

Sandymoor Supplementary Planning Document

Public Consultation Draft

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Operational Director
Environmental Health and Planning

Environment Directorate
Halton Borough Council
Rutland House
Halton Lea
Runcorn
WA7 2GW

Operational Director
Environmental Health and Planning,
Halton Borough Council,
Environment Directorate,
Rutland House,
Halton Lea,
Runcom,
WA7 2GW

This guidance note should be read in
conjunction with the relevant policies of the
Halton Development Plan.

Prepared for Halton Borough Council by:

GVA Grimley
Jon Rowland Urban Design
RSK ENSR
ATKINS
Urban Graphics



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Purpose

- 1.1** The purpose of this Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is to complement the Halton Unitary Development Plan (UDP), providing additional practical guidance and support for those involved in the planning of future development at Sandymoor, in East Runcorn. The key aims of development of Sandymoor are to:
- Ensure that strategic housing numbers are met through the delivery of development at Sandymoor;
 - Create a mixed and inclusive community that offers a choice of housing and lifestyle through comprehensive development;
 - Promote high-quality design to create an attractive built environment within woodland and open space, and a sense of place and community;
 - Give priority where possible to pedestrians and cyclists rather than vehicles to promote sustainable travel;
 - Maximise the opportunities for access to public transport services;
 - Make the most appropriate and effective use of land available by applying best practice sustainable principles;
 - Work in partnership to achieve a lasting quality and form of development, working collaboratively with public, private, voluntary and community groups and organisations to add value to the SPD.

- 1.2** By stating this purpose, the Council will seek to improve through its function as a Local Planning Authority any development proposal that does not provide for, or meet the principles encouraged and required within this SPD and the Halton UDP.
- 1.3** This SPD includes:
- An overview of the Sandymoor development, its context and history;
 - The key design influences, constraints and opportunities;
 - A set of generic design codes and guiding principles which build upon the policies set out in the Halton UDP.
- 1.4** The SPD is also accompanied by a number of statutory documents prepared to be read in conjunction with the policy guidance. These include: Sustainability Appraisal, Statement of Community Involvement and the Appropriate Assessment (a requirement of the Habitats Directive).

PLANNING HISTORY

- 2.1** The principle of development at Sandymoor was established when Section 7.1 Approval for residential development, under the New Towns Act 1981, was granted by the Secretary of State for the Environment on 21 June 1988 covering an overall gross area of circa 147 hectares.
- 2.2** Phase I of development at Sandymoor was undertaken during the late 1980's and early 1990's, whereby 890 residential units were built across 37 hectares of land. In 1999, the Commission for New Towns (now English Partnerships) and Halton Borough Council jointly prepared a Masterplan that considered the development potential for the remainder of the site.
- 2.3** This Masterplan subsequently informed the allocation of sites within the 2005 Halton Unitary Development Plan (UDP), which allocates some 40.66 hectares for residential development. 37.4 hectares of that 40.66 hectares presently remains available for residential development, with the capacity to deliver up to 1,423 new dwellings during Phase 2 of the UDP housing release. Phase 2 residential development was programmed to commence from May 2007, subject to sites allocated in Phase I being developed, and provided the number of dwellings completed on windfall sites was not substantially higher than allocated for in Phase I.



Figure 2.1 Sandymoor Masterplan boundary

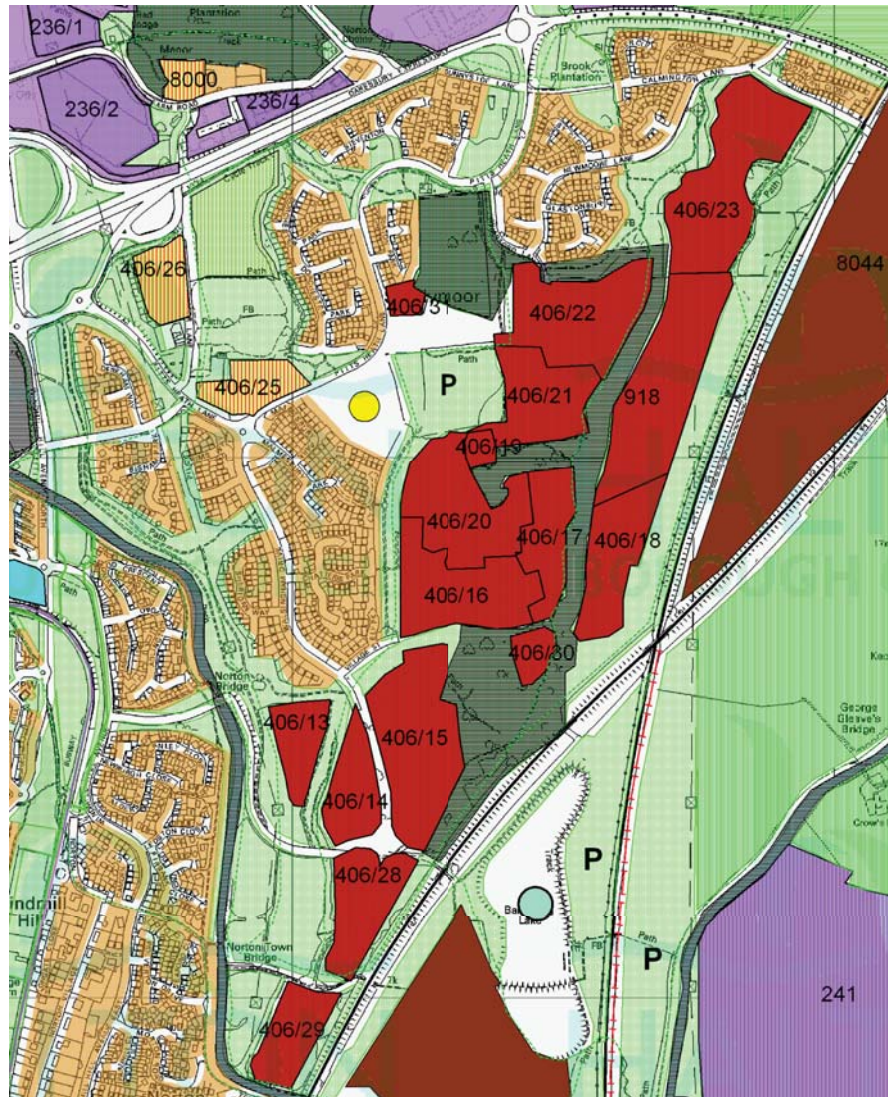


Figure 2.2 Sandy Moor UDP Plan

- 2.4** After the approval of the original Sandy Moor Masterplan in 1999 and its subsequent adoption into the Halton UDP, the Environment Agency identified a revised area at potential risk of flooding within the northern part of the site, directly affecting land identified for residential development. The implications of the identification of the potential flood risk area are considered in further detail in section 4 of this SPD.
- 2.5** The original 1999 Sandy Moor Masterplan has since been revised to take account of the Environment Agency's latest findings, and to ensure that no new development is proposed within the identified area of potential flood-risk. The revisions to the Sandy Moor Masterplan have also sought to reflect key principles promoted through recent national planning policy, primarily in relation to sustainable development – 'making the most efficient use of land;' and 'high-quality design.' The revised Masterplan forms a key element of this SPD, and as such will be progressed in accordance with the revised regulations following the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act in 2004.

LOCAL CONTEXT

- 2.6** In the 1960's and 1970's, the Runcorn Development Corporation established development plans for Runcorn New Town. Several villages were at the time built as 'satellites' to the main centre of development.
- 2.7** Sandymoor was a later addition to the urban area, with its development beginning in the 1990's, situated to the east of the original New Town residential areas of Windmill Hill and Castlefields. Sandymoor clearly has several different characteristics to these older areas, reflecting more speculative suburban housing styles. These predominantly comprise two storey detached dwellings with private gardens.

SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.8** The Sandymoor development site comprises 78.1 hectares of land, of which some 37 hectares have already been developed. A further 18 hectares of land is currently subject to extant planning permissions. The Sandymoor development site comprises around 25-30 hectares (net) of land available for future development in accordance with the Masterplan.
- 2.9** The Masterplan area primarily comprises open land, paddocks and woodland. The sites' topography is relatively flat, but slopes gradually to the north, rising more steeply alongside the Bridgewater Canal towards the western boundary of the site.

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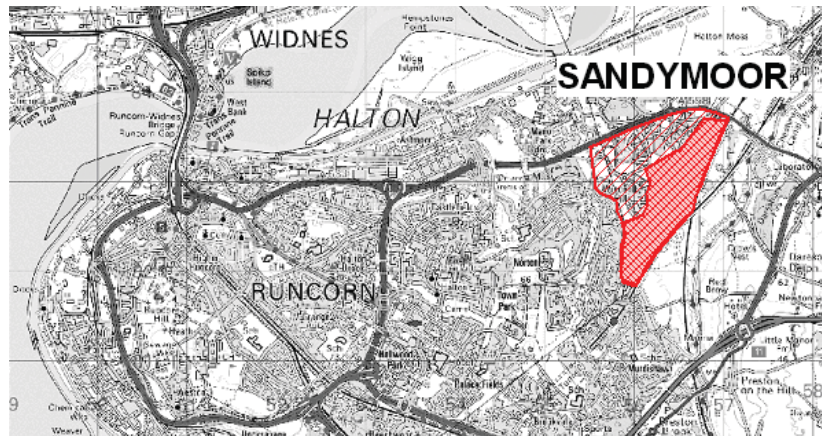


Figure 2.3 Sandymoor Location Plan

SITE LOCATION

- 2.10** The Sandymoor development site is situated on the eastern edge of the Cheshire town of Runcorn (See Figure 2.3). The area is bound to the north by the Daresbury Expressway (A558), the primary access point to existing residential development at Sandymoor. The West Coast Main Line (WCML) and Manchester-Chester railway lines lie immediately to the east, whilst the Bridgewater Canal runs along the western and southern edges of the site.
- 2.11** In regional terms, Sandymoor is well connected via the M56, A56 and A558 road network, connecting the site directly with Runcorn, Manchester and Chester, in addition to the M6 corridor. Runcorn East train station lies approximately 1.5km to the south of the site, providing a link with rail services to Warrington, Manchester, Chester, The Wirral and North Wales.

- 3.1** This SPD is subject to a number of development constraints that need to be considered during the preparation of new development proposals, and in the subsequent determination of planning applications by Halton Borough Council. Details of these constraints and potential development opportunities are set out below:

a) INFRASTRUCTURE

Railway Lines and Noise Attenuation

- 3.2** One of the planning conditions attached to the original 1988 Sandymoor Section 7.1 Approval was the requirement to maintain a buffer zone of circa 100m along the eastern boundary of the site adjacent to the WCML and Manchester to Chester railway line. However, this separation distance has been reviewed during the preparation of this SPD and Masterplan based on latest noise assessments.
- 3.3** PPG24 'Planning and Noise' (1994) provides explicit advice to Local Planning Authorities when considering residential development proposals near to railways. Surveys should assign whole sites or parts of sites to one of four Noise Exposure Categories (NEC's). In Category A areas noise need not be a factor in granting planning permission. However within Category D areas, planning permission should normally be refused.



Figure 3.1 Existing railway lines

- 3.4** The latest noise model indicates that the majority of the development plots at Sandymoor fall within NEC B, with a stand-off distance to the NEC B/C boundary from the West Coast Main Line of approximately 50m. This reduces to circa 30m for the Manchester to Chester railway line due to fewer vehicle movements along this route. It should be noted that sections along the eastern boundary of the site are located close to the NEC B/C boundary.
- 3.5** NEC B advises that noise issues should be taken into account during the determination of planning applications and, where appropriate, conditions be imposed to ensure an adequate level of mitigation against noise. The model does not include proposed residential buildings, however it is anticipated that the acoustic shadows behind houses fronting onto the track may fall within NEC A.
- 3.6** The above findings are based on a comprehensive record of actual rolling stock and operations along the West Coast Main Line and Manchester to Chester railway line adjacent to the Sandymoor development site.



Figure 3.2 Noise levels from railway

Existing Road Network

- 3.7** The future wider development of the site presents an opportunity to enhance and extend the existing Sandymoor highway network, in accordance with this SPD and Masterplan, and promote a higher level of sustainable travel amongst local residents through the provision of new public transport, walking and cycling routes and linkages.

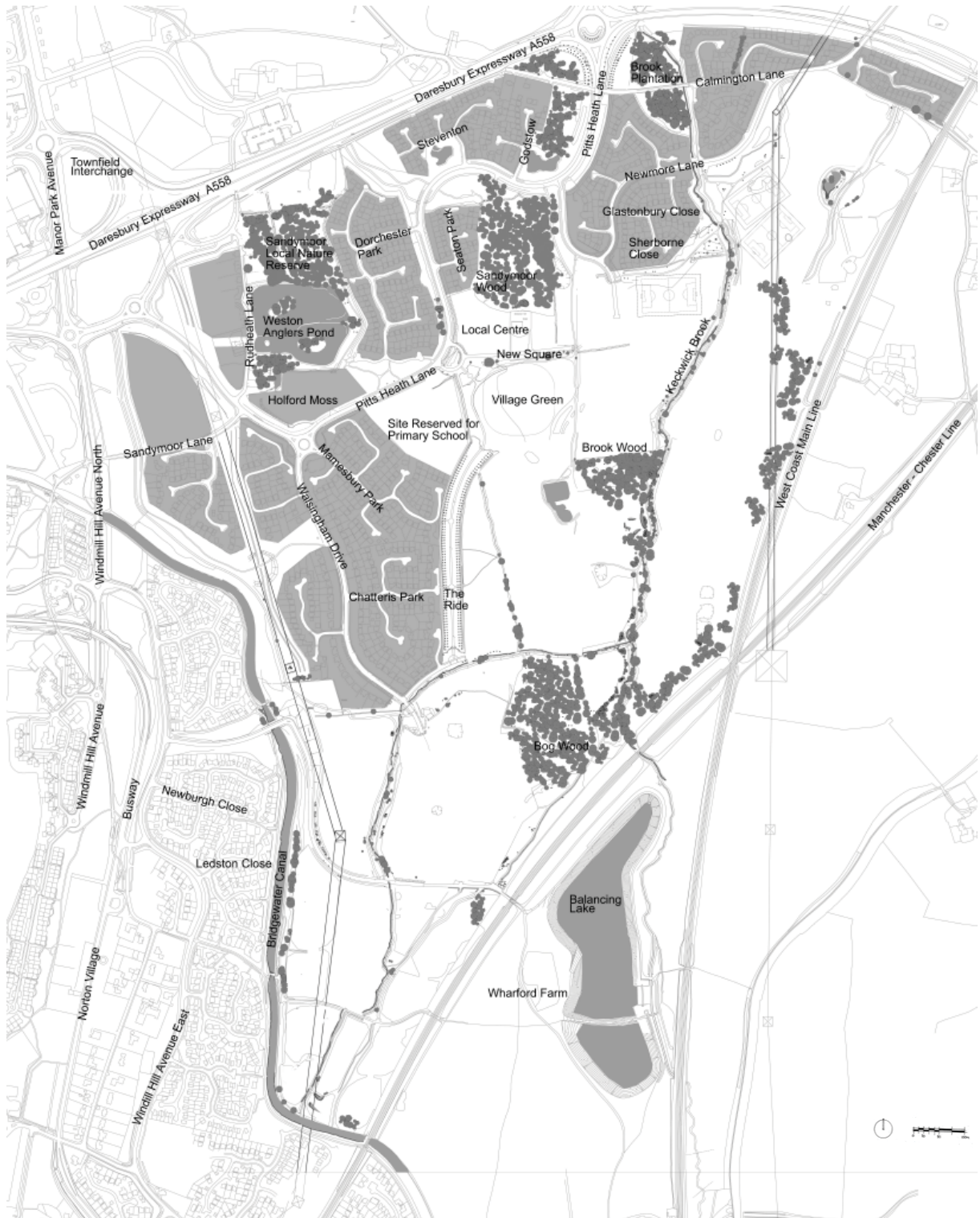


Figure 3.3 Existing road network plan

- 3.8** As part of the revision to the Masterplan the hierarchy of the highways has been established to provide quality links to the existing network and beyond. The revised Masterplan includes a new vehicular access from Windmill Hill Avenue on the west side of the site, traversing the Bridgewater Canal. This is a significant change to the previous 1999 Masterplan, which sought access only from the Daresbury Expressway onto Pitts Heath Lane. Roundabout layouts have been re-configured to accommodate the revised highways orientation and access points into each individual land parcel. These modifications take into account aspects including road type, junction spacing, frontage access, and visibility. Traffic management on the existing main roads has also been addressed as part of the Masterplanning process. This will involve enhancing pedestrian crossings, and incorporating additional traffic calming measures where necessary.
- 3.9** The street hierarchy takes into account public opinion voiced during the consultation event held at Sandymoor Hall in April 2005, to provide a main local distributor road primarily for vehicular access and public transport linking the existing network to rest of the development via a grid of pedestrian-friendly and shared surface access routes. Detailed proposals are set out in the 'Street Design Guide Principles' in Appendix I. In addition, the outline planning application for Sandymoor South which was granted planning permission in May 2007, was subject to formal public consultation during November 2006 at which the proposals for a new vehicular access from Windmill Hill were presented to local residents.

b) WATERCOURSES

Brooks and Tributaries

3.10 Within the Sandymoor development site lie two brooks which form the main watercourses, both running north towards the River Mersey. They comprise:-

1. Keckwick Brook

3.11 Designated as a 'Main River' by the Environment Agency, this brook forms the main natural drainage component to the Sandymoor site. It enters the site from the Wharford Farm area, under the railway line to the south east of Bog Wood and leaves via a culvert under the Daresbury Expressway at Sandymoor Junction. The brook is well colonised by waterside trees that links both Bog and Brook Wood and constitutes an important wildlife corridor. Water vole field signs have been identified all along this brook within the Sandymoor site (2006 Survey).

2. Sandymoor Main Ditch (referred in this document as Sandymoor Brook)

3.12 This brook enters the area at the southern tip of the site, emerging from a culvert under the Bridgewater Canal, and joins into the Keckwick Brook just north of Bog Wood. Surveys have indicated that suitable water vole habitat occurs at various points along this brook.

3. The Bridgewater Canal

3.13 The Council is a partner in the Bridgewater Way regeneration project, which seeks to create a 65km/39 mile leisure route for walkers and cyclists along the length of the historic Bridgewater Canal. The Bridgewater Canal runs along parts of the western and southern boundaries of Sandymoor. This will continue to serve as a major leisure route with accessible towpaths. Footpaths from within the site should connect with these where possible. There is the opportunity for development adjoining the canal to make arrangements for necessary improvements to the canal towpath in accordance with the guidance contained within the Council's Provision of Open Space SPD.



Figure 3.4 Existing watercourse plan

c) UTILITIES

Overhead Cables/Pylons

- 3.14** The two overhead electric cable routes that run along both the eastern and western edges of the site represent significant development constraints at Sandymoor. The western cables are 275kV (with a maximum of 400kV) high voltage power lines maintained by National Grid Transco. In contrast, the eastern overhead power lines are 132kV high voltage, and maintained by Scottish Power. New development proposals each must ensure that a specific stand-off distance from the overhead power lines is created due to the requirement for statutory safety clearances.
- 3.15** To assess the potential impact of electro-magnetic fields (EMFs), a wide range of health studies have previously been undertaken by several organisations as commissioned by Central Government. However, none of these have established a direct linkage between EMFs and symptoms of ill health.
- 3.16** The revised Masterplan requires all new housing to maintain a non-statutory minimum separation distance of 25m either side of centre line of the western 400kV power line corridor to the building lines of residential development in full compliance with the National Radiological Protection Board's (now part of the Health Protection Agency) current minimum requirements.

Future Utility Services

- 3.17** The supply of utility services to new development, including electricity, gas, water and telecommunication, has been identified as a potential constraint due to the significant increase in load as a result of increased unit numbers. The relevant service providers are and will continue to be kept fully informed of development proposals to establish any future network upgrading or reinforcement requirements. The Masterplan includes the location for a proposed sub-station adjacent to the new access road from Windmill Hill Avenue.



Figure 3.5 Existing overhead pylons

d) NATURE CONSERVATION

3.18 Scattered within the development area lie several natural and man-made (WWII bomb craters) ponds. Surveys indicate that these ponds, despite some drying out during the summer months, support a variety of amphibians including a small population of protected great crested newts. Where proposed development is likely to impact directly upon these ponds, the Masterplan has identified the opportunity to accommodate provision elsewhere within the development area to not only compensate for the loss of any existing ponds, but also provide new ponds to increase 'connectivity' of the amphibian habitats at Sandymoor, thereby enhancing the local environment for the amphibian populations. In addition, these ponds will serve as attractive natural features to the benefit of the local community.

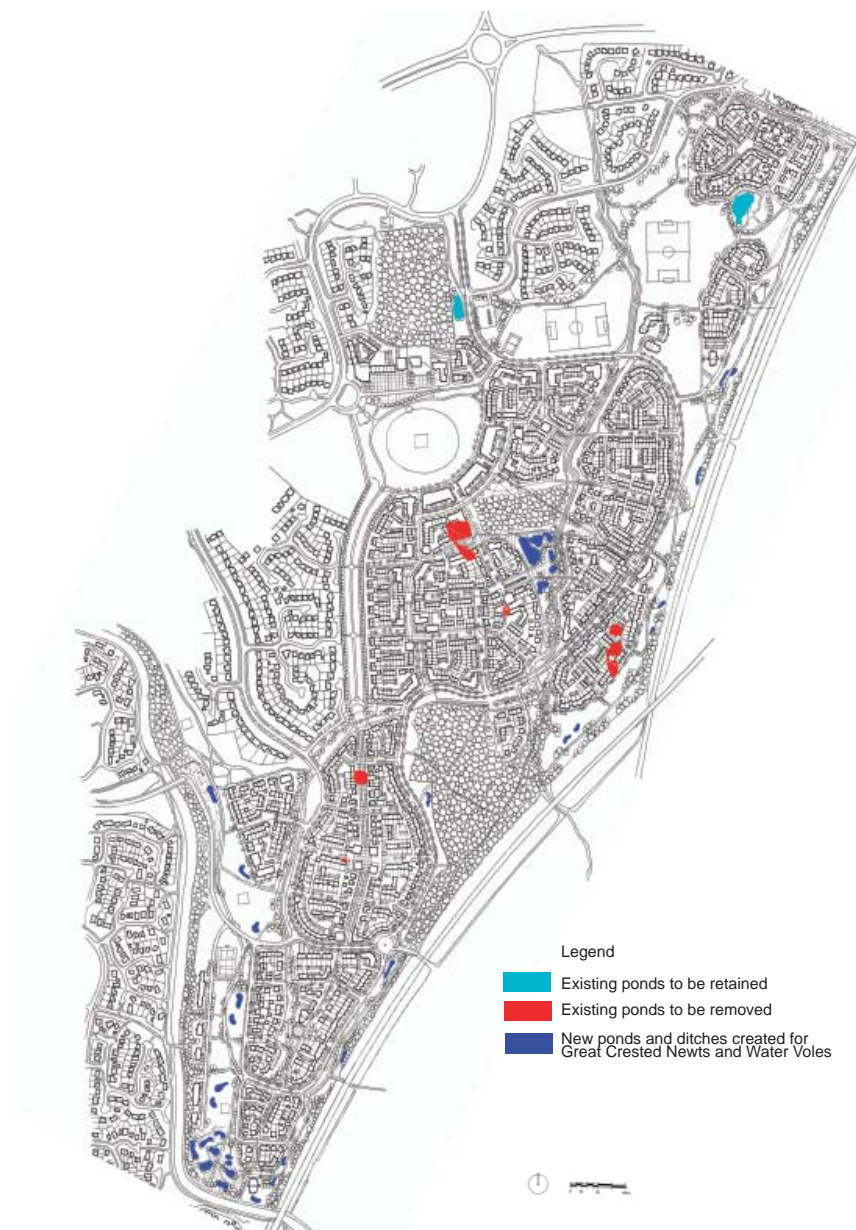


Figure 3.6 Location of existing and proposed ponds

e) FLOODPLAIN MITIGATION

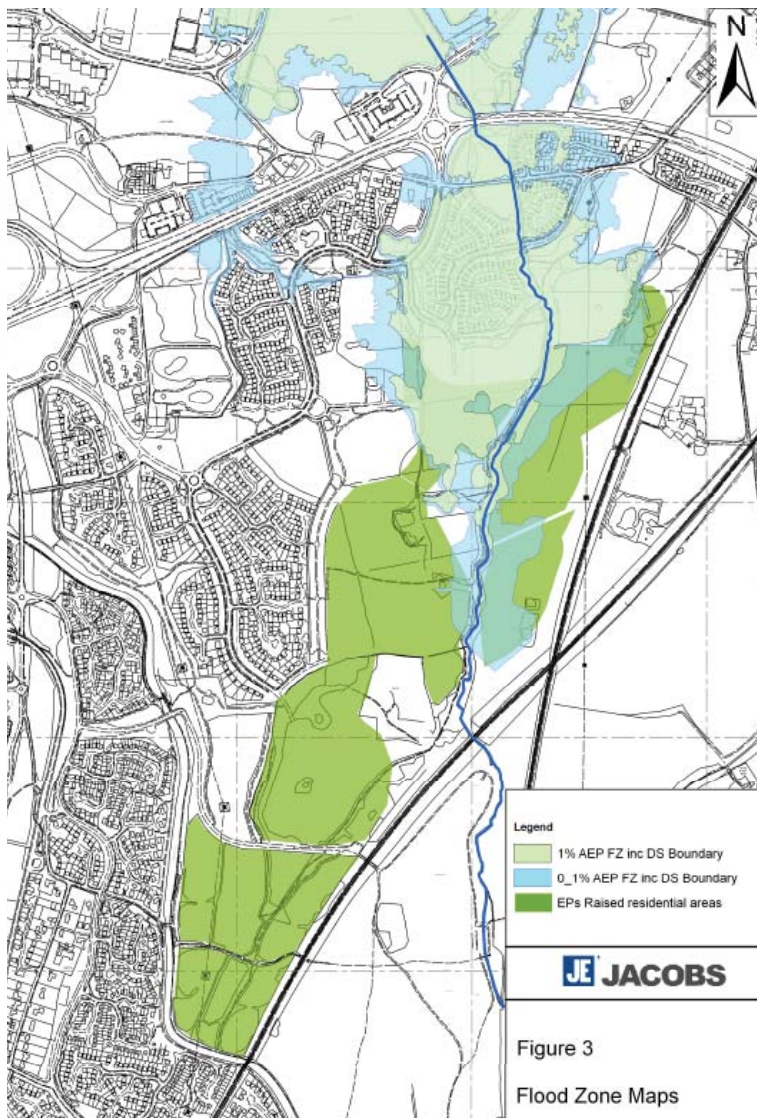


Figure 3.7 Flood risk plan

3.19 As previously discussed within this SPD, an area of potential flood risk is located within northern Sandymoor. The extent of the floodplain has been identified through a study commissioned in late 2005/early 2006. The findings determined that areas of the proposed development do fall within the revised Zone 2 (0.1%, 1000 year) and Zone 3 (1%, 100 year) Flood Outlines. Flood mitigation measures have therefore been developed for the Masterplan to reduce this risk of flooding to an acceptable level. This will be done through providing compensatory flood storage, reprofiling the site to physically raise ground levels above the 1% flood level and ensuring that all commercial and residential development takes place within the lower risk zones (i.e. Zone 1 Low Probability and Zone 2 Medium Probability). Detailed hydraulic modelling has been undertaken to demonstrate the effectiveness of these flood mitigation measure and ensure that there is no net loss of floodplain storage or exacerbation of flood risk downstream. Initially, the location of playing field provision was changed to ensure that no built development would be located within a high risk flood area. This undevelopable area of land has also been identified for playing field provision in the revised Masterplan, forming part of a 'land-swap' with land in southern Sandymoor in order to prevent any new development within the unmitigated floodplain. To reflect this change, planning permission was granted in May 2007 which allowed for this 'land-swap' as part of the overall Masterplanning process.



Figure 3.8 Proposed open space and playing fields plan

f) OPEN SPACE PROVISION

3.20 The total quantity of public open space provision located within Sandymoor has been established through conforming to the guidance of the National Playing Fields Association. This specifically identifies a '6 acre standard' (2.4ha) per 1000 population of playing pitch and passive recreation provision within new residential developments. The provision of natural green space follows Natural England's Natural Green Space standards amended to meet Halton Borough Councils standard (2.75 Ha per 1,000 population). The total provision of 49 hectares of open space at Sandymoor exceeds the combined minimum requirement of 25.75 hectares (based on an estimated population figure of 5,000) by 23.25 hectares. Halton Borough Council has previously prepared an 'Audit of Recreational Provision', which identified a shortage of playing fields within East Runcorn. To satisfy the needs of the local community, the Masterplan provides for 3 new junior (or 2 senior) playing fields within northern Sandymoor.

g) GROUND CONDITIONS

- 3.21** A geological review of Sandymoor has indicated that the entire site is underlain by glacial till, comprising marine and estuarine alluvium, blown sand and localised clay, and rocks of the Triassic Mercia Mudstone and Sherwood Sandstone groups. At present, further investigation of a geotechnical nature comprising shell and auger boreholes, and trial pits including associated geotechnical testing is considered necessary for certain areas within Sandymoor.
- 3.22** There is no evidence on review of previous site history to suggest that the site is contaminated as a result of previous use(s). The majority of Sandymoor has essentially remained as agricultural land, with extensive residential development within the immediate surrounding areas.

h) DRAINAGE

- 3.23** There is adequate capacity within the existing foul and surface water trunk sewers to accommodate the additional flows from housing areas with an increased residential density. The existing foul and surface water trunk sewers have been constructed at depths deep enough to allow all the remaining undeveloped sites to discharge via gravity sewer connections.
- 3.24** Each parcel of land must be drained to specific outfall manholes that have been designed to accept the relevant discharge from catchment areas based on the Masterplan. Any further additions or alterations made to the Masterplan must be considered against the revised sub-catchments now proposed. All sewers offered for adoption must comply with United Utilities easement requirements.

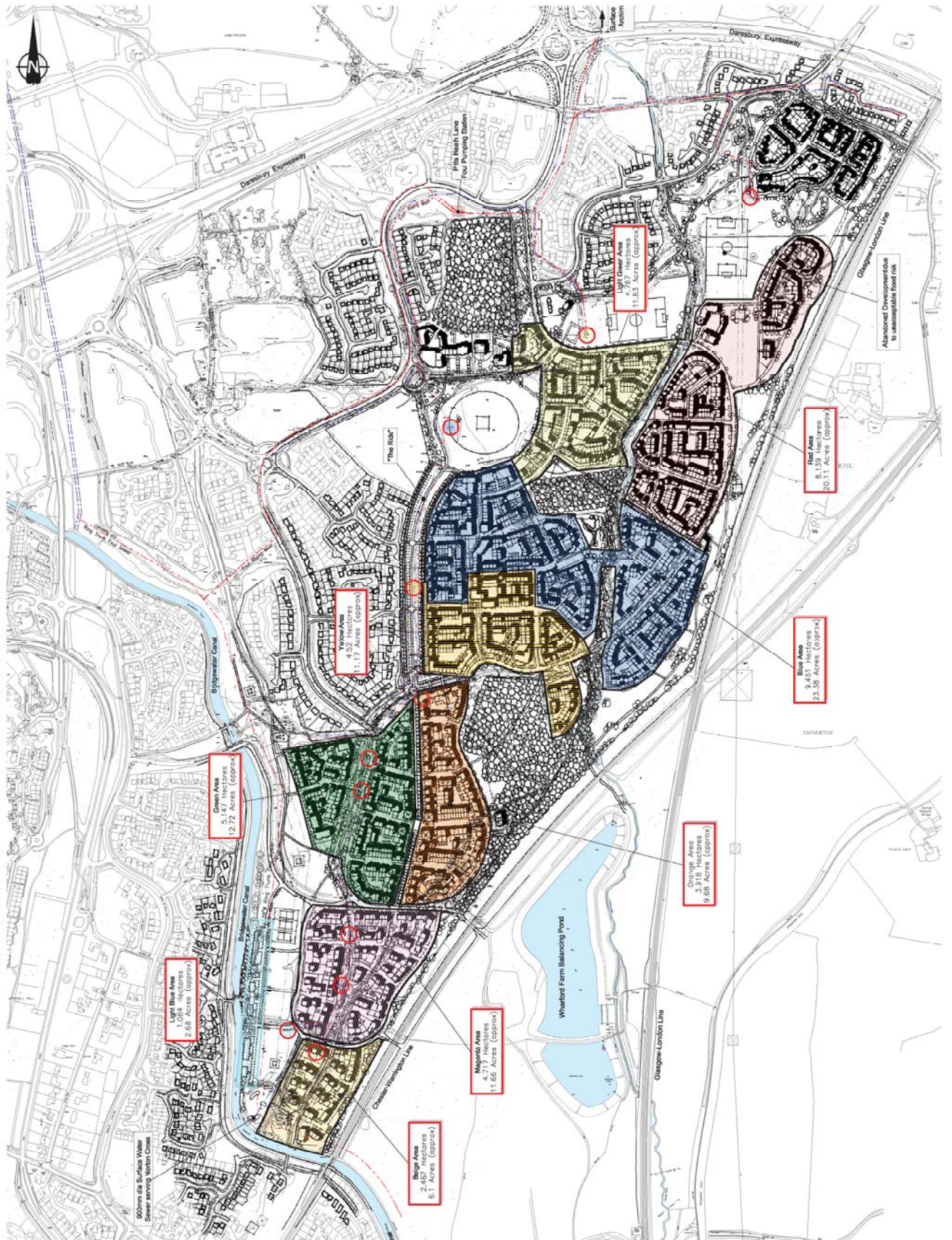


Figure 3.9 Drainage plan

i) FOOTPATHS

3.25 The existing Sandymoor development has established a series of footpath routes, mainly associated with the highway network. Footpaths within existing open space in the northern parts of Sandymoor have also been established, and link not only with road footpaths but also pedestrian routes towards Moore Village and across the Bridgewater Canal to Windmill Hill. A formal central tree-lined avenue 'The Ride' has been developed leading from the Village Green and proposed Local Centre towards the south of the development site. New proposed footpaths will need to link with the existing network and extend accessibility not only into the new open spaces but also to the wider countryside.

j) PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

3.26 Designated public rights of way currently exist across the south of Sandymoor (Gooseberry Lane) forming a link between sections of The Bridgewater Canal and the adjacent surrounding countryside. They also run along the canal towpath. The opportunity exists for the strategic footpaths through and beyond the site to be linked and extended into the development to provide a continuity of existing 'leisure' routes.

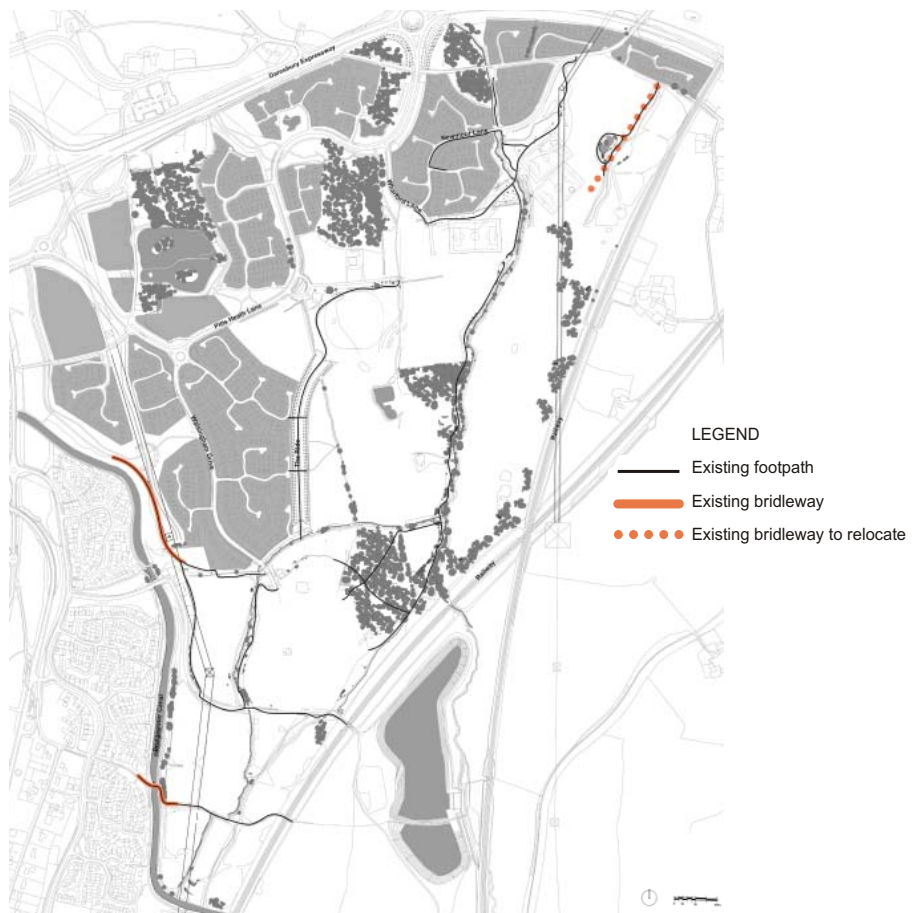


Figure 3.10 Existing footpaths and public rights of way