

# Chapelford Urban Village, Warrington

## Key details

<b>Name</b>	Chapelford Urban Village
<b>Location</b>	Warrington, Cheshire
<b>Number of dwellings</b>	2,110
<b>Date first homes sold</b>	2004
<b>Homes delivered to date</b>	2,110
<b>Percentage of affordable homes</b>	15%
<b>Average house price</b>	£227,000
<b>Walking distance to railway station</b>	17 minutes



## Background and context of development

Warrington is a prosperous and developing town. The proximity of the M62, M6, and M56 afford it easy access to the North West and the rest of the country, with 6.2 million people, including residents of Manchester and Liverpool, living within 45 minutes of it. Its employment rate, economic activity rate, and private to public sector job ratio all exceed the national average, let alone the regional one. It has expertise in energy, engineering, software, and logistics.

Partly as a result of all this, the average house price stands at £211,000, higher than the North-West average of £192,000 and not far off the national average of £226,000. Warrington's prosperity and

housing need within the Mid Mersey area is reflected in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment of 2016. Halton and St. Helens were both given targets of just over 10,000 new homes in the 2014-2037 period, but Warrington's was nearly double this. Recommended affordable housing figures were broadly in line with these; Halton's net affordable need was given as 2,737, St. Helens' as 2,208, and Warrington's as 5,060.

So far, substantial progress has been made in achieving these goals. While the Chapelford development was nearing completion at the beginning of the SHMA period, Warrington Borough Council has already mapped out the location of the majority of the 20,000 required houses. There will be 3,500 in the town centre, 4,000 on the waterfront, 7,000 in a Garden City to the south east, and 1,800 in a collection of urban extensions to the south west of the town. Most of this is still at early stages, but it nevertheless reflects positively on growth and housing provision in the area.

The location of Chapelford Urban Village is in the north-west of the town, on the 200 acre former RAF Burtonwood site, which saw extensive US usage in the Second World War and Cold War, but became defunct thereafter and was closed in 1993. Planning permission for the development was granted in 2002, since when there have been 15 phases of house building approved by the Council, some of which amended the nature and location of essential facilities. The phased areas were conceived of as commercial, retail, or residential, allowing for the possibility of mixed use but also of potential segregation.

The first homes were sold in 2004 and the last ones completed in 2017. Much of the infrastructure was not fully planned until the middle of the period of construction, leaving a lack of services and transport that is common in the early stages of many housing developments. Most of this is now finished, however, with the main outstanding item being the construction of a new station, Warrington West, on the southern edge of the development. Planning permission for it was granted in 2017 and completion is expected in 2019, having received £4.23m from the government's New Stations Fund Round 2.

## **Public Realm**

<b>Urban trees</b>	<b>Yes, on most streets</b>
<b>Grass verges</b>	<b>Yes, on most streets</b>
<b>Front gardens</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Back gardens</b>	<b>Yes, mostly small</b>

## **Public transport, walking and cycling accessibility**

On entering Chapelford Urban Village, the amount of land dedicated to car parking is immediately apparent. There are streets that almost look more like car parks than streets, while the extensive car parks in front of some small blocks of flats are so all-encompassing that they even stretch underneath the buildings themselves. However, the main streets through Chapelford are attractively designed and have good traffic calming measures.



There is little consideration of walking and cycling in the planning and promotional documentation for the site, with the focus instead on Warrington's advantageous placement within the road network. Despite this, a great deal of effort appears to have been put into cycle provision within the site itself, with an abundance of cycle lanes and blue signs alongside the traffic calming measures, although some of the cycle provision seems rather over-designed. However, despite being just 3km from Warrington town centre, a set of barriers including the Sankey Brook, the West Coast Mainline railway and some unfriendly major roads conspire to cut off Chapelford from the town centre.



Therefore, while the development's location means that many facilities and the town centre could be relatively easily accessible by foot and bike, the urbanised environment acts as a significant deterrent to this in practice. There is a signed cycle route between the town centre and Chapelford but it



requires navigating a major roundabout, followed by a choice of either cycling alongside a dual carriageway or on a muddy path which involves passing a threatening area underneath a bridge. It would have been more helpful if some of the money that must have been spent on blue cycle signs within Chapelford could have been spent instead on improving the route into town. The benefits of the urban location and the efforts made to encourage cycling on site are therefore damaged by the poor quality of the pedestrian and cycle routes in the surrounding urban environment.

The bus network in Warrington is relatively weak. We found good quality bus shelters in Chapelford, but the information provided in them was poor, with timetables missing entirely in some cases. A local bus service runs through Chapelford every 30 minutes but does not run after 1830 in the evening or on Sundays. In many cases public transport is little quicker than walking when accessing services off the Chapelford site. When combined with the unappealing pedestrian and cycle routes between Chapelford and the centre of Warrington, this results in the town having a predominantly car-based culture.



Destination	Company	Route numbers	Weekday daytime frequency	Weekday evening frequency	Saturday frequency	Sunday frequency	Travel time	Location of bus/train stop	Last return time
Warrington town centre (incl. railway stations)	Warrington's Own Buses	13	Every 30 mins	Last bus 18:10	Every 30 mins	No service	19 mins	Various	18:10

Rail facilities, however, are much better, and allow residents more options when travelling further afield. Sankey for Penketh station, in the west of the town, is only 17 minutes by foot, and buses from Chapelford pass close to Warrington Bank Quay and Warrington Central stations, which afford direct access to London Euston (three hours), Liverpool, Manchester, Lancaster, Glasgow, Chester, and Birmingham. Even better, a new station at Warrington West is currently being built on the southern edge of the site and is due for completion in 2019. Therefore Chapelford residents can easily travel to regional hubs for work.

The effectiveness with which the development's location has been utilised has thus been mixed. Being able to make use of this disused RAF site has meant that it is feasible to walk to many destinations within the surrounding suburbs. The opening of Warrington West station will be a major boon for the area, and will transform the prospects for regional travel. However, developers and

planners have not fully capitalised on other opportunities, leaving residents with fairly poor bus, walking or cycling access to all but a few destinations within the town itself, particularly if they are unable or unwilling to walk or cycle in the busy and potentially dangerous urban environment.

## Local Facilities

The centre of Chapelford looks more like an out-of-town complex than a suburban centre. There is also a severe lack of variety in terms of the facilities on offer. The 'district centre' comprises simply of a very large Sainsbury's, a pub, and a primary school, all surrounded by large car parks, and an empty plot due to house the doctor's surgery. The only other retail premises are squeezed into three small units attached as if an afterthought to the side of the Sainsbury's. This might be said to provide inadequate choice for over 2,000 households. Most of these facilities were built significantly after the first houses were sold, and we are still waiting for the new doctor's surgery and community centre. Thus, the developers were guilty of prioritising sales over residents' quality of life in the early years of development.

A park, complete with children's play facilities that reference the site's military history, sits next to the Chapelford district centre and provides a welcome relief from the nearby car parks. The suburban location of the development also means that it is generally possible for residents to walk to essential facilities in neighbouring parts of Warrington. This applies to a secondary school, leisure centre, and library. There is no post office on the site, a surprisingly common state of affairs in recent urban extensions.



Type of facility	Plans and current state of progress within development	Built yet within site?	Closest example outside the development	Estimated time to reach nearest example outside development			
				Walking	Cycling	Driving	Public transport
Convenience store	No plans	No	Co-op	13 minutes	3 minutes	9 minutes	12 minutes
Café / restaurant	Sainsbury's cafe	Yes					
Drinking establishment	Chapelford Farm pub (Cloverleaf restaurants)	Yes					
High street shops	Three small shops by the side of Sainsbury's superstore	No	Warrington town centre	46 mins	14 mins	10 mins	17 mins
Supermarket	Sainsbury's	Yes					
Nursery	Chapelford Village Primary School	Yes					
Primary school	Chapelford Village Primary School	Yes					
Secondary school	No plans	No	Penketh High School	17 minutes	6 minutes	10 minutes	17 minutes
Park	Dakota Park	Yes					
Playground	Dakota Park	Yes					
Playing fields	Dakota Park	Yes					
Tennis courts	No plans	No	Great Sankey Leisure Centre	24 minutes	6 minutes	6 minutes	15 minutes
Leisure centre	No plans	No	Great Sankey Leisure Centre	24 minutes	6 minutes	6 minutes	15 minutes
Swimming pool	No plans	No	Great Sankey Leisure Centre	24 minutes	6 minutes	6 minutes	15 minutes
Wildlife area	No plans	No	Risley Moss Nature Reserve	2 hours 14 minutes	39 minutes	19 minutes	1 hour 19 minutes
Community Centre	A group are planning to build a community centre	No	King's Community Centre	22 mins	6 mins	3 mins	12 mins
Daytime / evening classes	Some at Chapelford Village Primary School	Yes					
Medical facilities	Chapelford Health Care Centre – currently housed in small prefab, new building planned	Yes (temp site)					
Post office	No plans	No	Penketh Post Office	22 minutes	6 minutes	8 minutes	21 minutes
Library	No plans	No	Penketh Library	23 minutes	6 minutes	8 minutes	22 minutes
Co-working space	No plans	No	Warrington Business Park	1 hour 8 minutes	16 minutes	18 minutes	38 minutes





## Developer Contributions

There has been fairly little S106 funding towards transport, particularly excluding the highways contribution and the one-off Warrington West contribution. Due to both the pre-existence of certain facilities within the area and the Council's preference in disclosure, the facilities dealt with by the agreement are fewer than in some other cases.

Contribution	Amount
Chapelford Village Primary School Contribution	£2.7 million
Chapelford Health Care Centre Contribution	£500,000
Chapelford Community Centre Contribution	£85,000
Leisure Centre Contribution	£210,000
Highways and Transport Contribution	£750,000
Warrington West Contribution	£1.1 million
Cultural Buildings Contribution	£50,000
Parks and Pitches Contribution	£130,000
Secondary School Contribution	£1.9 million
Library Contribution	£30,000

## Summary

The initial impression on entering Chapelford is the extreme dominance of land dedicated by car parking. This is at its worst in the district centre, which takes the appearance of an out-of-town complex and is essentially comprised of a single large supermarket, a primary school and a pub. There are good traffic calming measures within the site though, and extensive if rather over-designed cycle lanes. There is also an attractive new park in the centre of the development, with features referencing the site's military history.

In terms of public transport, the best feature is the new railway station currently under construction, which is almost unique in recent urban developments. However, the bus, walking and cycling links with Warrington do not live up to the same standard, and the result is that Chapelford now appears to be very car-dominated. This is likely also influenced by the fact that although it occupies a fairly central location, Chapelford is mostly surrounded by low-density car-based suburban developments. Overall, Chapelford shows that having an urban location is not in itself enough to avoid creating a car-dominated community.

