

Barton Willmore on behalf of Andrew Cotton (Representor ID: R00375)

Examination into the St. Helens Local Plan

Matter 4

**Matter 4 (Session 4): Allocations, Safeguarded Land and Green Belt Boundaries
Bold, Eccleston, Sutton Manor, Thatto Heath and St Helens Core Area**

**Issue 2: Bold Forest Garden Suburb (4HA), Land south of Gartons Lane (5HA) and
Former Penlake Industrial Estate (3HA)**

Bold Forest Garden Suburb (4HA) is the largest allocation in the LP with an indicative capacity of almost 3,000 homes, albeit that most of the development would be delivered beyond the Plan period. The allocation is supported by the Bold Forest Garden Suburb Position Statement and the Bold Forest Transport Review.

Land south of Gartons Lane (5HA) is also identified as a strategic site anticipated to deliver around 570 homes most of which would be within the Plan period. The former farm buildings and church site fronting Gartons Lane may need to be included in the allocation.

The former Penlake Industrial Estate (3HA) is under-construction and therefore should be treated as a commitment rather than allocation.

The Council, in response to preliminary questions, has indicated that MMs would ensure that Greenways are referenced in Policy LPA.05.1 and the Site Profile for 4HA.

Q11 Does the Plan reflect the current status of Penlake Industrial Estate (3HA) as a commitment?

1. No comments.

Q12 Do the Green Belt assessments support the allocations 4HA and 5HA and demonstrate exceptional circumstances for the removal of the land from the Green Belt?

2. We do not provide any comments in relation to 5HA.
3. Our Client welcomes the findings of the Green Belt Assessments (GRE001, SD020 and SD021) prepared alongside the progression of the Local Plan and support the suitability of Site 4HA for Green Belt release.
4. The Green Belt Review 2016 (GRE001) which was published alongside the Preferred Options Local Plan

identified the Bold Forest Garden Suburb as comprising six separate land parcels (Site References GBS_018, GBS_051, GBS_118, GBS_119, GBS_120, and GBS_162). These sites collectively comprise parcel reference GBP_074.

5. GRE001 concludes that each sub-parcel above has Low or Medium significance on the Green Belt purposes and would have a Low or Moderate impact on the Green Belt if allocated and recommended that each parcel is carried forward to the Stage 3 Assessment. Paragraph 4.9 of GRE001 found the site as a whole was considered to be well contained and in close proximity to St Helens Core Spatial Area and not hampered by prohibitive constraints.
6. The 2018 Green Belt Review (SD020) divides GB_074 across four sub-parcels (GBP_074_A, GBP_074_B, GBP_074_C, and GBP_074_D). GBP_074_B relates to our Client's site. SD020 confirms that GB_074 is bounded by strong, robust physical boundaries including existing development to the north, east and west, and Gorsey Lane to the south. SD020 states that, if left in isolation, the sub-parcels would not serve any Green Belt purpose.
7. Our Client's site, which is identified within GBP_074_B in SD020 is well contained by existing development and defensible boundaries. 'The Pastures' Residential development bounds the north of the Site, Bold Industrial Park is bounded to the east, and additional residential development lies to the south east. The wider 4HA allocation is also well contained by existing residential development to the north and west, Reginald Road Industrial Estate to the north west, and contained by Gorsey Lane to the south.
8. The Green Belt Review Stage 2B Proformas (SD021) was subsequently published in October 2020 and provides a more detailed consideration of GBP_074 in terms of suitability, accessibility, availability, and achievability as opposed to its Green Belt performance.
9. SD021 concludes that sub parcel GBP_074_C is significantly covered by a Local Wildlife Site (LWS) (Tunstall's Farm REF: LWS108), and this LWS has been removed from Site 4HA which we support. SD021 also concludes that the rest of GBP_074 has a 'Good Development Potential' with a preferred residential use. Our Client strongly supports this.
10. From the inception of the Local Plan, the Green Belt Review iterations have concluded that Site 4HA does not fulfil the Green Belt purposes. Our Client is fully supportive of these conclusions which indicates that Site 4HA is a suitable site to be released from the Green Belt without having a detrimental effect on the character, appearance and function of the Green Belt.
11. With respect to the second part of Q12, our Client does not consider that it is the purpose of the Green Belt Assessment to determine whether exceptional circumstances exist to justify the removal of land from the Green Belt. Instead, its purpose is to assess and identify sites for their function against the

purposes of the Green Belt prescribed by paragraph 134 of the NPPF and identify sites which could be released in the event that exceptional circumstances are demonstrated.

12. The Council readily accepts that it is unable to meet the development needs of the Borough through the development of brownfield land and other urban sites alone, and so is reliant upon the release of Green Belt land to do so. This represents exceptional circumstances to justify Green Belt release, and this position is exacerbated by our Client's contention that the Council's housing requirement of 486dpa should be treated as a minimum figure as set out in our Client's comments to Matter 2.
13. As such, having accepted that Green Belt land is required if the Council is to deliver its Vision and meet the development needs of the Borough, it should seek to utilise Green Belt sites which do not serve the purposes of the Green Belt and preserve the better performing sites and strengthen Green Belt boundaries in the process. In this respect, our Client considers that the Green Belt Assessments have done their job by identifying those sites, including Site 4HA, which could be released without compromising the integrity of the Green Belt as a whole.

Q13 If exceptional circumstances have been demonstrated have these been clearly articulated in the Plan?

14. Paragraph 4.6.9 of the Local Plan confirms that there is a lack of suitable and available sites within the urban area to meet the needs of the Borough. This is based on detailed analysis of the capacity of brownfield SHLAA sites. As such, the updated version of Table 4.6 of the Plan in the Draft Modifications Schedule (SHBC010) shows some sites on the edge of existing settlements have to be removed from the Green Belt and allocated for development during the plan period.
15. Whilst the above does not explicitly articulate 'exceptional circumstances', it is clear that the Council is treating the need to release Green Belt for development as imperative if it is to meet the future needs of the Borough. Our Client is fully supportive of this approach.
16. As previously discussed, the Local Plan assesses the performance of Green Belt sites proposed to be released for development in the context of the requirement for new housing and employment land. The Council will not be able to meet all of its development requirements on brownfield sites alone and it is clear that exceptional circumstances exist to warrant a review of the Green Belt in order for the Council to meet its identified need for housing.
17. Notwithstanding this, it would be beneficial for the Local Plan to explicitly explain the above in stating that exceptional circumstances exist. This will potentially be done as part of the Council's response to this question and as such the right to respond further on this point during the course of the Examination is reserved.

Q14 Are the configuration and scale of the allocations justified taking into account development needs, the Green Belt assessments and land ownerships?

Development Needs

18. The Council's latest figures on housing supply through the plan period and the residual requirement published in Annex 3 of the Draft Schedule of Modifications dated May 2021 (SHBC010) show that a surplus of 699 dwellings is present based on a period of 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2037. While some contingencies and buffers are built into both the SHLAA capacity and Green Belt allocation to allow for slippage and non-delivery, a surplus of 699 homes represents less than 10% when taken against the residual requirement present.
19. This small surplus is necessary to ensure flexibility for the Plan going forward. As such, the scale of the allocations which contribute to this supply, including Site 4HA, should be considered as wholly appropriate.
20. Given the evident need for Green Belt release to support housing and employment growth across the Borough, we consider the configuration and scale of Site 4HA sound and justified to meet those needs.

Green Belt Assessments

21. Our Client considers that the Green Belt Assessments discussed in Q12 clearly demonstrate that the parcels of land which form Site 4HA are suitable to be released from the Green Belt and allocated given the scale of housing need and the lack of capacity of brownfield sites to accommodate it. Notably the allocation as defined has clear defensible boundaries formed by permanent features including roads and existing development.

Land Ownerships

22. Our Client controls a significant part of Site 4HA to the north of the allocation. This land comprises the two land parcels at Travers Farm which are immediately adjacent to the land under the Council's ownership to the south of Bold Road and east of Reginald Road Industrial Estate. Together, our Client's land and the Council's land (as shown in Appendix 1 and 2 of this Statement) covers approximately 50ha and has capacity to deliver at least 850 market and affordable homes.
23. These three parcels of land under our Client's and the Council's ownership form the logical starting point for the development of Site 4HA given its sustainable location on the edge of settlement and proximity to public transport and employment opportunities. Our Client's land and the land under the Council are close to existing amenities, lie between Reginald Road Industrial Estate and Bold Industrial Park, and are accessible via local bus stops along Bold Road and Neill Road and connections from St

Helens Junction station less than 1km to the north west. The sustainable location of this site is illustrated in Figure 2 of our Client's Development Framework Document at Appendix 1 and it is our Client's view that this should be delivered before the other land parcels within Site 4HA.

Q15 Is the allocation of Site 4HA broadly consistent with the Bold Forest Park Area Action Plan?

24. Yes. The allocation of Site 4HA will support the Aims and Objectives of the Bold Forest Park Area Action Plan (BFPAAP) in terms of housing and economic growth, together with new tree planting, green infrastructure improvements, and enhanced pedestrian and cycle connectivity.
25. Appendix 5 of the Local Plan sets out the development requirements which are sought when delivering Site 4HA. The first requirement listed states "*The development must be consistent with the vision, aims, objectives and policies of the Bold Forest Park Area Action Plan*". This demonstrates at the outset that the Council requires the delivery of allocation 4HA to be consistent with the BFPAAP.
26. Further requirements set out at Appendix 5 for Site 4HA state that development must provide a well-landscaped setting including extensive green links which promote the objective of the BFPAAP to increase tree coverage across Bold Forest by 30%. It goes on to say that development shall minimise and mitigate any adverse impacts on biodiversity interests within the existing LWS, create a permeable layout and a choice of sustainable transport routes, provide necessary financial contributions for infrastructure, education and highway works where necessary, and avoid excessive noise or disturbance to existing occupiers.
27. Our Client supports the above requirements, and Site 4HA clearly provides an important opportunity to deliver these benefits and enhancements which are set out in the BFPAAP.
28. Our Client acknowledges that the BFPAAP establishes a number of key issues and articulates that the Bold Forest Park area is currently under utilised and there is an opportunity to meet the strategic needs of the Borough in terms of housing, opportunities for recreation, and employment. The Aims and Objectives of the BFPAAP include the creation of economic opportunities, creating opportunities for tourism and leisure, create easily accessible linked open spaces, promote the positive use of green space, and enhance the natural environment.
29. Our Client's Development Framework document (Appendix 1 of this Statement) and Bold Forest Garden Suburb Vision Statement (Appendix 2) which accompanied their representations to the Submission Draft Local Plan demonstrates how their scheme will deliver such features as part of the development of their site. Our Client's vision for the northern part of Site 4HA is to create a sustainable urban extension to the existing built-up area providing new high-quality market and affordable homes and well as providing a rich landscape framework accommodating greenways, footpath and bridleway

enhancements and community facilities and accessible public open space.

30. Our Client's scheme represents an exciting opportunity to provide a wide variety of benefits to both the public and the environment in line with the BFPAAP. Our Client proposes to create a new play area for children, provide new woodland areas, and seeks to retain and create an extensive network of green and blue infrastructure.
31. The development will create a net gain in biodiversity through by retaining existing landscape features and incorporated them into a comprehensive green infrastructure network. New planting and landscape enhancements will mean the site will provide an attractive, functional and accessible place for leisure and recreation as well as providing much needed high-quality homes which will help to support the economic growth and housing needs of the Borough. The scheme will also enable pedestrian and cycle permeability throughout the Site, as well as integrating and connecting to the surrounding area and nearby employment areas, public transport nodes and key amenities.
32. Crucially, if the Council is to fulfil the aims and objectives of the BFPAAP, the development of our Client's site and the wider Site 4HA is essential to deliver these objectives, and it is the ethos of our Client's scheme to align with the vision of the BFPAAP.
33. Overall, Site 4HA will support inward investment to Bold Forest Park and make it a more attractive place to live, work and play, and its allocation is reflective of the Aims and Objectives of the BFPAAP. In particular, our Client's land interest and the adjacent land under the ownership of the Council represents a sustainable solution to deliver new housing and a plethora of other environmental, recreational and visual benefits alongside accessible public open space and new community infrastructure in this excellent opportunity to enhance Bold Forest Park and the wider Borough.

Q16 Would the adverse impacts of developing Sites 4HA and 5HA (including Green Belt impacts, traffic, air quality, flood risk, loss of agricultural land, biodiversity) outweigh the benefits?

34. Our Client does not provide any comments regarding Site 5HA.
35. Our Client is confident that the wide range of benefits of delivering Site 4HA, as discussed in our response to Q15, would far outweigh any perceived harm.

Green Belt

36. As noted in Q12, SD020 and SD021 have concluded that the allocation of Site 4HA for housing development is recommended over other Green Belt Sites across the Borough as its development would not compromise the integrity of the wider Green Belt.

Biodiversity

37. SD021 confirms that landscape sensitivity is low for the Bold Forest Garden Suburb. In terms of ecology, SD021 states that the LWS (excluded from allocation 4HA) has recorded the presence of great crested newts and water voles and it is likely that these species are present within land parcels of Site 4HA. However, careful design, mitigation and compensation measures will ensure that biodiversity is maintained or enhanced as part of the future development of the allocation. Furthermore, given the predominant agricultural use of 4HA, it is considered in our Client's Development Framework Document that the land has relatively low ecological value and limited habitats for protected species. Notwithstanding this, future development provides an opportunity to integrate any features of value into a landscape framework for the site to be capable of supporting and enhancing biodiversity.

Loss of Agricultural Land

38. The development of Site 4HA will result in the loss of Grade 3 (Good to Moderate) agricultural land, however the benefits of the scheme which will deliver a significant number of market and affordable homes alongside a plethora of other green infrastructure and recreational benefits will clearly outweigh this loss. It should be noted that the open land surrounding St Helens is classified as Grade 1, 2 or 3. As such, the loss of Grade 3 agricultural land to meet the established need for housing is preferable to the alternative loss of higher value land.

Flood Risk

39. In terms of flood risk, Site 4HA is located within Flood Zone 1 which has the lowest risk from flooding. Nevertheless, our Client seeks to provide Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) at their land to the north of allocation 4HA to enhance drainage, and the location and form of these SuDS can be discussed with the Council throughout the design process.

Air Quality and Pollution

40. Regarding air, water, and noise pollution, SD021 states that the Environmental Health department has raised comments on the impacts of developing Site 4HA on the surrounding highways network, as well as a risk of odours and noise from the adjacent Reginald Road Industrial Estate. All of these issues are for detailed investigation as part of the later design work including the identification of mitigation measures if required. Work undertaken to date has not established any constraints that would act as a 'showstopper' to development.

Traffic

41. Site 4HA represents a unique opportunity to provide a wide range of transport benefits. The site is in a

sustainable location and the northern part of the allocation in particular is well connected to local bus stops and St Helens Junctions station. The development of Site 4HA can deliver traffic mitigation measures and strongly promotes sustainable modes of transport through an integrated network of pedestrian and cycle ways. Any adverse traffic impacts can be addressed sufficiently through the masterplan and application process.

42. Having identified the above technical considerations contained in SD021, the Council remained of the view that the site represented a suitable candidate for allocation, and so the Council too must consider that any technical concerns are capable of being addressed and we are supportive of this conclusion.
43. Overall, the allocation has the potential to bring significant economic, social, and environmental benefits which can be carefully designed and agreed with the Council to mitigate any potential harm or adverse impacts.
44. In terms of economic benefits, the important delivery of much needed homes which make up a large proportion of the Council's housing requirement which will help to support the economic growth of the Borough as well as creating new jobs and supporting local shops and businesses. From a social perspective, the development of the site will provide a mix of market and affordable homes, as well as providing community facilities and new public open space. Significant environmental benefits include the retention of existing landscape features as well as the comprehensive delivery of new green and blue infrastructure resulting in a net gain in biodiversity and ecological enhancements.

Q17 Are the requirements for Sites 4HA and 5HA within Policy LPA05.1 (Section 2) and Appendix 5 (Site Profiles) positively prepared and effective, particularly in relation to ensuring Green Infrastructure and sustainable modes of travel are delivered alongside the development?

45. With regards to Site 4HA, our Client is fully supportive of the requirements set out in Policy LPA05.1.
46. As set out in our Client's response to Q15, the requirements set out in Appendix 5 for Site 4HA have been positively prepared to reflect the BFPAAP. Although we acknowledge that SHBC010 provides some additional requirements for Site 4HA; namely the provision of pedestrian and cycle access, bus stops and a financial contribution towards improvements to St Helens Junction station, our Client suggests that it would be beneficial if greater detail was provided in relation to developer contributions to expediate the planning application process.
47. As set out in our Client's response to Q16, their land at Travers Farm is in close proximity to numerous bus stops along Bold Road and Neill Road and is within walking distance from St Helens Junction station. The vision for the concept masterplan is to enhance opportunities for sustainable modes of travel throughout the site, connecting the site to nearby employment areas, St Helens Junction station and other key destinations through attractive pedestrian and cycle links.

48. It is unclear why the requirements for Site 5HA shown at Appendix 5 differ from 4HA regarding consistency with the BFPAAP. Sites 4HA and 5HA are both located within the boundary of the BFPAAP and so our Client is of the view that the requirements for Site 5HA should also align with the BFPAAP policies such as the provision of tree planting to increase tree cover by 30%.

Q18 Are the net developable areas, minimum densities and indicative site capacities within Table 4.5 justified and effective?

49. Our Client considers the net developable area of 75%, and the indicative capacity of 2,988 dwellings for Site 4HA to be appropriate. However, our Client expresses serious concerns with the anticipated rate of delivery of only 480 dwellings within the plan period for Site 4HA indicated at Table 4.5 which is not justified or effective. This is discussed further in our response to Q21.
50. The first point to note here is that the indicative capacity to come forward prior to 2035 as shown in Table 4.5 of the Plan does not tally with that shown in the detailed trajectory in the Housing Need and Supply Background Paper (SD025) of 360. Nor does it relate to the new figure shown in the Updated Employment and Housing Land Supply Position Statement as of 31.03.2021 dated May 2021 (SHBC007) of 420 up to 2037.
51. Modifications should be made to ensure consistency.
52. It is noted that the Draft Schedule of Modifications dated May 2021 (SHBC010) updates Table 4.6 of the Plan to be reflective of the housing land requirements and supply up to 31 March 2037. This is reflective of changes to the trajectory shown in the Updated Employment and Housing Land Supply Position Statement as of 31.03.2021 dated May 2021 (SHBC007). Table 4.5 should also be amended to reflect this change.
53. The lengthy lead in time to delivery on Site 4HA, shown in various trajectories, appears to be informed by the assertion within the Bold Forest Garden Suburb Position Statement (SD027) that it will take 7 years from the point that the Local Plan is adopted for a masterplan to be completed to allow any development to come forward.
54. This time period differs from the work programme outlined at Table 2 of SD027 which states that a masterplan is adopted in Summer 2023. Using this as a starting point, the following timeline would seem more appropriate towards initial delivery.
- Masterplan adopted in Spring 2023;
 - Hybrid planning application (part detailed and part outline) submitted for first phase in Summer 2023;

- Planning consent for first phase granted Winter 2023;
 - Start construction works on site in Spring 2024;
 - First 50 homes delivered Winter 2025;
 - Delivery rate of 75 dwellings per annum in 2026 and 2027;
 - Delivery rate of 100dpa for the rest of the plan period and beyond.
55. Based on the above timeline, which our Client deems to be very much achievable, we suggest that 1,200 homes can be delivered at our Client's land and adjacent land under the Council's ownership within the plan period. As such, the Local Plan, as currently drafted, provides an unambitious housing trajectory for Site 4HA.
56. The trajectory at Tables 4.5 and 4.7 of the Local Plan should be amended to reflect this, as should the trajectory of SD025, SHBC007 and the wording of SD027 insofar that it relates to indicative delivery. However, it is noted that these trajectories are not intended to act as a phasing schedule for the development of the Garden Suburb and therefore do not have a wider bearing on the deliverability of the Plan.
57. In terms of densities, Table 4.5 prescribes a minimum density of 30dph for Site 4HA. Our Client considers this figure to be suitable as a minimum, however, given the size and nature of the allocation, we consider a flexible approach will enable developers to respond to site characteristics, market conditions, and viability.

Q19 Should the Bold Forest Garden Suburb (4HA) have a bespoke policy in view of its scale?

58. The Bold Forest Garden Suburb is the largest allocated site within the Local Plan and the Council clearly recognises its importance in contributing to meeting the needs of the Borough. Therefore, our Client has previously suggested that a site of such importance could have its own site specific policy. However, this is ultimately as decision for the Council to make.
59. Although the level of detail provided at Appendix 5 as discussed above is helpful, a site specific policy 4HA, if drafted, could provide more clarity on the timescales of the masterplan and delivery of the allocation, as well as timing of an Infrastructure Delivery Plan.
60. As previously stated, our Client is confident that it can start to deliver homes in the next 4 years. Notwithstanding the current requirement for a site-wide masterplan, my client is confident that with the additional clarity of requirements set out in a specific Garden Suburb policy they would be able to

ensure the early delivery of housing as a first phase of this site, thus increasing the housing land supply in the first half of the plan period.

Q20 Will infrastructure to support the allocations be delivered at the right time and in the right place?

61. At this stage, limited information can be ascertained in terms of infrastructure delivery. Notwithstanding this, Annex 1 of SHBC010 provides some modifications to Appendix 5 of the Local Plan such as the provision of accessible bus stops and a financial contribution to improvements to St Helens Junction station. Our Client suggests that a specific policy for Site 4HA would benefit from more specific information from the Council regarding what is required by way of financial contributions and how this will be apportioned for each phase of delivery for Site 4HA.
62. We note that it is up to the Council and the applicant to discuss what infrastructure is needed and where and when it should be delivered as part of development proposals. If any financial contributions are required, this can be secured via legal agreement or planning condition to ensure infrastructure is delivered in the right place at the right time.
63. Previously representations submitted by my Client have demonstrated that a first phase can be delivered early in the plan period and without the need for major new or upgraded infrastructure.

Q21 Are there any barriers to Sites 4HA and 5HA coming forward as anticipated by the housing trajectory, for example land assembly/multiple ownerships?

64. No. However, as previously stated the Council's housing trajectory for Site 4HA as set out in the Local Plan and in the Housing Need and Supply Background Paper (SD025) is far too conservative and does not reflect the Council's own work programme set out in Table 2 of SD027. This should be amended as described in our comments at Paragraph 54 of this Statement.
65. However, as previously stated neither Policy LPA05 or Policy LPA05.1 serve to restrict the delivery of homes of the allocation site by specifically requiring phasing of delivery to be linked to the stated trajectory. My client believes that this is the correct approach to ensure flexibility. This also means that issues with the trajectory will not impact on the wider soundness or deliverability of the Plan.
66. As previously stated, my client has produced a masterplan with previous representations which demonstrates that a first phase of the allocation can be delivered within 2.5 years of the adoption of the plan. Early delivery of this part of the allocation will be explored with the Council following the adoption of the Local Plan in order to increase the housing land supply in the early part of the plan period.

APPENDIX 1:

**DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK DOCUMENT FOR LAND AT TRAVERS FARM / SOUTH OF
BOLD ROAD, ST HELENS**

LAND AT TRAVERS FARM, ST HELENS

**DEVELOPMENT
FRAMEWORK**

NOVEMBER 2016

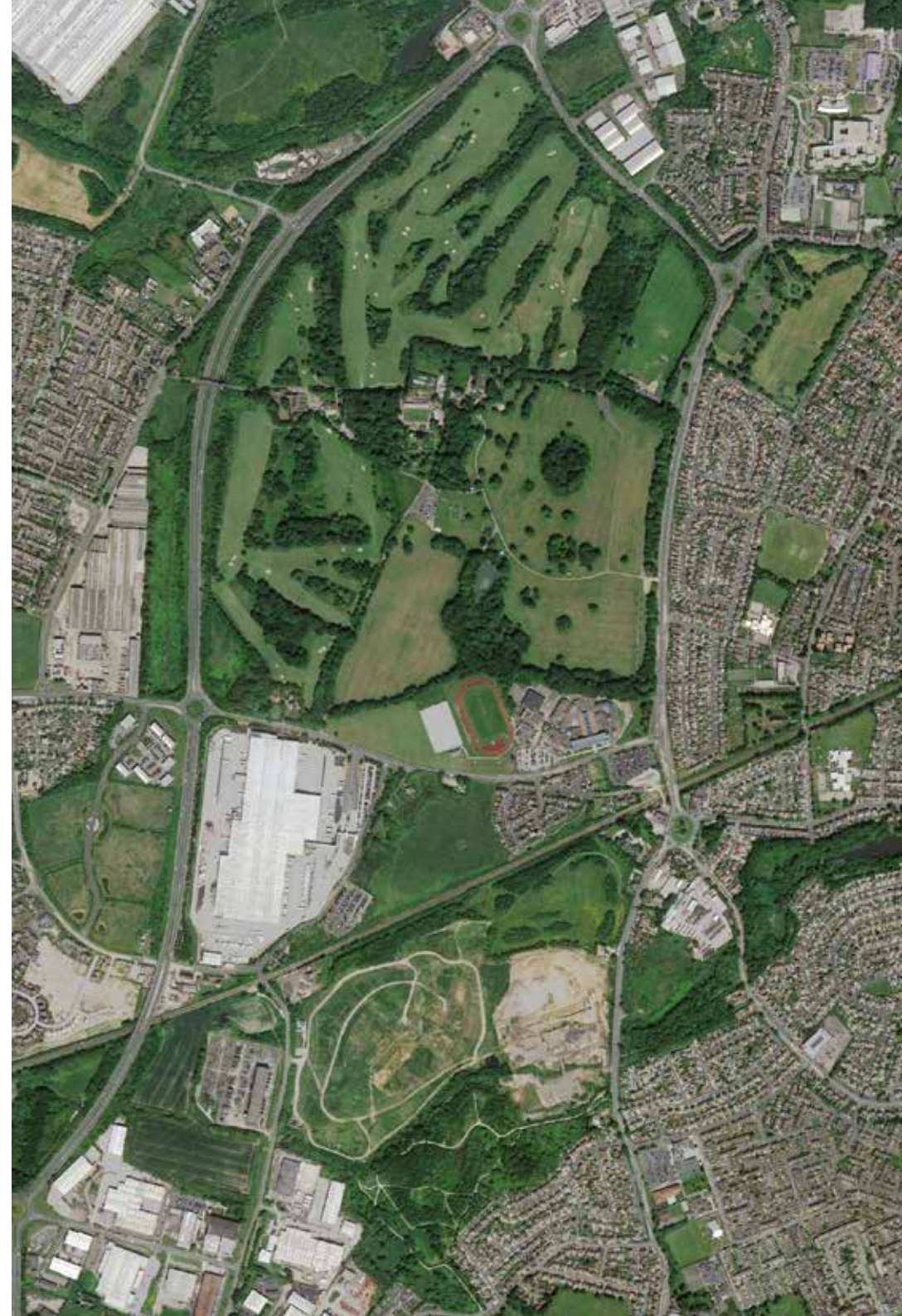
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND CONTENTS

This Development Framework has been prepared by Barton Willmore on behalf of Andrew Cotton, landowner at Travers Farm. It demonstrates that land south of Bold Road, and west of Neils Road, St Helens (the Site) represents a sustainable solution to deliver new housing to contribute to the future housing requirements of St Helens.

The Site comprises land at Travers Farm, which is safeguarded for residential development within the emerging St Helens Local Plan (2018-2033) and Council owned land which is allocated for residential development within the same Local Plan document.

This Development Framework has taken account of key technical and spatial considerations to inform the preparation of a Concept Masterplan that demonstrates the suitability of the Site to deliver a new homes in a highly sustainable location and within easy access of St Helens Junction Railway Station. The document sets clear and logical reasons to support the release of the Site from the Green Belt, whilst also clearly presenting the case for allocating the Site for development within the emerging St Helens Local Plan.

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Bold Road

Neils Road





VISION

Our vision is to create a sustainable urban extension to the existing built up area, providing new, high quality homes alongside accessible public open space and new community infrastructure. The Site will provide a rich landscape framework accommodating greenways, footpaths and bridleway enhancements and include the potential for community facilities and formal public open space. Building upon the principles of a modern garden village, new homes will be designed in a layout that maximises the opportunity to integrate with the wider rural area.

INTRODUCTION

LOCATION

The Site is located south of Bold Road, to the south east of St Helens. Neills Road is located to the east of the Site, and a new residential development accessed from The Pastures is located to the north of the Site. The Site is currently largely undeveloped, and is set within the Green Belt. The Site is also situated within the much wider Bold Forest Park action area, a wider strategy in this part of St Helens which seeks to promote access to the countryside and enhancement of certain green assets.

DESCRIPTION

The Site comprises a parcel of land approximately 50 hectares (ha) as outlined in Figure 1. The Site is largely flat in topography and is in use for arable farming.

The Site is formed by three fields located south of Bold Road and west of Neills Road. Inclusive within the Site boundary is Travers Farm and land within the ownership of St Helens Council.

Existing development frames the Site to the north, east, west and partially to the south. Open countryside extends to the south west.

The surrounding built up area provides for a mixture of uses. North and partially to the south of the Site are largely residential, with a relatively recent residential estate served by The Pastures located to the north, and older residential development located to the south east of the Site.

To the west lies the Reginald Road Industrial Estate and further residential dwellings fronting along Reginald Road. To the north west of the Site and north of Bold Road is a further employment area.

East of the Site is an area of employment land which is largely in industrial use. To the north east of the Site is the Bold

Business Centre. The built up complex of the Northfield Riding Centre is located near to the southern extremity of the Site.

Beyond existing development to the north and east is largely forested, accessible via a series of footpaths to the north east and south east of the Site. Approximately 500m to the south west of the corner of the Site is the Clock Face Country Park. This is an important local asset and one which the Council is keen to promote through the Bold Forest action proposals.

The northern and eastern site boundaries are defined by Bold Road and Neills Road respectively. An existing hedgerow runs along the entirety of the frontage along both roads, and is only disrupted by accesses into the fields and Travers Farm. Existing footpaths run along the Site frontage on Bold Road and Neills Road.

The southern boundary of the Site is defined by an existing hedgerow featuring intermittent trees.

The Site does not include land which is in the ownership of the dwelling located at the western end of Douglas Avenue, with this strip of land separating the south eastern part of the Site from existing residential properties on Douglas Avenue and Rosehill Avenue.

The southern extent of the Site boundary does not protrude any further south than the existing residential development. A Public Right of Way runs along the southern boundary of the Site.



The Pastures

Bold
Business
Centre

Bold Road

Reginald Road
Industrial Estate

Neils Road

Clock Face
Country Park

Figure 1: Aerial Location Plan

NEIGHBOURHOOD

The Site is located in a sustainable location at the urban edge of St Helens, the Principal Town within the Borough of St Helens.

FACILITIES

Local residents can enjoy access to a range of services and amenities within a comfortable walking and cycling distance from the Site. These include, but are not limited to:

- Wades One Stop Convenience Store;
- Reginald Road Industrial Estate, and Bold Business Park;
- Bold Colliery Country Park, and Clock Face Country Park;
- Junction Inn Pub;
- Post Office, Junction Lane;
- Oak House Surgery, Junction Lane;
- Junction Lane Dental Surgery;
- Lloyds Pharmacy, Junction Lane;
- Co-op Foodstore, Peckers Hill Road;
- TSB Bank, Peckers Hill Road;
- St Cuthberts Community College; and
- Sutton Oak C of E Primary School.

SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT

The Site has access to public transport in the form of multiple existing bus stops on Bold Road and Neill Road. Hourly connections are available to Newton Le Willows/Earlestown and St Helens via the 141 Bus Service. The 140 hourly bus service to Bold Heath and St Helens is also accessible at Helena Road.

The nearest railway station to the Site is St Helens Junction at c.1km from the Centre of the Site. This station provides direct access to Liverpool Lime Street, Warrington Bank Quay, Manchester Victoria, and Manchester Airport, with 3 services per hour to Liverpool Lime Street, and 1 services per hour to Warrington, Manchester Victoria and Manchester Airport.

WALKING AND CYCLING

Existing footpaths run along Bold Road and Neills Road. The Site is bounded to the west and south by existing Public Right of Ways which form part of a wider network of routes identified as strategically important within the emerging Bold Forest Park Area Action Plan. Further pedestrian connections are provided to forested areas to the north and east of the Site.

The proximity of these routes provides opportunity to connect to existing facilities and services which are accessible in St Helens to the north. They also link into

nearby recreational assets such as the Bold Forest Park and Clock Face Country Park.

The plan opposite (figure 2) demonstrates that a significant proportion of facilities and public transport opportunities are within a convenient and safe walking and cycling distance from the Site.



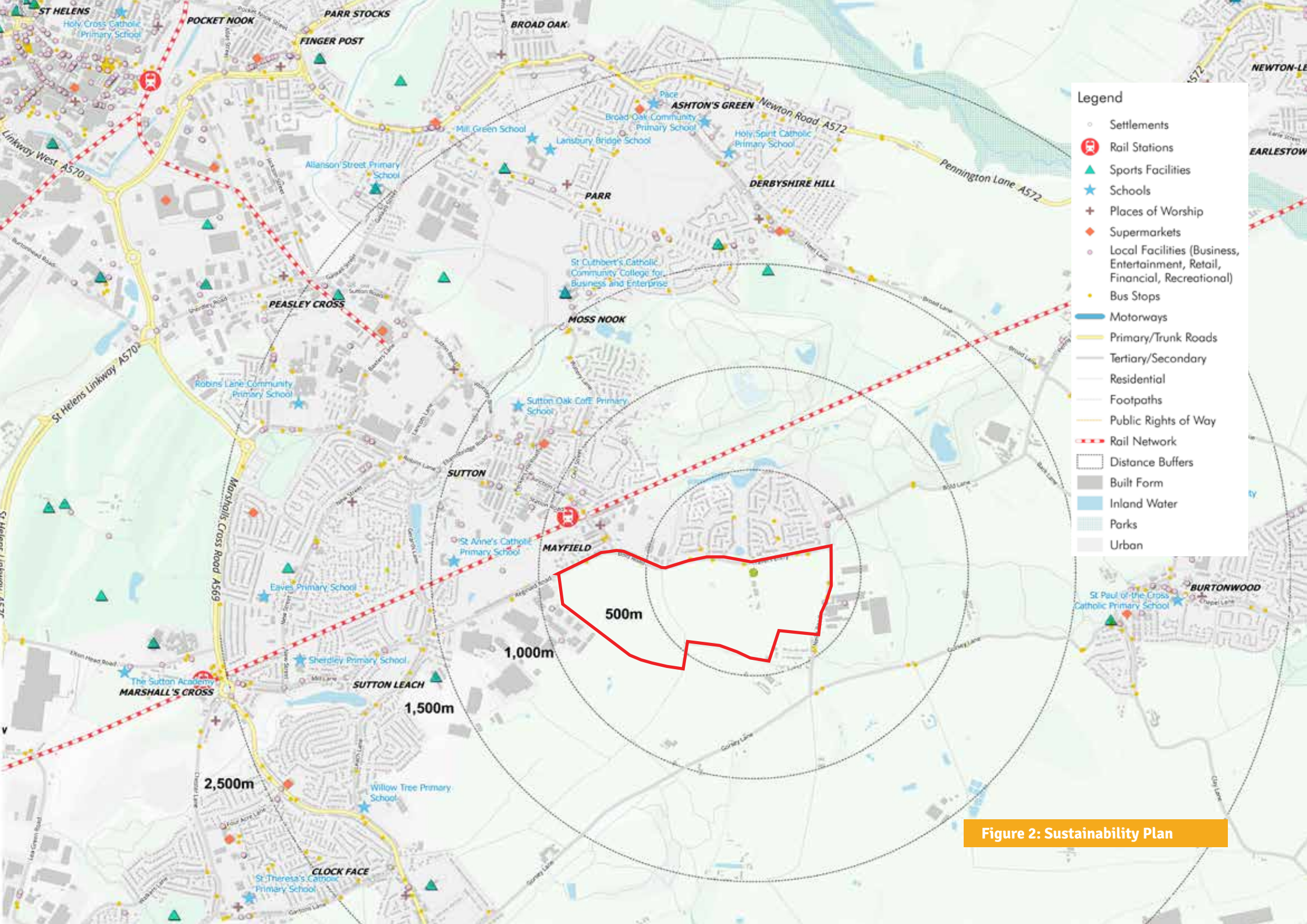


Figure 2: Sustainability Plan

GREENBELT ASSESSMENT

OVERVIEW

The Council are currently progressing towards the publication of its preferred options for its new Local Plan. As part of this process, it is known that the Council are undertaking a review of the Green Belt with the view of accommodating some future housing and employment needs within this area.

The Council's supporting Green Belt assessment will assess land parcels identified within the Green Belt against the "five purposes" as defined by Paragraph 80 of the NPPF.

It is considered that the Site which is promoted within the document (together with the potential opportunity provided by the Council's land to the west) would provide for a logical and sustainable release from the Green Belt.

As set out within this Development Framework the Site would provide development within clearly defined boundaries, using prominent and permanent physical features, and lessen the pressure to develop elsewhere on sites which are more sensitive to development.

The Site is adjacent to the existing urban edge, with the wider area bordered by existing development on three sides. The Site therefore provides for a logical extension to

the existing settlement. The Sustainability Assessment sets out that the Site is located close to a number of facilities and services as well as being adjacent to several bus routes, a high quality rail route, and adjacent to several local opportunities for employment.

The development of the Site will provide for an attractive and sustainable development following on from the lead provided by the adjacent residential development to the north of Bold Road and will provide for an opportunity for the aims of the Bold Forest Area Action Plan to be achieved. The development will help to safeguard and enhance the vitality and viability of existing local nearby services and facilities, and contribute to the full delivery of identified housing and employment needs for St Helens.

GREEN BELT ASSESSMENT

Overall our Client's site performs well when judged against the five purposes of the Green Belt. In particular the assessment notes that the Site:

- Is well connected to existing built-up areas;
- Has well defined boundaries and a low potential for unrestricted urban sprawl;
- Will not result in the merging of two settlements;
- Does not impact the special character of historic settlements; and
- Provides an opportunity for a logical "rounding-off" of the existing settlement.

As set out within the accompanying table, we have also undertaken our own Green Belt assessment of the Site.

CONCLUSION OF GREEN BELT ASSESSMENT

It is the accepted position of the Council, that in order for identified housing and employment needs to be delivered in full within the emerging Local Plan period, there will be a need for the development of Sites which are currently included within the Green Belt. Once published in December, the Preferred Options Local Plan will identify the Council's selected sites which will meet identified needs over the next plan period. This document will be supported by an assessment of Green Belt which will be used to identify the most suitable sites for release on which to deliver identified future development needs.

Clearly, preference should be given to those sites which no longer meet the five purposes for inclusion within the Green Belt as defined at Paragraph 80 of the NPPF, and which can provide for a new defensible boundary which is consistent with Paragraph 85.

The assessment which we have undertaken, demonstrates that the Site is an appropriate location for a new housing led development and can be achieved without conflicting with the purpose or function of the Green Belt.

We welcome further discussions with the Council regarding the assessment of the Site, and its potential for inclusion as an allocation within the emerging Local Plan.

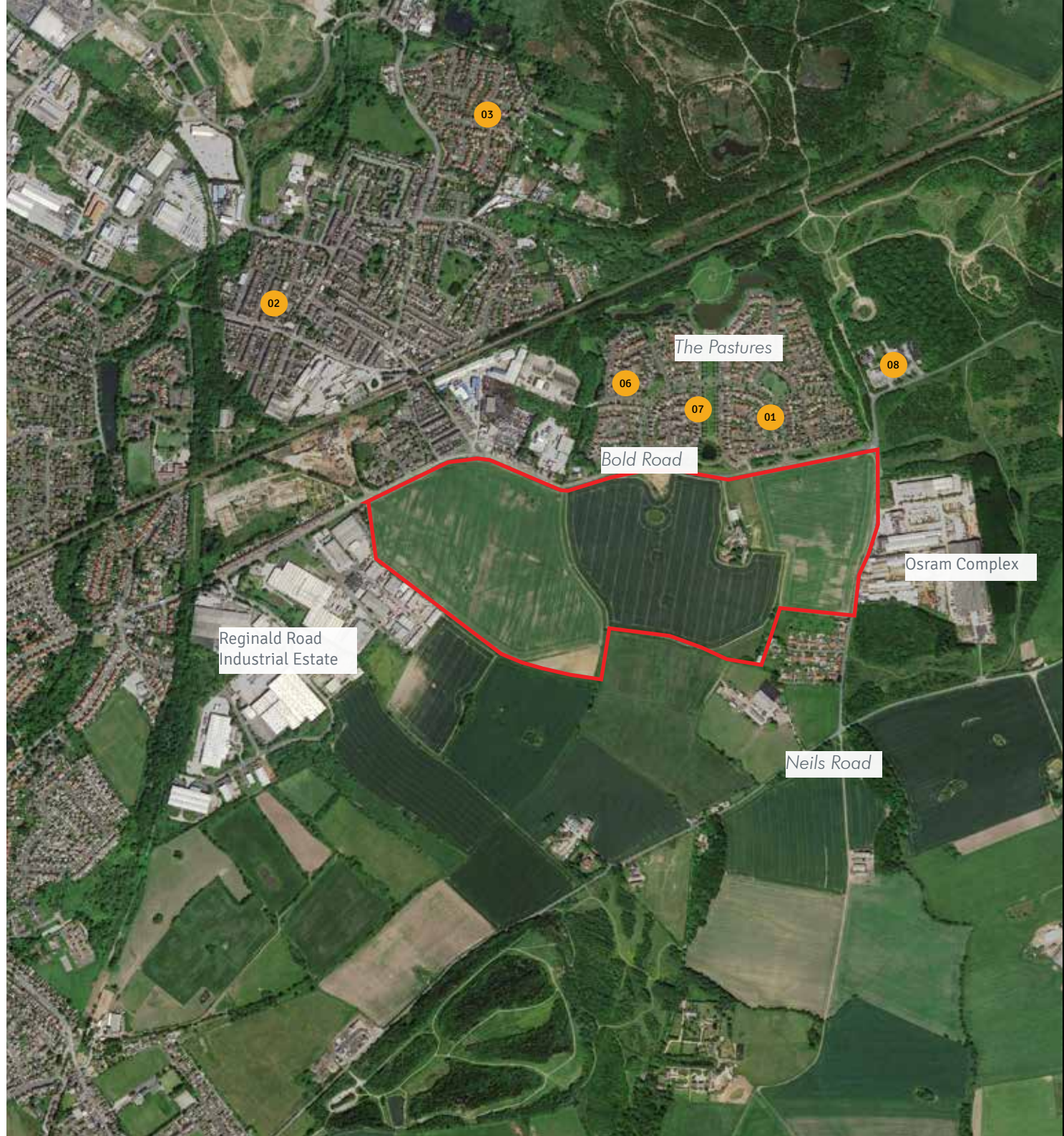
Purpose	Criteria and Definitions	Assessment	Overall Conclusion
1. Check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	Would development of the Site lead to/constitute ribbon development?	No. The Site forms a very distinct parcel which is defined by definitive, permanent and defensible boundaries. The Site offers a logical and distinct infill/rounding off between existing development located to the north, east, west and partially to the south.	No unrestricted sprawl.
	Would development result in an isolated development Site not connected to existing boundaries?	No. The Site is located adjacent the settlement boundary. There is existing development immediately to the north, east and partially to the south. To the west a single field separate the Site from further development. This land is not in the control of our client however, is known to be in the control of the Council – delivery of the wider site may therefore be possible.	
	Would development of the Site effectively 'round off' the settlement pattern?	Yes. The development would round off the settlement infilling an existing largely undeveloped area which is located between existing development to the north, east, west and partially to the south.	
	Do natural and physical features (major road, river etc) provide a good existing barrier between the existing urban area and undeveloped land, which if breached may set a precedent for unrestricted sprawl?	Development already exists to the south of Bold Road/Reginald Road. This road is does not therefore provide for a clear barrier and distinct barrier to development in this part of St Helens. A new boundary adopting the development line provided by existing development to the south of this road could be strengthened through the release of this Site from the Green Belt.	
2. Prevent neighbouring towns from merging	Do natural features and infrastructure provide a good physical barrier or boundary to the Site that would ensure that development was contained?	The development would infill an area of countryside which is not considered to fulfil an active Green Belt function. Development currently exists beyond Bold Road/Reginald Road/Niels Road to the south and or west thus breaking this physical boundary. The Site would restore a strong boundary using existing development as a prominent and definitive boundary to the Green Belt which is reinforced by the presence of the Public Right of Way in this location.	Development of the site would not result in the merging of settlements
	Would development of the Site lead to physical connection of 2 or more settlements?	No. Release of this Site would lessen the pressure to develop other sites adjoining the St Helens urban area which fulfil a more prominent role within the Green Belt.	
	Would the development of the site help preserve the physical separation of settlements across the Borough.	Yes. The Council acknowledges the need at Eastham to preserve the separation of development from Storeton (to the west) and Ellesmere Port (to the south east). Development of the Site will make a significant contribution to meeting the housing needs of Eastham and maintaining it's viability as a local centre; thus alleviating pressure elsewhere to develop sites towards Storeton and Ellesmere Port.	
	Does the Site provide access to the countryside – footpaths, bridleways across the land, or is it a designated park/greenspace?	Whilst PROWs run along the Site's southern and western boundary no footpaths run through the centre of the Site which is promoted through the Development Framework. The Site is in use for Agriculture.	
	Does the Site include national or local nature conservation designated areas?	None known.	
	Does the Site include areas of woodland, trees or hedgerows that are protected (protected ancient woodland) or significant unprotected tree/hedge cover?	None identified within the Site. Existing trees/hedgerows along Site boundaries and within the Site will be retained where possible. New planting within the Site will offset any loss which cannot be avoided.	
	Does the Site include any best and most versatile; grade 1, 2 or 3a (where known) agricultural land?	Unknown. The Site is indicatively shown on MAGIC Map as being Grade 3. However, it is worth noting that the majority of undeveloped land located within St Helens is Grade 2 or 3.	
	Does the Site contain buildings?	The Site contained an existing farm. These are not noted for historical merit.	
4. Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.	St Helens is not a town noted for its historical significance. The Site would not impact on the setting of any other historic town.		
5. Assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict/ urban land.	N/A	There is an accepted need for a review of the Green Belt within St Helens Borough in order to ensure that the full development needs of the Plan can be delivered in full.	Development of the site would not have an impact on regeneration within the Borough.

TOWNSCAPE CHARACTER

The Site lies on the fringe of the built up part of St Helens. To the west of the Site lies an existing industrial estate. This includes several warehouse type buildings of a range of sizes and heights, typically of up to 10m. Similarly, the Osram Complex to the east of the site includes 2 and 3 storey buildings, including an office building and warehousing.

To the north west of the Site along Bold Road are several residential properties. These vary in character and include post-war terraces, semi-detached houses and some more modern housing estates with detached houses. The character is therefore very varied.

The Pastures is a more modern housing estates built on an old colliery site. This is a less dense housing estate with a range of semi and detached dwellings, built on a strong road hierarchy. Homes are set back from the main road by a large landscaped area which includes footpaths, and a boulevard form the principle internal access road through the estate. Local services and shops can be found close to Bold Road which provides the potential to locate additional community services adjacent to these shops and within the Site. A large central landscaped spine provides a symmetry to the overall layout and the scheme which includes a range of 2 and 3 storey houses, with some apartment elements to the key focal points.





SITE ASSESSMENT

This section presents our initial Site investigation that future development proposals should consider.

LANDSCAPE FEATURES

Two small ponds are located within Site. One is located within the north of the western field, and one in the south western corner of the western field.

A hedgerow and a small watercourse flows within the Site along part of the boundary between the central field and the eastern most field.

A short hedgerow runs north-south along the boundary separating the central field and western field. This boundary is also defined by an existing watercourse/ drainage ditch, and a Public Right of Way.

ECOLOGY

Given the Site's agricultural use, it is considered to have relatively low ecological value, and limited suitable habitats for protected species. Notwithstanding, the proposed development provides the opportunity to integrate any features of value in to a landscape framework capable of supporting and enhancing biodiversity through the provision of species rich planting.

TOPOGRAPHY

Site and surrounding area is largely flat.

FLOOD RISK AND DRAINAGE

The entirety of the Site is located within Flood Zone 1 of the Environment Agency's Indicative Flood Map which means that it is considered to have a low risk of flooding.

Further investigations will be necessary to understand if the Site drainage can be achieved via an appropriately designed Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SuDs).

VEHICLE ACCESS

The Site benefits from the ability to deliver vehicle access from the north and east of the Site. Specifically: Reginald Road, Bold Road, Travers Entry and/ or Neills Road.

PEDESTRIAN ACCESS

A Public Right of Way bisects the Site, providing pedestrian and cycle access to the wider countryside, including the nearby Collier Moss Common Nature Reserve to the north, and Clock Face Colliery Country Park to the south. A further PRoW runs along part of the southern boundary of the Site.

UTILITIES

High voltage electricity pylons run parallel to Bold Road through the very north part of the Site, and pylons bisect the western most field in a north-east direction.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

In account of our initial Site investigations a series of opportunities and constraints have been identified to help inform the proposed development.

The opportunities and constraints presented have informed the design response (see Development Concept).

Considerations

- Integration of existing trees and hedgerows within the Site.
- Integration existing ponds.
- Reginald Road Industrial.
- Future development potential.
- Existing high voltage pylons bisecting the Site.

Opportunities

- Provide pedestrian/ cycle connections.
- Provide subtle references to the materiality featured within the wider settlement.
- Contribute to the surrounding landscape character and strengthen the local green infrastructure.
- Provide pedestrian links through the Site, and connect to the wider network of PRoW



Figure 3: Site Assessment Plan

CONCEPT MASTERPLAN

The sensitive development of the Site will allow for a high quality residential environment for future residents, whilst significantly improving the local housing offer through the provision of approximately 850 open market and affordable homes.

The opportunities and constraints previously presented have informed an appropriate design response to the Site. This is illustrated by the Concept Masterplan opposite and has the following elements:

DEVELOPMENT AREA

The development parameters are heavily influenced by the retention of existing landscape features whilst also ensuring efficient use of land.

RETAINED LANDSCAPE FEATURES

Existing landscape features will be retained and incorporated into a green infrastructure network. This will create a setting and identity for the new development, whilst providing increased biodiversity, recreation opportunities and landscape visual mitigation.

OPEN SPACE NETWORK

Green spaces and new planting throughout the proposed development will provide attractive, functional and accessible places for leisure and recreation. These spaces will vary in appearance, scale and use, from incidental green spaces containing existing landscape features to a more sizable areas of open space adjacent to and integrating with the existing woodland.

SUDS

While the form and final location of SuDS is subject to more detailed Site investigation, it is likely to include swales and attenuation ponds located in response to Site topography.

VEHICLE ACCESS, CIRCULATION AND SPACE SEQUENCE

Vehicle access to the Site will be delivered from Neills Road, Travers' Entry, and Reginald Road. Internally, a simple Estate Road will provide vehicle connectivity across the Site and a sequence of public spaces will be connected by the Estate Road. These spaces will range in form and function with a mix of hard surface materials and planted landscape features.

PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLE CONNECTIVITY

The proposed development will provide effective pedestrian and cycle connectivity across the Site and to the surrounding settlement. This will include connections to the existing residential neighbourhood to the north.

New paths, capable of accommodating pedestrians and cyclists, will be provided through a network of open space and the proposed residential streets. Shared surfaces, changes in horizontal alignment, construction and materials will all help to encourage walking and cycling rather than car use for local travel.

CHARACTER

The proposed development will reflect the character, scale and density of properties within the local townscape. Moreover, perimeter blocks and a legible network of streets will provide an attractive environment connecting the site with the surrounding environment.





- Site boundary
- Ponds
- Public open space
- > Potential vehicle access
- > Potential emergency vehicle access
- - - Pedestrian Links
- - - Indicative main street
- New/ existing trees
- ★ Potential Drainage Pond
- Residential Development Block
- ✱ Community Facilities
- ✱ Existing Shops

Figure 4: Concept Masterplan

BENEFITS AND CONCLUSION

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

The Site represents an available, suitable and sustainable site to be released from the Green Belt, having regard to the following benefits:

Economic Role

- The proposed development will secure a number of economic and fiscal benefits in terms of job creation;
- The proposed development will provide for increased expenditure in the local economy which will support the continued vitality and vibrancy of existing nearby services and facilities.

Social Role

- The Site has the potential to deliver a high-quality new residential led development delivering approximately 850 dwellings and new community facilities. These will make a valuable contribution towards meeting the full objectively assessed development needs of St Helens;
- The Site provides the opportunity to deliver new housing, serving as a logical extension to the existing settlement, at a density of c.27dph-30dph;

- Housing provided on the Site will be well-integrated with its surroundings, in particular existing housing predominantly to the north and east, and employment to the north west;
- The Site occupies a sustainable location for development, with easy access to a range of services within walking distance of the Site;
- The Site has potential to secure safe and sufficient vehicular access, without unacceptable impact on the local highway network;
- The Site is well served by existing bus routes, and is nearby to a high quality rail link offering sustainable links to the nearby cities of Liverpool and Manchester;
- There is an opportunity to create integrated pedestrian and cycle linkages as part of the Site's development, consistent with local emerging strategies, encouraging alternative modes or transport to private car, contributing towards a low-carbon economy, and providing improved access to nearby sources of recreation.

Environmental Role

- The Site has the potential to accommodate a residential led development with having an adverse impact on local landscape character;
- The proposed development will be set within a strong landscape framework which will assist in absorbing the proposed development into the surrounding landscape character;
- The Concept Masterplan for the Site has taken full account of local landscape and nature conservation interests, and provides an opportunity to develop and enhance the Bold Forest Park; and
- The proposed development will retain existing landscape features, including mature trees and hedgerows, and this will be strengthened through the implementation of new soft landscaping at the edges of and within the Site.





CONCLUSION

This Development Framework has undertaken an assessment of the Site, its context and its development potential. In doing so, it has been demonstrated that there are sound planning and design reasons for the Site to be released from the Green Belt for housing.

It is accepted by the Council that there is a need for release within the Green Belt to ensure that future development needs can be delivered in full. As such, this Document demonstrates that the Site does not meet the purposes of including land within the Green Belt as set out in Paragraph 80 of the NPPF, and provides for new defensible boundaries which are consistent with Paragraph 85.

In conclusion, the site is available and offers a suitable location to help the Council meet its future development needs.

Next Steps

The Site is considered deliverable in the next five years and our Client is committed to progressing the emerging Concept Masterplan towards a high quality residential development that responds to the local housing need, whilst taking into account and reflecting the character of the surrounding settlement.

We understand that the Council is looking to allocate part of the Site for housing growth, with the remainder of the Site safeguard for future housing growth. We look forward to working with the Council to progress the proposals for the Site and welcome any feedback and/or the opportunity to meet and discuss.

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APPENDIX 2:

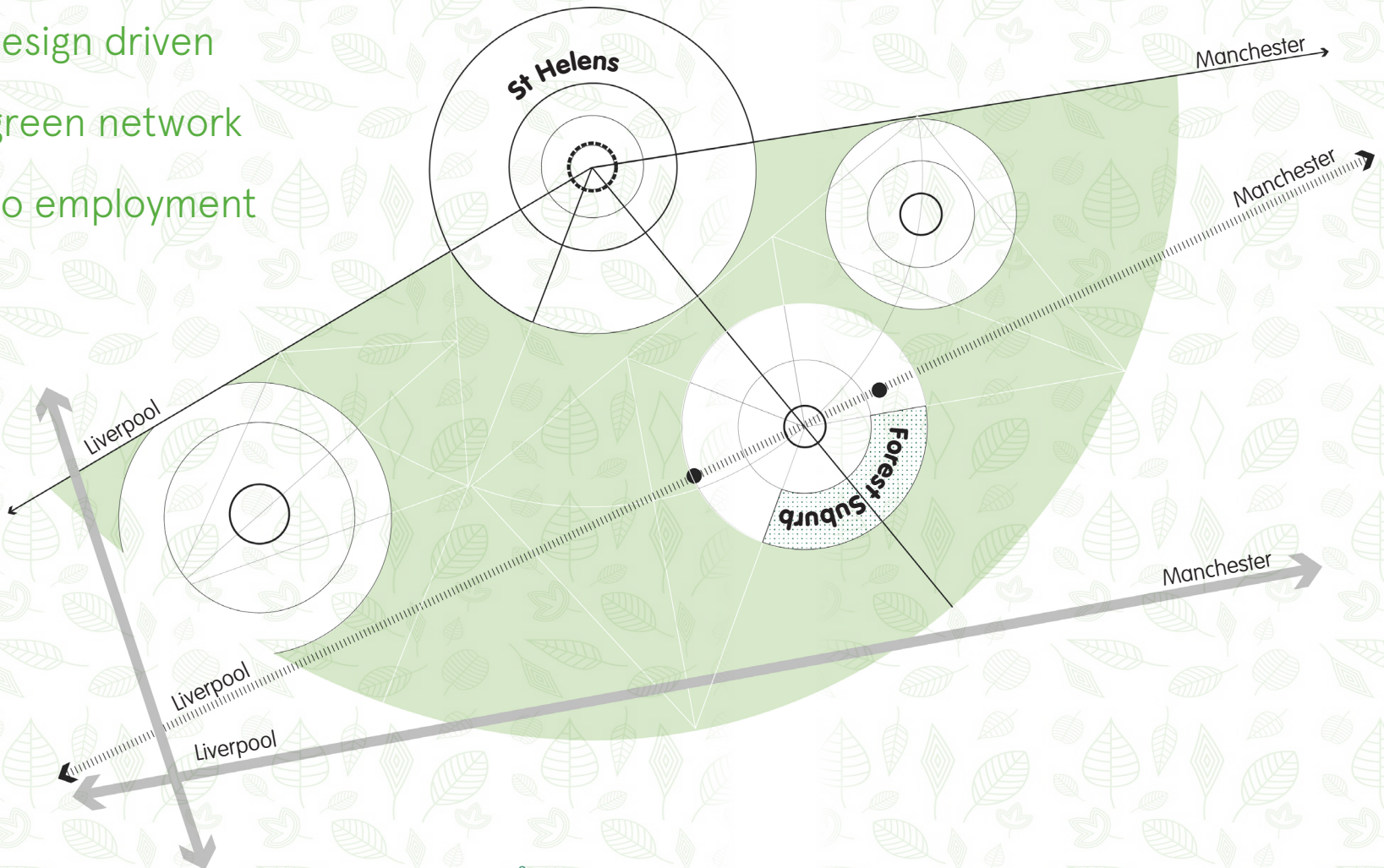
BOLD FOREST GARDEN SUBURB – OPPORTUNITY PLAN

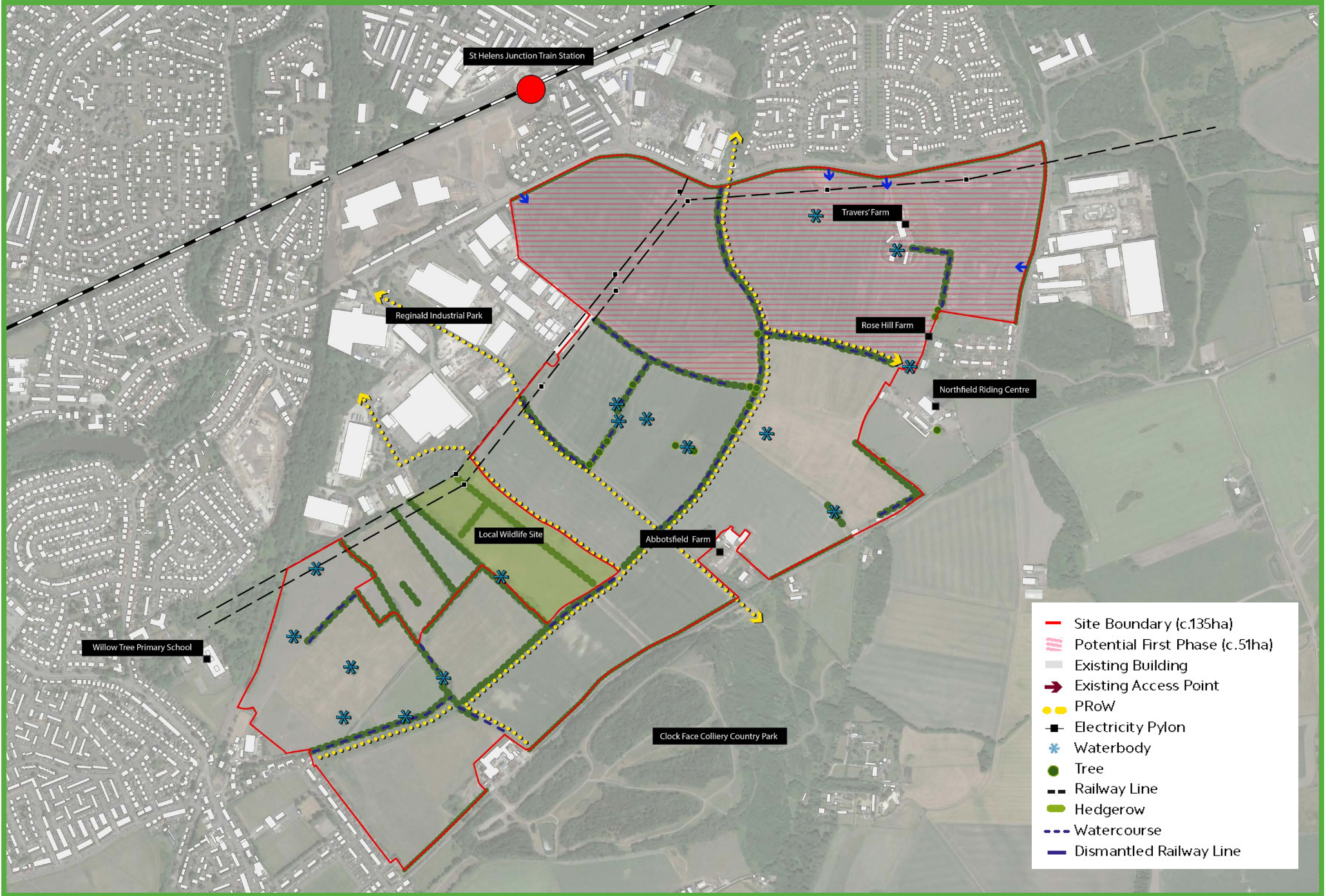
BOLD FOREST GARDEN SUBURB

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VISION: BOLD GARDEN FOREST SUBURB

- Highly accessible location with key strategic links
- Sustainable principles at its heart
- Landscape and design driven
- Fully integrated green network
- Close proximity to employment





Potential Development Area (c.83ha)
Potential Residential Development:
(2900@35dph)

-  Potential Vehicle Access Point
-  Primary Movement Route
-  Pedestrian/ Cycle Route



St Helen's Junction Train Station

Retained Ponds

B5204

Dismantled Railway Line with Opportunities for Pedestrian and Cycle Connections

Local Wildlife Site

Local Shops

Drainage/ Wetland Area

Wheatacre Wood

Tree Lined Estate Road

Neill's Road

Enhanced Pedestrian/ Cycle Connections to Nearby Recreation Areas

Gorsey Lane

Woodland Walk

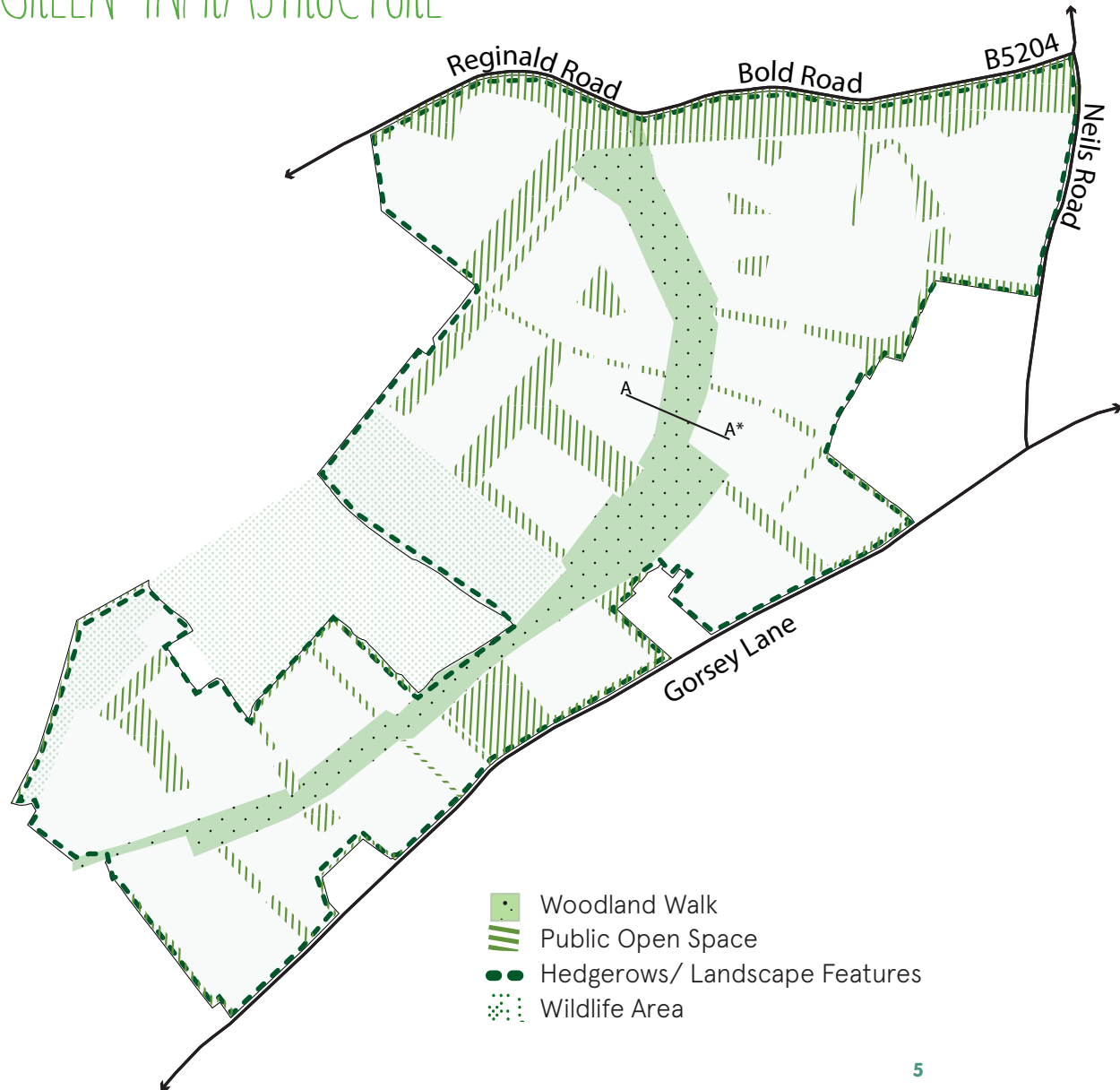
Childrens Play

Clock Face Colliery Country Park

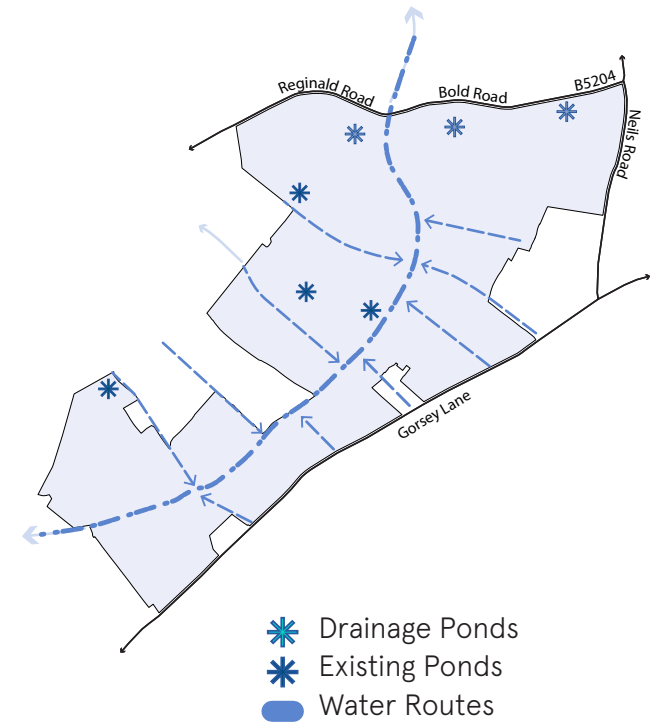
Retained/ Enhanced Landscape Features

AN EMERGING MASTERPLAN

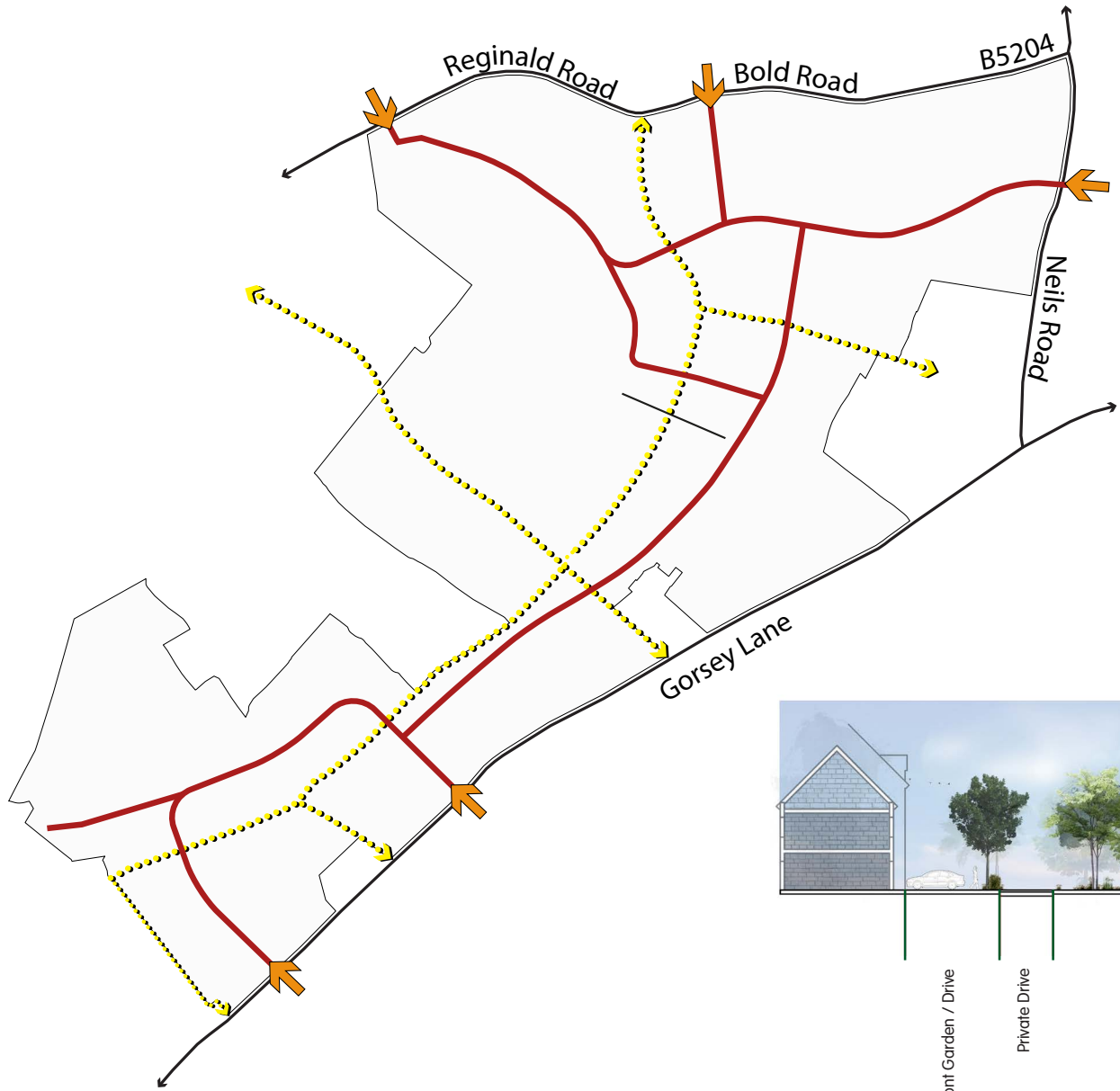
GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE



BLUE INFRASTRUCTURE: DRAINAGE

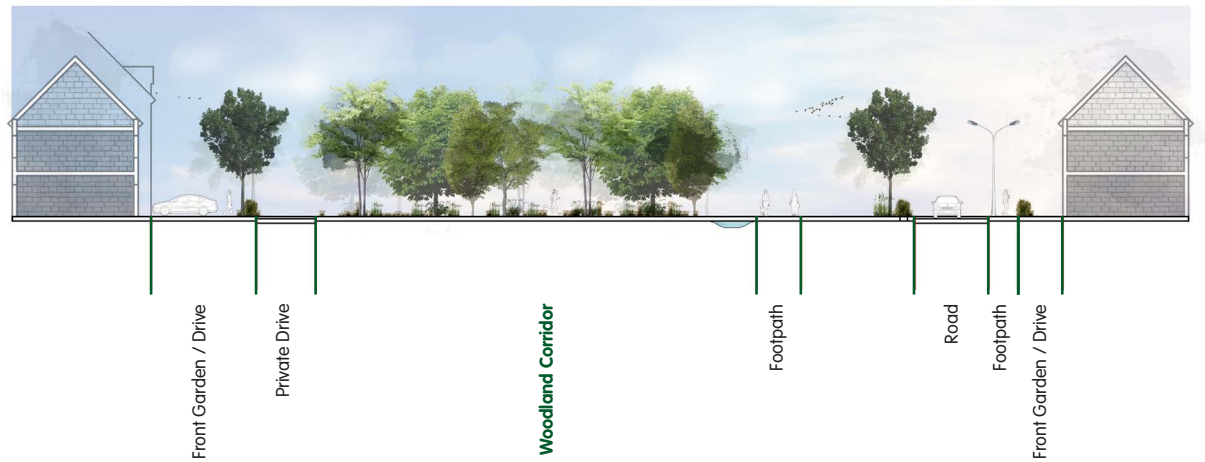


MOVEMENT INFRASTRUCTURE



- Primary Road
- ⋯ Pedestrian /Cycle Route
- ↔ Vehicle Access

CENTRAL GREEN ROUTE





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