



## PEEL HALL, WARRINGTON

### Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

Outline application for a new residential neighbourhood including C2 and C3 uses; local centre including food store up to 2000m<sup>2</sup>, A1-A5 (inclusive) and D1 use class units of up to 600m<sup>2</sup> total (with no single unit of more than 200m<sup>2</sup>) and family restaurant/ pub of up to 800m<sup>2</sup> (A3/ A4 use); site for primary school; open space including sports pitches with ancillary facilities; means of access and supporting infrastructure at Peel Hall, Warrington.

for

**SATNAM MILLENNIUM LIMITED**

March 2020 UPDATE

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## DOCUMENT CONTROL

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

- 1.1a This assessment has been updated from the original version dated March 2016. The updated issue of this report considers the new National Planning Policy Framework February 2019 and the Draft Local Plan 2019. The scheme's layout has also been altered following the public inquiry in 2019, these revisions are shown on the new Parameters Plan (**Appendix 2**). As part of this assessment, new viewpoint photographs have been retaken in 2019 to reflect any changes within the assessment area. Additional information and data has been gathered regarding highways, noise and air quality, providing new survey data and mitigation strategies, this has also been evaluated as part of this report.
- 1.1 Appletons were commissioned by Satnam Millennium Ltd to carry out a **Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment** in respect of a proposed new residential neighbourhood which would include up to 1,200 houses with new access, a neighbourhood centre, ecological enhancement and public open space, at Peel Hall, Warrington (hereafter referred to as 'the Site'). The site extends to approximately 69 hectares (170.5 acres). The application is outline seeking approval only for means of access at this stage, with all other matters reserved for subsequent approval. This assessment has been based on the illustrative masterplan and parameters plan which are to be submitted as part of the planning application. Though illustrative in nature these show the likely distribution of built form, infrastructure and retrained landscape features. The site is generally open grassland and scrub vegetation with mature hedges and trees along field boundary drains. There is a small woodland coppice with further mature vegetation surrounding sports pitches towards the eastern boundary.
- 1.2 The assessment identifies the baseline conditions for both landscape and visual amenity and seeks to identify the sensitivity of each before considering the change that the introduction of the proposed housing development and associated infrastructure and landscaping will produce. Potential landscape, character and visual impacts of the proposals are assessed together with any cumulative impacts and mitigation proposals to ameliorate such impacts should they occur are recommended.
- 1.3 Landscape assessment is the systematic description and analysis of the landscape resource, including physical features and elements of the landscape, of how their composition forms distinct areas of character, appraisal of quality and sensitivity, and the potential effect of the proposed development on the landscape. The elements may include landform, field and settlement patterns, building styles, road and transport patterns, vegetation cover and land use.
- 1.4 Visual assessment is the description and analysis of the views experienced by receptors from residential properties, public buildings, public open spaces, public rights of way, open access

areas, transport corridors and places of work, and the potential effect of the site on these receptors.

- 1.5 The nature of landscape and visual impacts is closely related to other topics such as ecology and the historic environment. Each of these topics can influence the landscape character of an area or contribute to the quality and sensitivity of landscape or visual receptors. The scope of this report has been developed in accordance with these topics in so far as information is available. Impact on any heritage assets is not included in this assessment.
- 1.6 Principles and good practice for undertaking LVIA are set out in the Landscape Institute (LI) and the Institute of Environmental Management (IEMA)- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (GLVIA, April 2013). The methodology used for this assessment is based upon this guidance. A summary of the methodology employed for this assessment are set out in Section 2 and in detail at **Appendix 1**. Where any deviation from the Guidelines occurs in order to appropriately undertake the assessment in a manner which provides clear evaluation, this will be justified, and an explanation provided (see section 2.0).
- 1.7 The assessment should be read in conjunction with the following drawings:  
Parameters Plan.  
Landscape Masterplan.  
Open Space Plan.

#### Site Visits

- 1.8 Site visits for the purposes of completing this report were made between February and November 2019 in order to survey the existing landscape and to assess both local landscape character and visual amenity, although previous visits to the site have been undertaken as part of the design team assessment during 2015 and 2017/18. The site visits were undertaken by Chartered Landscape Architects and included visits to the site itself, to significant and representative viewpoints, and to the remainder of the assessment area.

#### Definition of Assessment Area

- 1.9 The focussed study area shown on **Figure 12 – Visual Envelope with Viewpoint Locations**, was selected on a realistic and pragmatic basis as an approximate 3.0 kilometres radius from the centre of the site. Viewpoints where predicted impacts may be significant to a greater or lesser degree were assessed. Potential views from further distance were also assessed and discounted as being negligible or not feasible. The selected viewpoints were submitted to Simon Twigg of Warrington Borough Council on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2016 for verification and were agreed on the 27<sup>th</sup> January 2016. As part of this update additional further consultation was undertaken with Mike Davies of Warrington Borough Council in June 2019.

Individuals involved in preparing this Assessment

- 1.10 This assessment was undertaken by Appletons, landscape architects and environmental consultants, a Registered Practice of the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment. A Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute (CMLI) was directly involved in writing this assessment: David Appleton CMLI (Director) and Dave Starkie CMLI (Associate Director). Viewpoint photography, mapping and figures were taken and prepared by Dave Starkie CMLI and Stuart Walker CMLI (Landscape Architect).



## 2.0 METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 The site has been assessed in terms of the character, landscape and impacts of the proposed residential development on the existing site and the surrounding area. It has been carried out in accordance with the recommendations contained within the *'The Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact'* 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition published jointly in 2013 by The Landscape Institute (LI) and The Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA). The baseline condition of the site has therefore been established and an assessment of the positive and negative impacts in terms of landscape character, landscape effects and visual effects has been made.

### Definition of Assessment Area

- 2.2 The study area for the assessment has been identified through an interactive process in the early stages of this assessment. Baseline information and site survey work has addressed the site itself and the wider landscape around it which the proposed development may influence. This has enabled the refinement of an appropriate assessment area for specific landscape and visual effects. The study area for the assessment has also been defined by the physical characteristics of the landscape (including landform, vegetation and existing character studies), as well as a preliminary review of the proposed development. The study area is based on an approximate radius of 3.0 kilometres from the site's approximate centre, beyond which the proposed development is unlikely to result in significant impacts or effects. The spatial scope of this study area has been refined through the initial stages of the assessment to focus on the key sensitive receptors and likely significant effects. Viewpoints where predicted impacts may be significant to a greater or lesser degree have been assessed. Potential views from further distance were also assessed and discounted as being negligible or not feasible.

### Site survey/ visits and selection of viewpoints

- 2.3 The site and surrounding area were visited on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2019, previous sites visits have been undertaken in 2015, 2017 and 2018. Trees and vegetation were beginning to foliate but, evergreen vegetation provided some visual screening within the landscape. The surrounding road network was driven, and local public rights of way were walked. Positive and detracting elements in the landscape were recorded, as was the general land use and susceptibility and value/ quality of the site and surrounding area. Viewpoints were identified based on public viewpoints (public rights of way) and a best effort was made to establish where potential sensitive, partial and open views of the site could be observed. The selection of public vantage points from public rights of way and highways for the viewpoints used in the landscape and visual impact assessment has been arrived at using professional judgement and in accordance with *'The Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition'*. Private viewpoints (residential properties) were also considered where applicable and key distant viewpoints identified to determine the wider impact on the landscape and where development would have the potential to affect the value and character of existing views.

- 2.4 The surveys helped gain an understanding of existing landscape character and visual amenity receptors, and supplemented the available information collected during the desk study. The surveys also helped establish the likely effects of the developments and possible mitigation.

#### Visibility Mapping

- 2.5 No computer based visibility mapping techniques (i.e. ZTV) have been utilised as part of this assessment, however the visible envelope of the Site has been predicted through desk top analysis of topographical data combined with field surveys to assess prominence or screening arising from landform, vegetation and built form. Mapping of a Zone of Visual Influence (ZVI) has been prepared and included at **Fig 11 (Appendix 4)**.

#### Photographs

- 2.6 A daytime photographic survey of the site has been made using a prime (fixed) lens (AF-S NIKKRO 35mm 1:1.8G) on a digital SLR camera (Nikon D3100). This produces individual photographs with an approximate horizontal field of view of 40 degrees which are similar to those taken with a standard 35mm film camera and a 50mm fixed focal length lens and allows for images to be reproduced as close to that which is generally equivalent to the focal length of the human eye. Technical Guidance set out within the Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 06/19- Visual Representation of Development Proposals September 2019 has been followed. Previous Landscape Institute guidance was followed prior to the 2019 note, although tripod mounting and levelling to horizontal and vertical axes has not been employed, and any grid references (where given), are approximate. The majority of the photographs utilise a series of three frames stitched together using image software (Adobe Photoshop) to provide a representation of the views that receptors are likely to experience when observing a landscape and moving their head and eyesight across the view. These have then had minimal cropping to present a photomontage which can be viewed on an A3 paper size.

#### Methodology for assessment

- 2.7 The methodology seeks to use recognised, published industry standards and techniques to identify and describe a landscape and visual baseline. These are then used to ascribe a sensitivity to landscape receptors and determine the effect on visual receptors which may be altered through the introduction of the proposed development. Landscape and visual impacts and their effects are considered separately although the conclusion on sensitivity and impact will have regard to both these related areas of study and proposals made for the mitigation of that impact. The magnitude of change brought about through the proposed development is considered alongside the level of sensitivity for each landscape receptor or visual receptor and the level of landscape or visual effects is expressed as a combination of these two elements. The proposal site has been assessed for both Landscape and Visual effects based on the proposed residential development and associated infrastructure and open space only.

### Significance of Impacts

- 2.8 The significance of impacts has been determined by both the previous experience of the authors and other examples as set out in '*The Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*'. The detailed methodology adopted for this assessment is contained in **Appendix 1**, but as qualified by the above paragraphs.

## 2.9 DESCRIPTORS OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF LANDSCAPE EFFECTS CATEGORIES

Significance Category	Typical Descriptors of Effect
Major beneficial (positive) effect	<p>The project would provide an opportunity to enhance the landscape because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It fits very well with the scale, landform, pattern and appearance of the landscape.</li> <li>• There is potential, through mitigation or design, to create or enable the restoration of characteristic features and elements partially lost or diminished as the result of changes resulting from inappropriate management or development.</li> <li>• It enables a sense of place to be enhanced through good design and/ or well designed mitigation measures.</li> <li>• It facilitates national and local policy objectives to regenerate degraded countryside or urban areas.</li> </ul>
Moderate beneficial (positive) effect	<p>The project would provide an opportunity to enhance the landscape because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It fits very well with the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape.</li> <li>• There is potential, through mitigation, to enable the restoration of characteristic features and elements, partially lost or diminished as the result of changes resulting from intensive farming or inappropriate development.</li> <li>• It will enable a sense of place to be restored or enhanced through beneficial mitigation and sensitive design.</li> <li>• It furthers national and local policy objectives to regenerate degraded countryside or urban areas.</li> </ul>
Minor beneficial (positive) effect	<p>The project would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fit well with the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape by maintaining or enhancing the existing character.</li> <li>• Enable some sense of place to be restored through well designed mitigation measure.</li> <li>• Maintain or enhance existing landscape character.</li> <li>• Avoid conflict with national and local policy towards protection of the countryside or protection/ enhancement of urban areas.</li> </ul>
Negligible effect	<p>The project would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complement the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape.</li> <li>• Incorporate measure for mitigation to ensure that the project will blend in well with surrounding landscape features and elements.</li> <li>• Avoid having an adverse effect on the current level of tranquillity of the landscape.</li> <li>• Maintain existing landscape character and enable a sense of place to be retained though beneficial and sensitive design.</li> <li>• Avoid conflict with national and local policy towards protection of the countryside or protection/ enhancement of urban areas.</li> </ul>
Minor adverse (negative) effect	<p>The project would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not quite fit the landform, scale and pattern of the landscape.</li> <li>• Be unable to be completely mitigated because of the nature of the project itself or the character of the landscape.</li> <li>• Affect an area of recognised landscape quality.</li> <li>• Conflict with local authority policies for protecting the local character of the countryside of the protection/ enhancement of urban environments.</li> </ul>
Moderate adverse (negative) effect	<p>The project would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be out of scale with the landscape or conflict with the local pattern and landform.</li> <li>• Be unable to be fully mitigated (i.e. mitigation will not prevent the scheme from damaging the landscape in the longer term).</li> <li>• Have an adverse impact on a landscape of recognised quality or on vulnerable and important character feature or elements.</li> <li>• Be in conflict with national and local policies to protect open land and nationally recognised countryside, or to protect/ enhance the urban environment.</li> </ul>
Major adverse (negative) effect	<p>The project would be very damaging to the landscape because it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is at considerable variance with the landform, scale, pattern and appearance of the landscape.</li> <li>• Is likely to degrade, diminish or even destroy the integrity of a range of characteristic features and elements.</li> <li>• Will be substantially damaging to a high quality or highly valued landscape, causing it to change and be considerably diminished in quality.</li> <li>• Cannot be adequately mitigated.</li> <li>• Is in serious conflict with national and local policy for the protection of nationally recognized countryside or for the protection/ enhancement of the urban environment.</li> </ul>

## 2.10 DESCRIPTORS OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF VISUAL EFFECT CATEGORIES

Significance	Typical Criteria
Major Beneficial	The project would lead to a major improvement in a view from a highly sensitive receptor.
Moderate Beneficial	The proposals would cause obvious improvement to a view from a moderately sensitive receptor, or perceptible improvement to a view from a more sensitive receptor.
Minor Beneficial	The project would cause limited improvement to a view from a receptor of medium sensitivity, but would still be a noticeable element within the view, or would cause greater improvement to a view from a receptor of low sensitivity.
Negligible Beneficial	The project would not significantly change the view but would still be discernible, and the effect would be beneficial.
Neutral/Non	No change in the view.
Negligible Adverse	The project would not significantly change the view but would still be discernible, and the effect would be adverse.
Minor Adverse	The project would cause limited deterioration to a view from a receptor of medium sensitivity, or cause greater deterioration to a view from a receptor of low sensitivity, and would be a noticeable element in the view.
Moderate Adverse	The project would cause obvious deterioration to a view from a moderately sensitive receptor, or perceptible damage to a view from a more sensitive receptor.
Major Adverse	The project would cause major deterioration to a view from a highly sensitive receptor, and would constitute a major discordant or dominant element in the view.

### Desk Study

- 2.11 Within the study area, the relevant Local Plans and Local Authority guidance documents were reviewed to gain an understanding of the quality and sensitivity of the features and elements that contribute to landscape character and visual amenity.
- 2.12 Following the Natural England approach of a tiered method of landscape character assessment and analysis, reference has been made to published landscape assessments. These provide an objective assessment of landscape character and provide a useful description of the baseline position. Natural England's Countryside Map of England has been referred to for a broad understanding of landscape character at a regional scale. Where available, local authority landscape character assessments have also been referred to.
- 2.13 Ordnance Survey mapping (Scales 1: 50,000 and 1: 25,000) and aerial photography has been studied to gain a general understanding of landform, the location of any public rights of way and national cycle network routes and the extent and type of vegetation and land use.

2.14 The following principal sources of information and guidelines were used to inform the Assessment of Effects on the Landscape Resource and Visual Amenity:

Sources of Information

2.14.1 *Planning Policy*

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), February 2019;
- Warrington Borough Council Adopted Local Plan, July 2014;
- Warrington Borough Council Planning Obligation SPD, January 2017;
- Warrington Borough Council Draft Local Plan, 2019.

2.14.2 *Guidance*

- GLVIA3 'Guidance for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment', The Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Assessment 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition 2013;
- 'Landscape Character Assessment for England and Scotland', (The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage 2002);
- 'Visual Representation of Development Proposals' Technical Guidance Note 06/19. The Landscape Institute, September 2019.

2.14.3 *Advice*

- 'A Handbook on Environmental Impact Assessment – 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition', SNH, 2009.

2.14.4 *Background*

- OS Mapping;
- Aerial photographs of the site and surroundings;
- Topographical Survey data;
- and,
- Information regarding the proposed development provided by the client and commissioned consultants.

### 3.0 ASSESSMENT AREA AND BASELINE CONDITIONS

#### Location

- 3.1 The proposed site is located in north Warrington at a distance of 1.2 kilometres from the town centre of Warrington, centred at grid reference SJ 61438 91723. Other settlements are Newton-Le-Willows, at 5.0 kilometres to the north west, Padgate, at 2.5 kilometers to the south east, Birchwood at 4.0 kilometres east, Winwick at 0.75 kilometers to the north, and adjacent to Houghton Green (Mill Lane to the east). The location of the site is shown on **Figure 1**, and an Aerial View is attached as **Figure 2**. The local authority is Warrington Borough Council. According to 2017 council data, Warrington had an approximate population of 209,700.

#### Site Context

- 3.2 The site lies to the south of the M62 Motorway, which runs the entire length of the northern boundary. It is the main route between Manchester to Liverpool with links to the M6 and M57. The northern boundary to the site is formed by a 1.4 metre high timber fence and a band of vegetation that forms a barrier to the M62 motorway. Part of the boundary runs in cutting to the north east adjacent to semi mature trees. Beyond the motorway lies farmland continuing northwards towards the A49 Winwick Link Road and the village of Winwick.
- 3.3 The eastern boundary of the site is made up of residential properties of Mill Lane (Old Road) and Lockerbie Close/ Ballater Drive with a recreational ground linking through to Mill Lane, beyond which lies Houghton Green and the Warrington suburb of Cinnamon Brow. The majority of the north east boundary is formed by hedgerow vegetation and timber panel fences approximately 1.8 metres in height that forms the curtilage to modern residential properties.
- 3.4 The south to south eastern boundary is well vegetated with trees and scrub vegetation forming the edge of Radley Common, Radley Farm and Radley Plantation. This area includes an existing play area and Radley Common Community Centre. Beyond this and for the majority of the south to south western boundary to the site there exists the rear gardens of houses forming the residential suburb of Hulme, part of Warrington.

#### Public Access

- 3.5 A single public right of way passes through the site from Mill Lane to the north east, along Peel Cottage Lane and crosses the motorway on an over-bridge.

#### Site Description

- 3.6 A photographic survey of both the site and its surroundings was undertaken in May 2016 using a camera calibrated to the focal length of the human eye. The photograph viewpoints are identified on **Figure 7**. The site is generally open grassland and scrub vegetation with mature hedges and trees along field boundary drains (**Appendix 3**). There is a small woodland coppice

with further mature vegetation surrounding sports pitches towards the eastern boundary. A detailed assessment of the habitats and vegetation within the site is set out in separate ecological studies. The highest point of the site is to the east of Peel Hall at 20.57 metres A.O.D. From that point the land falls to the north west boundary at 17.4 metres A.O.D and to approximately 10 metres A.O.D along the southern boundary. The general visual impression gained on site is that it is predominantly flat without major undulations.

#### Buildings on Site

- 3.7 Peel Cottage and Peel Hall are both located on Peel Cottage Lane which is located to the north west of the site. Peel Cottage and Peel Hall are not included in this application.

#### Geology

- 3.8 The site lies within an area comprised of Triassic sandstones and mudstones.

#### Ecology

- 3.9 An Ecological Survey and Assessment was carried out by Appletons in September 2013 with various updates between in June 2014 and June 2016. A new suite of surveys has been undertaken in 2019. The findings of these studies can be found in a separate report. The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal habitat survey plan from that report is attached as **Figure 8**.

#### Archaeology and Heritage

- 3.10 An Archaeology Survey and Assessment was carried out by Nexus Heritage in May 2016. The findings of this study can be found in a separate report.

#### Landscape Designations

- 3.11 No statutory or non-statutory landscape designations apply to the site or its surroundings.

#### Agricultural Land Quality

- 3.12 The agricultural land classification of the site is assessed by DEFRA as Grade 2, 3a, 3b and 4. Soil quality on the site is indicated on **Figure 4** and is based on Natural England's interactive 'Magic Map' data. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF- February 2019) states that Local Planning Authorities should take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a high quality. In the Warrington area most of the agricultural land is of high quality. Current guidance therefore places the responsibility on the Local Planning Authorities, but there is no policy dealing with Agricultural Land Quality in the Warrington Core Strategy 2014. It should be noted that the land no longer forms part of an agricultural holding and has not been actively farmed for over 20 years. It is also remote from any other farm holding and subject to urban pressures.



## 4.0 PLANNING POLICY

### Current Planning Context

4.1 The Site has been assessed with regard to the current national and local planning authority planning policies.

### National Planning Policy Framework

4.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and presumes in favour of sustainable development unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

4.3 Sustainable development underpins the aspirations of the NPPF to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change. At Section 2 paragraph 8 the NPPF sets out three overarching objectives:

- *“an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;*
- *a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and*
- *an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.”*

4.4 At Section 12 'Achieving well-designed places' the NPPF states in paragraph 127 that planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments:

- *“Will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
- *Are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*
- *Are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change;*

- *Establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangements of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;*
- *Optimise the potential of the Site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and*
- *Create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.”*

### Green Infrastructure

- 4.5 Green Infrastructure is the network of green spaces, water bodies, biodiversity habitats, and other natural elements that surround, pass through, and link the settlements and landscapes, connecting the cities, towns and villages in the borough. Section 15 paragraph 171 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out that local plans should “*take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure*”. The NPPF also sets out that Green Infrastructure should be used to help mitigate the effects of climate change in vulnerable areas. Government advice in respect of Green Infrastructure provision is set out in paragraphs 4 to 8 of Planning Practice Guidance updated July 2019.

### Development Plan Policies

- 4.6 The Development Plan for Warrington comprises the Core Strategy adopted in July 2014. Policies relevant to landscape issues are as follows:

#### **Policy QE3 Green Infrastructure:**

*‘The Council will work with partners to develop and adopt an integrated approach to the provision, care and management of the borough’s Green Infrastructure. Joint working and the assessment of applications will be focussed on;*

- *protecting existing provision, and the functions this performs;*
- *including local networks and corridors, especially where this helps to mitigate the causes of and impacts of climate change;*
- *improving the quality of existing provision including local networks and corridors, specifically to increase its attractiveness as a sport, leisure and recreation opportunity and its value as a habitat for bio-diversity.*
- *Protecting and improving access to and connectivity between existing and planned provision to develop a continuous right of way and greenway network and integrated ecological systems.*

**Policy QE7 ensuring a High Quality Place:**

*The council will look positively upon proposals which are designed to:*

- *be sustainable, durable, adaptable and energy efficient,*
- *create inclusive accessible and safe environments,*
- *function well in relation to existing patterns of movement and activity,*
- *reinforce local distinctiveness and enhance the character, appearance and function of the street scene, local area and wider town scape,*
- *harmonise with the scale, proportions and materials of adjacent and or existing buildings,*
- *maintain and respect the landscape character and, where appropriate, distinctiveness of the surrounding countryside,*
- *use the density and mix of development to optimise the potential of the site without damaging the character of the area and,*
- *be visually attractive as the result of good architecture and the inclusion of appropriate public space.*

Draft Local Plan

- 4.7 The Draft Plan for Warrington (Warrington Proposed Submission Version Local Plan 2017-2037) is currently concluding the consultation process. Peel Hall is allocated for development in this plan. Policies relevant to landscape issues are as follows:

**Policy DC3 Green Infrastructure:**

Development Proposals affecting Green Infrastructure

5. *All development proposals should, as appropriate to their nature and scale:*
- a. *protect existing green infrastructure and the functions this performs;*
  - b. *increase the functionality of existing and planned green infrastructure especially where this helps to mitigate the causes of and addresses the impacts of climate change;*
  - c. *improve the quality of existing green infrastructure, including local networks and corridors, specifically to increase its attractiveness as a sport, leisure and recreation opportunity and its value as a habitat for biodiversity;*
  - d. *protect and improve access to and connectivity between existing and planned green infrastructure to develop a continuous right of way and greenway network and integrated ecological system/ network;*
  - e. *secure new green infrastructure in order to cater for anticipated increases in demand arising from development particularly in areas where there are existing deficiencies assessed against standards set by the Council in accordance with Policy DC5; and*
  - f. *provide long-term management arrangements for new and enhanced green infrastructure within development sites.*

### **Policy DC6 Quality of Place:**

Sections relevant to landscape are as follows:

- a. *Respect existing local character within the surrounding built environment, and where appropriate the landscape setting, having regard to density, street layouts, scale, height and massing;*
- c. *Provide for new open space and landscaping which enhances and/ or provides mitigation against loss of biodiversity and assists with the physical and visual integration of new development;*
- f. *Ensure there is no unacceptable adverse impact on the amenity of neighbouring occupants or adjacent land users, including by reason of overlooking;*
  - c. *Be inclusive and accessible to all and promote permeability by creating places that connect with each other and with existing services and are easy to move through.*
- b. *Ensure that new open space is accessible, safe, overlooked and strategically located within the site;*
- c. *Incorporating Secured by Design principles, whilst ensuring that these are adequately balanced against other design principles and do not undermine the quality of development.*

### **Section 10 Main Development Areas and Site Allocations:**

#### **Policy MD4 Land at Peel Hall:**

Sections relevant to landscape are as follows:

- 3. *The masterplan must confirm to the requirements of Policy MD4, be informed by a Green Infrastructure Strategy, a site wide Surface Water and Foul Water Strategy and a Transport Assessment, agreed with the Highway Authority. It should also be subject to consultation with statutory consultees and the local community.*
- 6. *The replacement playing pitches must be operational before any development can commence on the existing Mill Lane playing fields site.*
- 26. *A Green Infrastructure Strategy should be prepared as part of the masterplan for the development in order to ensure the provision of an accessible, comprehensive and high quality network of multi-functional green spaces.*
- 27. *In accordance with the Council's open space standards the overall provision of open space for the new residential development should include as a minimum:*
  - a. *Public open space – Delivery of a minimum of 12.14ha of open space, comprising 1.52ha of informal play space; 5.52ha of natural/ semi-natural green space and 0.19ha of allotments (comprising 8 plots).*
  - b. *Equipped play – Delivery of provision equating to 0.7ha (aligned to LEAP and NEAP's) together with details of the management and maintenance arrangements.*

- c. Provision of additional 4.4ha of playing pitches and ancillary facilities in additional to the replacement of the existing pitches from Mill Lane.*
- 28. There should be a major new park as part of the development to provide a proportion of the open space and recreational needs of the development as well as providing a wider resource for north Warrington and protecting and enhancing biodiversity.*
- 29. Smaller areas of open space should be provided across all of the residential areas throughout the development.*
- 31. The Green Infrastructure Strategy should demonstrate how development within the urban extension will protect and enhance existing wildlife corridors and provide new corridors to link the site into Warrington's wider ecological network.*
- 32. The layout of the urban extension should take account of existing landscape features, specifically Radley Plantation, as well as including watercourses, woodlands and significant hedgerows.*

## 5.0 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

5.1 The site falls within National Character Area 60 prepared by Natural England as part of an assessment of a nationwide study of landscape character. It is described as a *'wide, low lying river valley landscape focusing on the River Mersey – a varied landscape extending from the Mosslands near the Manchester Conurbation NCA to the Merseyside NCA.'* Warrington Borough Council prepared a more localised and detailed landscape assessment in 2007. In their study, which analyses the landscape of the Borough as a series of landscape types, the Site falls within Type 1 'Undulating Enclosed Farmland' and sub-area 1C, covering Winwick, Culcheth, Glazebrook and Rixton. The sub-area is described as *'undulating enclosed farmland with medium to large scale field pattern.'* Abstracts from both the National and Local character studies are included in **APPENDIX 4**.

5.2 The landscape character of the site is not consistent with the assessment prepared by Warrington Borough Council. It is currently unused open land previously used for agriculture but this use has now ceased. The land is flat, not undulating. It could be better described as urban fringe. It includes a small plantation of trees and unmanaged hedgerows, though the land is generally open in character. A network of ditches is present on the site. Within the site three distinct sub-zones can be identified as follows:

### Western Zone

5.3 The land to the west of the site is distinctly urban fringe in character strongly influenced by the adjacent urban development. The previous farmland appears neglected and there is little vegetation apart from unmanaged grassland.

### Central Zone

5.4 The central area of the site is more open. It is heavily influenced both in visual terms and audibly by the M62 motorway which is at grade at this point. The motorway is illuminated and the lighting columns and traffic using the motorway dominate.

### Eastern Zone

5.5 The eastern zone is by contrast with the other two, smaller in scale due to the size of redundant field parcels and enclosure given by tree and hedge cover. The motorway is in cutting at that point and traffic noise and visual intrusion is less obvious. The adjacent residential areas influence the character of the site at that point.

### The Character of Adjacent Landscape

5.6 The character of land immediately to the north beyond the M62 is semi-rural farmland though this land does have affinity with Type 1 in the Warrington study. It also, however is influenced by urban features including the settlement of Winwick at a distance of 1.2 kilometres and the

motorway itself, which is illuminated and at grade with the adjacent landform. To the south, west and east the predominant land use is residential with areas of public open space.

### **Susceptibility to change**

- 5.7 The susceptibility to change of the landscape has also been considered. This is the ability of the landscape (whether it be the overall character or condition of a particular landscape type, or individual features/ elements or a particular aesthetic and perceptual aspect) to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation and the achievement of wider landscape policies or strategies. The development proposed for the Site would bring about the loss of grassland and would obviously change its character to an area of housing. However, the addition of new elements and given the size and scale of the development in relation to those within the immediate locality to the south, it would not affect the character of the wider landscape to the north. Change would occur due to the proposed development, it would be reversible but this would only be perceptible to a low degree. The **Susceptibility to change is therefore considered negligible to low.**
- 5.8 The site has the ability to absorb change particularly due to the enclosed nature of the boundaries and allow the process of development without impacting adversely on adjacent landscapes given the appropriate retention of natural landscape features such as the ponds and associated vegetation. The site is currently in private ownership without formal public access.

### **Landscape Value**

- 5.9 'Valued landscapes' are not defined within National Planning Guidance, though great weight is given to landscapes with statutory protection (paragraph 170 of the NPPF). In terms of the value attached to the character of the application Site the following criteria was used to arrive at an informed judgement. The approach is based upon the recommendations given in Box 5.1 (on page 84 of the LVIA Guidelines).
- Landscape quality
  - Scenic quality
  - Rarity
  - Representativeness
  - Conservation interests
  - Recreation value
  - Perceptual aspects
  - Associations
- 5.10 A finer grain assessment of the site and immediate locality can be undertaken with consideration given to the following:
- The components of the landscape – elements and landscape features such as evidence of recreational use e.g. public rights of way;

- The aesthetic and perceptual aspects of the landscape – scale, complexity, openness, tranquillity or wilderness;
- The overall character of the landscape created by particular combinations of these.

5.11 The existing landscape of the site has been considered and assessed in terms of the features and components both natural and man-made that combine to give structure, form and detail to the character of the landscape. The Site does not have any landscape designation. There are no valued views or current cultural associations with the site. There is no authorised pedestrian access to the main body of the site other than the public right of way which crosses the motorway and follows Peel Cottage Lane in the north east corner. The site and the immediate surrounding area are not specifically detailed in any of the published character assessments. There is a lack of tranquillity due to its close association with settlement edge. There are no intrinsic or strong sensory features and there is a lack of complexity, although some of the trees, brook and pond features offer amenity interest, screening and enclosure to the site. The landscape is therefore judged as **low in value** and **ordinary in quality and condition**.

#### **Landscape Sensitivity**

5.12 In conclusion, the classification of the existing landscape within the National and Warrington Landscape Character Assessments does not really apply, other than the small scale field pattern and hedgerow enclosure. The ability of the site to accept new development is considered high with no natural or heritage designations on the land. There is scope for mitigation and landscape enhancement particularly to reinforce the vegetated boundaries. The application site is judged to be tolerant of change with **landscape sensitivity considered to be low to medium**.

#### **The Impact of the Proposed Development on Landscape Character**

5.13 The character of the Site itself would obviously change significantly from open farmland to predominantly residential development. In terms of the impact on the character of land to the north this is considered to be negligible due to the lack of inter-visibility and the dominant presence of the M62 motorway which forms a visual and physical barrier between the two. The impact on the character of the existing development to the east, south and west is also **considered to be negligible** since again the site is not prominent in views from the public domain and in any event the proposed land use would be similar.



## 6.0 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

6.1 The application site is proposed for residential development comprising of up to 1,200 dwellings together with a local centre including a food store (A1 and A5 uses), healthcare (D1) and a family pub (A4). The site will also contain a primary school site and open space provision including sports pitches with ancillary facilities, together with means of access and buffer planting zones. The total site area is circa 69 hectares (170.5 acres).

6.2 A number of urban design principles have been considered in the formulation of the proposals at this stage. These are:

- To create a high quality residential area that is set among retained trees and the hedgerows to existing boundaries.
- To create well defined streets and spaces.
- To provide good pedestrian and cycle links to the adjacent town.
- To retain the natural features within the site such as the ponds, ditches, existing mature trees and hedges with a substantial area of amenity open space.

A Parameters Plan which demonstrates the approach to development and upon which this assessment is made is attached to this report as **APPENDIX 2**.

## 7.0 CONSIDERATION OF EFFECTS

7.1 The impact is considered in terms of (A), landscape impacts – the irreversible loss of natural features such as habitats and vegetation, (B) visual impact as the result of the development on a range of receptors and (C) any adverse change in the character of the landscape. In summary the findings of the LVIA for the construction and completion/ operational phases are set out in the following sections.

7.2 Full details of the methodology used for the preparation of this assessment are provided in **Appendix 1**.

### **Predicting, describing and assessing Landscape Effects**

7.3 In considering the effects on the landscape the degree of change in respect of the loss or impact on natural landscape assets such as trees or hedges, manmade features such as walls or the modification of the topography and quality of existing features which also contribute to landscape character of the site and surrounding environment is assessed. This is known as '*landscape impact*'.

### Identifying landscape receptors and interactions with the proposals

7.4 Landscape receptors are those components of the landscape that are likely to be affected by the proposed development and can include key characteristics, individual elements and features and specific aesthetic and perceptual aspects. The interaction or impact of the different components of the proposed development at all its different stages between the landscape receptors is identified.

### Susceptibility to change

7.5 The susceptibility to change has also been considered as part of the quality of the landscape. This is the ability of the landscape (whether it be the overall character or condition of a particular landscape type, or individual features/ elements or a particular aesthetic and perceptual aspect) to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation and the achievement of landscape policies or strategies.

### Establishing value

7.6 Individual elements, and/ or aesthetic/ perceptual aspects and/ or statements relating to landscape conservation which may be noted in Landscape Character Assessments are often taken as indicators of the value of the landscape. The condition is also a determinant of value. The condition of the different landscape types or areas including evidence for change in that condition is also assessed. The fact that an area is not designated either nationally or locally does not mean it does not have value. Conversely, just because an area is popular within a

local situation does not mean that it has intrinsic value. Value also needs to be weighed against other criteria to assess the landscape's merit in terms of designation.

Landscape sensitivity

7.7 Sensitivity of the landscape is the judgement on the combined susceptibility of the landscape to the particular type of change or development proposed, and the value attached to the landscape. This is expressed in this assessment as high, medium, low or negligible.

SENSITIVITY OF LANDSCAPES		
Sensitivity of landscape receptor =	Value attached to landscape receptor +	Designations attached to landscape character types or areas which may be affected and their national, regional, local importance.
		Landscape quality (condition)
		Scenic quality
		Rarity or representativeness
		Conservation heritage assets
		Recreational value
		Notable perceptual qualities
	Associations with art or literature	
	Susceptibility of landscape receptor to change	The ability of the landscape receptor to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline and/ or landscape planning policy or strategy.
<b>Overall judgement in respect of sensitivity:</b> This is expressed in this assessment as high, medium, low or negligible depending on the combination of circumstances.		

Landscape Effects

7.8 Landscape effects may include:

- The degree of change in and/ or partial or complete loss of elements, features, or aesthetic or perceptual characteristics that contribute to the character and distinctiveness of the existing landscape resource;
- The addition of new elements or features that will influence the character and distinctiveness of the landscape;
- The combined effect of these to changes in overall character.
- Effects may be beneficial, neutral or adverse and a judgment is made taking account:
  - the degree to which the proposals fit with existing character;
  - the contribution to the landscape the development may make in its own right, even if in contrast to that character.

7.9 The magnitude of change is assessed in accordance with the criteria contained in **Table E within Appendix 1** and summarised below.

MAGNITUDE OF CHANGE WITHIN LANDSCAPES		
<b>Magnitude of landscape effects =</b>	<b>Size and scale of changes</b> +	Extent of existing landscape elements that contribute to character that will be lost.
		Degree to which the proposal fits in with or changes existing character.
		The contribution made to the landscape by the scheme by virtue of good design, and its relationship to existing character.
	<b>Geographical Extent</b> +	Extent of geographical area over which effects are felt e.g. at site level; with the immediate setting of the site; at the scale of a landscape type or character area; effects spread over a wider area.
<b>Duration of effects</b>	Short term: 0-5 years, medium term: 5-10 years, long term: 10-25 years; Consideration of reversibility and changes which will occur over time.	
<b>Overall judgement in respect of magnitude of landscape effect:</b> This is expressed in this assessment as high, medium, low or negligible depending on the combination of circumstances.		

#### Significance of landscape effect

7.10 The correlation between sensitivity and magnitude of effect is determined in a considered way and the significance will be described as Major, Moderate, Minor or Negligible, and as either Beneficial, Adverse or Neutral depending on the circumstances.

#### **Predicting, describing, assessing Visual Effects**

7.11 The '*visual impact*' of the proposed development on the general public is assessed. Such impacts could be the result of visual intrusion into an important viewpoint or the direct obstruction of views into the wider landscape. Visual receptors that have a greater awareness of the view, such as walkers and residential occupiers will notice the introduction of new features more than those who are not absorbing it. However, it must be remembered that in respect of residential occupiers that within planning law there is no right to a view. The distance of the viewpoint from the proposed site, the duration of the impact, the scale and massing of the proposed development and the elevation of the proposed feature from the viewpoint are all assessed to determine the degree of impact.

#### Susceptibility of visual receptors

7.12 The following are relevant when assessing the significance of the impact on visual amenity:

- The receptor's sensitivity and activity type. Receptors that have greater awareness of the view such as walkers, will notice the introduction of new features more than those who are not actively absorbing the view;

- The distance of the viewpoint from the proposed site. The greater the distance of the viewpoint from the feature the less detail is observable, and it becomes more difficult to distinguish the feature from the background;
- The duration of the perceived impact, the number of potential receptors will increase as the duration of the impact increases;
- The scale and degree of the proposed scheme, the greater the proportion of the view that is taken up by the proposed feature the greater the impact. Proposed features that would include considerable movement will result in an increased negative impact;
- Seasonal effects;
- The elevation of the proposed feature from the viewpoint and if the proposed features are viewed against the sky, then the impact will be greater than if the feature is viewed against a background;
- The proportion of the development that is visible.

Value attached to a view

7.13 Judgements are made about the quality and value attached to the views experienced, taking into account various factors. These include views that are recognised through a relationship with heritage or inclusion within planning documentation/ development framework and the value attached to the view as signified by appearance in literature, guide books, interpretative material or on literature or art.

*Visual sensitivity*

7.14 Sensitivity of the landscape is the judgement on the combined susceptibility of the receptor to the particular type of change or development proposed, and the value attached to the views. This is expressed in this assessment as high, medium and low.

7.15 The sensitivity of the receptor often takes into account the following:

- Number of users;
- Frequency of use;
- Period of use;
- Focus of attention on the landscape.

SENSITIVITY OF VIEWS AND VIEWPOINTS		
Sensitivity of views and viewers =	Value attached to a view +	Relationship to heritage assets or planning designations.
		Indicators of value in publications, maps or art etc.
	Susceptibility of viewer to change	Occupation or activity of viewer.
		Extent to which their attention is focussed on the view.
<b>Overall judgement in respect of sensitivity:</b> This is expressed in this assessment as high, medium, low or negligible depending on the combination of circumstances.		

#### *Magnitude of visual effect*

Effects are assessed and described for each receptor with reference to representative and/ or specific viewpoint. The size of scale, extent and duration and reversibility of the change in the view are assessed.

- 7.16 The magnitude of change is assessed in accordance with the criteria in **TABLE J in Appendix I** and as summarised below.

MAGNITUDE OF CHANGE TO VIEWS		
Magnitude of visual effects =	Size and scale of changes +	Loss or addition of feature and changes in composition, including consideration of proportion of view affected, and whether it will be full, partial or glimpsed.
		Degree of contrast or integration with the landscape setting, including the design of the scheme and its visual qualities.
		Permanence of the view and its changes over time.
	Geographical extent +	Angle of view compared to activity of main receptor.
		Distance of viewer from the development.
		Extent of area over which changes are visible (including lengths of footpaths etc.).
	Duration of effects	Short, medium, long term and reversibility.
<b>Overall judgement in respect of magnitude of landscape effect:</b> This is expressed in this assessment as high, medium, low or negligible depending on the combination of circumstances.		

- 7.17 The correlation between sensitivity and magnitude of effect is determined to give the significance of landscape effect.

### Character Effects

- 7.18 An assessment to establish the '*character impact*' is made to assess the degree of change affecting both the site and the wider environs. Adverse changes in landscape character can occur as the result of the loss of landscape features which are acknowledged components of local distinctiveness, or the construction of new features that do not match those that already exist.
- 7.19 To assess the significance of the potential effects/ impacts the degree or magnitude of change (sometimes referred to as the nature of change), both adversely and beneficially, acting on the baseline conditions and the sensitivity of receptors is objectively considered. This is considered with and without mitigation based on prescribed criteria.

## 8.0 SIGNIFICANT LANDSCAPE EFFECTS

### Construction Phase

8.1 The following section reviews the potential effects of the proposed development during the construction phase on landscape features and resources. For the purpose of this assessment the construction phase will commence in Year 1 of development with the construction of access to the site, and the provision of services. After this period the proposed new access roads would be opened and construction of buildings would commence. It is anticipated that the development would take 14 years in a series of phases to complete, though this would depend on the housing market, and thus there would be an overlap of construction and operational phases.

### Land Use

8.2 There would be a loss of agricultural land which would be irreversible. There is no current government guidance for determining the significance of such a loss. It is considered however that this loss would be balanced by the planning benefits of housing provision in accordance with current policy contained within the NPPF. The agricultural resource is isolated and no longer used for that purpose, and in a landscape context is considered to be of **low sensitivity**. In mitigation and in accordance with current Government Guidance a soil conservation strategy would be put in place to maximise the re-use of topsoil resources and protect it from consolidation and/ or contamination during the construction phase of development. There will be an alteration of land use on the Site which will be of a local scale and permanent.

***The magnitude of impact is large.***

***The likely significance of effect is therefore low to moderate adverse.***

8.3 In terms of other landscape features such as watercourses and vegetation, they would be retained and enhanced. The significance of impact for those features would be therefore **neutral**.

### Topography and Landform

8.4 Development is proposed on a relatively flat site and it is envisaged there would be negligible cut and fill required. The preparation of the Site levels will require removal and storage of topsoil in appropriate locations to avoid visual disturbance and for soil conservation. The topography of the Site is considered to be of **low sensitivity to change**. There will be a very minor alteration to site levels which will be direct, permanent and of local scale.

***The magnitude of change is very small.***

***The likely significance of the effect is therefore none to negligible.***



### Vegetation

8.5 Vegetation resources on the Site include the hedgerow boundaries and broadleaved trees. The access to the site will require the removal of a number of young trees, poor quality broadleaved woodland and small sections of hedgerow. Small sections of hedgerow will have to be removed to give access into the various parcels of development. All other hedgerows and existing trees will be retained. Most of the grassland component of the site has no nature conservation value. The north-west parcel is semi-improved and as such has some nature conservation value, as do the ponds but in the context of the whole site, the habitat is considered to be of **low sensitivity**.

***The magnitude of change during construction will be medium.***

***The likely significance of effect is therefore minor – moderate adverse.***

### Hydrology

8.6 It is envisaged that SUDS will be incorporated within the proposals subject to development at the detailed stage, together with the retention of most of the ditch network and all of the ponds.

### Mitigation Measures

8.7 The construction phase would bring about changes to the landscape and visual amenity. Whilst some of these are inevitable, and of a temporary nature, it would be beneficial to provide mitigation. The phasing of onsite operations would ensure that proposed screening and assimilation features, such as tree planting to the northern boundary to give visual screening to the motorway would be undertaken at the earliest practicable opportunity and within year 1 of commencement of the construction phase. The physical construction of the proposed 1,200 houses and associated development over 14 years would also allow the establishment of the screen planting prior to the entire site being operational. It is anticipated that detailed mitigation proposals would be subject to planning conditions imposed on Reserved Matters planning applications for individual development parcels, but in general terms the following principles would apply.

- a) The sensitive location of storage areas and the utilisation of existing screening afforded by vegetation would be utilised to mitigate any potential short term adverse effects of the storage of materials, plant and machinery.
- b) To ensure protection of those features appropriate protection and management of existing vegetation during the construction phase would be undertaken in line with recognised best practice.

### **Operational Phase**

8.8 For the purposes of the assessment the operational phase is classified as the period when all the new buildings, infrastructure and associated landscape works have been completed. Predicted impacts are likely to be **long term and irreversible** in this phase. The following

assessments are based on the consideration of the proposals as a whole, including the new access, the internal road and footpath system, the movement of vehicles within the site and the night time impacts of lighting on the wider landscape.

Vegetation:

- 8.9 Following completion of the development, the landscape strategy will include tree and hedgerow planting internally and strengthening of the M62 boundary with the proposed habitat creation area. All using locally prevalent native species and planting arrangements that reflect the character of the Site's context and help to integrate and assimilate the proposed development into the wider landscape. Substantial numbers of new trees, including specimen and infrastructure trees will be planted on boundaries and within the proposed areas of amenity green space.
- 8.10 The vegetation is considered to be of **low sensitivity** to change. However, this would be offset by the addition of extensive new vegetation representing a **high magnitude of impact and leading over time to a likely significance of effect of medium beneficial**.

Hydrology:

- 8.11 The existing ponds, will be retained and enhanced. Most of the existing ditch network will be retained and utilised as part of a SUDS system.  
**The magnitude of change will be none.**  
**The likely significance of effect is therefore minor beneficial.**
- 8.12 **Within 5-10 years the significance of effect is judged to reduce to minor adverse.**

## 9.0 CHARACTER EFFECTS (construction and completion phases)

- 9.1 The character of the Site itself bears little relationship to either the national or local published character assessments. It is both physically and visually divorced from open land to the north of the motorway and has a flat, rather rolling topography. In the context of this study it is considered to be urban fringe. As the predominant use and character to the south, east and west of the site is residential and it is strongly influenced to the north by the M62 motorway. There would be **neutral** impact on the character of the residential areas. The land to the north beyond the M62 is rural in character. However, there is no significant inter-visibility between the Site and land to the north. Any impact of the development on land to the north, which is already visually influenced by the M62 motorway would be mitigated by screen planting undertaken during the early stages of development and would be **negligible adverse**.

## 10.0 SIGNIFICANT VISUAL EFFECTS

### Susceptibility of Visual Receptors

- 10.1 The susceptibility of visual receptors to change has been considered including the interest and focus of walkers, cyclists and horse riders of the local lanes and the highway footpaths around the Site. These are generally considered to have a *high susceptibility* to change since they are able to take in views in the course of their activity.

The residents of the community looking over the Site from the west, located on Elm Road, Birch Avenue, Poplars Avenue, Newhaven Road, Windermere Avenue, Lockerbie Close, Radley Lane, Mill Lane and Peel Hall are considered to have a *high susceptibility to change*. However, residents cannot protect the view that they have from their house or land, unless it would result in a loss of amenity, and in this instance the views from private properties would be of a similar land use.

- 10.2 Vehicle users on the local road network in the vicinity of the Site have also been considered. As the focus of attention is on driving, the scenic quality is not as prominent, although road users approaching the Site from the north-east would appreciate a change to their current baseline view, particularly during the construction phase. They are considered to be of **low susceptibility**.

- 10.3 There are no schools or hospitals within viewing distance of the Site. Though the Site is located adjacent to Radley Common (central) and a Fairview NHS Centre (west). These facilities are considered to have a **high susceptibility to change**.

### Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

- 10.4 The *visual sensitivity* of receptors has been judged through a combination of the susceptibility of visual receptors to change and the value attached to views. These judgments are detailed in the **Viewpoints at APPENDIX 6** but are summarised as follows:

- Walkers, cyclists and horse riders using the local lanes are considered to have **medium** sensitivity to change since they are potentially very highly susceptible to change, but the views affected are of no great quality.
- Residents within dwellings are considered to have **low** sensitivity, despite their susceptibility to change is high, they are private views.
- Motorised road users are considered to have **low** sensitivity to change since the duration of the view is limited and the views affected are of no great quality.

Visual impacts

- 10.5 Within the following section reference should be made to **the Visual Envelope Map (Figure 5)** and the **Viewpoints (APPENDIX 6)**. Visual impacts could occur as the result of visual intrusion into an important or valued viewpoint and/ or the partial or full obstruction of views into the wider landscape, and/ or change in composition of rural views to that of suburban housing. The distance of the viewpoint from the proposed site, the duration of the impact, the scale and massing of the proposed development and the elevation of the proposed feature from the viewpoint are all assessed to determine the magnitude of the impact and the significance of the effect. Visual amenity is defined within the GLVIA 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition as the overall pleasantness of the views that people enjoy of their surroundings. Significant views to the proposed development on the application Site would be limited to adjacent residential dwellings to the west, east and south, and the public footpath that crosses the Site. It is acknowledged that there would be increased prominence of the Site with new buildings and infrastructure visible from certain close range viewpoints.

Visibility Mapping

- 10.6 The Visual Envelope of the Site has been identified based on field analysis and with reference to existing screening, including built structures and vegetation identified from mapping and air photography. The Visual Envelope is indicative of the part of the landscape from which views of the proposed development might be gained. It does not imply that views would be possible from all points within the area delineated nor does it indicate that all the developments might be seen or that the development would be highly perceivable. Photographic viewpoints have generally been taken from within this Visual Envelope **(Figure 5)**.
- 10.7 The visual envelope of the Site is constrained to the east, west and south by existing urban form and vegetation along the Site boundary. To the north, the M62 and beyond field boundaries with hedgerow trees and maturing tree planting associated with Winnick Link Road and Delph Lane limit potential views. To the south and east views are contained by the current residential development, and at low level screened by boundary hedge planting. To the west, views are limited to those that can be gained from residential development located at Elm Road, Birch Avenue and Newhaven Road. To the east the development would be seen from residential properties located from Mill Lane, Radley Lane, Ballater Drive, Lockerbie Close and Peel Cottage Lane.

Public access

- 10.8 There is no authorised pedestrian access to the main body of the Site other than the public right of way which crosses the motorway and follows Peel Cottage Lane in the north-east corner. Views of the Site from the pedestrian over-bridge to the M62 motorway are panoramic of the whole the Site **(APPENDIX 6, viewpoint 6 and 7)**. These views would be very difficult to screen. This would be a short experience of a longer route, however. In the section leading the

southern base of the motorway footbridge the track is well screened from the main body of the Site and views are limited. The adjacent vegetation would be retained. Beyond the motorway to the north possible views of the Site diminish with distance. (**APPENDIX 6, viewpoints 15, 16, 17, 18 and 23**). Views of the Site from that direction are restricted to the central area of the Site. To the east and west the Site is screened by motorway embankment and mature trees within the curtilage of the motorway itself. After the screen planting has been carried out, views from the north would be obscured. It is considered that the residual visual impact on public footpaths would be minor.

Views from residential properties

- 10.9 Views will be possible from residential properties to the west, south and east of the Site. They are mostly from the rear elevations and or gardens.

**West**

Elm Road 14no.  
Birch Avenue 2no.  
Poplars Avenue 18no.

**Central**

Newhaven Road 82no.  
Windermere Avenue 44no.  
(24no. would overlook proposed open space)

**East**

Lockerbie Close 4no. (gable on)  
Radley Lane 4no. + Peel Hall  
Mill Lane 2no.  
Ballater Drive 15no. + 1no. gable on

These are private viewpoints however.

*The magnitude of change during construction will be high.*

*The change will be not so great to incur a loss of amenity and the likely significance during construction is therefore **moderate adverse**.*

Views from highways

- 10.10 Users of the M62 motorway would be aware of construction works to the central area of the northern part of the Site, where it is at grade and where clear views are possible until screen planting has established. However, motorists and their passengers would be travelling at speed and would have oblique views. In any event, views from roads are not considered to be 'sensitive'. There are no other significant views from highways into the body of the Site, though

construction works to form vehicular access points into the Site would be obvious from Mill Lane, Poplars Avenue and Birch Avenue. The residual impact on highway users is considered to be minor prior to mitigation and negligible following the establishment of screen planting.

Users of the Amenity Space/ Playing Fields to the East and South of the Site

- 10.11 Users of open space and playing fields are considered to be sensitive visual receptors. Views into the Site from the existing playing fields to the east are partially screened by boundary vegetation (**Appendix 6 viewpoints 12 and 20**). Views from the recreation ground to the south-east are again screened by boundary vegetation and by the Radley Plantation (**Figure 8 photograph 8**). The residual impact on users of amenity open space is considered to be neutral, and in any event these playing fields are to be relocated as part of the overall proposals.

Employment Uses

- 10.12 Workers and visitors to commercial enterprises are considered to have **low** sensitivity to change since their views are not focussed on their surroundings.

**Assessment of Visual Effects and Magnitude of Change**

Construction Phase

- 10.13 The visual impacts of both the construction and operational phases have been assessed. During construction work, there would inevitable indirect effects on the visual amenity of possible receptors. Construction activities would be visible to a greater or lesser degree from within the identified visual envelope and are likely to comprise:
- Construction traffic associated with the draining and removal of the lagoon;
  - Excavation works and stockpiling of soils;
  - Site hoarding/ perimeter protection fencing;
  - Signage;
  - Construction traffic and flashing hazard lights;
  - Temporary site infrastructure including porta cabins and haulage routes;
  - The gradual construction of built form;
  - Site plant and large or tall scale machinery.
- 10.14 There would be a gradual change in the scale of development throughout the construction phase. The sensitivity of the receptors is varied with low to high sensitivity both in proximity to the Site and in the wider landscape. The magnitude of change will also vary in accordance with the progress, location and type of construction taking place.
- 10.15 The visual effects during the construction phase would be indirect, temporary and local in scale. The existing hedgerows around the Site to the north and west and planting to the east should avoid any major adverse visual effects during the course of the construction.

***The sensitivity of receptors is considered to be moderate.***

***The magnitude of change during construction will be moderate.***

***The likely significance during construction is therefore moderate.***

- 10.16 The detailed assessment for both the construction phase and operational phase is contained within the **Viewpoints at APPENDIX 6**.

### **Operational phase**

- 10.17 For the purposes of the assessment the operational phase is classified as the period when all the new buildings, infrastructure and associated landscape works have been completed. Predicted impacts are likely to be ***long term and irreversible*** in this phase. The following assessments are based on the consideration of the proposals as a whole, including the following:

- Residential development;
- Highway and access infrastructure;
- Footpath systems;
- Areas of public open space;
- Structural landscaping;
- Stationary and moving vehicles;
- Night time lighting.

- 10.18 Following completion of the development there would be inevitable indirect effects on the visual amenity of those public receptors which can view the Site. The Site is not considered to be large scale in the context of the surrounding settlement. The Site is generally considered to be 'flat' and well contained by existing vegetation and surrounding built form and infrastructure therefore it would not be in a prominent position or intrude into elevated views. The proposed development would not block any existing important or valued views. Views from the higher ground to the north-east at Delph Lane, Middleton Lane and beyond are possible (**APPENDIX 6 viewpoints 18, 22, 23, 24 and 25**) but these views are not judged as valued views and are in the context with the wider existing urban features of Warrington.

- 10.19 In general terms the magnitude of change are assessed as ranging from *small to medium adverse* for most receptors. Receptors of adjacent road users to the south and north would experience ***adverse impact of low to medium*** magnitude dependant on the angle of view, distance to the Site and the proportion of the Site that would be a component of the view. Whilst the magnitude of change is often larger when in close proximity to a development, in this instance closer views are well contained and at comparable levels to the Site thus resulting in a reduced significance of the effects. Other effects would be of ***low magnitude*** for visitors, motorised road users and rural workers as the impact of change would be observed for a short duration due to the activity.



## Significance of Visual Effects

The following provides a summary the significance of the visual effects:

### 10.20 Residential

- Up to 34no properties to the west would experience adverse and permanent visual effects of **moderate significance**. Existing mature boundary vegetation would partially obscure some of these views (**viewpoints 1, 3 and 4**).
- 126no properties immediately to the south with views partially obscured by boundary vegetation would experience adverse effects of **moderate significance (viewpoint 5)**.
- Up to 11no properties to the east would experience adverse and permanent visual effects of **moderate significance**. Existing mature boundary vegetation would partially obscure some of these views (**Photographs 12, 13, and 20**).

### Pedestrians and horse riders on public highways

- 10.21 Pedestrians on Peel Cottage Lane PROW would experience **adverse effects of major significance** as the proposed development would cause obvious alterations from a highly sensitive receptor. The establishment of proposed landscaping over time would reduce the effect of the development on the view.

### Roads/ transport network

- 10.22 Motor borne users of the M62 would experience **negligible adverse effects** since the Site is visible from the road due to the change of level and intervening vegetation and motorists would be travelling at speed. The views would in any event replicate views of existing residential properties in the middle distance.
- 10.23 Motor borne users of Mill Lane and Ballater Drive may experience a fleeting view through gaps in the vegetation. They may experience **minor adverse effects** depending on their focus of attention towards the Site.
- 10.24 Users of the Radley Common Recreation Ground would experience **negligible** effects.
- 10.25 In summary, there are only a moderate number of properties which have principal habitable rooms which face towards areas of the Site where built form is proposed, but as previously stated residents do not have the right to a view. There would be impact on users of the public footpath linking Peel Cottage Lane to the M62 pedestrian footbridge (**viewpoints 21 and 22**). Road users whilst experiencing the change would not be significantly affected. In some views the new housing development will be a changed view, but would be seen in the context of existing urban features and as an extension to the current residential development of Warrington and so the development would not, particularly over time, be considered a significant intrusive feature.

## 11.0 NIGHT TIME AND CUMMULATIVE IMPACTS

### Night time Impacts

- 11.1 Street lighting and lighting from houses would impact on the amenity of existing close distance receptors to a minor degree. Highways are not generally used to the same extent as in daylight hours and views from existing houses are generally inverted, as occupiers close their curtains to the darkness. Night time views would also be seen generally within the context of other existing street lighting within the urban area of Warrington along with the floodlit M62 to the north.

### Cumulative landscape character and visual effects

- 11.2 Cumulative visual effects are the effects on views and visual amenity enjoyed by people, which may result either from adding the effects of the project being assessed to the effects of other projects on the baseline conditions or from their combined effect. This may result from changes in the context and character of views experienced in particular places due to the introduction of new elements or removal of or damage to existing ones. In the case of the application Site, there may well be other development proposals in the vicinity that would result in a cumulative effect, if seen in the same context. In this instance, the observer would need to move to another distant viewpoint to see the same or different developments, and due to natural screening the Site would not be visible in that context. In this case the only other proposed development in Warrington is located to the north of the settlement. There are no cumulative landscape, visual or character impacts.

## 12.0 LANDSCAPE STRATEGY AND MITIGATION

### Retention of existing Landscape features

12.1 The majority of existing vegetation to the northern, eastern and southern boundaries will be retained and supplemented as part of the development proposals. These provide containment and screening of the Site from many potential viewpoints, particularly views at close quarters. These features will be further strengthened by additional tree and shrub planting and help to maintain an enclosed character of the land around the proposal Site. Although not identified as mitigation to reduce or remove adverse effects, the proposed strengthening of existing landscape features with planting will greatly enhance the development and has been part of the overall design process and planning of the development. The proposals also include the formation of a linear habitat creation area along the M62 boundary and additional woodland planting north of Radley Plantation to help enhance north-south wildlife connectivity.

12.2 Detailed proposals would seek to offset the proposed impacts by the following methods:

1. The development of a Construction and Environmental Management Plan to reduce impact on the amenity of local residents during the construction phase and conserve natural assets on Site, all of which can be secured through the imposition of a standard planning condition.
2. The protection by appropriate fencing of retained trees, hedgerows, and other vegetation by the use of industry standard root protection areas calculated on tree girth and canopy spread prior to commencement of works on Site.
3. The protection of ponds and ditches by fencing by exclusion fencing and other appropriate methods to prevent contamination by construction activity, prior to the commencement of works on Site.
4. The conservation of soil on Site by careful stripping and stockpiling to prevent contamination and allow re-use in garden and open space areas.
5. The implementation of tree and shrub planting to boundaries and to re-force retained hedgerows in order to provide additional screening and enhance biodiversity, together with pond and ditch enhancement and habitat creation for proposed open green space. Native species planting would be used in these locations to encourage an ecologically diverse environment.

12.3 New planting within the proposed development would consist of heavy standard trees planted within front garden curtilages and within the existing boundary hedgerows. Within the proposed areas of open space smaller nursery stock of native origin would be planted in groups together with larger feathered trees. It is anticipated that a detailed planting scheme would be agreed with the Local Planning Authority at the reserved matters stage and that this would be the subject of a standard planning condition.

### Green Infrastructure

- 12.4 In accordance with recommendations contained within NPG (National Planning Guidance) the provision of Green Infrastructure will form an integral part of mitigation proposals for the Site. Green Infrastructure includes all undeveloped areas including gardens. An assessment of the total area has been made and based the assumption of proposed dwellings having 1.5 times the gross building area as garden space. Green infrastructure amounts to approximate 30.8 hectares which equates to 45 percent of the total site area.

### Parameters Plan

- 12.5 A parameters plan showing the broad landscape strategy for the Site is attached as **APPENDIX 2** to this report. Any necessary mitigation in the form of a landscape scheme and implementation/ phasing of works would be agreed at the reserved matters stage of detailed planning applications and would include the establishment of appropriate stand-off zones, the detailed design and orientation of new dwellings and boundary screen planting.

## 13.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

13.1 A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment has been undertaken for the proposed development using standard criteria set out in 'The Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment- 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition.' The study has identified sensitive receptors based upon a walkover survey of the Site and potential viewpoints from outside the Site boundaries. The relationship of the Site to the surrounding landscape has been considered in the context of existing landscape character assessments. As a result the assessment has identified the likely impacts or effects the development would have on the landscape and visual receptors.

13.2 The proposals seek to create residential development that respond sympathetically to the landscape character and existing residential development in the general locality and to incorporate and replicate landscape features that are evident in the local character area. The development will include a high proportion of green open space. Important existing features such as trees, hedgerows, ditches and ponds would be retained and enhanced where appropriate. The proposed landscape elements would integrate the development in the landscape with due regard to neighbours and other surrounding land uses. The Site is well screened and enclosed by existing vegetation to most boundaries. Views are mainly very local views obtained from the adjacent highways and a number of residential properties.

### Landscape Character

13.3 The change in the landscape with the introduction of the proposed housing development will be most pronounced at close distance. The Site would be seen as a natural extension of the existing settlement. All landscaping would adhere to local planning policy with regard to development design. The Site has the ability to absorb change and allow the process of development without impacting adversely on adjacent landscapes given appropriate development layout and mitigation. The Site will provide for increased biodiversity and assist with meeting local housing provision numbers in a sustainable manner.

### Conclusion

13.4 Following mitigation the proposals would result in a **minor adverse effect** on both the landscape resource and in respect of visual impact. The Site has the ability to absorb change and is considered to be appropriate change of use in terms of landscape character in the context of the adjacent settlement edge.

*end*

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