

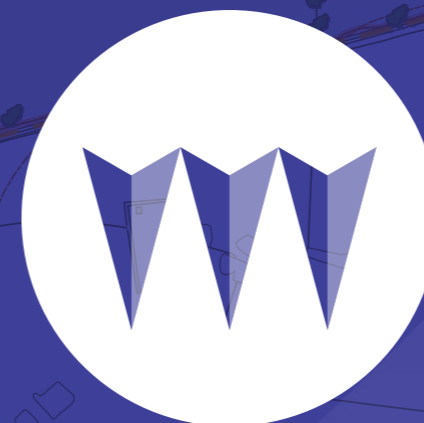
King Street, Northwich.

Vision Document.

March 2024

Document Ref: P24-0464_501A

Expertly Done.



NPL GROUP

King Street, Northwich. Vision Document.

Prepared by Pegasus Group on behalf of NPL Group
Date: March 2024
Document reference: P24-0464_501B
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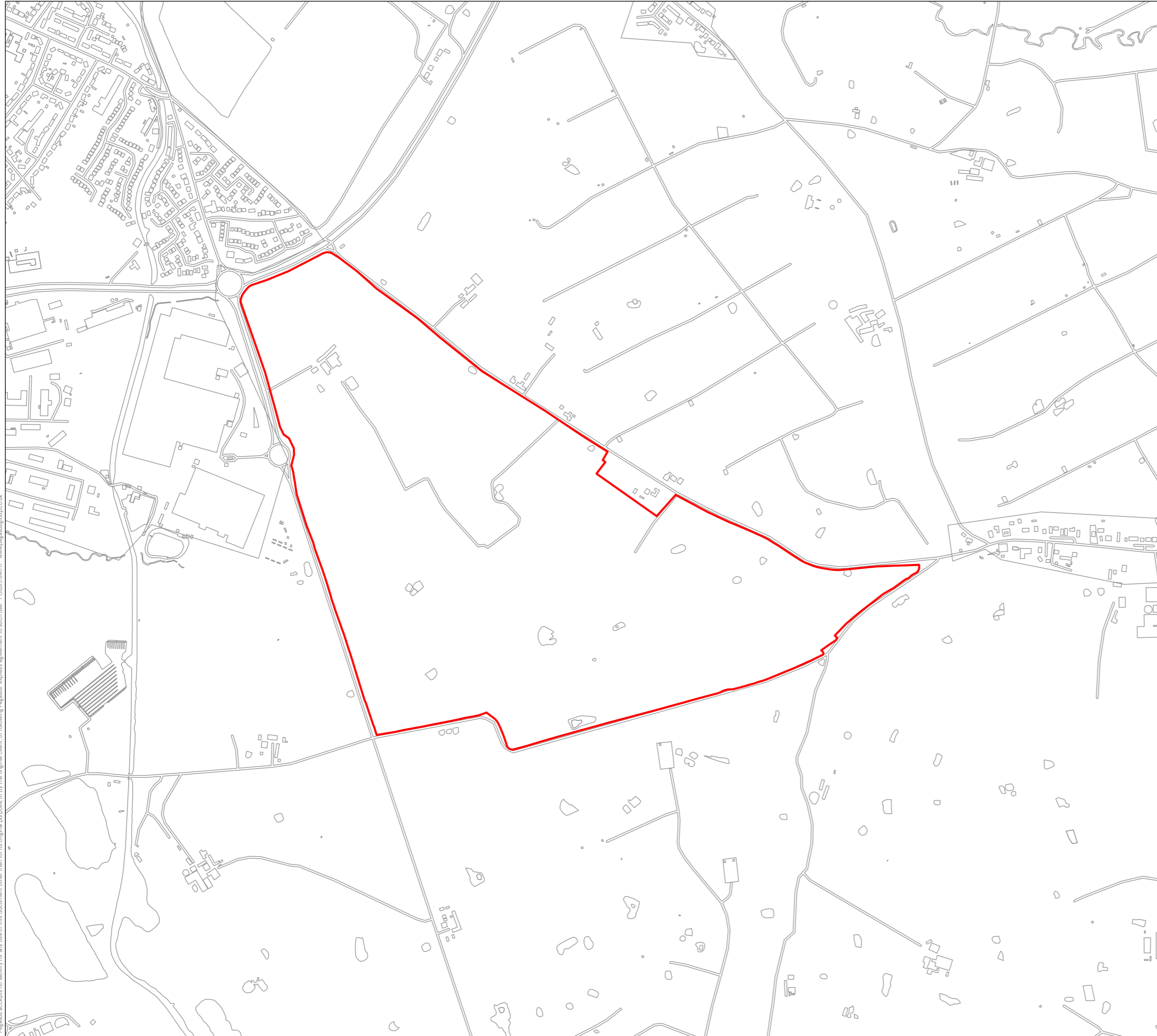
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KEY
 Site Boundary

NOTES:
 REVISIONS:

SITE LOCATION PLAN

KING STREET, NORTHWICH

NPL GROUP (UK) LTD



DATE	SCALE	TEAM	APPROVED
13/03/2024	1:10,000@A3	EH	AG

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DRAWING NUMBER
 P24_0464_EN_09



1.1 Introduction

- 1.1 Pegasus Group have been instructed on behalf of NPL Group, UK's leading group of privately-owned brownfield regeneration, remediation and land development companies. NPL Group are actively promoting sites for development in Northwich, including their land interests at King Street, Rudheath, Northwich.
- 1.2 NPL have had multiple approaches from developers, occupiers and investors about their landholdings in Northwich and this, along with Cheshire West and Chester's Call for Sites, has prompted NPL to confirm that the site is available.
- 1.3 A range of other technical consultants have been appointed to assess the Site's suitability for development, considering a range of environmental, physical and planning policy considerations. These documents also support that the site is deliverable.
- 1.4 This document provides a full assessment of the Site's context in terms of surrounding topography, natural environment, historic environment and local planning policy. It demonstrates that the site is highly accessible and sustainably located. Development of the site will make a significant contribution to the economic prosperity of Northwich, offering the local community employment opportunities and enhance the economic performance of the area.
- 1.5 This Document has been prepared in response to the Borough's initial engagement and work on updating the evidence base to aid early vision and strategy development of the new Local Plan. Some of the initial evidence base work that is available for comment include:
 - Employment Areas Survey
 - Places Background Paper
 - Land Availability Assessment and Call for Sites
- 1.6 The site at King Street can make a significant contribution to the Council's employment requirements, when this is set out in future evidence. The site extends to approximately 102.47 hectares (253.2 acres). Development of the initial proposals have considered a number of key constraints in order to guide the production of a deliverable masterplan. These constraints are summarised later in this report.
- 1.7 An indicative masterplan has been prepared which demonstrates the site could deliver 76.87 Ha of employment land (Use Classes E(g), B2 or B8). The site can provide a range of flexible commercial development and inward investment opportunities that can accommodate large scale employment uses. The site also has the ability to be delivered in a number of phases that could expand beyond the plan period.
- 1.8 The vision is to create a high-quality development that would positively contribute to the Northwich area by providing high quality employment uses to support existing business uses at Gadbrook Park. In short, the site represents a suitable available and deliverable employment development opportunity.



KEY

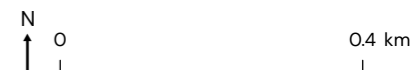
Site Boundary

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SITE LOCATION PLAN

KING STREET, NORTHWICH

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2.1 Site Context

- 2.1 The site is predominantly comprised of fields, sustainably located at the southern end of Northwich. The site comprises a series of agricultural land parcels, with overhead pylons and hedgerows.
- 2.2 In the northern section of the site is adjoined by the A556 and is an agricultural farm and the majority of the northern section was part of HS2 Safeguarded Land (now abandoned), which will be discussed in greater detail below.
- 2.3 To the west of the site is Gadbrook Employment area which contains the Morrisons Distribution Centre. On the western boundary is the A530 beyond which the Gadbrook site, which is part of a separate Call for Sites representation submitted on behalf of NPL Group. The south of the site is bordered by Crowder's Lane and the eastern boundary of the site comprises Penny Lane with open countryside beyond both boundaries.
- 2.4 Northwich is a town and civil Parish in the north east of the Borough. The settlement lies on the Cheshire Plain, at the confluence of the river Weaver and Dane. Northwich has good train links and benefits from strong road connections to the surrounding settlements of Chester, Manchester and Liverpool.

History of the Site – Implementation of Planning Permission.

- 2.5 The principle of development is accepted on the promotion site, as it is the subject of an implemented planning permission for substantial above ground development for:
- 10 underground gas storage caverns to be created using solution mining;
 - A gas processing facility
 - Ancillary infrastructure required to undertake solution mining;
 - 58km dedicated twin pipeline system to facilitate the transportation of leaching water from the Mersey Estuary to the King Street site and the subsequent discharge of brine created by the solution mining process back into the Mersey Estuary;

2.6 The references are:

- Construction of a solution mining compound, ten underground natural gas storage cavities, associated gas processing plant, transmission infrastructure and ancillary development including a control room and gatehouse at High House Farm, King Street, Northwich (references 4/07/2846/FZ5; APP/Z0645/A/08/2093471/NWF Annex 2).
- Construction and operation of twin parallel pipelines, pumping stations and infrastructure for water delivery and brine dispersal on a 58-kilometer route between King Street, Northwich and Bromborough (references 3/P/2008/111/XX/59; 4/08/0181/FZ5; 06/08/00172/CPO; APP/Z0645/A/08/2093465 Annex 1).

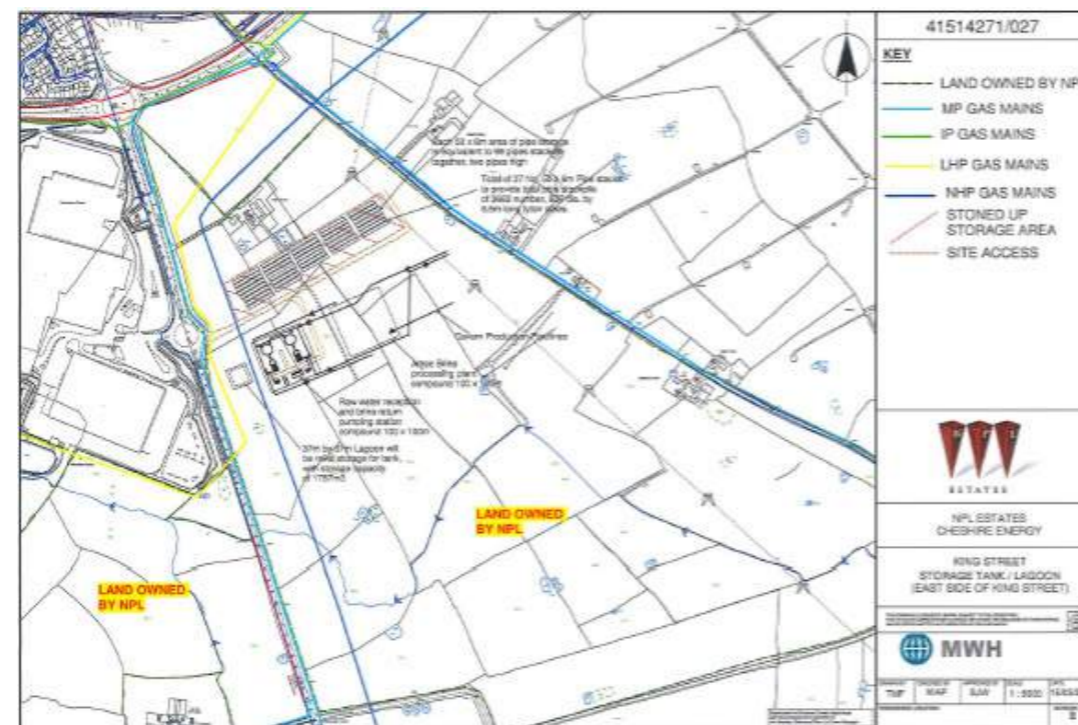
2.7 NPL gained initial planning consent for the scheme in December 2009 and then secured the various authorisations, licences and Hazardous Substances consents which would facilitate the implementation of the Project. In August 2011 Cheshire West and Cheshire Council confirmed that the conditions relating to the planning consent for the Project had been submitted and approved and that the permissions had been duly implemented.

2.8 The plan for this is below and shows the extent of the approved development on the site. This demonstrates that a significant amount of built form has already been approved on the site.

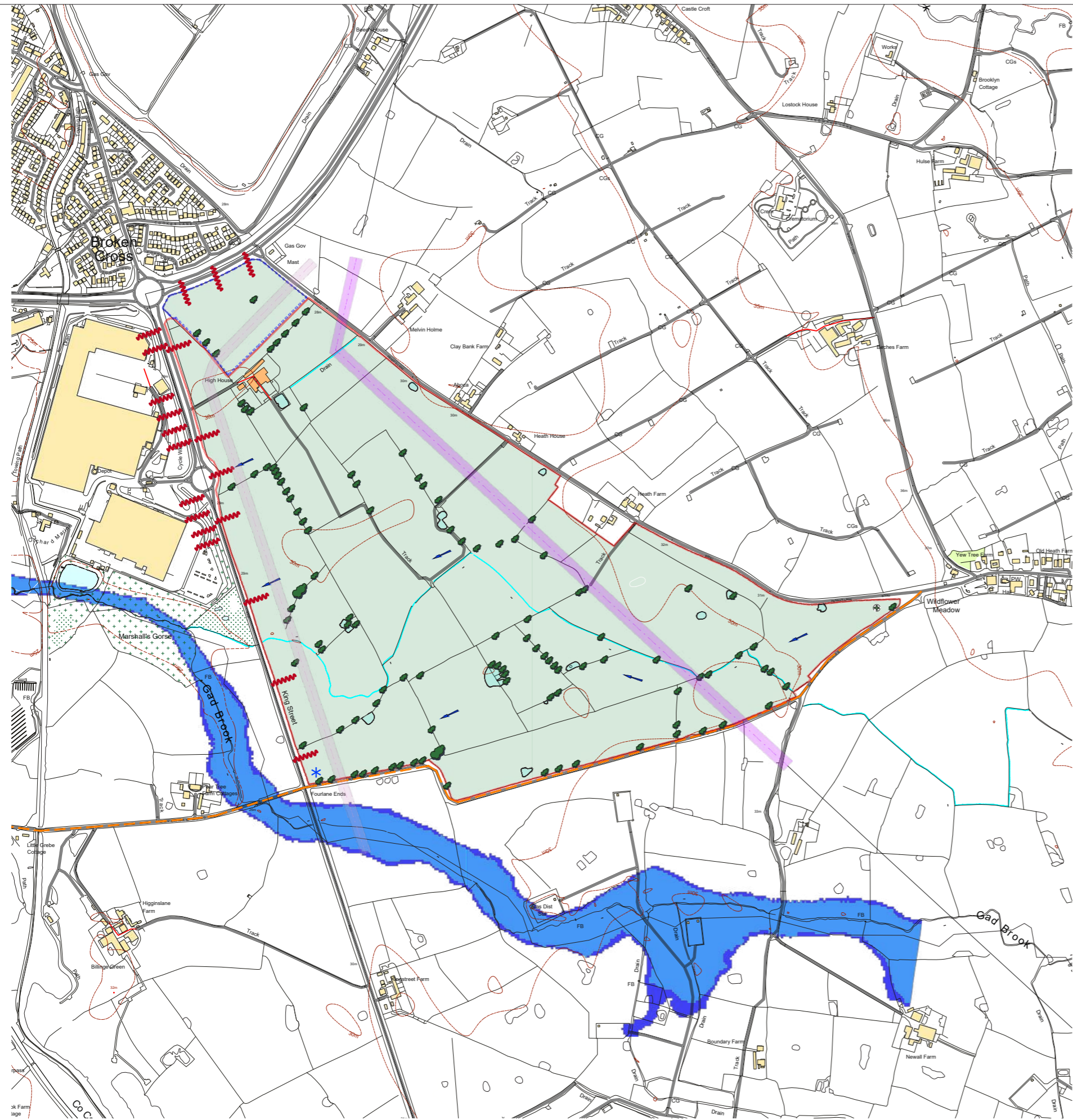
2.9 The Cheshire West and Chester Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (HELAA 2017) identified the site as suitable and available for employment development. Negotiations occurred with the Council to secure allocation of the King Street site for employment uses. There was significant and demonstrable market interest in the land, given the lack of competing sites in the area and the recently opened link road from the M6 – the A556 dual carriageway.

2.10 Despite the land scoring very highly for employment development and having been previously allocated for employment uses, the Council removed the allocation and rejected the site solely due to the impact of the alignment of HS2.












2.11 NPL attended the Local Plan Working Group meeting on the 24 July 2017 to plead the case for the balance of the King Street site that was unaffected by HS2, as employment land prior to the finalisation of Part 2 of the Local Plan. The Council were not swayed as they had not had any correspondence from HS2 to indicate that the two land uses could compatibly co-exist or that HS2 would not object to any planning application brought forward and that the site could be used from a technical perspective. Part 2 of the Local Plan was therefore published without an allocation of the King Street site.



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KEY

-  Site Boundary (23.09 Ha)
-  Additional Parcel Site Boundary, currently outside of ownership, for consideration (4.82 Ha)
-  EXISTING OVERHEAD CABLES AND NOTIONAL EASEMENT AREA (TBC)
-  EXISTING PIPELINE AND NOTIONAL EASEMENT AREA (TBC)
-  EXISTING GROUPS OF TREES (INDICATIVE)
-  EXISTING LARGE AREAS OF BROADLEAF WOODLAND
-  EXISTING LARGE AREAS SCRUB GRASSLAND
-  EXISTING WATER BODIES (PONDS, LAKES, SUDS AREAS)
-  WATER COURSES
-  GENERAL SLOPE DIRECTION DOWN
-  SITE HIGH POINT
-  SITE LOW POINT
-  SIGNIFICANT GRADIENT (> 1/10)
-  EXISTING BUILDINGS ON SITE
-  SPORTS FIELDS (OFF-SITE)
-  POTENTIAL NOISE SOURCE
-  EXISTING BUILDINGS ADJACENT SITE
-  FLOOD ZONE 2
-  FLOOD ZONE 3
-  NATIONAL CYCLE ROUTES
-  NATIONAL CYCLE ROUTES

REV	DATE	DESCRIPTION	REVISED BY	APPROVED BY

NPL Sites, CW&C - Constraints Plan O2 - King Street



3.1 Site Constraints

3.1 The illustrative masterplan has been carefully informed by key technical considerations on site, as discussed below.

Flood Risk

3.2 The vast majority of the site, mainly the southwestern area, is located within Flood Zone 1 (lowest probability of flood risk) and therefore entirely acceptable for development. As shown on the Government Flood Mapping, there is some water bodies located within the site that could be retained within an emerging masterplan as appropriate.

3.3 The Illustrative Masterplan has factored in the watercourse which crosses broadly east-west across the site, and it will be further considered in any drainage strategy when it is developed further for the site.

Ecology

3.4 The site is not subject to any statutory environmental designations, such as SSSIs or Special Conservation areas.

3.5 Initial investigations have identified that there are farmland birds in the wider area, but this is probably not that unexpected given the beyond the south of the site is largely agricultural in nature.

3.6 We are also aware there have been European Protected Species applications and Great Crested Newt Surveys, but these are all a distance off site, the closest being around 700m away.

3.7 Nevertheless as the scheme develops on the site ecological mitigation measures will be incorporated. Given the size of the site in question, any proposal will deliver a net gain in biodiversity on site or in the immediate area within the control of NPL.

Trees

3.8 There are no protected trees present on site (i.e., subject to a Tree Preservation Order). A number of intermittent trees are located along the boundaries of the site and are included within the field boundaries.

Ground Conditions

3.9 There are no known contamination or other geotechnical constraints that would prevent the site coming forward for residential development given the site has only been in use as agricultural land.

3.10 Nevertheless, NPL are aware that further detailed reports on ground conditions will be prepared at a later date, but this will principally confirm what is known and to guide foundation design.

3.11 To conclude, with ecological mitigation and detailed design measures, the site is entirely acceptable for employment development.

Historic Environment

- The site is unconstrained when considering the historic environment and associated assets for the following reasons:
- There are no Grade I, II* or II listed buildings within the site or in close proximity;
- There are no Conservation Areas within the site boundary or immediately adjacent to it;
- There are no locally designated heritage assets on the site or within close proximity;
- There are no Registered Parks & Gardens within the site or within close proximity; and
- There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the site.

Other Constraints

3.12 NPL have provided utilities information for the King Street site as it is known that there is a gas pipe which runs along the western edge of the site and then it turns right just to the north of the existing farmhouse. We are aware that there is a high voltage overhead line, but assume that this can be diverted to accommodate development, possibly to reflect the easement for the gas pipeline.

3.13 NPL are also aware that there are overhead transmission cables running broadly north-south towards the eastern edge of the site.

3.14 There are no other known pipes or cables which impact on this site, but investigations will continue to ensure that this is the case and to ensure that the masterplans, as presented, are viable and deliverable for the quantum of employment land indicatively identified. The identified utilities, their easements and stand-off requirements can easily be accommodated within the emerging masterplan for the site.

3.15 In short, there are no constraints in the area that would preclude the development of this site for employment.

HS2

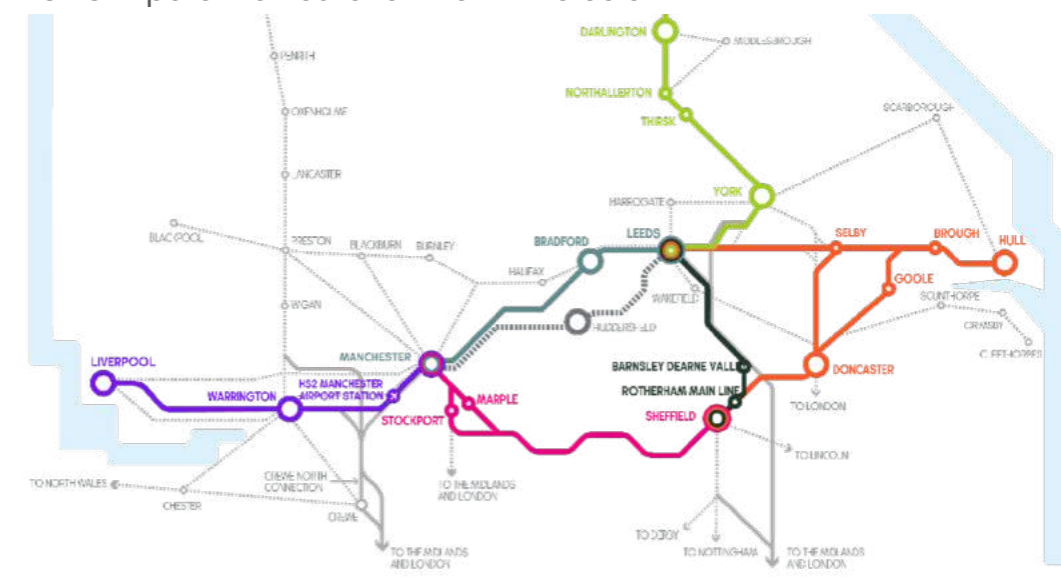
3.16 Part of the site was identified as Safeguarded Land for HS2 rail development.

3.17 The Government has confirmed that it will start taking steps to lift the blighting effect of HS2 in areas where safeguarding is going to be lifted and we expect this to be the case here.

3.18 Most recently, the Government has published 'Network North: Transforming British Transport' on 4 October 2023, which announced that safeguarding of land and property across the majority of Phase 2a had been removed. Safeguarding on the Phase 2b route (where the Gadbrook Park site is located), between Crewe and Manchester Piccadilly, will be amended by summer 2024. The current expectation is that this will allow for any safeguarding needed for Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) to be assessed.

3.19 This demonstrates that the NPR rail route does not extend to include the area of the Phase 2b route affecting the King St site.

3.20 A potential route for the NPR is below:





KEY

Site Boundary

● Viewpoint Location

NOTES:
REVISIONS:

LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT - VIEWPOINT LOCATION PLAN

KING STREET, NORTHWICH

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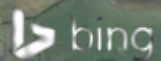
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3.2 Landscape Analysis

- 3.21 The site comprises farmland bound by the A556 dual carriageway and roundabout to the north; the B5082 Penny's Lane to the east; Crowders Lane to the south; and the A530 King Street to the west. To the immediate west of the northern part of the site is a Morrisons Distribution Centre, accessed via a roundabout on the A530 King Street adjacent to the site, and including large scale development largely contained by woodland along its boundaries. West of the Morrisons Distribution Centre there is industrial development at Roberts Bakery accessed off the A556 to the north.
- 3.22 The site and its surroundings are shown on Figure 1. The following section provides an initial overview in landscape and visual terms of the site and its surroundings in relation to the proposed development of the site.

Landscape Character

- 3.23 The site is in the northern part of National Character Area 61: Shropshire, Cheshire & Staffordshire Plain.
- 3.24 At a local level, the site is in landscape character type (LCT) 10: Cheshire Plain East, in the north-western part of landscape character area (LCA) 10b: Stublach Plain, as characterised in the Chester West and Chester Landscape Strategy 2016.
- 3.25 The key characteristics of LCA 10b are listed below:
- "Flat plain-like topography resulting from the uniform characteristics of the underlying Eldersfield Mudstone bedrock;
 - Salt bearing strata underlie the area – the landscape is influenced in part by features associated with the brine/salt extraction and gas storage industries with well-heads, fenced compounds and tracks visible;
 - The surface mantle of glacial till (boulder clay) gives rise to seasonally waterlogged soils that are suited to dairying on short term and permanent grassland, interspersed with some arable fields;
 - A pattern of small and medium sized fields is overlaid onto the flat plain providing unity across the landscape – some fields are Medieval in origin e.g. around Stublach Grange;
 - Fields are bounded by an intact network of low thorn hedgerows with some hedgerow trees that filter views across the area. Ditches are also present along field boundaries;
 - Woodland cover is generally absent, although the occasional covert or copse punctuates the landscape;
 - The area is drained by a small number of brooks and streams;
 - Field ponds, formed when pits were dug to extract marl for improving fields, are a common feature of the plain;;
 - The Trent and Mersey Canal that includes associated structures and artefacts of industrial archaeology;
- The Billinge flashes beside the canal, formed land subsidence due to brine pumping, now support important wetland habitats, including swamp;
 - Recreational use of the landscape is limited to a few public rights of way that follow tracks and field boundaries across the farmland and the canal towpath;
 - Low density of settlement – the settlement pattern is defined by scattered red brick or white washed farmsteads with distinctive red brick dairy barns (with round windows). Two moated medieval sites remain;
 - The road network is typically comprised of narrow, rural unmarked lanes linking farmsteads, although the M6 motorway, A530 and a small number of 'B' roads also pass through the character area;
 - A straight Roman Road that crosses the plain, connecting Middlewich to Northwich. A railway line follows a similar route across the plain;
 - Long range views across the open, flat landscape with electricity pylons prominent on the skyline. Industrial works at Northwich East have a visual influence on the Stublach Plain; and
 - Church spires at Moulton and Davenham are features in views across the plain."



VP1

View from Penny's Lane looking into and across the site.



VP2

View from Penny's Lane looking into and across the site.



VP3

View from Crowder's Lane looking into and across the site.





VP4

View from King Street looking into and across the site.



VP5

View from King Street looking into and across the site.



- 3.26 Under the 'Perceptual/Visual' section, the Landscape Strategy identifies the following of most relevance to the site and its surroundings in LCA 10b:
- "The flat, low lying, large scale, open landscape is itself not visually prominent;
 - The presence of hedgerow oaks which are particularly distinctive and contribute to biodiversity, filter views and stand out against the open skyline;
 - The low density of settlement and absence of roads across much of the plain give it an 'empty' character. In places the landscape even feels 'remote', but the strong field pattern indicates that this landscape has been tamed by man;
 - A generally tranquil, still, rural landscape although the presence of the main road and railway contributes movement and noise locally;
 - Occasional areas of woodland, marl pits and associated emergent vegetation, provide some texture and visual interest;
 - The flat, low lying, open landscape (due to lack of vegetation) provides the opportunity for long ranging and expansive views across the landscape;
 - Open skylines are a feature of the area – punctuated by the occasional hedgerow tree, farmstead, or pylon;
 - The open character means there is little opportunity for screening any large scale elements or for mitigating visual impact without the mitigation measures in themselves being highly visible – making it a visually sensitive landscape. However, the low density of settlement and few recreational opportunities means there are relatively few sensitive visual receptors in the area;
 - Large scale industrial buildings in adjacent areas (e.g. the distribution warehouses at Gadbrook Park, Rudheath and the Brunner Mond brine works at Northwich East) are visible on the skyline; and
 - There are views from the western edge of the plain over the Dane Valley with the spire of Moulton Church on the skyline."

3.27 The overall management strategy for LCA 10b "should be to conserve the pastoral character and local built vernacular of the landscape and enhance the condition of the hedgerow and tree network."

3.28 Built Development Guidelines identified for LCA 10b of most relevance refer to:

- "...7. Protect the character of Kings Street Roman Road, including the avenue of trees along its length.
- 8. Consider opportunities to screen development on the urban edge of Northwich using planting of broadleaved species...
- 10. Preserve the industrial aesthetic of the Trent and Mersey Canal and its setting, including associated structures and artefacts of industrial archaeology. Consider views from the canal in planning new built development...."

3.29 The site is included in the south-eastern part of the Mersey Forest Plan. The interactive Mersey Forest Plan map available online identifies the site in the 'Eastern Lowland Plain and nearby areas' where woodland cover in 2012 was recorded as being 3%. The indicative woodland cover target for this area is identified as being 10%. The Mersey Forest Plan identifies that the policy in this area (Policy C20) is to "Create occasional woodlands, buffering ancient semi-natural woodland within and just over the boundary. Maintain and plant hedgerow trees. Help to screen views of large-scale industry, but do not obstruct long distance views of the Sandstone Ridge and Peak District."

Character Of The Site

- 3.30 The site comprises agricultural fields of varying shapes and sizes defined by hedgerow and trees which generally are well-maintained with some appearing 'gappy' in places. There is hedgerow with hedgerow trees along the site's boundaries bound by adjacent roads. Traffic movement along these roads, in particular on the A556 to the north and the A530 King Street to the west, is audible and road users overlook the site to varying extents. Penny's Lane to the east and Crowder's Lane to the south have more rural character, compared to the dual carriageway to the north and the straight A road to the west which provides access to the Morrisons distribution centre via an existing roundabout adjacent to the western site boundary. There are large warehouses at the Morrisons distribution centre largely contained by mature hedgerow, trees, and woodland along its boundaries. There also is industrial development at Roberts Bakery west of the Morrisons site accessed off the A556 dual carriageway to the north, which also runs along the site's northern boundary and includes lighting columns and road signage. The northern section of the A530 King Street alongside the site's western boundary also includes lighting columns and road signage and includes foot and cycle ways to both sides of this section of the road.
- 3.31 The site includes a watercourse within its southern extent and several field ponds with associated vegetation, which are typical of the surrounding landscape.
- 3.32 An overhead line supported by steel lattice pylons runs roughly northwest southeast through the eastern extent of the site and crosses the site in the southeast and the northeast.

Designations

3.33 The site is not included in a local or national landscape designation and there are no other designations of landscape importance present on the site.

Visual Amenity

3.34 Figure 1 shows the location of key views taken during a site visit in February 2024.

3.35 There are no public rights of way (PRoW) running through the site or along its boundaries.

3.36 The residential property in the northern part of the site has views of the site and there are properties on Penny's Lane to the east, including Ashbrook Farm adjoining the eastern site boundary. Residents to the east have views towards and across the site beyond roadside hedgerow and trees along the site's eastern boundary and within the site. Residents north of the site have filtered and screened view towards the site beyond intervening mature vegetation and the A556.

3.37 Road users travelling along the site's boundaries (including cyclists on National Cycle Network Route 573 along Davenham Road to the south) have views towards the site limited by mature boundary hedgerow and trees or views extending over hedgerow and/or through gaps in boundary hedgerow including at the south-western corner of the site.

Constraints And Opportunities

3.38 The following recommendations inform the landscape framework plan shown in Figure 2 and have been informed by a review of relevant policies of the Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan, the Cheshire West and Chester Landscape Strategy and assessment work undertaken on site:

Opportunities

- Boundary hedgerow and trees provide some existing visual containment of the site.
- Potential for native landscape buffers to enhance and reinforce existing boundary vegetation along the site's boundaries, to allow mitigation of potential views, to minimise the influence of potential future development on the wider countryside in the southern context of the site, and to contribute to the relevant Mersey Forest Plan woodland target.
- Existing field boundary vegetation provides a starting point for a landscape framework. Retain field boundary hedgerow and trees, field ponds and associated vegetation and integrate into the landscape framework for future potential development as far as possible, to provide landscape and ecology benefits.
- Opportunity to access the site off the existing roundabout adjoining the site's western boundary opposite the existing Morrisons distribution centre.

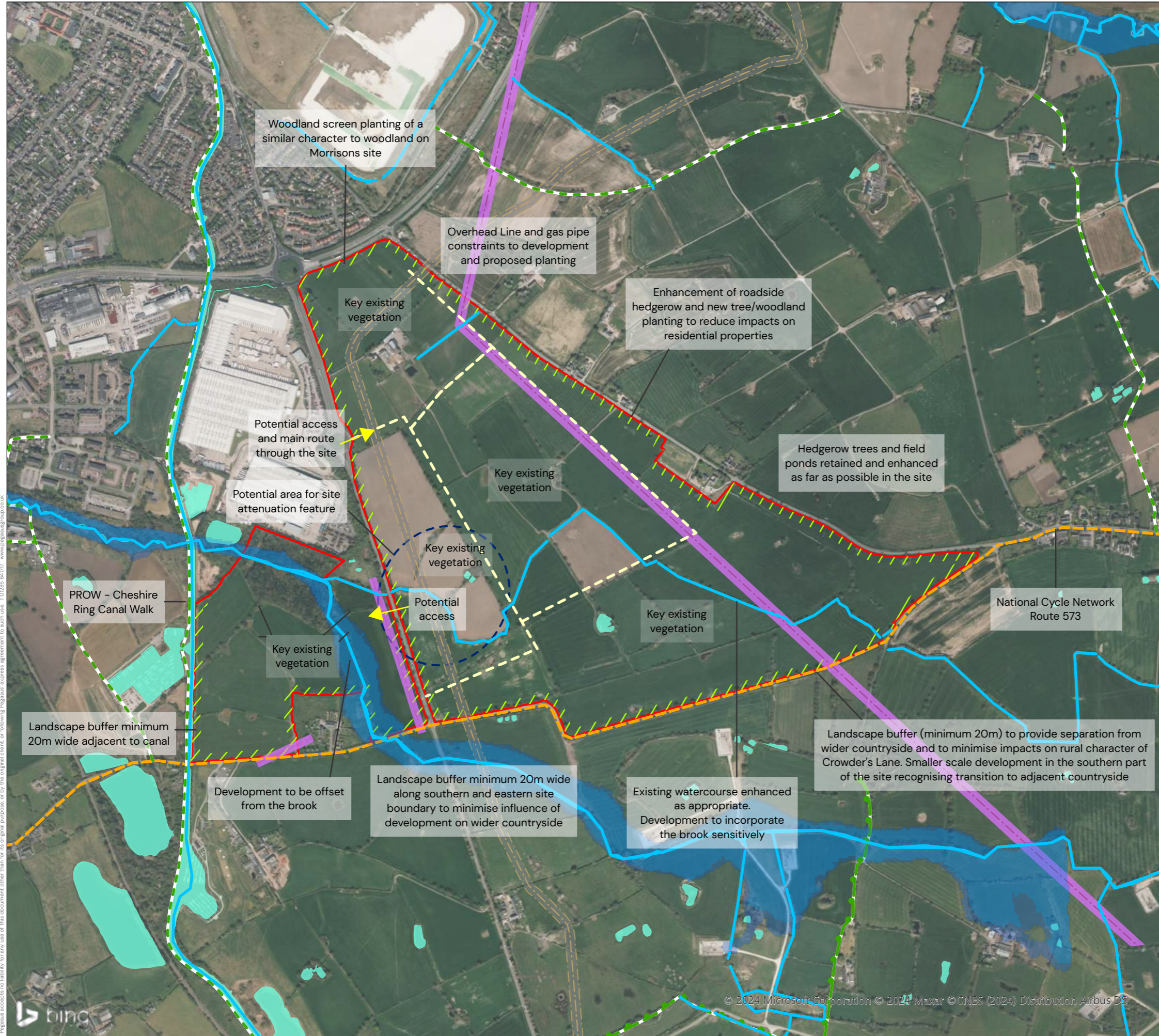
Constraints

- Visual impact on residential properties with views of the site.
- Watercourse through the southern part of the site should be retained on its existing alignment, and the watercourse and associated vegetation enhanced where appropriate. Potential future development should respond sensitively to this water feature and associated vegetation cover.
- Overhead line supported on lattice pylons running parallel to the eastern boundary of the site (in the site) and a gas pipeline running through the western and northern part of the site, are a potential constraint to any new planting.

Mitigation Recommendations

3.39 The watercourse running through the southern part of the site, and notable mature hedgerow and trees and field ponds and associated vegetation, (subject to detailed surveys), should be retained and incorporated into the landscape framework for the site as far as possible and enhanced as appropriate.

3.40 Landscape buffers, minimum 20m wide, including existing boundary hedgerow and trees and new infill hedgerow and trees and tree planting along the boundaries of the site to filter and screen views towards the site, and potential future development, experienced by road users and residential properties with views beyond intervening hedgerow and trees. Landscape buffers would assist in minimising the influence of potential future development on the wider countryside.



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LANDSCAPE FRAMEWORK PLAN

KING STREET, NORTHWICH

NPL GROUP (UK) LTD



DATE	SCALE	TEAM	APPROVED
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3.3 Highways

- 3.41 Highways advice has been provided by SLR to support this masterplan.
- 3.42 The transport assessment provides preliminary consideration in relation to the site's access feasibility and potential vehicle access strategy. The access strategy considers the neighbouring Gadbrook proposed development site that could come forward on the west side of the A530. This could be delivered in principle via two separate three- arm roundabouts or signalised junctions to the south of the Morrisons roundabout as the spacing to the A530 / Crowder's Lane / Davenham Road junction is around 700m.
- 3.43 A shared four-arm roundabout or signalised junction to the south of the Morrisons roundabout is also potentially feasible as both sites share frontage on the A530 for approximately 350m. A new vehicular access point(s) would need to be situated at least 160m from existing junctions on the A530 in line with the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) Stopping Sight Distance for the 50mph road speed.
- 3.44 A new access junction(s) would consist of high- quality facilities for active travel modes including controlled crossing points. There is also the potential opportunity to consider providing access into the site at the A530 / Morrisons Distribution Centre three-arm roundabout by introducing a fourth arm at this junction. A secondary point of access could be proposed on Penny's Lane and could be a simple priority junction.
- 3.45 SLR have undertaken an analysis of traffic generation for B8 land use based on around 3.9msqft of floor space. The trip forecasts suggest that a B8 development of the scale proposed could generate in the order of 653 two-way vehicle trips in the weekday AM peak hour and 613 trips in the PM peak hour. A trip distribution exercise has been undertaken based on the expected routes B8 trips would take to and from the site.
- 3.46 The vast majority of traffic is expected to travel to and from the north of the site where the A556 and M6 Junction 19 are situated. As such, it is estimated 80% of trips will travel to and from the north with 20% travelling to and from the south. Of the 80% travelling to and from the north, approximately 50% of traffic is expected to travel to and from Junction 19 of the M6 via the A556, with 20% travelling to and from the Cheshire West region via the A556. The remaining 10% of traffic is anticipated to travel to and from the north of the A556 / A530 roundabout.
- 3.47 The study also identified potential future improvements at the A556 / A559 and A556 / A533 junctions to the north and west of the site respectively, and traffic from the development would use these junctions.
- 3.48 The aforementioned junctions on the surrounding highway network would be subject to detailed capacity assessments and material development traffic impacts would be appropriately mitigated in line with the Northwich Transport Study. Other off-site junctions may need to be considered for this development site, and the wider study area for the traffic impact could be agreed with the Local Highway Authority.
- 3.49 The preliminary transport appraisal demonstrates that the site could be served by sustainable modes of transport. There are good options for providing vehicular access and the traffic impacts of the proposed development could be appropriately mitigated in line with the Northwich Transport Study. In summary, no significant transport constraints are identified at this stage to suggest that the proposed development could not be allocated for employment development in the CWaCC Local Plan.

3.4 Planning Policy Framework

National Planning Policy Framework

- 3.50 National Planning Policy is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This revised document was adopted in December 2023 and sets out government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. This document is crucial to the production of a sound Local Plan.
- 3.51 This states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, including the provision of homes, commercial development, and supporting infrastructure in a sustainable manner.
- 3.52 Paragraph 15 states that the planning system should be genuinely plan-led. Succinct and up-to-date plans should provide a positive vision for the future of each area; a framework for meeting housing needs and addressing other economic, social and environmental priorities; and a platform for local people to shape their surroundings.
- 3.53 Section 6 of the NPPF is also critical for the consideration of this site in so far as:
- 3.54 Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt.... The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future.
- 3.55 The site is available to support inward investment to match the expected future economic and industrial strategies and to meet anticipated needs over the plan period. Given the size of the site, it can also be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated at the outset of the plan and to enable a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances.
- 3.56 It can also address the specific locational requirements of different sectors. This includes making provision for clusters or networks of knowledge and data-driven, creative or high technology industries, and for storage and distribution operations at a variety of scales and in suitably accessible locations.

Adopted Development Plan

- 3.57 The current adopted Development Plan for Cheshire West and Chester comprises the Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies and Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies. Following the adoption of the Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies on 29th January 2015, and the Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies on 18th July 2019, all policies from the former district and county Local Plans have been deleted and replaced either by a new policy within the Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan (Parts One and Two), or by the NPPF. Appendix B of the Local Plan (Part Two) provides full details.

Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies

- 3.58 The development Plan for the area comprises the adopted Local Plan (Part One) for CW&C which was adopted in January 2015. This document identifies the Strategic Policies and represents the most recent adopted policy.
- 3.59 Policy STRAT2 of the plan outlines that the Local Plan aims to deliver at least 22,000 new houses and 365ha of employment land between 2010 and 2030. This also outlines the settlement hierarchy for the Borough and states that the majority of new development will be within or on the edge of the City of Chester and the towns of Ellesmere Port, Northwich and Winsford to maximise the use of the existing infrastructure and resources and to allow homes, jobs and other facilities to be located close to each other and accessible by public transport.
- 3.60 Policy STRAT5 supports STRAT2 and outlines the importance of Northwich in relation to the rest of the Borough stating that it is a key focus for development. Provision will be made in Northwich for at least 4,300 new dwellings and 30ha of additional land for business and industrial development.
- 3.61 STRAT 5 establishes firm parameters for Part Two of the Local Plan in relation to business and industrial developments. This states Gadbrook Park will be retained and protected for continued employment purposes. Any expansion of the employment park will be assessed through the Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies Plan.

Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies

- 3.62 The Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies document was adopted on 18 July 2019. It provides further detailed policies and land allocations which support the strategic objectives and policies set out in the Local Plan (Part One), as part of the Council's aim to produce a comprehensive planning framework to achieve sustainable development in the borough.
- 3.63 Policy N4 relates to Employment Land Provision and identifies the following 8 sites to meet the strategic development requirement for new employment developments. This includes Gadbrook Park (3 hectares, use classes B1, B2, B8) in line with Local Plan (Part Two) policy N5.
- 3.64 Policy N5 states that within the Gadbrook Park area, as identified on the policies map, development proposals must be compatible with established employment uses, the character of the surrounding area and contribute towards achieving a more sustainable pattern of development for users of the business park.
- 3.65 The next section of this Representation seeks to fully investigate the availability, deliverability, viability as well as appropriateness of the site.

4.1 Evidence for King Street

4.1 Northwich is currently identified as a sustainable growth centre for the Cheshire West and Chester Borough. Within the existing Local Plan (Part 1) it states that Northwich will provide a key focus for development in the east of the borough. Policy STRAT 5 required the provision of 30ha of additional land for business and industry for Northwich.

4.2 The Town itself has employment facilities including the adjacent Gadbrook Business Park. STRAT 5 states that Gadbrook Park will be retained and protected for continued employment purposes. It would be expected that the status of Gadbrook Park is likely to be retained and enhanced in any future versions of the Local Plan.

4.3 Indeed, within the Draft Employment Areas Survey 2023 it states:

There are 8 employment areas assessed within Northwich, 7 of these are 0–20ha in size. There is a lack of employment areas within the 20–40ha and >60ha size brackets in Northwich. However, there is an undeveloped employment land allocation to the south west of Gadbrook Park (not included within this study). This is approximately 30ha and would therefore fill this gap in provision. Gadbrook Park is 56ha in size and a strategic location on the edge of Northwich. This scores ‘good’ on the prominence and environmental setting objective.

4.4 It does go on and set out the issues with Gadbrook, noting that;

“...there is currently a relatively high proportion of vacant premises so has scored average on the ‘market attractiveness’ objective. Purpose built office parks are most likely to have been impacted by the covid pandemic, and increase in people working from home. When the business park was fully occupied, signage indicates on street parking was a concern for some businesses”.

4.5 Within the assessments employment hierarchy Gadbrook Park is considered a Flagship Site/Strategic Location.

4.6 This supports the suitability of allocating additional land at Gadbrook Park to provide for future land requirements and this site can address one of the key requirements within the 20–40ha range for larger scale employment uses i.e. not more offices.

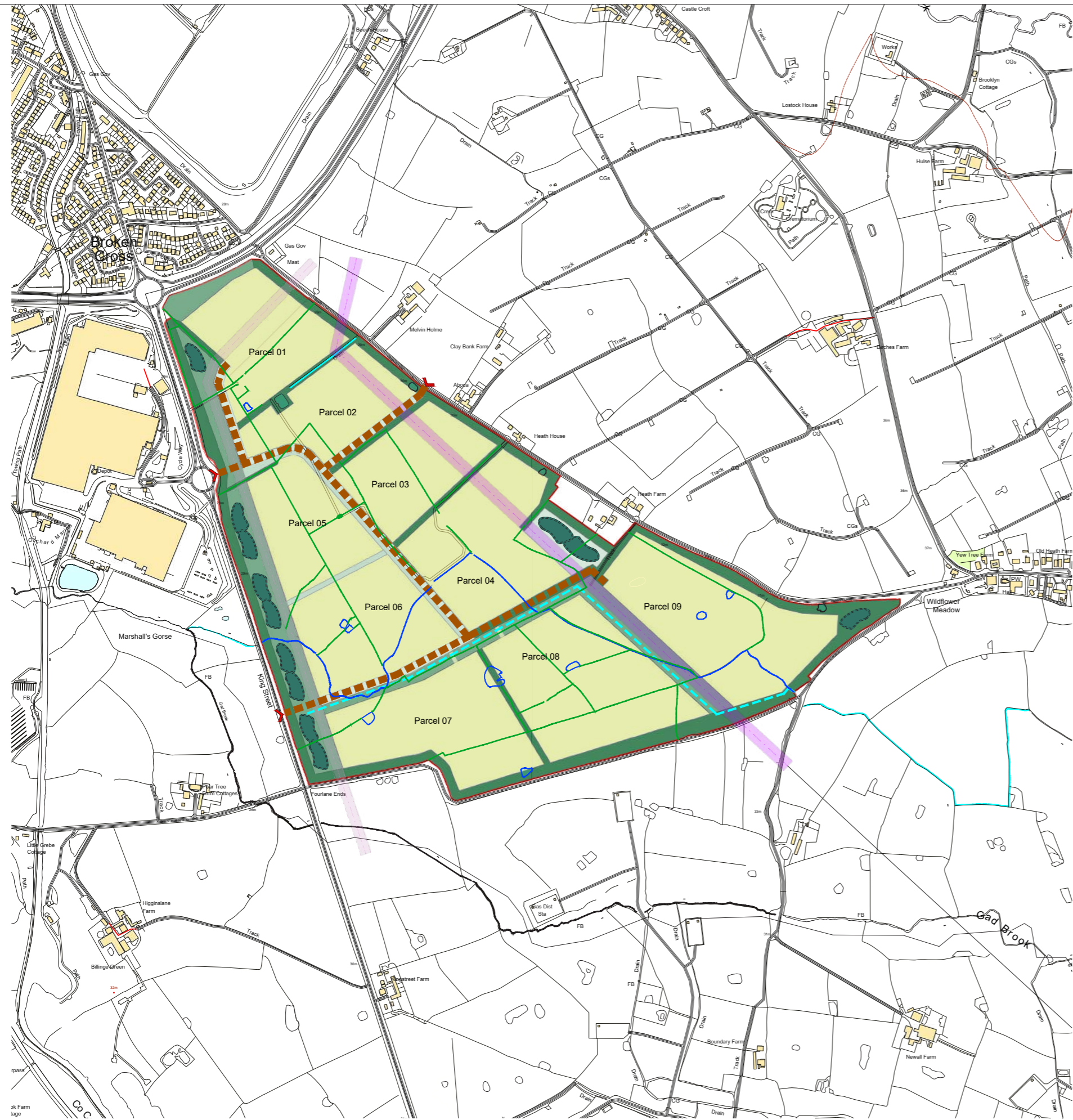
Market Commentary

Demand

- 4.7 Evaluating the site at Gadbrook/King Street against key criteria that determine attractiveness and suitability to the market it is clearly found that the land exhibits all of the characteristics of a successful employment site.
- 4.8 Access to consumer markets.
- The site’s situation, 3 miles from the M6, means the major conurbations of Manchester, Warrington and Crewe are all within a 30 minute drive time.
 - Urban centres of Liverpool, Chester, Ellesmere Port, Stoke, Stafford, Blackpool and Burnley are within 60 minute drive time.
 - Key locations of Birmingham (1 hour 10 min), Leeds (1 hour 10 min) and London (3 hours) are comfortably within a 4.5 hour drive time.
 - The key transport interchanges of M62 at Warrington and the A556 / M56 provide alternative accesses to the critical transpennine routes.
- 4.9 Connectivity to production markets and suppliers, including access to seaports and airports. The site is well connected to:
- Manchester Airport (17 mins)
 - Liverpool John Lennon Airport (33 mins).
 - Port of Liverpool is also within a 40 minute journey time.
 - The emerging multi-modal (ship canal, rail and road) Port Salford scheme at Barton.
 - The seaports of Hull (2 hours), Felixstowe (3 hours 55 min), Folkestone (4 hours) and all within the key 4.5 hour journey time.

- 4.10 The site occupies a key strategic location within the M6 Corridor. Other settlements (Crewe, Winsford, Middlewich and Warrington) on the M6 Corridor provide modern and updated employment sites, that are capable of accommodating larger footprint buildings for regional/national headquarters, offices and smaller premises. Northwich does not currently provide land for such opportunities.
- 4.11 The availability of the right type of labour.
- Northwich and the wider Cheshire West area provides an abundant labour pool of AB (Higher and intermediate managerial, administrative, and professional), C1 (Supervisory, clerical, and junior managerial, administrative and professional), C2 (Skilled manual) & D (Semi-skilled and unskilled manual) workers for employers on the sites.
 - Northwich clearly exhibits credentials that make the promotion sites attractive locations for inward investment.
 - House prices are more affordable within the proximity of the sites.
 - Local schools are well regarded.
 - There is ample local amenity and access to open countryside which means that the town and its environs offer a compelling case for businesses (and their employees) to locate there.
 - The relative cost of labour.
 - Northwich and the surrounding area benefit from a diverse labour pool with available skilled and lower skilled employees at a variety of price points according to the requirements of individual occupiers.
- 4.12 Many warehousing requirements emerge as a result of contract placements and/or in response to unforeseen issues / opportunities generated by the wider supply / production chain. As such, strong (and on occasion instant) speed to market / delivery credentials are considered a prerequisite by many occupiers, with time pressures often overriding locational preferences.
- 4.13 The location close to the M6 and the major North West conurbations of Manchester and Liverpool place the site at a distinct and significant advantage over competing sites such as those in Middlewich and Crewe. There is a lack of availability of suitable sites at Omega in Warrington. The site is therefore well placed to capitalise on latent and unsatisfied market demand along the key M6 corridor.
- 4.14 Older and lower grade commercial accommodation will become increasingly prone to physical, economic and sustainable obsolescence. Such premises are typically inefficient in terms of energy consumption, operating practices and building efficiency, and cannot viably be brought up to standard.
- 4.15 There is therefore significant and increasing demand for modern, state-of-the-art, warehousing, office and manufacturing facilities to support growing turnover, quick turnaround and the high individualisation of orders. This trend is likely to be sustained and will remain a significant driver of the UK industrial/commercial sector. The majority of this demand is likely to be satisfied through new design and build developments.
- 4.16 The site is unencumbered by physical or environmental restrictions and any infrastructure investment can be easily sustained by development at this location. Gadbrook/King Street affords the opportunity to offer a range of design and build solutions as well as freehold or leasehold tenure. The flexibility the site provides will be crucial in responding to a wide range commercial market requirement.

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- KEY**
- Site Boundary (102.47 Ha)
 - Gross Developable Area - 76.87 Ha (Parcels + Infrastructure)
 - POTENTIAL SITE ACCESS
 - POTENTIAL NEW ACCESS/LINK ROAD
 - POTENTIAL AREAS OF DEVELOPMENT
 - RESTRICTED LAND USE DUE TO FLOOD ZONES
 - LANDSCAPE BUFFERS INCORPORATING EXISTING VEGETATION
 - PROPOSED AREAS OF OPEN SPACE / SITE LANDSCAPING
 - RETAINED AREAS OF WOODLAND
 - POTENTIAL NEW ON-SITE SUDS - PONDS
 - EXISTING WATER COURSES TO BE RETAINED
 - EXISTING WATER COURSE AND POND FEATURES SUBJECT TO DETAILED SURVEYS, TO BE CONSIDERED FURTHER
 - NEW SUDS FEATURES WITHIN OPEN SPACE LEADING TO SUDS POND
 - EXISTING LANDSCAPE FEATURES SUBJECT TO DETAILED SURVEYS, TO BE CONSIDERED FURTHER

REV	DATE	DESCRIPTION	REVISED BY	APPROVED BY
E	14/03/24	Minor amendments in line with client comments	RW	AG/PR
D	13/03/24	Amendments to layout/parcel configurations and key notes	RW	AG/PR
C	12/03/24	Amendments to layout/parcel configurations	RW	AG
B	07/03/24	Layout reconfigured around existing landscape features	RW	AG
A	06/03/24	Parcel 1 split, Parcel 09 and 10 created	RW	AG

NPL Sites, CW&C - Concept Masterplan 02 - King Street



5.1 Masterplan

5.1 The illustrative design proposals have been informed by the local context of the site, its surroundings and constraints and opportunities, with particular consideration given to the landscape and visual appraisal set out in section 3, creating a landscape-led masterplan.

Framework

5.2 The landscape and visual analysis has provided a framework for the masterplan, that will mitigate any potential landscape and visual issues associated with the development through the following features:

- Retaining the majority of existing planting.
- New areas of planting on parts of the site, which could benefit from containment, or help to integrate the site with its surroundings
- Create attractive open spaces with pedestrian and cycle routes.
- Retain existing rights of way, with proposed realignment where necessary.
- Additional pedestrian routes throughout the open space network ensuring connectivity through the site.
- Water attenuation areas in the lower areas of the site which can be integrated with open space provision.

Masterplan

5.3 The key drivers behind the design are:

- Landscape and Green Infrastructure – Responding to the Landscape Framework set out above and creating new opportunities for sustainable drainage and landscape enhancement, in line with the recommendations set out in section 3.
- Distinctiveness – Creating a new settlement edge to Northwich with respect to the existing urban form and surrounding environment.
- Connectivity – There are multiple vehicular access options along the A530 ensuring that logical and safe access points can be created to facilitate the site. Pedestrian and cycle connections will be carefully included within the built form to ensure viable alternative and sustainable transport options.
- Utilities and Services – Working with the existing utilities and services that cross the site.

5.4 As such, the development could provide a minimum of 76.87 Ha of high quality new employment land that is sensitive to the local landscape context, creating a new rural to urban transition along the south eastern edge of Northwich.

5.5 The development will have a clearly legible hierarchy of streets providing connectivity and access to local facilities, with clear access into the site and good pedestrian linkages to the surrounding area.

5.6 The layout and urban form of the scheme will be such that it maximises the potential of the site without compromising the landscape framework set out above.

Economic Benefits

Land at King Street, Northwich

Construction of B2 (manufacturing) and B8 (warehousing) floorspace

5.2 Economic Benefits

5.7 The scale of development available at Gadbrook/King Street is likely to attract international, national or regional occupiers and thus deliver significant inward investment into the Northwich area.

5.8 The level of investment has been set out in detail in the economics infographic in Appendix 1, but in summary it could include:

Construction Benefits

£225million

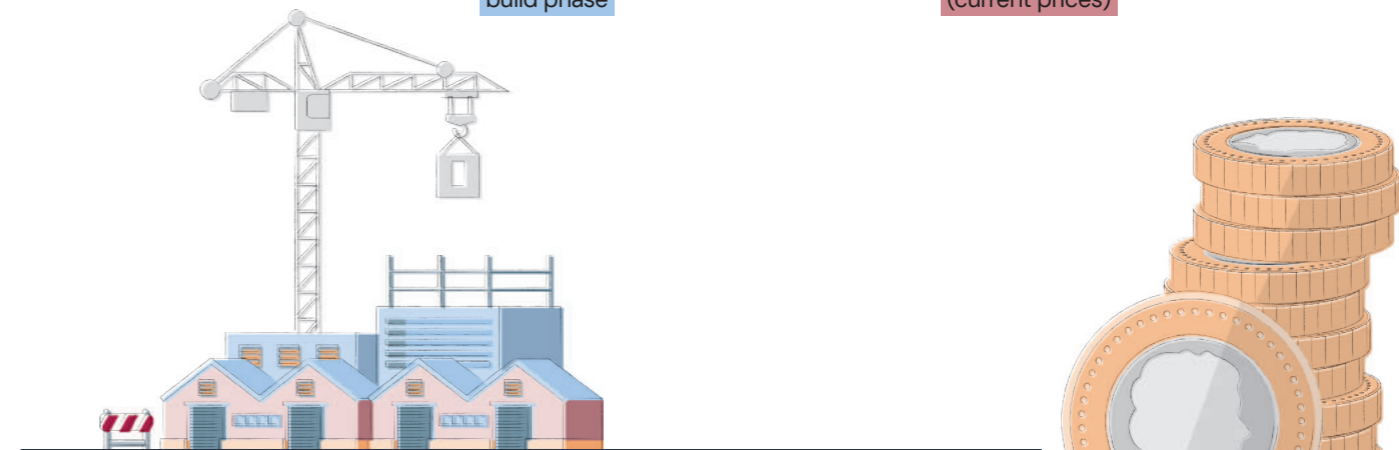
Estimated construction investment over three-year build programme

1,269

Direct construction roles and indirect/induced jobs supported per annum during build phase

£216million GVA

Economic output supported by activities at the site over three-year build programme (current prices)



Operational Benefits

Up to £145million

Annual salaries paid to on-site staff

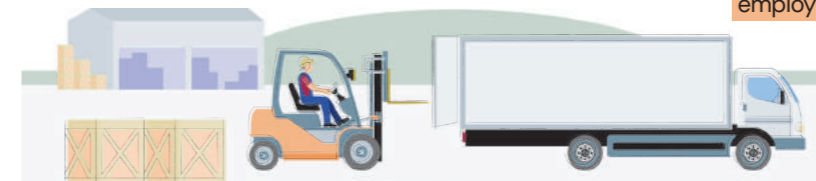
Up to £253million

Economic output generated per annum by the proposed development once it is built and fully operational



Up to 4,248

Gross full-time equivalent jobs supported on-site by the employment floorspace



Jobs at a variety of skill levels supported by the employment floorspace

60.2%

Requiring A Levels, undergraduate or postgraduate qualifications

39.8%

Requiring GCSEs, other qualifications or no qualifications



£4.3million

Estimated business rates paid per annum once fully built and operational



Construction Phase Benefits

- Temporary employment: Over the expected three-year build timeframe, an estimated 1,269 temporary jobs could be supported per annum. This relates to on-site jobs and employment supported in the wider economy via supply chain effects.
- Contribution to economic output: The three-year build phase could generate around £216million (current prices) in gross value added, which is a common proxy for economic output.

Operational Phase Benefits

- Permanent employment: Once built and fully occupied, 4,248 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs are estimated to be supported on-site.
- Contribution to economic output: The on-site employment supported is estimated to generate £253million of GVA per annum.
- Wages to on-site employees: Total wages paid to on-site employees are estimated to be £145million per annum.
- Business rates revenue: Annual business rates revenue generated by the scheme is estimated to be £4.3million.

1 Construction cost has been calculated using BCIS Online Tool and are exclusive of external works, contingencies, supporting infrastructure, fees, VAT, finance charges etc.
 2 GVA, or gross value added, is the measure of the value of goods and services produced in an area, sector or industry.

6.1 SUMMARY

- 6.1 This Document has been prepared by NPL and their Consultant Team in response to the Borough's initial engagement and work on updating the evidence base to aid early vision and strategy development of the new Local Plan. Some of the initial evidence base work that is available for comment include:
- Employment Areas Survey
 - Places Background Paper
 - Land Availability Assessment and Call for Sites
- 6.2 The land at King Street is suitable for industrial and commercial development. there are no environmental, physical and overall planning constraints that would prevent the delivery of the site in the short term. This analysis also shows that the site is commercially deliverable.
- 6.3 This document provides an executive summary of the Site's context in terms of surrounding topography, natural environment, historic environment and local planning policy. It goes onto demonstrate that the site is highly accessible and sustainably located. The site is in a single ownership and now that constraints are know it is eminently deliverable and can support the employment uses at Gadbrook Park and Northwich and deliver a significant scale employment opportunity.
- 6.4 The nearby Gadbrook Park is considered a Flagship Site/ Strategic Location and this site can support this. The overall market commentary clearly shows that the site is an excellent location for additional employment uses given its access to markets, access to labour. Most importantly Cheshire West and Chester need to be aware that the market for these types of employment sites can require quick and easy opportunities to offer a range of design and build solutions and the flexibility of the site (and indeed Gadbrook to the west) will be crucial in responding to a wide range commercial market requirements.
- 6.5 Furthermore, this site was considered when the Previous Part 2 Plan was being prepared. The Land Allocations Background Paper (2017) included land to the south-east Gadbrook Park/west of King Street (WIR/0013) and this was identified as the preferable site to meet the additional employment land requirement in Northwich, in line with the recommendations of the BE Group Study (May 2016). It was due to progress to be an employment allocation, however following the announcement of the revised HS2 route in November 2016, which shows HS2 bisecting the site, the Council announced that it was removing the site allocation from Part 2 of the Local Plan. This was confirmed in the Local Plan Working Group document dated 24 July 2017.
- 6.6 The site was previously constrained by HS2 safeguarding, but now this has been cancelled the expectation is that safeguarding will be dropped, unless it is needed for Northern Powerhouse Rail which this site/area is not. Therefore HS2 is not a constraint to this site.
- 6.7 The indicative masterplan demonstrates the site could protect existing landscape features, respond to existing watercourses, but accommodate approximately 76.87 Ha of employment land (Use Classes E(g), B2 or B8). This could however be delivered in a range of potential site sizes and phases, and has the ability to accommodate significant scale B8 uses to cater for market demand.
- 6.8 The site can also make significant economic contributions to Northwich and the wider borough of Cheshire West and Chester, including:
- Over 5,500 jobs on a temporary and permanent basis
 - The three-year build phase could generate around £216million (current prices) in gross value added , which is a common proxy for economic output.
 - The on-site employment supported is estimated to generate £253million of GVA per annum.
 - Annual business rates revenue generated by the scheme for Cheshire West and Chester is estimated to be £4.3million.
- 6.9 We hope that this vision document is useful in establishing that the site is available, suitable and deliverable/developable for employment uses to support those already nearby at Gadbrook Park. NPL look forward to working with Cheshire West and Chester and bringing this site forward through the preparation of the new Local Plan.

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