

Development Brief - Berry Drive (Gorstthills) July 2025



1. Summary

1.1. This brief has been prepared to set out the Council's expectations for development of the former Gorsthills Primary School site on Berry Drive, Ellesmere Port. The brief has been prepared in accordance with current planning policy and will be a material consideration in helping to determine planning applications for the site. However, as landowner the Council expects that this development exceeds the minimum requirements of the Local Plan and provides an exemplar development that responds to the Council's objectives and commitments within the Climate Emergency Response Plan.

2. Background

Introduction:

2.1. This development brief seeks to guide the redevelopment of the former Gorsthills School site, Berry Drive, Ellesmere Port. A site plan, with a suggested planning application boundary can be found in Appendix One of this brief. The purpose of the brief is to provide planning and design guidance for the development of the site, allowing developers to submit informed proposals that respond to the Council's expectations for the site and respect the requirements of the Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan. The brief outlines the way in which the site should be developed, setting out the key principles.

Location:

2.2. The site is situated within Ledsham and Manor Ward, Ellesmere Port. It comprises approximately 0.63 ha of previously developed land of the former school buildings (Development Site). The green field land, associated with the former school playing field (Open Space) will remain as public open space and the land will be retained in Council ownership.

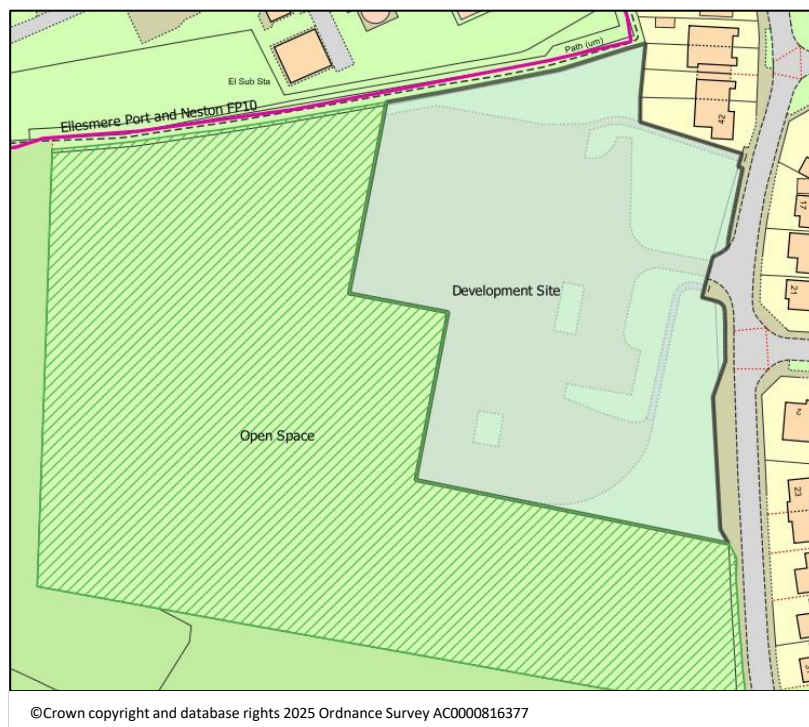


Figure 1 – Berry Drive (Gorsthills)

2.3. Gorsthills School was demolished in c2007. Since demolition the site has remained vacant. In 2010 a scheme for extra care housing was approved (Ref. No: [09/02048/OUT](#)) but was not implemented. Since the onset of the Covid19 pandemic, the open space has been made available for informal public recreation.

2.4. Berry Drive is in a primarily residential area. Sutton Hall water treatment works lies to the north of the former school site. A strategic residential development of up to 2,000 dwellings is currently under construction off Ledsham Road; this will be built eventually to the west and south of the Berry Drive site. The site is served by public transport with bus stops some 485m and 645m away, providing access to Ellesmere Port, Chester and Liverpool. There is a Public Right of Way (EP&N FP10) that runs along the northern boundary of the site connecting the existing residential area with the upcoming Ledsham Road development.

Development and disposal of the site:

2.5. The land at the former Gorsthills Primary School is currently owned by Cheshire West and Chester Council. The Development Site will be disposed of for residential development, with the Council's expectations for the site set out in this brief.

3. Planning Policy Context:

3.1. Cheshire West and Chester Development Plan is made up of the Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies and Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies and relevant made Neighbourhood Plans. There is no Neighbourhood Plan for this area. The Local Plan (Part One) provides the overall vision, strategic objectives, spatial strategy and strategic planning policies for the borough to 2030. The Local Plan (Part Two) provides further detailed policies and land allocations which support the strategic objectives and policies set out in the Local Plan (Part One). The Local Plan seeks to deliver the Council's aim to produce a comprehensive planning framework to achieve sustainable development in the borough.

3.2. The strategy of the plan, as set out in the Local Plan (Part One) policy STRAT 2, directs development to the four urban areas, which includes Ellesmere Port. The site is located within the settlement boundary for Ellesmere Port as identified in the Local Plan (Part Two) policy EP 1 and therefore is a suitable location for development. The policy also supports regeneration of previously developed land for a range of uses, particularly to support new housing development. The Local Plan (Part Two) policy DM 1 requires development on previously developed land to have an appropriate mix of uses and density whilst fully respecting the existing character and layout of the surrounding area to maximise the use of land.

3.3. By virtue of the location and proposal recommended by this development brief, the following policies will be applicable, but are not restricted to:

Local Plan (Part One) policy:

- STRAT 1 –Sustainable development
- STRAT 2 – Strategic development
- STRAT 4 – Ellesmere Port
- STRAT 10 – Transport and accessibility
- SOC 1 – Affordable housing

- SOC 3 – Housing mix and type
- SOC 5 – Health and well-being
- SOC 6 – Open space, sport and recreation
- ENV 1 – Flood risk and water management
- ENV 3 – Green Infrastructure
- ENV 4 – Biodiversity and geodiversity
- ENV 6 – High quality design and sustainable construction

[Local Plan \(Part Two\)](#) policy:

- EP 1 – Ellesmere Port Settlement Area
- T 5 – Parking and access
- DM 1 – Development of previously developed land
- DM 2 – Impact on residential amenity
- DM 3 – Design, character and visual amenity
- DM 4 – Sustainable construction
- DM 20 – Mix and type of new housing development
- DM 35 – Open space and new development
- DM 36 – Provision for sport and recreation
- DM 40 – Development and flood risk
- DM 44 – Protecting and enhancing the natural environment
- DM 45 – Trees, woodland and hedgerows

3.4. In addition, parking requirements should meet the criteria set out in the latest [Parking Standards SPD](#).

3.5. A planning application for the site must submit at least the following documents:

- Design and Access Statement
- Sustainable Housing Statement / Sustainable Construction Checklist
- Health Impact Statement (template available via the link below)
- Planning Statement
- Biodiversity Net Gain metric and supporting documents
- Preliminary Ecological Assessment and any further surveys recommended
- Ground Investigation
- Noise Assessment
- Tree Survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment / Method Statement
- Transport Statement (including details of Electric Vehicle charging infrastructure)
- Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy
- Construction Management Plan
- Agronomy Assessment

3.6. Further information can be found on our website: [What to submit with your planning application \(cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk\)](https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk)

4. Design and layout:

4.1. A high standard of design will be expected throughout the scheme. The following principles must be included and articulated within the design and access statement:

Development Density:

4.2. The development on the Development Site must be in keeping with the existing density levels and proposed neighbouring development of Ledsham Road which has a density of approximately 30-35 dwellings per hectare. See extract from the density plan, below:

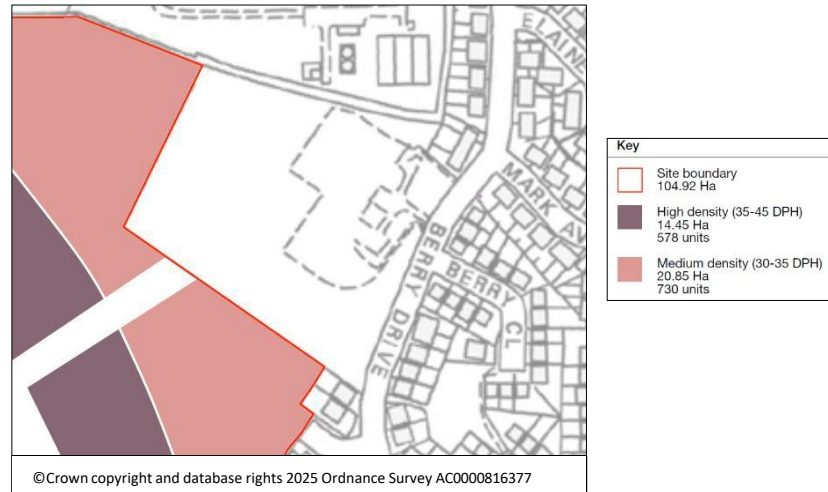


Figure 2 – 12/02091/OUT Ledsham Road housing density

Design Proposal:

4.3. In line with Local Plan (Part One) policy ENV 6 and Local Plan (Part Two) policy DM 3, the dwellings on the Development Site will be expected to achieve a high standard of design that respects the character and protects the visual amenity of the local area. The design proposal should address the following:

- An appropriate boundary between the Development Site (previously developed land) and the open space (greenfield)
- Outward looking development with orientation of dwellings such that they face out to Berry Drive and the open space wherever possible
- Scale and impact
- Safety and security
- Creation of sense of place
- Integration with existing residential area and the new development on the Ledsham Road site
- Separation Distances
- Relationship to the adjacent Water Treatment Works
- Integration of and connection to existing footpath (Ellesmere Port and Neston FP10)

4.4. Local Plan (Part Two) policy DM 20 paragraph 10.10 states that ‘normally, there should be a minimum distance of 21 metres between facing windows of main habitable rooms and 13 metres between windows of main habitable rooms and blank walls.’

Mix and type of housing:

4.5. In line with Local Plan (Part One) policy SOC 3 and Local Plan (Part Two) policy DM 20, proposals for residential development must take account of the housing needs of the local area to ensure a range of house types, tenures and sizes are provided across the borough. This new development presents an opportunity stated in Local Plan (Part Two) Policy DM 20, to address the requirement of smaller homes for first time buyers, accessible and adaptable

homes such as bungalows and self-build and custom build housing. Affordable housing requirements are set out in Section 7 of this brief.

Amenity:

4.6. In line with Local Plan (Part One) policy SOC 5 and Local Plan (Part Two) policy DM 2, all proposals for new development will be expected to safeguard the quality of life for residents within the development and those living nearby. Development will only be supported where it does not result in a significant adverse impact upon the residential amenity of the occupiers of existing properties or future occupiers of the proposed development.

4.7. The northern boundary of the site overlooks the Sutton Hall Water Treatment Works and appropriate boundary treatment to mitigate floodlighting and noise arising from the site's operations will be necessary.

The Built Form:

4.8. Application for any proposal should address consideration of the following:

- Architectural style to achieve a sense of place. The domestic scale should reflect the existing style.
- Garden size: The explanatory text for Local Plan (Part Two) policy DM 3 (para 10.16) requires that the size and shape of outside amenity space must be carefully considered, and it is recommended that rear gardens are at least equal to the ground floor footprint of a dwelling. Triangular shaped gardens are discouraged as they rarely offer a practical, usable space, and residents should be able to access their garden without having to walk through their home.
- Parking & Cycle Storage: Access to convenient and secure cycle and other vehicle storage should be provided in line with Local Plan (Part Two) policy T 5 and guidance in the latest Parking Standards SPD, which includes electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure and cycle parking requirements.
- Bin Storage: Para 10.15 of the explanatory text of Local Plan (Part Two) policy DM 3 says that new development should ensure that there is adequate external storage space for bins and recycling, as well as vehicles and cycles. Provision of bin collection points shall be included within the layout.
- Materials used should be sympathetic and reflective of the local area in line with Local Plan (Part Two) policy DM 3 point 2 which says that new developments should respect and where appropriate enhance the prevailing layout, urban grain, landscape, density and mix of uses, scale and height, massing, appearance and materials.

Sustainable Construction:

4.9. In line with Local Plan (Part One) policy ENV 6 and Local Plan (Part Two) policy DM 4, all development proposals (including changes of use) will be expected to achieve the highest levels of energy and water efficiency that is practical and viable, and to maximise opportunities to incorporate sustainable design features where feasible.

4.10. New dwellings will be required to meet the optional higher National Housing Standard for water consumption of 110 litres per person per day. The development will present an opportunity for innovative sustainable design solutions for energy efficiency and low carbon energy generation and use over and above Building Regulations and/or National Housing Standards.

4.11. Cheshire West and Chester Council declared a Climate Emergency in May 2019. The Climate Emergency Response Plan sets out the scale of the challenge that we face, as a borough, to achieve carbon neutrality by 2045. In the Council's Climate Emergency Response Plan, Anthesis proposed that in order to achieve the goal, amongst other actions, new build housing developments should be built to the Passivhaus standard. Passivhaus is an international energy performance standard to dramatically reduce the requirement for space heating and cooling, whilst also creating excellent indoor comfort levels.

4.12. Therefore, all houses developed on the site must be designed and certified to Passivhaus standards, which will be written into the development agreement. Further information should be submitted in a Sustainable Housing Statement / Sustainable Construction Checklist as part of the planning application. Further information on the Passivhaus standard is available here: [Home \(passivhaustrust.org.uk\)](https://home.passivhaustrust.org.uk)

5. Highway, Access and Parking

5.1. Vehicular access to the site will be from Berry Drive. Access should be of adoptable standard and be able to accommodate bin lorries and emergency vehicles. The junction at Berry Close should be considered in designing the scheme, particularly avoiding driveways opposite the junction. The Highway Authority should be consulted as part of the preparation of the plans and layout.

5.2. The Council will seek to work with local land owners to create a connection between the Public Right of Way Ellesmere Port and Neston FP10 and the former Gorsthills School site to provide another cycling and walking option to the facilities on the Ledsham Road development.

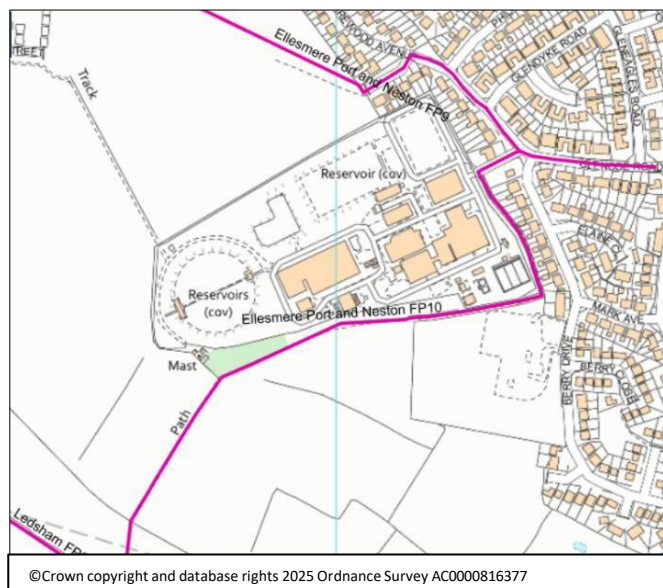


Figure 3: Footpath connectivity around the site

5.3. In addition, a 3.6-meter-wide maintenance only access point will need to be provided from the Development Site onto the open space to allow ongoing maintenance.

5.4. The development should also provide cycle parking in accordance with the latest [Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document \(SPD\)](#) which relate to the number of

bedrooms per dwelling and contribute towards facilitating safe and easy pedestrian and cyclist movement. The development is expected to demonstrate that the design has followed Government guidance Cycle infrastructure design ([LTN 1/20](#)).

5.5. In line with the Council's commitment to carbon neutrality and to tackle climate change emergency, it is expected that the housing development on the Development Site exceed the minimum recommended provision for Electric Vehicle charging infrastructure as set out in the SPD and as a minimum provide one 7kw Mode 3 EV charging point per dwelling. As part of the transport and infrastructure improvements, the former school road markings will also need to be removed and the lay-by must be retained.

6. Flood Risk and Drainage

6.1. The site is within Flood Zone 1 as identified on the Flood Map for Planning (Source: <https://flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk/>) and the Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA).

6.2. The site was subject to a site assessment in the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2016) for residential development and it was confirmed that there is a risk of surface water flooding. In accordance with Local Plan (Part One) policy ENV 1 and Local Plan (Part Two) policy DM 40 and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) will be required. The FRA will also be expected to address potential reservoir failure in relation to the adjacent Water Treatment works. The Reservoir Flood Map can be viewed in Appendix two, the Council is currently undertaking a new borough-wide Strategic Flood Risk Assessment which will be completed later this year and may provide more up to date mapping.

6.3. In line with Local Plan (Part One) policy ENV 1 and Local Plan (Part Two) policy DM 41, proposals for major development will be required to incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) which must be included in the early stages of the site design. The preference is for surface level SuDS subject to satisfactory arrangements for management / maintenance. In line with Local Plan (Part Two) policy DM 43, it must be demonstrated that the proposal will not cause unacceptable deterioration to water quality or have an unacceptable impact on water quantity (including drinking water supplies) or water treatment/wastewater infrastructure capacity.

6.4. The discharge of surface water to combined drainage systems will be regulated in accordance with requirements set by the relevant utility provider. SuDS must not have an impact on the long-term maintenance and management of the open space, allowing the sports field, including the sports pitch to be reinstated in the future. Consideration should be made for the small amount of surface water flooding in the North East of the site.

7. Affordable Housing

7.1. Proposals for residential development should identify how the affordable housing requirements set out in Local Plan (Part One) policy SOC 1 will be met. In urban areas, including Ellesmere Port, sites that have a capacity for ten or more dwellings or comprise an area of 0.3 hectares or more, are expected to provide a target of 30% of the total dwellings as affordable units. Affordable housing provision must be provided on site unless there are exceptional circumstances which can be demonstrated to justify off site provision or financial

contributions. Local Plan (Part Two) policy DM 23 sets out the requirement for on-site affordable housing, which is key to achieving sustainable and mixed communities as well as meeting affordable housing needs. In line with Local Plan (Part Two) policy DM 23 residential proposals for the Development Site should deliver affordable housing on-site as part of the development.

7.2. Amongst the 30% affordable housing required, there should be a tenure split of 70:30 rent to intermediate tenure. The rented element should be Affordable Rent or Local Housing Allowance Rent (whichever is lowest), intermediate tenure to be Shared Ownership, Discount Market Sale or Rent to Buy. Discussions around mix and type would be picked up at the planning application stage but the rental element would be expected to consist of 1-bedroom apartments (in small blocks) and 2-bedroom houses predominantly. Intermediate tenure units would be generally sought for 2/3/4-bedroom houses. Schemes that propose 100% affordable housing could also be acceptable.

7.3. An early engagement with the Council's Housing Strategy team to discuss tenure, mix and type of housing is recommended.

8. Landscaping and Biodiversity

8.1. Local Plan (Part Two) policy DM 3 explains that landscaping is an effective way to achieve a high standard of design and to protect visual amenity. Design solutions, where appropriate, should take opportunities to protect and provide unifying features of design such as gate piers, landscaping, walls, boundary fences and the nature, quality and type of materials.

8.2. Commensurate with the size and scale of potential impact, proposals must utilise native species in landscaping schemes, where appropriate. The site currently has a number of protected trees which should be incorporated in any landscape proposal.

8.3. In line with Local Plan (Part One) policy ENV 4 and Local Plan (Part Two) policy DM 44, development will be supported where it delivers biodiversity net gains within the borough. Planning applications for developments required to achieve 10% biodiversity net gain (if not exempt) will be expected to provide a completed Biodiversity Net Gain checklist, completed Statutory DEFRA Metric and Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment document including supporting information, to demonstrate the biodiversity net gain solution for the development. A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal should be provided, to be carried out by a suitably qualified ecologist to best practice guidelines. Any further species or habitat specific surveys recommended from this are also required. Mitigation plans and method statements of works should be submitted if evidence of protected species or habitats is found. More detail of what information is expected with the submission can be found here: [Cheshire West and Chester Council - Developer contributions guidance note - Biodiversity net gain](#).

8.4. Local Plan (Part Two) policy DM 45 (Trees, woodland and hedgerows) states "*In line with Local Plan (Part One) policies ENV 3 and ENV 4, development will be supported where it conserves, manages and, wherever possible, enhances existing trees, woodlands, traditional orchards, and hedgerows. All significant healthy trees, woodlands, traditional orchards, and hedgerows should be integrated into the development scheme. Where possible, existing significant trees should be incorporated within public open space.*"

8.5. The site is within the Mersey Forest area defined in the Local Plan (Part Two) policy DM 45 which supports the aims and policies in the Mersey Forest Plan as well as conserving, managing and enhancing existing trees, woodland and hedgerows. Since there are protected groups of trees and woodland within the Development Site, an appropriate landscape and design statement which includes mitigation measures must be submitted as part of the application.

8.6. Figure 4 below shows the TPOs for the site and the surrounding area. Individual trees are shown as points and TPOs for Areas, Groups and Woodlands as hashed green polygons.



Figure 4 TPO's for Individual Trees and Areas, Groups and Woodlands

9. Open Space

9.1. Development must be in line with Local Plan (Part One) policy SOC 6 and Local Plan (Part Two) policy DM 35 and conform to the Council's latest Open Space Study which says that "*proposals for new residential development will be required to provide open space, where:*

1. there are existing deficiencies in quantity, quality or access to open space; or
2. the development generates a need that cannot be met by existing provision."

9.2. The Open Space Study – Area Profile – Ellesmere Port (2017) confirms that there is an overall under supply of most typologies of open space within the Ellesmere Port study area, with a total shortfall of 9.27ha. More specifically, within the Ledsham and Manor ward there is a deficiency of 2.91 ha of Amenity Green Space, 3.9 ha of Park and Recreation ground space, 0.39 ha of children's play space and 0.23 ha of youth play space.

9.3. Modest improvements to the open space adjacent to the Development Site must be made as part of the Local Plan requirement. However, any work must not prejudice the future reinstatement of the sports pitch.

10. Provision for sport and recreation

10.1. There may be some additional pitch needs generated from the development in line with Local Plan (Part One) Policy SOC 6 and Local Plan (Part Two) policy DM 36. Depending on the number of dwellings, it is likely that the requirement for pitch sums will be triggered to

enhance existing pitch site/s within the Ellesmere Port locality which has been identified within the latest Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan as a priority. This is calculated using Sport England's pitch calculator and based on the number of people generated from a development.

10.2. The latest Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan recognises current and future shortfalls are evident on youth 11v11, youth 9v9, mini 7v7, mini 5v5 and rugby union (senior) pitches. Please note the Council periodically updates this strategy and the most up to date evidence base should be used at the time of the planning application.

11. Phasing and Delivery

11.1. The developer is expected to make a single planning application for the entire Development Site. A suggested red line boundary can be found in Appendix One. A detailed programme that schedules the development will need to be submitted for consideration. The Council will need to be satisfied that access to the open space on the former school playing field area for local residents is maintained during the construction phase. In addition, a Construction Environmental Management Statement must be submitted setting out how the construction phase of the site will be managed to protect the amenity of neighbouring residents.

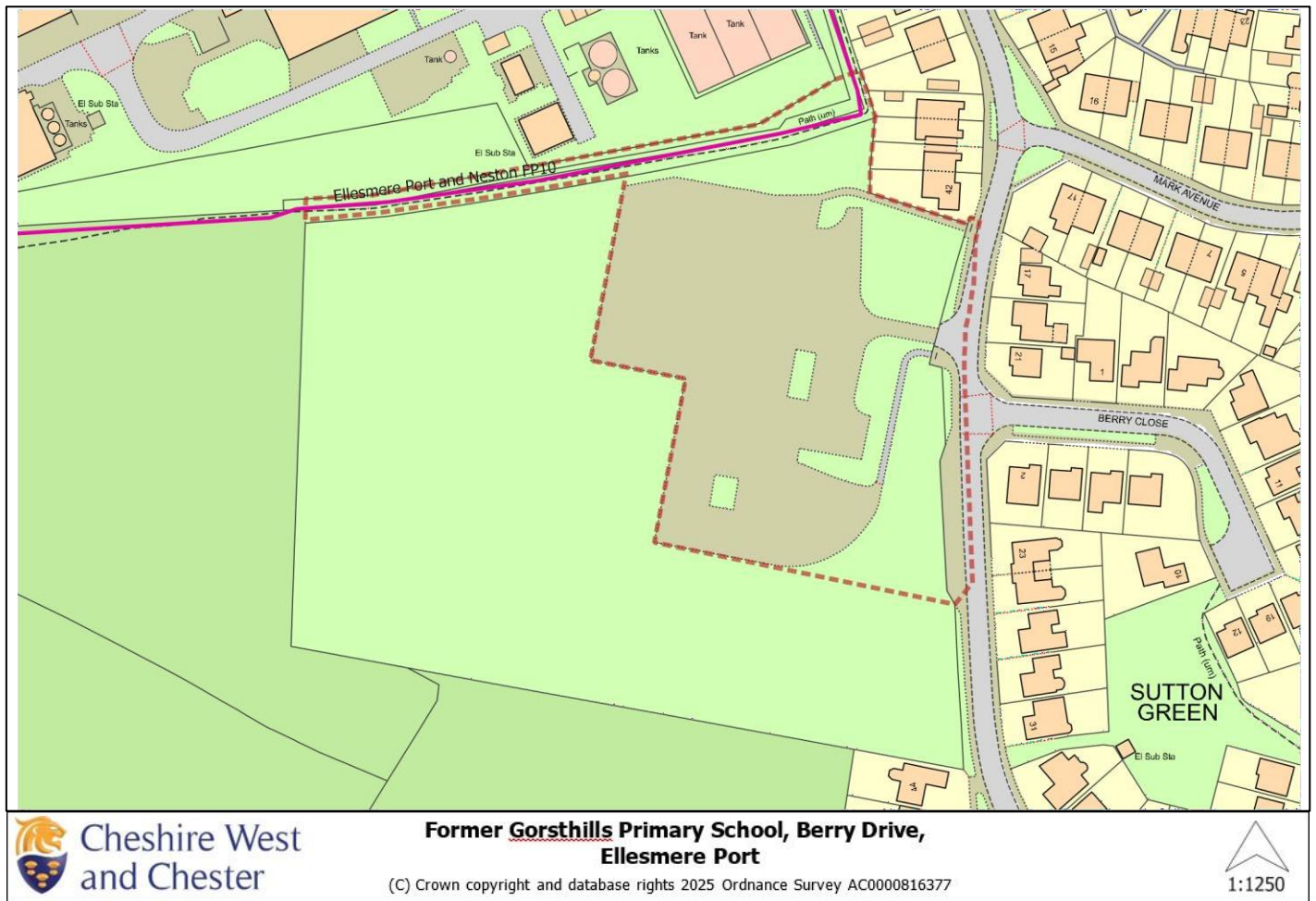
11.2. The development of the site must be completed in a single phase and any planning permission will include conditions for the construction of the site to protect the amenity of existing residents as identified by the policy requirements set out in Sections 4 to 10 of this brief.

12. Planning obligations/conditions

12.1. Residential development on the Development Site is in principle acceptable. However, developer contributions must be secured in order to carry out all infrastructure and improvements on or off-site. In particular, regard must be had to the following:

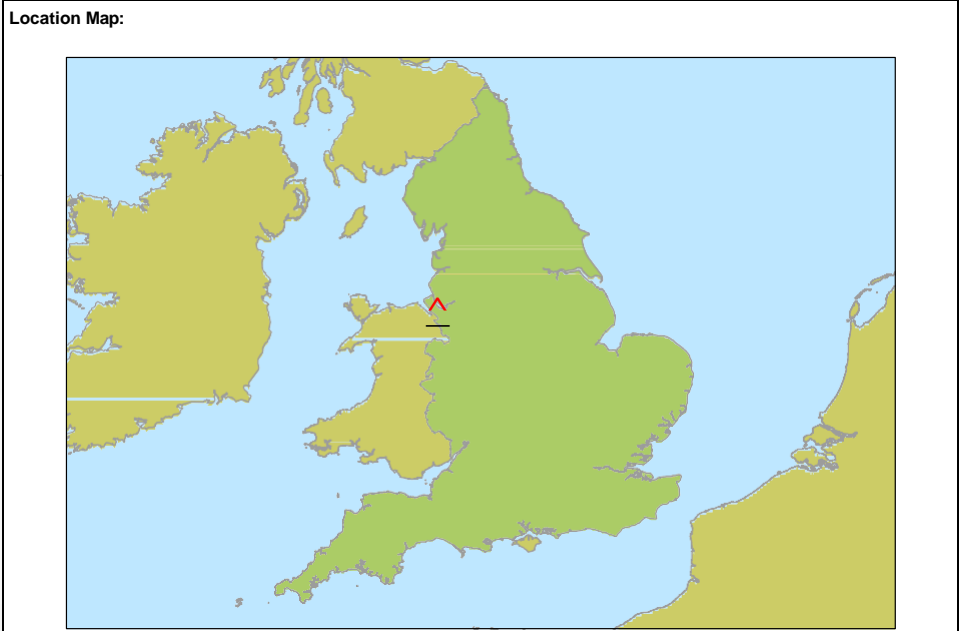
- Affordable housing
- Open Space and playing pitch needs associated with the new housing
- Education contributions
- Health contributions
- Biodiversity Net Gain
- Highways

Appendix 1 - Suggested planning application boundary





Reservoir Flood Map	
Reservoir Name: Sutton Hall	Map Type: Maximum Flood Extent Dry Day
Multiple Breach: Composite of all Breach Locations 1 to 3	Scale: 1:9,500 at ISO A0
RFM specification version used for map production: Version 1.2 October 2020	Revision: A
Status: Final	Date Produced: 19/07/2019



Legend:

- Reservoir Location
- Reservoir Extent
- Maximum Flood Extent for Dry Day Scenario

Notes:

A dry day scenario is the predicted flooding that would occur if the reservoir fails when the rivers are at normal levels.

If a reservoir fails at the same time when the river has already overflowed its banks, flooding could be worse. To show how much worse, in many cases a wet day scenario is included as well.

There is no likelihood that flooding from the reservoir breach downstream of the wet day termination extent would significantly impact on properties or infrastructure. Any flooding is mostly from a river, not from the reservoir breach.

Note that a wet day scenario has not been run for all reservoirs.

0 0.2 0.4 0.8 1.2 1.6
Kilometres

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 - The information contained in this map DOES NOT in any way reflect the structural integrity or likelihood of failure of the dam.
 - This map gives an indication only of the areas that may be flooded if the dam completely failed. The flood extent is best estimate for multi-purpose use. It is based on a simplified modelling approach. Actual reservoir failure may give rise to conditions (flood extents) which vary from those indicated.
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