

Open Space, Sport, Play and Leisure Assessment

Land at Jack Lawson Terrace, Wheatley Hill, County Durham

On behalf of Gleeson Regeneration Ltd.

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1. Introduction and Context

- 1.1. This Open Space, Sport, Play and Leisure Assessment (OSSPLA) has been prepared by Pegasus Group on behalf of Gleeson Regeneration Ltd (the Applicant). It relates to a planning application at Land at Jack Lawson Terrace, Wheatley Hill (the Site) for the erection of 78no. residential dwellings.
- 1.2. The Site measures approximately 2.65ha and comprises of land previously developed as housing and a maintenance depot which has now been cleared and landscaped over. More details of the proposed development and existing site are contained within the Planning Statement, which accompanies this application and should be read in conjunction with this report.
- 1.3. The majority of the Site is identified as Amenity Green Space (References: OSNA1554 and OSNA2631) within Durham County Council's Open Space Needs Assessment (OSNA) (2018). Consequently, there is a requirement for this OSSPLA to assess the loss of open space as a result of the proposed development, as well as the open space requirements generated by the development itself.
- 1.4. This OSSPLA is structured as follows:
 - Section 2 provides the planning policy context;
 - Section 3 analyses the open space information available;
 - Section 4 assesses open space in relation to the Site itself;
 - Section 5 considers and assesses the loss of open space as a result of development; and
 - Section 6 summarises and draws conclusions.

2. Planning Policy Context

National Planning Policy

- 2.1. The latest version of the National Planning Policy (NPPF) was published in December 2023. Section 8 of the NPPF covers areas relating to the promotion of healthy and safe communities. Paragraph 102 in particular recognises that access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sports and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and wellbeing of communities.
- 2.2. The NPPF also requires that planning policies be based on robust and up to date assessments of the needs for open space, sport and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. These assessments can then be used to inform the levels of open space, sport and recreation provision that is required.
- 2.3. Accompanying Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) then sets out how open space should be taken into account in both plan-making and decision taking (Reference ID: 37-001-20140306) and how local planning authorities should assess the needs for sports and recreation facilities (Reference ID: 37-002-20140306).

Local Planning Policy

- 2.4. The County Durham Plan (CDP) was adopted in October 2020 and the approach to open space within the CDP is outlined in Policy 26. For the loss of open space this states:

“Development proposals will not be permitted that would result in the loss of open space or harm to green infrastructure assets unless the benefits of the development clearly outweigh that loss or harm and an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space or land to be surplus to requirements. Where valued open spaces or assets are affected, proposals must incorporate suitable mitigation and make appropriate provision of equivalent or greater value in a suitable location. Where appropriate there will be engagement with the local community.”
- 2.5. For the provision of new open space, Policy 26 states:

“Proposals for new residential development will be required to make provision for open space to meet the needs of future residents having regard to the standards of open space provision set out in the Open Space Needs Assessment (OSNA). Where it is determined that on-site provision is not appropriate, the council will require financial contributions secured through planning obligations towards the provision of new open space, or the improvement of existing open space elsewhere in the locality.”
- 2.6. The Open Space Needs Assessment (OSNA, 2018) referred to in Policy 26 is a separate document produced by the Council which assesses open space requirements across the county. We examine this in the next section of this report.

3. Analysis of Open Space Information

3.1. Policy 26 of the CDP has been informed and is underpinned by a number of pieces of evidence. Specifically, this includes the aforementioned OSNA which forms part of the CDP’s evidence base and is analysed below.

Open Space Needs Assessment (OSNA)

3.2. The OSNA is a document prepared by Durham County Council to undertake research analysis and present conclusions in relation to meeting the need for open space, sport and recreation. The document is set out in two parts. Part 1 provides an overview of the whole of County Durham, whilst Part 2 includes further analysis at a localised level of different areas within the County.

3.3. Part 1 of the OSNA sets out standards for different typologies of open/green space in both a quantitative and qualitative sense. These are set out on a county-wide basis in Table 1 below.

Table 1 – County Wide OSNA Standards

Typology	Quantity Standard	Access Standard	Quality Standard
Allotments	0.9ha/1000	480m (10 minutes straight line walk time)	Aim to achieve an ‘average’ standard of quality across the typology.
Amenity Green Space	1.5ha/1000	480m (10 minutes straight line walk time)	Aim to achieve a ‘good’ standard of quality across the typology.
Parks and Recreational Grounds	1.4ha/1000	600m (12-13 minutes straight line walk time)	Aim to achieve a ‘good’ standard of quality across the typology.
Play Space	Children’s Play Space 0.5ha/1000 Youth Play Space 0.04ha/1000	Children’s Provision – 600m (just under 12-13 minutes straight line walk time) Youth Provision 720m (15 minutes straight line walk time)	Aim to achieve a ‘high’ standard of quality across the typology.
Natural Green Space	1.5ha/1000 (to include natural and amenity green space for new provision)	Accessible Natural Green Space Standards (ANGSt) for analysing existing provision	Aim to achieve a ‘good’ standard of quality across the typology.

Outdoor Sport Space (Private)	N/A	N/A	N/A
Education	N/A	N/A	N/A
Churchyard and Cemetery	N/A	N/A	N/A
Golf Courses	N/A	N/A	N/A

3.4. Examining Part 2 of the OSNA document, the Site itself lies within the East Durham sub area and when assessed against these overall standards, it is concluded that the area has a sufficient supply of:

- Allotments;
- Amenity Green Space; and
- Play Space (Children).

3.5. Conversely, it notes an undersupply of:

- Park and Recreation Ground (combined); and
- Play Space (Youth).

3.6. Although there are some open space typologies in which the region is identified as having an undersupply, these are considered to be very marginal, as demonstrated in Table 2 below.

Table 2 – Open Space Standards in East Durham

Typology	Existing Provision (ha)	Existing Provision (ha /1000)	Required Provision (ha)	Required Provision (ha /1000)	Supply (ha)	Supply (ha/ 1000)	Provision
Allotments	108.14	1.14	85.62	0.9	+22.52	+0.24	Sufficient Supply
Amenity Green Space	277.74	2.92	142.70	1.5	+135.04	+1.42	Sufficient Supply
Park and Recreation	123.69	1.30	133.18	1.4	-9.49	-0.10	Under Supply

Ground (combined)							
Play Space (Children)	4.86	0.05	4.76	0.05	+0.10	+0.00	Sufficient Supply
Play Space (Youth)	1.46	0.02	3.81	0.04	-2.35	-0.02	Under Supply

3.7. For those typologies with no standards it notes that there is the following existing provision:

- Outdoor Sport (Private) – Existing Provision 0.13 (ha/1000)
- Accessible Natural Green Space – Existing Provision 11.68 (ha/1000)
- Education – Existing Provision 0.56 (ha/1000)
- Churchyards and Cemeteries – Existing Provision 0.46 (ha/1000)

3.8. As well as examining the quantum of open spaces, the OSNA also examines the access and quality of those spaces. Table 3 below provides a summary of accessibility across the East Durham sub-area.

Table 3 – Summary of Accessibility to Open Space in East Durham

Typology	Current Access
Allotments	Large gaps in access in some of the most populated areas.
Amenity Green Space	Good access in general, although some gaps in access present.
Parks and Recreation Grounds	Generally good access in the most populated areas, although there are a number of gaps in access.
Play Space (Children)	Some large gaps in access in the most populated areas, especially in the north of the assessment area.
Play Space (Youth)	Very sporadic provision with large gaps in access across the assessment area.

<p>Natural Green Space</p>	<p>Good access to 20ha sites across the majority of the assessment area, although there is a gap in access in the north which is densely populated.</p> <p>The northern half of the assessment area also does not meet the 100ha site access standard, whereas the majority of the southern half meets the standard.</p> <p>There are no 500ha sites within 10km.</p>
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3.9. In analysing the quality, access and quantity of open space, the report considers the following priorities for East Durham:

- Existing provision to be enhanced;
- Opportunities for the re-location/re-designation of open space;
- Identification of areas for new provision; and
- Facilities that may demonstrate a surplus.

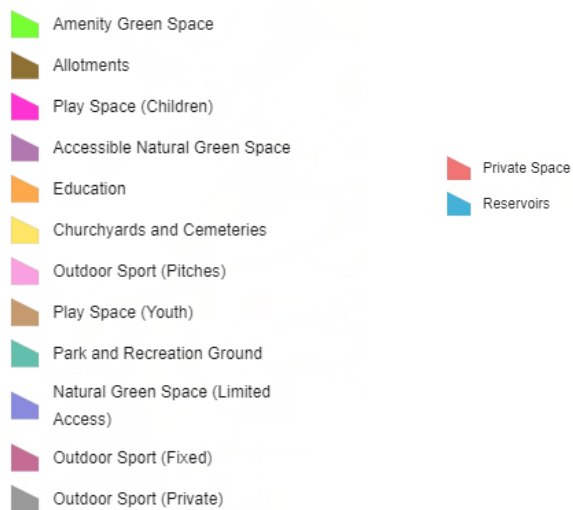
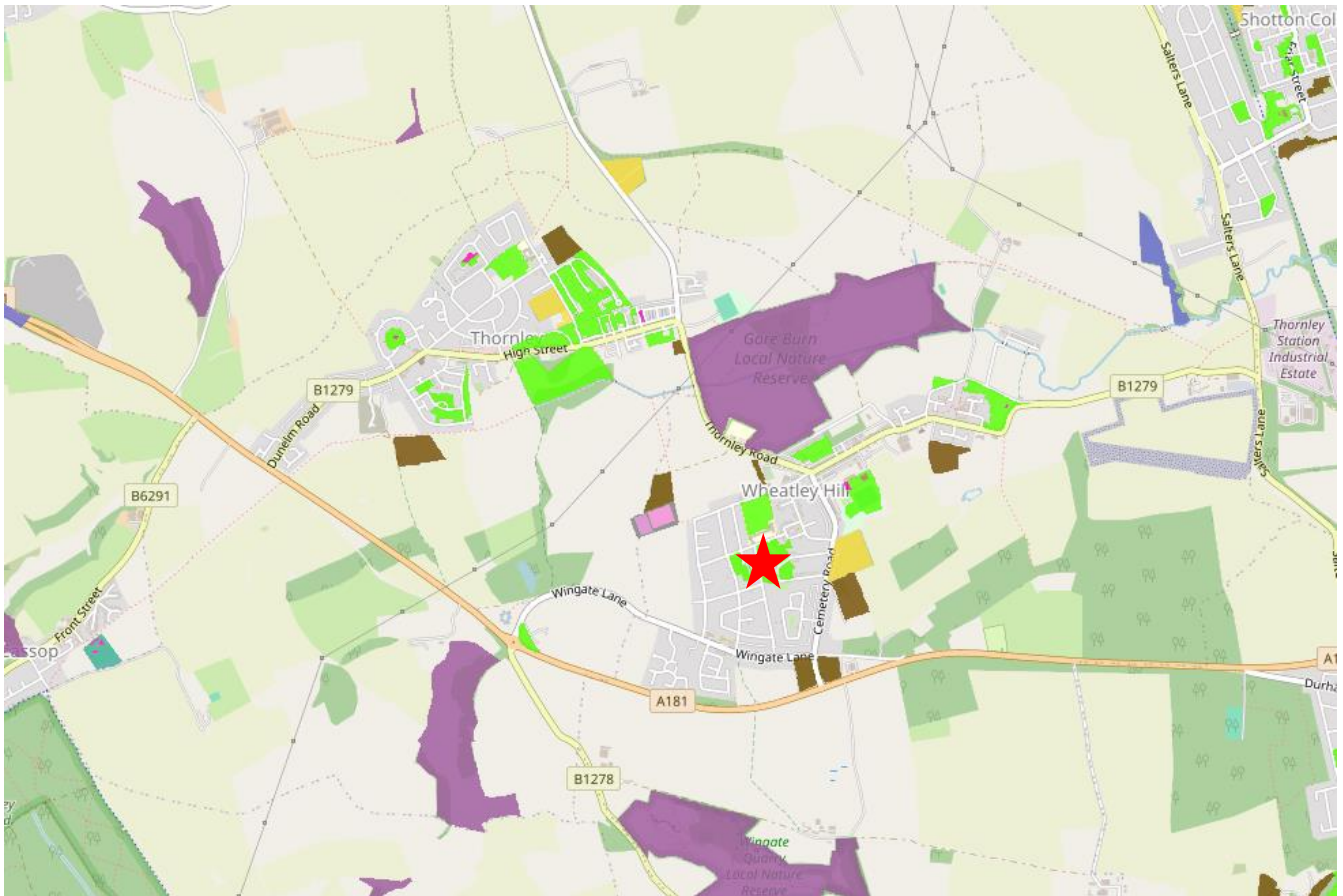
4. Assessment of the Application Site

- 4.1. As outlined in Section 1 of this OSSPLA, the Site is designated as open space within the County Durham OSNA and so this document is required to provide justification for the loss of open space.
- 4.2. This OSSPLA will also ascertain the current provision of open space in the area and identify where there may be requirements in relation to the application.
- 4.3. Part 1 of the OSNA provides guidance on assessing requirements for open space. Table 19 of the OSNA outlines that for schemes of 50–99 dwellings, which applies to this planning application which is proposing 78no. dwellings, the following is usually sought as an on-site contribution:
- Amenity/Natural Green Space; and
 - Play Space (Children) – non equipped play area.
- 4.4. Whereas the following are usually sought for off-site contributions:
- Allotments;
 - Parks, Sport and Recreation Grounds; and
 - Play Space (Youth).

Provision of Open Space Around the Site

- 4.5. To better understand open space provision around the Site, Figure 1 on the next page provides a map extract of the Site (shown as a red star for reference), as shown on the OSNA.
- 4.6. Immediately to the north of the Site lies a relatively large area of Amenity Green Space. Within Wheatley Hill, there are a number of different open space typologies. Approximately 145m to the east of the Site, adjacent to Cemetery Road is Wheatley Hill Churchyard and Cemetery, and directly to the south of this is Woodlands Avenue Allotment.
- 4.7. To the north-east of the Site, there are two Amenity Green Space typologies, and within the vicinity of these lies a Play Space (youth) and Play Space (children) typology.
- 4.8. To the north of Quilstyle Road (approximately 200m north of the Site) is Wheatley Hill Allotment.
- 4.9. Gore Burn Local Nature Reserve, a very large, accessible natural green space sits to the north of the Site, to the east and north of *St Godric's Catholic Primary School*.
- 4.10. Also proximate to the Site, to the north-west of the Quilstyle Road and Quetlaw Road junction is two large Outdoor Sport (Pitches) typologies, an Outdoor Sport (Private) typology, and adjoining this to the north another Allotment.

Figure 1 – Map of Extract of Wheatley Hill from the OSNA



4.11. As demonstrated by Figure 1, the Site falls centrally within Wheatley Hill, which is proximate to the village of Thornley to the north-west. Thornley contains numerous open space typologies, as identified within the OSNA, and these would be suitable for serving the proposed development Site as well.

Assessment by Typologies

- 4.12. As demonstrated above, there is a strong provision of open space in the East Durham sub-area and within Wheatley Hill itself. This section now assesses how this relates to the proposed development to inform what further open space is required to support the development.
- 4.13. Table 4 below mirrors the development requirements as set out in Table 19 of the OSNA which sets out what open space is required for a development and what should be delivered on site and off site. However, it is important to note that the CDP and OSNA states that *“this is only a guide and requirements will be determined on a case-by-case basis using the standards and assessment within this assessment”*. The CDP also states that any requirements should be appropriate to the context of the site. This OSSPLA should be used to determine what open space provision is required for the site.

Table 4 – Requirements for Open Space, Sport, and Recreation Facilities (OSNA, 2018)

Type of Provision	1-19 dwellings	20-49 dwellings	50-99 dwellings	100+ dwellings	250+ dwellings
Allotments	X	X	X	X	✓
Amenity/Natural Green Space	X	✓	✓	✓	✓
Parks, Sports and Recreation Grounds	X	X	X	X	✓
Play Space (Children)	X	X	✓*	✓*	✓
Play Space (Youth)	X	X	X	X	✓

Key:

- ✓ On-site provision normally sought
- X Off-site provision normally required
- * Non equipped play areas

Play Space (Children) – On Site

- 4.14. As outlined above, the OSNA states that a development with 78no. dwellings should seek to incorporate Play Space (Children) on site as part of the development. However, it should be highlighted that the OSNA reports a sufficient supply of this typology in the East Durham area, and that the Wheatley Hill and Thornley area contains several existing areas of Play Space (Children), as listed below:



- Greenhills Community Centre Play Area (OSNA2215);
- Cottingham Grove (OSNA260);
- Play Space west of Patton Walk/B1279 (OSNA745);
- OSNA1279; and
- OSNA2723.

4.15. Greenhills Community Centre Play Area (OSNA2215) is of a high quality and within the 600m access standard set out in the OSNA, whilst Play Space west of Patton Walk/B1279 (OSNA745) is also within Wheatley Hill. This demonstrates there is existing provision which serves the site.

4.16. Moreover, in the nearby village of Cassop, there are numerous Play Space (Children) typologies identified at Thomas Marsden Playing Fields (OSNA1048), including Thomas Marsden Field unfenced children's play area (OSNA221), Thomas Marsden Playing Field Fenced Play Area (OSNA982), and a Play Space (Youth), Thomas Marsden Playing field Half MUGA (OSNA2580). This demonstrates a sufficient supply of Play Space (Children), and other suitable sites within the area, consistent with East Durham's supply as identified within the OSNA, which has a sufficient supply.

4.17. With the above in mind, there is sufficient provision of Play Space (Children) in the East Durham area and in close proximity to the site. On site provision is therefore not considered to be required.

Amenity Green Space – On Site

4.18. The majority of the Site itself is identified as Amenity Green Space within County Durham's OSNA, and the loss of this typology is assessed in Section 5 below. However, when assessing the existing provision, the OSNA reports that there is a significant surplus (+135.04ha) of Amenity Green Space in the East Durham Area. There are also other areas of Amenity Green Space in close proximity to the Site, with some within the 400m access standard set out in the OSNA, including:

- Amenity Green Space at Wheatley Hill Community Primary School directly to the north of the site (OSNA2958)
- Amenity Green Space at The Greenhills Centre (OSNA920)
- Amenity Green Space north of Patton Walk (OSNA103)
- Amenity Green Space north of Greenwood Close (OSNA1167)

Allotments – Off Site

4.19. As set out in the OSNA, there is currently a 22.52ha surplus of allotments in the East Durham area. The above also shows that there are numerous allotments within Wheatley Hill and in nearby Thornley. As a result, no additional Allotment typology space is considered necessary for this proposal.

4.20. Specifically in Wheatley Hill there are the following Allotments.

- Woodlands Avenue Allotment (OSNA1541);
- Wingate Lane Allotment (OSNA175);
- Weardale Park Allotment (OSNA1461);
- Wingate Lane Allotment (OSNA8)
- Wheatley Hill Allotment (OSNA1625);

4.21. Within nearby Thornley there are also the following Allotments:

- East Street Allotment (OSNA1205);
- School Green Allotment (OSNA2259); and
- St Bedes Crescent Allotment (OSNA1213).

4.22. As demonstrated above there are numerous allotments within Wheatley Hill and Thornley, and there is an oversupply in the East Durham sub area. As a result, no additional Allotment typology space is considered necessary for this proposal.

Park, Sports and Recreation Grounds – Off Site

4.23. There are no Park, Sports and Recreation Grounds typologies in close proximity to the site, however, there are some in the local area including:

- Ludworth Community Centre (OSNA2382); and
- Shotton Colliery Community Park (OSNA97).

4.24. There is also an undersupply within the East Durham area, however, this is only marginal.

Play Space (Youth) – Off Site

4.25. The OSNA concludes that there is only a minor undersupply of Play Space (Youth) in the East Durham area. However, there is provision within Wheatley Hill in close proximity to the Site including:

- End of Stephen's Terrace (OSNA1814); and
- Thomas Marsden Playing field Half MUGA (OSNA2580).

4.26. In the nearby villages of Shadforth and Ludworth there is Play Space (Youth) open space provision (OSNA2304 and OSNA2445), which is considered to be accessible. With this in mind, there is existing local provision for the site.

Open Space Quality

- 4.27. In terms of quality of the open space, the mapping information from the OSNA indicates that typically this area has mainly good to average quality open spaces (rank A – C), which is above average compared with other parts of East Durham (where the majority are rank B – C).

Open Space Requirements Conclusions

- 4.28. This analysis shows there is a strong provision of most open space typologies in the East Durham sub area. However, any contribution requested for open space should also take into account the local provision in close proximity to the site. On this basis, Wheatley Hill and its surrounding areas have a good supply of open space within the settlement which can provide necessary facilities for current and future residents.
- 4.29. Any requests for open space contributions should therefore take into account this current position and also have regard to the statutory tests found in Regulation 122(2) of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended) and Paragraph 57 of the NPPF. That is to say, any contribution should be:
- Necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
 - Directly related to the development; and
 - Fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.
- 4.30. Any such contribution would also need to take into account the Council's position on viability according to Policy 25 of the CDP.

5. Open Space Loss Assessment

- 5.1. As referred to previously within this OSSPLA, the majority of the development Site is currently identified as Amenity Green Space within Durham County Council's OSNA. The southern area of the eastern parcel is not identified as Open Space so is excluded from this assessment.

Policy 26 – Green Infrastructure

- 5.2. Policy 26 of the CDP sets out that development will be expected to maintain and protect, and where appropriate improve, the county's green infrastructure network. Policy 26 specifically states that:

“Development proposals will not be permitted that would result in the loss of open space or harm to green infrastructure assets unless the benefits of the development clearly outweigh that loss or harm, and an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space or land to be surplus to requirements. Where valued open spaces or assets are affected, proposals must incorporate suitable mitigation and make appropriate provision of equivalent or greater value in a suitable location.”

- 5.3. With this in mind, it is important to consider the loss of this open space and assess the potential benefits against any adverse impacts which could be created by this loss.

Loss of Open Space

- 5.4. The majority of the site is identified as Amenity Green Space within the OSNA which is defined as “spaces open to free and spontaneous use by the public... Examples might include both small and larger informal grassed areas in housing estates and general recreation spaces.”

- 5.5. The open space at the site consists of informal amenity grassland which includes a limited number of trees or other vegetation. It includes two formal pathways (not Public Rights of Way) but does not include any street furniture or features. The parcels of open space are intersected by a number of dwellings on Shakespeare Street, Shakespeare Street itself and a former access road off Wordsworth Avenue. This results in an area of open space which is not coherent or of a high quality. There are also only a few number of dwellings which front onto the open space and the majority of the open space boundary is lined by garden fences. This gives the impression that the open space has not been planned and that it has just been cleared from the previously residential uses on the site until relatively recently.

- 5.6. In light of the above, it is considered that the Open Space is of a low quality and does not provide an attractive, functional space for existing residents.

- 5.7. In addition to the poor quality of the Open Space, it is important to note that the OSNA concludes that there is a significant surplus (+135.04ha) of Amenity Green Space in the East Durham Area. There are also other areas of Amenity Green Space in close proximity to the Site as highlighted above, including:

- Amenity Green Space at Wheatley Hill Community Primary School directly to the north of the site (OSNA2958)
- Amenity Green Space at The Greenhills Centre (OSNA920)

- Amenity Green Space north of Patton Walk (OSNA103)
- Amenity Green Space north of Greenwood Close (OSNA1167)

5.8. Of the above, the Amenity Green Space at The Greenhills Centre is considered to be of a much higher quality, and provides a more comprehensive offering as this includes a football pitch and is adjacent to children's and youth play space. This and the Amenity Green Space at Wheatley Hill Community Primary School meet the access standard contained within the OSNA which is 480 metres or 10 minutes' walk time.

5.9. With the above in mind, it is considered that the open space which is proposed to be lost as part of the development is of limited quality and is surplus to requirements when assessed against the OSNA and the existing provision in Wheatley Hill.

Benefits of Development

5.10. As demonstrated above, the impacts associated with the loss of open space would be limited. However, this section sets out the benefits of the proposed development and whether this would outweigh such loss.

5.11. Firstly, the proposed development would deliver a high-quality development which will support the regeneration of this site which was previously developed. This will be achieved by providing a coherent layout which is well connected to the existing built development, and will deliver a variety of house types which will benefit the existing character of the area.

5.12. The proposals will deliver 8no. much needed affordable homes, and 8no. bungalows suitable for older people and people with disabilities. This will contribute to meeting the needs of such groups as specifically identified in the CDP.

5.13. The development will also deliver much needed market dwellings which will contribute to the housing need for the area, by providing new family homes and homes for first time buyers. This will specifically address the identified housing need for the County which has been set to support sustainable social and economic growth in the area.

5.14. As set out above, Policy 1 of the CDP sets out how the plan will deliver a net minimum of 24,852 new homes over the period 2016 to 2035, however, since the adoption of the CDP the Council's housing land supply position has been declining year on year. Whilst the Council has a 5.47-year supply, as noted in the 2021-22 Annual Monitoring Report, there is a clear trend being established in terms of a shrinking land supply. Furthermore, this report is now somewhat outdated, and an updated report is expected, which will likely confirm that the Council have less than a 5-year supply of housing. The delivery of this site would help contribute towards reversing that trend and would contribute to adding further flexibility in the county's housing supply, which was highlighted as a requirement at the CDP examination.

5.15. Finally, the development will also provide economic benefits to Wheatley Hill and the surrounding area by helping to increase the village's vibrancy and vitality through new residents supporting local services.

Loss of Open Space Conclusions

5.16. With the above in mind, the proposed development is set to deliver notable benefits to the settlement of Wheatley Hill and the County as a whole. The benefits discussed are



considered to significantly outweigh any potential harm caused by the loss of open space which is considered to be limited in value. As such, it is considered that the proposed development complies with the policy requirements of Policy 26.

6. Summary and Conclusions

- 6.1. This OSSPLA has sought to review the requirements for open space in relation to the planning application submitted for the development of 78no. dwellings at land at Jack Lawson Terrace, Wheatley Hill.
- 6.2. The document provides a policy analysis which details the national and local planning policy position in relation to open space, as well as the information published by the Council that examines open space standards in the County and benchmarks this against facilities in different sub areas within Durham.
- 6.3. For East Durham, the area in which the development Site is located, there is a minor deficiency in the Play Space (Youth) and Parks and Recreation typologies, and a surplus in the Allotment, Amenity Green Space and Play Space (Children) typologies.
- 6.4. For the scale of the development proposed, on-site provision is typically required for Amenity Green Space and Play Space (Children) (non-equipped), although the analysis provided within this document demonstrates that such facilities are already at a surplus within Wheatley Hill and its surrounding area.
- 6.5. Those types of open space which can be seen to be at a deficit currently within East Durham, and which are usually sought as an off-site (Play Space (Youth)) appear to be in relatively healthy supply in the areas surrounding Wheatley Hill. This would indicate that on a more localised level, these open space typologies are also well provided in the area.
- 6.6. On this basis, the localised provision would need to be considered when assessing this planning application, as this indicates that key typologies are already accounted for in Wheatley Hill and the surrounding area.
- 6.7. This OSSPLA has also demonstrated that the site's value as open space is limited and there are other accessible areas of open space in the surrounding area of a higher quality. This loss will be outweighed by the benefits associated with the delivery of a high-quality development which includes 8no. much needed affordable homes, 8no. bungalows suitable for older people and people with disabilities, and market homes which will address an identified need within the area.
- 6.8. The above assessment should be used to determine what contributions would be required to mitigate the need for additional open space as a result of the proposed development. Any contributions sought will thus need to consider the relevant statutory tests found within Regulation 122(2) of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended) and Paragraph 57 of the NPPF as well as any considerations of viability.

Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)
Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

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