



RUNCORN ROAD, HIGHER WALTON

VISION DOCUMENT, SEPTEMBER 2017







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01 INTRODUCTION



Site Boundary

This Vision Document has been prepared on behalf of Story Homes North West and Brian Priestner to set out how the land at Runcorn Road, Higher Walton ('the Site') can contribute to the proposed Warrington South West Sustainable Urban Extension. It supports the case for releasing this site from the Green Belt and allocating it for housing, as part of the Council's Local Plan Review. It demonstrates that it will provide a sustainable solution to help Warrington Borough Council meet its future housing growth requirements.



To ensure the appropriate development of the Site, Story Homes has instructed a professional development team with a proven track record in delivering successful schemes. This document assesses the sustainability and suitability of the Site and builds upon work already undertaken by Warrington Borough Council (WBC) on the Warrington South-West Sustainable Urban Extension.

At the outset, it is highlighted that the Site:

- Is in a highly sustainable location in close proximity to the existing services and facilities within the village centre of Moore;
- Will result in a relatively minimal harm to the key purposes of the Green Belt; and
- Provides an opportunity to create a high quality development which will maintain the positive character of the Higher Walton conservation area through good design and high quality landscape proposals.

This document is submitted to the Council alongside the representations to the Warrington Local Plan Preferred Option consultation (September 2017) produced by WYG. The representation should be read in conjunction with this Vision Document.

INTRODUCTION TO STORY HOMES



Story Homes is a privately owned housebuilder, founded by Fred Story in 1987. It has a long and successful reputation of building quality and high specification homes across the North of England and South of Scotland. The family owned business has grown in size and status over the years but remains grounded, built on its original ethos of 'doing the right thing' and creating a brand synonymous with quality.

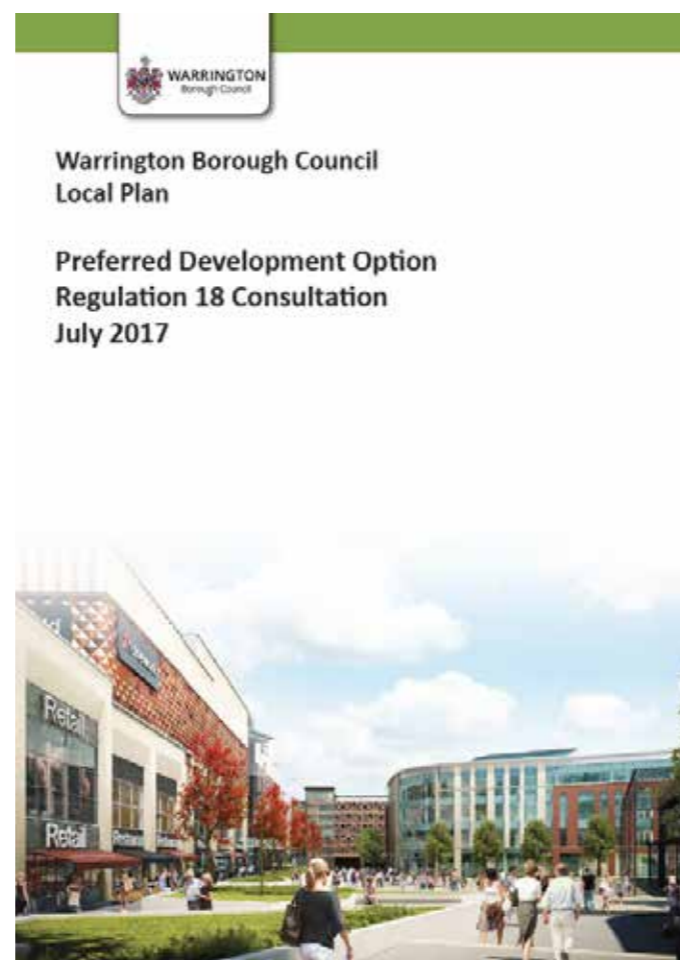
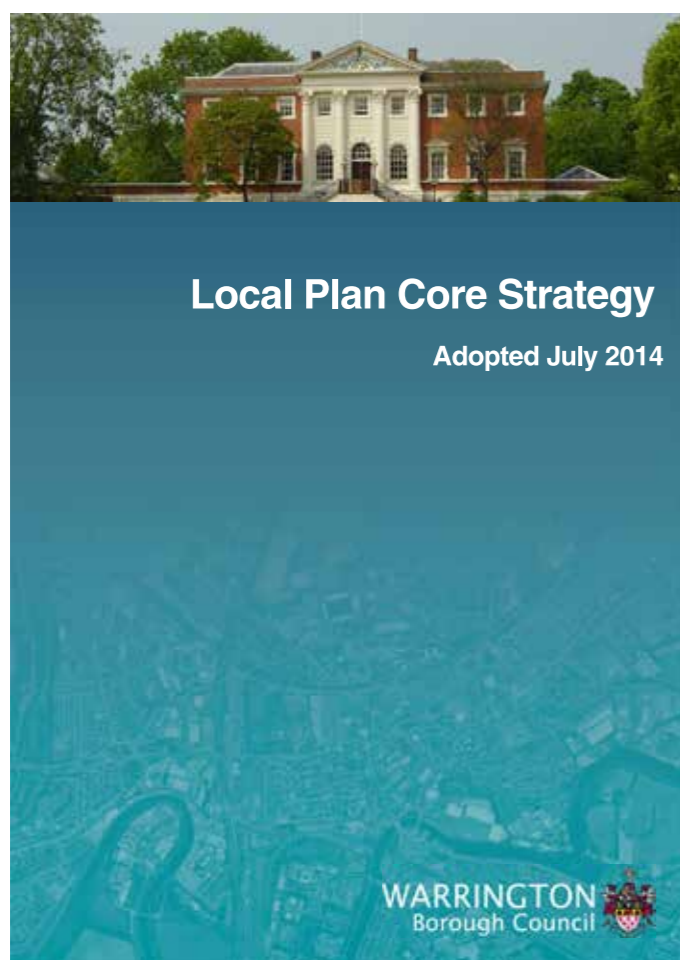
For nearly 30 years Story Homes has been the name most often associated with aspirational homes for sale throughout Cumbria, the North East and Lancashire. A passion for quality and excellence has seen Story Homes become a multi-award winning UK property developer, with modern and attractive homes instantly inspiring buyers. Story Homes have been awarded the top '5 star' rating in the house building industry's annual customer satisfaction survey for the 4th year running since becoming eligible for 4 years ago.

Story Homes' success is underpinned by a determination to understand the needs of communities where we build and a goal to deliver design quality and high quality building specifications that enhance locations. Story Homes' presence in the North West is growing significantly and has recently been awarded 3 UK Property awards for Brookwood Park in Kirkham, The Woodlands in Shotley Bridge and Pentland Reach in Biggar.

The Story Difference, comprising a commitment to design quality, place-making and customer experience, will be instrumental in delivering an exemplary new development which Higher Walton can be proud of.

02 THE PLANNING CONTEXT

THE EMERGING WARRINGTON LOCAL PLAN REVIEW



Given the results of the High Court challenge and the emerging evidence underpinning the Borough's growth needs and economic development ambitions, the Council recognised the need to undertake a review of the Local Plan.

A Local Plan Scoping Stage consultation was undertaken in November 2016. The Council then published their Preferred Development Option for consultation in July 2017. This sets out the current housing and employment land requirement for the Borough and the preferred option strategy for meeting these needs.

To underpin the Local Plan review, the Council commenced the preparation of the Borough's housing and economic needs to the year 2037. The most up to date study assessing the housing objectively assessed need (OAN) for the Borough identified a need of 955 new homes per year to 2037.

The Council has also assessed the number of additional jobs that will be created through the Council's growth aspirations set out in the 'Warrington Means Business' economic development programme as well as the Local Enterprise Partnership's (LEP) Strategic Economic Plan and future growth ambitions. These growth aspirations will deliver 31,000 new jobs in Warrington up to 2040 which is approximately 30% above the baseline forecasts and there is a need to ensure a balance between the number of homes and jobs.

There is also a need to provide an additional 5% buffer to allow for flexibility (as directed by the National Planning Policy Framework) and to make up for an existing backlog of 847 homes. All of this means that it will now be necessary to increase the minimum supply of homes to around **1,200 per annum**. The Council are also seeking to identify 'safeguarded land' to meet further needs in the ten years beyond the Plan period.

The most recent Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), published in January 2016 has identified that Warrington's housing needs cannot be met on brownfield land, existing commitments and on greenfield sites outside of the Green Belt.

If Warrington is to meet its development needs, then based on the Preferred Development Option, sufficient Green Belt land will need to be released to deliver approximately 9,000 new homes and 213 hectares of employment land over the next 20 years [from Preferred Development Option, WBC, July 2017].

Warrington Borough Council adopted its Local Plan Core Strategy in July 2014. This set out a need to build 500 new homes every year up to 2027. This requirement is now out of date.

Following the adoption of the Core Strategy, a High Court Challenge subsequently quashed the specific parts of the Plan relating to:

- The housing target of 10,500 new homes (equating to 500 per year) between 2006 and 2027 and;
- References to 1,100 new homes at the Omega Strategic Proposal

The Council have sought to deliver as much housing as possible within the urban area. They commissioned an Urban Capacity Study which estimated that 15,429 homes could be delivered on existing urban sites, a figure which we feel is unrealistically high and is open to challenge. However, the Council nevertheless maintain that they will need to release sufficient Green Belt land to deliver 8,791 homes (see Table 1).

The Preferred Development Option is Option 2. This is for the majority of Green Belt release to be adjacent to the main urban area in Warrington, with incremental growth in the outlying settlements. This includes a Garden City Suburb of approximately 6,000 new homes to the south-east of Warrington and an urban extension in South-West Warrington of around 2,000 homes.

Warrington South West Urban Extension Framework Plan

The Council have commissioned a Framework for the proposed South West Urban Extension. The Framework Plan includes two options: Option 1 includes a new strategic link road (the 'Western Link') and Option 2 does not include this link road. The Council's evidence base documents establish that the Western Link is not required in order to deliver the South-West extension (see WBC's Area Profiles document). The Site is also not dependent on the Western Link for implementation. The Western Link has the potential to deliver much wider economic benefits to the Borough and the wider region. However, it is considered that economic success can only meet its true potential when supported by a strategic and suitably flexible policy agenda. The delivery of Green Belt sites in the first five years of the Plan period will be critical in establishing the economic growth locally in South-West Warrington and across the Borough and therefore this is likely to be delivered ahead of the link road. The Option 1 and 2 Framework Plans are provided on the following pages.

The Site forms part of the area identified for the Warrington South West Urban Extension (it actually represents around 25% of this proposed allocation), which is key to the delivery of WBC's new Local Plan. It has a total area of around 21.3 hectares and could deliver around 450-500 units, therefore representing a major contribution to this extension and to the delivery of new homes to meet identified future needs. It is identified for development within WBC's Warrington South West Urban Extension Framework Plan Document.

This represents very clear "exceptional circumstances" to justify the release of land from the Green Belt. The Site at Runcorn Road in Higher Walton has the potential to make a substantial contribution to the social and economic success of the Borough.

| | 955 p.a. | 1,113 p.a. | 1,332 p.a. |
|----------------------------------|----------|------------|------------|
| Housing Target 2017 to 2037 | 19,100 | 22,260 | 26,640 |
| Flexibility at 5% | 955 | 1,113 | 1,332 |
| Backlog (from 2015 against OAN) | 847 | 847 | 847 |
| Total Requirement | 20,902 | 24,220 | 28,819 |
| Total Capacity within urban area | 15,429 | 15,429 | 15,429 |
| Green Belt requirement | 5,473 | 8,791 | 13,390 |

Table 1: Housing Land Requirements

Table extracted from Preferred Development Option, WBC, July 2017



Location of the proposed South-West Urban Extension (from Preferred Development Option WBC July 2017)

FRAMEWORK PLAN - OPTION 1



Warrington SW Urban Extension Development Framework Plan Option 1 (WBC, June 2017)

FRAMEWORK PLAN - OPTION 2



Warrington SW Urban Extension
 Development Framework Plan Option 2
 (WBC, June 2017)

03 THE SITE

LOCATION AND OWNERSHIP



Story Homes' land at Higher Walton comprises a series of separate land parcels that forms a significant combined area of around 21 hectares, representing a major part of the Warrington South West Urban Extension. The Site is well located, being close to the strategic motorway with good access to both the M6 and M56, and lying only around 3.5 km from the Warrington town centre (to the north-east). The site lies in an area of land between the A56 (to the south-east) and Manchester Ship Canal (to the north). The Bridgewater Canal passes through this area, to the north of the Site. The village of Moore lies to the west of the site, and Higher Walton to the east.

These parcels are:

Land south of Runcorn Road (east) – parcels B1 and B2 within the SW Urban Extension

Land south of Runcorn Road (west) – part of parcel A2

Land east of Bellhouse Lane – parts of parcels A3 and A4

Land north of former railway line – part of parcel A7

Collectively these parcels are referred to as 'the Site.'

The Site is currently owned by one landowner under one single title whom Story Homes have an agreement with. The site is therefore under the control of a single housebuilder. There are no ownership or legal constraints to its delivery for housing.

Story Homes are committed to bringing the site forward for housing and will progress a scheme as soon as the site is allocated. This will involve pre-application discussions with Warrington Council and public engagement.

04 GREEN BELT ASSESSMENT

The land lies between the villages of Moore (to the west) and Higher Walton (to the east). It lies in a wedge of land between the railway line and Manchester Ship Canal to the north and the A56 (Chester Road) and canal to the south-east. Both of these linear features serve to protect the surrounding countryside from the impact of development here. This area, which includes all of the above land parcels, has been identified by WBC as the site of the Warrington South West Urban Extension. The Green Belt Assessment (Arup, 2016) places the subject land at Higher Walton within general area division parcel 14. This is assessed as making a 'moderate' contribution to the Green Belt overall.

At the next level of analysis, the Green Belt Assessment places most of the land in parcel WR65, which covers a much larger area including land to the west. The only part of the Site not included in WR65 is the smaller site to the south of Runcorn Road, which has not been covered in the Green Belt Assessment.

W65 has also been assessed as making a 'moderate' contribution overall to the Green Belt. The contribution in regard to safeguarding the countryside from encroachment is rated as 'strong', however this is largely due to the parcel's eastern boundary which is located away from the Site; with regard to the Site, we believe that this land does not make a strong Green Belt contribution.

The Green Belt assessment is partly based on the contribution that the parcel makes to Walton Village Conservation Area. However, the Site is not located adjacent to Walton Village and is separated from it by the A56. Development of this land will not therefore have a direct impact on the setting of the Conservation Area.

The Site is within a reasonably well-enclosed area meaning that the surrounding Green Belt, and landscape character, will not be harmed by its development.

Overall, therefore, the Site can be released without detriment to the wider Green Belt. This means that this is a positive context for development in comparison to other sites.



05 SUSTAINABILITY

WBC's Area Profiles document has considered service provision for the Warrington South West Sustainable Urban Extension Area within the context of Warrington and has concluded that development of the scale envisaged can be supported by existing and enhanced infrastructure.

It is also useful to consider more local services, as the Site's land is accessible to services in local villages that have not been included within WBC's Settlement Profiles for the outlying settlements.

We have undertaken analysis of the location of key community facilities in the vicinity and their accessibility from the Site (see the Facilities Plan).

New housing on the Site will be served by existing local facilities at Higher Walton and Moore, in addition to services within Warrington. Moore (to the west) is within 10 minutes' walk of the site and Higher Walton (to the east) is within a 5 minute walk. Additionally, facilities are also available in Daresbury to the south, including a significant number of jobs, and in Stockton Heath. All of this is without considering the new local centre that is proposed to be constructed adjacent to the subject land as part of the SW Warrington Sustainable Urban Extension.

Moore has several local facilities:

- Moore County Primary School
- Moore Village Pre-School
- Red Lion Inn PH
- Moore Village Store and Post Office

To the east, Higher Walton has the following services:

- St John the Evangelist's Church
- Walton Lea Crematorium
- The Walton Arms PH

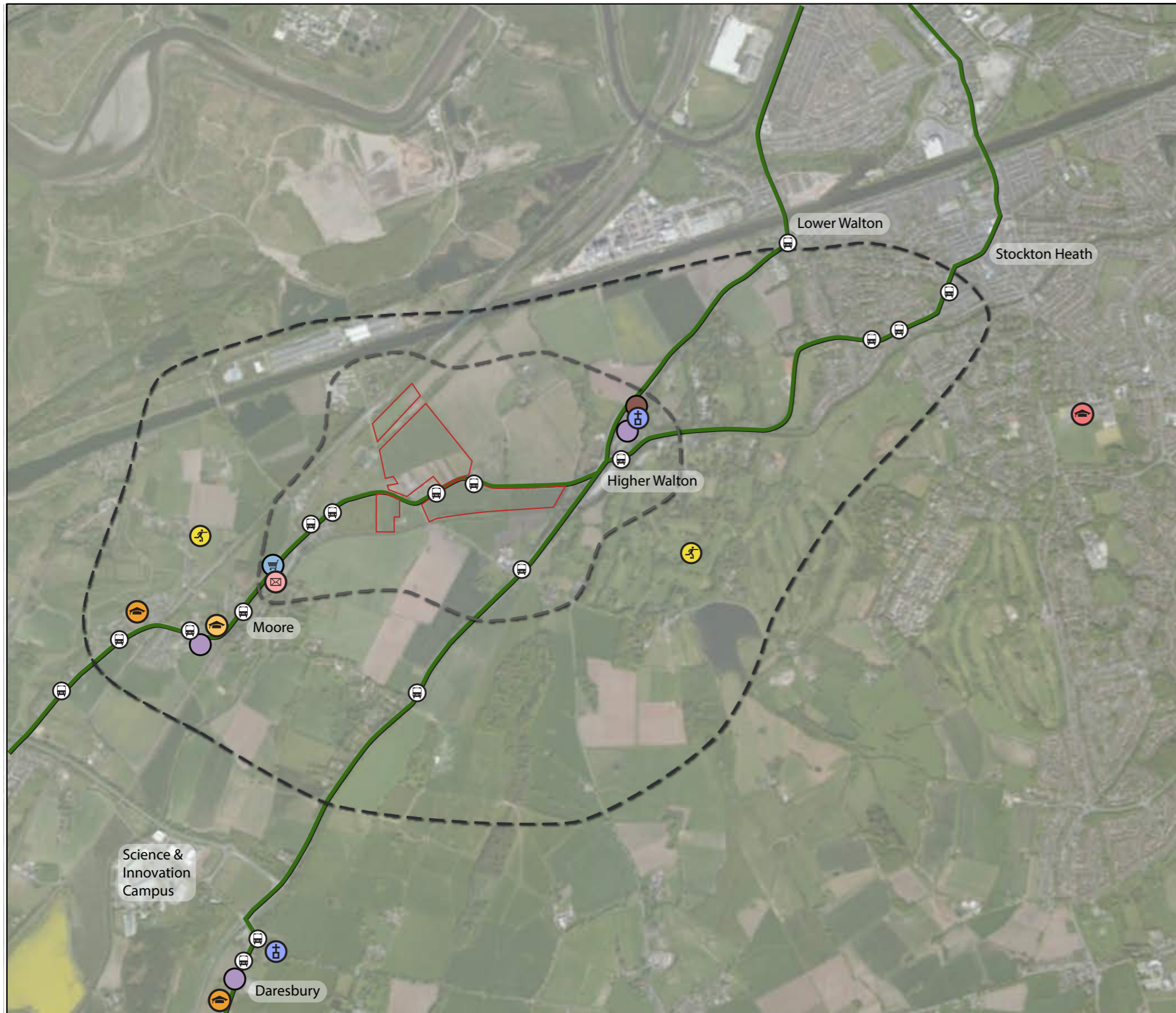
The area is also well served by bus services with the 43A, 62, 62B, 66 and 70 routes all stopping on Runcorn Road. These services offer a bus every 15 minutes to both Warrington and Runcorn town centres.

A little further to the south lies Daresbury village, which also has:

- Daresbury Primary School
- All Saints Church
- Ring O'Bells PH
- A large amount of jobs at Daresbury Park



FACILITIES PLAN



- Site boundary
- Bus stop
- Bus route
- Convenience store
- High school
- Primary school
- Pre-school
- Post office
- Sports facilities
- Public house
- Crematorium
- Church
- 1km isochrone
- 2km isochrone

06 BENEFITS AND INFRASTRUCTURE



In order to justify the release of this Site from the Green Belt the Council must in their plan making demonstrate exceptional circumstances but also ensure that this would constitute sustainable development. The NPPF states that “sustainable development is about positive growth – making economic, environmental and social progress for this and future generations: “At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable developments, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking.”

The development of this Site in Higher Walton will deliver significant and lasting economic, social and environment benefits to the local community.

Social Benefits

- Family homes – the Site can address the growing need for new high quality and modern family homes in Higher Walton. It will deliver a wide range of new homes in terms of type and size, to meet the needs of different families in the community.

- Affordable homes – the new community will include a substantial number of new affordable homes, such as starter homes and affordable rented houses. This will significantly enhance opportunities for home ownership, helping less affluent families and young first time buyers to get onto the housing ladder.
- Open Space – the development will provide a significant amount of public open space for new and existing residents to enjoy. There will be enhanced connectivity to recreation facilities beyond the Site for the existing housing development to the west, south and east.

Environmental Benefits

- Environmental improvements – the new high quality landscape proposed can provide new and enhanced habitats to increase the biodiversity value of the Site, whilst providing new landscape features and greenspaces for the community to enjoy.
- New drainage infrastructure – the landscape strategy for the Site includes a Sustainable Urban Drainage Scheme (SuDS).
- Recreational resources – the Site will provide new open space and green infrastructure for the local community to enjoy and spend time in.
- Access – as the Site is within a 5 minute walk of Moore and Higher Walton village centres, this will encourage new residents to use pedestrian and cycle routes into the village rather than the private car.
- Improvement of existing areas of poor landscape value, such as land around the disused railways.

Economic benefits

- Economic growth – the Site will bring new working age families in Higher Walton. This will be crucial to ensure that there is a resident labour force in the area, which can underpin sustainable economic growth without resulting in large increases in in-commuting from elsewhere in the region.
- New jobs – building new homes creates significant numbers of new jobs in construction, in the supply chain and in related services such as shops and leisure centres.
- Increased spending power – new homes will bring new economically active families into Higher Walton, who will spend their disposable income in local shops and services. This will boost businesses and increase local vitality and the viability of local services and facilities.
- Increased revenue – the new homes will substantially increase Warrington Borough Council’s revenue base as a result of significant increases in Council Tax income.

Site Related Infrastructure

- Catchment population to help support new local centre.
- New areas of public open space.

BENEFITS AND INFRASTRUCTURE



The Site will provide a range of new and expanded infrastructure to ensure that the new development is sustainable and self-sufficient, has access to day-to-day services and facilities, and is capable of integrating successfully with the existing local community.



Community Benefits

This could include investment in:

- New recreational open spaces and play areas for children
- New school places and improved facilities for primary and secondary children
- Expanded health services, including more places in GP surgeries and dental practices
- New landscaping, including tree planting and wetland areas
- New and improved bus services and cycle lanes

Story Homes can confirm that the Site is:

- Available for development. Story Homes has an agreement with all of the landowners with an interest in the Site, to bring it forward for residential development (subject to its release from the Green Belt). There are no legal or ownership constraints to its delivery;
- Achievable and viable for residential development. It is located in a strong market area which experiences high demand for new homes and there are no overriding constraints which present an obstacle to delivery.

07 CONCLUSION



The emerging Local Plan recognises that Warrington must provide new homes both to meet the needs of its population and to underpin economic growth. Warrington Borough Council acknowledges that this cannot be achieved on brownfield land alone. Green Belt releases are essential.

This Vision Document sets out how the land at Runcorn Road, Higher Walton can provide a new, high quality residential development. It will provide attractive and well-built family homes as part of a sustainable natural and tranquil environment, integrated with new green and blue infrastructure. It will help Warrington to meet its growing and urgent housing needs.

The Site can be brought forward using a comprehensive masterplanning process, with significant involvement from both Warrington Borough Council and the existing local community.

This Vision Document provides the evidence to demonstrate that this Site in Higher Walton represents a logical and sustainable development opportunity where the exceptional circumstances to support its release from the Green Belt are clear. A number of technical assessments have confirmed that there are no physical constraints or other potential impacts or environmental conditions which could preclude the development of the Site for housing. The proposed development clearly accords with the three dimensions of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF.

NEXT STEPS

The Site is in the control of a well-known high quality housebuilder (Story Homes), and is considered suitable and deliverable within the first 5 years of the emerging Local Plan period.

Story Homes are committed to progressing the emerging Concept Masterplan towards a high quality residential development that responds to the local housing need, whilst taking into account and reflecting the character of the surrounding area, and ensuring the development of the Site would form a new defensible Green Belt boundary to the south west of Warrington.

Story Homes looks forward to working with Warrington Borough Council to progress the proposals for the Site.



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