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Galtres Garden Village

Assessment of York Local Plan Policy Compliance and Potential Recreational Impacts on Strensall Common SAC

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*A spreadsheet of calculations is also supplied

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 In July 2021, Wold Ecology was commissioned to assess the potential recreational disturbance impacts of the proposal to create a Garden Village on approximately 93 hectares of land to the north of North Lane, Huntington, York (national grid reference centroid SE 63328 56617) in North Yorkshire with a view to supporting its inclusion within the City of York Local Plan strategic housing allocation. This document presents the result of the assessment to determine the scale of impact from the proposal on any site in the National Site Network (Formerly Natura 2000 network) and assesses policy compliance.
- 1.2 The proposal is currently located on land that is primarily arable and pastoral agricultural land bounded by hedgerows, scattered trees, ditches and immature plantations with farm yards and associated buildings (Wold Ecology, 2017). The proposed site is located approximately 1.4km south of Strensall Common Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) at its closest point. The nearest official public access on foot is 1.8km northeast of the proposal using existing bridleways and roads. Access for vehicles to the main car park is a 5km, 10 minute drive from proposed main entrances.
- 1.3 The proposed development involves the creation of a new garden village consisting of a projected 1753 dwellings. Of the total site area of 92.97 hectares, within the masterplan, designated open space provision totals 39.73 ha. Additional landscaping is provided by retained hedgerows, gardens, general landscaping and verges. For the purpose of this assessment a built development area of 53.37 hectares is used.
- 1.4 The York Local Plan (in development) sets out a policy GI2a that designates a 400m exclusion zone around Strensall Common SAC for development and a further 5.5km zone of influence concerning recreational disturbance following the completion of a Recreational Disturbance study by Footprint Ecology (2019). Identified impacts (Footprint, 2019) from recreational disturbance include *“trampling; increased fire incidence; disturbance to grazing livestock; nutrient enrichment from dog fouling; contamination of ponds; contamination from fly tipping, litter etc.; and damage to infrastructure (gates etc.)”*.
- 1.5 In the absence of mitigation, using the Footprint (2019) methodology it is calculated that the Galtres Garden Village proposal, unmitigated, will contribute a predicted change in visits to Strensall Common SAC of 3.0% to 5% using a travel distance adjusted methodology. Straight line distances leading to a 13% change in visits, unmitigated.
- 1.6 The indicative masterplan outlines provision of an approximately 19 hectare district-level Country Park and several kilometres of car free walking routes around the perimeter of the development, quantity of provision of open space is exceptional and well exceeds the York Local Plan recommended strategic open space standards.
- 1.7 This report has examined the potential recreational impacts of the proposed Galtres Garden Village and determines that whilst the proposal will lead to an increase in residents within 5km of Strensall Common SAC, the proposal’s design will sufficiently mitigate impacts on Strensall Common in relation to recreational disturbance. Indeed, the location and scale of the proposed Country Park and the

year-round accessible nature of the pathways will likely attract residents from neighbouring Earswick, further mitigating recreational impacts on Strensall Common. The proposal is therefore considered compliant with City of York Local Plan policies GI2a – Strensall Common and GI6 Green Space provision.

2.0

INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 In July 2021, Wold Ecology was commissioned to assess the potential recreational disturbance impacts of the proposal to create a Garden Village on approximately 93 hectares of land to the north of North Lane, Huntington, York (national grid reference centroid SE 63328 56617) in North Yorkshire with a view to supporting its inclusion within the City of York Local Plan strategic housing allocation. This document presents the result of the assessment to determine the scale of impact from the proposal on any site in the National Site Network (Formerly Natura 2000 network) and assesses policy compliance.
- 2.2 The proposal is currently located on land that is primarily arable and pastoral agricultural land bounded by hedgerows, scattered trees, ditches and immature plantations with farm yards and associated buildings (Wold Ecology, 2017). The proposed site is located approximately 1.4km south of Strensall Common Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The nearest official public access on foot is 1.8km northeast of the proposal using existing bridleways and roads. Access for vehicles to the Strensall Common, Scott Moncrief main car park is a 5.7km, a seven minute drive from proposed main entrances to Galtres Garden Village.
- 2.3 The proposal d development involves the creation of a new garden village consisting of a projected 1753 dwellings. Of the total site area of 92.97 hectares, there is a proposed development area of approximately 53.24 hectares. The main design principals are identified (ID Partnership, 2017) as:
- The creation of attractive residential neighbourhoods within a landscape setting with a series of green routes through the site
 - Utilise the site’s existing field drainage system to incorporate SuDS
 - Provision of a “continuing care retirement community”, including specialist housing and a range of services for the elderly and retired
 - A community hub of shops
 - A new primary school
- 2.4 SACs and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) in the UK no longer form part of the European Union’s Natura 2000 ecological network. The 2019 Regulations, however, create a national site network on land and at sea, covering both inshore and offshore marine areas. The national site network includes existing SACs and SPAs and any new SACs and SPAs designated under these Regulations. The national sites network provides protection for sites that are of exceptional importance in respect of rare, endangered, or vulnerable natural habitats and species. The 2019 Regulations fulfil the commitment made by government to maintain environmental protections and permit the UK to continue to meet its international legal obligations, such as the Bern Convention, the Oslo and Paris Conventions (OSPAR), Bonn and Ramsar Conventions. Ramsar sites and internationally important wetland habitats have also been included in this Habitat Regulations screening report.
- 2.5 The York Local Plan (in development) sets out a policy GI2a that designates a 400m exclusion zone around Strensall Common SAC for development and a further 5.5km zone of influence concerning recreational disturbance following the completion of a Recreational Disturbance study by Footprint Ecology (2019). Identified impacts from recreational disturbance include “*trampling; increased fire*

incidence; disturbance to grazing livestock; nutrient enrichment from dog fouling; contamination of ponds; contamination from fly tipping, litter etc.; and damage to infrastructure (gates etc.)” (Footprint, 2019).

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 There is a legal requirement for all Local Plans to be subject to a Habitats Regulations Assessment. The requirement for which is set out as part of Article 6 of the EC Habitats Directive 1992 and interpreted into British law by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 (EU Exit Regs). For York City Council, this required that they assessed 'likely significant effects' on Strensall Common SAC, River Derwent SAC and the Lower Derwent Valley Special Protection Area (SPA/ RAMSAR) as well as four other designated sites within 20km of the authority boundary. Plans must ensure that the favourable conservation status of natural habitats and species of wild fauna and flora are maintained or restored.
- 3.2 A precautionary approach is taken and plans, or projects, may only proceed having determined that there will be no adverse effect on integrity following a detailed and informed assessment against the vulnerabilities of the designated features. Having gone through the screening stage (Stage 1), significant likely effects were identified from allocations within the York Local Plan on Strensall Common SAC in relation to recreational pressure on the dry and wet heathland communities 'alone' and the plan was taken to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment (AA).
- 3.3 The AA initially determined no adverse effect on integrity from allocations in close proximity to Strensall Comm, namely Policies SS19/ST35 (Queen Elizabeth Barracks, Strensall), E18 (Towthorpe Lines) and H59 (Land at Howard Road, Strensall). The conclusion was based proposed modifications to the policy wording to secure mitigation measures to prevent access and to deliver Suitable Alternate Natural Green Space on site (SANGS), a previously accepted and adopted mitigation measure elsewhere in the country. Other measures proposed included a wardening service to influence public behaviour on the SAC of existing and future residents.
- 3.4 Following consultation with Natural England who *'did not agree that adverse effects on integrity can be ruled out based on the evidence available'* and went on to recommend that *'robust and comprehensive visitor assessment will be necessary to determine whether the mitigation outlined in policy SS19 are adequate to offset the impact of the proposal and the wider impact of the plan and allocation H59 in particular'*, a visitor survey was commissioned to determine current levels of recreational impacts and to project impacts from the proposed York Local Plan policies and allocations.
- 3.5 Visitor survey methodology was discussed and agreed with Natural England and surveys undertaken in August and September 2018. Key findings from the surveys undertaken at Strensall Common included that
- *'73% of interviewed visitors brought their dogs – of 190 dogs observed 45% of them were off-lead during the interview;*
 - *43% of dog walkers visited daily;*
 - *78% of all interviewees visited regularly throughout the year;*
 - *The median distance travelled to the site, as the crow flies, was 2.4km and 75% of visitors came from within a radius of 5.5km, the median length travelled whilst on the Common was 2.5km;*
 - *Overall visits were expected to increase by 24%, reflecting a 61% increase in housing within 500m of the SAC;*

- *Recreational impacts, typically comprising trampling, fires, eutrophication from dog fouling etc was evident although these were mainly limited in extent and severity and generally found in close proximity to car parks;*
- *The report also identified that the worrying of livestock by dogs is already resulting in a loss of animals and may jeopardise future grazing – future grazing will be a vital tool in restoring the SAC to favourable condition.*

- 3.6 The report detailed that, in the absence of mitigation, due to the scale of the increase in access predicted from the visitor surveys, the proximity of new development and concerns relating to the current impacts from recreation, adverse impacts on the integrity of the SAC could not be ruled out as a result of the quantum of development proposed. It also specified that it would be difficult to rule out an adverse effect on integrity for individual allocations adjacent to the site (Footprint, 2019). Nationwide, the negative impacts of recreational disturbance are becoming recognised as one of the biggest threats to the positive conservation status of many designated sites in the UK.
- 3.7 The 2019 report undertook a full assessment of predicted mitigation measures for allocations within Strensall and found them to be non-compliant with the requirements of the Habitat Regulations as the mitigation measure were considered neither feasible nor achievable and subsequently, an adverse effect on integrity on Strensall Common SAC could not be ruled out. There needs to be certainty, beyond doubt, that mitigation measures will be successful, especially in relation to long term impacts on Strensall Common. Of note was the questioning of whether 7ha of greenspace at Queen Elizabeth barracks, adjacent to the health would be sufficient to attract visitors away from the common and the long-term effectiveness as a fence as a barrier.
- 3.8 The new objective evidence outlined in the Visitor Survey report supported Natural England’s objection. It concluded that the proposed mitigation cannot be completely relied upon and an adverse effect on integrity effect could not be ruled out with any certainty. The projected increase in visitors from all allocations was 24% which is of particular concern given existing visitor pressures are presently negatively impacting on the favourable conservation status of the heath. The Council, responded in line with recommendations of the report and removed allocations ST35 and H59 from the Plan detailing that there ‘is no meaningful way to mitigate the effects of recreation arising from the general site allocation either on site or in-combination with the larger site allocation ST35.’ (York Local Plan HRA update)
- 3.9 In removing allocations from within Strensall village (ST35 and H59) the residual increase in recreational pressure from the remaining Local Plan allocations reduces to approximately 8%. In assessing impacts of remaining strategic allocations, the report did not consider the associated open space which, if large enough, could reasonably be expected to reduce the number of a small number of these visits. It was determined that there was no need for additional mitigation for these allocations (York Local Plan Update, 2019). The local plan remains under examination and there remains pressure to include ST35 and H59 allocations.

- 3.10 The new Strensall Common Policy is as follows:
GI2a: Strensall Common Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
Development not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the SAC will only be permitted where it will not adversely affect the integrity of the Strensall Common SAC, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. Proposals will be determined in accordance with the following principles:
- a) There is an ‘exclusion zone’ set at 400m linear distance from the SAC boundary.

Permission will not be granted for development that results in a net increase in residential units within this zone. Proposals for non-residential development within this zone must undertake Habitats Regulation Assessment to demonstrate that they will not harm the integrity of the SAC.
 - b) There is a ‘zone of influence’ between 400m and 5.5km linear distance from the SAC boundary.
 - i. Where new residential development is proposed within the zone of influence on allocated housing sites SS9/ST7, SS10/ST8, SS11/ST9 and SS12/ST14, provision of open space must include or secure access to areas of suitable natural greenspace secured by way of mitigation prior to any occupation of new dwellings and secured in perpetuity.
 - ii. **Proposals for other housing development which are not within plan allocations will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that they will have no adverse effects on the integrity of the SAC, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. Any necessary mitigation measures may be sought through planning contributions and must be secured prior to the occupation of any new dwellings and secured in perpetuity. Open space provision must also satisfy policy GI6.**
- 3.11 The potential impacts of the proposed new Galtres Garden Village therefore need to be assessed for potential recreational disturbance impacts on the qualifying features of Strensall Common SAC and wider policy compliance.

4.0 ASSESSMENT OF RECREATIONAL IMPACTS AT STRENSALL COMMON

4.1 Strensall Common lies 1.4 km north of the proposal and all areas of the development fall within 2 km of the designated site. The proposal will lead to a net increase in residential dwellings within the 5.5km buffer identified in the proposed York Local Plan Strensall Common Policy GI2a.

Figure 1: Location of Strensall Common SAC in relation to the proposal



4.2 Currently, housing numbers for the proposed development are 1753; this includes an outlined 350 retirement units including a mix of bungalows, extra care apartments and a nursing home. Other residential properties will be a mix of one to five bed units. Using an approximation of an average of 2.4 people per dwelling (ONS, 2021), the proposal's estimated population is calculated at of 4,207 within 2km of Strensall Common SAC. For consistency, the methodology used by Footprint Ecology (2019), and approved by Natural England as part of their assessment of effects on Strensall Common, has been used to assess potential impacts and predict the scale of visitor increases from the proposal; particularly with reference to Section 7 of the report. 'Housing change and implications for the levels of Recreational Use' and the calculations and tables therein.

Table 1: Predicted Quantities of Housing within 1.5km and 2.0km of Strensall Common based on Outline Proposals (ID Partnership, 2022).

Galtres Garden Village	Hectares	Predicted Dwellings
Area of Open Space	39.73	n/a
Development Area within 1.5 km (19.5%)	7.7	254
Development Area within 1.5 to 2.0 km (80.5%)	45.54	1499
Total Development Area	53.24	1753
Total Site Area	92.97	1753

- 4.3 The number of predicted dwellings has been calculated by measuring the development area with 1.5 km of Strensall Common and using this as a percentage of the total development area; assuming equal distribution of units across the development footprint.

Table 2: Number of current residential properties, future development (plan allocations) and interviewees by 500m distance band (Updated from Table 18, Footprint, 2019). Allocations at Queen Elizabeth Barracks and Howard Road have been removed for the calculations in line with the York Local Plan Update.

Galtres Garden Village highlighted in dark green.

Distance Band from SAC	Current residential properties	New Development (Plan Allocations)	% Change in housing	Number of interviewees	Interviewees per current property*
0-500	883	0	0	44	0.0514
500-1000	1523	0	0	49	0.0315
1000-1500	149	254	171	3	0.0194
1500-2000	791	1499	190	4	0.0121
2000-2500	1269	492	39	18	0.0077
2500-3000	2900	928	32	15	0.0050
3000-3500	2772	334	12	17	0.0033
3500-4000	1863	53	3	2	0.0023
4000-4500	2180	0	0	8	0.0017
4500-5000	1637	780	48	3	0.0014
5000-5500	2463	1016	41	2	0.0011
5500-6000	4485	1293	29	3	0.0010
6000-6500	9956	395	4	3	0.0009
6500-7000	9305	213	2	3	0.0009
7000-7500	6743	604	9	0	0.0008
Total	48,919	7861	16	174	

- 4.4 Using the calculations detailed in section 7 and *Figure 13 (Fitted Curve) of the Strensall Common Visitor Survey, the number of expected additional interviewees has been calculated based on the increase in houses.

- 4.5 Table 2 shows that the proposal at Galtres Garden Village would lead to a 171% increase in housing between 1000m and 1500m and a 190% increase between 1500m and 2000m. Current housing numbers within these distance zones are low, particularly within the 1000m to 1500m distance range. These properties are

generally related to individuals living to the north of Strensall Village with easy access to Strensall Common entrance points using established footpaths.

Table 3: Number of current interviewees and predicted increase based on fitted curve determined as part of the Footprint Ecology (2019) Visitor Survey:

Distance band from SAC (m)	Number of Interviewees	Predicted additional increase as a result of new housing	Percentage change (%)
0-500	44	0	0
500-1000	49	0	0
1000-1500	3	4.93	164
1500-2000	4	18.13	453
2000-2500	18	3.76	20.9
2500-3000	15	4.60	30.7
3000-3500	17	1.11	6.5
3500-4000	2	0.12	6.2
4000-4500	8	0.00	0.0
4500-5000	3	1.06	35.4
5000-5500	2	1.16	58.0
5500-6000	3	1.30	43.4
6000-6500	3	0.37	12.2
6500-7000	3	0.19	6.2
7000-7500	0	0.51	0.0
TOTAL	174	42.03	21.4

4.6 The Strensall Common visitor survey (Footprint, 2019) determined that combined proposals within Strensall Village would account for 14% of the future increases in visitors to Strensall Common. Other increases from strategic allocations are ST8 Land North of Monks Cross (2%), ST9 Land North of Haxby (2%) and ST14 Land West of Wigginton Road (1%) reflecting the decreasing proximity of the allocations from the common. Footprint’s statistical analysis showed that beyond 4km impacts are significantly reduced. For example, distant allocations, such as ST17 Nestle scarcely contributes to increases in visitors to Strensall Common. The number of interviewees per existing property was one order of magnitude less at 3km than those within 500m of the SAC boundary and two orders of magnitude less at 5.5km distance (Waterman, 2020). The data suggested that 75% of all visitors travelled from within 5.5km of the SAC. The median distance travelled to the site from home was 2.4km. The median distance travelled by car was 4.6km. 51% of all visitors came from Strensall. Using the straight line distance band, Galtres Garden Village would account for a 13.3% increase in visitors alone.

4.7 As per the methodology in the Footprint Visitor Survey the impact of the additional dwellings at Galtres Garden Village can be assessed.

Table 5: Increases in predicted access with proposed development at Galtres Garden Village. From Table 20 (Footprint, 2019).

Scenario *Queen Elizabeth Barracks (QEB) removed	Overall number of dwellings	% Change in Access	Increase compares to current Local Plan allocations
All* Local Plan allocations	6108	8.2	n/a
All* allocations plus GGV	7861	21.4	2.61
Original York Local Plan Allocations (incl QEB)	6653	24.2	2.95
Original York Local Plan Allocations (incl QEB) plus GGV	8406	37.5	4.35

4.8 The calculations undertaken in accordance with the Footprint Methodology indicate that housing allocations at the proposed Galtres Garden Village will lead to up to over a two and a half times increase in the numbers of potential visitors accessing Strensall Common SAC compared to currently allocated housing development. This alone would be considered significant in the absence of mitigation. The relatively proximity of the proposed Galtres Garden Village boundaries to Strensall Common and the comparative absence of housing within this distance zone combined with its extent are contributing factors on the relatively high predicted increases in visitors to Strensall Common when using the Footprint Methodology.

Figure 2: Summary Statistics from the Footprint Visitor Survey Report

Table 17: Summary statistics for the straight-line distance between the home postcode and survey point for different groups of interviewees. Shading and dark lines separate different types of grouping. N is the sample size (number of valid postcodes) and Q3 is the 75th percentile.

Variable/type of interviewee	N	Distance (km)				
		Mean (+ 1SE)	Min	Median	Q3	Maximum
All interviewees with valid postcode	192	5.69 (+0.76)	0.28	2.86	5.79	64.15
Day visitors from home only	183	4.06 (+0.44)	0.28	2.41	5.5	48.01
Dog walkers	134	5.04 (+0.85)	0.28	3.00	5.71	64.15
Jogging/power walking	9	3.06 (+0.9)	0.86	1.67	5.67	7.53
Walking	28	5.34 (+2)	0.36	1.45	5.73	54.22
Visiting less frequently than once a week	50	12.37 (+2.37)	0.28	5.75	11.5	64.15
Visiting at least once a week	142	3.34 (+0.46)	0.34	1.82	4.82	55.35
Those travelling by car	130	6.14 (+0.73)	0.36	4.63	6.37	48.01
Those who arrived on foot	61	4.79 (+1.8)	0.28	0.73	1.35	64.15

4.9 Table 17 (Figure 2) from the visitor survey (Footprint Ecology, 2019), shows that currently displaced demand from adjacent settlements is high with numerous and frequent visits from the residents of Wigginton, Haxby, Earswick and New Earswick with dog walking the most frequently cited reason for travel to Strensall Common with individuals showing high fidelity to the site (i.e., visit daily or most days). Dogs worrying cattle is a key threat to management of the site and eutrophication of habitats from dog fouling is evident. The City of York Open Space Assessment (2017) details significant open space deficiencies in these wards as illustrated in Appendix 4 (see also Table 12). Earswick, within Strensall Ward, and Haxby and Wigginton are particularly poorly provisioned in terms of accessibility and quantity standards with no destination park and extremely limited

access to natural/semi-natural green space. New Earswick is well served by outdoor sports provision and access to semi-natural greenspace. Huntington is poorly provided for, with the exception of access to the public rights of way along the River Foss which extend north to Earswick and Strensall village.

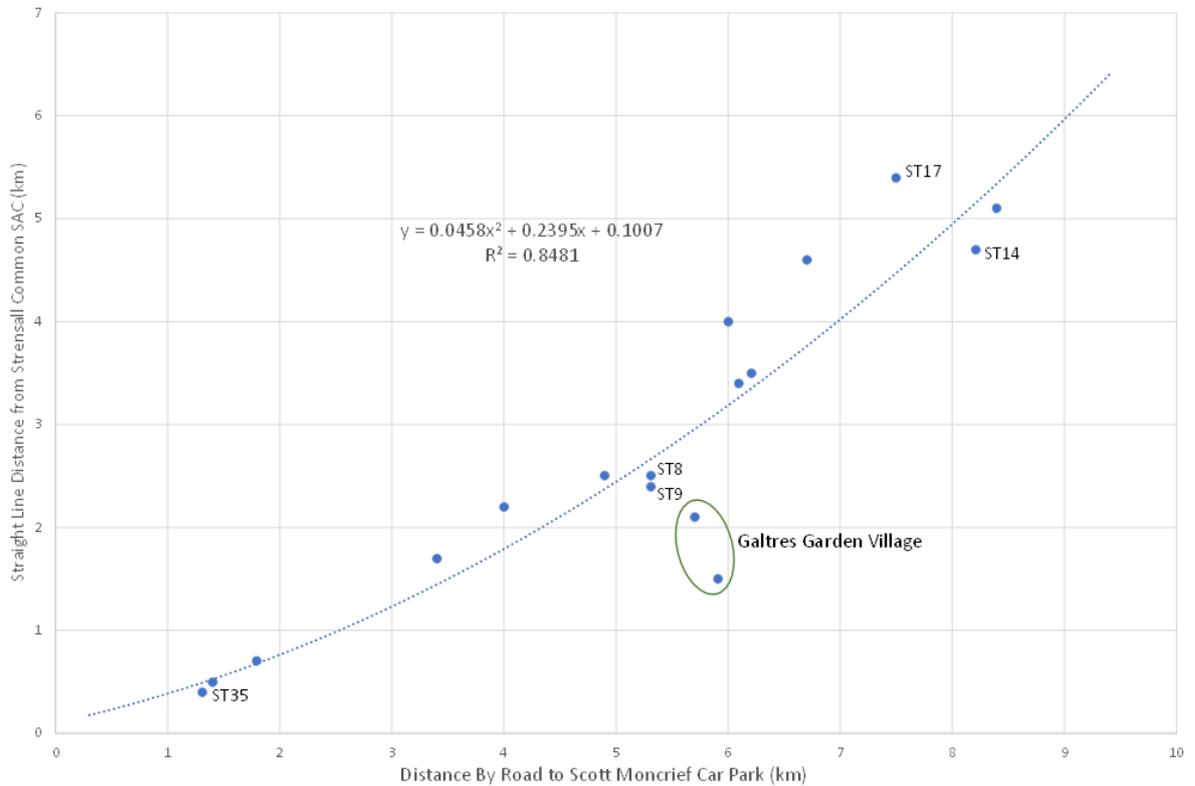
4.10 Table 17 also details mode of transport for visitors within these distance bands. It can be seen that the 75th percentile for those travelling on foot to Strensall is 1.35km, the mean distance travelled on foot 4.97 km is heavily skewed by a maximum distance travelled on foot of 64.15km. Given the access difficulties from the Galtres Garden Village to Strensall Common of foot, the most likely mode of transport from the new development would be from car (see Appendix 1). The Footprint Visitor report makes no allowances for ease of access via the most popular mode of transport to Strensall Common. Whilst Galtres Garden Village lies in relatively close proximity entrances lie to the south meaning that travel distances from this site are in reality, further than allocations ST8 and ST9 which are a greater straight line distance from Strensall Common SAC. Table 6 details distance from existing villages and proposed allocations south of Strensall Common

Table 6: Distance by Road to Strensall Common Scott Moncrieff Car Park Compared to straight line distance to Strensall Common Boundaries

Location	Distance to Scott Moncrieff Car Park (km)	Straight Line Distance from Strensall SAC (km)
ST35 Strensall Camp (QEB)	1.3	0.4
Strensall Village South	1.4	0.5
Strensall Village Central	1.8	0.7
Earswick Central	3.4	1.7
Earswick South	4	2.2
Haxby Central	4.9	2.5
ST8 Land North of Monks Cross	5.3	2.5
ST9 Land North of Haxby	5.3	2.4
Galtres Garden Village West Entrance	5.7	2.1
Galtres Garden Village Central	5.9	1.5
Huntington Central	6	4
Wigginton Central	6.1	3.4
Haxby South	6.2	3.5
Hutington West	6.7	4.6
ST17 Nestle	7.5	5.4
ST14 Land West of Wigginton Road	8.2	4.7
Heworth North	8.4	5.1

4.11 The table shows that entrance points to strategic allocations. Graphical representation of the data shows that in terms of travel times, Galtres Garden Village is an outlier in comparison to the trends (Figure 3). Whilst the Footprint Ecology methodology allows a broad assessment of strategic level impacts on Strensall Common, this assessment allows a detailed plan level assessment of how the design of the scheme and the road network should allow an alternate approach to predicting the extent of increase in visits to Strensall Common from the proposal.

Figure 3: Graph showing the Relationship between Distance by Road to Scott Moncrieff Car Park, Strensall Common SAC and straight line distance to Strensall Common SAC, from Key Allocations and existing settlements.



4.12 The graph illustrates that both existing settlements and strategic allocations lie closer to Strensall Common SAC’s main car park than the proposal at Galtres Garden Village with the closest straight line point to Strensall Common SAC (1.4km) being an approximate 6 km drive to the designated site. Using the equation of the fitted curve ¹and the closest vehicle access point of Galtres Garden Village to Strensall Common a more appropriate assessment distance is 2.95km putting the proposed strategic allocation within the 2500-3000m distance band from the SAC. For comparison, Table 7 illustrates the revised distance band by travel time of other strategic allocations and existing settlements. The table highlights the east of access to Strensall from existing dwellings in Earswick and Haxby and provides evidence for the high levels of existing visitor pressure from properties within the 2-3km straight line distance band to Strensall Common. The graph illustrates that Galtres Garden Village should more appropriately be assessed to sites with a similar travel time, including strategic allocations ST8 and ST9 which lie closer by road to the Scott Moncrieff Car park, a key access point for those travelling by car.

¹ $y = 0.0458x^2 + 0.2395x + 0.1007$; $x = 5.7\text{km}$ $y = 2.95\text{km}$

Table 7: Adjusted Distance Bands for Assessing Visitor Increases in Accordance with Travel Time to Site

Location	Straight Line Distance from Strensall SAC (km)	Travel Distance Adjusted Impact Band (km)
ST35 Strensall Camp (QEB)	0.4	0.49
Strensall Village South	0.5	0.53
Strensall Village Central	0.7	0.68
Earswick Central	1.7	1.44
Earswick South	2.2	1.79
Haxby Central	2.5	2.37
ST8 Land North of Monks Cross	2.5	2.66
ST9 Land North of Haxby	2.4	2.66
Galtres Garden Village West Entrance	2.1	2.95
Galtres Garden Village Central	1.5	3.11
Huntington Central	4	3.19
Wigginton Central	3.4	3.27
Haxby South	3.5	3.35
Hutington West	4.6	3.76
ST17 Nestle	5.4	4.47
ST14 Land West of Wigginton Road	4.7	5.14
Heworth North	5.1	5.34

4.13 Accordingly, assessments for the predicted impact of the proposed strategic allocation at Galtres Garden Village are revisited in Table 8 (a revision of Table 2) with allocations assessed within the 2500-3000m distance band. Other Strategic Allocations have not been similarly adjusted within the calculation given the similarity in straight line and adjusted travel distances for these allocations. Given that all proposed dwellings are greater than 5.8 km from Strensall Common main car park (providing an adjusted distance of over 3km for the entire development) this assessment tests a worst case scenario for increases in recreational disturbance at Strensall Common. For emphasis, adjusted travel distance for properties in the north of Galtres Garden Village would exceed 4km.

Table 8: Number of current residential properties, future development (plan allocations) and interviewees by 500m distance band. Allocations at Queen Elizabeth Barracks and Howard Road have been removed for the calculations in line with the York Local Plan Update. Revised Galtres Garden Village contribution highlighted in dark green.

Distance Band from SAC	Current residential properties	New Development (Plan Allocations)	% Change in housing	Current Number of interviewees	Interviewees per current property
0-500	883	0	0.0	44	0.0514
500-1000	1523	0	0.0	49	0.0315
1000-1500	149	0	0.0	3	0.0194
1500-2000	791	0	0.0	4	0.0121
2000-2500	1269	492	38.8	18	0.0077
2500-3000	2900	2681	92.4	15	0.0050
3000-3500	2772	334	12.0	17	0.0033
3500-4000	1863	53	2.8	2	0.0023
4000-4500	2180	0	0.0	8	0.0017
4500-5000	1637	780	47.6	3	0.0014
5000-5500	2463	1016	41.3	2	0.0011
5500-6000	4485	1293	28.8	3	0.0010
6000-6500	9956	395	4.0	3	0.0009
6500-7000	9305	213	2.3	3	0.0009
7000-7500	6743	604	9.0	0	0.0008
Total	48,919	7861	16.1	174	0.1406

4.14 Calculations show that Galtres Garden Village alone would contribute to a 60.4% change in housing in the 2.5km-3.0km travel distance band.

Table 9: Number of current interviewees and predicted increase based on fitted curve determined as part of the Travel Distance Adjustment.

Distance band from SAC (m)	Number of Interviewees	Predicted additional increase as a result of new housing	Percentage change (%)
0-500	44	0.00	0
500-1000	49	0.00	0
1000-1500	3	0.00	0
1500-2000	4	0.00	0
2000-2500	18	3.76	21
2500-3000	15	13.29	89
3000-3500	17	1.11	7
3500-4000	2	0.12	6
4000-4500	8	0.00	0
4500-5000	3	1.06	35
5000-5500	2	1.16	58
5500-6000	3	1.30	43
6000-6500	3	0.37	12
6500-7000	3	0.19	6
7000-7500	0	0.51	0
Total	174	22.87	13.1

- 4.15 Using the revised project stage travel distance methodology combined impacts of the proposal at Galtres Garden Village can be assessed.

Table 10: Increases in predicted access with different levels of development from at Galtres Garden Village compared to York Local Plan Allocations (YLP) using Adjusted Travel Distance Methodology.

Scenario *Queen Elizabeth Barracks (QEB) removed	Overall number of dwellings	Increase in housing compared to current YLP Allocation	% Change in Access	Change in Access compared to current YLP Allocations
All* Local Plan allocations	6108	n/a	8.2	n/a
All* allocations plus GGV	7861	1.29	13.1	1.59
Original York Local Plan Allocations (incl QEB)	6653	1.09	24.2	2.95
Original York Local Plan Allocations (incl QEB) plus GGV	8406	1.38	29.2	3.56

- 4.16 The revised calculations suggest that housing allocations at the proposed Galtres Garden Village will only lead to a one and a half times increase in the numbers of potential new visitors accessing Strensall Common SAC compared to currently allocated York Local Plan housing development in the absence of mitigation. Given the outlined increase in housing delivery from Galtres Garden Village (1754) within the zone of influence to Strensall Common, this is reasonably expected. By way of comparison, using this methodology, allocations at QEB would add an additional 16% change in access whilst only delivering 545 dwellings.

4.17 **Potential Access Opportunities**

- 4.17.1 The Galtres Garden Village development's eastern boundary is a designated public right of way, a bridleway that gives access to Towthorpe Moor Lane. From here, access to the southern sections of Strensall Common is possible. The current access arrangement at this point is a stile. Strensall Common is a minimum of a 1.8 km walk from the north-eastern boundary of the proposed Galtres Garden Village development (Appendix 1). Following on from the bridleway, a 380m road walk along Towthorpe Moor Lane is necessary. This distance is outside the 75th percentile of distances walked to Strensall Common as outlined in the Footprint Visitor Survey Report (Figure 2). Therefore, impacts from future residents accessing Strensall Common on foot are not considered significant.
- 4.17.2 Very limited unofficial car parking is available at the Towthorpe Moor Lane entrance, a 4.8 km drive via the Galtres Garden Village eastern entrance and the A64. A 5.7 km drive via the western entrance and the A1237 and Strensall Road provides access to the main car for Strensall Common, at Scott Moncrieff Road with level access to Strensall Common from the proposed western entrance. Vehicle travel is considered the most likely mode of travel to Strensall Common from Galtres Garden Village for dog walks, recreation and cycling based on the distances involved and the results of the Visitor Survey. 5.7km falls within the 75th quartile for distances travelled by car to Strensall Common but is above the medium and average travel distances by car. Any additional vehicle movement is likely to be

predominantly at the main car parks at Strensall Common which would contribute to further pressure on existing well-worn routes through Strensall Common.

5.0 PROPOSED GREENSPACE PROVISION

5.1 Galtres Garden Village Masterplan Proposed Green Space

5.1.1 In order to be compliant with GI2a, the proposal must be compliant with policy GI6 (Appendix 5). York's Local Plan Evidence Base: Open Space and Green Infrastructure Final Report (AMEC, 2013 – updated 2017) states that 'As a benchmark, the total proportion of open space to be provided as part of new development is 5.83ha/1,000 population as a minimum level of provision'. Table 6 shows that current proposed provision at Galtres Garden Village achieves or exceeds recommended open space provision. Population estimates have been calculated using ONS statistics for average number of people per household (ONS, 2021). The total site area is 92.97 hectares, and 39.73 ha is outline for open space provision on site.

Table 11: Proposed Open Space Provision at Galtres Garden Village against York Open Space Standards.

Galtres Garden Village proposed dwellings	1753
Galtres Garden Village Estimated Future Population	4208
York minimum standard open space (ha) per 1000 population	5.83
Strategic minimum required at Galtres Garden Village (Hectares)	24.53
GGV Area of Open Space) Current Proposed (Hectares) (Undeveloped Footprint)	39.73
Galtres Garden Village Surplus (Hectares)	15.20

5.2 Current Open Space Provision (City of York Council, 2017)

5.2.1 In order to show compliance with GI6, the proposal should aim to address current deficiencies within the ward. The proposal lies predominantly within the Huntington and New Earswick ward, with the northern sections falling within the boundary of the Strensall ward. The proposals western boundary lies just over 500m east of Haxby and Wigginton ward boundaries. Table 12 shows that all wards in these areas are deficient in several typologies of open space. Of relevance is that Strensall Common is not designated as Open Space within the Local Plan Policy Maps, it is, however, designated Green Belt

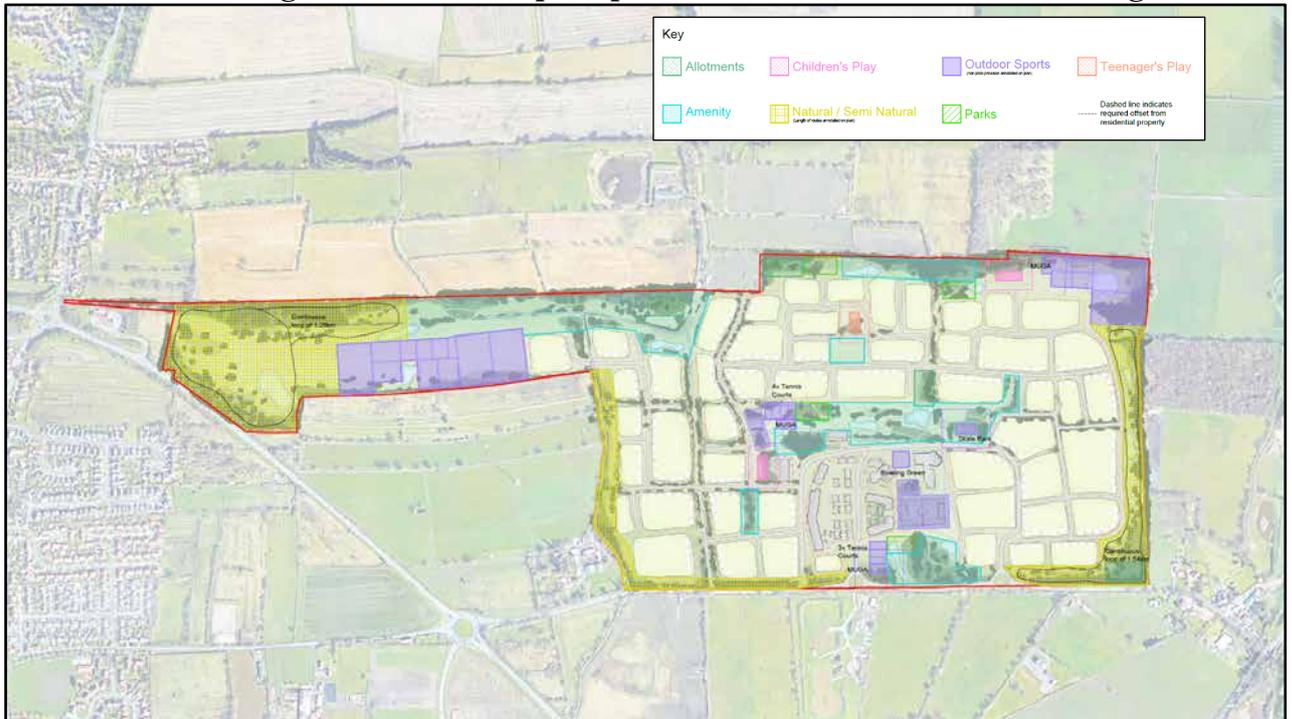
Table 12: Current Open Space Breakdown by 2015 Ward Typology of open space surplus / deficits at 2017 (City of York, 2017)

Ward	2017 population	Parks & Gardens (Ha)	Natural / Semi Natural (Ha)	Amenity Green Space (Ha)	Children' s (No. Facilities)	Young Persons (No. Facilities)	Outdoor Sports (Ha)	Allotments (Ha)
Haxby & Wigginton	12038	-2.17	-20.29	-9.68	-4.89	-2.43	-12.92	-2.29
Huntington & New Earswick	12108	-2.18	12.59	-9.27	-5.41	-2.29	17.43	-1.27
Strensall	8137	-1.46	-4.95	2.09	-2.86	-1.71	-4.37	-1.32

5.3 Recommended Minimum Quantity of Provision by Typology - Galtres Garden Village

5.3.1 York Open Space Standards have been applied to the proposed number of dwellings (and estimated population) at Galtres Garden Village, as guidance for the detailed design process.

Figure 4: Outlined Open Space Provision at Galtres Garden Village



5.3.2 The creation of a garden village allows at the masterplan stage, for the design of a new settlement that can provide well above the City of York Council’s open space standards. Figure 4 illustrates how different typologies are supplied throughout the development to maximise accessibility for future residents. Delivery of open space quantity as part of the master plan design is detailed in Table 13 below.

Table 13: Open Space Provision at Galtres Garden Village by Typology

Category	Recommended provision at Galtres Garden Village (ha)	Proposed Open Space GGV
Parks	0.76	0.94
Natural/Semi Natural	8.96	15.12
Amenity	6.10	11.67
Children’s play space	2 (2.02) facilities	2.1 (two)
Teenagers’ play space	1 (0.88) facility	0.88 (one)
Outdoor sports facilities	7.49	7.78
Allotments	1.22	1.24
TOTAL	24.53	39.73

- 5.3.3 The positioning of the large Country Park at the west of the proposal maximises connectivity to the wider area with a footpath link to Earswick, joining Strensall Road that is well served by footpaths from both Earswick and Huntington north with properties situated 1km walk from the Country Park’s western pedestrian access. From here, residents can access the Country Park walkways and facilities. In addition, good road links to the Country Park from surrounding settlements should satisfy some displaced demand from nearby settlement. Sports provision within the development also has the potential to attract demand from adjacent settlements. Table 14 illustrates that the proposal contributes to an improvement in ward level open space provision.

Table 14: Changes in Open Space Quantity in Strensall Ward with Galtres Garden Village Allocation Baseline Figures 2017 (City of York, 2017)

Ward	2017 population	Parks & Gardens (Ha)	Natural / Semi Natural (Ha)	Amenity Green Space (Ha)	Children’ s (Sites)	Young Persons Facility (Ha)	Outdoor Sports (Ha)	Allotments (Ha)
Strensall	8137	-1.46	-4.95	2.09	-2.86	-1.71	-4.37	-1.32
Galtres Garden Village	4207	0.18	6.16	5.57	0.00	0.00	0.29	0.02
Strensall OS Provision with Galtres Garden Village	12344*	-1.28	1.21	7.66	-2.86	-1.71	-4.08	-1.30

*Galtres Garden Village estimated population plus 2017 Strensall population

5.4 Open Space Design Principles Galtres Garden Village

- 5.4.1 Open space provision is delivered well above the minimum York standards for a development of its size. The proposed masterplan details a holistic approach to provision across the site and is considerate to existing natural assets on site and the provision of sustainable drainage integrated into the landscape. Open space is delivered at both the centre and edges of the proposal and delivers numerous and varied off road walking routes for future residents.
- 5.4.2 The large Country Park to the west offers safe off-road routes for dog walkers, jogger’s, cyclist and families and the proposed green edge to the development offers several kilometres of off road footways through a variety of greenspace typologies. Included is a 5km loop which is likely to be popular with runners and those looking for longer walks. Seasonal desirability of the Country Park will be maximised by ensuring there is a shared cycle and footway that is of highways adoptable standard, which is accessible, and free from standing water, year-round.
- 5.4.3 The provision of high quality natural green space is a priority vision providing opportunities for vehicle free experiences and an area where dogs can be allowed safely off a lead. Potential conflict between dogs and small children is addressed through delivery of play provision within strategic locations, separate from the natural green space. Traffic free off-road routes to school are to be provided where possible. Public fronting, well over-looked open space is prioritised to maximise safety and reduce the potential for anti-social behaviour. Private backs will be avoided around perimeter greenspace.

5.4.4 Green network connections within the indicative masterplan are exceptional with green space integrated through and inside the development.

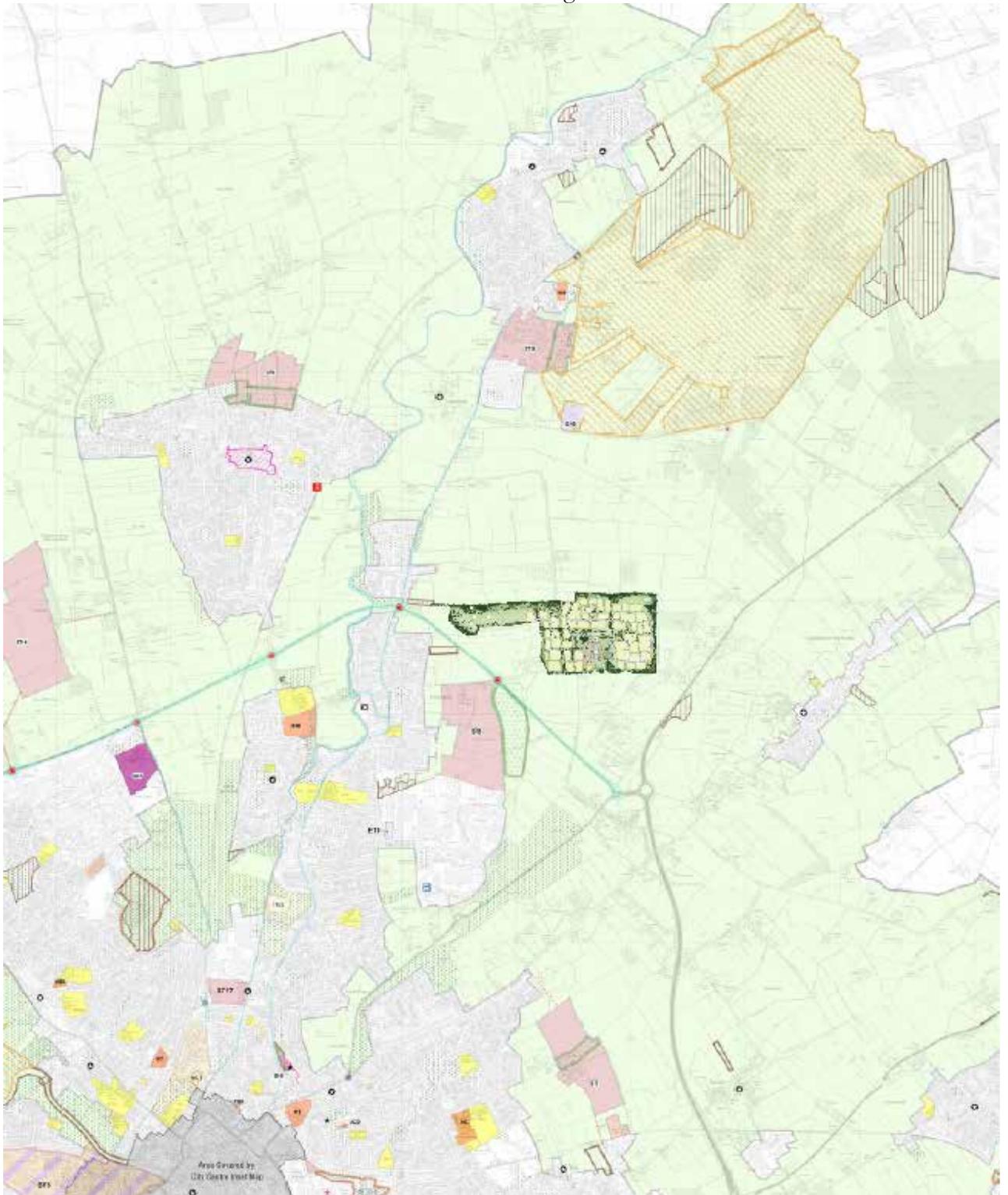
6.0

DISCUSSION

- 6.1 Using methods set out in the ‘Footprint Ecology Visitor Survey and Impacts of Recreation at Strensall Common report’ adapted for travel distances predictions suggest an increase in access to Strensall Common as a result of the addition of the proposed development at Galtres Garden Village, increasing from an initial 8.2% for City of York Local Plan Allocations to 13.1% with Galtres Garden Village. This increase is considered significant given that recreation disturbance is a current direct threat to qualifying habitats and an indirect threat to the favourable management of the site through increased impacts on grazing animals. The additional allocation at Galtres Garden Village will contribute to the growing pressures related with those sites already put forward for allocation within the City of York Local Plan. Galtres Garden Village will contribute a predicted change in visits of 3.3% (3km band) to 5.0% (2.5 km band).
- 6.2 In terms of recreational impacts on the qualifying features of Strensall Common SAC, a likely significant effect alone is identified in the absence of mitigation.
- 6.3 Open space provision, as indicated by figures within the Galtres Garden Village Masterplan (ID Partnership, 2022), achieves, or is well above the York Open Space Standards in terms of quantity. Delivery of the Country Park is outlined as part of the pre-occupation of phase 1 of the development.
- 6.4 This assessment determines that the current indicative masterplan for Galtres Garden Village is compliant with proposed City of York Local Plan policies GI6 and GI2a.
- 6.5 Whilst proposals result in a large increase in housing within 2km, the travel adjusted distances outlined within this report are considered to be a reasonable and well-argued modification to calculating the project scale impacts in relation to changes in recreational visits to Strensall Common SAC. Access constraints and the commitment to high quality and extensive green space within the development will significantly mitigate the number of visits to Strensall Common. Increases will be experienced through destination visits, however, daily visits for dog walking, running and walking will be adequately mitigated on site. The positioning and scale of the proposed district level Country Park, combined with perimeter pathways will, medium to longer term, attract use from adjacent settlements and has the potential to reduce existing demands on Strensall Common. Phase 1 delivery of the Open Space will include varied walking routes, picnic tables, benches and car parking provision.
- 6.6 The creation of a large-scale district Country Park offering an alternate destination for residents of Huntington, Earswick, south and central Haxby and the proposed Galtres Garden Village will provide opportunities to displace the existing demand from Strensall Common from visitors from outside the village. This is particularly noteworthy in relation to promoting daily dog walking visits away from the sensitive habitats of Strensall Common. Year round, safe dog walking areas free from sheep and cattle will offer an attractive alternative to Strensall Common. Mitigation measures associated with the proposed Galtres Garden Village will help to address existing open space deficiencies in the wider area.

- 6.8 The location of the proposed Galtres Garden Village offers an opportunity to deliver a district level Country Park. Phase 2 works will include higher level facilities e.g., café, toilets, and educational opportunities.

Figure 6: York Local Plan Allocations near to Strensall Including Galtres Garden Village



7.0

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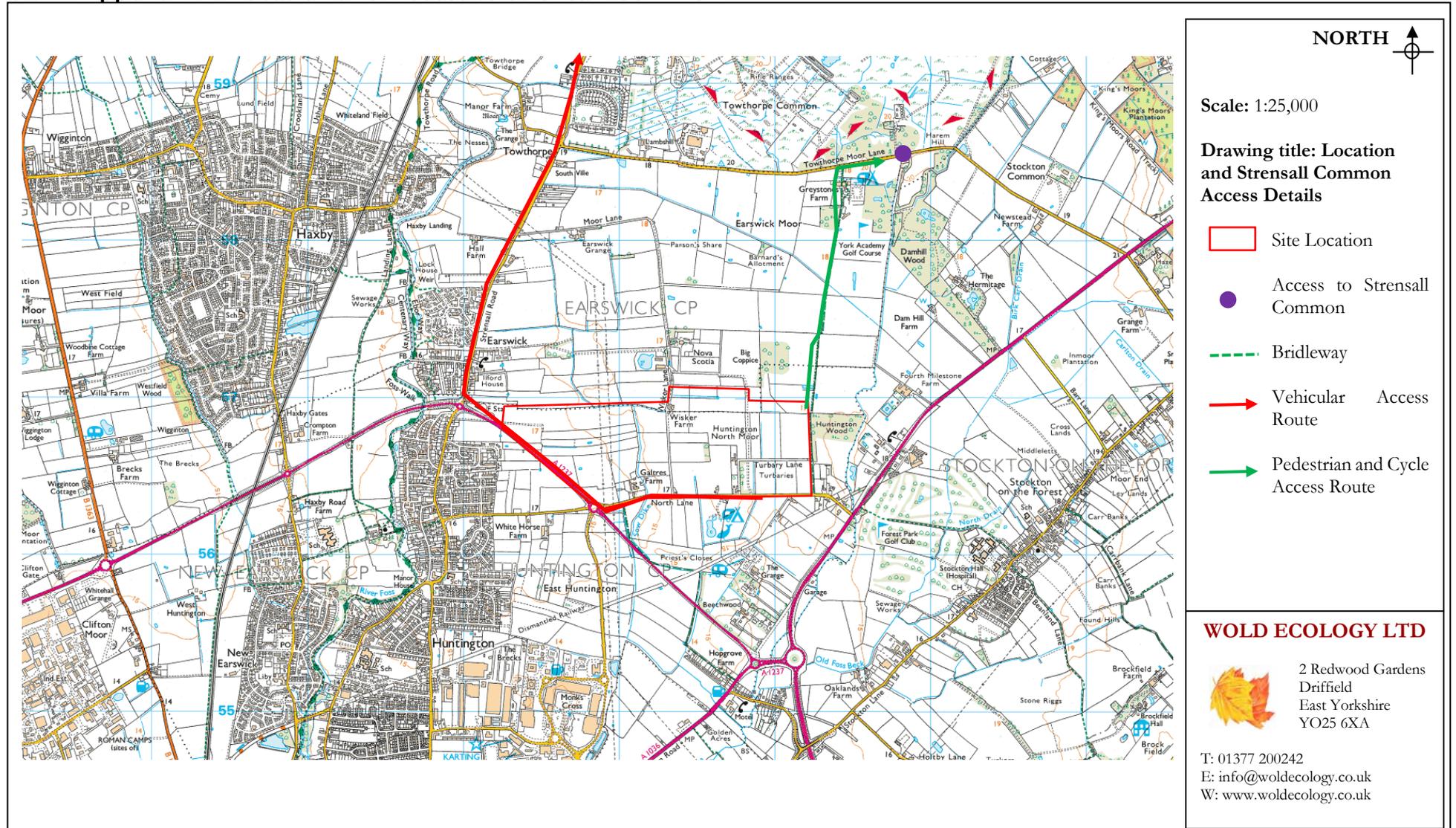
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8.0 Appendix 1: Location and Access to Strensall Common



Appendix 2: Concept Plan, Galtres Garden Village: 1753 units



Appendix 3: Strensall Common features and vulnerability.

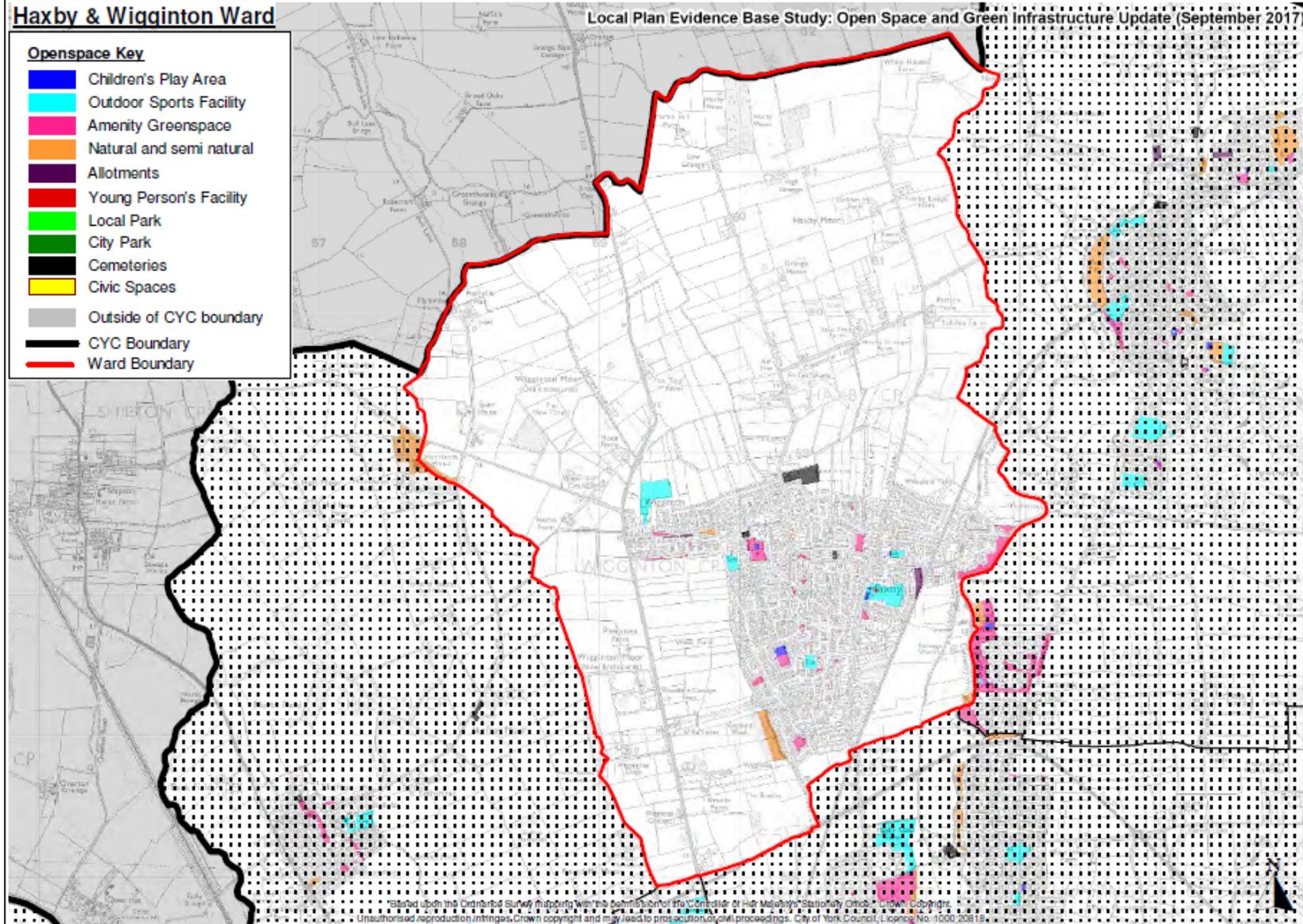
Site Name	Location	Area	Qualifying features	Conservation Objectives	Vulnerability of site
Strensall Common SAC	1400m north of proposal	569.63 hectares	<p>Annex I habitats present as a primary reason for selection of this site</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4010 Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i> Strensall Common, together with Skipwith Common, is an example of acidic lowland heath in northern England. The wet element is well-represented by M16 <i>Erica tetralix</i> – Sphagnum compactum wet heath, although its extent has been reduced by drainage. It is a noted locality for marsh gentian <i>Gentiana pneumonanthe</i>, narrow buckler-fern <i>Dryopteris carthusiana</i> and long-leaved sundew <i>Drosera intermedia</i>. 4030 European dry heaths Strensall Common, with Skipwith Common, is one of only two extensive areas of open heathland remaining in the Vale of York. There is a complex mosaic of 4010 Northern Atlantic wet heaths with i and dry heath elements. The H9 i – <i>Deschampsia flexuosa</i> dry heath is noted for petty whin <i>Genista anglica</i> and bird’s-foot <i>Ornithopus perpusillus</i>. 	<p>Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extent and distribution of the qualifying natural habitats The structure and function (including typical species) of the qualifying natural habitats, and, The supporting processes on which the qualifying natural habitats rely. 	<p>Pressure and/or threats to the integrity of the qualifying species</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Access/Disturbance Inappropriate scrub control Air Pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition Change in land management Urban Edge effect <p>The main issues affecting the SAC have been identified as public access and disturbance particularly linked to dog walkers and dogs off leads.</p>

Summary of likely significant impacts

European Sites	Assessment of potential impact on European Site	Likely significant effect	Assessment on in-combination effect	LSE identified in-combination	Appropriate Assessment
Strensall Common SAC	Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i> European dry heaths	Yes	n/a	n/a	Yes

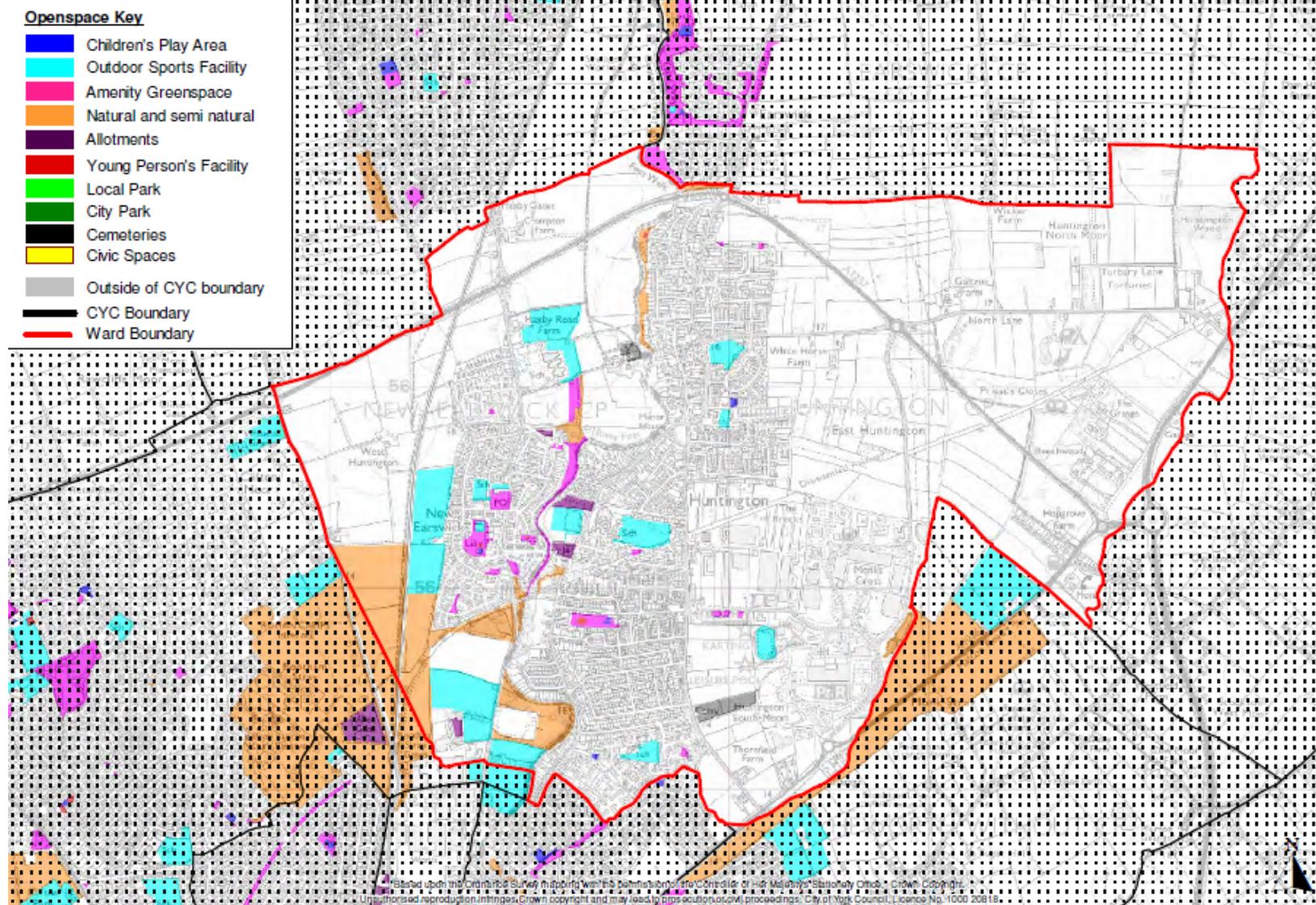
Appendix 4: Maps of Greenspace Provision in nearby wards.

Source - City of York Local Plan Evidence Base; Open Space and Green infrastructure Update (2017)



Huntington & New Earswick Ward

Local Plan Evidence Base Study: Open Space and Green Infrastructure Update (September 2017)

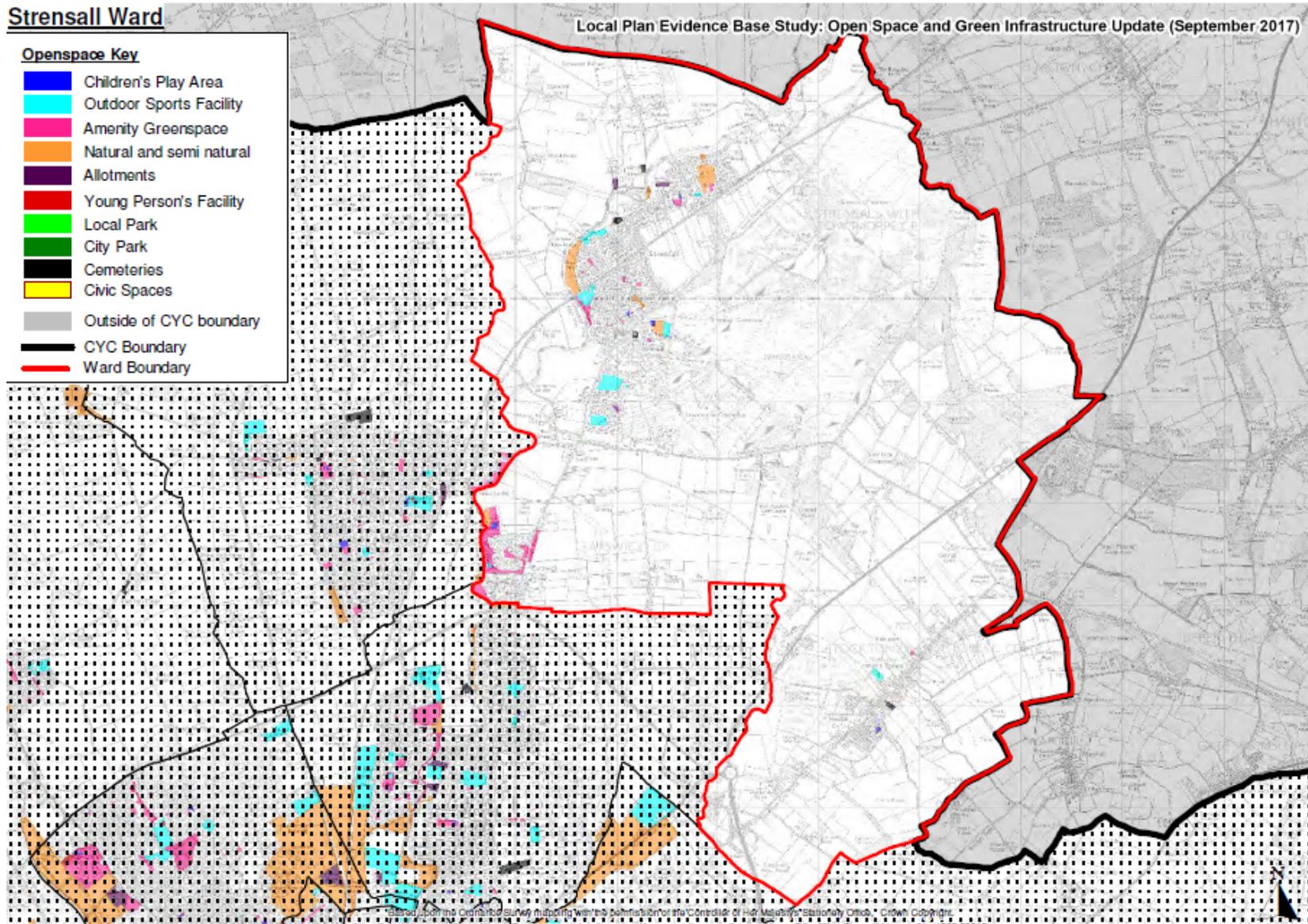


Strensall Ward

Local Plan Evidence Base Study: Open Space and Green Infrastructure Update (September 2017)

Openspace Key

-  Children's Play Area
-  Outdoor Sports Facility
-  Amenity Greenspace
-  Natural and semi natural
-  Allotments
-  Young Person's Facility
-  Local Park
-  City Park
-  Cemeteries
-  Civic Spaces
-  Outside of CYC boundary
-  CYC Boundary
-  Ward Boundary



Appendix 5: York Local Plan Proposed Policies

Policy GI2a: Strensall Common Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

Development not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the SAC will only be permitted where it will not adversely affect the integrity of the Strensall Common SAC, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. Proposals will be determined in accordance with the following principles:

- a) There is an ‘exclusion zone’ set at 400m linear distance from the SAC boundary. Permission will not be granted for development that results in a net increase in residential units within this zone. Proposals for non-residential development within this zone must undertake Habitats Regulation Assessment to demonstrate that they will not harm the integrity of the SAC.
- b) There is a ‘zone of influence’ between 400m and 5.5km linear distance from the SAC boundary.
 - i. Where new residential development is proposed within the zone of influence on allocated housing sites SS9/ST7, SS10/ST8, SS11/ST9 and SS12/ST14, provision of open space must include or secure access to areas of suitable natural greenspace secured by way of mitigation prior to any occupation of new dwellings and secured in perpetuity.
 - ii. Proposals for other housing development which are not within plan allocations will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that they will have no adverse effects on the integrity of the SAC, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. Any necessary mitigation measures may be sought through planning contributions and must be secured prior to the occupation of any new dwellings and secured in perpetuity. Open space provision must also satisfy policy GI6.

Policy GI 6: New Open Space Provision

All residential development proposals should contribute to the provision of open space for recreation and amenity. The successful integration of open space into a proposed development should be considered early in the design process. The precise type of on-site provision required will depend on the size and location of the proposal and the existing open space provision in the area. Where there are deficiencies in certain types of open space provision in the area surrounding a proposed development, the Council will seek variations in the component elements to be provided by the developer in order to help to overcome them. Requirements will be calculated using the Council’s up to date open space assessment and will be in line with the Council’s Green Infrastructure Strategy. The Council will encourage on-site provision where possible but off-site provision will be considered acceptable in the following circumstances:

- i. if the proposed development site would be of insufficient size in itself to make the appropriate provision (in accordance with the Council’s standards) feasible within the site; or
- ii. in exceptional circumstances, if taking into account a site’s characteristics including but not limited to the accessibility/capacity of existing open space sites/facilities and the circumstances of the surrounding area the open space needs in the context of an up-to-date Playing Pitch and Built Sports Facility Strategy, it can be demonstrated that of the proposed residential development can be met more appropriately by providing either new or enhanced provision off-site;
- iii. **on strategic sites, where through strategic master planning agreements that provide for green infrastructure approaches which make accessible provision beyond allocated site boundaries. Open space standards as set out in the most up**

to date open space evidence base document should still be used as a guide to overall provision.

New open space is identified on the proposals map at:

- OS1: Land North of Manor Church of England Academy
- OS2: Land to North of Poppleton Juniors, Millfield Lane, Poppleton
- OS5: Germany Beck
- OS6: Land abutting the River Foss at Heworth Croft

Indicative new significant areas of open space have been identified in connection with the following strategic sites, as shown on the proposals map:

- OS7: Land at Minster Way at ST7
- OS8: New Parkland to the East of ST8
- OS9: New Recreation and Sports Provision to the south of ST9
- OS10: New Area for Nature Conservation on land to the South of A64 in association with ST15
- OS11: Land to the East of ST31

This new open space will be complemented by further on-site provision of local green and open space (as required in this and other relevant sections of the plan), and both should be planned cohesively in order, where appropriate, to:

- **manage impacts on the city's historic character and setting;**
- **mitigate and compensate for ecological impacts, and provide for ecological enhancement;**
- **meet open space requirements arising from new development;**
- **accommodate drainage infrastructure, flood storage and attenuation; retain and enhance landscape and heritage features; and**
- **frame pedestrian and cycle linkage.**

The precise delineation and extent of the new open space will be set through detailed master planning and the planning process. The areas indicated on the proposals map are a guide to general extent based on current understanding of site and other conditions.