



development brief

Firswood Road

July 2014

John Harrison, DipEnvP, MRTPI
Assistant Director Planning
West Lancashire Borough Council

www.westlancs.gov.uk

WEST LANCASHIRE



LOCAL PLAN

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The Site: Firswood Road



Executive Summary

Introduction & Purpose

This development brief has been produced to guide developers and investors in their proposals and planning applications for the future of the housing development site bounded by Firswood Road, Neverstitch Road, Slate Lane, and Ormskirk Road / Blaguegate Lane ("Firswood Road"), on the edge of Skelmersdale in the parish of Lathom South. This Brief is not a blueprint for development, but a set of principles that, when applied, will significantly contribute to the aim of creating a high quality, sustainable development of the site.

Vision

The Vision for the Firswood Road site is to develop the land in such a way as to complement the existing residential areas and to diversify the choice and range of housing to meet local needs, whilst helping to create a linear park to provide multifunctional recreation spaces, and improve opportunities for walking and cycling.

Existing Site

The site comprises approximately 22 ha of land allocated for residential use, of which up to 18 ha are considered to be developable. The topography of the site is relatively flat with a slight change in level towards the eastern boundary. The site is currently accessed via Neverstitch Road and Firswood Road and connected between the two access points by Old Engine Lane, a private road/footpath, with a public right of way.

Opportunity

The site will deliver approximately 400 new residential dwellings with an associated linear park and open space/landscaping. This will assist in meeting the housing requirement of the West Lancashire Local Plan 2012-2027 of 4,860 dwellings over the plan period.

Sustainability, in all its aspects, will sit at the core of all that is developed on the site.

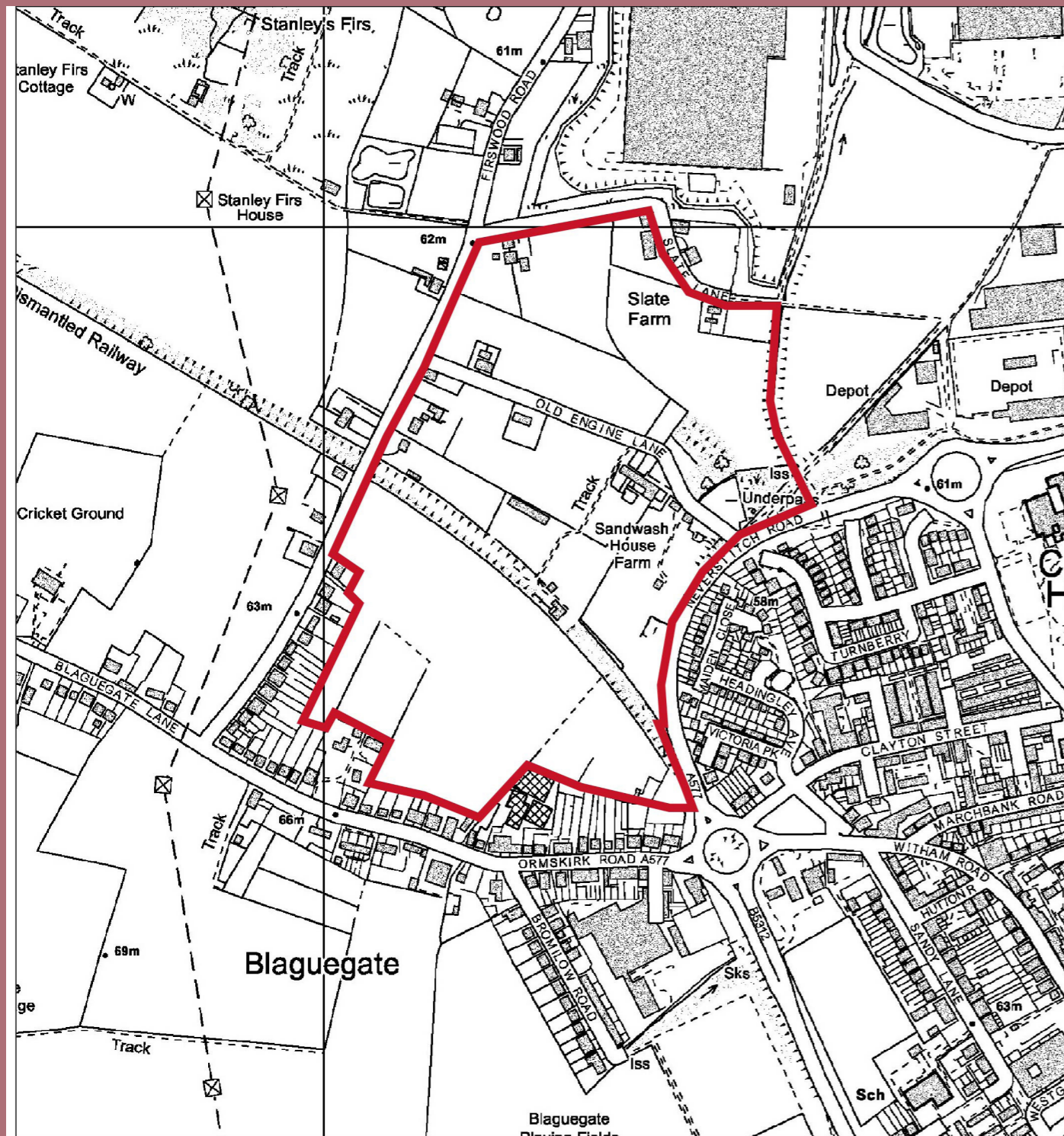
Phasing

It is anticipated that the site will be brought forward in a complementary not competing fashion, and this should be reflected in a more detailed phasing programme for the site.

Next Steps

This Brief will inform the nature and content of outline and reserved matters / full applications for planning permission that come forward involving this site. Once adopted, it will be a material consideration in the determination of such applications.

Residential Development Site Boundary



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Introduction

Background

Firwood Road has been identified from as far back as the early 1990s as a site to assist in the longer-term delivery of housing for West Lancashire Borough Council. From 1992-2013, the site was subject to a safeguarded land policy. However, in the current West Lancashire Local Plan 2012-2027 ("the Local Plan"), adopted in October 2013, the site has been judged necessary to meet the Plan's housing targets, and has thus been allocated for development within the Plan period.

As part of Local Plan policy RS1 Residential Development, several of the allocated housing sites, including the Firwood Road site, are required to have a masterplan/ development brief produced to assist in the delivery of the site.

Document Preparation

This document has been subject to consultation which included a 6 week consultation period for representations to be made and a drop in session which complies with our current Statement of Community Involvement.

Purpose of the Brief

This document sets the agenda for the development of Firwood Road as a residential development site. It promotes high quality design and a contextually sensitive approach to existing development and place-making. Development at Firwood Road will have a lasting impact on the surrounding area, thus it is important to achieve a high quality residential development at this location on the western edge of Skelmersdale, whilst maintaining a strong Green Belt boundary on Firwood Road. As it will be developers that will roll out the future development of the site, the purpose of this Brief is to help achieve a vision for the site by establishing appropriate design principles for the site. By preparing the Brief, the Council is establishing a strategic approach to site development.

The Local Plan envisages the delivery of Firwood Road for approximately 400 residential dwellings along with access and associated landscaping and the provision of a linear park link to assist in the delivery of the proposed Ormskirk – Skelmersdale Linear Park.

This Development Brief therefore provides a design framework with principles and guidance, which should inform detailed design solutions, but it also recognises the importance of retaining flexibility to respond to changing market conditions and social and technical demands. The Development Brief includes illustrations to indicate how future development might look. However these are not intended as prescriptive blueprints for the site, but as an indication of how the principles might be adhered to.

The Brief will provide guidance and a basis for review whereby future development proposals can be assessed against the Brief.

Using the Brief

The Brief is intended to be instructive, assisting any developers interested in the development of Firwood Road. It sets out an understanding of what is required and what is acceptable. The brief acts as a reference document and a platform for further detailed design and a single or suite of successful planning application(s). It does not, however, provide all the information necessary to inform a successful development proposal. Consultation and dialogue with West Lancashire Borough Council, the Local Planning Authority, will therefore be essential to achieve a full and detailed appreciation of the planning position and expectations for the site. This should be through the formal pre-application process.



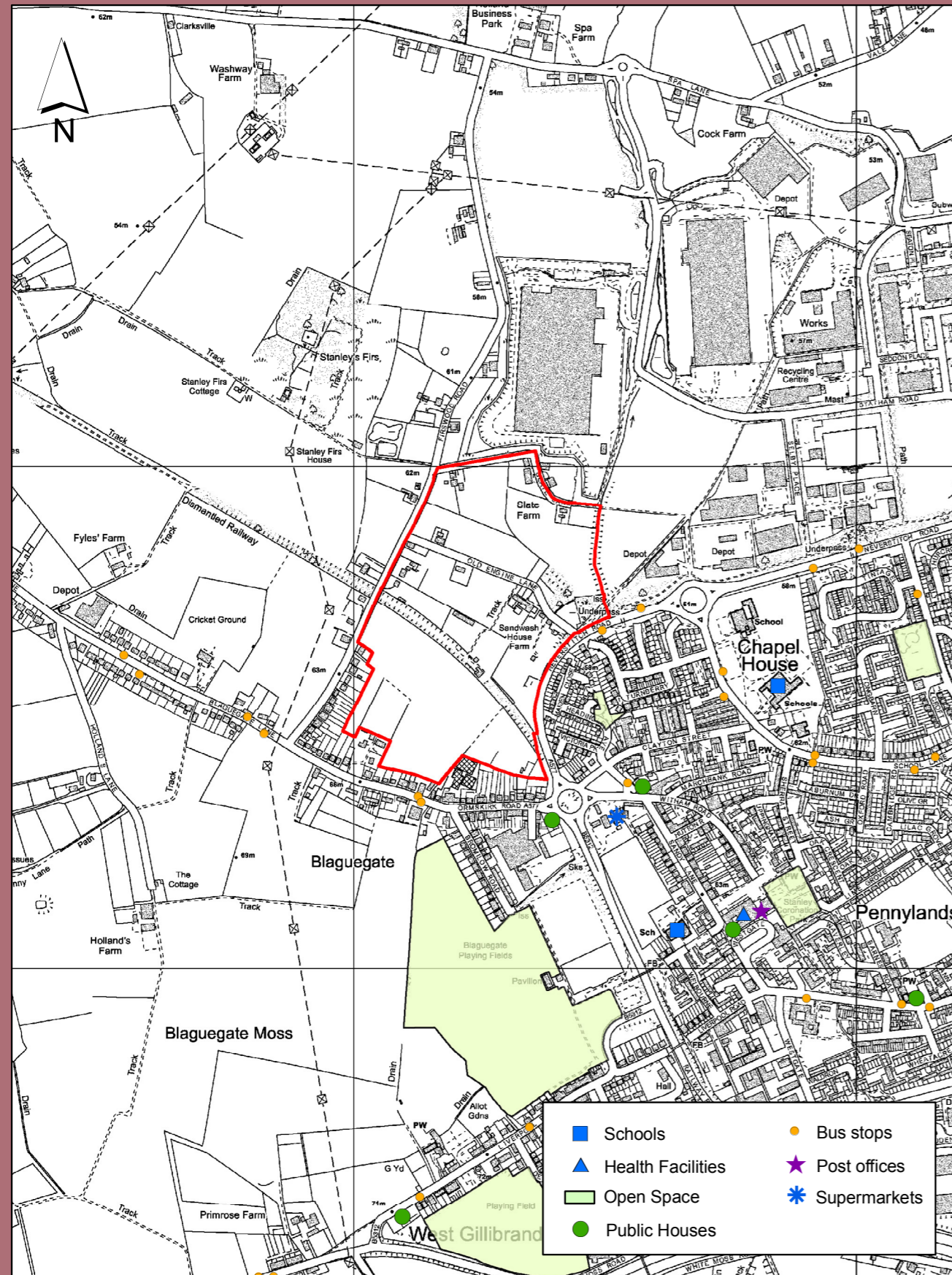
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Vision and Key Principles

The Vision is for development at the Firwood Road site to develop the land in such a way as to complement the existing residential areas and to diversify the choice and range of housing to meet local needs, whilst helping to create a linear park to provide multifunctional recreation spaces, including walking and cycling.

The following principles set the expectations at a strategic level:

- A range of high quality, well designed, low carbon homes will be encouraged;
- The housing aspect of the development will need to include a good mix of housing types to meet all local needs. 30% of properties will be required to be affordable and 20% to meet the needs of older persons.
- Any new development will need to meet Part L of the Building Regulations as a minimum requirement;
- Access to public transport and walking and cycling provision will be improved within the development site and the surrounding areas, assisted by a linear park offering opportunity for recreational uses;
- A Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) will be provided to deal with existing and the future increase in surface water discharge; and
- Development will incorporate biodiversity measures and safeguard protected sites (species / habitats). Natural 'green' spaces and routes throughout the site will be provided for people and wildlife.



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The Site & Context

The Site

Firwood Road comprises a total of 22 ha of formerly safeguarded land which has been released through the Local Plan 2012-2027 for residential development. The site is bordered by higher than average density residential development (30 – 40 dwellings per hectare) to the east, lower density development (15 - 20 dwellings per hectare) to the south and south west corner, employment to the north and open agricultural Green Belt to the west. The existing access to the land is from Neverstitch Road and Firwood Road via Old Engine Lane.

Site context

The site is situated to the west of the built up area of Skelmersdale, and lies within Lathom South Parish. The site is located approximately 2 km to the west of Skelmersdale town centre, which is accessible from the site by bus.

The site is bounded to the north by an established belt of trees. These act as a buffer to the employment site behind, which is dominated by two very large distribution warehouses.

To the east and south are the established residential neighbourhoods surrounding Blaguegate Lane, Chapel House and Pennylands ("Old Skelmersdale") comprising properties fronting Ormskirk Road and various residential roads serviced off Clayton Street. The general styles of these dwellings are mixed 19th and 20th century detached/semi-detached properties.

The land to the west of the Firwood Road site comprises open Green Belt land and agricultural holdings and Firwood Road itself acts as a natural boundary to the development site. To the south western corner of the site is a small cluster of lower density residential dwellings. These properties comprise mainly large post war dwellings with varying architectural details and a range of single and two storey properties.

The route of the former railway between Old Skelmersdale and Ormskirk travels across the site from south east to west, exiting the site in the west under an old stone bridge on Firwood Road.

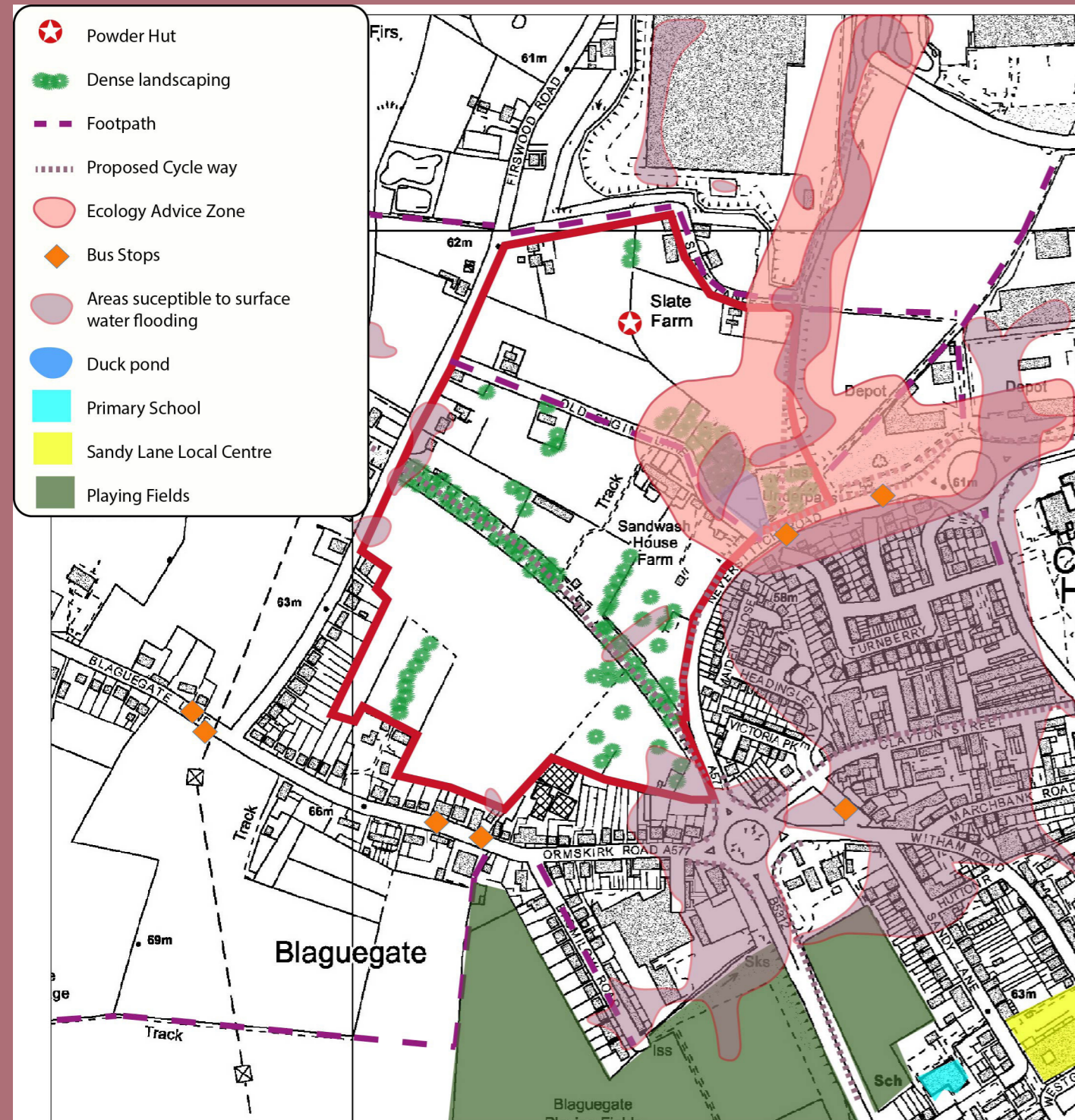
Wider site context

With regards to open space and recreation, the nearest facilities are located at Skelmersdale Football Club, Skelmersdale Cricket Club, Blaguegate Playing Fields and Stanley Coronation Park. The nearest primary schools are Brookfield Park and St Richards Catholic Primary Schools, approximately 10 minutes walk from the site entrance. Slightly further away from the site are Glenburn Sports College (Secondary School), Lathom High School Technology College and Our Lady Queen of Peace Engineering College. Located approximately 2km away (as the crow flies) is Skelmersdale Town Centre with a range of shops and facilities within the Concourse Shopping Centre. A number of other retail units exist within walking distance of the site. The nearest health facility, Sandy Lane Health Centre, is located in the Sandy Lane Local Centre, approximately 10 minutes walk away.

Existing uses and topography

The site consists of fields used as arable and pasture land, with a central area used for light industrial / storage uses. The topography of the land is relatively flat; there is a slight slope of less than 5 metres falling from west to east in the far north eastern corner of the site in the vicinity of Slate Farm.

Constraints and Opportunities Plan



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Technical Constraints

Historic Environment

As far as West Lancashire Borough Council is aware, there are no archaeological constraints which would preclude the development at Firwood Road. However, applicants will be required to consult with Lancashire County Council's Scheduled Monument Register regarding any designations on the development site.

Located on the site is a historic Powder Hut, a 19th century explosives store for the Lathom Colliery. The developer will be required to undertake a significance or heritage report for the Powder Hut and will ultimately be encouraged to retain this nominated locally listed feature in order for the historic role of the site to be reflected in the new development.

Applicants should contact the Lancashire County Council Archaeology Unit for information regarding the Heritage Environmental Record (HER) as follows:

Archaeological Service Officer, 01772 533404,
archaeology@lancashire.gov.uk

Ecology

Firwood Road maintains a habitat relatively typical of that of the surrounding area. The site is not designated as a nature conservation site on account of its species diversity. The Habitats Regulations Assessment for this site, undertaken during the preparation of the West Lancashire Local Plan 2012-2027, stated:

*This site is on the western boundary of Skelmersdale and is not located in an area currently identified as sensitive for qualifying bird species. Whilst the site supports grassland and/or arable habitat which may meet the basic needs of qualifying bird species, it is surrounded by existing residential and employment development and divided by linear belts of shrubs and trees. It is thus unlikely to be attractive to qualifying bird species due to proximity to human activity and lack of the wide open views preferred by these species.*¹

¹West Lancashire Local Plan Habitats Regulations Assessment, URS, Nov 2011, p207. Available online at: <http://www.westlancs.gov.uk/pdf/West%20Lancs%20HRA%20with%20appendices%20-%20opti.pdf>

However, during consultation on the site, the Council has been advised of a range of species observed on the site, including a number of protected species such as barn owls. It is important that development of the site be undertaken in such a way as to minimise to an acceptable level its impact on these species. A full investigation of the presence of protected species, and proposals for mitigation, will be required as part of any planning application on the site. Early engagement with the Council on the need for HRA screening is advised.

Located to the north east boundary of the Firwood site, in close proximity to Sandwash House Farm, lies an ecology standing advice zone. It is thought there could be potential breeding habitats for bats and birds located in this area, and further investigation will be required through a Phase 1 Ecology Survey to accompany any future planning application.

Tree Preservation Order ref: TP (WLBC 31 2004) applies to part of the site surrounding the pond north of Old Engine Road; the TPO covers a mixed woodland area, mainly consisting of Birch, Oak and Hawthorn with some ash, willow, sycamore, rowan, holly and wild cherry which could hold potential for the roosting of bats. Other trees on the site will be worthy of retention; liaison is encouraged with the Council's arboricultural officer on this matter.

The line of the former railway running west to south-east across the site is designated on the Local Plan Policies Map as a wildlife corridor, as well as being part of the proposed Ormskirk – Skelmersdale Linear Park.

Flooding

Firswood Road is located within Flood Zone 1, which indicates that the site is at low risk of flooding. However a small section of land along the north eastern boundary, to the east of Slate Farm, is prone to surface water flooding. This area of land already accommodates a brook (Slate Brook) which will be required to remain open; subsequently areas of flooding will need to be addressed in this area. The constraints map shows a number of areas that are subject to surface water flooding. However residents in the area have notified the Local Planning Authority that some other additional areas occasionally suffer from surface water flooding following heavy rainfall. This should be addressed through a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) as part of any planning application.

Drainage and Sewerage

At present there are currently no public surface water sewers serving the Firswood Road site. On site SuDS will be required to manage surface water drainage to attenuate to a greenfield land run off rate. Therefore, early engagement with Lancashire County Council, the Lead Local Flood Authority is required. Some residential properties located on or surrounding the site currently have drainage rights over the Firswood Road site as a result of their not being connected to the wider drainage network.

Noise

Due to the proximity of the employment area to the north of the site, it is important to consider noise and vibration measurements. The site is also adjacent to Neverstitch Road (A577). Given the frequency of traffic running along this boundary, the land to the east would potentially have a slightly increased risk of noise.

Noise mitigation for the properties which may fall within a higher noise level, for example to the north of the site or along the eastern boundary, will need to be considered in the design layout of the site and incorporate appropriate building fabric and installation of localised acoustic fences where required.

Contamination

There are two seams of coal under the land at Firswood Road, one shallow, one deep. Initial indications are that the existence of the coal under the site will not compromise development to any significant extent, taking into account land stability issues, and the need to consider sterilisation of any workable coal deposits. It has not yet been possible to carry out a detailed ground condition survey, but the site is located within a Coal Mining Development area, and a number of mine entries have been located along Old Engine Lane and in the vicinity of Slate Farm. The site also contains high risk development areas along the eastern boundary. Any developer/applicant will need to engage with Lancashire County Council with regards to the minerals safeguarding area in the northern part of the site and undertake thorough site investigations as part of the planning application process.

Landscape

The site is within the Skelmersdale Landscape Character Area (Landscape Character SPD) but is not located within, or directly adjacent to, any Area of Landscape History Importance (the nearest such area is approximately 1km north of the site). The only tree constraints are located on the north eastern boundary at the junction of Old Engine Lane and Neverstitch Road, around Slate Farm and along the dismantled railway. Vegetation runs along all of the boundaries and the dismantled railway line, which adds character to the defensible landscape of the urban area.

Transport

There is capacity within the highway network to accommodate the anticipated traffic generated by the proposed 400 dwellings, with limited highway improvements.

The main access to the Firswood Road development site should be taken off Neverstitch Road between Old Engine Lane and the Ormskirk Road roundabout, at a point where maximum visibility can be achieved.

A minor secondary access to the site may be located on the southern part of Firswood Road (south of the bridge over the disused railway line).

This will ultimately increase traffic using the Firswood Road/ Blaguegate Lane junction. However, due to the limitations of this junction and of Firswood Road generally, this access would by necessity be limited to only a small portion of the site, and to access for emergency vehicles. Advice received from the highways authority (Lancashire County Council) is that the number of residential units served by an access onto Firswood Road should be limited such that no more than 60 extra trips at peak times be generated by the new housing. This could equate to approximately 100 3-bedroom dwellings, subject to detailed transport assessments demonstrating that the 2-way trip generation on Firswood Road does not exceed 60 vehicles per hour at peak travel times in order to maintain the rural nature of the lane.

If it is possible, the creation of a more significant secondary access directly onto Blaguegate Lane would be preferred, although it is acknowledged that this would be reliant on a landowner(s) outside of the site boundary being willing to sell their land.

The key issues with regard to secondary access to the site are safety at any new junction with Firswood Road, capacity of the Firswood Road / Blaguegate Lane junction, and amenity for existing residents.

The existing accesses onto Neverstitch Road or Firswood Road serving properties on Old Engine Lane will be maintained solely for their use, and preserved at least in their current form, if not improved, because they provide the routes for the two Public Rights of Way as well as for residents.

The internal road network must be in accordance with Manual for Streets 2 guidance. However, the vehicular access points penetrating the site from Firswood Road and Neverstitch Road must be in accordance with Design Manual for Roads and Bridges, or any subsequent relevant guidance.

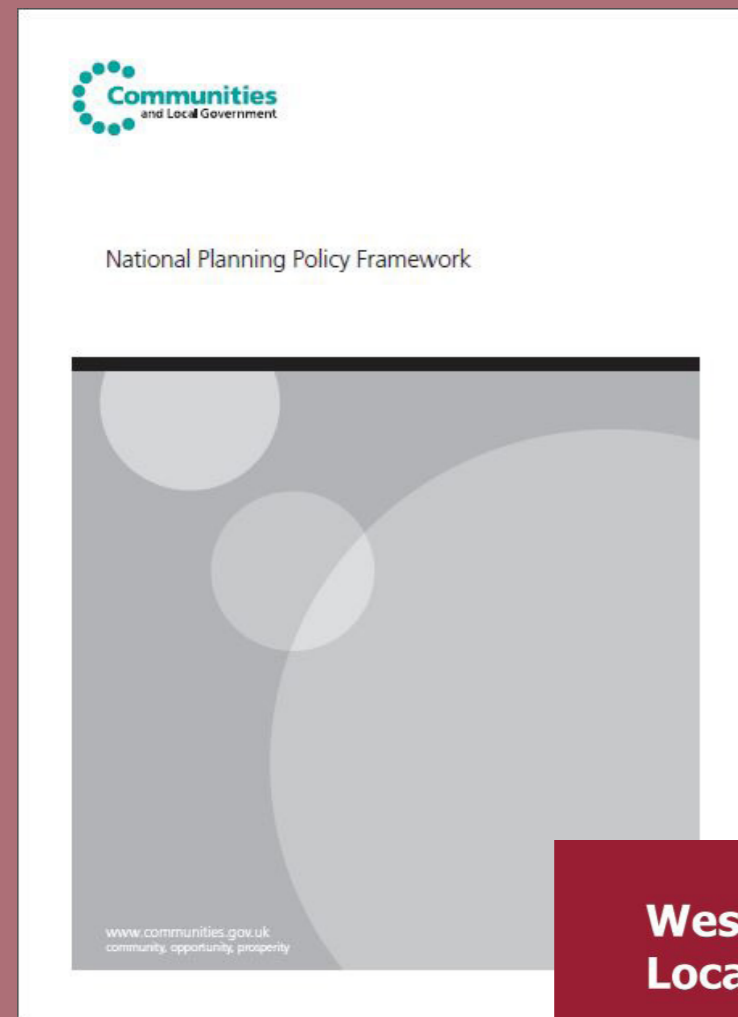
Bus stops are located along Neverstitch Road and Ormskirk Road / Blaguegate Lane, with services running to and from Ormskirk, Southport, Wigan and Skelmersdale Town Centre.

The site is surrounded by a number of existing and proposed cycle routes including the Southern Loop and the existing dismantled railway line which dissects the site. Footpaths 8-1-FP-24, 8-1-FP-26 and 8-2-FP-101 are located on the site and along the boundary of the site.

Utilities

An existing 11kV overhead line crosses the site; however it is thought that this can be diverted underground by the developer during site construction, subject to the electricity provider's authorisation.

Gas, water, electricity and telecommunications can be provided to the development site, without adversely impacting on the provision of services to the wider community. Developers also need to take into consideration the surrounding residents' right to drainage over the land as many currently use septic tanks.



**West Lancashire
Local Plan**
2012-2027
Development Plan Document

**WEST LANCASTHIRE
LOCAL PLAN**

October 2013

Policy Context

Policy Context

Planning policy should be referred to in respect to the future of the development of the site. However, it is not appropriate for this brief to repeat the content of guidance and policies, but to guide developers, investors and their design teams to operate within the context of appropriate national and local policy guidance. There is an obligation on design teams to establish the policy context and the elements of their proposal in addition to the requirements of this brief. The main policies are summarised below:

National Planning Policy Framework

At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision taking.

The NPPF supports growth of areas to supply new homes, stating that this can be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements or extensions to existing villages and towns.

Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people. Development should:

- Function well and add to the overall quality of the area,
- Have a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit,
- Accommodate development whilst creating and sustaining an appropriate mix of uses (including incorporation of green and other public space as part of developments) and support local facilities and transport networks,
- Respond to the local character and history, whilst reflecting the identity of the local surroundings and materials, and not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation,

- Create safe and accessible environments where crime, disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion; and
- Be visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.

The design elements of the National Practice Guidance should also be considered when preparing applications for development at Firwood Road.

Local Planning Policy

The West Lancashire Local Plan 2012-2027 was adopted by the Council on 16th October 2013. Policy RS1 allocates Firwood Road for residential development to assist in the delivery of 4,860 homes across the Borough over the period 2012-2027.

The following policies of the Local Plan are the most relevant to development at Firwood Road:

- GN3 Criteria for Sustainable Development
- RS1 Residential Development
- RS2 Affordable Housing
- IF2 Enhancing Sustainable Transport Choice
- IF3 Service Accessibility and Infrastructure for Growth
- IF4 Developer Contributions
- EN1 Low Carbon Development and Energy Infrastructure
- EN2 Preserving and Enhancing West Lancashire's Natural Environment
- EN3 Provision of Green Infrastructure and Open Recreation Space
- EN4 Preserving and Enhancing West Lancashire's Built Environment, Cultural and Heritage Assets

Design Guidance

Developers, investors and their design teams should also be aware of design best practice and this should be referred to in the preparation of proposals for this site. Particular attention should be paid to the WLBC Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) 2008. In addition, reference should also be made to national guidance such as Building for Life 12 (Design Council CBE 2012).

Provision of Public Open Space in New Residential Developments

Supplementary Planning Document

The Open Space SPD is designed to provide more detailed guidance on the Borough Council's approach to the protection and enhancement of existing open space and the provision of additional open space and associated facilities as part of new housing developments. This document should be referred to in the production of any planning application for the site.

General Place Making Principles

The planned growth for West Lancashire provides an opportunity to create sustainable and vibrant new communities. It is crucial that we build high quality housing with a unique identity that will provide visually pleasing environments where people will want to live. The Local Plan and Design Guide SPD set out core principles for the level of quality to be expected in new developments.

This section describes the Quality of the Character.

The Four Cs of Place Making

It is important that the Firwood Road site is designed to be a distinctive and attractive place in its own right, and also one that integrates with and benefits South Lathom and Skelmersdale. To ensure distinctiveness and integration we have established four main place-making principles:

- Community
- Connectivity
- Climate
- Character

Community

Individuals and families build into communities that live in and use places. The following community focused place-making principles provide a basis for ensuring that the Firwood Road site will be a well-designed and successful place whose community has the best chance to thrive:

- Consult the community on the draft development brief and at pre-application stage.
- A range of housing tenures should be available, and homes should be built in a way that allows adaptation to different stages of life.
- Individuals should feel able to get involved in managing their communities.
- There should be a mix of formal and informal greenspace and links between them.

- Community activities should be encouraged by the provision of places to meet informally and formally.
- Public space should promote social interaction and healthier lifestyles.

Connectivity

Whilst private cars will remain important they should not over-dominate the design process or the completed development. The following connectivity principles provide a basis for ensuring that the Firwood Road site will be well connected within and beyond itself by a range of transport choices and opportunities to safely walk and cycle:

- Development should be easily accessible by public transport services.
- Development should enhance the feasibility of walking and cycling.
- Streets, footpaths and other links should provide for ease of mobility for all sectors of the community.
- Bus stops should be well designed and should provide information on services and local facilities.
- Road designs should include permeable surfaces and service infrastructure should go into green space corridors or service ducts.

Climate

All new development and environmental infrastructure at the Firwood Road site will be built to meet the latest environmental standards, using the following climate change focused place-making principles:

- Generally, the pattern of development should allow people to easily adopt sustainable lifestyles.
- Parts of the development should aim to achieve the highest standards and act as examples of good practice as the development proceeds.
- New development should not be located in areas liable to environmental risks.

- If possible, sustainable waste management systems should be built into new developments to make recycling easy and unobtrusive and encourage people to waste less.
- All buildings should be designed to maximise energy efficiency and anticipate the potential impacts of climate change while having the capability to be easily adapted.
- Biodiversity and wildlife should be encouraged through a network of green spaces and sustainable urban drainage systems that are specifically designed to foster greater ecological variety.
- Sustainable energy partnerships or trusts should be encouraged as part of the new development.
- Trees and planting should be used to provide shading and cooling in summer and to soak up rain as well as providing attractive landscapes.

Character

The following design character focused place-making principles provide a basis for ensuring that the Firswood Road site will be a well-designed and attractive place:

- Existing landscape features should be identified and used to create a locally distinctive place.
- Densities and massing should vary to reflect the surrounding area.
- Creative but simple designs, well built with good materials and detailing, are often the most successful and durable approaches.
- Open space should be designed to be integrated with buildings and good landscapes are as important as good buildings.
- All buildings should be designed to be flexible and adaptable.
- Car and cycle parking, storage and waste recycling should be integrated into the design process of all buildings.

Site Specific Urban Design Principles

Design Principles

The following design principles underpin the proposals:

- To integrate development and support community cohesion, new homes should link to the existing residential neighbourhood to the east of the site,
- The area of land closest to the Green Belt boundary to the west of the Firswood site should be treated as a buffer zone between the development and the surrounding countryside. Areas of open space and landscaping will be encouraged here and, where appropriate, sensitively designed, lower density development that will not detract from the openness of the surrounding Green Belt.
- The existing landscape including topography and dismantled railway suggest an opportunity for a linear park (as part of the proposed Ormskirk – Skelmersdale Linear Park) and public open space, each with its own distinctive character responding to the landscape.

Firswood Road is expected to deliver approximately 400 dwellings and appropriate public open space. Please refer to the most up to date requirements in the latest Provision of Public Open Space in New Residential Developments SPD.

Surrounding Character

The site is located within an existing arable farming area, displaying typical characteristics of field margins, tree and hedge planting and ponds. The hedging provides an opportunity as a framework for development. Typical of this character area are the meandering roads which serve the adjacent communities. Character areas draw on the unique landscape and physical form of the existing site.

The eastern site boundary features existing vegetation which creates a strong and defensible boundary to the site. Neverstitch Road acts as the outer periphery road for Skelmersdale and Ormskirk Road acts as a gateway for Skelmersdale from Lathom.

Appropriate landscape treatments within the development can be used to strengthen the existing boundary and to create a strong defensible boundary to the urban area.

A variety of housing styles and densities of development can be found in the area immediately surrounding the Firswood Road site. The proposals for Firswood Road should complement and reflect the most successful elements of building character and distinctiveness, including building scale, massing and height. A variety of house types and finishes is encouraged. Appropriate development on the site will be in the region of single, 2 to 3 storeys, in the form of mews, semi-detached and detached dwellings. Building density should be lower towards the south and west in order to respect the existing residential properties and Green Belt. Higher density development should be located to the eastern section of the site, ground conditions permitting.

Connections

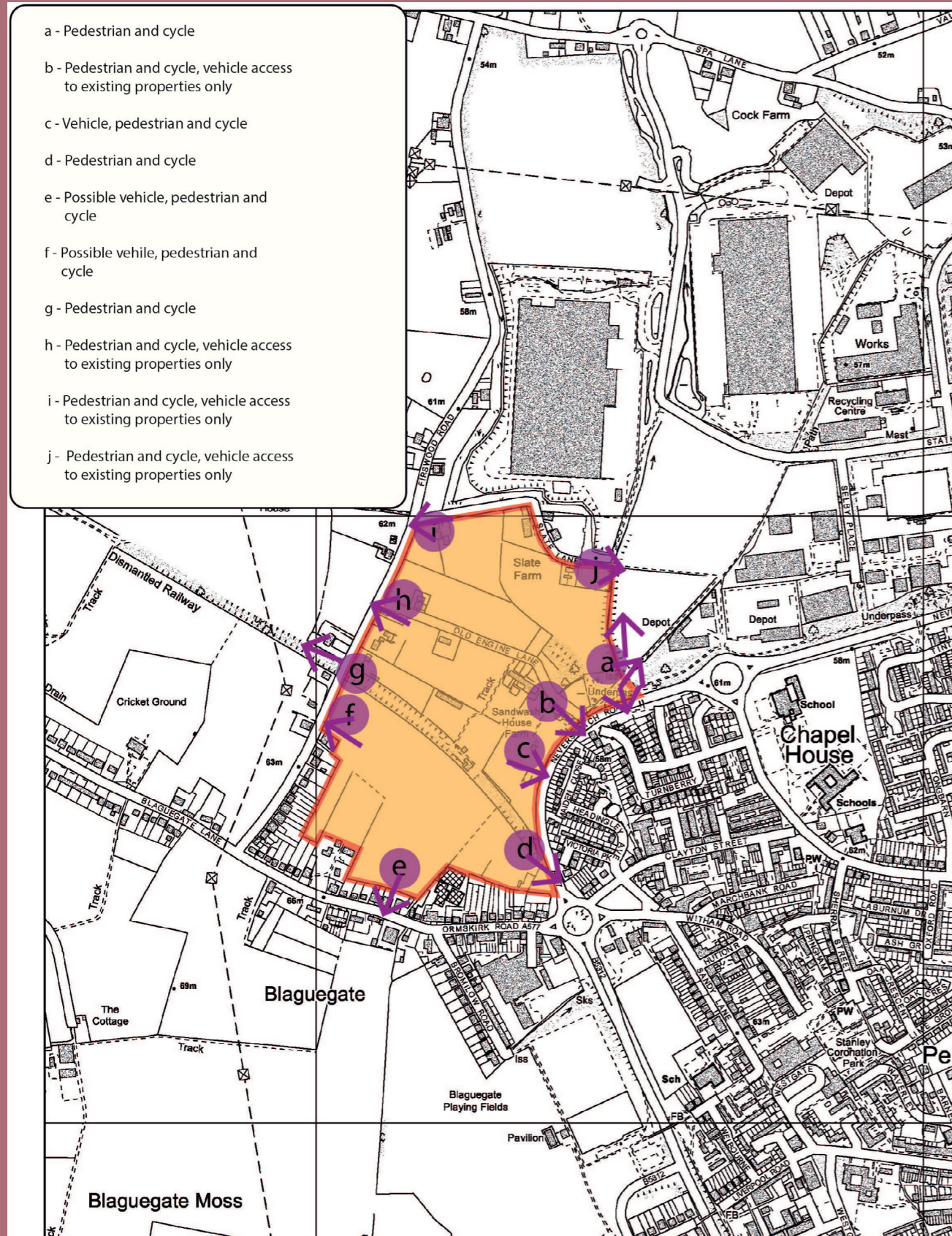
The Connections Plan addresses movement around the site, including provision for pedestrians, cyclists, public transport, and motorists in presenting a hierarchy of street types prioritising different movements. It presents an opportunity opening this site to public access and linking it into the existing residential community to the east.

The cohesive connection of existing and new communities will aid access to public transport and increase and support opportunities for walking and cycling.

A main access point from Neverstitch Road, with a potential secondary access point from Firswood Road or Blaguegate Lane, is achievable without impacting unacceptably upon the existing traffic flows.

There are a number of public footpaths located within or connecting to the development site including footpaths 8-1-FP-24, 8-1-FP-26 and 8-2-FP-101.

Potential Connections Plan



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The connections and links are illustrated on the Connections Plan and will be located at:

a – Pedestrian and cycle links to existing established footpaths / cycling links including the XL Business Park.

b – Old Engine Lane Access (Neverstitch Road). Pedestrian and cycle access with vehicle access to existing properties only, this access will retain the existing footpath throughout the site whilst allowing access to existing properties via Old Engine Lane. This will not create a vehicular access to enter the site for any new residential development. The footpath/cycle way provides access to bus stops located on Neverstitch Road and the wider footpath/cycle network.

c – Neverstitch Road Access. This access point will accommodate the main vehicular access to the development site. Pedestrian and cycle access at this location will also permeate the development site into the existing built up area.

d – Neverstitch Linear Park Access. This would allow not only for people from the Firwood Road site to access the proposed pedestrian/cycle way into Ormskirk/Skelmersdale but also allow opportunities for people outside of the site to access the Linear Park.

e – Blaguegate Lane – Subject to the willingness of a landowner(s) outside the current development site boundary to sell, or to allow access across their land, this could be a potential location for access to or from the site. A number of bus stops are located on Blaguegate Lane and there are existing foot/cycle paths that link to the south of Blaguegate Lane.

f – Firwood Road – There is the opportunity to develop an access off this southern part of Firwood Road, subject to a Transport Assessment specifically addressing the impact of the junction on Blaguegate Lane. The access would only serve a specified number of residential properties with no more than approximately 60 trip generations at peak time in the southern section of the development site. The number of trip generations will need to be supported by evidence documented in the Transport Assessment.

g – Firwood Road Linear Park Access. This would allow not only for people from the Firwood Road site to access the proposed pedestrian/cycle way into Ormskirk/Skelmersdale but also allow opportunities for people outside of the site to access the Linear Park.

h – Old Engine Lane Access (Firwood Road). Pedestrian and cycle access with vehicle access to existing properties only, this access will retain the existing footpath throughout the site whilst allowing access to existing properties via Old Engine Lane. This will not create a vehicular access to enter the site for any new residential development. The footpath/cycle way provides access to Blaguegate Road via Firwood Road with access to bus stops and the wider footpath/cycle network.

i – Slate Lane access to Firwood Road – Vehicular access for existing properties only.

j – Slate Lane (east) to access to the cycle route to XL Business Park and public footpaths north east of the site.

Key Landscape Elements

The countryside in West Lancashire is well known for contributing to a green landscape. The landscape setting for the development will play a key part in retaining a strong landscape character.

The West Lancashire Local Plan outlines some of the open space standards for new development.

An approach including a variety of Green Infrastructure opportunities should be embraced and located appropriately for:

- Driving character and memorable identity;
- Access;
- Recreation and facilities;
- Biodiversity;
- Symbiotic relationships with the built form, where development is proposed; and
- Promoting links, where appropriate, to the broader landscape offer.

The design of Green Infrastructure should specifically:

- Consider native planting for biodiversity in the first instance;
- Limit the use of paved surfaces to locations whose function determines their necessity. Porous surfaces should always be considered in the first instance;
- Promote on-site water attenuation including grey water recycling within the development;
- Include elements of a Sustainable Drainage System, including ponds, ditches, swales and wetlands as appropriate. These need to be considered with new habitat creation in mind;
- Add Green Infrastructure to the built form. Features such as green roofs, green walls, balconies and roof terraces could be considered;
- Pay careful attention towards the provision of gardens, which can add to the overall Green Infrastructure objectives around reducing flood risk and promoting biodiversity, but their function could be tackled separately; and
- Include multi-functional open spaces which allow flexible uses and long term adaptability.

Reducing Climate Change

In order to assist in the reduction of climate change it is important that any development takes into consideration sustainable design and construction methods, whilst meeting the sustainable development requirement as set out in policy EN1 of the West Lancashire Local Plan 2012-2027 and through the use of additional renewable energy where feasible.

Urban Design Opportunities

The site offers a significant opportunity to deliver much needed residential development in West Lancashire over the plan period to 2027, enhancing the Skelmersdale residential offer. A well-considered internal layout will open up the site whilst minimising the impact on the wider community.

The site is located on the edge of the urban settlement and already displays landscaping boundaries to the west reducing the impact upon the Green Belt.

The dismantled railway running west- south east across the site provides a valuable opportunity for the delivery of a key section of the proposed linear park from Skelmersdale to Ormskirk. Whilst the exact route of the linear park is not resolute, there is significant existing tree planting and a wildlife corridor designation along the line of the dismantled railway, therefore providing the opportunity for the basis of a route.

It is also noted that a concentration of constraints is present in the north eastern part of the site, around the existing waterbody and TPOs. This offers an opportunity for habitat / recreation provision. The existing watercourse in the north eastern corner of the site will assist in the creation of SuDS. The site allows for landscaping to be located on the boundaries adjoining the Green Belt, thus again reducing the visual impact to the surrounding areas.

Development Requirements

Quantum and mix of development

Development on Firswood Road is proposed to deliver approximately 400 dwellings (of which 30% should be affordable, and 20% designed for elderly people), associated public open space provision and, if required, ancillary retail floor space to support the development, such as a newsagent, hairdressers and hot food takeaway. Any retail development on site must not have a negative impact on the viability of the nearby Sandy Lane Local Centre.

The requirement for affordable homes and elderly provision originates from policies RS1 and RS2 of the Local Plan; the figures (30% affordable homes and 20% homes designed for the elderly) have been derived taking into account the housing needs study for West Lancashire, and population and household projections. The Council will have regard to the impact of these and other policy requirements on the viability of the overall scheme.

Below is a table setting out how the housing mix could be split:

Affordable Housing General Needs	72	30% affordable housing requirement
Affordable Housing Older Persons	48	
Market Housing Older Persons	32	20% elderly housing requirement
Market Housing General Needs	248	
Overall Total	400	

With regard to the provision of elderly accommodation, it should, if possible, be located within a suitable walking distance of shops and / or public transport. The typical perception of elderly persons' accommodation is bungalows or sheltered housing. However, this need not be the case, and such types of development may not always be appropriate, e.g. from a density point of view. Elderly persons' housing could simply be individual private dwellings that contain features designed specifically for the elderly (as opposed to Lifetime Homes, which are able to be adapted to suit older or disabled people). The provision could, if appropriate, be met through an Extra Care Facility or other purpose built elderly accommodation. Applicants are advised to consult with The Housing Strategy and Development Programme Manager, (01695 585244 jonathan.mitchell@westlancs.gov.uk) for further information.

The Firswood Road site has the potential to provide approximately 80 older persons units. The precise split of these 80 units between affordable and market units should be established at the time of any planning application. At the time of writing this development brief, and based on current needs evidence, the Council considers that 48 of the elderly accommodation units would need to be affordable housing type tenures, the other 32 units consisting of market housing for older people (i.e. of the 400 units overall, 12% would be affordable and for the elderly, 18% would be affordable and for any age, and 8% would be market housing for the elderly). These figures come from evidence dated April 2014; developers should use the most up to date data available at the time of making their planning application.

A hierarchical approach could be adopted such as:

1. Sheltered Housing
2. Bungalows and smaller scale apartment developments.

An Extra Care-type / Assisted Living scheme could also be considered, although the above delivery approaches are currently considered more appropriate for this site.

As part of any planning application, the developer should provide an older persons' accommodation statement that aims to justify the developer's intended approach in respect of the provision of older persons' accommodation on the site. In that regard, and particularly in the case of affordable housing for the elderly, they would be expected to have:

- Liaised with Health professionals / Lancashire County Council / Clinical Commissioning Groups / Registered Providers (Housing Associations) to ensure that due regard has been given to trying to develop the housing as indicated by the delivery hierarchy. If the developer cannot deliver such housing, then the Council needs to know why.
- Explained how their approach has complied with Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for innovation (HAPPI) principles and any other good practice guidance related to design.
- Identified relevant delivery partners such as Registered Providers (Housing Associations).

Sustainability requirements

The required minimum design standards for Firswood Road are to achieve the requirement of Part L of the Building Regulations and exceed this where possible.

Any subsequent applicant(s) will be required to be subject to attend a Places Matter design review panel, at the applicant's expense.

Open space public realm requirements

The site once developed will need to provide accessible open space for public use. The indicative layout in this Brief shows this along the dismantled railway and to the north east of the site around the existing pond to the advantage of what is already on the site in these locations. The greenspace and linear park is to be multifunctional by creating appropriate buffers between the proposed housing and the open countryside beyond the site to the west.

In addition, an element of formal open space and play facilities is required for a development of this scale. The indicative layout suggests this might link the Linear Park and the greenspace in the North East of the site.

Areas of greenspace, roads and non built development will need to be strategically located on the Firswood Road site following site investigations that will accompany any subsequent planning application.

Open space will need to develop a relationship with the proposed landscape treatments, seeking to preserve a semi-rural character and maximise wildlife value within the open spaces throughout the development.

The location of the Linear Park and informal amenity space should carefully consider:

- Access standards and connections to the green grid,
- Physical and visual amenity,
- The design of the built form(should not leave left over spaces); and
- The management and maintenance of the open space.

Firswood Road is expected to deliver 400 dwellings with a minimum requirement of 15 sqm per bedroom of each dwelling of on-site public open space. This figure is correct at the time of writing this development brief. Please refer to the most up to date requirements in the latest Provision of Public Open Space in New Residential Developments Supplementary Planning Document.

Transport access and servicing requirements

There is the ability to have a number of access points entering the site, but the primary access will be via Neverstitch Road. The possibility of a secondary access points located along Firswood Road in order to start development of the site and serve a limited number of dwellings would need to be supported by a Transport Assessment which will assess the impact of the junction of Firswood Road/ Blaguegate Lane and the surrounding junctions at the request of Lancashire County Council. Current evidence suggests that development serving 60 trips at peak time would be acceptable; flexibility of this figure would need to be supported by a Transport Assessment. This could equate to approximately 100 3-bedroom dwellings, subject to detailed transport assessments demonstrating that the 2-way trip generation on Firswood Road does

not exceed 60 vehicles per hour at peak travel times in order to maintain the rural nature of the lane. The key issues are safety at any new junction with Firswood Road, capacity of the junction with Blaguegate Lane and amenity for existing residents.

Slate Lane and Old Engine Lane need to be preserved at least in their current form if not improved, because they provide the routes for the two Public Rights of Way as well as for a handful of direct residents. If an access directly onto Blaguegate Lane is possible this would also need to be investigated further by any applicant through discussions with Lancashire County Council Highways and the preparation of a Transport Statement.

The design of all internal streets should comply with the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation's Manual for Streets 2. However, the penetrating vehicular accesses should comply with the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges, or any subsequent relevant guidance.

Streets should be designed to encourage suitable behaviour from those who use them, particularly from drivers, through appropriate street design rather than simply relying on speed limits. All streets should be fronted by development.

The pedestrian, cycle and public transport networks should be complete as soon as is practicable to encourage travel by these modes, whilst linking to existing cycle/ footpaths and public transport connections.

There should be no single solution for the location of car parking spaces, but on plot car parking with a preference for side drives is the preferred method, while parking to the rear of properties should be a second resort. Car parking provision should be calculated using West Lancashire's Car Parking standards set out in Appendix F of the Local Plan. Attention is to be drawn to the requirement for Electric Car Charging Points (Policy IF2), each dwelling is required to provide a charging point and communal parking areas should provide at least one space for charging or 10% of spaces on site, whichever is greater.

Land Use

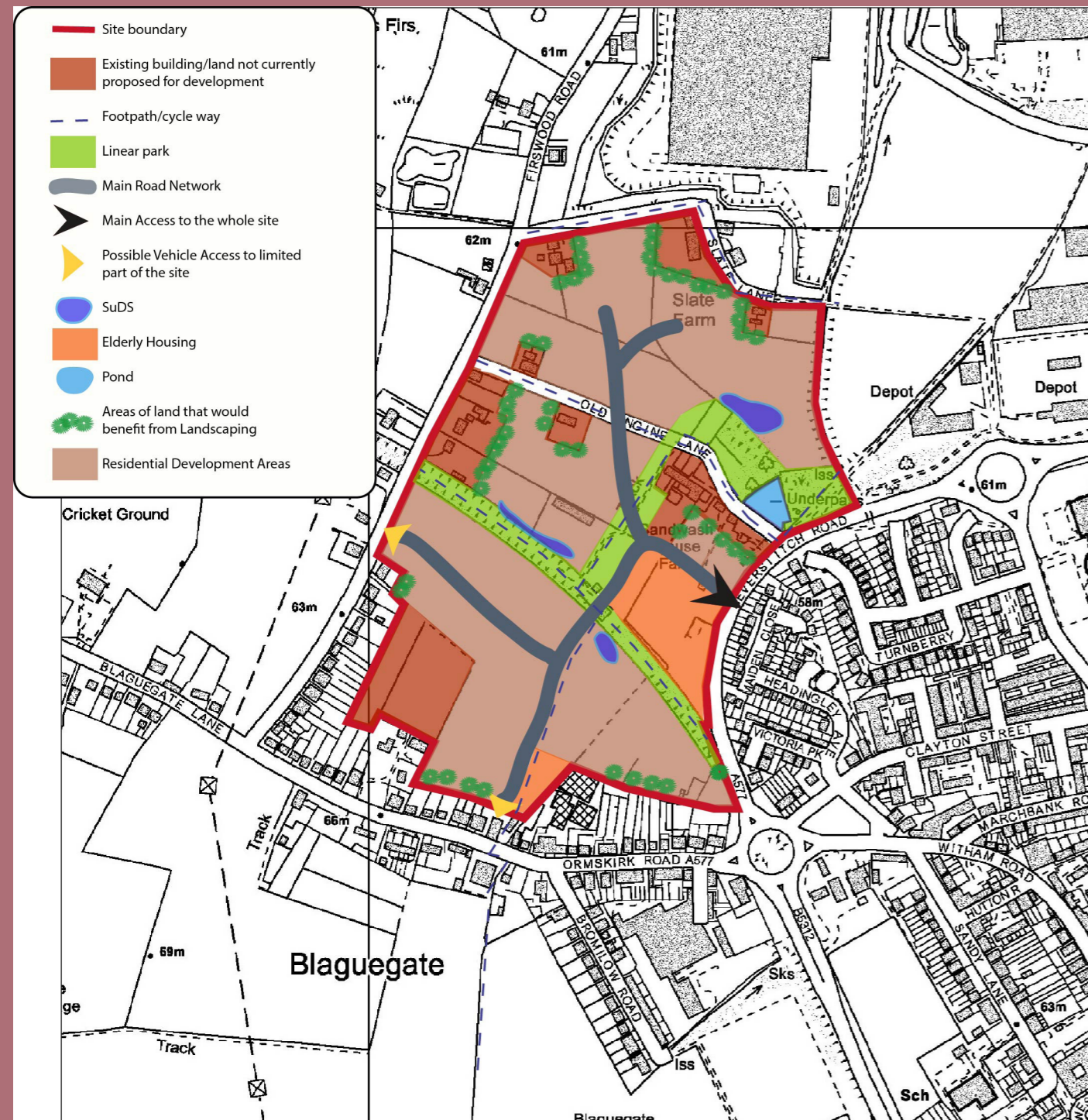
The indicative plan demonstrates that the site can be broken up into a number of areas respecting the character and surroundings of the site. It is proposed that through these respective areas the development comprises:

- Residential areas including that specifically for the elderly;
- Public open space and play equipment;
- Potential small retail area;
- SuDS; and
- Landscaping boundaries.

Currently there are a number of buildings/land identified on the indicative plan that are not proposed for development. However, should they come forward for development in the future, they should be integrated within the wider development proposal.

The plan is indicative only and designed to show how the site could be laid out to achieve all of the site objectives including housing mix, open space, linear park, SuD's and good integration and connectivity.

Indicative Plan



Phasing

It is assumed that, due to multiple ownerships, the Firwood Road site will come forward as several applications and it is currently understood that the intentions of owners at the time of writing this Brief would suggest that the development of the site would generally be phased south to north.

Clearly this may have an implication for highways access, with the intended primary access onto Neverstitch Road potentially not being developed in the first phase. As such, the Transport Assessment for Phase 1 will be critical in identifying an initial access for Phase 1 and how this will be managed once the primary access onto Neverstitch Road is delivered as part of a later stage.

Likewise, with a phased development of multiple ownerships, securing a fair contribution towards the on-site public open space from all landowners in all phases may necessitate the use of Section 106 (S106) agreements and financial contributions towards the creation of the open space on other ownerships.



Development Process

Outline of potential planning obligations

Planning obligations are sensitive to the overall site viability assessment, development mix and quantum. They could also be significantly affected by the site constraints, underground utilities, and variables that are not yet known.

Any development on site will make a proportionate contribution towards the strategic infrastructure through S106 agreements and/or CIL charges.

Required Supporting Information

Aside from the usual Planning Statement and Design & Access Statement, the following evidence will be required to support any planning application in accordance with Policy RS1 of the Local Plan on the Firswood Road site:

Affordable Housing Statement – providing details relating to the provision of affordable housing, including the number and mix of residential units with numbers of habitable units, plans showing the location of units and the number of habitable rooms and/or bedrooms and the floor space of the units. If different levels or types of affordability or tenure are proposed for different units this should be clearly and fully explained.

Ecological Survey – as a minimum, a Phase 1 Habitat Survey, with more detailed assessments required depending on what the Phase 1 Survey identifies.

Coal Mining Risk Assessment – the presence of a Coal Mining Referral Area and Mineral Safeguarding Area will require close liaison with the Coal Authority on any development proposals and potentially a Coal Mining Risk Assessment Report.

Contaminated Land Report – where a development proposal includes a particularly vulnerable use (e.g. a care home) or where there is any suspected history of contamination on any part of the site, a Contaminated Land Report is required in line with the latest national guidance.

Crime Impact Statement – to consider whether the development can help avoid / reduce the adverse effects of crime and disorder. This can be provided as part of the Design & Access Statement.

Draft Section 106 Agreement – depending on the precise requirements at the time of application and what is outlined on the Council's Regulation 123 list, this may address the provision of affordable housing, the provision / improvement of open space and / or contributions towards highways and transport improvements.

EIA Screening - Seeking the Council's opinion on Scoping for Environmental Impact Assessment.

Flood Risk Assessment – provide a Flood Risk Assessment in line with the latest national guidance to assess any implications development may have on all forms of flood risk on the site and in the wider area, and address how sustainable drainage systems will be utilised in the development proposal.

Foul Sewerage Treatment Statement – all new buildings need separate connections to foul and storm water sewers and applications for such development should therefore be accompanied by a foul sewerage assessment.

Heritage Statement – ensuring that the impacts on nearby Heritage Assets have been considered in the preparation of development proposals.

Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment – to ensure that the landscape and visual impacts of proposals are fully considered in the preparation of development proposals.

Landscaping Scheme – identifying the main areas and types of planting and hard surfaces (existing and proposed).

Parking & Access Arrangements – all applications requiring the provision of off-street parking and servicing will be required to demonstrate adequate on-site parking and servicing provision, including mobility spaces and provision for cycling and motorcycles as appropriate, in line with Policy IF2 of the Local Plan.

Renewable Energy Statement – an opportunity for the applicant to show how the consideration of energy efficiency and sourcing energy from a renewable source, together with the use of sustainable resources, has influenced the development proposals. In line with Policy EN1 of the Local Plan, low carbon design should be incorporated into the development proposals as required by Building Regulations and the potential for renewable, low carbon or decentralised energy schemes serving the site should be considered thoroughly.

Site Waste Management Plan – should contain details of the types of construction waste to be removed from the site, the identity of the person who will remove the waste, and the site that the waste will be taken to. The plan should also include details of how waste will be minimised and materials re-used on site.

Statement of Community Involvement – setting out how the applicant has complied with the requirements for pre-application consultation provided in the Council’s adopted Statement of Community Involvement and demonstrating that the views of the local community have been sought and taken into account in the formulation of development proposals.

Transport Assessment – required where any proposal would be likely to result in a material increase in traffic movements on roads, whether adjacent to or remote from the site.

Travel Plan – should outline the way in which the transport implications of the development are going to be managed in order to ensure the minimum environmental, social and economic impacts. The travel plan should have a strategy for its implementation that is appropriate for the development proposal under consideration.

Tree Survey – in line with Policy EN2 of the Local Plan, consider the potential adverse effects of the development proposals on any existing trees or hedges on, or adjacent to, the site. This should be undertaken by a suitably qualified arboriculturist and in line with BS.5837:2012.

Utilities Statement – to indicate how the development will connect to existing utility infrastructure systems.