APPLICATION FOR A VARIATION TO EARLIER APPROVED: CREATION OF LANDSCAPED OPEN SPACE CORRIDOR IN CONNECTION WITH PROPOSALS FOR THE DITTON STRATEGIC RAIL FREIGHT PARK 05/0948/FUL BY

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

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DESIGN STATEMENT

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SECTION A INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.0. Aims and Objectives

1.1. Halton Borough Council (HBC) are pleased to submit this Design and Access Statement as information in support of a full planning application for earthworks, sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDs) and planting works at Ditton, Halebank. The purpose of this Statement is to set out the design and access principles that HBC proposes in relation to the site and its wider context. This application is a variation to the landscape proposals of a previously approved planning permission 05/00948/FUL.

1.2. A summary of the key changes to the site layout in this design from the previously submitted design are as follows:

- Removal of the additional football pitch – replaced by an extended landscape mound adjacent to the development plot boundary,
- Additional native woodland planting along the extended mound to provide continuous woodland screening,
- Removal of the pond on the north eastern side of the development plot,
- Removal of the works within the eastern part of the site, which is subject to a Village Green Application,
- An increase in size and a change in the function of the western pond to include it within the sustainable urban drainage system. The boardwalk has also been removed at this location,
- Removal of the drainage ditches and replacement with underground pipes for Heath and Safety reasons,
- Realignment of footpath/ cycleway to link into Clap Gate Crescent,

1.3. Section 42(1) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 gives effect to a new Section 62 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Under Section 42 there is a requirement for 'Design and Access Statements' to be submitted with most forms of outline or detailed planning permission from August 10th 2006. This statement has been produced in accordance with Section 42 of the Act and will consider both the design and access principles for the site.

1.4. This document sets out the following information in relation to the development:

- The design and access principles and concept of the development and an outline of how these are reflected in the development layout, visual appearance and landscape.

- How the development will meet Halton Borough Council's urban design objectives. The statement will demonstrate how the proposals accord with Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document published in 2005.

1.5. The remainder of this Design and Access Statement will be structured as follows:

- Site Location and Context
- Site Appraisal
- Overall Vision
- Urban Design Principles
- Development Description and Layout
- Landscape and Open Space Strategy
- Access
- Sustainability Principles

2.0. Site Location and Context

2.1. The proposed development site is located to the south of Widnes on the periphery of Hale Bank (Grid Reference 348100, 384400) in the county of Cheshire. The site lies on the northern edge of the Mersey Estuary and is bounded by the main Liverpool to Manchester railway to the north, Hale Road and residential development to the East, agricultural land to the west and Hale Bank Road to the South.

2.2. The application site occupies an area of approximately 37.3 hectares. The site is largely composed of gently sloping arable land, with some mature hedgerows demarcating the field boundaries. Farm outbuildings are located within the southern part of the site providing limited structural diversity. Illustrations of the existing topography within the application area are provided in D1058.08.001C.

2.3. The site currently has no public rights of way or formal public access to link it to the surroundings. However, the surrounding roads; Hale Road and Hale Bank Road, connect to the A557 Express Way, which in turn links to the M62 and M56, and the A562 linking to Liverpool.

2.4. The site forms part of the proposed wider Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park (now renamed and hereafter referred to as 3MG- Mersey Multimodal Gateway) which is designated in HBC UDP (adopted April 2005) as a strategic investment site. Further details of this are provided within Section 4.0.

3.0. Site Appraisal

3.1 The development site occupies an area of approximately 37.2 hectares and includes agricultural land and associated farm outbuildings. The general landscape character of the site is predominantly rural, although there is a strong urban/industrial influence, particularly to the north of the site where this influence increases towards Widnes. The Mersey Estuary to the south is a key landscape feature of the wider area, and has created a river valley landscape which is flat and open with wide views.

3.2 The site is located in close proximity to the River Mersey (although the river is not visible from the site) and the area around Hale Bank and Ditton is located on low ground between 10–15m AOD. The site comprises predominantly flat open arable farmland with large scale field patterns with a gentle fall in a northerly direction towards the railway track and the industrial development beyond. The majority of the site is under arable crops with some areas left unplanted. Recreation and amenity open space borders the eastern boundary of the site adjacent to housing in Hale Bank.

3.3 The proposed development site is bounded by residential development to the east comprising the settlement of Hale Bank and a large industrial estate beyond extending to the River Mersey. The settlement of Ditton is located approximately 0.9km to the north west of the site.

3.4 To the immediate north of the site the character becomes more industrialised, with the main Liverpool to Manchester railway line forming the northern boundary to the site. Beyond this the agricultural land is interspersed with several large scale industrial developments. Further north Ditton Brook runs through an area of scrub grassland which lies between the industrial development and the A562, and beyond this major road there is a further industrial estate with the wider urban area of Widnes beyond.

3.5 To the south and south west of the site the land becomes more open in character comprising large arable fields. This area is designated as an Area of Special Landscape Value. The landscape character is more rural than that to the north and there are extended views over open fields towards the River Mersey.

3.6 Two ponds are shown on OS mapping. The pond in the east of the site in close proximity to the residential development was viewed on site and is used for fishing; the other lies more centrally within the site to the north-west.

3.7 Tree and woodland cover is minimal and is predominantly concentrated along hedge boundaries and around settlements. The hedgerow along the northern length of Hale Bank Road is largely intact and defines the character of this road. The hedge varies in height and type from a 1m dense clipped section of thorn hedgerow to overgrown thorn hedge between 2m and 5m. There are also sections supporting mature poplar and beech trees. The southern boundary of Hale Bank Road is more open

with post and wire fences rather than hedgerows allowing open views onto the surrounding land.

3.7 The south eastern site boundary is formed by a mature thorn hedgerow which extends northwards into the site and serves to separate the recreation area from the wider agricultural land.

3.8 There are occasional areas of scrub vegetation associated with the railway embankment notably in the vicinity of the former station and sidings. There are also some small areas of vegetation within the amenity and informal recreation areas.

3.9 Field boundary hedgerows within the site vary from intact to fragmented and incorporate occasional trees of a range of heights. The hedgerows divide the site into several large regular fields.

4.0 LEGISLATION AND POLICY CONTEXT

4.1 Under Section 42(1) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 there is a requirement for Design and Access Statements to be submitted with most forms of planning applications from 10th August 2006. The accompanying planning application is for a development type that has a formal requirement for a Design and Access Statement.

4.2 The purpose of a Design and Access Statement is to demonstrate the thinking behind the design and access elements of the planning application and improve the quality of the planning application and resulting development. This Statement has been produced in accordance with the CABE guidance '*Design and Access Statements: How to write, read and use them*' (2006).

4.3 A number of planning polices from national to local level are applicable to the proposed residential development of the application area within the Ditton development site. These are summarised below:

Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 1 – Delivering Sustainable Development

4.4 PPS1 highlights the importance of good design in the planning process as it makes a significant contribution to attractive, usable, durable and adaptable places and is a key element in achieving sustainable development. PPS1 states that good design should:

- Address the connections between people and places by considering the needs of people to access jobs and key services;
- Be integrated into the existing urban form and the natural and built environments;
- Be an integral part of the processes for ensuring successful, safe and inclusive villages, towns and cities;
- Create an environment where everyone can access and benefit from the full range of opportunities available to members of society; and
- Consider the direct and indirect impacts on the natural environment.

Local Planning Policy

4.5 The Halton Borough Council Unitary Development Plan (2005) has been reviewed and a summary of the policies of relevance to the proposals follows below. The planning context of the site and the surrounding area is shown on C1058.08.001 Planning Context.

Green Belt

4.6 The western end of the site falls within the Green Belt as designated in the Halton Unitary Development Plan (UDP) (April 2005). This area comprises agricultural land to the north of Havelock Cottages. Beyond this the area of Green Belt extends to the west and south of the site as

seen in C1058.08.001: Planning Context. The Green Belt designation aims to safeguard the surrounding countryside, protect agricultural land, enable informal recreational opportunities and inhibit the unrestricted sprawl of the urban area, preventing the towns of Runcorn and Widnes merging with their neighbouring towns and cities.

4.7 The design proposes open space uses within this location including woodland planting, SUDS pond and wildflower meadows. The design of this will be finalised in conjunction with the detailed design of the future link road proposals.

Proposed Greenspace

4.8 The majority of the proposed advance landscape scheme is on land allocated as 'Proposed Greenspace' in the Halton UDP. This 'Proposed Greenspace' relates to the provision of a landscape buffer around the potential employment site for Regional Investment Site 253 – '*North of Hale Bank Road*' which forms part of the wider Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park.

4.9 The western most part of the 'Proposed Greenspace' falls within Green Belt as described above.

4.10 The 'Proposed Greenspace' policy aims to create further open space and upgrade existing areas of land for recreation or wider amenity value. Greenspace Systems are networks of interconnecting Greenspaces, which provide important visual, physical, functional and structural linkages (Halton UDP, 2005).

Areas of Special Landscape Value

4.11 An Area of Special Landscape Value lies just outside the development site boundary to the south of Hale Bank Road. Areas of Special Landscape Value are defined as areas which make an important contribution to the local character of an area and are important in terms of helping to conserve and promote local distinctiveness. They may be made up of several distinct landscape components, or include one specific type of landscape component on a larger scale.

Conservation Area

4.12 Part of the development site lies adjacent a Conservation Area with a very small part falling just within this boundary as indicated in the Halton UDP. The Conservation Area is located to both sides of Hale Bank Road at the western end of the development site and includes Linner Farm and its outbuildings.

Regeneration Action Areas

4.13 The industrial estate which stretches from Hale Bank to the Mersey Estuary falls within an area designated as a Regeneration Action Area. The informal open space located to the east of the site (to the north of Lovel Terrace) falls just within this Regeneration Action Area. There is reference within this policy to public open space being an integral part of the design of the action area.

Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance (2005)

4.14 The majority of the proposed landscape scheme and the development plot site falls within an area allocated as the Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park (3MG- Mersey Multimodal Gateway). This allocation is for a phased strategic inter-modal freight park and includes sites 253, 255 and 256 as indicated on C1058.08.001: Planning Context. This allocation safeguards land for businesses which would directly utilise the railway (for example for freight transport and distribution). The northern part of this site is allocated within this document as employment and the southern, eastern and western areas identified as potential areas for green space opportunities. The document recommends that quality hard and soft landscaping is provided within and along boundaries of potential development sites.

4.15 As part of this document a Landscape Strategy and Design Guide was produced. This document provides greater detail on the types of landscape treatment within the site. This includes the planting of native woodland to form a rapid screen to ultimately screen future development. The document also provides recommended species and landscape materials to be used. This document has been referenced during the design of the site.

The Mersey Forest Plan

4.16 This document provides guidance and aspirations for the nature of recommended planting within Halton. The site lies within an area identified as proposed woodland cover of 20-30%. The guiding principles for planting within the area include for increasing the woodland cover within and around the urban edges and around the Mersey Estuary. This site is located near the Mersey Estuary and is along the boundary of the urban edge of Halebank. The proposals would make a strong contribution to woodland creation within the area.

SECTION B OVERALL VISION AND URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES

5.0. Overall Vision

5.1. The proposed layout for the site has been based on a number of design and planning objectives which, taken together, will result in a development which will bring amenity, recreation and biodiversity benefits whilst also forming a landscape structure surrounding future development (as anticipated by the Halton UDP and emerging LDF).

5.2. The overall vision is to provide a well-designed and high quality linear open space that will integrate with existing open space, Halebank Recreation Ground, to the east of the site. This development will make the most efficient use of land within the site, and aims where possible to protect and enhance the existing landscape features and ecology value of the site.

6.0. Urban Design Principles

6.1. The Design Principles for Ditton are as follows:

- To integrate the new landscape sensitively with the established surrounding landscape and land use context,
- To ensure a safe, healthy and secure environment for both people and wildlife,
- To enhance and improve the range of ecological habitats that are present on site ensuring these are appropriate to the location,
- To promote quality with well-considered detailing of ponds and natural habitats,
- To mitigate for the loss of one pond by creating a number of waterbodies within the site,
- To create an efficient movement framework that is safe and attractive to all users,
- To consider the existing public footpath network in the design of the movement framework, creating connections with existing public footpaths and amenity open space,
- To create new carefully placed landform to maximise screening of the wider site in preparation for future development,
- To establish advanced landscape structure prior to future development.

SECTION C ARCHITECTURAL AND LANDSCAPE DESIGN

7.0. Development Design Concept and Layout

7.1. The design has been developed using the information and preliminary identification of opportunities provided within the Ditton SRFP Masterplan produced in 2005. The design was originally submitted to HBC in 2005 and received full planning permission. It has subsequently been subject to minor amendments following detailed site investigations.

7.2. The development of the site is centred around the creation of new woodland planting on mounding, wildflower meadow creation and SUDS ponds. The development site will be subject to extensive earthworks to create mounding that will provide screening to future development within the northern part of the site, which will be designed and developed at a later date.

7.3. Based on previous designs a Masterplan has been finalised and is illustrated on drawing D1058.08.001C. The main elements of the masterplan are as follows, more detailed information is provided below.

- Landscaped mounds up to 4m in height
- Native woodland planting
- Wildflower meadows
- SUDS waterbodies
- Species rich native hedgerows
- Boundary fencing
- Footpath/ cycleway

Detailed Surveys and Assessments

7.4. The previously approved application had a number of conditions attached to the approval. Responses providing clarification to the conditions of the previous application are provided as appendices to this Design and Access Statement. The majority of the conditions related to the requirement for further detailed surveys of the site. These surveys have been undertaken and the relevant additional supporting information and reports are provided within the Appendices. The information in paragraphs 7.5 to 7.22 below provides clarification of the surveys undertaken on site which have informed the final layout of the proposed Masterplan.

Noise, Vibration and Construction Environmental Management Plan

7.5. Surveys have been undertaken by AMEC Earth and Environmental (AMEC) and the Construction Environmental Management Plan and Construction Noise Management Plan are provided within Appendix 2 of this Design and Access Statement.

Air Quality

7.6. An air quality assessment was prepared by AMEC in support of the previous proposals consented under Planning Application No. 05/0094-ful, Ditton Widnes. The assessment was presented within AMEC Report

Ref 57880012060- "Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park- Landscape Infrastructure Supporting Environmental Information- Air Quality Assessment"(December 2006).

7.7. The assessment has been reviewed with respect to the changes to the scheme masterplan. As the new proposals do not extend to the north east corner of the site, the potential impacts associated with the site preparation and construction phase including the generation and deposition of dust will be reduced for properties located on Lovell Terrace, Clap Gate Crescent and Hale Road.

7.8. Furthermore, remediation associated with the former scrapyard located within the north eastern area of the site will no longer be required. As such no impacts upon air quality relating to odours from the hydrocarbon contamination will occur within this area of the site.

7.9. Overall, the changes to the scheme masterplan, will reduce the potential impacts upon local residents associated with the generation and deposition of dust, exhaust related emissions and odours associated with the remediation of hydrocarbon contaminated soils.

Site Investigation

7.10. AMEC prepared a contamination assessment to support the previous scheme. The findings of the assessment were presented in a report entitled; Contamination assessment for landscaping works consented under Planning Application no. 05/00948/FUL, Ditton, Widnes. J1219/08.2006. This document was issued to Halton Borough Council Contaminated Land Officers and to the Environment Agency for review. A copy of this report is provided within Appendix 4 of this Design and Access Statement.

7.11. The new landscape masterplan (illustrated on drawing D1508.08.001C) identifies that no landscaping works are proposed in the north east corner of the site. The remainder of the landscaping scheme is not, with respect to contamination issues, at significant variance from the previous proposals detailed under the existing planning consent.

7.12. AMEC has reviewed the findings of the previous assessment and determined that the scope of the intrusive investigation works previously undertaken is adequate to assess contamination impacts associated with the new revised landscaping scheme. No further intrusive investigation works are required.

7.13. Notably, as the new landscaping proposals do not extend into the north east corner of the site, those areas which were found to be impacted by former sludge disposal lagoons and scrap yard activities will not now be affected by landscaping works.

7.14. The previous contamination assessment had identified that remedial action would be required in the event that landscaping works were undertaken in this area and a remediation strategy was prepared by AMEC to describe the necessary actions. The strategy was presented

in a report entitled Remediation Strategy for Landscaping Works, Ditton, Widnes (Ref: J1219/03.2007).

7.15. Notably, the remedial action included requirements for the removal of localised hydrocarbon contamination in the area of the former scrapyard. These works will not now be required as they fall outside the area where landscaping works are proposed. Elsewhere, the revised landscaping proposals will not require specific remedial action to allow their implementation.

7.16. Halton Borough Council and the Environment Agency have indicated that the contamination assessment submitted with the previous application was satisfactory and therefore AMEC has concluded that no additional technical information is required to support this new application.

Archaeology

7.17. A Geophysical Survey was carried out across the site by Oxford Archaeology North / Stratascan in 2006, which highlighted several anomalies that required further investigation. A copy of this study is provided in Appendix 5. Following on from this report, a suitably qualified Archaeological Contractor has been appointed to carry out evaluation trenching, to establish whether the anomalies are archaeological in origin and to which period they belong. This work has been commissioned in full consultation with Cheshire County Council's Planning Archaeologist.

7.18. The trenching and evaluation works are due to commence in May 2007, initially on the Lovels Hall site to the north of the railway (outside the application site). Following this, the contractor will complete the work on the application site (subject to access arrangements being agreed), in liaison with CCC's Planning Archaeologist.

7.19. The ensuing report will be forwarded to the Local Planning Authority at the earliest opportunity (It is anticipated that this work will be complete in late June / July 2007).

Ecological Surveys

7.20. A number of ecology surveys were undertaken in order to satisfy conditions within the previously submitted application. The revised Landscape Masterplan, drawing D1058.08.001C, submitted for this application , has been reviewed in light of a series of ecological surveys and impact assessments which were carried out in 2005 and 2006 (AMEC E&E 2005a, 2005b, 2006a, 2006b). The reappraisal has indicated that the findings of these reports are still valid and that there are no changes to the identified ecological impacts, their appraisal or the recommendations made therein.

7.21. AMEC's response to the Environment Agency, with regard to the survey methodology for amphibians, particularly great crested newts (GCN), is still valid and they are confident that the negative results found during the GCN surveys (ie no crested newts were found) is still applicable.

7.22. Outstanding ecological mitigation which will still need to be implemented includes (a) the survey of the site for ground breeding birds immediately before the start of site preparation works, should those works be carried out during the bird breeding season (March to August), (b) the internal inspection of existing buildings on site for bats and barn owl. Land ownership and access issues have prevented these surveys being undertaken. If the demolition of these buildings is proposed during the bird breeding season, they should also be inspected before the start of works for swallow and house martin which are known to nest in the area.

Landscape

7.23. The landscape has been designed to provide suitable screening for future development within the northern part of the site. A landscape and visual assessment was undertaken as part of the design process in order to determine key views into and out of the site and enable the sensitive placement of mounding.

7.24. A number of landscape mounds are proposed across the southern part of the site. It is intended that these would be up to 4m in height. The locations of the mounds have been determined through a combination of assessments of the key sensitive views into the site and public consultation. As a result the mounds are primarily located along the southern, western and eastern boundaries to provide comprehensive screening of the potential future development from the residential properties which surround the site.

7.25. Extensive open space of between 30m and 110m has been provided around the mounds to create a subtle variety of experiences throughout the site whilst also ensuring that users of the open space feel secure.

7.26. To soften the appearance of the mounds and over time, provide additional screening, native woodland would be planted over the tops of the mounds. This planting would serve two functions; it would provide visual amenity and an improved setting to the open space and would also improve the habitat diversity on site. The network of new wildflower meadows and woodland would provide wildlife corridors across the site.

7.27. Further details of the nature of the landscape are provided in Section 8.0 Landscape and Open Space Strategy.

Earthworks

7.28. Extensive earth moving operations will be required across the site in order to create the earth mounds and SUDS ponds. The works will comprise both 'cut and fill' operations. The ground modelling has been carefully calculated to ensure there is in a net balance of material to avoid the requirement to take material off site and to minimise the need for the importation of materials. Approximately 125,000m^3 of cut and fill movement will be required.

7.29. Excavations will be undertaken across the whole site reducing the levels in the northern part of the site to an average of 9.5m AOD, this material will be used to form the mounds throughout the southern section of the site. To reduce vehicle trafficking across the site it is intended that the excavated material will be used to build up levels close to where the excavation operations have been undertaken.

7.30. One pond within the northern part of the site will be filled in as part of the proposals in order to facilitate future development. However, this would be mitigated for by the creation of new SUDS ponds within the western and southern parts of the site. In addition, the new proposals would enhance the existing pond located within the southern part of the site.

7.31. The proposed landform will be graded to tie into the surrounding topography with smoothly flowing natural contours across the site. The contours of the resulting landform are illustrated on D1058.08.002B Contours and Sections.

Proposed Surface Water Drainage System

7.32. The design of the site includes for the provision of two waterbodies which will act as water storage and will collect surface water from the site during high rainfall and flooding events. The proposals are primarily soft landscape works with the only hard surfacing proposed being the footpath/ cycleway. Ground modelling has confirmed that these proposals would not significantly increase water run off rates from those which currently exist. However the water bodies have been designed to control and regulate the surface water runoff rates from future development on the site based on a development area of 21 hectares.

7.33. As a further safeguard against extreme flood events, the ponds have additional storage capacity. The top of the ponds is approximately 0.5m above the projected natural water level to enable additional capacity during flood events. This water would then naturally percolate through the ground from these waterbodies.

7.34. Ultimately as part of the future development proposals it is intended that these ponds will be connected via an outfall to Ditton Brook. However, the SUDS system would not be connected to Ditton Brook as part of these proposals and therefore has been designed as a self regulating system.

7.35. The ponds would be connected via culverted pipes which would be implemented as part of the landscape works. It is intended that these pipes will enable water to be conveyed through the SUDS system and ultimately have a controlled outfall into Ditton Brook. Details of how they would be constructed are provided on drawings D1058.08.012, D1058.08.016, D1058.08.023 and D1058.08.024. Further details of the SUDS system are provided within the Flood Risk Assessment which included within Appendix 10 of this document.

Phasing of Development

7.36. It is intended that the development of the site will be divided into two phases. This is considered necessary because the design of the western part of the site will need to be finalised in conjunction with the detailed designs of the proposed link road into the site which is located in this area. The phasing is anticipated as follows:

- **Phase 1**. Preparation of the first phase of landscape works within the southern section of the site (2007-2008)
- **Phase 2**. Creation of landscape ponds and woodland planting within the western section in conjunction with the implementation of the proposed link road.

7.37. Phasing information is provided in Appendix 1 of this document. The Phasing areas are illustrated on drawing D1058.08.026 and the timescales for Phase 1 of the development are provided in X1058.08.002: Phase 1 Project timescales. This table provides details of the projected time periods taken for each landscape operation. It is anticipated that works will commence in September 2007 and be completed by May 2008.

7.38. The phasing of the earthworks will be carried out to minimise the disturbance to ground nesting birds. All earthworks operations within the site will be carried out between mid October and mid March. The earthworks will also be undertaken sequentially across the site to minimise vehicle movements and thus disturbance across the whole site.

8.0 Landscape and Open Space Strategy

8.1 The development includes proposals for both the conservation and enhancement of existing landscape features and the creation of new landscape areas.

8.2 The planting proposals, including the species to be used in each area is provided on drawing D1058.08.007C: Planting Plan. The proposals include for the creation of the following:

- 4.62 hectares of native woodland planting,
- 1,310 linear metres of species rich hedgerow
- 0.95 hectares of wildflower meadow
- 1.82 hectares of wetland and water habitat

8.3 The area will be developed as a linear green space, containing a Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS) network, along with native woodland and scrub planting. A combined footpath/cycleway will be provided to link across the site from Clap Gate Crescent to Hale Bank road and an additional circular loop provided around the SUDS pond within the western part of the site. (The design of which is subject to change on completion of the detailed design for the proposed link road within this area). In addition, new footpath links will be provided to integrate Halebank Recreation Ground with the new open space.

8.4 Newly created mounds will be planted with native woodland to soften the appearance of the new landform. The plants will predominantly be native 'feathered' and 'whip' trees and shrubs. These have been shown to be fast growing and have excellent survival and establishment rates, as compared to larger trees which although may have a greater initial effect tend to have a lower successful establishment rate.

8.5 The species mix to be used for the woodland planting is as follows:

10% Acer campestre
10% Alnus glutinosa
10% Betula pendula
7% Corylus avellana
7% Crataegus monogyna
10% Fraxinus excelsior
5% Ilex aquifolium
5% Pinus sylvestris
5% Prunus avium
10% Quercus robur
5% Frangula alnus
3% Rosa canina
8% Sorbus aucuparia
5% Viburnum opulus

8.6 Underneath the woodland planting, native woodland bulbs would be planted to provide diverse ground flora and seasonal interest. Small areas of woodland bulbs would be planted along margins of woodland not adjacent to wildflower meadows. The species in the mix would include:

24% Bluebell
12% Wood anemone
24% Snowdrops
12% Winter aconites
24% Wild narcissi
4% Hardy cyclamen

8.7 A new species rich hedgerow will be planted to the north of the mounding as shown on the site layout drawing. This will mitigate for the sections of existing hedgerow that need to be removed to facilitate the landscape works. In addition, the hedgerow will improve wildlife linkages across the site, connecting areas of new woodland planting with existing established hedgerows, scrub and woodland.

8.8 The species mix to be used for the hedgerows is as follows:

5% Acer campestre
20% Corylus avellana
30% Crataegus monogyna
10% Ilex aquifolium
20% Prunus spinosa

10% Frangula alnus
5% Viburnum opulus

8.9 Within the southern section, where the site width is at its narrowest mature specimen tree planting of Fraxinus excelsior and Quercus robur trees will be undertaken. These would be planted in naturalised groups to provide screening along the boundary to the site.

8.10 The remaining area will be seeded with a mix of amenity grass and wildflower meadows. An area of species rich grassland is located within the eastern part of the site; this will be retained and brought into more active management. Seed mixes for the proposed wildflower areas have been formulated following botanical surveys of the site and recommendations provided by ecologists.

8.11 It is intended that there will be two wildflower mixes, Seed Mix 1 would be a damp meadow mix sown around and within the SUDS waterbodies to provide floral diversity within these basins should these areas be seasonally dry. Seed Mix two would be a summer meadow mix using species which are locally appropriate to the site and would provide seasonal interest and amenity whilst also increasing the botanical diversity of the grassland around the edges of new woodland planting. The remainder of the site area would be seeded with a low maintenance general amenity grass seed mix.

8.12 The site will be enclosed by a continuous fence that will provide a secure and improved boundary around the periphery of the site. Formal pedestrian access to the site will provided off Hale Bank Road and Clap Gate Crescent.

8.13 The boundaries of the site will be clearly defined and are illustrated on Drawing D1058.08.014B: Boundary Treatments. The boundary of the site will be demarcated by a combination of fencing types. Close board timber fencing will be used along boundaries with residential properties and timber post and three rail fencing along the boundary with Halebank Road and with agricultural fields along the western boundary.

8.14 The boundary between the new open space and the site of the potential future development will be demarcated by a post and wire fence supporting a native hedgerow. A temporary length of post and wire fencing will be installed along the western edge of Phase 1 works to prevent access to the western part of the site prior to Phase 2 works taking place. Rabbit proof fencing will be used to protect new areas of woodland planting.

8.15 Details of how these fences will be constructed are provided on drawings D1058.08.011: Post and wire fence, D1058.08.013: Close board fence, D1058.08.018: Rabbit proof fence and D1058.08.019: Three rail fence.

8.16 A landscape maintenance contract would take place for the first two years of the site establishment. This would commence on completion of

Phase 1 works and therefore, would be in place between May 2008 to May 2010.

9.0. Movement Network

9.1. The site will be served by the existing road network. From this a new temporary haul road will be established, to enable vehicular access to undertake the earthworks and habitat creation development. This will be implemented as part of United Utilities sludge main diversion works which will be undertaken during the summer of 2007. This informal vehicle route will be removed at the end of the implementation works and used either as the foundations for the footpath/ cycleway or the area will be reinstated to grass.

9.2. A new footpath cycleway will be provided through the site linking residential development to the east of the site with Hale Bank Road to the south. An additional route will extend as a loop around the pond within the western part of the site. These footpaths will link into the pavements located on Hale Bank Road and Clap Gate Crescent. Additional footpath links will be created to connect to routes through Halebank Recreation Ground to improve public access into the site from housing along Blackburne Avenue, Baguley Avenue and Clap Gate Crescent. A detail of how the footpath will be constructed is provided on drawing D1058.08.022.

9.3. There are no public rights of way that link into the site. Therefore the footpaths will link into the pavements of surrounding roads where desire lines currently exist, to ensure good integration of the site with the surrounding area. These routes would be lit at night to provide a safe route for pedestrians during the hours of darkness.

9.4. To prevent unauthorised vehicles from gaining access to the site, 'A' frame gates would be installed at each entrance. These are designed to facilitate wheelchair, bicycle and pushchair access whilst preventing motorbikes and cars from entering the site.

9.5. Access to the site for construction works will be gained from Hale Bank Road in the location indicated on drawing D1058.08.001C Site Layout. This will be the only entrance into and out of the site for the duration of the contract.

9.6. The entrance will be designed to facilitate a separate vehicle entrance and exit. Construction vehicles such as HGVs, exiting the site will be directed through a wheel washing facility to ensure that debris and mud does not enter the public road system. Further detail of how it is intended that this system will operate is provided in Appendix 3.

9.7. During construction work of the proposed site, HGV movements on the local road network will occur due to the transfer of plant and materials onto site. These movements will be kept to a minimum as it is likely that the majority of plant once on site would be retained and stored there for the duration of the contract. HGVs will gain access to the site

through the designated entrance along Hale Bank Road. In addition, movements of HGVs associated with the construction will be restricted during local school opening and closing times in order to maximise road safety.

9.8. Adjacent to the access to the site a contractors site facility area will be provided. This will include a small temporary parking area for site workers, deliveries and visitors. This will prevent congestion on the existing transport network caused by vehicles visiting the site parking on the local road network.

10.0 Sustainability Principles

10.1 Residential development within Halebank is located adjacent to the open space and is accessible by cycle or on foot. It is envisaged that the open space would primarily be used by the local community as a local amenity resource for dog walking and informal recreation. However there are some bus stops located near to the site which would provide access from further away such as Widnes Town Centre.

10.2 The earthworks on site which includes both cut and fill operations has been designed to be in balance. Therefore all materials will be retained and used on site. This will reduce the requirement for importing or exporting materials on site.

10.3 The development also embraces other key social sustainability principles namely:

- Enhancing the ecological value of the site.
- Accommodating the needs of all potential users, wherever possible, in the design of the Ditton open space corridor.
- Designing to allow natural surveillance of the greenspace and movement framework through the shared use of routes.
- Utilisation of SUDS within greenspace.