The site offers excellent public transport and cycle links along the main road to Stockton Heath, Lymm and Grappenhall, as well as good vehicular access to Warrington town centre and the M56 and M6 motorways via Knutsford Road. Access to / from the site is already

established via a gated entrance to the north east - however, this will require upgrading to accommodate uplift in the intensity of its use.

The site is sustainable in terms of community infrastructure. Local schools are in close proximity, including Thelwall Community Junior School (0.31 miles), Thelwall Infant School (0.69 miles) and Bright Futures (1.5 miles), which accepts secondary school aged children through to the age of 18. Primary medical services are located 0.5 miles away at the Quays Grappenhall Surgery and 1.2 miles away at Latchford Medical Centre. The sustainability of the site is further enhanced through the Draft Local Plan 2021 land allocation of Thelwall Heys, directly to the south, and across the Trans Pennine Way. This site's release from Green Belt and allocation for housing will bring forward a minimum of 310 new homes within the plan period (note that policy MD5 on page 218 states the number as 300 homes whilst other parts of the Plan quote 310 - please double check text for consistency).

It is noted and agreed that the designated land at the Thelwall Heys site is currently considered to make a poor contribution to the overall quality and aims of the Green Belt. Conversely, paragraph 3.3.13 of the Draft Local Plan 2021 confirms that its allocation as housing land will "provide a high quality residential environment, sensitive to the heritage and ecological assets within the site [itself] and in [its] surroundings. [It] can also be effectively integrated into the Borough's green infrastructure network and provide extensive areas of open space for recreation and biodiversity."

The land at Woodlands Alpaca Farm is considered to make still less of a positive contribution to the Green Belt than that at Thelwall Heys. The site is physically separated from the open fields to the south by Trans Pennine Way, is obscured from view by an existing high-boundary wall (therefore not 'open') and is directly impacted both visually and audibly by Stockport Road - a main east-west thoroughfare in south Warrington. The benefit of access to open space for recreation and biodiversity can also be considered to apply to the site at Woodlands Alpaca Farm, in spite of the new housing designation at Thelwall Heys, because of adjacent access to the Trans Pennine Way, the canal, and open fields beyond.

For these reasons we are supportive of the proposed Green Belt land release and the re-allocation of the site as being within 'suburban Warrington' and by implication suitable for housing delivery.

The impact of this re-allocation on Woodlands Alpaca Farm as a business will need to be assessed independently. Subject to residential housing being granted on the site, the farm will need to find alternative accommodation in the locality to continue their community-focussed activities. We would welcome support from the Council to facilitate this relocation when the time comes in order to put the land at Stockport Road to a more efficient, sustainable use. We would also encourage the Council to engage with NUKO Planning and The Egerton Trust to discuss improved northern access to / from the Thelwall Heys site via the existing lane to the east of Woodlands Alpaca Farm, with the potential for partial land sale to widen the highway.

## 2. Land opposite Warrington Sports Club, Walton Lea Road, WA4 6SL

Ownership:	ADS group	Flood risk zone:	1
Site area:	3.2ha	Indicative no. of homes:	96-160
2021 Green Belt:	Yes (not PDL)	Existing access quality:	2 (but good potential)



This green field site lies just to the west of the suburban area of Walton, south-west Warrington. The immediate area is defined by sizeable semi-detached and detached residential properties. The neighbourhood centre of Stockton Heath is approximately 0.8 miles as the crow flies to the north-east, with a wide range of existing services and retail outlets serving a well-established community. The nearest GP surgery - Stockton Heath Medical Centre - is only 1 mile away, and the nearest primary and secondary schools are 0.8 miles and 1.1 miles respectively (both rated 'Good' or better by Ofstead).

Walton Lea Road bounds the site to the west and north. A brook separates the site from the existing settlement of Walton, whilst the Cheshire Ring Canal bounds the site to the south. The location offers excellent walking and cycling routes along the canal tow path into Stockton Heath, Grappenhall and Lymm to the east, and into open countryside to the west before reaching the village of Moore and Halton BC. Frequent bus services service Warrington town centre from opposite the Stag Inn (10 min walk from the site), whilst junction 11 of the M56 motorway is accessible by private vehicle within 8 minutes, offering direct links to Manchester, Liverpool and the rest of the UK.

In terms of planning history, the site was subject to a refused outline application and a dismissed appeal for residential accommodation, dating from around 2001. Details of the historic application are unavailable on the Council's website - however,

applying the lower of the Council’s emerging housing density range figures, the site has the potential to deliver 96 new homes subject to access and other considerations. The site has been in the ownership of the ADS group for a number of years, for whom NUKO Planning has acted as agent for several housing applications within Warrington Borough Council.

In the context of significant housing under provision and borough-wide green belt release in areas without the same level of existing community infrastructure and services, we consider this site to represent a sustainable, deliverable and desirable alternative (or supplementary) location for green belt release as part of the Local Plan development process. Much like the previous site, its proximity to the existing settlement boundary presents an opportunity for a modest yet efficient and sustainable allocated housing site. The nearby carriageway of Walton Lea Road (80-100m east of the existing settlement boundary, which follows the brook) provides a convenient and clear-cut new boundary, ensuring no further ‘creeping’ into the green belt. Access could (should) be brought in from the road, thereby preserving the privacy and amenity of the existing suburban accommodation to the east.

Ecology and other considerations would, of course, be given appropriate protection, but it is understood this site has been used for agriculture and grazing for many years, and as a result its biodiversity and ecology credentials are relatively limited. The site is surrounded by mature trees that would (should) be protected as part of any development.

For the reasons set out above, we would respectfully encourage the Council to consider the release of this land from the green belt and its allocation as suburban Warrington to support the sustainable deliver of housing within the borough, and within the next plan period.

### 3. ADS Recycle Yard, Camsley Lane, WA13 9BY

Ownership:	ADS group	Flood risk zone:	1 (very small part 2)
Site area:	0.7ha	Indicative no. of homes:	21-35
2021 Green Belt:	Yes (PDL)	Existing access quality:	3 / 4

The ADS recycle yard lies on Camsley Lane, directly off Stockport Road, in south-east Warrington. The site is well within the green belt boundary, and unlike the previous two sites would not benefit from a modest extension of the settlement boundary to enable redevelopment for housing. Unlike the previous two sites, however, it does meet the NPPF definition of ‘previously developed land’, and therefore has the potential to qualify for the green belt (re-)development exemption set out in paragraph NPPF 149(g) (subject to conditions).



The site is currently used for employment uses. Such sites are protected in adopted planning policy - but the ADS group would like to take this opportunity to register their interest in alternative employment sites within the borough to accommodate a relocation, expansion and potentially enable public-private partnership waste-recycling services (including waste incineration) should the opportunity arise. ADS would then look to redevelop the site at Camsley Lane for housing (making use of the provisions in NPPF 149(g)), bringing forward a housing windfall site of up to 35 new homes, subject to relevant material planning (and market) considerations. The site is in a desirable residential location, and is considered more suitable (and viable) for housing than for its current uses; the yard is at capacity, and the surrounding green belt designation limits the businesses opportunity for expansion.

The site is a relatively rural one, but still offers the opportunity for sustainable housing. A regular bus route travels to / from Lymm and Warrington town centre every 30 minutes from the top of Camsley Lane. Lymm village itself is only a 25 minute walk from the site, whilst the Trans Pennine Way runs immediately to the south of the site providing access to walking and cycling routes into Grappenhall, Stockton Heath and beyond. Access to junction 20 of the M6 is a 6 minute drive away by private vehicle, providing access to the rest of England. Statham Community Primary School is only 0.29 miles away, whilst Lymm High School is only 1.69 miles away - both well within walking distance for the respective age groups. The Lakeside Surgery and Brookfield Surgery both offer primary medical services within 1 mile from the site.

Safe vehicular to the site is already established via Stockport Road, and there are unlikely to be any ecological or arbo-cultural issues. Considerations pertaining to (external traffic) noise and ground-source contamination will likely require particular attention on this site, and suitable mitigation will be forthcoming as part of any application. To this end, and subject to ADS' ability to secure a suitable relocation to

an alternative site, we would encourage the Council to consider this site for housing windfall as part of any adopted Local Plan, and accommodate the unit numbers accordingly.

#### 4. Land to south of Fox Covert Cemetery, Red Lane, WA4 5AL

Ownership:	ADS group	Flood risk zone:	1
Site area:	4ha	Indicative no. of grave plots:	6,800 (1,700 / ha)
2021 Green Belt:	Yes (GB exception applies)	Existing access quality:	1 (land locked)



According to [warrington.gov.uk](http://warrington.gov.uk), the Council are responsible for five cemeteries in the borough. Among the most recent of these, opening in October 1961, is Fox Covert Cemetery, Red Lane. The site has burial areas for various religious denominations, smaller plots for cremated remains and a beautiful baby garden. Its idyllic setting is well suited to reflection and contemplation.

There is a long-established identified shortage of burial sites in the UK. A 2013 analysis by the BBC found that one quarter of England's local authorities predicted the graveyards they manage to be full by the year 2023. Against this backdrop, Warrington Borough Council have not allocated any new burial sites since 1964 and the opening of Walton Lea Crematorium.

The Draft Local Plan 2021 makes no explicit reference to the expansion of existing or allocation of new burial sites and cemeteries (though they are defined as being an essential and / or important 'social and community facility' (para 7.4.4), going on to highlight that 'the management and protection of existing facilities is just as important as the assessment of the need for new provision' (para 7.4.6)).

The (approximately) 4ha of land to the south of Fox Covert Cemetery represents a sustainable and readily deliverable opportunity to plan for future burial and plot demand within the borough, expanding the existing Council-managed facility to the north. The site is within the ownership of the ADS group, and they would be willing



to engage in proactive discussions to lease, sell or partner with the Council to enable any expansion.

Such a solution would make best use of existing infrastructure (including access) and workforce, and would accord with prevailing public understanding of the site as a place of final rest, and remembrance. The site is a five minute drive from Warrington's only crematorium, allowing ease of access between the two sites for funerals, memorials and ash scatterings.

The site is within the green belt, but NPPF (2021) para149(b) makes clear that the provision of 'appropriate facilities' - including cemeteries - should not be considered an exception to inappropriate development in the green belt. To this end we would encourage the Council to allocate this site as being specifically for burial land within the definition of 'social and community facilities' in order to safeguard the site for future generations whilst making best use of the publicly managed services and facilities at Fox Covert Cemetery.

Any allocation would be subject to the provisions of The Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order 1977.

## 5. Riverside Trading Estate, Station Road, Penketh, WA5 2UL

Ownership:	Riverside Estates Ltd.	Flood risk zone:	1 (small part 2)
Site area:	1.7ha	Indicative no. of homes:	51-85
2021 Green Belt:	Yes (part PDL)	Existing access quality:	2 (upgrade possible)



Riverside Trading Estate lies to the south of Station Road and the Sankey Canal in the district of Penketh, west Warrington. Immediately to the south is the River

Mersey, with the Fidler's Ferry Sailing Club to the east. The site is within the green belt boundary, but is a site with a long industrial history, including a period as a busy pet food canning factory.

The site is now in the ownership of Riverside Estates (NW) limited. The current uses comprise light industrial and storage uses to the east, and a caravan storage site to the west. A number of office- and industrial-to-residential permitted development conversions took place on the site in 2018. As a result there are currently 37 one- and two-bedroom converted residential units on the site. Vehicular access is gained via Station Road, over which Riverside Estates has a 5.5m Right of Way, including a legal right to maintain and repair the width of this carriage way. The road passes a dual-tracked railway line (now disused) and the Sankey Canal before entering the site.

The eastern element of the site (approximately 9,000sqm and comprising light industrial and storage units as well as office accommodation (now all mostly converted into residential units)) was subject to a pre-application enquiry in 2020 (PR/2020/04461). Feedback from WBC indicated that because of the existing development on the site, the principal of redevelopment could be considered acceptable, subject to the provisions of (then) NPPF 145(g) (now 149(g)) and other material planning considerations. The site's principal constraint was identified as being that of highways safety and access.

Station Road - along with a considerable area of land and the nearby Fidler's Ferry Power station (recently decommissioned and now falling within the Council's proposed housing allocation site) - is under the ownership and control of SSE. NUKO Planning has approached SSE on behalf of Riverside Estates to facilitate discussion on the roads sale and release to no avail, with resource being cited as the reasoning.

Since the time of the pre-application NUKO Planning has sought legal advice on undertaking improvements to Station Road to enable safe highways access in accordance with Riverside's Right of Way. We have been advised that:

- We have a right to improve this road up to a width of 5.5m - including to adoptable standards if we wish;
- Subject to the agreement of the Council (presumably dependant on necessary and acceptable improvements to its condition) there are existing mechanisms to see this road brought under WBC Highways adoption, with or without the consent of the current owner, but;
- In any event the decommissioning of the power station, the likely removal of the railway lines, and the allocation of housing on the former Fiddler's Ferry site represents an opportunity to re-enter into negotiations with SSE, with the support of the Council and / or their regeneration partners, Warrington & Co.

On that basis, the site's potential for a bespoke and unique housing development becomes both apparent and deliverable. It is accepted that there are challenges associated with access, but we are keen to work with the Council to find solutions to

these, not least on the understanding that the current (unimproved) access is serving some 37 residential units, a 'dog hotel', antique shop, caravan storage yard and sailing club.

Existing community infrastructure can be found a 5 minute drive away (or a 20 minute walk) in Penketh, including supermarkets and pubs. A number of primary schools are in close proximity (Penketh and Penketh South, 1.3 miles and 1 mile respectively), as well as a post office (1.5 miles) and high school (1.8 miles). The Ferry Tavern is a 400m walk north east along the canal tow path, offering a local community hub and focus. Excellent walking and cycling routes along the towpath provides links to Sankeys Bridges to the east, and open countryside to the west (subject to the final iteration of the Local Plan, this will also provide access to the proposed housing allocation site at Fidler's Ferry, and its proposed associated new community infrastructure). Despite its proximity to the river, the site does not flood and the vast majority of it is within Flood Zone 1.

We also acknowledge that the site is also partly in employment use. However, as with the ADS storage yard, the emerging 2021 Local Plan presents the opportunity to relocate these uses onto one of the Council's identified new employment sites. The increase in allocated employment floorspace can be considered more than sufficient to accommodate the low-grade caravan storage facility and the modest additional employment uses on the site, and would unlock the potential for this site to shine as a flagship riverside development in WBC. After years of industry and under-appreciation of this site and its unique riverside frontage, the emerging Local Plan has the opportunity to maximise and capitalise on the one of the borough's most impressive natural assets; the River Mersey. The allocation of the entire site (with associated access) for windfall housing - subject to the provisions of NPPF 149(g) - would present the opportunity for wholesale improvements to vehicular access and public realm to the mutual benefit of all parties - including Warrington's wider population - something that viability currently prohibits.

## Conclusion

NUKO Planning trusts that the above submission is welcomed by the Warrington Borough Council, and that the content of this letter will be taken into consideration by the Council in the next stage of the plan making process. Should anything require further discussion or clarification please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Kind regards

**Harry Dodd**