



Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan

Representations to Issues and Options (Regulation 18) Consultation
On Behalf of Cheshire Garden Village Limited

August 2025

Contents

1.	Introduction	1
2.	The Site and Background to Representations	2
3.	Cheshire West and Chester: Local Plan Issues and Options (Regulation 18)	4
4.	Issues and Options: Introduction.....	5
5.	Issues and Options: Vision.....	7
6.	Issues and Options: Objectives	10
7.	Issues and Options: Sustainable Development.....	18
8.	Issues and Options: Spatial Strategy.....	19
9.	Issues and Options: Northwich	31
10.	Issues and Options: Green Belt and Countryside.....	33
11.	Issues and Options: Transport and Accessibility.....	34
12.	Issues and Options: Infrastructure and Developer Contributions	35
13.	Issues and Options: Economic Growth, Employment and Enterprise	36
14.	Issues and Options: Housing	38
15.	Issues and Options: Green Infrastructure, Biodiversity and Geodiversity.....	41
16.	Issues and Options: Design and Sustainable Construction.....	42

Appendices

Appendix I Site Location Plan

Appendix II Site Submission Documents

Document Details

Report title: Planning Statement

Prepared by: CO'D/LM/RB

Status: Final

For and on behalf of AshtonHale Limited

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Cheshire West and Chester Council is preparing a new Local Plan for the borough which will set out how development and growth will take place. The new plan will create a single local plan document that updates and replaces all policies in the current Local Plan (Part One) and Local Plan (Part Two). These representations have been prepared by AshtonHale Ltd ('AshtonHale') on behalf of Cheshire Garden Village Limited ('CGV') in response to the Council's Regulation 18 Local Plan Issues and Options 2025 consultation.
- 1.2 These representations are of particular relevance to CGV's land interests at the land off Chester Way in Northwich, a plan showing the extent of this site is attached at **Appendix I**.
- 1.3 These representations made on behalf of CGV intend to cover the following:
- Background to CGV's interest in the Issues and Options consultation and its representations; and,
 - Responses to the questions posed within the 'Issues and Options (Regulation 18)' consultation document.

2. The Site and Background to Representations

- 2.1 Land at Chester Way, Northwich ('the Site') extends to c. 9.57 hectares in its entirety, including approximately 3.46ha of developable land, as shown at **Appendix I**. It is located to the north of Chester Way (A559) as it becomes Manchester Road going eastwards.
- 2.2 The Site is bounded by Northwich Retail Park to the east, which comprises a number of large-scale retail units and significant hardstanding. To the west of the Site is Wade Brook, and beyond this other large-scale commercial units including car dealerships and showrooms. To the south of Chester Way, there is a mix of industrial, retail and other commercial uses. To the north of the site, there is woodland and beyond this Wincham Brook and the New Warrington Road.
- 2.3 The Site represents a highly sustainable, accessible, unconstrained and logical option for Green Belt release that could contribute to the strategic retail and employment requirements for Cheshire West and Chester or alternatively be made available for residential uses. Development and major transport infrastructure contains the site on all sides and as such it would represent an infill site, developing the small gap in existing built frontage on Chester Way.
- 2.4 The Site was submitted within CWaC's Land Availability Assessment Stage One consultation exercise and Call for Sites process in March 2024. The Applicant's representation demonstrated the Site's availability and suitability to deliver employment or residential development, which would contribute to the Council's economic, social and environmental objectives. This submission was supported by a Transport Note and a Preliminary Flood Risk, Drainage & Utilities Review. The submission's supporting documents have been enclosed at **Appendix II** of this representation.
- 2.5 Despite the Site not being included within the Council's Issues and Options consultation document, correspondence with the Council has confirmed that the identified spatial options and potential growth areas included within the paper are intended to be broad areas. As set out in the consultation document, the Council identify the need to bring forward small-medium sized employment sites, to provide

for a range of development. In addition to identifying small-medium sites for employment, the Council should consider the inclusion of small-medium housing sites too which will make a valuable contribution to the housing delivery needs of the borough. These sites will be determined at later stages of the plan making process.

3. Cheshire West and Chester: Local Plan Issues and Options (Regulation 18)

- 3.1 Cheshire West and Chester Council is preparing a new local plan for the borough, and as part of that process, comments are invited on the priorities and issues that the new Local Plan should address and how the new plan can influence this. The Council have published the 'Local Plan Issues and Options (Regulation 18)' document, dated July 2025, which sets out a number of questions to understand the public's views on the key planning issues and priorities facing the area.
- 3.2 CGV has prepared these representations to provide observations on questions posed by the Council within the consultation document. We respectfully request that these representations are considered in the next stages of preparing the Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan.
- 3.3 CGV has not commented on every question set out in the document, only those considered particularly relevant to their interests in Cheshire West and Chester ('CWaC'). The absence of comment to any other question should not be construed as CGV agreeing with the approach and CGV reserves the right to comment on those matters as the Plan progresses.

4. Issues and Options: Introduction

Question IN 3: Do you have any comments or views on the proposed plan period for the new Local Plan?

4.1 CLG are supportive of the concept of shorter local plan periods which ensure that policies and supporting evidence within Development Plans are kept up-to-date and remain relevant. Policies in the plan should reflect current and short-term future growth in the area in order to better guide and inform planning proposals and planning decisions. A shorter plan period will allow for more frequent reviews and updates, ensuring that the policies and data reflect the changing economic, environmental and social positions of the borough.

4.2 By creating shorter plan period, the new Local Plan will further align with the Government's intentions at reducing local plan review periods. Under regulation 10A of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) local planning authorities must review local plans at least once every 5 years from their adoption date to ensure that policies remain relevant and effectively address the needs of the local community. Most plans are likely to require updating in whole or in part at least every 5 years¹. A shorter plan period will allow for more realistic targets to be set within the document, ensuring more accurate monitoring in the progress and success of the Local Plan policies.

Question IN 6: Do you have any comments on what role Neighbourhood Plans should play in terms of meeting Cheshire West's development needs and other suggested policy approaches for the new Local Plan? This could include things like meeting housing needs, local connection tests, or design etc.

4.3 It is recognised that Neighbourhood Plans can play a useful role in guiding development and design matters in certain locations however, their role in meeting broader development needs should be limited. Neighbourhood Plans should not be used to constrain housing delivery or introduce restrictive policies outside of the adopted Local Plan. Neighbourhood Plans should be advisory in nature and confined to matters of local character, design preferences etc.

¹ NPPG Paragraph: 062 Reference ID: 61-062-20190315

4.4 Planning Practice Guidance (Paragraph: 044 Reference ID: 41-044-20190509) confirms that neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity with strategic policies.

5. Issues and Options: Vision

Question VI 1: Do you agree with the suggested approach towards the new Local Plan vision, as set out in VI 1 'Vision' above? If not please suggest how it could be amended?

5.1 CGV recognises that to achieve sustainable visions of the Local Plan, spatial strategies must be established, such as the strategic identification of Northwich to meet development needs. CGV supports the inclusion of Northwich within the spatial strategy, as it represents a strategically important area for both new development and regeneration.

5.2 In addition to the identification of key locations within the strategy, the Local Plan must also recognise areas outside of the locations identified which will be capable of delivering employment and housing development. Areas located adjacent to the settlements identified, yet within sustainable locations, can be utilised to reduce spatial pressures of these areas.

Question VI 2: should the vision include/establish a set of principles and priorities? Are these the right ones - do you have any other suggestions?

5.3 The vision of the Local Plan should include a set of principles and priorities to allow for sustainable development to be established. CGV broadly supports the draft visions as set out in section VI 1 'Visions' and welcomes the scope of the principles identified. However, it is considered by CGV that additional principles should be included within the vision to allow for Cheshire West and Chester to be a desirable and attractive place to live, work and visit, and to allow for future policies to accurately address these visions. CGV put forward the following principles to be considered at the next stage of the Local Plan process:

- i. **Delivering Sustainable Growth:** *Ensure development is distributed appropriately across housing and employment land to meet the needs of communities and businesses, while delivering positive social outcomes and addressing environmental sustainability.*
- ii. **Creating a Prosperous Economy:** *Grow economically but sustainably, recognising our key employment sectors. Allow people and places to prosper by supporting the creation of high-quality jobs, attracting new businesses,*

retaining and enhancing existing businesses, supporting opportunities to improve training and education and to retain skills and talent, and so providing an adaptable and prosperous economy.

*iii. **Meeting a Specific Housing Need:** Meet identified housing needs by delivering a mix of affordable, high-quality, and energy-efficient homes, tailored to support diverse households and changing demographic demands.*

- 5.4 Given CWaC's established housing need (1,914 homes annually, a 259.8% increase from previous targets), the Local Plan must prioritise the delivery of diverse, affordable and high-quality homes. This includes recognising that sustainable residential development on well-located Green Belt sites may be essential to address the borough's housing emergency and contribute to national housing supply targets.
- 5.5 Ensuring that current and future housing and employment needs are met is a crucial objective and accords with Paragraphs 61 and 85 of the NPPF which seek to "boost the supply of homes" in accordance with the Government's objectives and help to create conditions for economic growth and productivity.

Question VI3: Do you agree with the approach of establishing concise visions for the key places identified in the new Local Plan? Or do you have an alternative suggestion?

- 5.6 Providing established visions for major settlements such as Chester, Ellesmere Port, Northwich, Winsford, Frodsham, and Neston/Parkgate allows the plan to reflect the distinct identities, opportunities, and challenges each area faces. This approach helps ensure that future development is not only sustainable and aligned with borough-wide principles but also grounded in the specific context of each place.
- 5.7 Northwich's capacity for development, combined with its connectivity advantages, positions it as an ideal location for future development. The site lies to the north of the A559, directly linking the site to Northwich town centre. The site is enclosed by employment uses on either side, making it a logical location for future employment development. Additionally, the site is strategically located in proximity to a number of shops, supermarkets and services, as well as located close to schools and colleges, making it a sustainable location for housing delivery.

- 5.8 To meet ambitious growth targets, the Council should actively consider the strategic release of Green Belt land, enabling Northwich to emerge as a hub that drives economic vitality and sustainable development across the borough.

6. Issues and Options: Objectives

Question OB 1: Please select the option which is the most appropriate approach for the new Local Plan:

- *Option A - Take forward current Local Plan objectives*
- *Option B - Use the Sustainability Appraisal objectives*
- *Option C- Neither of these*

6.1 CGV support the objectives taken from the Local Plan Update 2023: Sustainability Appraisal Report which provide a comprehensive framework for bringing forward sustainable development. They support a balanced approach to environmental protection, social wellbeing, and economic growth, which are key considerations in the release of Green Belt land. CGV believes that their site, land off Chester Way, complies with each of the relevant objectives outlined within Option 'B', as detailed below.

- *Protect air quality where it is of a high standard and to improve it elsewhere.*
The site's proximity to Northwich, one of the borough's main towns, allows for sustainable travel options. Its location enables access to local services, reducing the need for long car journeys and helping to mitigate air quality impacts. Future development would incorporate measures to manage and minimise emissions during and after construction.
- *Reduce the emission of greenhouse gasses, in particular CO2.* By focusing development near an existing urban area, the site supports a more compact settlement pattern, helping reduce car dependency.
- *Reduce energy consumption, promote energy efficiency and increase the use of energy from renewable resources. Will it reduce energy consumption?*
Development will be subject to modern building regulations and can exceed energy efficiency standards where feasible.
- *Optimise the re-use of previously developed land and buildings.* While not previously developed, the site is a sustainable urban infill piece of land, located immediately adjacent to Northwich. Previously developed land in the

borough is insufficient to meet all housing and employment needs, and the site offers a logical, well-connected location for growth.

- Manage contaminated land effectively. Appropriate investigations and reports will be enclosed within any future planning application at the site to ensure that development is brought forward safely.
- Minimise the risk of flooding from all sources. Appropriate investigations and reports will be enclosed within any future planning application at the site to ensure that development is brought forward safely.
- Protect, enhance and manage the character and appearance of the landscape and townscape, maintaining and strengthening local distinctiveness and sense of place. A sensitive design approach will integrate the development into the existing Northwich landscape setting, this could include aspects such as buffers and boundary planting.
- Preserve and enhance historic assets, sites, features, areas and settings of archaeological, historical and cultural heritage importance. The site is not in proximity to any conservation areas or listed buildings.
- Protect and enhance the borough's biodiversity and wildlife habitats. The site will deliver at least 10% BNG, as required nationally. Existing features such as hedgerows or mature trees will be retained and enhanced where possible.
- Provide sufficient high quality, well designed, sustainable housing solutions to meet the range of identified needs for market and affordable housing (including housing options for older people, students, Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Show people and self and custom house building). If brought forward for residential use, the site could deliver a mix of housing types, tenures and sizes, including affordable housing, in line with identified local needs. There has been recent strong interest from multiple housebuilders, including Registered Providers.

- Promote regeneration, particularly of deprived areas. Development will support the vitality of Northwich by increasing local population or employment opportunities.
- Create a safe environment to live in and reduce the fear of crime. Design will follow Secured by Design principles.
- Enable environments that promote health and wellbeing. Future development at the site will deliver connections to local services and will support active lifestyles and mental wellbeing.
- Support a sustainable, resilient and inclusive economy and provide opportunities for economic growth and investment. If promoted for employment use, the site will create jobs and attract investment; whilst houses would generate significant employment during the build period and increased council tax revenue thereafter.
- Maintain and improve the vitality and viability of city, town and local centres. Residents or employees will use local shops and services in Northwich, helping to maintain its role as a key town centre and increasing footfall and economic activity.
- Protect and enhance community facilities and services. The site will integrate with the wider settlement to enhance community cohesion and access.
- Make the best use of existing transport infrastructure and ensure everyone has access to high quality and affordable public transport, cycling and walking infrastructure. The site is well-located to utilise existing roads and public transport links, and its development would support enhancements to walking, cycling, and bus networks. Its location adjacent to Northwich reduces car dependency and supports sustainable movement patterns.

Question OB 2: Do you have any alternative approaches options [sic] that you would like to suggest?

6.2 An alternative approach to delivering appropriate growth within the borough would be to designate established employment areas yet also identify undeveloped sites with potential for expansion. For example, land promoted by CGV off Chester Way,

Northwich, represents an opportunity to bring forward modern, fit-for-purpose employment floorspace that enhances the wider area, supports the local economy and improved compatibility with nearby uses. Or alternatively, the site proves a logical location for residential development, close to local amenities and existing infrastructure.

6.3 While Green Belt policy rightly serves an important role, selective Green Belt review (where sites are on the edge of urban areas, adjacent to existing developed land, and capable of being well-integrated) should be considered where it brings wider regeneration or strategic economic benefits. This is particularly pertinent in light of the employment land requirement (198 ha over 20 years) and the limitations noted in the Stage 1 Land Availability Assessment², or the Council's identification for 1,914 homes to be delivered annually.

6.4 Therefore, a more proactive and spatially integrated employment strategy, combining existing employment and residential areas, adjoining expansion land, and qualitative improvement opportunities, would offer a robust alternative approach for delivering economic objectives.

Question OB 3: Do you feel that the option of taking forward the current Local Plan objectives into the new Local Plan, as set out in Option A 'Take forward the current Local Plan objectives' above, is an appropriate approach?

6.5 The Local Plan objectives as outlined in Option A relate well to CGV's land interest off Chester Way Northwich. As demonstrated below, the objectives largely relate to the characteristics and qualities of the land:

Economic

- SO2 Support a vibrant, diverse and competitive local economy that provides a range of job opportunities to support sustainable communities. The site has the potential to contribute significantly to the local economy. If brought forward for employment use, it can attract new businesses or expand existing ones, supporting job creation in a sustainable and accessible location. If

² January 2025.

developed for housing, it can help support the borough's identified housing need.

- SO4 Provide and develop reliable, efficient transport networks that support sustainable growth and improve accessibility to jobs and services. Located adjacent to Northwich, the site benefits from proximity to existing road and public transport infrastructure. Development would enable enhancements to sustainable transport modes, including walking, cycling, and bus services, improving accessibility to jobs and services both within the town and the wider borough.
- SO5 Ensure all development is supported by the necessary provision of, or improvements to infrastructure, services and facilities in an effective and timely manner to make development sustainable and minimise its effect upon existing communities. The site can be integrated into existing infrastructure networks and offers opportunities for strategic infrastructure investment.

Social

- SO6 Promote mixed and balanced communities through the provision of a range of housing to meet market, affordable and specialist housing needs. If brought forward for housing, the site can deliver a range of homes to meet identified needs in Northwich, including market, affordable, and potentially specialist housing. This will help address local affordability pressures.
- SO7 Support education and skills and ensure that deprived communities have access to services and employment. Proximity to employment areas and public transport links allows opportunities for skills and employment to be developed.
- SO8 Create stronger, safer and healthier communities by enabling access to leisure, recreational and community facilities and promoting walking and cycling. Future development at the site will deliver connections to local services and will support active lifestyles and mental wellbeing.

Environmental

- SO11 Ensure new development does not create an unacceptable impact, either individually or cumulatively, on the amenity and health of residents. Careful design will ensure protection of residential amenity, air quality, and noise levels.
- SO12 Ensure new development is of sustainable and high quality design that respects heritage assets, local distinctiveness and the character and appearance of the landscape and townscape. The site is not in proximity to any conservation areas or listed buildings.
- SO13 Manage, expand and improve green infrastructure and waterways networks, recognising their importance in delivering local environmental, social, economic and health benefits. The site will be brought forward to deliver sustainable development with access to green infrastructure and waterway networks.
- SO14 Mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change by addressing flood risk and water management and support the development of new buildings and infrastructure that are resilient, resistant and adapted to the effects of climate change. Appropriate investigations and reports will be enclosed within any future planning application at the site to ensure that development is brought forward safely.
- SO15 Take action on climate change by promoting energy efficiency and energy generation from low carbon and renewable resources. The development will meet modern energy standards.
- SO16 Achieve sustainable waste management, using sustainable modes of transport and travel and the prudent use of our natural resources including water and mineral reserves. Construction and operation will follow best practices for waste minimisation and recycling.

6.6 We believe the current Local Plan objectives (Option A) remain broadly relevant but are not sufficiently flexible to respond to evolving planning challenges, particularly in light of updated national policy and increased housing and employment land

requirements. For example, areas like CGV's land interests at Chester Way that are adjacent to existing commercial hubs may present sustainable opportunities for Green Belt release, which the existing objectives may not fully accommodate.

Question OB 4: Do you think that objectives SO1, SO3, SO9, SO10 need to be amended if they are to be taken forward into the new Local Plan? Do you have any suggestions for how they should be amended?

SO1 Develop the role of Chester as a sub-regional city, promote regeneration and development in the towns of Ellesmere Port, Northwich and Winsford and enable appropriate levels of development in the key service centres to support sustainable rural communities.

- 6.7 SO1 should be updated to acknowledge the potential for sustainable growth in areas adjacent to existing urban and commercial zones, even if within current Green Belt boundaries, especially in key towns like Northwich.

SO9 Support sustainable development and urban regeneration by supporting the use of suitably located previously developed land and buildings and by locating the majority of development within and on the edge of the main urban areas and key service centres.

- 6.8 SO9 should be updated to recognise the limited availability of previously developed land and support well-located Greenfield and edge-of-settlement sites.

SO10 Protect the environmental quality and character of Cheshire West and Chester through maintaining the general extent and character of the North Cheshire Green Belt and Cheshire countryside.

- 6.9 SO10 should allow for flexibility in Green Belt boundaries where robust evidence demonstrates that the release would deliver sustainable development outcomes without compromising the integrity of the wider Green Belt.

Question OB 5: Do you feel that the option of using the Sustainability Appraisal objectives in the new Local Plan, as set out in Option B 'Use the Sustainability Appraisal objectives' above, is an appropriate approach?

- 6.10 Yes, we believe Option B offers a more robust and future-proofed approach to plan-making. The SA objectives provide clear criteria for assessing the long-term sustainability and resilience of proposed development sites.

Question OB 6: If you do not feel this is an appropriate approach, are there any changes that you could suggest?

- 6.11 While we support Option B, we suggest enhancements to better reflect spatial considerations and site-specific viability. For example, including objectives that recognise the role of edge-of-settlement Green Belt sites, and an emphasis of bringing forward sites with proximity to existing infrastructure.
- 6.12 Additionally, CGV believes there is scope for the inclusion of an additional objective (or an amendment to an existing one) to reflect support for housing development to come forward to meet the identified need.

7. Issues and Options: Sustainable Development

Question SD 1: Do you agree with the suggested policy approach towards sustainable development, as set out in SD 1 'Sustainable development' above? If not please suggest how it could be amended?

- 7.1 Yes, we broadly agree with the suggested policy approach towards sustainable development. The proposed criteria strike a strong balance between environmental responsibility, resilience to climate change, and social inclusion.
- 7.2 However, we recommend that the policy also explicitly recognises that sustainable development can occur on well-located Green Belt sites, particularly where they are adjacent to existing urban or commercial areas, such as the site CGV's land interests at Land off Chester Way.
- 7.3 Sustainable development may, in some cases, include land currently within the Green Belt where clear evidence demonstrates that such development would meet long-term housing, employment, and climate objectives in a manner consistent with national and local sustainability principles

Question SD 3: Are there any other sustainable development issues or requirements that should be included in the new Local Plan?

- 7.4 Yes, the Local Plan should include a specific sustainable development requirement around proximity to existing infrastructure and services. Developments located adjacent to existing built-up areas and near public transport, employment sites, utilities, and services should be prioritised, even if these lie within the current Green Belt. The Local Plan should prioritise development of sites that are well connected, therefore reducing the need for car travel and making efficient use of utilities.
- 7.5 The Local Plan should place a clear focus on the delivery of affordable housing as a core sustainable development requirement. Access to affordable housing is fundamental to creating inclusive communities and supporting economic growth. Prioritising sites that can deliver a meaningful proportion of affordable house, while being well served by infrastructure and transport, will help ensure that development meets both environmental and social sustainability objectives.

8. Issues and Options: Spatial Strategy

Question SS 1: Is there any reason for the Council not to plan for delivering a minimum of 1,914 new homes each year?

- 8.1 The Council must plan to meet the Standard Method Requirement of 1,914 new homes per year in full as a minimum. In accordance with Paragraph 62 of the NPPF, *“To determine the minimum number of homes needed, strategic policies should be informed by a local housing need assessment, conducted using the standard method in national planning practice.”* There is no reason for the Council not to plan for delivering this minimum figure.
- 8.2 The Council must recognise that the delivery of 1,914 homes annually sits within a national context where the Government is seeking to significantly boost the number of homes delivered in order to meet a recognised demand.
- 8.3 This figure represents a baseline figure for the Council to achieve and there is clear scope to exceed this number where justified.
- 8.4 If the Council do not feel that they can meet the Government’s housing targets within the current identified Local Plan settlements, the Council must look to bring forward Green Belt sites to achieve these targets. Green Belt sites, much like CGV’s land interests at Chester Way, in sustainable locations offer the Council the opportunity to achieve these housing need figures. Paragraph 73 of the NPPF notes that that planning policies should identify a supply of specific, deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years’ worth of housing, with an appropriate buffer to ensure choice and competition in the market. The release of Green Belt land in sustainable locations are well-placed to support this objective and contribute to a more resilient and responsive housing land supply.
- 8.5 Land off Chester Way offers a logical and justified opportunity for Green Belt release, closely related to Northwich and existing service provisions, public transport links, and proximity to centres of employment and amenities. These aspects make the site particularly suitable for residential development that could provide for affordable housing.

Question SS 2: Do you think the Council should consider a stepped housing requirement that plans for a lower level of housing delivery earlier in the plan period?

- 8.6 It is CGV's position that a stepped housing requirement should not be introduced within the emerging Local Plan due to the concerns about reducing the housing delivery across the borough in the short-term. In order to achieve the Government's growth agenda, Cheshire West and Chester Council should recognise the immediate need to deliver housing and accord with Paragraph 61 of the NPPF.
- 8.7 To support sustainable growth and meet local demand without delay, the Council should instead pursue a consistent and ambitious housing delivery trajectory from the outset of the plan period. This approach would also justify the early release of sustainable and deliverable Green Belt sites, such as the land off Chester Way, for residential or employment use. Unlocking such strategic sites early would support both housing delivery and economic development, aligning with the Council's wider growth ambitions.

Question SS 3: Is there any reason for the Council not to plan for delivering a minimum of 9.9 hectares of employment land each year?

- 8.8 No there is no reason for the Council not to plan for delivering a minimum of 9.9 hectares of employment land each year. This annual requirement is grounded in the evidence provided by the Cheshire West and Chester Economic Development Needs Assessment (2025), which examined a comprehensive range of scenarios in line with national policy and planning practice guidance.
- 8.9 As identified within the CWaC Economic Development Needs Assessment ('EDNA')³, the Council need to plan for c. 198 hectares over a 20-year period (equating to 9.9 hectares annually). While the Land Availability Assessment (Stage One) identifies potential capacity of 158 hectares within established employment areas, this figure is likely to be reduced once constraints, availability, and site suitability are fully assessed in Stage Two. As such, there is a clear need to plan proactively for new allocations, including undeveloped greenfield provision, to ensure deliverability over the plan period.

³ March 2025, page 5.

8.10 Northwich, as the borough's second largest service centre, is identified as a priority location for employment land alongside Ellesmere Port and Winsford. The town already benefits from a number of established employment areas and remains well-placed to accommodate both medium and large-scale commercial development. Given the potential shortfall of suitable brownfield land, the Council should recognise the strategic importance of bringing forward additional employment land in and around Northwich, including the possible release of well-located Green Belt sites, including the land off Chester Way.

8.11 The Council should make it a priority to deliver the identified employment land need in order to accord with Policy 85 of the NPPF which details that planning policies should *'help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development'*.

Question SS 4: Do you agree with the suggested policy approach towards the spatial strategy principles, as set out in SS 3 'Spatial strategy principles' above? If not please suggest how it could be amended?

8.12 CGV broadly support the policy approach towards the spatial strategy principles, especially the recognition that where there are not enough planning permissions and opportunities for redevelopment within urban areas and towns, the approach will be to develop on the edge of existing settlements in locations with the best access to public transport and existing services and infrastructure, as the next best sustainable option. Depending on the settlement, this may require the release of Green Belt land.

8.13 Land off Chester Way represents a prime example of how the release of Green Belt land within the Local Plan process can help achieve development in sustainable locations, with best access to services and facilities. CGV's site, bounded by Northwich Retail Park to the east and further commercial and industrial development to the west, can enable further employment-based development to come forward in a suitable location. If the site were to come forward for residential development, the site is located within a sustainable and attractive location to meet needs of future residents, which is reflected in the interest expressed by a number

of housebuilders and Registered Providers. The site represents a highly sustainable, accessible, unconstrained and logical option for Green Belt release that could contribute to the strategic retail and employment requirements for Cheshire West and Chester. Development and major transport infrastructure contains the site on all sides and as such it would represent an infill site, developing the small gap in existing built frontage on Chester Way.

Question SS 5: Do you agree with the suggested policy approach towards the settlement hierarchy, as set out in SS 4 'Settlement hierarchy' above? If not please suggest how it could be amended?

8.14 CGV generally agrees with the approach taken within the outlines Settlement Hierarchy, in that development should be centred in areas with strong local infrastructure and services, such as locations identified within the consultation document i.e. Northwich. Northwich is described as a 'main town' and provides local infrastructure and services for its large population. However, CGV stress that reliance solely on the settlements listed within SS 4 is unlikely to address the identified housing and employment land need. To enable the annual delivery of 9.9 hectares of employment land or the 1,914 new homes across CWaC, the Council should consider the release of Green Belt land in proximity to existing settlements and areas of development, where sites can be served by existing infrastructure provisions and services.

Question SS 6: Should all settlements have some level of development, regardless of whether they are identified in the settlement hierarchy?

8.15 No, development should be directed primarily to the settlements identified in the hierarchy, where there is clear evidence of infrastructure capacity, service provision, and access to sustainable transport. These core locations and their immediately surrounding areas are best placed to accommodate growth in a way that supports the objectives of sustainable development, as defined by the Local Plan evidence base.

8.16 Allowing development in all settlements, regardless of their role or capacity, risks undermining the spatial strategy by dispersing growth to unsustainable locations with limited facilities, infrastructure, and connectivity. This could increase car dependency, strain rural character, and dilute investment in the most sustainable and strategic locations.

8.17 Small-scale, locally appropriate development in lower-tier settlements may still be suitable where it meets clearly defined local needs, but this should be the exception (not the baseline) for planning future growth.

Question SS 9: Have circumstances changed since the adoption of the Local Plan (Part One), that would now justify Green Belt release?

8.18 Since the adoption of Cheshire West and Chester's Local Plan (Part One) in January 2015, a number of circumstantial changes have occurred which now justify Green Belt release across the borough as part of an evidence-based spatial strategy.

8.19 Firstly, the revised National Planning Policy Framework published in December 2024 provides clearer direction on the potential for local authorities to review Green Belt boundaries where fully evidenced and justified, particularly in the context of strategic planning and housing delivery.

8.20 The Government's reaffirmed ambition to deliver 300,000 homes per year at a national level, alongside changes to the standard method for calculating local housing need has placed greater pressure on local authorities to plan positively and realistically for future growth. Meeting this requirement will be extremely difficult without a strategic review of constrained land designations, including parts of the Green Belt that may no longer serve their original planning purpose. Cheshire West and Chester Council are expected to experience a significant uplift in their local housing delivery needs; since the introduction of the new standard method, Cheshire West and Chester Council will be required to deliver 1,914 homes annually- an increase from 532 homes annually under the previous standard method (259.8% increase).

8.21 In addition to the above, the Council will be required to plan for the 198 hectares of employment land identified to meet a range of types and sizes of site over the 20-year plan period. As identified in the CWaC Economic Needs Assessment 2025, there appear to be strong opportunities in higher value manufacturing and related sectors in areas such as Northwich. The Assessment notes that to deliver this need, a switch from previously developed land to greenfield provision may be required.

8.22 In light of these evolving factors, it is appropriate for the Council to revisit the Green Belt strategy established under the previous Local Plan.

Question SS 10: Are there any other considerations that we should take account of in relation to future Green Belt policy?

8.23 Yes, there are several key considerations that should inform the future approach to Green Belt policy within the new Local Plan to ensure it remains fit for purpose and responsive to changing national and local circumstances.

8.24 Firstly, the introduction of the 'grey belt' concept in the December 2024 NPPF highlights the need for a more refined approach to Green Belt review. The NPPF identifies the concept of 'grey belt' land as previously developed or low-performing parcels within the Green Belt that may be more suitable for development without compromising its overall function. This provides a valuable opportunity for Cheshire West and Chester Council to review existing Green Belt areas, particularly those adjacent to sustainable settlements such as Northwich, and identify underutilised land capable of supporting either residential or employment growth.

8.25 Grey belt land is defined within the NPPF as;

land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143. 'Grey belt' excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development.

8.26 It is our opinion that CGV's land constitutes as grey belt land in accordance with the definition provided within the NPPF. The site, albeit greenfield, does not actively contribute to purposes 'a', 'b', or 'd' defined within Paragraph 143 of the NPPF.

a) The Site itself is located adjacent to the existing settlement boundary of Northwich and is a contained Site forming part of a large-built up area. The Site is bounded and constrained by built form to the east and west (existing retail/commercial uses), and transport links (A559 Chester Way/Manchester Road to the south and New Warrington Road to the north). There are permanent and defensible field boundaries surrounding the Site which would prevent any sprawl of the Site and complete the built frontage along this part of the A559.

b) the site would form a natural extension to the settlement boundary of Northwich and would not result in the merging with the nearest settlement of Wincham.

d) Northwich is not designated as a historic town, therefore the release of the site from the Green Belt would not impact on this purpose.

8.27 While not previously developed, the CGV's site is functionally contained, adjacent to the urban edge, and makes a low contribution to the Green Belt purposes. In light of the Council's housing shortfall, the site's release should be justified under the grey belt provisions of the NPPF.

8.28 The Council should assess the quality, character, and function of individual Green Belt parcels, rather than treating the designation as a blanket constraint. Land that is previously developed, underused, or visually and functionally disconnected from the wider Green Belt may no longer contribute meaningfully to its core purposes and could be released without causing significant harm. This would allow for more strategic and sustainable growth, particularly adjacent to key service centres like Northwich, where infrastructure and transport links already exist.

8.29 Some areas of Green Belt have been overtaken by edge-of-settlement development or are no longer serving their intended role and may be better suited to development than to long-term protection.

8.30 Overall, the site makes a weak contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt and therefore would be a suitable site for release from the Green Belt to assist in meeting the development requirements of Cheshire West and Chester.

8.31 Additionally, the Green Belt should be considered in the context of housing and employment delivery pressures. The Council will be required to meet its housing need, calculated via the standard method⁴, and accommodate employment land demands that cannot be met solely within existing urban boundaries. If sustainable options are exhausted within non-Green Belt locations, the plan must be prepared to justify selective Green Belt release as a means of delivering the spatial strategy.

⁴ NPPF, Paragraph 62

- 8.32 *Question SS 11: Please select the option which is the most appropriate spatial strategy for Cheshire West and Chester:*
- *Option A - Retain the Green Belt*
 - *Option B - Follow current Local Plan level and distribution of development*
 - *Option C - Sustainable transport corridors*
 - *None of these*
- 8.33 Option B is the most appropriate spatial strategy for Cheshire West and Chester, as it allows for a realistic balance between meeting increased housing and employment needs and making selective, justified Green Belt releases in sustainable locations. This approach recognises that significant constraints on brownfield and previously allocated land exist, and that sustainable urban extensions including Green Belt release where warranted will be necessary to meet the borough's development requirements.
- 8.34 CGV supports the approach outlined in Option B's spatial strategy, which indicates that Northwich and its surrounding area could accommodate over 5,000 new homes. This level of provision is complemented by the recognition that greenfield land on the town's periphery may be appropriate for employment expansion. The spatial strategy map also highlights areas outside Northwich town centre as key locations for office development and the enhancement of existing employment areas. CGV agrees with this balanced and strategic approach to growth, which supports both housing and economic development in a sustainable manner.
- 8.35 In this context, Land off Chester Way, promoted by CGV is a logical and sustainable extension to the existing employment area. While in the Green Belt, it is closely related to the urban area, benefits from adjacency to existing employment uses, and can deliver modern employment floorspace to enhance the overall quality and functionality of the area. Therefore, a strategy that allows for planned growth in line with current distribution patterns, but with targeted Green Belt release where it supports sustainable development, is the most effective and deliverable option for the new Local Plan.
- 8.36 CGV do additionally recognise and support the spatial strategy identified under Option C whereby potential greenfield employment expansion is proposed in proximity to Northwich and this area is identified to deliver new homes.

Question SS 12: Do you have any alternative spatial strategy options that you would like to suggest?

- 8.37 To further the strategy outlined in Option B, further emphasis should be given to sustainable expansion of employment sites adjacent to established settlements, including targeted release of Green Belt land where it directly adjoins existing employment areas or settlement boundaries. Taking forward this approach would allow strategically positioned sites to deliver employment provisions, strategic regeneration, and infrastructure delivery.
- 8.38 This spatial strategy would support the Local Plan's objective of economic growth, while allowing flexibility to meet the increasing housing and employment land needs.

Question SS 14: Do you feel that Option A is an appropriate spatial strategy for the new Local Plan?

- 8.39 CGV recognise Option A's ambition to retain the Green Belt extent in line with Government Guidance that these boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances however, for the Plan to establish a deliverable strategy it is CGV's opinion that these boundaries will require readjustment. In this context, a strict adherence to retaining all Green Belt boundaries risks overlooking sustainable, well-located opportunities for employment or housing that could contribute positively to local objectives.
- 8.40 While Option A promotes brownfield-first principles and development within non-Green Belt settlements, a targeted Green Belt release in locations such as CGV's land is likely to be essential to meeting both employment and housing needs in a sustainable way. This is particularly true given the ambitious growth requirements of the new Local Plan and the known limitations of land supply within existing urban boundaries.

Question SS 15: If you do not feel that Option A is an appropriate spatial strategy option, are there any changes that you could suggest?

- 8.41 Option A should be amended to allow for selective Green Belt release within sustainable locations. If Option A were to be brought forward, this would raise a risk to undermining economic growth and limiting land availability. An option should

be developed which promotes planned Green Belt release to meet identified employment and housing needs.

Question SS 16: Do you feel that Option B is an appropriate spatial strategy for the new Local Plan?

8.42 Yes, Option B allows for planned growth in line with current distribution patterns, yet with targeted Green Belt release where it supports sustainable development.

Question SS 18: Do you feel that Option C is an appropriate spatial strategy for the new Local Plan?

8.43 Option C is supportable in principle however, for it to be deliverable and effective, the strategy should actively consider the selective release of Green Belt land where it is adjacent to existing development, offers strong sustainability credentials, and helps deliver wider employment and regeneration goals—as is the case with CGV's land off Chester Way.

8.44 CGV recognise that this option details the potential for greenfield employment expansion on sites outside of Northwich town centre however, the option should explicitly identify areas where Green Belt release would be appropriate.

8.45 If this option were to be taken forward, it should be noted that CGV's land interest off Chester Way lies in proximity to an identified principal road network, where development is encouraged.

Question SS 21: What information should we take into account when assessing sites for allocation in the new Local Plan?

8.46 In the preparation of the new Local Plan, CWaC should consider the potential for sites to contribute towards the strategic objectives of regeneration and sustainable settlement growth, along with further technical considerations.

8.47 CGV's site is within a sustainable location, with access on foot into Northwich, and the local services and facilities contained therein. The site proves a logical location for Green Belt release when assessed against the five purposes of the Green Belt (as set out in Paragraph 143).

- **Check unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas:** The site is adjacent to Northwich's settlement boundary, is well-contained by built form and infrastructure, and would not lead to unrestricted sprawl.

- **Prevent neighbouring towns from merging:** The Site forms a logical extension to Northwich and would not cause merging with nearby Wincham.
- **Safeguard the countryside from encroachment:** While greenfield development is technically encroachment, defensible boundaries would prevent further spread and allow planned growth.
- **Preserve the setting and character of historic towns:** Northwich is not a designated historic town, so development would have no impact on this purpose.
- **Assist urban regeneration:** There are limited sites within Northwich for large-scale commercial development, so the site helps meet employment and housing needs without undermining urban regeneration.

8.48 Overall, the site makes a weak contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt and therefore would be a suitable site for release from the Green Belt to assist in meeting the development requirements of Cheshire West and Chester. It would also constitute Grey Belt land.

8.49 Within the emerging Local Plan, allocated employment sites should be situated in proximity to existing employment infrastructure to allow for logical extensions to economic hubs that can benefit from shared infrastructure. For example, CGV's site off Chester Way, Northwich, lies immediately to the west of Denton Drive Industrial Estate (ref. N03 in the Employment Areas Survey 2024).

8.50 In addition to being located close to existing employment sites, the land off Chester Way is within proximity to the existing settlement boundary of Northwich and would prove a sensible location for future residential development.

8.51 The Plan should prioritise land that is deliverable within the plan period. Sites in proximity to existing settlements with reach of services and infrastructure should be favoured, even when they lie within the Green Belt. Where land within the Green Belt no longer serves the purposes defined in the NPPF, or where development can be accommodated with minimal harm to openness, such sites should be considered for Green Belt release. This is particularly appropriate where development can

contribute to strategic employment needs or housing need, such as Cheshire West's target of delivering 198 hectares over 20 years or 1,914 homes.

Question SS 29: Which of the identified potential growth areas around Northwich do you consider to be the most suitable?

8.52 While CGV's land off Chester Way has not been identified as a potential growth area within the Issues and Options consultation, we consider it to be a logical and sustainable location for growth. The site is well-related to the existing built-up area of Northwich, benefits from strong transport connections, and is bounded by defensible features that prevent further sprawl. It offers a valuable opportunity to accommodate future development needs in a planned and contained manner and should therefore be considered in the next stages of the plan-making process.

9. Issues and Options: Northwich

Question NO 1: Do you agree with the suggested policy approach towards Northwich, as set out in NO 1 'Northwich 'above? If not please suggest how it could be amended?

- 9.1 CGV broadly support the policy approach towards Northwich including the emphasis on town centre regeneration, infrastructure improvements, and the safeguarding of settlement character. CGV however, recommend that the policy be amended to provide greater flexibility for sustainable growth on well-located Green Belt sites adjacent to existing development. The policy should give greater emphasis to residential development opportunities, particularly given CWaC's identified housing need. Northwich's role as a main town makes it ideally places to accommodate significant residential growth that can support the housing need response (making a meaningful contribution to both local need and the broader national shortage⁵) and deliver sustainable residential communities.
- 9.2 This growth will be important in supporting the regeneration of the Northwich Town Centre Development Framework and in the delivery of housing and employment opportunities. This is especially important in light of increasing development pressures, limited brownfield capacity, and the need to meet higher levels of housing and employment need in a sustainable manner.
- 9.3 CGV also supports the Council's intention to identify key sites and allocations in and around Northwich as part of the plan-making process. In this context, CGV's land off Chester Way represents a logical and sustainable opportunity for growth, well-suited to contribute to the delivery of the Plan's strategic objectives.

Question NO 2: Do you have any comments on the suggested key allocations/sites?

- 9.4 CGV support the suggested key sites, especially growth surrounding Northwich Town Centre. The delivery of housing and employment development within these

⁵ House of Commons Library, *Tackling the under-supply of housing in England*, UK Parliament Research Briefing, 19 May 2023; <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7671/>

locations make logical sense due to the existing build environment of these locations and their proximity to existing infrastructure and services.

- 9.5 While the objectives are broadly supported, we would encourage further emphasis is placed on the role that releasing Green Belt land can make in meeting strategic housing and employment goals. Over reliance on development in allocations such as Wincham Urban Village and Winnington Works may result in needs not being met. Sites outside of these allocations should also be considered, especially where they offer logical extensions to Northwich and can meet needs.
- 9.6 CGV's site offers a sustainable, well-connected and accessible location for housing or commercial use. This site will help meet local needs, support town centre regeneration, and its release from the Green Belt would not undermine Green Belt objectives.

Question NO 3: Do you have any views on how the aspirations of the Northwich Town Centre Development Framework should be reflected through the new Local Plan?

- 9.7 The Framework's emphasis on connectivity, regeneration, and vibrancy should be supported by allowing development close to the town centre, including those currently just beyond the boundary.
- 9.8 The release and development of Land off Chester Way for either employment or residential uses could contribute to the success of Northwich Town Centre by supporting town centre footfall, and investment in Northwich's local economy.

10. Issues and Options: Green Belt and Countryside

Question GB 1: Do you agree with the suggested policy approach towards Green Belt and countryside, as set out in GB 1 'Green Belt and countryside' above? If not please suggest how it could be amended.

- 10.1 CGV support the policy approach towards the Green Belt and Countryside as set out in GB 1. Policies provided in the emerging Local Plan should reflect the most recent guidance relating to the Green Belt in the NPPF, including reference to grey belt land and provide reference to the anticipated Green Belt review evidence.
- 10.2 In regard to wording of the policy the Local Plan should include reference to Paragraph 148 of the NPPF, which notes:

Where it is necessary to release Green Belt land for development, plans should give priority to previously developed land, then consider grey belt which is not previously developed, and then other Green Belt locations. However, when drawing up or reviewing Green Belt boundaries, the need to promote sustainable patterns of development should determine whether a site's location is appropriate with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework. Strategic policy-making authorities should consider the consequences for sustainable development of channelling development towards urban areas inside the Green Belt boundary, towards towns and villages inset within the Green Belt or towards locations beyond the outer Green Belt boundary.

Question GB 2: Should there be a separate policy for countryside and Green Belt areas?

- 10.3 Yes, the Local Plan should include separate policies for countryside and Green Belt areas, as they serve distinct planning functions and are subject to different national policy frameworks and local considerations. Maintaining two distinct policies will also improve clarity for applicants, decision-makers, and communities, especially as the new Local Plan will be a single document.

11. Issues and Options: Transport and Accessibility

Question TA 1: Do you agree with the suggested policy approach towards transport and accessibility, as set out above in TA 1 'Transport and accessibility'? If not please suggest how it could be amended?

- 11.1 CGV support the view that new development will be encouraged in sustainable locations with access to services and facilities. CGV's land interests at Chester Way represents a sustainable location which is well connected by active travel and public transport.

12. Issues and Options: Infrastructure and Developer Contributions

Question ID 1: Do you agree with the suggested policy approach towards infrastructure and developer contributions, as set out above in ID 1 'Infrastructure and developer contributions'? If not please suggest how it could be amended.

- 12.1 In circumstances where developer contributions are sought, the obligation needs to allow for the consideration of viability. Obligations should only be sought where they are proven necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms and are reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

13. Issues and Options: Economic Growth, Employment and Enterprise

Question EG 1: Do you agree with the suggested policy approach towards economic growth, employment and enterprise, as set out in EG 1 'Economic growth, employment and enterprise' above? If not please suggest how it could be amended?

- 13.1 CGV supports the Council's recognition that a flexible supply of employment land allocations will need to be identified across the borough within the forthcoming spatial strategy to cater for a range of types and sizes of businesses.
- 13.2 CGV are adamant that this flexible supply of employment land must partially be delivered through new allocations identified at the edge of existing settlements, with existing infrastructure capacities. Utilising edge of settlement locations with proximity to town centre locations will allow for the sustainable growth of economic outputs within CWaC.
- 13.3 One location that should be brought forward for these uses is CGV's land off Chester Way within Northwich which is situated within a logical location for future development. The site is in a sustainable location, with access on foot into Northwich, and the local services and facilities contained therein. Nearby bus stops on Chester Way/Manchester Road provides access to and from Knutsford and Warrington, and Northwich train station is a 5-10 minute walk from the site, which is frequented by services between Manchester and Chester. Chester Way links to Junction 19 of the M6 to the north-east, and through Northwich to Junction 11 of the M56, providing excellent private transport links.

Question ED 2: Do you agree these are the key strategic employment locations that need to be protected? Are there any others to be added?

- 13.4 CGV agree with identified key strategic employment locations referenced within ED 2 however, believe that in addition to these locations, the emerging Local Plan should recognise the importance of smaller retail parks, such as Northwich Retail Park, and their surrounding land to help deliver 9.9 hectares of employment land each year. Smaller retail sites and their wider surroundings can ensure that employment growth can grow sustainably, which is essential to sustain local services

and economies. The growth of these smaller retail sites will additionally prevent the Council's employment land strategy having an over reliance on the key employment locations identified, enabling a more balanced employment land delivery, ensuring that both large and small sites come forward.

Question EG 3: Should established employment areas, to meet a range of sizes and types of business/industry needs, be designated on the policies map? If so should this include the full range of areas identified in the Employment Areas Survey 2024?

- 13.5 Yes, established employment areas should be designated on the policies map to ensure that a range of businesses and employment needs are met. However, in addition to the areas identified in the Employment Areas Survey 2024, there is a strong case for also including undeveloped sites adjacent to these existing areas. Such sites can offer logical, sustainable extensions to the current employment land portfolio and help meet future economic needs.
- 13.6 In this context, CGV's land off Chester Way, which lies immediately adjacent to the Denton Drive Industrial Estate (Employment Areas Survey 2024 reference: N03), should be considered. Site N03 was rated as 'Good' in the survey yet, the assessment noted issues including a mixed quality of existing buildings, open storage, on-street parking pressures, and retail frontage along Chester Way, which negatively impacted its compatibility score. These constraints highlight an opportunity for surrounding land to contribute to the qualitative improvement of the area.
- 13.7 Furthermore, although the site is currently located within the Green Belt, its position on the edge of the existing settlement boundary, alongside established employment uses, makes it a strong candidate for Green Belt release in the emerging Local Plan. Its development would support economic growth objectives while providing a more coherent and integrated employment area. The Council should designate the existing employment areas identified in the 2024 Survey but also recognise the value of adjacent, sustainable, and deliverable sites such as CGV's land at Chester Way, to ensure flexibility and improvement of the local employment land supply.

14. Issues and Options: Housing

Question HO 1: Do you agree with the suggested policy approach towards mix and type and specialist housing in new developments, as set out in HO 1 'Mix and type of housing in new developments and specialist housing' above? If not please suggest how it could be amended?

- 14.1 CGV broadly supports the suggested policy approach towards housing mix and type of housing as set out within HO 1 yet believe this could be strengthened to allow for greater flexibility on a site-by-site basis, particularly in strategic or edge-of-settlement locations that could accommodate a broader range of uses.
- 14.2 In this context, CGV's site off Chester Way, represents a credible opportunity for sustainable residential development, including specialist or supported housing. The site is located on the edge of the existing settlement boundary and is adjacent to established employment uses. Its proximity to local services, transport connections, and retail facilities at Northwich Retail Park enhances its suitability for a broader housing mix, particularly for older people or those needing access to services without reliance on the car.
- 14.3 We recommend that Policy HO 1 be amended to explicitly acknowledge that specialist and mixed-tenure housing opportunities may also be appropriately located on sustainable edge-of-settlement sites. This would help ensure the policy remains responsive to local context and land availability and supports inclusive, place-based growth.
- 14.4 Such flexibility would align with the NPPF's objectives around meeting diverse housing needs, making effective use of land, and planning positively for mixed-use developments that create healthy, inclusive, and vibrant communities.
- 14.5 The policy approach requires strengthening to recognise the critical role that strategic residential sites play in addressing the nationwide affordable housing shortage.

Question HO 4: Do you agree with the suggested policy approach towards delivering affordable housing, as set out in HO 2 'Delivering affordable housing' above? If not please suggest how it could be amended?

- 14.6 While the overall intention of Policy HO2 to secure the delivery of affordable housing is supported, the policy approach should be more flexible, particularly in relation to edge-of-settlement or Green Belt release sites that are being promoted for development in the Local Plan.
- 14.7 It should be recognised by CWaC in the development of the Local Plan that the delivery of housing on previously undeveloped land can incur unexpected costs. Policy HO2 should therefore allow for site specific viability considerations to come forward as part of any application submission.
- 14.8 The policy should promote and support residential schemes that provide in excess of the policy requirement for affordable housing; these schemes can make a valuable contribution towards the affordable housing needs in the area, and this should weigh heavily in favour of such proposals.

Question HO 6: Do you agree with the suggested policy approach for residential development proposals, as set out in HO 3 'Proposals for residential development' above? If not please suggest how it could be amended?

- 14.9 CGVC is supportive of the approach, however, note that where reference is given to development within the Green Belt, this should be supported by text outlining the principles of the grey belt to aid sustainable development across the borough.

Question HO 8: Within this policy approach (or elsewhere) should the new Local Plan set out more detail on what development is appropriate in the Green Belt, with respect to, for example, house extensions; what is small scale/subordinate (not increasing size of a dwelling by more than 30%) etc?

- 14.10 The emerging Local Plan should ensure that it sets out a clear criteria on what constitutes as appropriate Green Belt development in line with the 2024 version of the NPPF. Clearer definitions would provide greater clarity for applicants and decision makers. It is also important that the Plan recognise that in order to achieve sustainable development in well-connected locations, Green Belt release will be appropriate This would support wider regeneration and growth objectives and align with emerging evidence around employment and housing land needs.

Therefore, while detailed Green Belt guidance is welcomed, this should be balanced with a criteria-based policy that also facilitates strategic and sustainable Green Belt release where exceptional circumstances are demonstrable.

15. Issues and Options: Green Infrastructure, Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Question GI 3: Should new Local Plan policy go above the 10% mandatory biodiversity net gain set nationally?

- 15.1 The Local Plan should not seek to exceed the 10% mandatory biodiversity net gain requirement set out nationally. The 10% threshold, as introduced by the Environment Act 2021 represents a balanced and evidence-based standard that has been subject to national consultation, viability testing, and wide stakeholder engagement. Requiring a higher percentage locally could risk undermining development viability, and introduce delivery challenges

16. Issues and Options: Design and Sustainable Construction

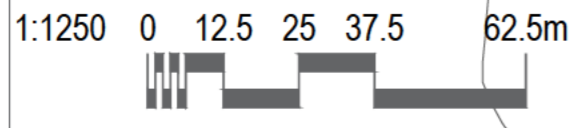
Question DS 2: If the Council produces a borough-wide Design Code, should this form part of the new Local Plan?

- 16.1 A borough-wide Design Code should not form part of the new Local Plan. While high-quality design is critical to sustainable development, a single, overarching Design Code applied across the entire borough risks being too generic or inflexible, to the wide variation in local character across Cheshire West and Chester. Instead, the Local Plan should reference the role of design codes as supplementary guidance, allowing them to evolve over time without requiring formal plan review.

Appendix I

Site Location Plan

Disclaimer:
 Do not scale from this drawing
 All contractors must visit the site and be responsible for taking and checking dimensions.
 All construction information should be taken from figured dimensions only.
 Any discrepancies between drawings, specifications and site conditions must be brought to the attention of the supervising officer.
 This drawing is for planning purposes only. It is not intended to be used for construction purposes. Whilst all reasonable efforts are used to ensure drawings are accurate, Astle Planning and Design Ltd accept no responsibility or liability for any reliance placed on, or use made of, this plan by anyone for purposes other than those stated above.



Client	CHESHIRE GARDEN VILLAGE LIMITED		
Project	CHESTER WAY NORTHWICH		
Drawing Title	PROPOSED LOCATION PLAN		
Drawn by	RH	Checked by	MP Date 27.08.25
Status	PRELIMINARY	Scale @ A2	1:1250
Job no.	AW004	Dwg. no.	LP01
		Astle Planning & Design Limited The Steam Mill, Steam Mill Street, Chester, CH3 5AN 01244 886644 info@astlepd.co.uk www.astlepd.co.uk	

This drawing is the copyright © of Astle Planning & Design Ltd and shall not be altered, copied, photographed or reproduced in any way without the written authority of Astle Planning & Design Ltd.

Appendix II

Call for Sites Submission Documents



AshtonHale

Planning Policy Team
Cheshire West and Chester Council

Submitted via the Consultation Portal

15th March 2024

Dear Sir / Madam

Consultation on Land Availability Assessment and Call for Sites: Representations on Behalf of Cheshire Garden Villages Ltd

These representations are submitted to Cheshire West and Chester Council ("CWaC") by AshtonHale on behalf of Cheshire Garden Villages Ltd ("CGV") in relation to their land interests at Land at Chester Way, Northwich. A Site Location Plan is appended to this letter.

Background

The Site is not identified in the draft Stage 1 Land Availability Assessment but has previously been promoted for development by Lane End Strategic Land. Positive discussions were held with key regeneration officers at CWaC in 2016 with regards potential retail/commercial uses, and representations were made on Lane End's behalf to the January 2018 Part Two Local Plan consultation (enclosed for reference). Whilst the reason for not progressing the site to an allocation is not documented, it is understood that CWaC did not seek to alter or amend the Green Belt as part of that process.

These representations seek to bring together all available information on the site; assess the Site's contribution to the Green Belt; and how the site could be brought forward for sustainable development.

Site Context

The site extends to c. 2.6 hectares and is located to the north of Chester Way (A559) as it becomes Manchester Road going eastwards. The Site is bounded by Northwich Retail Park to the east, which comprises a number of large-scale retail units and significant hardstanding. To the west of the site is Wade Brook, and beyond this other large-scale commercial units including car dealerships and showrooms. To the south of Chester Way, there is a mix of industrial, retail and other commercial uses. To the north of the Site, there is woodland and beyond this Wincham Brook and the New Warrington Road.

The Site represents a highly sustainable, accessible, unconstrained and logical option for Green Belt release that could contribute to the strategic retail and employment requirements for Cheshire

West and Chester. Development and major transport infrastructure contains the site on all sides and as such it would represent an infill site, developing the small gap in existing built frontage on Chester Way.

On this basis, we wish to work closely with Cheshire West and Chester Council and other stakeholders throughout the process to develop an appropriate masterplan for the site which reflects the vision and objectives for the Local Plan.

Site Deliverability

The NPPF (December 2023) and Government's growth agenda seek to ensure that sufficient land is available in the most appropriate locations to increase employment and housing land supply, support growth and boost home ownership. The site is available, suitable and achievable and is ideally positioned to deliver a mix of uses.

In accordance with the NPPF, to be considered deliverable, sites should:

- **Be Available Now:** A site is considered available where there is confidence that there are no legal or ownership problems;
- **Be Suitable:** A site is considered suitable for development if it offers a suitable location for development and would contribute to the creation of sustainable, mixed communities; and
- **Be Achievable:** A site is considered achievable for development where there is a reasonable prospect that housing will be developed on the site within five years. This is a judgement about the economic viability of a site and the capacity of the developer to compete and sell housing over a certain period considering market factors, cost factors and delivery factors.

An Available Site

The land does not have any ownership or legal impediments, and our clients are committed to bringing the site forward for development. As such the site would be available to be developed early in the plan period.

A Suitable Site

The site is in a sustainable location, with access on foot into Northwich, and the local services and facilities contained therein. Nearby bus stops on Chester Way/Manchester Road provides access to and from Knutsford and Warrington, and Northwich train station is a 5-10 minute walk from the Site, which is frequented by services between Manchester and Chester. Chester Way links to Junction 19 of the M6 to the north-east, and through Northwich to Junction 11 of the M56, providing excellent private transport links.

Our assessment of the site against the five purposes of the Green Belt (as cited at Paragraph 143 of the NPPF) is set out below:

- **Check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas** - as was confirmed in the 2018 representations, The Site itself is located adjacent to the existing settlement boundary of Northwich and is a contained Site forming part of a large-built up area. The Site is bounded and constrained by built form to the east and west (existing retail/commercial uses), and transport links (A559 Chester Way/Manchester Road to the south and New Warrington

Road to the north). There are permanent and defensible field boundaries surrounding the Site which would prevent any sprawl of the Site and complete the built frontage along this part of the A559. **No contribution.**

- **Prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another** – the Site would form a natural extension to the settlement boundary of Northwich and would not result in the merging with the nearest settlement of Wincham. **No contribution.**
- **Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment** – whilst the development of any greenfield site would result in ‘encroachment’, it is not considered that the Site strongly contributes to this purpose. The defensible boundaries referenced above would limit any additional development in the future, and the release of the Site would allow development around Northwich to be properly planned and managed. **Weak contribution.**
- **Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns** – Northwich is not designated as a historic town, therefore the release of the Site from the Green Belt would not impact on this purpose. **No contribution.**
- **Assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land** – As shown on the Draft Site Layout Plan, it is anticipated that the Site would come forward to help to meet larger footplate non-food retail and employment needs. The map accompanying the Draft Land Availability Assessment shows that there are limited opportunities for large-scale commercial development within the main built form of Northwich. As such, additional land outside of the settlement boundary would be required to meet these needs. An alteration of the Green Belt would therefore not prevent the recycling of derelict or other urban land. **Weak contribution.**

Overall, the Site makes a weak contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt, and therefore would be a suitable site for release from the Green Belt to assist in meeting the development requirements of Cheshire West and Chester.

An Achievable Site

A commercial development would likely be the most viable option for this site and there is a realistic prospect that such proposals can be delivered, indeed there is a history of strong interest from potential end-users, as was documented in the previous representations. However, CGV would also be open to discussing the potential for residential and/or care and retirement uses on the Site.

In terms of potential technical constraints, a Transport Note (ref: 4350) has been prepared by Eddisons and is submitted with these representations. The Note and accompanying drawing demonstrate that vehicular access into the site can be provided for off the A559 Chester Way, and the proposed vehicular accesses will provide safe and convenient access into the site for retail and employment land-uses and accords with the relevant highway design standards. As such, there are no material highways or transport reasons which would prevent the allocation or delivery of development on this site.

Potential flood risk, drainage and utilities constraints have also been reviewed. A Preliminary Note (ref: 0112-01) prepared by Shaw Stephens Consulting is enclosed, which concludes that there are no flood risk, drainage or utility related issues that would impede the deliverability of the draft development proposals for the Site.

In summary, there are no known technical constraints that would prevent the site coming forward in a short timescale.

Summary

In summary, this letter demonstrates that the removal of the site from the Green Belt and its allocation for employment or a mix of uses within the Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan would make a valuable contribution towards the Council's development land supply and would deliver significant material benefits whilst still protecting the purpose and functions of the Green Belt. The site represents a gap in an existing built frontage, immediately adjacent to the settlement boundary of Northwich and is a logical location to deliver sustainable development with access to a range of existing services and facilities.

CGV's key objective is to ensure that the land's full potential is recognised and identified as a strategic development opportunity in the emerging Local Plan. The scale of the overall land holding, and its exceptional location coupled with the willingness of the landowner offers potential opportunities to deliver additional benefits to Northwich and the wider area.

The development of the site for a commercial scheme would constitute sustainable development in accordance with the NPPF. An employment or residential development would deliver positive economic, social and environmental benefits which should be afforded significant weight in the plan making process. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that the site is deliverable as it is available, suitable and achievable.

CGV welcomes the opportunity to work collaboratively with the Council and key stakeholders as the review progresses, in order to ensure that the maximum benefits are derived from the site for Cheshire West and Chester Council, the local community and wider area.

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me. We would be grateful if you could confirm safe receipt of these representations.

Yours sincerely,

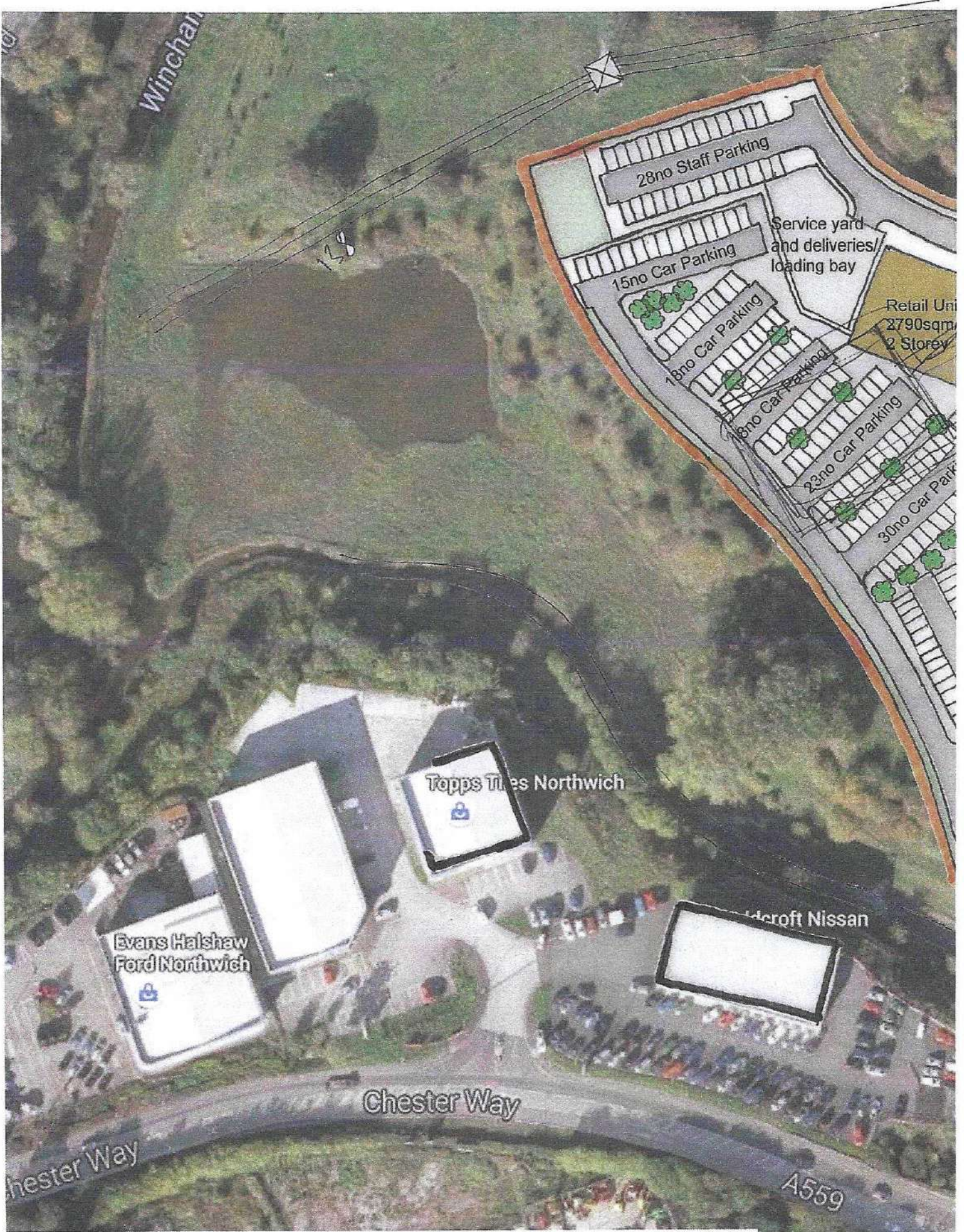


Louisa Fielden
Associate Director
AshtonHale Ltd



Enc.

Site Location Plan
Draft Site Layout Plan
Transport Note
Flood Risk, Drainage and Utilities Review



NORTHWICH SKETCH PROPOSAL



Scale 1:1000 @ A3

0 20m



Cass
associates

94-16-A
FEB 2016
REV B

Haywood & Jackson Fabrications

Argos

Northwich Retail Park

Service yard and deliveries/ loading bay

Retail Unit
3720sqm/40,000sqft
2 Storey

B&Q

Wade br

A559

Manchester

A559

Manchester Rd

Manchester Way

sqft

Cycles

35no Staff Parking

Car Parking

83no Car parking

17no Family/Disabled parking

15no Caf Parking

2no Dis

4no Wait

Drive-Thru

POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT OF LAND TO THE NORTH OF CHESTER WAY, NORTHWICH CWAC – TRANSPORT NOTE – MARCH 2024 (4350)

Introduction

Eddisons has been instructed by Cheshire Garden Village Ltd to advise on the traffic and transport issues relating to a potential retail/employment development on land to the north of the A559 Chester Way in Northwich.

Existing Site

The Site is bounded by Northwich Retail Park to the east, which comprises a number of large-scale retail units and significant hardstanding. To the west of the site is Wade Brook, and beyond this other large-scale commercial units including car dealerships and showrooms. To the south of Chester Way, there is a mix of industrial, retail and other commercial uses. To the north of the Site, there is woodland and beyond this Wincham Brook and the New Warrington Road.

Vehicular access into the site is provided for via a gated access off the A559 Chester Way in the south-east corner of the site. The site is currently undeveloped.

The A559 Chester Way has a carriageway width of circa 7.7 metres in the vicinity of the site, a footway with a width of at least 1.8 metres is located on the along the frontage of the site which links with the pedestrian infrastructure in the vicinity of the site. The A559 Chester Way is subject to a 30mph speed limit.

Proposed Vehicular Access Arrangements

As detailed above, the site is bound to the south by the A559 Chester Way and has around of 30 metres of frontage which abuts the extent of adopted highway. Vehicular access into the site can be provided for off the A559 Chester Way.

The proposed vehicular access into site will incorporate a formal right-turn lane on the A559 Chester Way. This has necessitated the slight widening the A559 Chester Way but does not require the acquisition of third party land to implement, as all additional land is within the existing limits of adopted highway. The running lanes on the A559 Chester Way will be 3 metres wide with a 2 metre wide right turning lane.

The vehicular access junction will be a standard priority-controlled junction which will have a carriageway width of 5.5 metres with 2 metre footways and 6 metre corner radii.

The A559 Chester Road is subject to a 30mph speed limit along the frontage of the site. Based on Table 7.1 in Manual for Streets, visibility splays of 2.4 metres by 43 metres are required in each direction.

The proposed site access arrangements are displayed in **Drawing 4350_F01** and the above demonstrates that safe and efficient vehicular access can be provided, that accords with the relevant highway designs standards.

Summary

The above Transport Note has considered the access options in relation to the land to the north of the A559 Chester Way in Northwich and concludes the following;

- Vehicular access into the site can be provided for to the south off the A559 Chester Way.
- The proposed vehicular accesses will provide safe and convenient access into the site for retail and employment land-uses and accords with the relevant highway design standards.

As such, there are no material highways or transport reasons which would prevent the allocation or delivery of this site for retail/employment development.

DRAWINGS



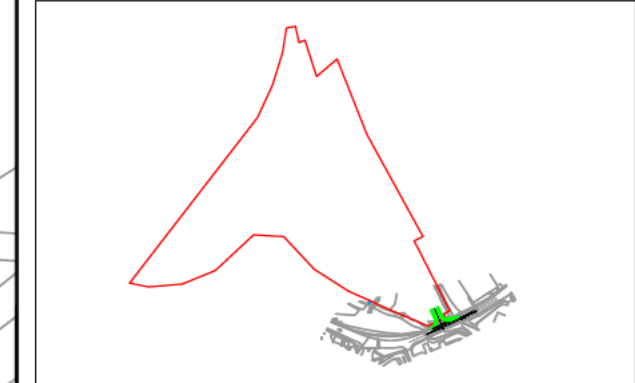
NORTH SOUTH AERIAL VIEW



NOTES
 THIS IS NOT A CONSTRUCTION DRAWING AND IS FOR INDICATIVE PURPOSES ONLY. THE DRAWING WILL BE SUBJECT TO CHANGE FOLLOWING LOCAL AUTHORITY REVIEW AND CONFIRMATION OF PUBLIC HIGHWAY AND THIRD PARTY LAND BOUNDARIES.

- INDICATIVE SITE BOUNDARY
- DENOTES NEW KERBS

LOCAL AUTHORITY: CHESHIRE WEST COUNCIL
 TOTAL AREA OF SITE: 8.4Ha



SITE LAYOUT NTS

REV	DETAILS	DRAWN	CHECKED	DATE

CLIENT:
CHESTER GARDEN VILLAGE LTD

PROJECT:
LAND AT CHESTER WAY, NORTHWICH

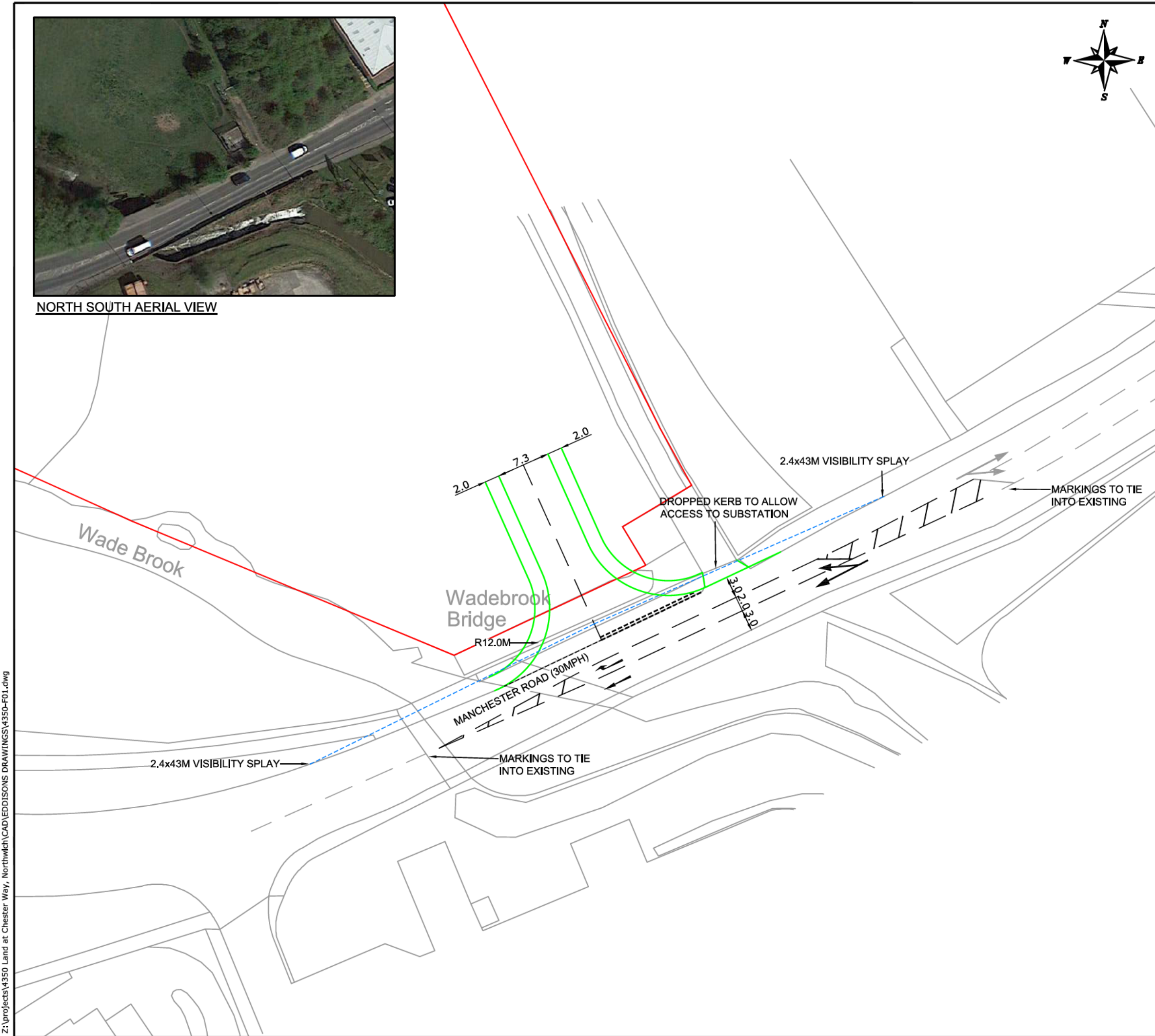
DRAWING TITLE:
PROPOSED SITE ACCESS PLAN

SCALES:
1:500 @ A3

DRAWN: **LB** CHECKED: **TSB** DATE: **MAR 23**

Eddisons
 340 Deansgate
 Manchester
 M3 4LY
 Email: Info@crofts.co.uk
 Tel: 0161 837 7380
 Web: www.eddisons.com/services/transport-planning

DRAWING NUMBER: **4350-F01** REVISION: **-**



Z:\projects\4350 Land at Chester Way, Northwich\CAD\EDDISONS DRAWINGS\4350-F01.dwg

