SITE PROMOTION STATEMENT

LAND AT KNUTSFORD ROAD, KNUTSFORD

Promotion for Residential-led Development

1. Introduction

1.1 Plan:8 Town Planning Ltd is instructed by Merdad Hoodeh, owner of land at Knutsford Road, Knutsford, to promote the site for allocation through the emerging Cheshire East Local Plan.

1.2 The land was submitted to Cheshire East Council through the 2024 Call for Sites exercise. This statement updates that submission having particular regard to the National Planning Policy Framework published in August 2026, the revised national approach to Green Belt and grey belt land, Planning Practice Guidance on Green Belt assessment, the Council's current housing land supply position and preparation of the new Cheshire East Local Plan.

1.3 The original submission promoted approximately 7.5 hectares of land and included an illustrative concept identifying approximately 3.5 hectares for development, with the balance available for landscape, biodiversity and green infrastructure enhancement. That concept was prepared to demonstrate the principle and flexibility of development rather than to establish a fixed development area or capacity. The site is in single ownership and is therefore capable of being planned and brought forward comprehensively.

1.4 The development proposition is deliberately flexible. Having regard to the efficient use of land required by national and local planning policy, the site is promoted for a residential-led allocation capable of accommodating approximately 150 dwellings, subject to detailed masterplanning. This could comprise either:

- 100% residential development, including market and affordable housing; or
- a mixed residential development comprising market and affordable housing together with specialist older persons accommodation, potentially including a care home or care village.

1.5 At this stage it would be inappropriate to prescribe a fixed capacity or development footprint. However, as an indication of potential capacity, development of approximately 60% of the 7.5 hectare site at an average net residential density of around 35 dwellings per hectare could accommodate in the order of 150-160 dwellings. This represents a reasonable basis for testing the site's capacity through the Local Plan process, whilst retaining substantial land for green infrastructure, landscaping, biodiversity net gain, drainage and other necessary infrastructure. The precise mix should be determined having regard to identified needs, site capacity, infrastructure requirements and viability.

2. The Site and Development Opportunity

2.1 The site lies off the B5085 Knutsford Road on the eastern side of Knutsford, approximately 1.2 miles from the town centre. The land extends to approximately 7.5 hectares and is currently principally agricultural in character.

2.2 It lies at the edge of the existing built-up area of Knutsford and provides an opportunity for planned growth adjoining one of Cheshire East's established service settlements.

2.3 Vehicular access can be obtained directly from Knutsford Road. The original submission identifies good visibility in both directions and proximity to housing, schools, shops, medical facilities, employment and public transport.

2.4 The indicative concept submitted in 2024 demonstrated that residential development could be accommodated whilst retaining a substantial proportion of the site for green infrastructure, landscape planting, habitat creation and biodiversity enhancement. It was not intended to establish either a maximum developable area or a maximum housing capacity.

2.5 The August 2026 NPPF places increased emphasis upon making efficient use of land and optimising the development potential of suitable sites. Cheshire East Local Plan Policy HOU 14 similarly expects residential development generally to achieve a net density of at least 30 dwellings per hectare and seeks higher densities in Key Service Centres where sites are well served by public transport and/or close to transport routes or nodes.

2.6 Against that policy background, a reasonable initial assumption is that approximately 60% of the overall site could form the developable residential area. At an indicative average net density of around 35 dwellings per hectare this would provide capacity for approximately 150-160 dwellings. The precise capacity would be established through masterplanning having regard to landscape, heritage, ecology, drainage, access, housing mix and green infrastructure requirements. This approach would retain substantial flexibility to provide a strong landscape and green infrastructure framework whilst ensuring that the site makes efficient use of land. The landowner is willing to work with the Council through the site assessment and Local Plan process to determine the optimum development extent, capacity, housing mix and green infrastructure strategy.

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3. Housing Need and the Emerging Local Plan

3.1 There is now a materially different strategic context from that which existed when the site was first promoted.

3.2 Cheshire East Council's latest published Housing Monitoring Update identifies 8,780 deliverable dwellings, equivalent to only 3.3 years' housing land supply, against a five-year local housing need of 13,162 dwellings.

3.3 That position is important to plan-making. The new Local Plan must identify sufficient land to meet future development needs and provide a strategy capable of delivering the homes required over the plan period.

3.4 The Council has confirmed that sites submitted through its Call for Sites exercises will be assessed for suitability, availability and deliverability, with that work informing the emerging Local Plan.

3.5 The Council's emerging evidence also recognises that meeting future development requirements is likely to require consideration of a range of spatial options, including development at settlement edges.

3.6 Knutsford is an established town with a significant range of employment, retail, education, health, leisure and public transport facilities. It is therefore an appropriate location in which to consider additional sustainable growth.

3.7 The allocation of this site would provide an opportunity to deliver additional housing adjoining an established settlement and existing services rather than directing an equivalent level of growth towards a less sustainable rural location.

3.8 In circumstances where Cheshire East cannot presently demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing land, it is particularly important that potential allocations are assessed on the basis of their realistic development capacity and that otherwise suitable land is not promoted at an unnecessarily low density. The site's capacity should therefore be tested against the requirement to make efficient use of land rather than being constrained by the illustrative 2024 concept.

3.9 A capacity of approximately 150 dwellings would represent an average density of around 35 dwellings per hectare across a developable area of approximately 4.5 hectares. This is a reasonable working density for testing an edge-of-settlement allocation and would allow a detailed masterplan to provide a varied density profile responding to the site's landscape, heritage and other constraints.

3.10 There is also flexibility in the type of accommodation that can be provided. The site can respond to the Council's emerging evidence concerning market and affordable housing, dwelling mix and tenure, specialist housing for older people and care accommodation.

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4. Green Belt – The Changed National Policy Context

4.1 The site is presently within the Green Belt. That designation is recognised and has been taken into account from the outset.

4.2 However, national Green Belt policy has changed materially since the original Call for Sites submission and since Cheshire East's earlier strategic assessment of this part of the Green Belt.

4.3 Policy GB3 of the August 2026 NPPF provides for Green Belt boundaries to be altered through plan-making where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified. In considering whether such circumstances exist, authorities are required to examine whether

development needs can otherwise be met, including through previously developed and under-utilised land, optimisation of density and consideration of land outside the Green Belt.

4.4 Where Green Belt release is necessary, Policy GB4 establishes a clear order of priority: previously developed land should be considered first, followed by grey belt land which is not previously developed, and then other Green Belt locations, subject to the need to promote a sustainable pattern of development.

4.5 National policy therefore no longer supports treating all undeveloped Green Belt land as performing an equivalent function. The contribution made by individual areas to Green Belt purposes is now directly relevant to plan-making and site selection.

4.6 The promoted site should consequently be assessed against the current national methodology as part of the Council's emerging Green Belt evidence base.

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5. The Previous KN15 Green Belt Assessment

5.1 The promoted land forms a relatively small part of the much larger parcel identified as KN15 – Land to the south of Knutsford Road and east of Longridge in Cheshire East's 2015 Green Belt Assessment.

5.2 The 2015 assessment concluded that KN15 as a whole made a major contribution to the Green Belt. That finding is acknowledged. It is not suggested that the previous evidence should simply be disregarded.

5.3 It is, however, necessary to distinguish between the extensive KN15 parcel and the significantly smaller site now being promoted at its western end adjoining Knutsford.

5.4 It is also necessary to apply the materially different methodology now contained within the 2026 NPPF. Annex E requires sufficiently granular assessment areas to identify variations in the contribution made by different parts of the Green Belt. Large assessment parcels may therefore need to be subdivided.

5.5 The principal areas of change can be summarised as follows:

Green Belt purpose	2015 KN15 assessment	Position under 2026 NPPF
(a) Check unrestricted sprawl	Major contribution	Requires site-specific reassessment. The present site is substantially smaller, adjoins the urban edge and can potentially be contained as a coherent extension rather than an incongruous projection into open countryside.
(b) Prevent neighbouring towns merging	Major contribution, principally because KN15 separates	Materially changed test. Annex E concerns the merging of towns, not villages. Mobberley is a village. The principal basis of the earlier

Green Belt purpose	2015 KN15 assessment	Position under 2026 NPPF
	Knutsford and Mobberley	assessment therefore no longer corresponds with Purpose (b).
(c) Safeguard countryside from encroachment	Major contribution	Remains relevant to the wider assessment of whether release would fundamentally undermine Green Belt purposes, but it does not determine grey belt status.
(d) Preserve setting and special character of historic towns	Significant contribution	Requires assessment of whether this particular site forms part of Knutsford's setting and makes a considerable contribution to its special character. The findings for the much larger KN15 parcel cannot automatically be transferred to the promoted site.
(e) Assist urban regeneration	Contribution	Relevant to the wider five-purpose assessment but not to the definition of grey belt.

5.6 The 2015 assessment is therefore an important starting point but cannot reasonably be treated as determinative of the contribution made by this particular site under the current national policy framework.

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6. Site-specific Grey Belt Assessment

6.1 The NPPF defines grey belt, in broad terms, as Green Belt land comprising previously developed land and/or other land which does not strongly contribute to Green Belt purposes (a), (b) or (d).

6.2 It is therefore those three purposes which determine whether the promoted site is capable of falling within the current grey belt definition.

Purpose (a) – Checking unrestricted sprawl

6.3 Annex E indicates that land is likely to contribute strongly to Purpose (a) where it lacks nearby physical containment and, if developed, would produce an incongruous pattern such as an extended finger of development into the Green Belt.

6.4 Conversely, contribution may be moderated where physical features can contain development, the land is partially enclosed by existing development, or development would form a coherent settlement pattern.

6.5 The promoted site lies directly against the existing Knutsford urban edge. Development can be masterplanned to form a coherent extension to the settlement, with its extent and

configuration responding to existing physical features and landscape structure, rather than creating an isolated or elongated projection into the countryside.

6.6 A substantial proportion of the overall landholding would remain available for green infrastructure, landscaping and biodiversity enhancement, providing the opportunity to establish an appropriate transition between the new settlement edge and the Green Belt beyond.

6.7 On that basis, there is a viable case that the site does not strongly contribute to Purpose (a). Its contribution is more appropriately regarded as moderate, subject to detailed confirmation of its boundaries and landscape relationship.

Purpose (b) – Preventing neighbouring towns merging

6.8 This is the clearest respect in which the 2015 assessment requires reconsideration.

6.9 The previous finding of a major contribution was founded substantially upon the role of KN15 in maintaining separation between Knutsford and Mobberley.

6.10 Annex E now expressly provides that Purpose (b) concerns the merging of towns and that villages should not be considered for the purposes of this assessment.

6.11 Knutsford is a town. Mobberley is a village.

6.12 Development of the promoted site would therefore not result in neighbouring towns merging. The site makes a weak or no contribution to Purpose (b) under the current national methodology.

Purpose (d) – Historic towns

6.13 The 2015 assessment identified Knutsford as an historic town and attributed a significant contribution to the wider KN15 parcel. That conclusion is acknowledged.

6.14 The current Annex E test is, however, more specific. The question is whether the particular land forms part of the setting of the historic town and the extent to which it contributes to its special character.

6.15 The 2015 assessment itself recorded that there was no Conservation Area within the 250 metre buffer to the west of KN15, although designated heritage assets are present elsewhere within the much larger parcel.

6.16 The presence of heritage assets within KN15 as a whole does not in itself establish that the present promoted site makes a strong contribution to the setting or special character of Knutsford.

6.17 This should be confirmed through a proportionate heritage assessment considering the relationship between the promoted development area, relevant Conservation Areas and listed buildings and any important visual, physical or experiential relationships.

6.18 On the evidence presently available, there is no sound basis for simply carrying forward the wider KN15 finding and concluding that this particular site makes a strong contribution to Purpose (d).

Grey belt conclusion

6.19 The previous Purpose (b) assessment has been overtaken in an important respect by the current national methodology because it relied upon maintaining separation between the town of Knutsford and the village of Mobberley.

6.20 Purpose (a) also requires reconsideration by reference to the substantially smaller promoted site, its relationship with the existing urban edge and the potential to create a contained and coherent settlement form.

6.21 Purpose (d) requires an assessment of the particular site's relationship with the setting and special character of Knutsford rather than reliance upon characteristics of the wider KN15 parcel.

6.22 There is consequently a substantive case that the promoted site meets the current definition of grey belt land. It should be assessed on that basis through Cheshire East's emerging Green Belt review.

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7. Effect on the Remaining Green Belt

7.1 Identifying land as grey belt does not, of itself, justify its release. National policy also requires consideration of whether development would fundamentally undermine the purposes of the remaining Green Belt, taken together, across the plan area.

7.2 Development would inevitably reduce openness within the developed part of the site. That is inherent in any Green Belt release and is not disputed.

7.3 The relevant strategic question is whether release of this land would materially prejudice the continuing ability of the remaining Green Belt to perform its purposes.

7.4 The promoted site represents only a small part of the wider Green Belt east of Knutsford. Development would adjoin the existing settlement and can be planned as a coherent extension rather than creating a detached enclave.

7.5 It would not lead to the merger of neighbouring towns. A substantial extent of open countryside would remain beyond the site, while a significant proportion of the landholding would remain available for landscape, green infrastructure and biodiversity enhancements.

7.6 A carefully defined allocation would therefore result in a localised change to the settlement edge without undermining the strategic function of the remaining Green Belt.

7.7 That is consistent with the proportionate approach to the "remaining Green Belt" test, which requires consideration of the contribution of the site alongside the continuing function of the Green Belt beyond it.

7.8 There is consequently a strong basis for concluding that allocation of the site would not fundamentally undermine the purposes of the remaining Green Belt taken together.

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8. Sustainability, Deliverability and Benefits

8.1 Green Belt considerations form only one element of the site-selection process. The emerging Local Plan must ultimately identify land which is suitable, available and capable of delivery.

8.2 The Knutsford Road site performs positively in those respects.

8.3 It adjoins an established town with access to a significant range of employment, education, retail, health, leisure and public transport facilities.

8.4 The site therefore provides the opportunity to accommodate additional homes where residents can make use of existing services and infrastructure rather than relying upon the creation of an entirely new settlement framework.

8.5 The land is within single ownership and the landowner is actively promoting it for development. There are therefore no known land assembly issues which would prevent delivery.

8.6 Direct vehicular access is available from Knutsford Road and the original submission identifies the ability to achieve good visibility.

8.7 The scale of the wider landholding provides considerable flexibility in masterplanning. An indicative developable area of approximately 4.5 hectares would allow the site to make efficient use of land while retaining substantial land for landscape reinforcement, habitat creation, biodiversity net gain, sustainable drainage and green infrastructure.

8.8 The site could deliver a range of housing benefits including market housing, affordable housing and, depending upon the evidence of need, specialist older persons accommodation and care provision.

8.9 The landowner recognises that a major residential allocation involving Green Belt release would be expected to comply with the applicable Golden Rules, including the affordable housing requirement established through national policy and the emerging Local Plan, necessary infrastructure improvements and accessible green space.

8.10 The revised capacity assumption would still retain a substantial proportion of the 7.5 hectare site for environmental and green infrastructure enhancement, providing significant scope to respond positively to the Golden Rules and other site-specific requirements.

8.11 No overriding constraint has presently been identified which demonstrates that the site cannot be developed. Detailed work on highways, drainage, ecology, landscape, heritage and other infrastructure matters can appropriately inform the Council's site assessment and subsequent masterplanning.

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9. Conclusions and Case for Allocation

9.1 Land at Knutsford Road represents a credible and deliverable opportunity to contribute towards the future housing needs of Knutsford and the wider Cheshire East Borough.

9.2 The site is available, in single ownership, adjoining an established town and capable of accommodating approximately 150 dwellings, potentially more or less depending upon the final housing and accommodation mix. This represents a reasonable initial capacity based upon development of approximately 60% of the site at an average net residential density of around 35 dwellings per hectare, whilst retaining substantial scope for green infrastructure and environmental enhancement.

9.3 This capacity should not be treated as a ceiling. The emerging Local Plan process should seek to optimise the site's development potential in accordance with national and local policy, informed by detailed masterplanning and the site's environmental and infrastructure constraints. The development proposition remains intentionally flexible and could comprise market and affordable housing or a residential-led development incorporating specialist older persons accommodation and/or care provision where the Council's evidence identifies a need.

9.4 Cheshire East's current housing land supply position reinforces the importance of the emerging Local Plan identifying an adequate portfolio of suitable and deliverable sites.

9.5 National Green Belt policy has also changed materially. Where Green Belt release is necessary, the NPPF now gives priority to previously developed land and then to suitable grey belt land before considering other Green Belt locations.

9.6 The 2015 assessment of the extensive KN15 parcel should not therefore determine the assessment of the much smaller promoted site. The current NPPF requires a more granular assessment which recognises variations in the contribution made by different areas of Green Belt.

9.7 Most significantly, the previous Purpose (b) finding relied heavily upon maintaining separation between Knutsford and Mobberley. Current national policy expressly confines this purpose to preventing the merging of neighbouring towns. Mobberley is a village.

9.8 There is also a substantive case that the promoted site does not strongly contribute to Purpose (a), given its relationship with the existing Knutsford urban edge and its potential to form a contained and coherent settlement extension. Purpose (d) similarly requires consideration of the particular site's relationship with the setting and special character of Knutsford rather than reliance upon heritage assets elsewhere within KN15.

9.9 The promoted land should therefore be assessed as a potential grey belt location through the Council's updated Green Belt evidence.

9.10 Its release would result in a localised alteration to the Knutsford settlement edge but would not lead to the merger of neighbouring towns or fundamentally undermine the ability of the remaining Green Belt to perform its strategic purposes.

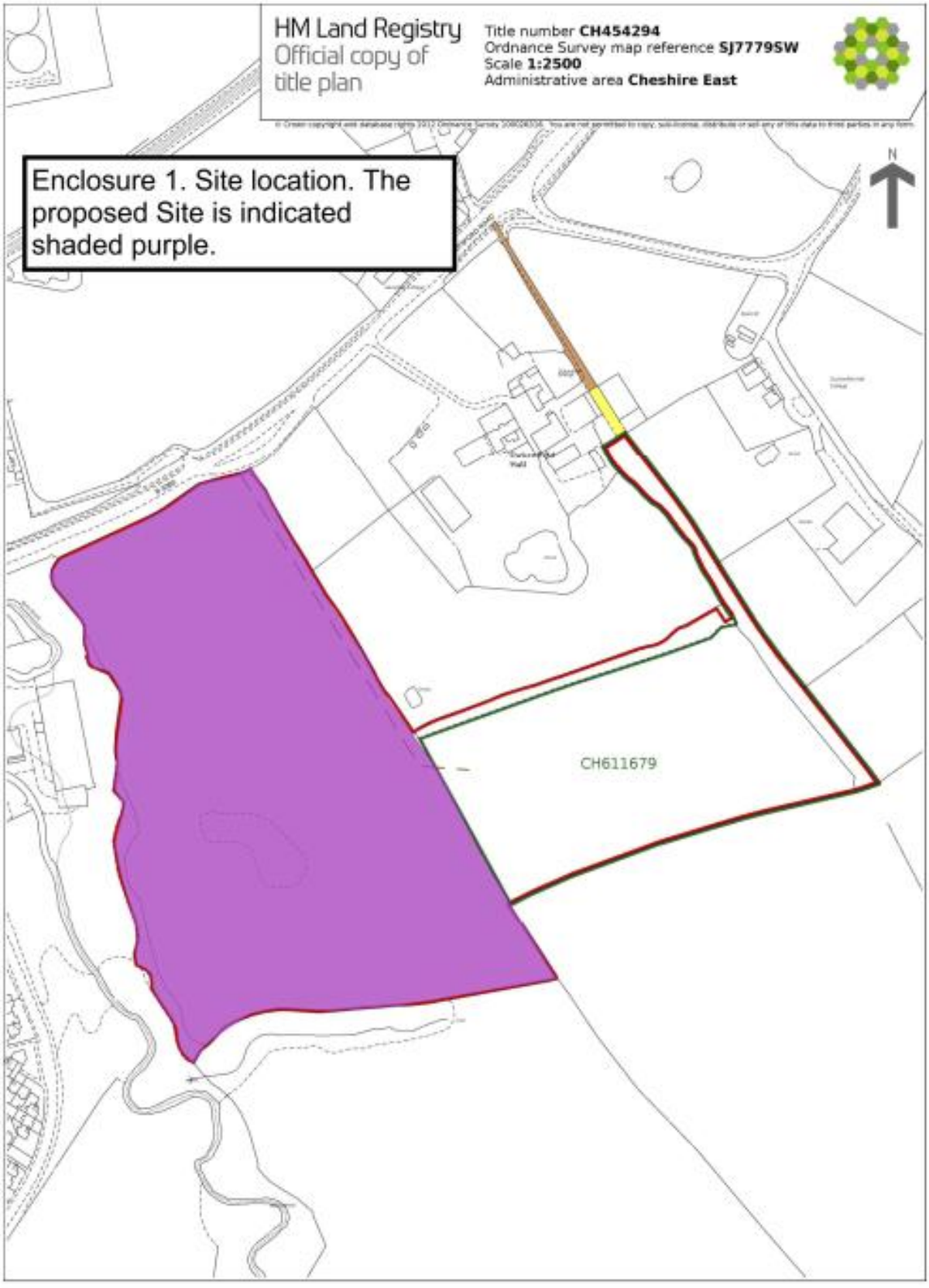
9.11 The land at Knutsford Road should therefore be carried forward through the Council's Land Availability Assessment and Green Belt review and considered positively as a potential residential allocation in the emerging Cheshire East Local Plan.

Plan:8 Town Planning Ltd
September 2026

Enclosures:

1. Site location. The proposed Site is indicated shaded purple.
2. Site location relative to KN15 as Shown on 2015 Green Belt Update "*Parcel Assessment Results – Knutsford and Mobberley*". The proposed Site is indicated shaded purple.

Enclosure 1. The proposed Site is indicated shaded purple.



Enclosure 2 Site location relative to KN15 as Shown on 2015 Green Belt Update "*Parcel Assessment Results – Knutsford and Mobberley*". The proposed Site is indicated shaded purple.

