



OMEGA **SOUTH**

Planning Statement

Omega South – Zones 3-6 - Outline Planning Application



Planning Statement

Outline Planning Application
Zone 3-6, Omega South,
Warrington

Omega (Warrington) Limited

August 2015

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Executive Summary

This application, submitted by Omega Warrington Ltd, seeks outline planning permission for:

"Outline Planning Application for the creation of up to 1100 residential units and mixed-use zone to include retail uses (Use Classes A1-A5), Hotel (Use Class C1), Extra Care Facility (Use Class C2 - Residential Institution) and Non-Residential Institution (Use Class D1) with associated access, parking, landscape and infrastructure proposals."

The proposals form the final phase of the Omega South Masterplan in the areas identified as Zones 3, 4, 5 and 6 and comprise mixed-use and residential areas as well as significant areas of new open space, landscaping and habitat creation.

In summary, it is considered that the proposed development does not fully accord with the Development Plan allocation for this site. The mixed-use zone(s) are in accordance with the ancillary uses that are identified in Policy CS 8, however residential development is not specifically identified. The site is allocated in the Local Plan Core Strategy (Core Strategy) for employment generating uses (Policy CS 8), an allocation made to ensure that adequate land is available to meet local and regional employment and economic needs within the Borough.

However, whilst the allocation identifies preferred uses for the site it does not go as far as to identify unacceptable alternative uses for the site. The application site represents a highly sustainable location for new housing development in so far as it is a brownfield site, within the settlement boundary which is well located in terms of access to sustainable modes of transport and a comprehensive network of pedestrian and cycle facilities. The site is also within walking distance of existing services in Great Sankey and will be well served by the proposed local facilities that form part of this application. The proposals also offer good opportunities for working and living, with strong links to the commercial elements of Omega, in close proximity, further reducing the need to travel.

Consequently whilst residential development may not fully accord with the Omega/Lingley Mere site allocation as defined by Policy CS 8, proposals do accord with the Core Strategy's overall aim of delivering sustainable development and any potential adverse impacts of granting permission would not significantly or demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the development.

In addition, the Core Strategy identifies that, to meet the employment land requirement for the Borough, the entire Omega site is not required to come forward for employment generating uses. In fact, the level of employment land already consented on Omega makes sufficient contribution to the employment land supply that no further employment land is

required on the site. This, combined with the fact that the market for major out-of-centre office destinations has faded dramatically, provides further justification for proposals to bring forward alternative uses on the site.

This Planning Statement has also considered the proposals against policies contained within the National Planning Policy Framework. This is deemed necessary because the outcome of the High Court challenge to the Core Strategy means that the Plan is currently silent on the matter of an overall housing target and specific housing allocations are absent from the Plan. In such circumstances the presumption in favour of sustainable development applies (NPPF Para. 14) and it has been demonstrated that the benefits of the proposals; economic, social and environmental, significantly and demonstrably outweigh any potential adverse impacts resulting from the development. This view is affirmed through the findings of the assessment work carried out in support of this application in relation to Environmental, Transportation and Retail impacts.

The development does not fully accord with the site's Development Plan allocation, however this Planning Statement has demonstrated that the proposals represent sustainable development, for which there is a presumption in favour and that any potential adverse impacts of granting permission would not significantly or demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the development. We therefore respectfully request that planning permission be granted

The development will herald the final stage in the redevelopment of Omega South and will realise the long standing ambition of Omega Warrington Limited, in partnership with Warrington Borough Council, to bring the Omega site forward as a focus for economic, social and environmental regeneration within the area.

This Statement forms only one part of the application submission. The Statement makes cross reference to a series of other documents submitted as part of or alongside the application. Those other documents should be considered in full, albeit this document identifies the principle conclusions of each and provides a useful single point of reference.

For clarification, the full submission comprises the following:

- Application Form and Certificates;
- Planning Statement (Miller Developments Ltd);
- Design & Access Statement (Archial NORR/Place on Earth);
- Transport Statement (WSP);
- Environmental Statement –EIA (WSP);
- Drainage Strategy (WSP);
- Retail Statement (GVA);

- Consultation Statement (GL Hearn); and
- Application Plans
 - Site Location Plan - (00)910
 - Proposed Land Use Drawing - (00)910 Rev. C
 - Proposed Phasing - (00)911 Rev. B
 - Building Heights - (00)912 Rev. C
 - Building Densities - (00)913 Rev. C
 - Vehicular Circulation - (00)914 Rev. B
 - Pedestrian Circulation - (00)915 Rev. C
 - Landscape Removal / Retention - (00)917 Rev. B
 - Proposed Landscape - (00)918 Rev. B
 - Indicative Layout Plan- Residential Phase One (00)919 Rev. B
 - Indicative Layout Plan- Mixed Use Zones (00)920 Rev. B

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Miller Developments Ltd on behalf of Omega (Warrington) Ltd (OWL), a joint venture between Miller Group and Royal Bank of Scotland. The application proposals represent the culmination of work over the last 12 months by OWL, in conjunction with the landowners, the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), and Warrington Borough Council (WBC) and are in accordance with the agreed Masterplan Development Strategy for Omega South.
- 1.2 In June 2007, outline planning permission was granted for business space for Phase 1 and 2 of Omega, which allowed for up to 1.6m sq.ft of logistics space (Omega North) and 1.5m sq.ft of office accommodation (part of Omega South). Since then the global recession has seen the development of schemes across the UK slow down due to very poor occupier demand and reduced investor confidence, Omega was no exception. However, OWL along with the HCA, WBC and Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership have worked hard to secure investment for the site to help facilitate development as quickly as possible once market conditions improved. This ground work has led to significant development over the last three years with over 1m sq.ft of logistics floorspace being granted reserved matters consent on Omega North and a further 2.75m sq.ft on Omega South.
- 1.3 The revised Omega Masterplan document was prepared in response to the global recession and reimagines the original plans for Omega, as a prestigious location for business development, into a more viable mixed-use employment, residential and commercial regeneration opportunity. The Masterplan document was finalised and presented to the Council's Executive Board, who endorsed its content (13 January 2014) thus ensuring that the Masterplan provides a robust strategic development framework for the site that will provide a context for subsequent planning applications and proposals for Omega South.
- 1.4 The re-working of the Masterplan also coincided with the preparation of the Warrington Borough Council Local Plan Core Strategy Document, which during its preparation identified Omega (and Lingley Mere) as a strategic location for economic growth, which in the interests of creating a sustainable business community, is capable of accommodating ancillary uses of an appropriate scale and nature to provide a business services hub to serve the development as a whole, such as retail, leisure, hotel and conference facilities will be supported. At Finalised Draft stage provision was also made for the development of about 1,100 dwellings within the plan period, however the specific reference to residential development on this scale

was removed following a successful High Court challenge to the proposed adopted Core Strategy document.

- 1.5 The proposals to which this application relates form the final significant stage in the regeneration of the south site, on areas identified as Zones 3, 4, 5 & 6, zoned in the Masterplan for residential (Zone 6) and mixed-use (Zones 3-5) development. The proposals comprise an "Outline Planning Application for the creation of up to 1100 residential units and mixed-use zone to include retail uses (Use Classes A1-A5), Hotel (Use Class C1), Extra Care Facility (Use Class C2 - Residential Institution) and Non-Residential Institution (Use Class D1) with associated access, parking, landscape and infrastructure proposals". Access will be via the existing access points situated around the southern boundary of the site
- 1.6 The application boundary has also been drawn to include the remaining landscape elements of the Masterplan, referred to as the Green Heart. This significant landscape feature not only provides a focal point for the Masterplan but also delivers overall regeneration of Omega South. It is envisaged that the Green Heart will be delivered in stages as development comes forward across the site, this application provides conceptual landscape proposals and an indicative phasing strategy for this element of the site, to provide comfort to the Planning Authority on the nature and timing of this key feature. At this stage, the Green Heart is expected to be delivered with 4-5 years of work starting on site, although elements associated with the new habitat creation will come forward and be complete in advance of this and prior to work starting on plots that would affect sensitive areas of the site.
- 1.7 The Project Team responsible for the preparation of the application and supporting documents is as follows:
 - Planning: Miller Developments Ltd ('MDL')
 - Architects/Masterplanners: Archial NORR
 - Transport; WSP Group Ltd ('WSP')
 - Environmental; WSP Group Ltd ('WSP')
 - Infrastructure and Drainage: WSP Group Ltd ('WSP')
 - Landscape Architects: Place on Earth ('PoE')
 - Retail Impact; Bilfinger GVA (GVA)
 - Strategic Communications: GL Hearn ('GLH')

2. The Application Site and Surroundings

Site and Surroundings

- 2.1 Omega lies within the north-western quadrant of the Borough of Warrington, immediately adjacent to the M62 Motorway, at Junction 8. Warrington Town Centre lies approximately 3.5km to the south-east. The Borough boundary with St Helens defines the site's western boundary.
- 2.2 The wider site is surrounded by a mix of uses, including commercial, residential, light industrial, retail and open countryside. To the north and west, beyond the Zone 7 manufacturing and logistics zone, lies predominantly open agricultural land and designated Green Belt. To the west lies the business headquarters for United Utilities, known as Lingley Mere. To the south and east lie the predominantly residential areas of Great Sankey and Westbrook, served by schools, health facilities, local shops and recreational open space. Further east still lies the Gemini Retail and Business Parks and Callands residential area.
- 2.3 A short distance to the south east, between Great Sankey and Westbrook, lies the regeneration site known as Chapelford Urban Village. This site extends to approximately 92 hectares (227 acres) and benefits from planning permission for the development a major residential-based mixed use scheme to create an urban village. The development, which is now almost complete comprises over 2,000 dwellings and various facilities including a railway station, Warrington West.

The Application Site

- 2.4 The Omega site is traversed east to west by the M62 Motorway, creating two definitive land parcels - Omega North and Omega South. Omega North extends to 47.89 hectares and is now home to over 1 million sq.ft of logistics floorspace. The overall Omega South site extends to about 185 hectares, of which some 31 hectares are covered by the OPP for Phase 1 & 2 (June 2007) for up to 1.5 million sq.ft of B1 office development. The OPP for Zone 7 and the Green Heart corridor, covers a further 77ha of the South site and detailed planning permissions for an ASDA Logistics development and a new Barrow Hall primary school cover a further 25ha and 3ha, respectively. The application site itself equates to approximately 49ha.
- 2.5 Together, this land historically comprised a large part of the former US Airforce/ Royal Airforce Burtonwood Air Base. Used as a base for operations during World War II, the site was intensively developed with hangars, runways, taxiways and other associated infrastructure. The airbase comprised all of the present day Omega site as

well as further significant land to the south-east (Chapelford Urban Village) and south-west (Lingley Mere).

- 2.7 Following a phased rundown of the site in the 1960s and 1970s and construction of the M62 Motorway through the site along the line of the original east-west runway, a large proportion of the air base was sold on to the Warrington and Runcorn Development Corporation in 1982. In October 1989, ownership was passed to the Commission for the New Towns (CNT) and then in May 1999 on to English Partnerships, who have subsequently become the HCA.
- 2.8 Following acquisition, the Development Corporation conducted a phased programme of demolition and this was intensified between 1986 and 1989, when all remaining buildings and assets to the south of the motorway (with the exception a Pickett - Hamilton Fort) were removed. Omega South was subsequently levelled and there is little evidence remaining of the former use of this site. The majority of the site lies vacant, although construction work has started on a logistics centre granted detailed planning consent as an initial phase of the Zone 7 development.
- 2.9 In 1991, CNT secured the disposal of 40 hectares (approximately 97 acres) at the south-western corner of the Omega site to North West Water Plc (now United Utilities) for the development of its corporate headquarters. Approximately 19 half of this land, now known as Lingley Mere, has been developed for that purpose and therefore falls outside the Omega site. However, the remainder which is controlled by a Joint Venture initiative between United Utilities (UU) and Muse Developments, was deemed surplus to UU's requirements and now benefits from a number of recently renewed outline consents for B1, B2 and B8 development. In addition, full planning permission was granted in 2010 for a 132 bed hotel with conference facilities. This surplus United Utilities land is covered by the Omega policies contained within the emerging Core Strategy Document (see Section 5). However, it is not included within the Masterplan Development Strategy document prepared by OWL and approved by WBC.
- 2.10 To the immediate north and west of Zone 6 is the site of a Regional Mail Processing Centre for the Royal Mail. Although situated with the heart of the Omega site, its previously developed and operational status means that it falls outside of the Omega allocation in the adopted Core Strategy and is not covered by the Masterplan Development Strategy document. However, OWL have had pre-application discussions with Royal Mail representatives and due cognisance of the Royal Mail's operational requirements has been given through the development and masterplan

processes. Detailed mitigation measures, where appropriate, will be a matter for future reserved matters applications.

Access

- 2.11 The wider Omega site is well related to the strategic and local highway network with Junction 8 of the M62 motorway, situated on its eastern boundary. The construction of this junction was promoted and funded by the HCA (then English Partnerships), in order to facilitate the development of Omega. The junction comprises a grade separated interchange and provides access to the eastbound and westbound carriageways, whilst slip roads also provide access to the existing Burtonwood Service Area (eastbound) on the north side of the motorway. The westbound service area closed in 2008 and has subsequently been redeveloped for a mixed-use commercial developed known as Gemini 8 accessed off the Gemini Link Road (Charon Way), which was constructed at the same time as the new junction. This road provides a direct and dedicated link between the new junction and the Gemini Business and Retail Park. The Omega site therefore has a direct access via the junction to this established business and retail area.
- 2.12 As part of the junction development and in order to facilitate the development of the Omega site a dedicated access point was created from the roundabout to serve Omega South. In addition, the carriageway of the motorway was improved between Junction 8 and 9, involving a widening of both carriageways to four lanes plus hard shoulder.
- 2.13 As well as the works to Junction 8, spurs have been provided off surrounding local roads in order to allow access to Omega South. Potential access points have been provided from roundabouts at key junctions on the local network surrounding the site, including the junction of Omega Boulevard with Orion Boulevard and at the eastern end of Orion Boulevard.
- 2.14 The site also lies close to three major rail corridors. Within 3km of the site lie two Liverpool – Manchester and Trans-Pennine routes and the west coast main line. The nearest mainline stations are found in Warrington Town Centre, namely Warrington Central and Warrington Bank Quay and there remain proposals to create a third railway station at Chapleford (Warrington West), which would be within easy access of the site.

3. Planning History

3.1 The application site has no specific planning application history, however as discussed, the majority of the wider Omega site has been the subject of various planning permissions, of which the following are of most relevance:

Application Number	Description	Decision
2003/01449	Outline application for Omega Phases 1 & 2 involving phased redevelopment for primarily employment uses (offices, industrial, storage & distribution) with associated development for subsidiary uses (retail, food & drink, non-residential institutions & hotel), and associated car parking, landscaping and infrastructure, including demolition of existing structures on site. (Access was a detailed matter for consideration as part of this planning application).	Application Approved: 05/06/2007
2012/20315	Plot 1B, Omega North - Reserved matters application for distribution centre (use class B8) with associated car parking, landscaping and access from approved service road.	Application approved: 13/08/2012
2012/20856	Plot 1A, Omega North - Application for approval of Reserved Matters following outline permission 2003/01449 - distribution centre (use class B8) with associated car parking, landscaping and site access.	Application Approved: 06/12/2012
2013/21695	Plot 1C, Omega North - Reserved matters application for a logistics facility (Use Class B8) with associated car parking, landscaping and associated works, pursuant to outline permission 2003/01449 (as amended by 2012/20812).	Application Approved: 03/06/2013

<p>2013/21340 & 2013/22143</p>	<p>Omega South - Proposed distribution warehouse development with associated access, landscaping, estate roads, HGV and car parking, attenuation pond and other ancillary development.</p>	<p>Applications Approved: 26/04/2013 & 29/08/2013</p>
<p>2014/23290</p>	<p>Outline Application (Major) - The creation of up to 196,000 sq.m (2.1 million sq.ft) of B2 manufacturing and B8 logistics floorspace (split 30% B2/70% B8) with associated car parking, landscaping and infrastructure.</p>	<p>Application Approved: 16/05/2014</p>
<p>2014/24372</p>	<p>Reserved Matters (Major) - Application for approval of reserved matters to consider appearance, landscaping, layout and scale following approval of outline permission 2014/23290</p>	<p>Application Approved: 26/09/2015</p>
<p>2014/24677</p>	<p>Reserved Matters (Major) - Application for approval of reserved matters following outline planning permission 2014/23290 (all matters reserved) - Manufacturing facility (Use Class B2) with associated car parking, landscaping and site access</p>	<p>Application Approved: 20/11/2015</p>
<p>2015/25467</p>	<p>Full Planning (Major) - Proposed construction of a three form entry primary school, siting of mobile unit, sports pitches and sprinkler tank with new north-south access road including a pedestrian and cycle way.</p>	<p>Application Approved: 15/05/2015</p>

3.2 As can be seen the majority of planning permissions and development work has centred on the development of logistics floorspace on both Omega North and South, reflecting the strong demand in this sector. However, OWL have also been pleased to secure the first manufacturing use on Omega South (2014/24677) in line with the Zone 7 OPP. OWL have also worked closely with WBC to help secure the delivery of the new Barrow Hall Primary (2015/25467), which will be located within Zone 6, Omega South. The Primary School is set to replace the existing Barrow Hall Primary School, Barrow Hall Lane, which is at capacity. The development of the school and associated infrastructure is due to start in September 2015 and is due to be completed in time a September opening in 2016. In the first instance the school will

serve its exiting catchment area and pupils, however it is anticipated that over time as the residential development proposed by this application is delivered that the catchment will change to serve more of the Omega site. The delivery of the new Barrow Hall Primary School sits within a wider WBC Education strategy that will lead to a series of improvements and extensions to other primary schools in the wider area to accommodate the growth in demand that will result from planned housing growth within the area.

4. Masterplan Development Strategy

- 4.1 The Masterplan Development Strategy document was presented to and approved by the WBC Executive Board on 13 January 2014 and was also subject to public consultation in conjunction with the Zone 7 planning application during January and February 2014. The document was prepared to provide a framework for future development on Omega South (Omega North being substantially complete in line with the original OPP and Masterplan proposals) and to provide an introduction to the development zones created within the masterplan.
- 4.2 The development plot areas, green infrastructure and overall masterplan layout were created following analysis of key drivers such as ecological, landscape and drainage strategies, including extensive consultation with key statutory stakeholders and consultees.
- 4.3 A copy of the approved Masterplan Development Strategy is submitted alongside this application (for information purposes), but briefly the Masterplan comprises the following:
- Creation of distinct development zones:
 - Zones 1 & 2 – B1 Office (extant planning permission)
 - Zones 3/4/5/6E – Mixed Use (to include commercial uses such a supermarket, local shops, restaurants and other amenities to serve the site and wider community)
 - Zone 6 – C3 Residential
 - Zone 7 – B2 Manufacturing and B8 Logistics
 - Provision of comprehensive transport and pedestrian infrastructure within the site and an Access Strategy that will ensure connectivity within the local and wider area.
 - A high quality, sustainable landscape strategy that will create a safe and attractive environment for users and residents of the site, whilst also protecting and enhancing key ecological factors that affect the site.
 - Creation of a 'Green Heart' that will not only provide a focal amenity point for the site as a whole but also deliver significant on-site ecological/biodiversity benefits to offset any loss resulting from the development;

5. Development proposal

Description of Development

5.1 This outline planning application is for:

"Outline Planning Application for the creation of up to 1100 residential units and mixed-use zone to include retail uses (Use Classes A1-A5), Hotel (Use Class C1), Extra Care Facility (Use Class C2 - Residential Institution) and Non-Residential Institution (Use Class D1) with associated access, parking, landscape and infrastructure proposals."

5.2 The application is made in outline, in order to establish the principle of development, in accordance with the approved Masterplan for Omega South. Conceptual details for the proposed 'Green Heart' landscape and phasing strategy are also submitted for information as part of this application although formal approval is not sought for these at this stage. All other detailed matters are reserved for subsequent submissions.

5.3 The planning application is supported by a suite of documents dealing with Design & Access, Transport, Retail Impact and Environmental matters. In addition, Indicative Layout Plans have been prepared for one of the proposed residential development plots (Zone 6 - Phase 1) and the mixed-use zone (Zones 3-5) to demonstrate how the proposed scale of development could be accommodated. These layouts have been prepared with reference to relevant WBC guidance and standards where appropriate.

5.4 With regard to the structural landscaping and main infrastructure, the proposed principles of design and implementation are specified within the Design & Access Statement prepared by Archial NORR (in conjunction with PoE and WSP) and those principles are also submitted for formal approval.

5.5 Details of individual siting of buildings within the development parcels and their landscaping are to be submitted as reserved matters, along with details of external appearance and design. However, certain parameters are specified within the Design & Access Statement. The primary aim of the Design Control Guidelines is to promote a consistent, high standard of design within the residential zones. The Design Control Guidelines are presented as a series of design objectives in order to provide general guidelines, or in some instances specific criteria, for development sites. The Design Control Guidelines are conceived as a dynamic design tool which is to be used to ensure the overall design intentions are implemented. The Guidelines will therefore have the ability to be amended, updated, revised and re-issued as required.

The formal approval of these documents will therefore ensure details that emerge at the reserved matters stage are in line with the principles of development proposed at this stage.

- 5.6 The identification of firm parameters and principles of development at this outline stage enables the Local Planning Authority to assess the merits and potential impacts of the development. This is particularly important in relation to assessing the likely significant environmental effects of the development, within the Environmental Statement that accompanies the application.
- 5.7 Notwithstanding the need to identify broad parameters for development, it is vital that the permission allows for a reasonable degree of flexibility in terms of the final form of development. This flexibility is essential because OWL are not a housebuilder and intend to dispose of individual development plots to a variety of housebuilders who will have their own design and development principles. Given that the application is made in outline, and that sufficient detail is provided to assess the likely impacts of the development, this approach is considered entirely appropriate.

Proposed Development

- 5.8 The proposed development represents the final phase of the Omega South development to be applied for planning permission, identified as Zones 3-6. The proposals comprise primarily residential development, up to 1100 units, with a separate mixed-use area that will contain a variety of retail, commercial and residential and non-residential institution uses. The development will complement the wider prestigious, sustainable business community that is planned for Omega and should provide the catalyst for future development on the remainder of Omega.
- 5.9 The Masterplan broadly identifies two main areas within which development will be focused. The mixed-use area is defined as Zones 3-5, which are located centrally within the site adjacent to the previously approved B1 zones (Zones 1 & 2), Green Heart and the more northerly residential development plots. The residential area, identified as Zone 6, has been indicatively split into seven development plots that will be brought forward on a phased basis. The new Primary School site is also contained within the Zone 6 area, immediately to the south of the Royal Mail Distribution Depot. The outer edges of the development plots are also defined through wide belts of structural landscaping, swales and habitat corridors.
- 5.10 As discussed above, the variety of housebuilders likely to be involved with development on the site, means that there is no certainty over the final form that development on the site will take. However, an indicative layout plan for the first

phase of residential has been prepared (Ref. No. (00)919 Rev. B), which attempts to show how a residential plot could be developed, based upon typical design standards for this type of development.

- 5.11 An indicative layout plan has also been prepared for Zones 3-5 (Ref. No. (00)920 Rev. B) that illustrates a potential development layout for this area based upon the uses proposed. It is anticipated that the final make-up of these Zones will be largely driven by market demand and therefore the application seeks to provide maximum flexibility, whilst also providing some broad parameters for the development. In addition to some higher density residential development (flats/townhouses etc) it is anticipated that the mixed-use zones will be able to accommodate in the region of 10,000 sq.m (circa 100,000 sq.ft) of commercial floorspace. To provide a degree of certainty at this point the table below provides a breakdown of the proposed maximum floorspace figures to be created:

Planning Use Class	Gross Floorspace (sq.m)
A1 (foodstore)	2,000
A1 (non-food)	1,500
A2, A3, A4 and A5	2,000
C1	2,850
C2	80 beds
D1	1,000

- 5.12 These Gross Floor Areas have been used to inform the impact assessment work that supports this application, however it is important to note that these GFA figures are only indicative at this stage and have not been subject to any form of market testing. Consequently there is a possibility that the exact composition of Zones 3-5 will change post determination of the application, should this be the case OWL will liaise with WBC to ensure that any changes are assessed through updated impact studies, where relevant.
- 5.13 The Proposed Access and Vehicular Circulation Plan (IANC 14002800 (00) 914 Rev B) and Proposed Access and Pedestrian Circulation Plan (IANC 14002800 (00) 915 Rev B) show the proposed accesses, the primary roads and the location of the proposed pedestrian and cycle routes. As shown on Proposed Access and Vehicular Circulation Plan, Zone 6 will be primarily accessed via the existing roundabout junctions off Lingley Green Avenue and Whittle Avenue and a new access junction to be created on Omega Boulevard. The primary access for Zones 3-5 will be via the existing roundabout junction between Burtonwood Road and Whittle Avenue.

- 5.14 The initial highways junction spurs to allow access into the site along these roads already exist and appropriate consents and legal agreements will be sought to allow connection to these at the appropriate time.
- 5.15 Once vehicles have accessed the site, there will be a choice of routes available to access individual plots, with secondary boulevards connecting the Zones and development parcels. The indicative location of accesses into the development parcels are shown on Proposed Access and Vehicular Circulation Plan. These routes are intended to be combined highways with provision for both vehicular and non-motorised users.
- 5.16 The Proposed Development includes the creation of new pedestrian and cycle routes which will link into the existing network and provide new opportunities for walking and cycling through the site, connecting into Zones 1, 2 and 7 to the north of the Site. The illustrative locations of these routes are provided on Proposed Access and Pedestrian Circulation Plan. These new routes will encourage a reduction in car dependency through the creation of a mixed-use and integrated urban neighbourhood with interconnected streets that are conducive to walking and cycling. On the more lightly trafficked streets i.e. within the residential development plots, walking on footway and cycling on street will be encouraged in line with latest best practice and in particular the principles within Manual for Streets (Ref. 4.1).
- 5.17 Where possible the development will create pedestrian only routes through the proposed areas of landscaping and open space as shown on Proposed Access and Pedestrian Circulation Plan. The key proposed pedestrian routes comprise a circular route around the 'Green Heart' and along the unnamed watercourse (which connects to North Park Brook/Mary Anne Brook) to the west and south of Zones 3 - 5 and along the western, southern and eastern boundaries of Zone 6.
- 5.18 Within the site, key walking and cycling desire lines will be satisfied using segregated walking and cycling routes, conforming to latest best practice in terms of design and security. These routes will be marked and surfaced according to local and national standards, and will be arranged to include natural surveillance from local houses and areas of activity. Where appropriate, routes will be lit in accordance with the relevant British Standards.

Consistency with the Masterplan Development Strategy

- 5.19 The proposed development is entirely consistent with the Masterplan, which has been approved by WBC as an appropriate vision/framework for the wider site and which is submitted alongside this application for information purposes only.

- 5.20 It is not considered appropriate for the Masterplan itself to comprise part of the application and therefore subject to formal approval, as this represents only a vision of the site at this moment in time. The identification of development parcels and parameters within the documents submitted for approval as part of this application enables the principle of development to be established, in a framework form that is generally consistent with the current approved Masterplan.
- 5.21 It is envisaged that the development proposed within this application will be constructed over a 10 year period, depending on market demand and conditions. The development will therefore in itself be phased and an example of the potential phasing strategy is outlined in the Proposed Phasing Plan (IANC 14002800 (00) 911 Rev B), submitted with the application. Principally the strategy is intended to be sufficiently flexible to respond to market demands and ensure a successful, commercially viable development, delivered in a comprehensive and integrated manner. Phased development in this manner will mean that up to three housebuilders could be on site at any one time, as phases overlap. This should engender healthy competition between selected housebuilders ensuring a strong choice of housing product, within high quality developments at attractive prices. Linking the delivery of the mixed-use zone to the residential development will also provide a sustainable form of development that will create a variety of employment opportunities on a local and regional scale over the lifetime of the development.
- 5.22 The proposed land uses for the site directly reflect the Masterplan vision, whilst the overall design and landscaping principles, access arrangements and environmental principles contained within the application proposals are also all consistent with the Masterplan document. This is explicitly illustrated in the separate Design & Access Statement prepared by Archial NORR, the Transport Statement (WSP), the Environmental Statement (WSP) and the Retail Statement (GVA), which all accompany the application.

6. Pre-application Consultation

- 6.1 Throughout the development of Omega OWL have always committed to undertaking pre-application consultation and have met regularly with various representatives and departments of the Council, key stakeholders and the local community. This commitment has been continued through the preparation of the Zones 3-6 outline planning application.
- 6.2 OWL appointed GL Hearn's Strategic Communications team to undertake public consultation on the Zones 3-6 proposals, the next phase of development on Omega South. The consultation strategy not only responded to the advice laid out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) for pre-planning consultation, but also that of Warrington Borough Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement.
- 6.3 On OWL's behalf, GL Hearn undertook public consultation for Zones 3-6 in May and June 2015. A Consultation Statement, prepared by GL Hearn, is submitted with this application and summarises the consultation undertaken and the feedback received. The final chapter sets out the team's response to issues raised.
- 6.4 Omega Warrington Ltd is committed to being part of the Warrington community and speaking to neighbours of the site, local residents and businesses as proposals develop and come forward as planning applications. Three public exhibitions were held and were promoted in a number of ways including a community newsletter sent to over 11,000 local residents and businesses and electronic flyers were circulated to local stakeholders. Presentations were also given to two Parish Councils and the Omega Partnership Group.
- 6.5 The feedback from the public exhibitions provided the team with a good overview of the main local concerns and views on the initial proposals. The feedback received focused largely on traffic issues where people perceive local roads to be at full capacity already and local infrastructure to be ill equipped to withstand any further congestion pressures. Various roads and junctions were highlighted as areas of key concern and recipients felt that these areas warranted further study and assessment. The approach taken towards creating a variety of housing designs and types was generally accepted and many recipients were keen for more amenities to be provided within the local area – particularly medical facilities and community facilities for young people. Furthermore, recipients re-asserted the importance of habitat and bio-diversity conservation on the site and the need for the 35 acre green heart.

- 6.6 OWL has responded to the main issues raised in the report and the various supporting documents submitted with the application covering traffic, environmental and retail impact also consider the points raised and where necessary propose mitigation approaches to combat any perceived issues in the area.
- 6.7 This Consultation Statement will be uploaded to the Omega website for the public to view and announcements will be made to the community to promote access to the planning application and awareness of the statutory consultation process. Furthermore, post submission, the website will be kept updated with any developments or announcements on the site in addition to the continuation of the quarterly community newsletter which will be sent to surrounding residents and businesses.

7. Planning Policy

7.1 The main national, regional and local planning policies which are relevant to consideration of this application are summarised below. This section sets out key policy considerations which should be taken into account in considering this application.

National Planning Policy Framework

7.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published on 27 March 2012 setting out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The NPPF replaced all previous national Planning Policy Statements and Guidance, apart from PPS10.

7.3 The primary objective of the Framework is the desire to achieve **sustainable development** and the policies contained within the Framework, taken as a whole, constitute the Government's view of what sustainable development in England means in practice for the planning system.

7.4 The Framework clearly identifies three aspects to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles:

- **an economic role** – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;
- **a social role** – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and
- **an environmental role** – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.

- 7.5 The Framework also confirms that sustainable development should realise positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural and historic environment, as well as in people's quality of life, including (but not limited to):
- making it easier for jobs to be created in cities, towns and villages;
 - moving from a net loss of bio-diversity to achieving net gains for nature;⁶
 - replacing poor design with better design;
 - improving the conditions in which people live, work, travel and take leisure; and
 - widening the choice of high quality homes.
- 7.6 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This National Planning Policy Framework does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making. Proposed development that accords with an up-to-date Local Plan should be approved, and proposed development that conflicts should be refused unless other material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 7.7 At the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (Paragraph 14), which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking. For **decision-taking** this means:
- approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; and
 - where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, granting permission unless:
 - any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole; or
 - specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted.
- 7.8 To support the presumption in favour of sustainable development, the Framework sets out 12 core planning principles that should underpin both plan-making and decision-taking, which include the need to:

- Proactively drive and support sustainable economic development in order to deliver the homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs.
- Deliver high quality design and good standards of amenity.
- Support the transition to a low carbon future.
- Contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution.
- Encourage the effective use of land that has been previously developed.
- Actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling.

7.9 Section 1 of the Framework sets out the government's commitment to securing economic growth in order to create jobs and prosperity, building on the countries inherent strengths and meeting the twin challenges of global competition and of a low carbon future.

7.10 Section 2 focuses on ensuring the vitality of town centres and sets out how planning policy and decision making should meet this aim. Due to the fact that the proposals contain an element of town centre uses within the mixed-use zone, a Retail Statement has been prepared which deals with this issue in full.

7.11 Transport is addressed in Section 4 and transport systems need to be balanced in favour of sustainable transport modes. Encouragement is given to solutions which support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and reduce congestion. Transport Statements or Assessments will be required for all development that generates significant amounts of movements. A Travel Plan will also be required, prior to the approved development coming into use.

7.12 The Framework states that planning policies should aim for a balance of land uses within their area so that people can be encouraged to minimise journey lengths for employment, shopping, leisure, education and other activities. For larger scale residential developments in particular, planning policies should promote a mix of uses in order to provide opportunities to undertake day-to-day activities including work on site. Where practical, particularly within large-scale developments, key facilities such as primary schools and local shops should be located within walking distance of most properties.

7.13 The Framework provides that planning decisions should take account of whether:

- The opportunities for sustainable transport modes have been taken up depending on the nature and location of the site, to reduce the need for major transport infrastructure.
- Safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all.
- Improvements can be undertaken within the transport network that cost effectively limits the significant impacts of the development.
- Development should only be refused where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe.

7.14 Development that generates significant movement is to be located where the need to travel will be minimised and the use of sustainable modes can be maximised. It should be located and designed where practice to:

- Accommodate the efficient delivery of goods and supplies.
- Give priority to pedestrian and cycle movements.
- Have access to high quality public transport facilities.
- Create safe and secure layouts.
- Incorporate facilities for charging plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles.
- Consider the needs of people with disabilities by all modes of travel.

7.15 Section 6 tackles the need to boost the supply and delivery of a wide choice of high quality homes. The Framework establishes that housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development and that local planning authorities should:

- use their evidence base to ensure that their Local Plan meets the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area, as far as is consistent with the policies set out in this Framework, including identifying key sites which are critical to the delivery of the housing strategy over the plan period;
- identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years' worth of housing against their housing requirements with an additional buffer of 5% (moved forward from later in the plan period) to ensure choice and competition in the market for land. Where there has been a record of persistent under delivery of housing, local planning authorities should increase the buffer to 20% (moved forward from later in the plan period) to provide a realistic prospect of achieving the planned supply and to ensure choice and competition in the market for land;

- identify a supply of specific, developable sites or broad locations for growth, for years 6-10 and, where possible, for years 11-15;

7.16 To be considered deliverable, sites should be available now, offer a suitable location for development now, and be achievable with a realistic prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within five years and in particular that development of the site is viable. Sites with planning permission should be considered deliverable until permission expires, unless there is clear evidence that schemes will not be implemented within five years, for example they will not be viable, there is no longer a demand for the type of units or sites have long term phasing plans. To be considered developable, sites should be in a suitable location for housing development and there should be a reasonable prospect that the site is available and could be viably developed at the point envisaged.

7.17 To deliver a wide choice of high quality homes, widen opportunities for home ownership and create sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities, local planning authorities should:

- plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community (such as, but not limited to, families with children, older people, people with disabilities, service families and people wishing to build their own homes);
- identify the size, type, tenure and range of housing that is required in particular locations, reflecting local demand; and
- where they have identified that affordable housing is needed, set policies for meeting this need on site, unless off-site provision or a financial contribution of broadly equivalent value can be robustly justified (for example to improve or make more effective use of the existing housing stock) and the agreed approach contributes to the objective of creating mixed and balanced communities. Such policies should be sufficiently flexible to take account of changing market conditions over time.

7.18 Section 7 places great importance on the design of the built environment, stating that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people. A number of principles are established with regards to design including:

- Being of a high quality.
- Being inclusive.

- Will function well and add to the overall quality of the area over the lifetime of the development.
- Establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit.
- Optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development, create and sustain an appropriate mix of uses and support local facilities and transport networks.
- Respond to local character and history, and reflect the identify of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation.
- Create safe and accessible environments.
- Are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.

7.18 Importantly the Framework states that decisions should not impose architectural styles or particular tastes and they should not stifle innovation. However, local distinctiveness should be reinforced. Decisions should also address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment.

7.19 Great weight is placed on outstanding or innovative designs which help raise the standard of design more generally in the area. Development should take advantage of opportunities to improve the character and quality of an area and the way it functions. The Framework confirms that proposals which can demonstrate they have taken account of the views of the affected community in evolving designs will be treated favourably.

7.20 Development should be directed away from areas at highest risk of flooding. A sequential approach should be taken to areas at risk of flooding. To pass development must:

- Demonstrate that it provides wider sustainability benefits to the community that outweigh flood risk.
- A site-specific flood risk assessment demonstrates that it will be safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere and, where possible, reduce flood risk overall.

7.21 Development is only be appropriate in areas at risk of flooding where it can be demonstrated that the most vulnerable development is located in areas of lowest flood risk within the site unless there are overriding reasons to prefer a different

location. Development is to be appropriately flood resilient and resistant and residual risk is to be safely managed, giving priority to sustainable drainage systems.

7.22 Section 11 of the Framework seeks to conserve and enhance the natural environment. New and existing development should be prevented from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution. Where appropriate despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land should be remediated and mitigated. The effective re-use of previously developed land is encouraged. Land which is affected by contamination is the responsibility of the developer and/or landowner. Decisions should ensure that the site is suitable for the new use taken account of former activities such as pollution arising from previous uses.

7.23 Planning application submissions and decisions should aim to:

- Avoid noise from giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life as a result of new development.
- Mitigate and reduce to a minimum other adverse impacts on health and quality of life arising from noise from new development.
- Recognise that development will often create some noise.

7.24 Development should limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity.

7.25 Section 12 establishes the need for applicants to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting, within proposals. The level of detail should reflect the significance of the asset. Great weight should be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets. Significance can be harmed or lost through development within its surroundings. Where development would result in substantial harm to a designated heritage asset it must be demonstrated that substantial public benefits outweigh the harm or loss. Where development will result in less than substantial harm this harm should be weighed against wider public benefits of the proposal.

7.26 Finally, the Framework confirms that Local planning authorities should approach decision-taking in a positive way to foster the delivery of sustainable development and that decision-takers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible. Local planning authorities should work proactively with applicants to secure developments that improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area.

7.27 The planning system is plan-led. Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Framework is a material consideration in planning decisions which is founded upon the mandate that local planning authorities should apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development assessing and determining development proposals.

Warrington Local Plan Core Strategy

7.28 The Warrington Local Plan Core Strategy was adopted in July 2014 and provides the overarching strategic policy document at the heart of the Council's Local Planning Framework. It sets out the planning framework for guiding the location and level of development in the borough up to 2027. It also contains more detailed development management policies in respect of specific issues for use in determining individual planning applications. Policy CS 8 (Strategic Proposal - Omega and Lingley Mere) establishes the Council's vision for Omega and is dealt with in more detail below.

7.29 The Council's Overall Spatial Strategy forms the basis of the Local Plan Core Strategy document and is predicated a series of over-arching objectives, which include:

- CS 1 – Delivering Sustainable Development;
- CS 2 – Quantity and Distribution of Development;
- CS 3 – Maintaining a 10 Year Forward Supply of Housing Land
- CS 4 – Transport

7.30 Policy CS 1 states that throughout the borough, development proposals that are sustainable will be welcomed and approved without delay.

7.31 It goes on to state that to be sustainable, development must accord with national and local planning policy frameworks, taking into account other material considerations, and must have regard to:

- *the planned provision made for economic and housing growth;*
- *the requirement to provide for recognised and identified development needs;*
- *the priority afforded to the protection of the Green Belt and the character of the countryside;*
- *the priority afforded to accommodating growth in Inner Warrington through the use of previously developed land;*
- *the importance of sustaining and enhancing the vitality and viability of the Town Centre and other designated centres that act as community hubs;*

- *the need to develop sites, services and facilities in appropriate locations accessible by public transport, walking and cycling;*
- *the need to make the best use of existing transport, utility, social and environmental infrastructure within existing settlements, and ensure additional provision where needed to support development;*
- *the need to address the causes of and be resilient to the effects of climate change;*
- *the need to sustain and enhance the borough's built heritage, biodiversity and geodiversity;*
- *the importance of prudently using resources and maximising re-use, recovery and recycling where possible;*
- *the need to safeguard environmental standards, public safety, and residential amenity;*
- *the delivery of high standards of design and construction, that have regard to local distinctiveness and energy efficiency; and*
- *the need to improve equality of access and opportunity.*

7.32 Policy CS 1 also confirms that the Council's approach will always be to work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can accord with the development plan and be approved without delay wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area.

7.33 In line with the Framework, Policy CS 1 also provides that where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision then the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise - taking into account whether:

- *Any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole; or*
- *Specific policies in that Framework indicate that development should be restricted.*

7.34 Policy CS2 confirms that up to 277 hectares of land for business, general industrial and storage/distribution uses (principally Use Classes B1, B2 & B8) is available over the period 2006 to 2027, to support growth of the local and sub-regional economy. This land supply figure includes the land at Omega for which planning permission has already been granted for B1, B2 & B8 uses and, importantly, this need is met without the need to include the remainder of Omega, which is the subject of this application.

7.35 Policy CS2 confirms that the town of Warrington will continue to function as the primary settlement in the borough and establishes the principles that will determine the detailed distribution of development through the Local Plan Core Strategy period. Of these founding principles the following are of most relevance to this planning statement:

- *The re-use of previously developed land within defined settlements(2) will be prioritised and at least 80% of all new homes within the borough will be delivered on previously developed land;*
- *Around 60% of new residential development should be delivered in the defined Inner Warrington area. The remainder will be delivered in the town's suburbs and to a lesser extent within the borough's defined settlements*

7.36 The policy dealing with the Quantity and Distribution of Development would normally also establish the housing implementation strategy for the Local Plan area, however as a result of a successful High Court challenge elements of the housing land policies have had to be removed from the Local Plan. Specifically, the parts of the Plan which have been overturned are:

- The housing target of 10,500 new homes (equating to 500 per year) between 2006 and 2027; and
- References to 1,100 new homes at the Omega Strategic Proposal

7.37 In response, the Council have begun the work necessary to ensure the housing elements of the Plan are revised in line with the ruling and have recently published, for consultation, the Draft Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) 2015, in order that the Local Plan Housing target can be reinstated as soon as possible. The SHLAA is considered in more detail as part of the **Planning Assessment** section set out below.

7.38 Policy CS3 establishes the Council's plans to maintain a 10 year forward supply of housing land. The Council will monitor housing land supply and where it is indicated that an on-going, deliverable and developable 10 years' supply of housing land can no longer be sustained or where it can be demonstrated that housing need cannot be met within the Mid-Mersey SHMA, the Council will review its housing land provision, and bring on-stream additional housing sites as required, with priority given to encouraging the reuse of previously developed land and avoiding sites in the Green Belt where possible.

7.39 Policy CS4 is the Councils overall transport strategy. It outlines that in order to support Warrington's role as a regional transport gateway/interchange, the Council

and its partners will seek links through Warrington to the wider region and sub-region. Using the principles set out in Policy CS2, development will be located to reduce the need to travel, especially by car, and to enable people as far as possible to meet their needs locally. The policy highlights that early consultation with the Highways Agency is necessary for any proposal that may affect the Strategic Road Network.

7.40 Policy CS8 (Strategic Proposal - Omega and Lingley Mere) allocates the whole of the 267ha wider Omega site as shown in Figure 3.1 (incorporating Omega North, the wider Omega South site and Lingley Mere) as the primary location for ongoing economic development within the borough, and a focus for business, general industrial and storage / distribution development (class B1/B2/B8). The site is also expected to contribute to economic opportunity and growth in the wider sub region. The supporting text to Policy CS8 identifies that Omega could accommodate between 12,000 and 20,000 jobs when fully built out.

7.41 Policy CS8 recognises the need to provide ancillary uses to support to the scale and nature of intended employment development at Omega and ensure a sustainable development, stating that:

'In the interests of creating a sustainable business community, ancillary uses of an appropriate scale and nature to provide a business services hub to serve the development as a whole, such as retail, leisure, hotel and conference facilities will be supported. Retail development may also be acceptable.'

7.42 The supporting text to Policy CS8 explains that:

'The introduction of any further uses which do not directly support the resident workforce at Omega would only be supported where it can be demonstrated that proposals would in no way undermine any aspect of the Overall Spatial Strategy'.

7.43 Figure 1 below illustrates the strategic opportunity at Omega and Lingley Mere, which is split into three distinct phases/areas namely; Dark Purple - Omega Phases 1 & 2 (which is formed by the extant B1, B2 & B8 OPP), Purple - the remainder of Omega comprising approved B2 & B8 development in Zone 7 (north of the Royal Mail Depot and Lingley Mere) and the current application site, and Light Purple - Lingley Mere Business Park.

1. provide a solution to environmental or social problems associated with a site; or
2. present an opportunity to widen the type, size and affordability of available housing, through reference to need evidenced by the Council, in sustainable locations which are well served by existing infrastructure; or
3. support the delivery of or help create the density of population to support the operation of neighbourhood hubs and local shops and services.

- 7.47 Policy SN 2 seeks to secure Mixed and Inclusive Neighbourhoods and establishes a 30% affordable housing provision target for proposals situated on previously developed/brownfield land for 15 or more dwellings where that site is located outside of Town Centre and Inner Warrington. The preference is for this to be an on-site provision unless circumstances preclude this. In each case the provision to be made will be based on negotiation and agreement on a site by site basis. A lower proportion and/or a different tenure split may be permitted where it can clearly be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Council that development would otherwise not be financially viable, and affordable housing provision is nevertheless being maximised.
- 7.48 Policy MP1 highlights the Council's general transport principles. It states that the Council and its partners will support development where it meets a set of criteria such as it reduces the need for private car use through its location, travel planning and marketing and is in favour of public transport, pedestrians and cyclists.
- 7.49 Policy MP4 seeks to secure improvements to public transport infrastructure and services (including bus, rail and taxi/ private hire) in partnership with operators and delivery partners and confirms that in accordance with the Overall Spatial Strategy, development should be located in areas with easy access to public transport.
- 7.50 Policy MP6 states the Council will support priorities and improvements set out in the Local Transport Plan and other delivery documents by ensuring development will not prejudice the implementation of proposed transport schemes and projects that require land beyond the limits of the public highway.
- 7.52 Policy MP7 states that applications for major developments, developments that are not consistent with the local planning framework or developments that raise specific issues in a locality that consist of housing, employment, retail, leisure, and service uses must be accompanied by a Transport Assessment, Transport Statement, and

Travel Plan in accordance with national planning policy and national guidance on transport assessments.

8. Planning Assessment

Principle of Development

- 8.1 If taken on face value, the proposals do not fully accord with the overall aims Policy CS8 Core Strategy in that the primary element (residential) is not in itself an employment generating use. However, whilst Policy C8 identifies preferred land uses for the site, which include ancillary uses such as those applied for within the mixed-use zone (Zones 3-5), it does not specifically identify land uses that would be deemed unacceptable on the site.
- 8.2 Although proposals for residential development on Omega may not fully accord with the Omega/Lingley Mere site allocation, as defined by Policy CS 8, the proposals do accord with the Core Strategy's overall aim of delivering sustainable development (Policy CS 1) and any potential adverse impacts of granting permission would not significantly or demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the development.
- 8.3 The application site represents a highly sustainable location for new housing development in so far as it is a brownfield site, within the settlement boundary which is well located in terms of access to sustainable modes of transport and a comprehensive network of pedestrian and cycle facilities. The site is also within walking distance of existing services in Great Sankey and will be well served by the proposed local facilities that form part of this application. The proposals also offer good opportunities for working and living, with strong links to the commercial elements of Omega, in close proximity, further reducing the need to travel.
- 8.4 Furthermore the supporting text to Policy CS 8 (Para. 6.38), which confirms that whilst employment uses are the "primary" objective for Omega, the employment land supply target of 277 hectares is not reliant on Omega coming forward in its entirety for such uses. This provides a clear indication that there is capacity at Omega for alternative uses to be brought forward without any adverse impact on the employment generating element of the site or more generally on the overall employment land supply of the Borough. In the absence of any prohibitions in the Policy and in light of the sustainable nature of the site, alternative uses could include residential development, subject to the proposals according with other policies within the development plan.
- 8.5 Not only is the remainder of Omega South not required to meet the long-term employment land requirements of the Borough it is also no longer commercially viable to expect it to come forward in the manner originally intended.

- 8.6 As outlined above since 2007 the Omega site has gained successive planning consents for various Zones within the Omega development site, both north and south of the M62 motorway. The original planning consent, gained in 2007 for Phases 1 and 2, comprised a significant amount of B1 office development (1.6m sq.ft) that was due to be the first phase of a much larger (circa 3.5m sq.ft) B1 office park. However, to date despite being actively marketed in the intervening period, no B1 demand has been forthcoming on the Omega site.
- 8.7 Between 2008 and 2014, a global financial crisis affected many development schemes, resulting in stalled development and viability issues. The global recession and economic downturn has resulted in a requirement to re-consider the viability of the Omega development and in re-appraising how to deliver a strategic regeneration opportunity, such as Omega, OWL have had to move towards a large mixed-used scheme, that can be brought forward in a pragmatic and affordable way which maximises investment in bringing jobs across a variety of sectors and delivery much needed homes and investment in the local economy. It is also anticipated that releasing part of the site for residential development will have a positive effect on the ability of the wider site to attract prospective operators and occupiers who look for a quantum of development when choosing locations for their businesses.
- 8.8 The other policies of most relevance to the proposals are Policies SN 1 and SN 2 as outlined above. Residential development on Omega would satisfy the provisions of SN 1 in that the proposals would present an opportunity to widen the type, size and affordability of available housing, in a sustainable location which is well served by existing infrastructure; and will to help create the density of population to support the operation of a new neighbourhood hub with local shops and services.
- 8.9 Given the strategic importance of Omega as a development site, its overall viability is paramount to any proposals that are brought forward on the site, be it for employment generating or alternative uses. Policy SN 2 identifies a Borough wide standard for affordable housing provision of 30%, for sites of the nature of Omega. However, the policy also accepts that a lower percentage may be acceptable through negotiation and where applicants are able to demonstrate, to the satisfaction of the Council, that development would otherwise not be financially viable, and affordable housing provision is nevertheless being maximised.
- 8.10 A 20% on-site provision is proposed and OWL will work with the Council to ensure this provision is maximised and that the viability of the site has been tested to the satisfaction of the Council. More detailed viability assessment work will be provided, in due course for consideration as part of application determination process.

National Planning Policy Framework

8.11 As outlined above the proposals are considered to comply with the provisions of Policy CS 8, in so far as there is no restriction in terms of residential development on the site and should, in line with the Framework (Para. 14) be approved “without delay”. However, notwithstanding this, the result of the High Court judgement is that there is currently no identified 5 year housing land supply target for the Borough. The Development Plan can therefore be deemed to be absent or silent on the matter of housing land supply and housing land allocations. In such circumstances, under the provisions of the Framework the presumption in favour of sustainable development applies, planning applications for sustainable development should be granted planning permission unless:

- any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole; or
- specific policies in the Framework indicate development should be restricted.

8.12 To establish whether the proposals satisfy the policies within the Framework it is therefore important to examine whether the proposals satisfy the 3 dimensions of sustainability identified as the basis for the Framework; economic, social and environmental.

Economic Impacts

8.13 Sustainable development should be able to contribute towards building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation and the provision of infrastructure.

8.14 The proposed development is expected to generate a wide range of direct and indirect effects, both during the construction and in the longer term. These effects will be spread over a wide area and should benefit the Borough as a whole. The table below provides a summary of the likely economic impacts that the development will have:

Direct Impacts	Indirect Impacts	Wider Economy and Catalytic Effects
Capital Expenditure	“Spin-off” from construction supplier and wages expenditure	Meeting the need for new residential accommodation
Construction Jobs	Additional Council Tax	Supporting mixed

	receipts	communities by providing affordable housing
Gross Value Added to local economy from construction jobs	New community services and infrastructure	Support existing and new communities through the provision of new services and infrastructure
Jobs creation within mixed-use zone	S106 Planning Contributions	Provision of jobs in those sectors that would benefit most from additional opportunities
Additional retail expenditure to town and district centres	Greater access to affordable housing in Warrington	Promotion of Warrington as a more sustainable and attractive place to live

8.15 This range of economic effects aligns well with national, regional and local policy objectives, in particular, increasing the supply of high quality, sustainable housing to meet projected increases in population, enhanced economic prosperity through creating employment opportunities for local people and providing suitable accommodation for business growth, and contributing towards a more attractive and accessible public realm.

8.16 In addition, it has already been established that the entirety of Omega is not required to satisfy the employment land targets for the Borough, as sufficient land allocations within the Borough (including the committed/consented development on Omega) have already been identified. As a result, were the remainder of Omega to be brought forward as proposed by this application, it would have no adverse impact on the availability, range or quality of employment land supply in the Borough and would in fact provide a greater opportunity to meet housing land supply requirements in the right place at the right time.

Social Impacts

8.17 Sustainable development should support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local

services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being.

- 8.18 Although the High Court judgement effectively quashed the findings of the previous Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) published in 2012 and removed the housing land supply target from the Development Plan, it is worth noting that the land at Omega and Lingley Mere was identified as a deliverable housing site over the Plan period.
- 8.19 Following the ruling, WBC has begun the work necessary to reinstate the Local Plan Housing target. The first stage of this work is the preparation of a new SHLAA, which was published for consultation on 28 July 2015. The SHLAA considers the suitability of all available and potential sites for housing. The Assessment looks at the likelihood of sites coming forward over time, their capacity for residential development and whether there are any constraints on them which would preclude housing from being developed.
- 8.20 Although the inclusion of sites within the SHLAA does not automatically confer a Development Plan allocation or justification for planning permission, the document should be considered as a material consideration. The emerging SHLAA has taken the sites included in the 2012 SHLAA as the starting point for site identification, updated the status of those sites, added additional sites which have subsequently received planning permission for housing and new sites put forward following a 'Call for Sites' in August 2014. The new SHLAA retains the land at Omega and Lingley Mere but has split the sites, leaving an indicative net capacity at Omega of 972 units, which are anticipated to be brought forward, in their entirety, within the 15 year lifetime of the Plan. Although this does represent a formal allocation, Omega's continued inclusion within the evidence base, clearly demonstrates its integral role within the Borough's housing land supply figures, in the both the short and long term.
- 8.21 The proposed development allows not only for the delivery of new housing to meet the needs of present and future generations, but will also provide access to new services and infrastructure in response to the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being. These needs were in part identified through the pre-application public consultation exercises recorded in the Consultation Statement, submitted as part of this application. In particular, OWL are in discussion with WBC and the regional Community Health Partnership regarding the opportunity for new health facilities within the mixed-use area, in response to an identified lack of provision within the area.

8.22 OWL are also committed to ensuring that the development delivers a high quality built environment and as part of the application process will look to agree a Development Guideline document with WBC that will inform and guide prospective developers and encourage consistently high levels of design and amenity as part of the development process. This will be complimented by the creation of the Green Heart and sustainable links into the existing green infrastructure that surrounds the site that will ensure that Omega becomes not only an attractive place to live and work but also to visit.

Environmental Impacts

8.23 Sustainable development should contribute to protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.

8.24 The environmental impacts of the proposed development are considered fully in the Environmental Statement that accompanies this application. The Environmental Statement (ES) represents a full EIA, which has been prepared in accordance with the Town & Country Planning (EIA) (England and Wales) Regulations 2011 (as amended 2015). The need for EIA was determined through formal screening with WBC (18 February 2015) and its extent was agreed through the Scoping Opinion provided by the Council on 04 June 2015. The scope of the EIA was agreed and comprises:

- Transport and Access;
- Air Quality, Dust and Odour;
- Noise and Vibration;
- Landscape and Visual;
- Ground Conditions and Contamination;
- Flood Risk, Hydrology and Water Resources;
- Biodiversity

8.25 In line with the EIA Regulations 2011, the ES also assesses the cumulative effects of the proposals and provides a summary of environmental commitments. It is not intended to repeat the content of the ES in this Planning Statement.

8.26 The ecological and biodiversity aspects of the site have historically been a matter of detailed consideration as part of the Masterplan and Zone 7 outline planning application process, and whilst this topic is dealt with in the ES it is worthwhile summarising this matter again to clarify the position that has previously been agreed between OWL and the Council.

- 8.27 An Ecological Report (The Ecology Practice) (the 2013 Report) was undertaken and submitted as part of the Omega South Masterplan process and covers all of Omega South, including the application site. This assessment was undertaken to establish the likely effects of development on ecological features within and surrounding the South Omega site and provide comfort to the Council at the Masterplan stage that the proposals would be acceptable in this regard. The assessment quantifies the ecological/biodiversity wealth of the site and provides an appropriate mitigation strategy that considers these issues on a site wide basis, but also on a zonal and individual plot basis, to ensure an effective methodology that will allow for the phased delivery of the site.
- 8.28 A series of ecological surveys were carried out in 2013 to inform this process and key biodiversity features were identified: on- and off-site great crested newts, ground-nesting breeding bird Priority Species and Biodiversity Action Plan Priority habitats. Existing semi-mature woodland was also identified as a key feature at risk from the proposals. The relevance of these surveys was reviewed, reflecting the time that has passed since the initial work was undertaken and it was deemed that the survey of the Great Crested Newt habitat/population should be updated. This updated survey was carried out in May 2015 and the data set associated with this work is included within the ES, along with the original 2013 Report.
- 8.29 The findings and recommendations of the 2013 Report were considered and agreed as part of the Zone 7 OPP application process. It was agreed that the main, unavoidable impacts to biodiversity that will result from the Omega South development proposals are loss of large areas of grassland, which provide habitat for breeding birds; and loss of BAP quality areas of woodland.
- 8.30 The agreed mitigation, comprises a green infrastructure-led design approach, following statutory requirements and planning policy to achieve a net gain in overall biodiversity value. The principles of mitigation through the proposals are (i) avoidance and on-site maintenance; (ii) minimising impact and on-site replacement; and (iii) off-site compensation.
- 8.31 As with the other elements of the mitigation framework, the off-site compensation was calculated on a site-wide, holistic approach and a figure of £300,000 was agreed as part of S106 legal agreement for Zone 7. This contribution has been paid in full in line with the covenants entered into as part of the legal agreement. This is the only off-site mitigation work required as part of the redevelopment of Omega South, with all other mitigation accommodated on-site in line with the ecological mitigation strategy.

- 8.32 In terms of on-site mitigation, the most significant findings were in relation to the Great Crested Newts (GCN), which will be directly impacted upon by the residential development proposals. Section 5.10 provides full details on the findings and recommendations. Previous planning permissions on Omega South have contained conditions specifying the measures to be undertaken whilst working in proximity to the GCN areas. We believe that a similarly worded condition would be appropriate for this application.
- 8.33 In conclusion we consider that there are no significant environmental risks and impacts arising from the development that cannot be adequately mitigated that should preclude the Local Planning Authority from approving this planning application. The proposal accords and Section 11 of the NPPF and is therefore acceptable.

Transport and Access

- 8.34 A Transport Assessment has been prepared by WSP Transport Consultants in support of the planning application, which provides details of the Travel Plan Framework, development Trip Generation and an initial qualification in regards to the impact of the development.
- 8.35 The Travel Plan Framework sets out a range of measures and incentives which would be adopted to promote access by sustainable travel modes. This Travel Plan Framework is flexible enough to respond to the variety of uses and users that could be associated with the proposed development. Development of the site will provide good opportunities to promote sustainable travel patterns from the outset. The proposed development will provide the opportunity for comprehensive transport links for bus, rail, walking and cycling facilities.
- 8.36 The Transport Assessment provides a breakdown of the methodology used to assess the impact of the proposed development. The proposed development impact methodology, agreed in principle with both Warrington Borough Council and Highways England, involves amending the development content of previously consented Omega development and off-setting the residual trip capacity with the proposed Omega Zone 3-6 development.
- 8.37 Specifically, the proposal is to reduce the B1 offices consent by 600,000 sq.ft (55,740sqm) and convert this to a mix of 30% B2 industrial estate (16,722sqm) and 70% B8 industrial warehousing development (39,018sqm), totalling 55,740sqm, thereby freeing up consented trips to offset the proposed Zone 3-6 development. The 30%/70% B2/B8 split is the same as that contained within Omega Zone 7.

- 8.38 The Framework (NPPF) states that *“Development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts on development are severe.”*
- 8.39 The trip off-setting analysis demonstrates that converting 55,740sqm of B1 development to 55,740sqm of B2/B8 development provides sufficient spare trips to offset the impact of the Zone 3-6 development. In addition, in the AM peak the two-way trips would reduce by approximately 302 vehicles, providing a significant benefit to users of the local road network when compared against the currently consented Omega developments. This benefit arises due to the less intensive traffic uses of B2/B8 and Zone 3-6 development, in comparison to the B1 office development.
- 8.40 The Omega Zone 3-6 development therefore presents a significant opportunity to provide a mixed-use integrated development with employment, leisure, education, retail, community and residential uses all contained within the Omega site. This mixed-use development will provide the opportunity to travel by sustainable modes (walking, cycling and public transport) within and out with the site and will therefore reduce the need to travel by private car.
- 8.31 We believe therefore that the development should be considered acceptable and in accordance with the provisions of the Local Plan Core Strategy and Section 4 of the NPPF.

9. Conclusions

9.1 This application, submitted by Omega Warrington Ltd, seeks outline planning permission for:

"Outline Planning Application for the creation of up to 1100 residential units and mixed-use zone to include retail uses (Use Classes A1-A5), Hotel (Use Class C1), Extra Care Facility (Use Class C2 - Residential Institution) and Non-Residential Institution (Use Class D1) with associated access, parking, landscape and infrastructure proposals."

9.2 The proposals form the final phase of the Omega South Masterplan in the areas identified as Zones 3, 4, 5 and 6 and comprise mixed-use and residential areas as well as significant areas of new open space, landscaping and habitat creation.

9.3 In summary, it is considered that the proposed development do not fully accord with the Development Plan allocation for this site. The mixed-use zone(s) are in accordance with the ancillary uses that are identified in Policy CS 8, however residential development is not specifically identified. The site is allocated in the Local Plan Core Strategy (Core Strategy) for employment generating uses (Policy CS 8), an allocation made to ensure that adequate land is available to meet local and regional employment and economic needs within the Borough.

9.4 However, whilst the allocation identifies preferred uses for the site it does not go as far as to identify unacceptable alternative uses for the site. The application site represents a highly sustainable location for new housing development in so far as it is a brownfield site, within the settlement boundary which is well located in terms of access to sustainable modes of transport and a comprehensive network of pedestrian and cycle facilities. The site is also within walking distance of existing services in Great Sankey and will be well served by the proposed local facilities that form part of this application. The proposals also offer good opportunities for working and living, with strong links to the commercial elements of Omega, in close proximity, further reducing the need to travel.

9.5 Consequently whilst residential development may not fully accord with the Omega/Lingley Mere site allocation as defined by Policy CS 8, proposals do accord with the Core Strategy's overall aim of delivering sustainable development and any potential adverse impacts of granting permission would not significantly or demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the development.

- 9.6 In addition, the Core Strategy identifies that, to meet the employment land requirement for the Borough, the entire Omega site is not required to come forward for employment generating uses. In fact, the level of employment land already consented on Omega makes sufficient contribution to the employment land supply that no further employment land is required on the site. This, combined with the fact that the market for major out-of-centre office destinations has faded dramatically, provides further justification for proposals to bring forward alternative uses on the site.
- 9.7 This Planning Statement has also considered the proposals against policies contained within the National Planning Policy Framework. This is deemed necessary because the outcome of the High Court challenge to the Core Strategy means that the Plan is currently silent on the matter of an overall housing target and specific housing allocations are absent from the Plan. In such circumstances the presumption in favour of sustainable development applies (NPPF Para. 14) and it has been demonstrated that the benefits of the proposals; economic, social and environmental, significantly and demonstrably outweigh any potential adverse impacts resulting from the development. This view is affirmed through the findings of the assessment work carried out in support of this application in relation to Environmental, Transportation and Retail impacts.
- 9.8 This Statement has considered the context of the proposed development, the relevant planning policy framework and the terms of the outline planning permission. It has demonstrated that the proposals accord with and respond positively to the relevant policy context and the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). It is considered therefore that the proposals should be granted without undue delay.
- 9.9 Notwithstanding this, it is acknowledged that other factors and material considerations need to be considered when balancing this application. In this regard the main reports submitted along with this application conclude:
- that ecological interests can be appropriately mitigated;
 - that the development will not create a greater risk of flooding elsewhere;
 - that noise mitigation will ensure that acceptable noise levels are achieved;
 - that the building will be well screened by existing and proposed landscaping; and
 - that there is adequate highways capacity already provided to ensure that the development will not affect the free and safe flow of traffic.

- 9.10 The development does not fully accord with the site's Development Plan allocation, however this Planning Statement has demonstrated that the proposals represent sustainable development, for which there is a presumption in favour and that any potential adverse impacts of granting permission would not significantly or demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the development. We therefore respectfully request that planning permission be granted.