

## Site 7HA (Land west of the A49 Mill Lane and to the East of the West Coast Mainline railway line, Newton-le-Willows) - Delivery Note

### **Introduction**

The delivery of proposed residential site allocation 7HA (land west of the A49 Mill Lane and to the east of the West Coast Mainline railway line, Newton-le-Willows) was discussed in the Matter 4 Session 6 Local Plan hearing session on Thursday 10 June 2021.

In particular, there was a focus on the recently permitted redevelopment of the former Red Bank facility to accommodate the relocated Penkford School (from another site in Newton-le-Willows). This forms part of the proposed site 7HA allocation in the Local Plan Submission Draft.

The Council acknowledged in the hearing session that this would have an impact on the likely capacity of site 7HA. In response to the discussion, the Inspectors requested the Council provide a note in relation to the delivery of site 7HA. This was recorded in the action notes for the session as follows:

*“8. Provide a note relating to the delivery of site 7HA (including a plan from the planning application to show how the site relates to the school etc, what the revised site area is, any delivery implications for the site caused by the school etc).”*

This note seeks to complete this action.

### **Context**

On 25 May 2021, the St Helens Council Planning Committee granted planning permission for the relocation of Penkford School on to part of the site of the former Red Bank facility, Newton-le-Willows. Details as follows:

*P/2021/0028 – Proposed redevelopment of the Red Bank Educational Unit to facilitate the relocation of Penkford School includes extension to existing building, new playing field, new car park, fences, amended access from Winwick Road and associated structures.*

Appendix 1 to this note provides the site location plan for the proposed development. This shows the relocated Penkford School proposal will take up a portion of land on the proposed site 7HA allocation site, on the western side, adjacent the West Coast Mainline railway.

In recognition of the updated planning status on part of the site, the Council has acknowledged that the indicative capacity within the Plan (Table 4.5) needs to be amended to reflect the reduced site area now available for residential development.

### **New site area and indicative capacity**

The extent of the red line boundary on the site location plan supporting the planning application (as shown in Appendix 1) includes a significant, rectangular shaped area of land, which includes an area of hardstanding, to the east of the proposed new school between the access road from Winwick Road and the proposed school parking area. This particular area of land is not included within the boundary of the proposed school site, but has instead been included within the red line boundary as it is intended to be used as a construction

compound during the built out phase of the development. Once construction is complete, this land will no longer be needed in relation to the Penkford School development and will be available for development as part of the residential development of site 7HA.

On this basis, a further Plan is shown in Appendix 2 that shows two options for a revised site area:

- 1) If the whole of the red line boundary of the planning application area is removed from site 7HA (including the construction compound area), and
- 2) If only the area of the approved school and its associated facilities (ie. playing pitch and car parking area) up to its boundary is removed from site 7HA, indicated by a blue dash line on the plan

The revised site areas and associated indicative capacities for the two options can be summarised as follows:

Option 1 – using the red line boundary

Area of red line boundary = 3.88ha

When removed from the area of original site 7HA, revised site area is 4.15ha

$(8.03 - 3.88 = 4.15)$

Revised yield is  $4.15 * 75\%$  (NDA) = 3.11ha.  $3.11 * 30$  (dph) = 93 dwellings

Option 2 – using blue dash line (school boundary)

Area of blue dash boundary = 2.70ha

When removed from the area of original site 7HA, revised site area is 5.33ha

$(8.03 - 2.70 = 5.33\text{ha})$

Revised yield is  $5.33 * 75\%$  (NDA) = 4ha.  $4\text{ha} * 30$  (dph) = 120 dwellings

It should be noted that the above yields have been calculated by applying an indicative density of 30 dwellings per hectare in accordance with the indicative density currently set out in Table 4.5 in the Local Plan Submission Draft. However, discussions in the hearing session acknowledged that the two proposed safeguarded sites in Newton-le-Willows in Table 4.8 of the Plan (4HS and 5HS) both had indicative densities of 35 dwellings per hectare, and there was consideration of whether site 7HA should also have an applied indicative density of 35dph to ensure consistency. The Council would support such an approach.

If 35 dph were to be applied in the above calculations, the revised dwelling yields would be as follows:

Option 1 –  $3.11\text{ha} * 35\text{dph} = 108$  dwellings

Option 2 –  $4\text{ha} * 35\text{dph} = 140$  dwellings

As advised in the hearing sessions, the Council is strongly of the view that Option 2 which discounts the area of the school and its associated facilities (playing pitches, parking area etc) is a more accurate approach than simply removing the whole of the area within the red line boundary on the site location plan supporting the application. To do otherwise would be to remove an area (ie. the temporary construction compound) that will be available as part of the site 7HA residential development in due course.

## **Other considerations**

The access road to serve the school has the potential to be upgraded in due course to provide access to the residential element of the site when it comes forward.

With respect to the relationship between the school and the residential use on the remaining part of the site and any potential amenity issues, as explained in the hearing session, it is important to understand the nature of Penkford School. As set out on the school's website:

*“Penkford is a day maintained special school for children with social, emotional and mental health issues in the Borough of St Helens, Merseyside. We cater for 55 young people from Year 4 to Year 11.”*

Therefore, pupil numbers are relatively low and the school does not operate in the same way as other schools, for example, it has organised arrival and departure of pupils at the beginning and end of the school day.

There are not considered to be any reasons why the development of Penkford School in this location would undermine the ability to deliver housing on the remainder of the proposed site 7HA allocation at the scale referenced above. The relationship between the school and residential uses on the site can be managed through the design of the residential element in due course. Furthermore, no clear, firm evidence has been presented through the Examination process to contradict this view.

The remaining buildings on site 7HA are unoccupied, and therefore pose no impediment to the timely delivery of the development of site 7HA.

It should also be noted that a number of conditions in relation to the Penkford School planning permission are currently subject to a planning application for approval. There is a clear intention to deliver the school development in the short term, and therefore there is no concern that the development of the school will hold up the development of the proposed residential allocation.

## **Conclusions**

The site area for site 7HA in Table 4.5 of the Local Plan should be amended to 5.33ha (from 8.03ha), and the minimum density changed to 35dph (from 30dph). Accordingly, the indicative site capacity should be changed to 140 dwellings (from 181 dwellings as currently stated in Table 4.5).

Should it be considered that the minimum density is to remain at 30dph, the indicative site capacity should instead be changed to 120 dwellings.

The Council is well positioned to ensure that a residential development is brought forward on the remaining area of site 7HA to make optimal use of this previously developed land, in accordance with paragraph 138 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

To conclude, residential development on the part of proposed site allocation 7HA beyond the permitted school site is considered developable over the Plan period in the timeframe set out in SHBC007. The only impact of the school planning permission is a reduced site area and associated reduction in indicative site capacity as previously acknowledged and set out above.

# Appendix 1



## Appendix 2

