



Planning Statement

on behalf of:

Grasswood Limited

**Full Planning application for 8
Dwellings**

Former URC Church

Upton, Wirral

December 2020

Prepared by

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by SATPLAN LTD, on behalf of Grasswood Ltd, in support of a full planning application for 8 dwellings at the former URC Church in Upton on the Wirral.

1.2 This Statement sets out the background to the proposals and identifies the relevant planning policies and justifies the overriding reasons why planning permission should be granted for the proposed development.

1.3 The Site falls within the settlement boundary of Upton and is located in a primarily residential area as designated in the Wirral Unitary Development Plan. The proposal seeks a small-scale infill development located on the Former URC church following demolition approval from Wirral Council on the 5th March 2020 (DEM/20/00163). The application will assist Wirral Council in meeting its development needs, in line with the emerging Wirral Local Plan 2020-2035. Furthermore, the scale of the proposed infill development ensures that it is compliant with both local and national policy.

1.4 This statement should be read in conjunction with other supporting documentation which comprises:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| • Drawing Package | Ainsley Gommon Architects |
| • Transport Statement | Highways Advice |
| • Arboricultural Impact Assessment | TEP |
| • Design and Access Statement | Ainsley Gommon Architects |
| • Landscaping Proposals | Ainsley Gommon Architects |

1.5 The remainder of this statement is structured as follows:

- **Section 2 - Site Context** - provides a description of the application site and describes the context of the location.
- **Section 3 - Proposed Development** - provides a description of the proposed development.
- **Section 4 - Planning Policy Framework** - identifies the policies at a national, and local level, relevant to the site and the proposed development.
- **Section 5 - Key Planning Considerations & Policy Assessment** - addresses the principal issues to take into account when determining the application for the proposed development.

- **Section 6 - Summary and Conclusions** - draws out the main considerations in light of all the information presented, demonstrating that the proposed development is acceptable and that planning permission should be granted.



2. SITE CONTEXT

- 2.1. The application Site relates to the land between Merrills Lane and the Ford Road. The Site covers approximately 0.3 hectares and is surrounded by a tree boarded and a small brick wall which faces onto the Ford road. The Site is fairly level moving from the eastern boundary on Merrills Lane towards the Southern Boundary on the Ford Road.
- 2.2. Previously the Site was used as a public worship facility, which has been approved for demolition following approval from Wirral Council on the 5th March 2020 (DEM/20/00163). The Site is now cleared and vacant.
- 2.3. The Site boundaries compromise of dwelling houses being that the surrounding area is used for mainly residential purposes. The Eastern boundary of the Site adjoins Merrills Lane, which then attaches onto a neighbouring property. Although the Lane is pedestrian usage only, it provides a curtilage between the Site and the adjoining properties to the East. The Southerly section of the Site directly faces properties on the Ford road and the beginning of Wroxham Drive.
- 2.4. The west of the Site boundary adjoins the rear garden of a neighbouring property. The western Site perimeter includes protected trees. (TPOS) The dwellings are proposed to run adjacent to protected trees retaining and enhancing where possible.
- 2.5. Vehicular access to the Site is currently unavailable, with on-street parking the only option the Site currently offers. Vehicular access to the Site would be grained directly from the Ford road to serve the proposed dwellings. A pedestrian access route only exists in the southwest corner of the Site onto Ford Road, whilst a bus stop (flag and pole) is also situated on Ford Road midway along the Site frontage.
- 2.6. The buildings which surround the Site are predominantly residential dwellings, with a wide mix of dwelling types, including larger detached or semi-detached properties, and smaller terraces of more recently built houses. No real precedent style is set. The houses are a mix of two and three storeys, with the second floors tending to be rooms in the roof.
- 2.7. The Site is a sustainable location and is approximately 650m to the main service centre of Upton located on the Ford road and Arrowe Park road.
- 2.8. The Site also offers promising public transport links, which as mentioned previously a bus stop is present right outside the Site which currently provides 7 bus routes to various places across the borough and Upton town centre. Buses serving Ford Road are frequent (between 6 and 10 services

per hour in each direction). Upton Train station is also within 0.4 miles of the Site which can be accessed by walking, bus or car. Public transport infrastructure is therefore well established in the surrounding area.



3. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1. The proposed development seeks full planning permission for no. 8 dwellings with vehicular access via the Ford Road. This full application is accompanied by a layout plan, elevations, floor plans and sections which includes high quality semi-detached homes, with parking and both rear and frontal gardens.
- 3.2. The houses proposed will be a mix of two and three storeys in height. The proposed dwelling types aim to reflect the local market. For details of each house type can be seen in the submitted house type plans. As set out on the proposed Planning Layout Plan these comprise of:
- 7 no. three bedroom units; and
 - 1 no. four bedroom unit.
- 3.3. The proposed scheme of eight houses is suitable in size and scale for the Site. All required interface distances with the existing residential properties around the Site have been met.
- 3.4. Access to the Site will be provided by a new entrance off Ford Road, which will be designed to meet all relevant Wirral Highways standards.
- 3.5. A bus stop sits in front of the Site. Relocation of this bus stop along the Ford Road is proposed to reflect the proposed development subject to approval. Vehicle tracking for a large vehicle, such as a bin wagon, has also been provided to show that the visibility of any road users on Ford Road will not be impeded.
- 3.6. Houses 1-4 sit at the front of the Site, blending into the streetscape of Ford Road, with the overall height of this block being less than the ridge height of the former church, and following the natural descent of the ridge lines of the existing properties either side of it along Ford Road. Houses 5-8 sit at the rear of the Site and are similar in scale to the Manse House adjacent to it. A street elevation has been produced to reflect how the scheme fits into the surrounding context.
- 3.7. The scheme proposes two parking spaces per dwelling, which are accessed via a new shared surface road which enters the Site from Ford Road. This location allows retention of the existing stone wall along Ford Road. This also enables the proposed development to retain as many of the existing trees as possible, including all of those that are covered by a tree protection order (TPO). This gives good visibility of the Site but also allows the front of the Site to be well screened by the existing and newly proposed landscaping scheme.

- 3.8. Each dwelling also offers individual private rear garden areas, which have been designed to retain all TPO trees on Site. As a result, existent ecological and biodiversity assets aim to be undisturbed enhancing the proposed development and local environment.
- 3.9. This full planning application is also accompanied by a Design and Access statement, and materials schedule which provides further details of the design justification and constraints which have been considered in designing the layout and type of dwellings on the Site. The Design and Access Statement also demonstrates the achievability of privacy distances and landscape and external works.



4. PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 4.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the statutory development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Statutory Development Plan

- 4.2. The statutory development plan for the area comprises of the following:
- Wirral Unitary Development Plan, adopted February 2000.
 - Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD's)
 - Supplementary Guidance Notes
- 4.3. On this basis the key policies against which this application should be assessed are:

Wirral Unitary Development Plan

Policy URN1 Development and Urban Regeneration

Policy HSG1 New dwelling requirement

Policy HSG2 Affordable housing

Policy HS4 Criteria for New Housing Development

HS10 Backland Development

Policy GR5 Landscaping and New Development

Policy GR6 Greenspace within New Family Housing Development

Policy GR7 Trees and New Development

Policy TR9 Requirements for Off-Street Parking

Policy TR12 Requirements for Cycle Parking

CIL Charging Schedule

The Council has not yet made a decision on whether to introduce a CIL levy within the Wirral. A Baseline Local Plan and Community Infrastructure Levy Economic Viability study has been produced in April 2014. Despite this, no future updates regarding Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council progress with the levy has not been issued.

Other Material Considerations

4.4. In addition to the statutory development plan, the following documents should be given due weight in the planning assessment:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published 2019;
- Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) prepared by the Council to expand upon existing Core Strategy policies;

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

4.5. The NPPF sets out the Government's view of what constitutes sustainable development and what this means for the planning system. Paragraph 8 considers there to be three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways. These are:

- **Economic**– 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;
- **Social**– 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
- **Environmental**– 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.

4.6. The Framework makes clear that planning policies and decisions should play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions, but in doing so should take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area (paragraph 9).

4.7. To ensure that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. As set in Paragraph 11, in respect of decision taking this require Local Authorities to approve without delay development that complies with an up

to date development. Alternatively, where no development plan policies are in place permission should be granted unless the development detrimentally impacts protected areas, and so would be contrary to the policy objectives of the Framework, or the development benefits would be significantly outweighed by the adverse impacts.

4.8. Amongst other notable and relevant provisions of NPPF are:

- A requirement for Local Authorities to utilise as much previously developed land as possible in order to meet their objectively assessed development needs (paragraph 117);
- To boost significantly the supply of housing, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed and that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed (paragraph 59);
- The size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies (paragraph 61);
- Local Authorities must have a supply of specific, deliverable sites for the one to five year period, which should be reviewed on an annual basis and should include a buffer of either 5%, 10% or 20% depending on previous delivery rates (paragraph 73);
- It is recognised that small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an authority as these are often built out quickly, thereby boosting delivery of much needed homes (paragraph 68);
- Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sporting activities is important for the health of local communities. The NPPF therefore does not support the development of open space or sports and recreational buildings and land unless: the land is proven to be surplus to requirements; the loss of a facility would be replaced by equivalent or better facilities in respect of quality or quantity in close proximity to the site; or the development is for alternative sports and recreation facilities (Paragraphs 96 and 97);
- Planning decisions should give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs, and support the development of under-utilised sites especially where this helps to meet identified housing needs where land is constrained (paragraph 118);
- A requirement on Local Authorities to take a proactive role in helping to bring forward land that is suitable to meeting development needs (paragraph 119);
- Planning decisions need to reflect changes in the demand for land, and should be informed by regular reviews of allocations and land availability. Where there are no reasonable prospects of a site coming forward for its allocated use Local Authorities should reallocate

the land when undertaking a Local Plan Review, or support proposals for alternative uses where it would contribute to meeting an unmet need in the area (paragraph 120);

- Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development (paragraph 124);
- Planning policy and decisions should contribute to enhancing the natural and local environment by minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures (Paragraph 170).

4.9. The planning policy framework set out above provides the context against which this proposed development should be assessed. Section 6 of this report considers the key planning considerations and identifies why the proposed development is considered to comply with the planning policy that has been outlined in this section of the report.

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD's)

4.10. Adopted Supplementary Planning Documents provide more detailed explanation and mechanisms to assist applicants in satisfying the requirements of the development plan policies to which they relate. Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council has adopted a number of Supplementary Planning Documents / Guidance notes (SPDs/SPGs) to provide additional guidance on existing Local Plan policies. The key documents to note in the context of the proposals are:

- **SPD4 – Parking Standards** (June 2007) sets out the parking requirements for new development. Parking bays are expected to be 2.4 metres wide by 5.5 metres long. In cases where bays could be parallel to the access way and entered from the side, the length should be increased to at least 6 metres. Parking bays for disabled should have a minimum width of 3.6 metres. Walking distances should also face no significant barriers to pedestrians, including those with disabilities. The SPD seeks to ensure dropped kerbs and pavements needing to be 1.35 metres wide.

Parking standards and requirements are set out as follows:

- 1 space per 10 units is to be allocated for disabled parking;
- 1 secure space is required for motorcycles per 20 bays for communal parking areas;
- 1 space is required per one bedroom house;
- Average of 1.5 spaces for 2 bedroom houses;
- 2 spaces for houses with 3 or more bedrooms.

- **Supplementary Guidance Note - Backland Development** (No date) Supplementary Guidance Note on Backland Development sets out standards for new residential development within backland plots. Development should not affect the amenity of existing dwellings through noise, general disturbance, or loss of privacy. All development should abide by the minimum distances of 21 metres between overlooking windows and 14 metres between windows and 2 storey blank gables. Greater distances may be needed in low density areas.

Emerging Development Plan Documents

- 4.11. The emerging Wirral Local Plan is being prepared to shape the future of the borough for the 15-year period between 2020-2035. The latest stage was the publication of a Local Plan Issues and Options document for public consultation which ended in April 2020.
- 4.12. A proposed residential development SPD is currently underway aiming to provide details and guidance on how residential development can be implemented in accordance to the emerging Core Strategy Local Plan. Guidance on achieving development solutions that could be permitted under the terms of adopted planning policies will be explored giving further weight to Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council development objectives. The planning policy framework set out above provides the context against which this proposed development should be assessed. Section 5 of this report considers the key planning considerations and identifies why the proposed development is considered to comply with the planning policy that has been outlined in this section of the report.



5. KEY PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1. Full planning permission is sought for 8 dwellings for the land at Ford Road and Merrills Lane.
- 5.2. The following section assesses the suitability of the site for the proposed development having regard to the national and local planning policies and identifies other material considerations that should be taken into account as part of the determination process.

Principle of Residential Development

- 5.3. The Site falls within the settlement boundary of Upton and is located in a primarily residential area as designated in the Wirral Unitary Development Plan.
- 5.4. New Housing Development is permitted under UDP Policy Hs4 subject to proposals being of a scale which relates well to surrounding property, in particular with regard to existing densities and form of development. Proposals should not result in detrimental change in the character of the area.
- 5.5. The proposed residential development is considered as 'infill development' due to the size, tenure, and density all of which reflect characteristics of infill residential development as set by both national and local policy.
- 5.6. Pre-application advice was sought from the Local Authority in 2019 (Ref: PRE/18/00415/ENQ), which proposed 10 dwellings on the Site. A key consideration was how any future development may impact on the character, appearance and amenity of the area and prospective occupiers. The revised scheme of 8 dwellings is therefore reflective of this advice in its design to address these concerns.

Density

- 5.7. The proposed infill development has been limited to 8 units to keep the scheme at a scale and density which reflective of its surrounding environment.
- 5.8. A street elevation accompanies the application to reflect how the scheme fits into the surrounding context. Elevational treatments have also been carefully designed to reflect the numerous styles and details of the buildings that surround the site nearby. Mansard style roofs, pediment details and dormer windows are all features that can be found in other properties in the near vicinity and are replicated in these proposals.

Residential Amenity and Privacy Distances

- 5.9. UDP Policy HS4 requires new residential development to provide adequate private or communal garden space to each dwelling. Adequate interface distances should also be maintained between dwellings.
- 5.10. Wirral Councils Supplementary Guidance Note on Backland Development sets out standards for new residential development within backland plots. Development should not affect the amenity of existing dwellings through noise, general disturbance, or loss of privacy.
- 5.11. All required interface distances have been met between the proposed dwellings and surrounding properties (See Drawing Number 010A Rev B). The proposed small scale limited infill development would ensure residential amenity is maintained for those whom occupy neighbouring properties, aiming to adequately meet amenity guidelines within local policy.
- 5.12. The Site includes protected trees which align the perimeter of the site, with the most dominant cluster being on the West of the site. Protected trees which align the west of the Site aim to retain current established visual amenity of the neighbouring property. The proposed dwellings are designed to remain below the height of the current trees onsite, averting possible privacy issues and overlooking onto neighbouring properties.
- 5.13. Similarly, the proposed properties which align Merrills Lane will also retain trees and will be further enhanced by additional hedgerow planting and fencing to minimise privacy issues for the occupiers of these properties.
- 5.14. The proposed development design has therefore been mindful and reflective of local policy requirements in terms of privacy distances, meeting standards set by Wirral Council.

Transport

- 5.15. Access into the development is currently and proposed to be gained from the Ford Road. This application is accompanied by a Transport Statement (TS) which includes a full assessment of the access proposals, and impact of the additional trips that will be generated by the development.
- 5.16. The TS has deemed the Site to be well located in relation to sustainable travel options. It is within 140m walking distance of two bus stops on Ford Road providing access to Birkenhead, Eastham

Rake, Gayton, Liverpool, Moreton, New Ferry, Oxtan and West Kirby, and is also within 550m walking distance of Upton rail station, which provides hourly services to Bidston and Wrexham.

- 5.17. Similarly, the proposed development site is in a highly accessible urban location, 315m walking distance (approximately 4 minutes' walk) from a wide range of local amenities, businesses, and services available in Upton local centre.
- 5.18. The proposed site access arrangement onto Ford Road incorporate visibility splays of 2.4m x 43m to the nearest kerb line in the critical leading direction, and 2.4m x 43m (measured to 1m into the carriageway) in the non-critical direction, in accordance with 'Manual for Streets' standards. Swept path assessments have been able to demonstrate the proposed site access arrangements can safely accommodate a large 11.34m length refuse vehicle turning on site, allowing emergency vehicles and large vehicles to access the development.
- 5.19. The proposed residential development would (as a worst-case scenario) generate only 4 vehicular trips in each of the AM and PM peak hour periods, and around 35 vehicular trips per day in total. This low level of traffic can be easily accommodated on the local highway network, alongside the Ford Road without any detrimental impact to the current highway or residents.
- 5.20. Accordingly, there are no material adverse effects in highway safety or accessibility terms, and benefits may be conveyed by the proposed access arrangements. As well as complying with development plan policy in this respect, the proposals are consistent with the highways safety and accessibility objective of the NPPF.

Trees

- 5.21. The application is accompanied by an Arboricultural Impact Assessment exploring results and effects of the proposed development on the land at Ford Road.
- 5.22. 25 Individual trees (T1-T25); 4 groups of trees (G1-G4); and 5 hedges (H1-H5) were recorded within influencing distance of the application site. The tree population comprises small to large, amenity trees, in fair to good condition, located almost entirely around the boundaries of the site. The desktop review and site survey identified 11 trees included in a Tree Preservation Order; and 1 Habitat of Principal Importance *Hedgerow*.
- 5.23. As a result of Phase 2 of this development, being the erection of 8 new dwellings and associated infrastructure. As a result, 3 small low quality individual trees would be removed. Tree T22

(Portuguese laurel) would be removed to facilitate demolition of the existing church building. Trees T11 (Turkey oak) and T16 (cypress) are within or close to the footprint of proposed structures.

- 5.24. The development would give rise to no adverse effects that cannot be mitigated. New planting is proposed and would include 18 new trees/shrubs indicatively shown on the proposals. A comprehensive and detailed scheme of new planting should be produced, including a range of species, and at least 6 trees of medium to large ultimate size. The development would therefore have the potential to result in a significant net gain of tree cover and biodiversity.
- 5.25. Tree protection measures to be observed during demolition are provided within the Phase 1 - Demolition Stage Arboricultural Method Statement (ref: D7472.003-006) previously submitted. Tree protection measures to be observed throughout construction should be provided in the form of a separate Construction Arboricultural Method Statement which should be secured by planning condition; a Heads of Terms is provided on Drawing 3 within the report.
- 5.26. The inclusion of landscape proposals within the design aims to build on and improve the existing landscape character. Retention of trees has been assessed within the proposed layout, limiting tree removal, and accommodating this where possible. A large number newly planted trees, suitable in scale and species for the nature of the proposed development have therefore been incorporated, illustrating the proposals aim to prioritise mitigation against potential ecological impacts.



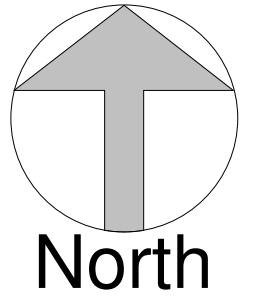
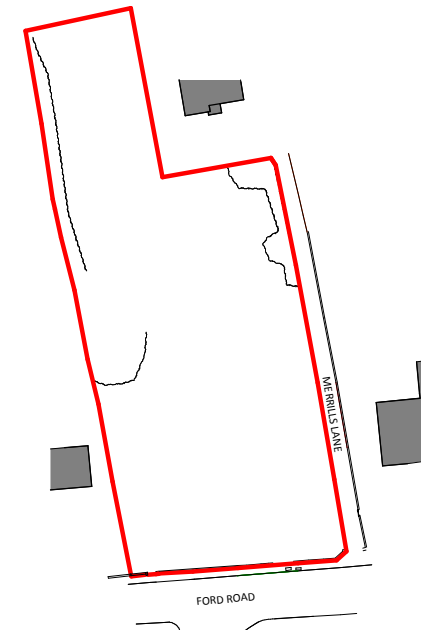
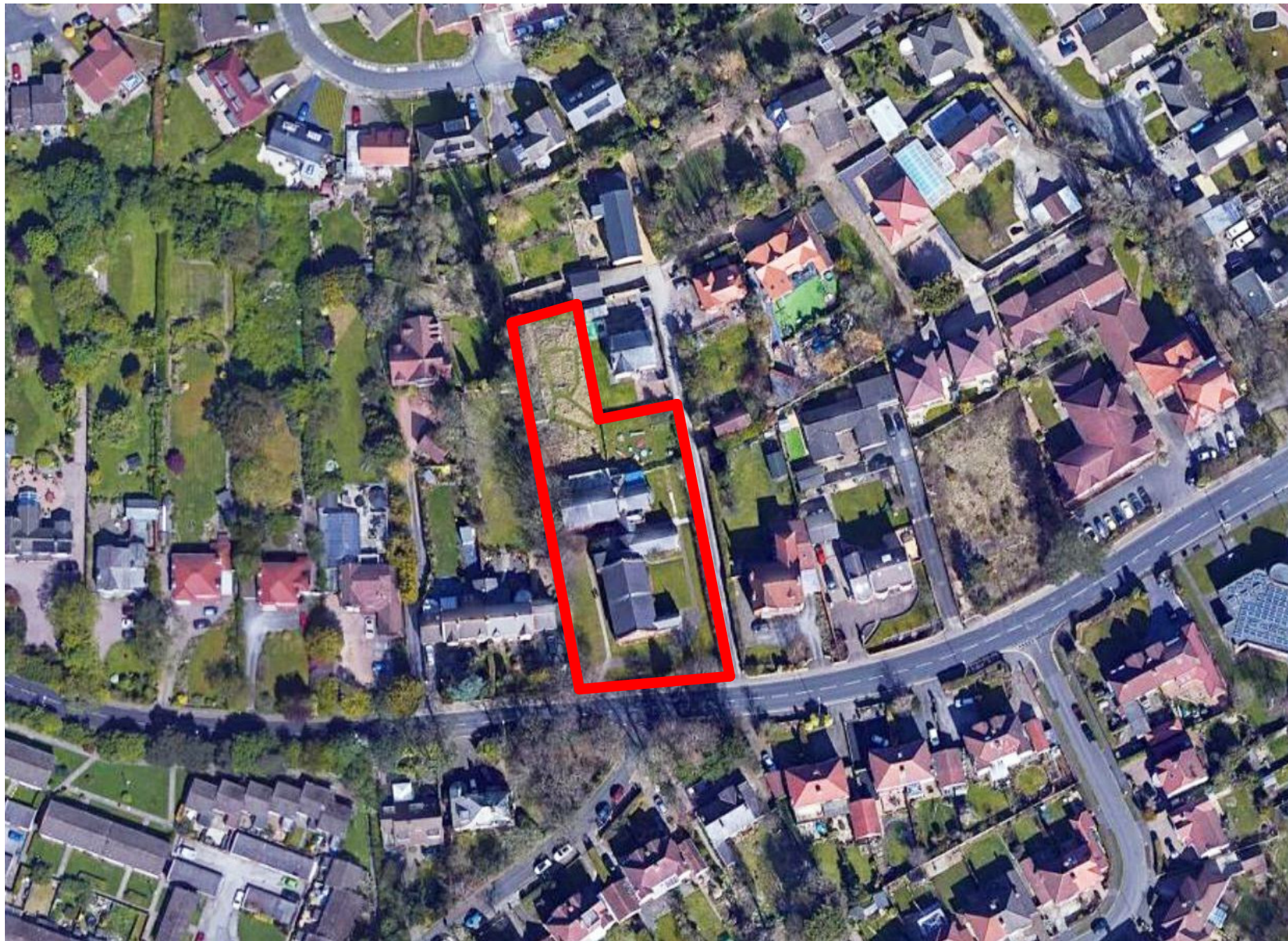
6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1. Under Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 the application is to be determined in accordance with the adopted statutory development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 6.2. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) introduces a presumption in favour of sustainable development which is to be the 'golden thread' through decision making.
- 6.3. In terms of sustainability this statement has demonstrated that the proposal does accord with the aims and objectives set out in Statutory Development Framework and NPPF. The appraisal of the proposed development against the key planning policies as set out in this report also demonstrates that the proposal is wholly compliant with the applicable policies.
- 6.4. The proposed development will provide quality housing in this location and will assist in contributing towards the Council's 5-year housing land supply on a brownfield site in a primary residential area.
- 6.5. This proposal represents sustainable development, in social, environmental and economic respects and the presumption in favour of sustainable development as referenced in the NPPF should apply. Accordingly, planning permission should be granted without delay.



APPENDIX 1 – SITE LOCATION PLAN





1 | 001 - LOCATION PLAN
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PROJECT
Land at Former Upton URC,
Ford Road, Upton CH49 0TG
for Hamilton Church Ltd

DRAWING TITLE
LOCATION PLAN

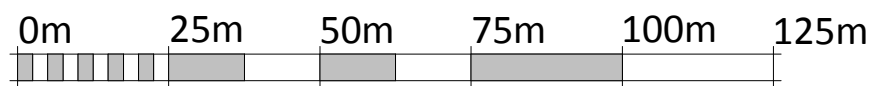
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