



Planning Statement

on behalf of:

Bellway Homes

Lathom Pastures Phase II

Residential Development at

**Land to the west of
Neverstitch Road,
Skelmersdale,**

December 2020

Prepared by

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by SATPLAN LTD in support of a full planning application, submitted on behalf of Bellway Homes Limited (North West), for 200 no. dwellings at land to the west of the A577 Neverstitch Road, Skelmersdale.

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

1.3 In summary the Site comprises of a 7.37 hectare irregular area of land located on the western side of Skelmersdale. It forms part of the Firwood Road allocated residential site as identified on the adopted Local Plan 2012-2027 proposals maps. The principle of developing this Site for a residential use is therefore in accordance with Local Plan Policy RS1. The Land at Firwood Road has also been subject to more detailed policies as set out in the Firwood Road Development Brief adopted by the Council in August 2014. This Statement considers the requirements as set out in the Development Brief and other remaining policies of the Local Plan against the proposed development and site technical findings.

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

- | | |
|--|-------------------|
| ▪ Application forms and Certificate | |
| ▪ Topographical Survey | Survey Operations |
| ▪ Drawing Package | APD Ltd |
| ▪ Design and Access Statement | APD Ltd |
| ▪ Landscape Plans | Enzygo |
| ▪ Transport Assessment | CBO Transport |
| ▪ Framework Travel Plan | CBO Transport |
| ▪ Proposed Access Arrangement Plans | CBO Transport |
| ▪ Swept Path Analysis Plans | CBO Transport |
| ▪ Electrical Vehicle Charging Point Plan | Bellway Homes |
| ▪ Air Quality Assessment | RSK |
| ▪ Noise Assessment Report | RSK |
| ▪ Ecological Assessment and Assessment | ERAP |
| ▪ Arboricultural Impact Assessment | Ascerta |
| ▪ Flood Risk Assessment | Waterco |
| ▪ Drainage Strategy | REFA |

- SUDs Management and Maintenance Plan Bellway Homes
- Preliminary Environmental Risk Assessment Groundtech Consulting
- Geo-Environmental Assessment Report (including Coal Mining Risk Assessment)
Brownfield Solutions Ltd
- Mineral Assessment Report Brownfield Solutions Ltd
- Coal Mining Report The Coal Authority
- Archaeological Desk Based Assessment Lanpro
- Construction Environmental Management Plan Bellway Homes
- Construction Management Plan Bellway Homes
- Stage 1 Utility Report TDS
- Proposed Road Lighting and Illuminance Layout Plans Nick Smith Associates
- Lighting Assessment Nick Smith Associates

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** - 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 off west of Neverstitch Road, Skelmersdale, and comprises of Phase II of the Applicant's Lathom Pastures development.
- 2.2. The Site covers approximately 7.37 hectares and is irregular in shape. The Site comprises of a mix of previously developed and undeveloped land, and as such there are a mix of areas of hardstanding, grasslands and woodland areas across the Site. There is one building, a large glass house, on Site located along its southern boundary.
- 2.3. As shown on the topographical survey that accompanies this application the topography of the site remains fairly level.
- 2.4. A former railway bisects the Site, entering it on its north-west side, and leaving the Site at the south-east corner. The dismantled railway line is evident on Site by a belt of mature trees.

Site Context

- 2.5. Old Engine Lane forms the northern boundary of the Site, this route is a track that links Neverstitch Road and Firwood Road which comprise of the eastern and western boundaries of the Site respectfully. There are existing residential properties intermittently located along both Old Engine Lane and Firwood Road.
- 2.6. To the north-east of the Site is a dense tree boundary. This green buffer establishes a separation along the boundary from the proposed residential development and the existing employment uses approximately 200 metres to the north-east of the Site.
- 2.7. New residential development is under construction to the south west of the Site. This is the Applicant's Lathom Pastures Phase I development, along Meadow Nook Drive. The south east corner of the site comprises of a small cluster of lower density residential dwellings comprising of single- and two-story properties fronting Ormskirk Road. These dwellings are mainly large post war dwellings with varying architectural details and design.
- 2.8. Land to the West of Firwood Road comprises of open Green Belt Land and various Agricultural holdings.

- 2.9. To the north of the Site, beyond Old Engine Lane are open fields. These also forms part of the 'Land at Firswood Road, Lathom/Skelmersdale' residential allocation in the Local Plan. This land has been recently subject to an outline planning application that was approved on 1st October 2020 (reference 2019/0069/OUT). Pursuant to this outline consent Wainhomes have recently submitted a reserved matters application, comprising of a 130 no. dwelling scheme (reference 2020/0906/ARM), which is currently being determined by the Council. The Stanley Industrial estate is located to the north of the Wainhome's Site.
- 2.10. An abundance of local services and facilities are within the area. Open space and recreation opportunities within the locality include Skelmersdale football and cricket club, Blaguegate Playing Fields and Stanley Coronation Park. Brookfield Park and St Richards Catholic Primary schools are within an approximate 10-minute walk catchment of the Site. In addition, three secondary schools are also nearby including West Lancashire Community High school, Lathom High school Technology College and Our Lady Queen of Peace engineering College. West Lancashire Community High school is accessible from the Site within a 10-minute walk.
- 2.11. The Site is located within approximately 2km of Skelmersdale Town Centre which offers various services and facilities.
- 2.12. Bus services are accessible along Blaguegate Lane, with the closest bus stop being available at the bottom of Firswood Road offering routes 310, 375 and 385. Aughton Park is the nearest train station to the site, which is accessible within a 10-minute drive.
- 2.13. A plan identifying the Site has been submitted as part of the application documentation. A full suite of technical assessments have also been submitted to demonstrate that the Site is suitable for development.

Planning History

- 2.14. The Site does not have any relevant planning history.

3. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1. The proposed development comprises a total of 200 no. dwelling houses. The layout incorporates a good mix of house types which will make a positive contribution to the character of the area, respecting the existing grain of housing.
- 3.2. As set out on the proposed Planning Layout Plan these comprise of:
- 10 no. one bedroom apartments;
 - 12 no. two bedroom apartments;
 - 9 no. two bedroom houses;
 - 115 no. three bedroom houses;
 - 52 no. four bedroom houses; and
 - 2 no. five bedroom houses.
- 3.3. Details of each house type can be seen in the submitted house type plans. Overall, this proposed mix of house and apartments are proposed to reflect the local market.
- 3.4. The houses are a mix of two and two and a half storeys in height. Each house benefits from a private garden space and off-road parking for at least two cars.
- 3.5. The apartment building, which is located at the Site frontage on Neverstitch Road, is three storeys in height. This approach provides a clear nodal point to mark the Site entrance. The apartment building is well located for residents to make use of the large areas of proposed public open space that surrounds the building. Each apartment has one off-road parking space.
- 3.6. All dwellings have access to electric vehicle charging points as shown on the submitted plan. These are located internally within garages where possible, or external where required.
- 3.7. There is one vehicular access into the Site which connects the development to Neverstitch Road, via a T junction arrangement with a central lane provided in Neverstitch Road for vehicles turning right into the Site. A pedestrian footway is proposed along the Site's Neverstitch Road frontage.
- 3.8. The Site has been designed to ensure permeability for pedestrians and cyclists with links from the application site provided on to Old Engine Lane in the northern corner of the Site adjacent to Plot 135; through to the Lathom Pastures Phase I development between Plots 75 and 76, and via the public

open space at the western side of the Site; on to Ormskirk Road adjacent to Plots 51 and 52; and at various points on Neverstitch Road.

- 3.9. Overall, 1.37 hectares of public open space has been provided as part of the scheme. This is centred around the dismantled railway line that bisects the Site, and includes a large stand-off distance from Neverstitch Road to ensure all new homes have good access to open spaces. These areas are to be landscaped as shown on the submitted landscaping plans and benefit from plenty of opportunities for natural surveillance with dwellings positioned to overlook the open spaces.
- 3.10. The proposed dwellings have been designed to sensitively sit alongside existing properties where they bound the Site. In the southern areas of the Site where the proposals about the Applicant's Lathom Pasture Phase I development and properties fronting on to Ormskirk Road back gardens have been located adjacent to back gardens. This same approach has been taken in the northern part of the Site where proposed houses back onto the houses fronting Firwood Road and Old Engine Lane. Adjacent to Plots 156 and 157 it is proposed to resurface the driveway for 4 Old Engine Lane and retain and enhance the hedgerow which separates this property from the proposed development to ensure a suitable boundary treatment.
- 3.11. Access is provided through the Site to Firwood Nursery, which does not form part of the Site, but is located centrally between Phases I and II Lathom Pastures. Vehicular access is provided to the Nursery from the estate road, adjacent to Plot 96.
- 3.12. The application is accompanied by a series of street scenes which demonstrate how the development will enhance the appearance of the area.



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:
- West Lancashire Local Plan 2012-2027, adopted October 2013;
 - Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule, adopted July 2014 and implemented September 2014.
- 4.3. On this basis the key policies against which this application should be assessed are:

West Lancashire Local Plan 2012-2027

Policy SP1 A Sustainable Development Framework for West Lancashire

Policy GN1 Settlement Boundaries

Policy GN2 Safeguarded Land

Policy GN3 Criteria for Sustainable Development

Policy GN4 Demonstrating Viability

Policy GN5 Sequential Tests

Policy EC2 The Rural Economy

Policy EC3 Rural Development Opportunities

Policy RS1 Residential Development

Policy RS2 Affordable and Specialist Housing

Policy IF2 Enhancing Sustainable Transport Choice

Policy IF3 Service Accessibility and Infrastructure for Growth

Policy IF4 Developer Contributions

Policy EN1 Low Carb Development and Energy Infrastructure

Policy EN2 Preserving and Enhancing West Lancashire's Natural Environment

Policy EN3 Provision of Green Infrastructure and Open Recreation Space

Policy EN4 Preserving and Enhancing West Lancashire's Cultural and Heritage Assets

CIL Charging Schedule

The Site is located in residential CIL charging 'Zone A', and therefore is liable for a charge of £85 per square metre of new floorspace.

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 February 2019;
 - Development Briefs and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) prepared by the Council to expand upon existing Core Strategy policies; and
 - West Lancashire Highways and Transport Masterplan, adopted October 2014.
- 4.5. The Council were pursuing a Local Plan Review, which was last consulted upon in November-December 2018. Work on this document stopped in September 2019 following a Cabinet decision to cease work on this plan. Subsequently work commenced in Autumn 2019 on a new Local Plan, however work on this plan has not progressed due to the Government's White Paper published in September 2019 and then the Covid-19 Pandemic which has prevented public consultation from taking place. For these reasons the emerging Local Plan is at very early stages and therefore afforded no weight in the determination of this application.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 4.6. 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.

4.7. 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).

4.8. 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.

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

- The planning system should be plan-led by succinct and up to date plans that provide a positive vision for the future of the area including a clear framework for addressing housing needs (paragraph 15);
- Non-strategic policies should be used by local authorities to set out detailed policies that can include allocating sites, as well as setting out other development management policies (paragraph 28);
- Applications should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise (paragraph 47);
- 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 large numbers of new homes can often be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as extensions to existing towns provided that they are well located and design, and supported by the necessary infrastructure and facilities (paragraph 72);
- 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);
- Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development (paragraph 124)
- A set of key design criteria for development is set out including: function well and add to quality; be visually attractive as a result of good architecture; be sympathetic to local character and history; maintain a strong sense of place; provide for an appropriate amount and mix of development; and create safe, inclusive and accessible places (paragraph 127); and
- 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).

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD's/SPG'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. The primary adopted SPD's considered to be relevant to this development proposal are:

- **Firwood Road Development Brief** (August 2014) sets out the Council's aspirations for the allocated residential Site at Firwood Road in order to guide development. Key objectives details in the Development brief include a site capacity of 400 dwellings; the provision of a linear park along the dismantled railway line route that will form part of the Ormskirk-Skelmersdale Linear Park; and the main site access to come from Neverstitch Road although a number of other access points have also been identified. The design objectives for the allocated Site are centred on community, connectivity; climate and character.
- **Affordable Housing** (July 2007) sets out the Council's policies for ensuring affordable housing is included within major development within West Lancashire in accordance with Policy DE3 of the Local Plan and PPS3 of the NPPF. It is stated that within Skelmersdale the number of affordable housing units to be provided on sites of 10 or more dwellings will be up to 25%. These affordable

units should include a mixture of types required to meet the overall regeneration and housing Strategy objectives for Skelmersdale.

In determining the precise level of affordable housing provision to be made on any site regard will be had to the following criteria:

- Site size suitability and the economics of provision; and
 - The need to achieve a successful housing development.
- **Trees and Development** (July 2007) establishes the requirements for developers when trees exist on or adjacent to the proposed development site in accordance with Local Plan Policies EN9 and GD1. Trees may be affected directly and indirectly, unless adequate attention is given within a development project in evaluating both the short and long term impact on tree cover within or near a site. The SPD includes survey requirements for tree and landscape reports.
 - **Site Planning, Layout and Design** (August 2007) aims to assist developers and designers in meeting the requirements of Local Plan Policy GD1 Design of Development. Guidance is provided on environmental issues that need to be considered and outlines a systematic approach to analysis and design. New development should avoid standardised designs having an appreciation of environmental characteristics and be sympathetic to its surroundings.
 - **Land to the West of Stanley Industrial Estate Skelmersdale** (May 2007) explores the principles for development within the site which is allocated for development within the West Lancashire Local Plan. The Supplementary Planning Guidance aims to provide a framework for developers on how the Council will expect the area to develop considering landscape buffer zones and footpath links which are adjacent to the area. Phasing of Development, Transport improvements, Public Transport, Design Principles, Structural Landscape, Drainage and Nature and Conservation are some of the key focal points West Lancashire require development to adhere too.
 - **Design Guide** (January 2008) provides an overview of the design principles of which West Lancashire Borough council expect development to adhere too. New development should be of an overall scale, mass and built form which responds to the characteristics of the site and its surroundings. Building heights and scale should not distrust visual amenity of the streetscene and impact on the wider landscape.
Privacy distances are also explored in which minimum distance between buildings, facing back to back is 21m. Minimum distances between main elevations and those that do not contain primary windows of habitable rooms is 12m. Minimum rear garden depths generally should be 10m.

- **Provision of Public Open Space in New Residential Developments** (July 2014) states West Lancashire Borough Council requirement that all residents within the Borough should have access to a range of high quality open space facilities in conjunction with Policy EN3 of the Local Plan. Recommended local standards are explored for parks, amenity green space and further outdoor recreational provision.

Policy OS1 establishes that developments of 40-289 dwellings will be required to:

“provide 13.5 square metres of public open space per bedroom developed. This public open space should typically take the form of informal amenity green space in order to provide the local function necessary of this public open space.”

Maintenance of Open Space will preferably be ensured just to the retention of ownership by the developer. In some cases, the council may ask the developer to provide a financial contribution for the maintenance of the on-site public open space for a minimum of 10 years.

For sites of 40-289 dwellings the council will charge:

- £0.47 per square metre per annum for maintenance of grassed areas, plus
- £1.81 per square metre per annum for maintenance of shrub beds.

4.11. 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 the redevelopment of this previously developed site to provide 200 no. new residential family homes for local people. The following section assesses the suitability of the site for the proposed uses having regard to the national and local planning policies and the key issues to be considered in determining the planning application are identified.

Principle of Developing the Majority of the Site for Residential Purposes

5.2. The Site comprises of a mix of undeveloped land, with areas of hardstanding associated with previous development. Importantly the majority of the Site forms part of an allocation for a future residential use as identified on the West Lancashire Local Plan 2012-2027 Proposals Maps, an extract of which is provided in Figure 5.1 below.

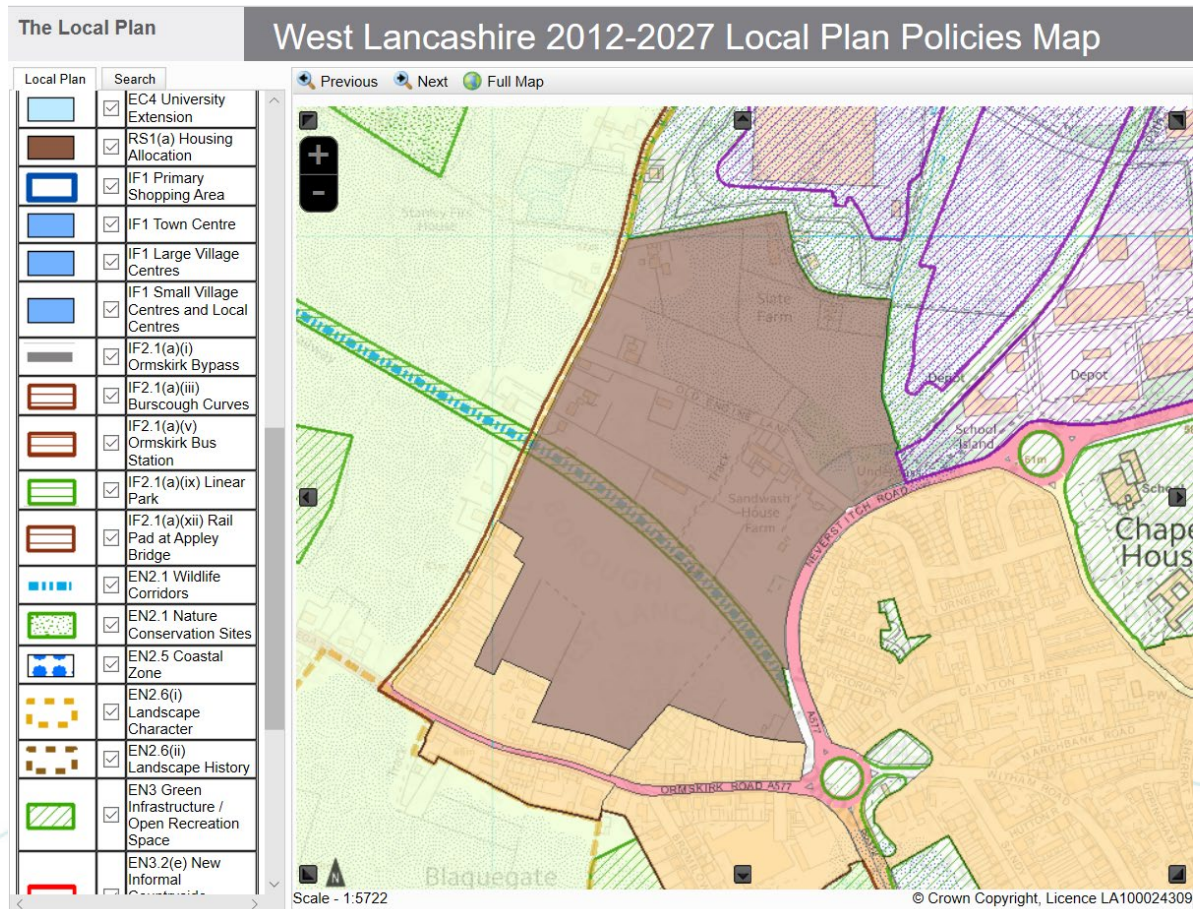


Figure 5.1- Extract of the Local Plan Proposals Maps as published on the Council's web-site

5.3. In applicable Policy RS1(a) the Site is referred to as being part of the Land at Firwood Road, Lathom/Skelmersdale and has an identified capacity of 400 dwellings. The proposed development

will ensure that this allocated Site is brought forward in accordance with the aspirations of the Local Plan. The principle of developing this area of the Site for a future residential use is therefore considered to be wholly compliant with Local Plan Policy RS1.

5.4. To expand upon the allocation of the Site the Council adopted a Development Brief for the land at Firwood Road in 2014. The Firwood Road Development Brief provides guidance to Developers looking to bring the Site forward to ensure that it is developed in a cohesive manner and achieves a series of key development objectives. As set out in the Development Brief these include the following:

- **Provision of approximately 400 no. new dwellings across the allocation:** The two other areas of the allocated site are either under construction (the Applicant's Lathom Pastures Phase I) in accordance with planning permission reference 2016/1027/FUL for 94 no. dwellings; or currently subject to reserved matters application reference 2020/0906/ARM, which is seeking permission for 130 no. dwellings following the approval of outline permission for this number of homes earlier this year. When taking into account, the 200 no. dwellings proposed as part of this application the total capacity of the allocated Site is 424 no. dwellings.

This modest increase over the allocated capacity of the Site is considered to be beneficial in providing an additional boost to the Council's housing land supply. Furthermore, this is partly accommodated on Site by the inclusion of a small parcel of non-allocated land to the south of the Site the principle of which is considered to be acceptable as set out below.

The proposed development, together with the proposals already approved at the wider land off Firwood Road, are considered to comply with this development objective.

- **An opportunity to provide higher density development along the eastern side of the Site as it abuts existing residential development:** the density of the proposed development is 27 dwellings per hectare in comparison to a density of 21 dwellings per hectare for the western part of the allocation. The proposed development therefore is considered to be an efficient use of land that is reflective of the Council's preferred approach to density of development across the allocation.
- **A restriction to building heights of 2 and 3 storey:** All of the houses proposed are two or two and a half storeys in height. The apartment building at the Site entrance, on the eastern side of the Site is proposed to be three storeys in height. This approach provides an identifiable node at the entrance of the scheme and ensures that the taller element of built form is located closest to the existing residential areas of Skelmersdale, rather than the open countryside beyond Firwood Road to the west of the Site. The proposed building heights are therefore in complete accordance with the restrictions and design objectives for the allocation.

- **Provision of a wide range of house types to complement local need:** As set out Section 3 of the Planning Statement the proposed development comprises of the following schedule of accommodation:
 - 10 no. one bedroom apartments;
 - 12 no. two bedroom apartments;
 - 9 no. two bedroom houses;
 - 115 no. three bedroom houses;
 - 52 no. four bedroom houses; and
 - 2 no. five bedroom houses.

This wide range of apartment and houses, from one bedroom properties up to five bedroom houses, is considered to provide a good mix of house types to meet a variety of local needs including first time buyers, growing families looking to move to a larger home, and those looking to downsize to a more manageable home. The proposals therefore provide a good mix of house types in accordance with the Council's objectives for the allocation.

- **Provision of 30% affordable housing, and 20% housing for older people:** the proposed development includes the provision of 10% affordable housing which comprises of 20 no. apartments, all of which will be available on an affordable rent tenure. In accordance with policy this application is accompanied by a Viability Assessment to demonstrate that the provision of any additional affordable homes would cause viability issues with the delivery of the Site. In respect of housing for older people, the scheme provides a range of house sizes that are suitable to adapt to the needs of the owners, and this includes smaller homes that are suitable for older people may wish to downsize to.

Whilst the proposed development does not comply with the Council's aspirations in respect of affordable housing this has been justified as set out in the submitted viability assessment.

- **Primary access to be provided off Neverstitch Road, albeit secondary accesses could be deemed acceptable subject to submission of the appropriate evidence:** This development is served off the primary access which is proposed to link the allocated land to Neverstitch Road in accordance with the Council's requirement. Both the Lathom Pastures Phase I development and Wainhomes reserved matters proposals access the highway network via Firswood Road. In this regard this proposed development, which comprises of the largest part of the allocated land utilises the access envisaged for the Site and is therefore in accordance with the Council's objectives.

The proposals also include pedestrian linkages through to the Wainhomes land to the north, Lathom Pastures Phase I and Ormskirk Road and associated bus stops that are available on this route. Given the objective to encourage healthy lifestyles and sustainable travel patterns this approach is considered to also be in accordance with the Council's objectives for the Site.

- **Provision of a hierarchy of streets in accordance with Manual for Streets Guidance to prioritise different movements:** as shown on the development layout the proposed development incorporates a variety of streets include main estate access roads, private drives and pedestrian linkages.
- **Provision of a linear park along the former railway line which will form part of the Ormskirk-Skelmersdale Linear Park:** integral to the scheme has been the provision of the linear park along the alignment of the former railway line. Pathways are proposed throughout this leisure and recreation hub that is central to the Site, and is so accessible to all residents. This links to an open space area at the south east corner of the Site which provide a green gateway along the Site frontage dedicated to pedestrians. This key objective of the Firwood Road allocated site has been wholly met by the proposed development.
- **Open space provision that promotes healthy lifestyle and social interaction in accordance with the Council's Open Space policies:** In accordance with the Provision of Public Open Space in New Residential Developments SPD the scheme should provide 13.5 square metres of open space for each bed space created. This equates to a requirement of 8,302.5 sq.m¹ of public open space on Site being required. The proposed development provides 1.37 hectares of public open space, far exceeding this requirement.
- **Good permeability for pedestrians and cyclists:** as set out above, a range of roads and linkages have been provided as part of the proposed development, and this includes pedestrian links through to the Wainhomes land to the north, Lathom Pastures Phase I and Ormskirk Road and associated bus stops that are available on this route. On this basis this objective has been addressed in the proposed development.
- **A restriction on the use of Old Engine Lane for existing homes and pedestrian and cyclists only:** the scheme does not encourage the vehicular use of Old Engine Lane, with all the homes proposed accessible off the main estate road only.
- **Good accessibility to public transport:** the proposals include a link through to Ormskirk Road where existing bus stops are located. In addition, a footpath is included along the Neverstitch Road frontage of the Site should residents need to access the bus stops on Neverstitch Road to the north east of the Site. Linkages have therefore been provided to public transport opportunities in the locality.
- **Parking provision to be in accordance with the Local Plan, with a general preference for side driveways:** each house has at least two off-street dedicated off-street parking spaces, with many of the houses benefiting from garages either detached or integral to the houses. The apartment building comprises of a mix of 1 and 2 bedroom dwellings, albeit one space per apartment has

¹ 615 bedspaces are created across the Site in a mix of 10 no. one bedroom; 21 no. two bedroom; 115 no. three bedroom; 52 no. four bedroom and 2 no. five bedroom properties.

been provided. Whilst this is not compliant with the parking requirements set out in Local Plan Policy IF2 it is considered to be appropriate to the scheme given the type of accommodation i.e. apartments, as opposed to houses.

The parking arrangements are designed in a mix of side driveways, frontage parking and a communal parking area. This approach is not contrary to the Council's objective and is therefore considered to be acceptable.

- **Provision of electric vehicle charging points for each dwelling and 10% in communal parking areas:** as shown on the submitted electric vehicle charging point plan every house will have an electrical vehicle charging point either within the garages provided, or available externally. The apartment communal parking area will also benefit from a changing point. The proposed development is in compliance with the Council's requirement in this regard.
- **Inclusion of Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDs) systems:** the provision of grass lined swales along the former railway line ensure that SUDs principles are at the heart of the drainage strategy for the Site. Detailed drainage plans and a SUDS management and maintenance plan are included in this submission to demonstrate to the Council how the swales are intended to function and be managed. In brief these features will be used to attenuate surface water run-off and hydrobrakes are used to restrict water flow to the greenfield run-off rates as set out in the submitted Flood Risk Assessment. It is therefore clear that the development incorporates a SUDs system in respect of a surface water drainage solution for the Site.
- **Protection and enhancement of biodiversity:** the application is accompanied by an Ecological Assessment that is based on surveys undertaken throughout 2020. As acknowledged by the Council in their Development Brief the Site is not, and does not form part of, an ecologically designated Site. From the survey data collected over the last year the habitats available on Site are typical and common place in the local area, and are therefore limited to being of a site level of importance.

The proposed development has been designed around the provision of a wildlife corridor along the alignment of the former railway line. This will form part of the Ormskirk – Skelmersdale linear park, and will be implemented in accordance with the with recommendations set out in the Ecological Assessment to ensure its success. These features include retention of trees and hedgerows where possible; provision of replacement planting with native species; wildflower planting in the understory of the trees; provision of appropriate levels of lighting; the provision of a variety of bat and bird boxes throughout the scheme; ensuring that the wildlife corridor and scheme itself are permeable to small mammals; and the implementation of a scheme of management of the wildlife corridor. These measures will ensure that a success wildlife corridor is created along the former railway line in accordance with the Council's objectives for the Firwood Road Site.

- **Retention of hedgerows where possible:** whilst the ecological assessment that accompanies this application did not consider the hedgerows to meet the criteria of 'important' as set out in the regulations every effort has been made to retain the existing hedgerows where possible, this is particularly along the dismantled railway line and along some of the Site boundaries. As set out in the Arboricultural Impact Assessment some sections of hedgerows are proposed to be removed in order to make way for development. It is proposed that replacement planting as shown on the submitted Landscape Plans will off-set this loss so as to achieve the Council's objective for the Site.
- **Integration of parking and waste storage within the scheme design:** each dwelling has its own allocated parking area either in the form of a driveway or communal parking area. In addition, each house benefits from a garden space which is more than sufficient to accommodate a bin store area, and all houses have direct access from their gardens to the road frontage for waste bin collections. The apartment building benefits from a dedicated bin store as shown on the proposed layout plan. This element of the Council's requirements has therefore been met.

5.5. On this basis it is clear that the scheme has been designed in order to respond to, and reflect, the Council's policy and design objectives for the land allocated for residential development at Firwood Road as set out in the Local Plan and more specifically in relation to the adopted site Development Brief. The principle of the proposal is therefore considered to comply with the Statutory Development Framework.

Principle of Developing the Southern Section of the Site for Residential Purposes

5.6. The Site also incorporates an existing commercial glasshouse located to the south of the allocated land. This part of the Site is located with the designated settlement boundary of the principal town of the Borough, Skelmersdale, the redevelopment of this previously developed land is therefore subject to Policy SP1 and GN1 of the Local Plan.

5.7. Policy SP1 of the Local Plan identifies a settlement hierarchy, as part of which Skelmersdale is identified as the principle regional town in the Borough where the majority of development is proposed to be located. This approach to development is sustainable as Skelmersdale is where the principal services and facilities are available. The small area of the Site that sits outside of the allocated land is wholly within the settlement boundary of Skelmersdale and is therefore in compliance with Policy SP1.

- 5.8. Policy GN1 expands upon strategic Policy SP1 and encourages development of brownfield sites within the settlement boundaries as identified on the Local Plan Proposals Maps. On this basis the redevelopment of the glasshouse part of the Site is compliant with Local Plan Policy GN1.

Residential Development Benefits

- 5.9. Residential development brings a number of benefits to the existing local community. As the proposed development comprises of 200 no. dwellings it is anticipated that the proposed development may be beneficial to the community in the following ways²:

- Provide 20 no. much needed affordable homes;
- Support the employment of 620 no. people;
- Provide 6 no. apprenticeship, graduate or trainee positions;
- Increase the number of local people of working age, which will be attractive to prospective businesses that could wish to be located nearby;
- Increase expenditure in local shops through the presence of new residents, thereby helping to support the local economy;
- Generate £2,410,600 in tax revenues, including £225,982 in Council Tax; and
- Generate New Homes Bonus payments for the Council to invest in local services and facilities.

- 5.10. The above potential benefits assist in demonstrating the social and economic sustainability of the proposals in accordance with the NPPF and Local Plan Policy SP1.

Affordable Housing and House Mix

- 5.11. Policy RS2 of the Local Plan sets out the affordable housing requirement for the Borough. Taking into account the proposed development (200 units) and its location (a greenfield Site on the edge of Skelmersdale) the policy sets a requirement of 30% affordable housing. On this basis the scheme should provide 60 no. affordable housing units. These levels of affordable housing are reiterated in the Site Development Brief. However, the proposed development includes only 10% affordable housing, comprising of 20 no. apartments, all of which will be available on an affordable rent tenure. In accordance with Local Plan Policy RS2 this application is accompanied by a Viability Assessment which demonstrates that the provision of any additional affordable homes would cause viability issues with the delivery of the Scheme.

² Where quantified these have been calculated using the House Builder Federation Housing Calculator: <https://www.hbf.co.uk/policy/policy-and-wider-work-program/hbf-housing-calculator/>

- 5.12. In respect of housing for older people, the scheme provides a range of house sizes that are suitable to adapt to the needs of the owners, and this includes smaller homes that are suitable for older people may wish to downsize to.
- 5.13. Whilst the proposed development does not comply with the Council's aspirations in respect of affordable housing this has been justified as set out in the submitted viability assessment.

Design and Open Space in New Housing Development

- 5.14. Both the NPPF and Local Plan Policy GN3 seek to ensure that development is of high quality and enhances the built environment. The Design Guide and Site Layout SPDs and Development Brief expand upon this requirement and provide a set of design considerations and criteria against which development proposals will be assessed.
- 5.15. A full assessment of the scheme design against the site specific policies set out in the Development Brief is set out above. It is clear from this assessment that the proposed development achieves the policy objectives that the Council have for the allocated land at Firwood Road.
- 5.16. The accompanying Design and Access Statement (DAS) prepared by APD Ltd, provides a further appraisal of the Site and explains how the design, layout and associated landscaping respond to the context of the Site. It is clear from the assessment in the DAS that the proposed development is a product of good quality design that includes a mix of housing, SUDs, a wildlife corridor, replacement planting and is of a permeable design so as to integrate the Site in the local area. On this basis the development is considered to comply with Policy GN3 of the Local Plan.
- 5.17. Policy EN3 of the Local Plan notes that where local deficiencies are evident new residential development will be required to provide public open space on Site. The Site Development Brief makes it clear that on site public open space will be required in accordance with policy requirements as part of the development of the allocated land. In accordance with the Provision of Public Open Space in New Residential Developments the scheme should provide 13.5 square metres of open space for each bed space created. The proposed development comprises of the provision of 615 bed spaces, and as such the proposals should include 8,302.5 sq.m of public open space on Site. The proposed development provides 1.37 hectares of public open space, far exceeding this requirement.

Highways and Accessibility

- 5.18. The NPPF details that all developments which generate significant amounts of movement should be accompanied by a Transport Assessment. Decisions should take account of the opportunities for sustainable travel and ensure that a safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all people.

Policy GN3 requires new development to integrate well into the existing area and provide safe and convenient access for all modes of transport.

5.19. The application is accompanied by a comprehensive Transport Assessment which assesses the sustainability of the site, the suitability of the access points into the site, an analysis of the proposed road layout, and the impact of the development upon the surrounding highway network. The Assessment confirms that the site is in a sustainable location and has connections to existing public transport linkages. The proposed road layout is considered to be acceptable from a design and highway safety perspective and includes pedestrian and cycle linkages to promote sustainable modes of travel. This application is also accompanied by a Framework Travel Plan which sets out how sustainable methods of travel will be encouraged and monitored. In this regard the proposed development is considered to be sustainable by way of its location and design.

5.20. The Transport Assessment also considers the impact of the traffic generated by the scheme on the surrounding highway network. As a result of the modelling work undertaken the Report concludes that the proposed development would not cause any operational issues at the proposed site access. The modelling also confirmed that there would also be no operational issues at the A577 Neverstitch Road / A577 Ormskirk Road / B5312 Railway Road / Witham Road / Ormskirk Road roundabout. The proposed development will therefore not have a detrimental impact on the operation of the highway network.

5.21. As set out above the proposed development is considered to provide an appropriate level of off-site parking for each dwelling as set out in Local Plan Policy IF2. Each house has at least two off-street dedicated off-street parking spaces, with many of the houses benefiting from garages either detached or integral to the houses. The apartment building comprises of a mix of 1 and 2 bedroom dwellings, albeit one space per apartment has been provided. Whilst this is not compliant with the parking requirements set out in Local Plan Policy IF2 it is considered to be appropriate to the scheme given the type of accommodation i.e. apartments, as opposed to houses.

5.22. The development is therefore considered to accord with Local Plan policies GN3 and IF2, and the provision of the NPPF.

Other Technical Considerations

Ecology and Arboriculture

5.23. The application is accompanied by an Ecological Assessment that is based on surveys undertaken throughout 2020. As acknowledged by the Council in their Development Brief the Site is not, and does not form part of, an ecologically designated Site. From the survey data collected over the last

year the habitats available on Site are typical and common place in the local area, and are therefore limited to being of a site level of importance. In addition, the hedgerows on Site were assessed and identified as not meeting the criteria of 'important' as set out in the regulations.

5.24. The proposed development has been designed around the provision of a wildlife corridor along the alignment of the former railway line. This will form part of the Ormskirk - Skelmersdale linear park, and will be implemented in accordance with the with recommendations set out in the Ecological Assessment to ensure its success. These features include

- retention of trees and hedgerows where possible;
- provision of replacement planting with native species as shown on the submitted landscape plans;
- wildflower planting in the understory of the trees as shown on the submitted landscape plans;
- provision of appropriate levels of lighting;
- the provision of a variety of bat and bird boxes throughout the scheme as shown on the submitted bird and bat box plan;
- ensuring that the wildlife corridor and scheme itself are permeable to small mammals; and
- the implementation of a scheme of management of the wildlife corridor.

5.25. These measures will ensure that a successful wildlife corridor is created along the former railway line. Therefore, subject to the recommendations and bio-diversity off-setting measures set out in the submitted Ecological Assessment, the proposed development is considered to comply with relevant wildlife legislation and planning policy including NPPF, Local Plan policies EN2 and GN3, and policy objectives of the Site Development Brief.

Ground Conditions

5.26. The application is accompanied by both a desk based and intrusive ground investigation reports. The ground investigations comprised of 17 no. trial pits; 5 no. trial trenches; 21 no. window sample boreholes and 11 no. rotary open boreholes. Based on both the desk-based assessment and subsequent chemical analysis of the samples taken as part of the site investigations, the ground conditions are considered to be suitable for a future residential use.

5.27. This application is also accompanied by a Minerals Assessment Report which acknowledges that the northern part of the Site is in a safeguarded area for Silica Sand. This concludes that as evidenced by the site investigations undertaken as part of the Geo-Environmental Report the thickness of this strata, and its likely mix with clay soils, are such that it would be highly unlikely be viable to extract it.

In addition, the Site is allocated for a future residential use in the West Lancashire Local Plan. It is therefore considered to be unjustifiable to safeguard the Site for mineral extraction.

- 5.28. The redevelopment of this Site is therefore not be contrary to the Lancashire County Council Minerals and Waste Local Plan, and the West Lancashire Local Plan notably Policy GN3.

Noise and Vibration

- 5.29. A Noise Assessment has been undertaken by RSK that accompanies this application. Given the site context Neverstitch Road has been identified as the main source of noise that could impact the residential amenity of the proposed homes. The submitted Noise Assessment makes use of data from 2019, prior to the reduction and changes in travel patterns caused by the Corona Virus. It is clear from the submitted report that good levels of amenity are achieved across the majority of the Site. Some plots do require noise mitigation measures in the form of upgraded glazing, ventilation and boundary specifications along the eastern boundary of the Site. Full details of the mitigation required are as set out in the submitted Noise Assessment. On this basis the levels of amenity achieved within the Site are considered to comply with the policy requirements set out in Policy GN3.

Flood Risk and Drainage

- 5.30. The Site is located wholly within Flood Risk Zone 1 and therefore is at a low risk of flooding. The principle of developing the Site is therefore in accordance with Local Plan Policy GN3. Given the area of land subject to the application it is accompanied by a flood risk assessment which considers the risk of flooding from all sources. Whilst there have been no records of the Site having been flooded, it is acknowledged that low points of the Site have been susceptible to surface water flooding. This will be addressed as the land levels are created as part of the proposed development.
- 5.31. The proposed design of development has SUDs principles at its heart with the provision of grass lined swales along the former railway line designed to attenuate surface water. Detailed drainage plans and a SUDS management and maintenance plan are included in this submission to demonstrate to the Council how the swales are intended to be used in draining the Site. These features will be used to attenuate surface water run-off and include hydrobrakes to restrict water flow to the greenfield run-off rates as set out in the submitted Flood Risk Assessment. It is therefore clear that the development incorporates a SUDs system in respect of a surface water drainage solution for the Site.
- 5.32. The proposed development is therefore compliant with the policy objectives of Local Plan Policy GN3 in relation to the location of development, away from areas at risk of flooding, and the drainage strategy proposed.

Heritage

- 5.33. Local Plan Policy EN4 seeks to protect and enhance historic assets, and their settings, in the Borough whilst also facilitating development through regeneration, leisure and tourism.
- 5.34. There are no designated or non-designated assets within the Site boundary, however the Site is accompanied by a Desk-based archaeological assessment to ascertain the archaeological potential of the land. The Site is considered to have low/nil archaeological remains for the prehistoric to medieval periods. There could however be assets associated with the former industrial use of the Site, however these are likely to have been significantly disturbed, truncated or have been considered to be of no archaeological or historic interest. On this basis the report concludes that there is no evidence to suggest that the Site contains any remains of sufficient importance to preclude development. The development of the Site is therefore no contrary to Local Plan Policy EN4 or the NPPF.



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. This policy objective is supported in the strategic West Lancashire Local Plan Policy SP1.

6.3. In terms of sustainability, this statement has demonstrated that the proposal does accord with the aims and objectives set out in NPPF and the West Lancashire Local Plan. The majority of the site forms part of a key strategic residential allocation as identified on the Proposals Maps. The principle of the proposed development of the Site to provide new homes is therefore in compliance with the Local Plan and will ensure that the Site is brought forward in accordance with the Council's aspirations.

6.4. The allocated site at Firwood Road, Skelmersdale is subject to an adopted Site Development Brief which expands upon the Local Plan policies to set out the Council's aspirations for the Site. As set out in this report the proposed development meets all of these objectives including:

- Contributing to an overall site capacity of 424 no. dwellings across the entire allocation;
- A good mix of homes, including smaller dwellings suitable for older people to downsize to;
- The provision of a linear park and wildlife corridor along the former railway line that bisects the Site;
- Incorporation of Sustainable Urban Drainage systems, which comprises principally of a swale along the dismantles railway line;
- Provision of open space at a level that exceeds the policy requirements set out in the Local Plan and accompanying SPD;
- Provision of the main access point on to Neverstitch Road; and
- A permeable development, and one that particularly encourages sustainable forms of transport such as walking, cycling and access to public transport facilities.

6.5. As the proposed development incorporates these design objectives it is considered that the Council's objectives for the Site have been met in full.

6.6. It is acknowledged that the Site does not achieve the required 30% affordable homes, but instead provides 10% in the form of 20 no. one and two bedroom apartments that will be available for

affordable rent. This is due to viability issues with the development of the Site which has been evidenced in the submitted Viability Appraisal in accordance with Policy RS2.

- 6.7. NPPF makes clear that Local Planning Authorities should approach decision-making in a positive way in order to foster the delivery of sustainable development (paragraph 38). Applications should be determined in accordance with the Local Plan and decision made as quickly as possible within statutory timescales. This proposal represents sustainable development, in social, environmental and economic respects and accords with the Local Plan the presumption in favour of sustainable development as referenced in the NPPF should apply. Accordingly, planning permission should be granted without delay.

