

Warrington Borough Council

Local Development Framework

Core Strategy Issues and Options Report

February 2009



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1 Introduction

1.1 The Local Development Framework (LDF) is the new planning system introduced in 2004 and will replace the Unitary Development Plan (UDP). Under the old system one plan was produced every 10 years or more. The new system requires a series of plans to be produced and kept up to date. Together they deliver the spatial planning strategy for the local authority's area and are intended to:

- promote a proactive, positive approach to managing development
- translate the sustainable community strategy into action on the ground

1.2 The planning system influences almost every aspect of our lives, from the quality of our urban environment to the size of homes we can afford, the employment opportunities available to us, and the amount of open countryside we can enjoy.

1.3 Through the planning system and other mechanisms the Council can direct what happens in Warrington. It can develop a vision of the place that Warrington should be in the future and use its resources and decision making to shape places to fit the vision.

1.4 Naturally councils cannot shape places alone. It must work with partners. The key partnership of the Council is the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) which includes the organisations and people who can influence what happens on the ground from the health trust to the Environment Agency and the local chamber of trade. The Council and the Local Strategic Partnership jointly produced the "Borough Portrait" in 2007 as the launching pad for the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) and the Core Strategy. The issues raised in consultation on the Borough Portrait ([Borough Portrait Consultation Report](#)) have fed directly into this Paper.

1.5 The vision for Warrington is expressed in the Sustainable Community Strategy (produced by the Local Strategic Partnership) and the Local Development Framework needs to reflect the Sustainable Community Strategy aspirations spatially. This means that the Local Development Framework and in particular the Core Strategy picks up the Sustainable Community Strategy vision and relates it to actual places and sites because it sets the legal framework with respect to land and development and is used to determine what actually happens in terms of bricks and mortar or landscape.

1.6 In summary the Core Strategy:

- Creates a framework to guide regeneration through public and private investment and that promotes economic environmental and social well-being for Warrington.
- Co-ordinates and delivers the public sector components of this vision with other agencies and processes.

1.7 The Local Development Framework also sits in a hierarchy of spatial plans and policy.

- National planning policies set out in Planning Policy Statements and Guidance (PPS and PPG) set out the government's priorities and requirements
- The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the North West translates national needs to a regional level.

1.8 The Local Development Framework sets the framework for decisions to be made in the borough about a wide range of activities that shape areas, from the role of the town in the economy, the health of the town centre, and how future housing needs can be accommodated, to the location of new schools and opportunities for outdoor play for children.

1.9 To date we have described the shape of the borough today (The Borough Portrait, produced jointly with the Local Strategic Partnership) and have started to identify issues and key sites through the Borough Portrait consultation and background papers published alongside this document.

Introduction

1.10 The Local Strategic Partnership's [Sustainable Community Strategy](#) for Warrington will be launched at the Partnership conference in early March 2009. The vision for Warrington as set out in the Document is as follows:

“by 2030, Warrington will be recognised as one of the best places to live and work in the UK where everyone enjoys an outstanding quality of life.”

1.11 We now need to develop ideas about different ways of supporting delivery of the vision through the Local Development Framework, of dealing with the issues in the light of the evidence available. This document attempts to do that and to share those ideas and options with partners and the business and resident community. We will then refine these ideas and work up the options into a number of clear alternative approaches (or **strategic options**) that can be evaluated with a view to deciding the preferred approach.

1.12 The statutory requirement is for the Council to show that the strategies/policies and allocations in the preferred option represents the most appropriate in all the circumstances having considered the relevant alternatives (and is founded on a credible evidence base).

1.13 Inevitably, some things will be fixed and naturally influence what options may be available - for example matters that are determined at national or regional level, and development proposals that have already been given planning permission. This document, together with associated background papers, looks to take account of the fixed points and identify available choices by reference to places and sites. **The combination of these choices can then be assembled into alternative strategies.**

In summary

1.14 The Core Strategy is the key element of the Local Development Framework that will decide the future shape of Warrington. The spatial strategy for the plan has to say what kind of place we are seeking, what development is happening, at what scale, when and how, who the delivery partners are and ultimately what contingencies are in place if delivery goes off track.

1.15 It will deal with key strategic issues and key sites that have been identified through the Borough Portrait and background papers issued for community engagement alongside this document.

1.16 The Core Strategy is forward looking in that it looks 15 years ahead from the date of adoption (2011), to comply with government requirements for the future supply of housing, and longer for the green belt. The process of core strategy preparation so far has entailed:

- Collecting the evidence
- Gathering the issues
- Developing a vision
- Generating options and alternative strategies

This is the stage we are now at. We will then go on to:

- Evaluate them
- Select a preferred strategy
- Consult on the preferred option including an explanation of why others were rejected and why the approach being followed has been chosen
- Refine the document for submission to the Secretary of State

2 Key Issues

2.1 Key issues arising at a local level are identified in a number of council documents including the Sustainable Community Strategy, the Regeneration Framework, the Transportation Framework and other programmes and strategies including those dealing with climate change, waste and neighbourhood issues. Key issues also arise from Warrington's status as a Growth Point. The review of local, regional and national plans, programmes and policies set out in the background papers, together with the response to consultation reported following publication of the Borough Portrait, indicates that there are a number of key issues that need to be addressed in the core strategy.

2.2 The key issues distilled from all these sources include:

Delivery of Housing Growth

2.3 The need for more new housing, including affordable housing, is now widely acknowledged and is a government as well as a borough council priority. Current policies focus new housing in areas in need of regeneration. The strategy options will be used to assess which approach will deliver a level and type of housing to meet forecast needs and support the economy without compromising the Green Belt or posing a threat to environmental assets.

2.4 It will therefore be necessary to ascertain how housing supply can be managed to ensure delivery of sufficient housing for 15 years from the date of adoption of the core strategy, whilst maintaining an ongoing 5 year supply of deliverable housing land, under the different options.

Affordability

2.5 The recent Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) suggests that over 400 additional new affordable homes need to be provided in the borough each year. This presents the Council with a significant challenge; we need to ensure we are doing as much as we can in difficult circumstances to increase the number of affordable homes on new housing developments, as well as ensuring we get the highest quality in terms of size, tenure and design.

Sustaining Economic Success

2.6 We need to ensure that an appropriate level of economic development is planned for in Warrington and that the right education and skills are available for Warrington businesses. Different levels of housing growth will have different implications for the level of economic development planned in the borough. If additional land for employment development is needed, appropriate locations will have to be identified. It will also be important to look at which sectors of the economy are forecast to grow, and what sort of sites they will require.

Revitalising the Town Centre

2.7 Though the health of the town centre is fundamentally sound, parts of the traditional shopping centre (particularly Bridge Street) are not performing well especially since the opening of the extended Golden Square. The fringes of the town centre are also in need of investment and there are key sites at the doorstep of the town centre that do not enhance the image, appearance or economy of the borough. Areas near Bridge Foot, or at Winwick Street near Central Station are clear examples. There is a need to diversify uses within and around the town centre. There is also a need to assess the capacity for more retail floorspace, whether there is a market for additional housing and what the appropriate balance should be between office provision in the town centre and the periphery of the town.

Maintaining the Green Belt Beyond 2021

2.8 The maintenance of the Green Belt is a key objective of government policy as expressed in Planning Policy Guidance Note 2 (PPG2). The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the North West explicitly states that the Green Belt boundary in Warrington should not be reviewed before 2021. Any such review would be driven by a wider review of the Regional Spatial Strategy and is not a matter for direct consideration in the Local Development Framework. Nevertheless, in order to maintain the Green Belt in Warrington in the long term it will be necessary to demonstrate an ongoing supply of land for development (notably housing and employment) for the period beyond 2021, and at least to 2026. This is an important consideration for the management of land supply and the capacity of areas outside the Green Belt.

Addressing Inequalities

2.9 Although Warrington is a very prosperous borough, it is also a very unequal one. A key defining feature of Warrington is the marked differences in prosperity and quality of life within the borough. Eighteen specific neighbourhoods (called Super Output Areas), mostly concentrated around the town centre and housing around 28,000 residents are amongst the 20% most deprived areas in the country, measured by a national index of multiple deprivation. Of these areas eleven rank within the 10% most deprived nationally.

2.10 At the other end of the scale 40 Super Output Areas in Warrington are ranked amongst the 20% most affluent nationally. These areas make up most of South Warrington, and together with other areas such as Sankey, Croft and Rixton represent around one third of Warrington's population (around 64,000 people).

Tackling Congestion

2.11 The borough's infrastructure has to deal with considerable traffic movements on a daily basis, particularly in the morning and evening peaks. These traffic movements are growing with development and redevelopment pressures both within and outside the borough. Different growth scenarios will have different impacts and will generate different pressures on transport infrastructure and will therefore require different ways of dealing with congestion.

Minimising the Causes of, and Adapting to the Impacts of Climate Change

2.12 This is a key issue in the development of the core strategy and a theme that will underpin the whole policy approach. The extent of areas at risk from tidal flooding at the historic heart of the town means that the effects of climate change are potentially significant, particularly in central Warrington. The location of development associated with the different options may have different effects on climate change. It is important that all options are resilient to the now inevitable impacts of climate change.

Safeguarding and Enhancing Environmental Assets

2.13 The borough's environmental assets including its green spaces and sites of recognised importance to bio-diversity enjoy a high level of protection through European regulation, national and regional policies, and the specific local framework of UDP policies. Their protection will remain a high priority in the Core Strategy regardless of which strategy option is pursued. However the opportunities to enhance and extend the network of sites and to integrate them into a more holistic green infrastructure framework may vary between the options.

Waste

2.14 Due to the presence of significant landfill sites in the Borough, and their remaining capacity, Warrington is likely to continue to receive substantial quantities of municipal, commercial and industrial wastes from outside the borough as well as having to provide adequate facilities for the treatment and

disposal of its own waste arisings. The Core Strategy will have to ensure sufficient opportunities for the provision of waste management facilities in appropriate locations including for waste disposal. The Core Strategy will need to set out how sites and areas suitable for new or enhanced waste management facilities will be identified, including criteria that will guide actual allocations and the broad locations where these will be sought.

Question 1

Have we correctly identified the Key Issues for Warrington?

3 Sustainable Community Strategy

3.1 The Warrington Partnership will launch the [Sustainable Community Strategy](#) (SCS) at their conference in March 2009. This will replace the strategy produced in 2005: Warrington towards Tomorrow. The Sustainable Community Strategy vision is referred to on page 5.

3.2 The strategy expands the vision to reveal what Warrington is expected to be like in 2030.

Our Economy.....

- A competitive, successful economy with strategic influence throughout the North-West, the UK and internationally
- The location of choice for national and international businesses with a high proportion of knowledge-based industries
- An employment rate amongst the highest in the UK
- Skilled and educated residents able to meet the needs of Warrington businesses
- Skills and employment levels within our deprived communities compare favourably to the rest of the borough as well as regionally and nationally
- A strong enterprise culture with thriving small businesses and more local ownership
- Thriving, alive and bustling town centre with lots for people to do and quality shopping which attracts people from across the region.

Our People.....

- Proud to belong to Warrington, celebrating our unique heritage and colourful past
- Involved in their local communities and neighbourhoods, getting on well together and participating in local decision making
- Able to access services locally and interact with each other within a network of community hubs which have grown up around our schools, colleges and community buildings
- Live in one of the safest places in the UK
- Choose healthy lifestyles and have life expectancies above the national average wherever they may live in Warrington, with far fewer deaths due to heart disease and cancer
- Remain independent in old age, fit and active for longer and playing a full part in community life
- Inspired to reach their potential and eager to learn and develop new skills
- Have a great start in life and achieve excellent educational attainment results in our high quality schools and colleges
- Benefit from plenty of leisure and cultural activities for young and old to keep them stimulated and enjoying life
- Tolerant and understanding of different generations, cultures and beliefs and welcome new communities into their midst.

Our Environment.....

- A vibrant, regenerated riverfront providing entertainment, cultural facilities, homes, hotels and offices, as well as walkways and recreation space
- Everyone has access to an affordable home that is of a high quality and reflects their needs
- A “green” borough, having met and exceeded targets for our energy coming from renewable resources and CO₂ emission reductions
- New technology, neighbourhood hubs and facilities connect communities to jobs and local services
- An effective, safe and efficient local transport infrastructure with people choosing to use public transport, cycling or walking rather than their car
- The major transport gateways into Warrington are attractive and provide a positive impression for visitors. Clean and modern railway stations and interchanges provide good links to key locations across Warrington, such as the town centre and major employment sites
- A well used network of attractive and clean green spaces with the River Mersey and our canals developed as a focus for local amenity and bio-diversity
- Well maintained areas of natural beauty with local people and businesses taking responsibility to help in their upkeep.

3.3 To bring the vision and objectives to reality, the Sustainable Community Strategy derives five shared ambitions to steer and focus the actions of the partnership.

Working with our communities, we want to make Warrington:

PROSPEROUS AND VIBRANT: where people benefit from being part of a successful and dynamic economy with vibrant town and district centres

ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE AND ATTRACTIVE: where people have good housing, accessible transport and enjoy caring for their environment.

EMPOWERED AND SAFE: where people are active and supportive in their communities, feel safe and live free from crime and anti-social behaviour

HEALTHY AND ACTIVE: where people can enjoy good health and wellbeing

AMBITIOUS AND ACHIEVING: where people are inspired and supported to reach their potential and lead fulfilling lives

3.4 Many of these objectives and shared ambitions reflect issues that will be addressed in the Core Strategy – and the Core Strategy is required to be a delivery mechanism for those elements that relate to spatial planning, and the development and use of land.

4 A Vision for the Core Strategy

4.1 The Borough Portrait (published for consultation in 2007) set out in detail the current situation in Warrington in a number of topic areas that contribute to create a sustainable community. The strategic elements of the Borough Portrait that together shape Warrington include:

- The regional / sub-regional context
- The Greenways and waterways in the borough
- Critical infrastructure including transport
- Neighbourhood areas
- Strategic sites and areas

4.2 Using these building blocks and drawing on other evidence, strategies, frameworks and programmes (as set out in the background papers), an appropriate vision for how the borough should evolve becomes clear:

Warrington's vision is that it will be recognised as one of the best places to live and work in the UK where everyone enjoys an outstanding quality of life. This means that:

- **By 2030 Warrington is firmly established as an outstanding place in the North West, fulfilling a key role in the regional economy and is a location of choice for national and international business.**
- **Omega is established as a successful location for sustainable economic development benefiting the local and regional economy and complementing the town centre and other established business locations such as Birchwood.**
- **Worklessness in the borough is at a low level. Local residents are better equipped with the skills required to take up employment and training opportunities created in the district and the sub-region.**
- **The town has developed as a focus for economic growth, building on investment in regeneration and restructuring and improvement of the older parts of the town including the northern spine (A49 corridor).**
- **Growth has reinforced existing neighbourhoods and has provided high quality, safe, secure and inclusive living environments that meet resident's needs and encourages healthy lifestyles. Disparities and inequalities that existed across the borough have been significantly reduced.**
- **The town centre and its surrounding areas are the vibrant focus of the borough for retail, leisure, entertainment and business providing plenty to do and see for people of all ages and interests throughout the day.**
- **Warrington has built on its strong roots as a key transport hub. The town is easy for everyone to get to and to get around with an integrated transport system providing realistic and reliable alternatives to using cars including park and ride, public transport, walking and cycling.**
- **The town and its residents make the most of its rivers, canals and greenways, using Warrington Waterfront as a focus of activity that interacts with the town centre. Flood risk within existing development has been reduced and all new development is flood resistant and resilient.**
- **All development is set in the context of a secure, long term Green Belt and countryside that is sustainable and attractive with a thriving rural economy and communities.**
- **Those visiting Warrington, as well as residents, are pleased by the quality of neighbourhoods, key gateways and routes into the borough and the town and district centres. Open spaces and the public realm is well maintained, and there is attention to detail and good design in all new development. The unique elements of the built and natural environment that Warrington possesses are well managed and looked after.**

4.3 This vision is a basis for consultation. It will evolve and be refined throughout the preparation of the Core Strategy.

Question 2

Is this an appropriate vision for Warrington?

4.4 The vision leads to a number of spatial planning objectives.

5 Objectives

5.1 The background papers published alongside this document set out all policies, strategies and programmes that will influence the Core Strategy. At a local level, relevant strategies include, amongst others:

- The Sustainable Community Strategy
- The Regeneration Framework and programme
- The Transportation Framework
- Growth Point Programme
- Climate Change Strategy
- Municipal Waste Management Strategy (at a draft stage)
- Look of the Borough Programme
- Neighbourhoods Programme

5.2 The overriding objective of the Core Strategy is to ensure that all relevant strategies are reflected in the framework for decision making in the borough. All the documents should be mutually supportive and there should be consistency and reciprocity between strategies. In order to achieve this, the suggested objectives for the Core Strategy include:

Economic Objectives

- to make provision for a supply of employment land to support the business sector and ensure that sustainable economic development is not held back by a lack of suitable sites;
- to review and decide on an appropriate land use mix at the regionally significant Omega site;
- to promote a hierarchy of strong and viable centres:
 - from Warrington town centre as the location for the concentration of retail, office, leisure and recreational development,
 - through district centres such as Birchwood and Stockton Heath, offering a range of shops and services, and
 - local and neighbourhood centres catering for day-to-day needs.
- to support the sustainable diversification of the rural economy; and
- to assist the economic development potential of tourism in Warrington.

Social objectives

- to promote healthy, safe, cohesive, mixed and thriving communities, where people will want to live, now and in the future;
- to ensure that everyone can have a decent home, which they can afford, in a secure environment, with reasonable access to health care, education provision and recreational facilities;
- to deliver a better balance between housing demand and supply;
- to provide for additional housing, so as to meet changing needs, support economic development, address the requirement for affordable accommodation, and ensure a choice in housing types;
- to improve the quality of the housing stock and its environment.

Transport Objectives

- to improve and maintain Warrington's existing transport infrastructure in good order;
- to improve journey time reliability, and tackle congestion in the borough's main transport corridors and around the town centre;
- to secure a shift towards the use of more sustainable modes of transport with a focus on public transport, walking and cycling;
- to secure safe and efficient access by all modes of transport between residential areas and the town centre, peripheral employment areas, schools, shops and other local services including health;
- to improve surface access and interchange arrangements to and between transport modes particularly at Central and Bank Quay and Birchwood stations;

- to reduce the adverse impacts of transport, in terms of road safety hazards, climate change, environmental pollution, residential amenity and social exclusion;
- to integrate the management and planning of transport systems to address needs arising from new development.

Environment Objectives

- to promote a more integrated approach to delivering a better environment through land and water management, including a better relationship of new development to water resources, flood risk and adaptation to the impacts of climate change;
- to create multi-functional networks of green spaces and green corridors building on the borough's canals and rivers;
- to produce a concise waste strategy that:
 - supports economic growth without increasing the environmental impact of waste;
 - increases recycling rates in the Borough;
 - provides a framework in which communities take more responsibility for their own waste;
 - delivers locations for facilities, and policies to support and deliver the Municipal Waste Management Strategy.
- to reduce energy demand and break the link between energy demand and economic growth;
- to promote and exploit low carbon and renewable energy technologies and increase the amount of electricity from renewable sources.

Question 3

Will these objectives help to deliver the vision for Warrington?

What are the component places that comprise building blocks for the Core Strategy?

6 What are the component places that comprise building blocks for the Core Strategy?

6.1 Strategic sites can be defined as sites or combinations of sites with a clear boundary, or general locations that are more loosely defined. The countryside around the town and villages in the borough which comprises the adopted Green Belt is clearly an area of strategic significance. The identification of these areas and sites is fundamental to the principle of place shaping and the assembly of alternative strategies. Once they are identified the potential for change can be assessed in the context of what is fixed, what might be reviewed, and what needs to be decided – taking account of the key issues identified above.

Strategic sites and areas

6.2 It is suggested that the strategic sites and areas in the borough are as follows.

- The Town Centre
- Omega
- The older parts of Warrington town, otherwise termed the Regeneration Area
- The countryside and its constituent settlements
- Peel Hall Farm
- Chapelford
- Warrington Waterfront (Arpley Meadows/Bridgefoot/Bridge Street)
- English Partnership sites at Appleton Cross, Grappenhall Heys, and Pewterspear
- ‘Suburban’ areas of the town

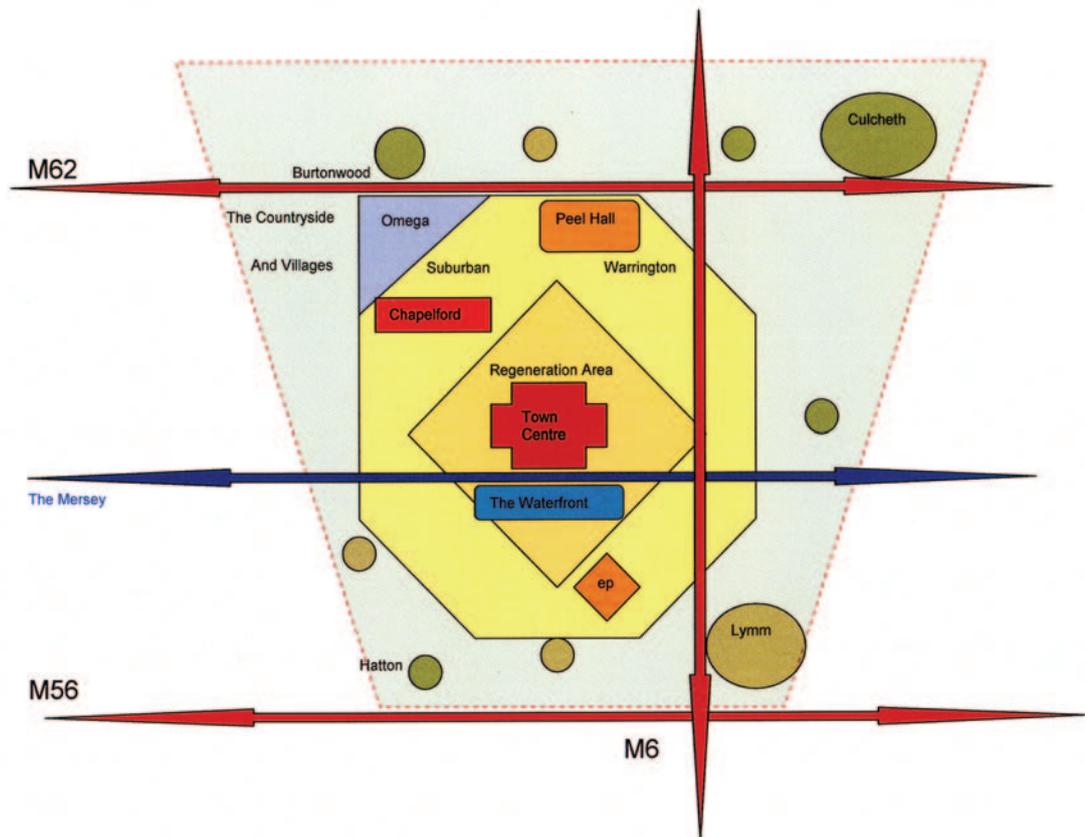


Figure 6.1 Strategic Sites and Areas

What are the component places that comprise building blocks for the Core Strategy?

6.3 When put together these places add up to the whole of the borough as represented diagrammatically in Figure 6.1. They represent the strategic framework of the borough, the key building blocks of a strategy that will shape the future of the borough.

7 Higher Order Strategies

7.1 The place of the Local Development Framework in the hierarchy of national and regional strategies is described previously. The topic papers provide summary details of their policy content. Many of their policies relate to the management of development – the factors to be taken into account and the standards that should be achieved when specific development proposals are being considered.

7.2 Other policies provide the overarching strategic planning context that local strategies must adhere to. The Regional Spatial Strategy specifically determines that in Warrington the focus should be on the regeneration and restructuring of the older parts of the town. The Green Belt was established to prevent the outward expansion of the town onto open land, and should not be reviewed before 2021. Once established, detailed Green Belt boundaries should not be reviewed unless there are very special circumstances.

7.3 The Regional Spatial Strategy also highlights Warrington as a town with particular opportunities for growth which should be harnessed in sustainable ways. Warrington (jointly with Halton & St Helens) is also one of six identified north-west New Growth Points, a government initiative designed to support the delivery of sustainable housing and economic development and related infrastructure.

7.4 This provides the basis on which the core strategy proceeds. The focus is on growth through regeneration, and no change to the green belt boundary will be contemplated. The Green Belt defines the limits to growth of the town and ‘inset’ villages. The capacity of these areas contained by the green belt boundary and the scope for change within them is central to the development of the core strategy.

7.5 The other key determinant of the Regional Spatial Strategy is the borough’s housing requirement, currently set at an annual average of 380 additional dwellings per annum. The Growth Bid status implies a higher level of housing provision and the core strategy debate will establish whether a higher level of growth is sustainable and appropriate in the local and regional spatial planning context, and what the future housing requirement for Warrington should be.

8 Current Situation of Warrington's Strategic Sites and Areas

The Town Centre

8.1 The town centre stands as a community hub and the key focus for shopping, civic and cultural activities, food and drink, and for a significant number of jobs. It is a major asset to the borough that performs well and which needs to be protected, promoted and enhanced through the council's policies and the management of development.

8.2 The importance of town centres continues to be stressed in national and regional policies and its continued development and regeneration will be the cornerstone of the council's Core Strategy. Parts of the town centre and adjacent areas are the subject of more detailed consideration and masterplanning, including the Bridge Street area, Palmyra Square, Bank Quay, Bank Park and the Waterfront area.

8.3 The development of options will need to address the future demands that will be made on the town centre for additional town centre development, particularly shopping, and ensure that there is adequate capacity to accommodate it in central locations that will benefit the whole community.

Omega

8.4 There is a long standing commitment to develop the Omega site into a major employment location. The major part of the site is identified in the UDP as a Regional Investment Site for high quality strategic business developments, whilst a smaller part of the site was granted outline planning permission in 2007 for a 3-phase business park development.

8.5 The Core Strategy will need to consider the role of the Regional Investment Site in terms of an appropriate land use mix that will bring benefits to the region as a whole and complementing existing and future provision in the borough.

Older Parts of Warrington, otherwise termed the Regeneration Area

8.6 The inner areas of Warrington have witnessed a resurgence of development interest since 2001. Over the three years up to April 2008 over 2000 new homes have been completed in this area. Many more have planning permission but construction has not yet commenced.

8.7 The Core Strategy will need to address when and how further sites will be developed given recent and predicted future changes in the housing market. It will also need to consider what further development capacity exists, and whether this is sufficient to meet needs, and able to provide the right type of housing. On the other hand it may be more sustainable to retain or allocate some of the sites for employment development, especially in or near the borough's deprived areas.

8.8 The Core Strategy will need to address the cumulative impacts of recent and future developments on the provision of local services and the capacity of infrastructure, notably the transport system. This will be possible using a Multi Modal Transport Model, currently in development by the Council and its partners.

Warrington Waterfront (Aprley Meadows / Bridgefoot / Bridge Street)

8.9 Arpley Meadows is one of several regeneration areas identified in the Unitary Development Plan and is the only one that has not since been developed or received planning permission. Work commenced on an Area Action Plan to address the development constraints that characterise the area. This work has now been overtaken by preparation of a masterplan for the Waterfront, a wider area than originally conceived.

8.10 As an established priority area for regeneration, the Core Strategy will bring forward the supporting strategic framework for the masterplan. This will be supplemented as appropriate in future by either an Area Action Plan or a series of Supplementary Planning Documents.

The Countryside and its Constituent Settlements

8.11 The wider open countryside around the town and other settlements in the borough is designated as Green Belt. As such it is protected from inappropriate development.

8.12 The countryside around the borough nevertheless has a role in the Core Strategy. It is part of the economy of the borough and provides for formal and informal recreation. It is the location of several landfill sites, and aspects of the borough's infrastructure. The strategy will need to address how pressures on the countryside can be managed to protect and improve its character and appearance.

8.13 The countryside is also home to many residents, within and beyond the many smaller settlements spread around the borough. It is important to recognise the role that these settlements play, and ensure their needs are addressed. The Core Strategy will also have to consider whether there is a case for an exceptions policy to enable the provision of affordable housing on the edge of the villages, in Green Belt locations.

English Partnership Sites at Appleton Cross, Grappenhall Heys and Pewterspear

8.14 These greenfield sites hold the capacity for some 1200 homes and have planning consent as a legacy from the new town development corporation.

8.15 There is currently a generous housing supply comprising previously developed land and therefore no reason to bring the development of these sites forward under present circumstances. This will not necessarily always be the case. English Partnerships manage these sites, and has agreed that their future will be resolved through the planning system.

8.16 The core strategy will need to consider if and when these sites should be brought forward for development, and whether other sustainable land use options should be considered.

Peel Hall Farm

8.17 As a result of the successful legal challenge that quashed the inclusion of Peel Hall Farm in the Green Belt, the future of this area will be addressed in the Core Strategy. The area is presently neither allocated for development nor specifically protected from development.

8.18 Peel Hall Farm is not previously developed land and, as in the case of the above new town sites, there is no reason to bring the development of these sites forward under present circumstances.

Chapelford

8.19 Chapelford remains the single most prolific contributor to housing supply in the borough and the entire site is covered by the existing outline planning permission. There may be scope to review progress and consider how the remaining capacity of the site can best contribute to the borough's housing need. Land was set aside for other land uses including a school, health centre, heritage centre, railway station and associated parking, and village centre. The Core Strategy will need to consider whether these sites are still needed and whether the original proposals are deliverable.

The "Suburban" Areas of the Town

8.20 The present focus on the regeneration of the older parts of the town has meant careful management of development and redevelopment for housing in the suburban areas of the town, as it has for the villages.

8.21 An exception to this was the approval of proposals for Dawson House in Great Sankey, and proposals are emerging for the redevelopment of the former police training centre in Bruche. In both cases it is the value of the contribution these schemes will make to the supply of affordable homes that support the case for an exception to be made.

8.22 The careful management of housing development in these areas is reserving their capacity for growth for a future date when development needs can no longer be accommodated through regeneration. The Core Strategy will need to address the future role of suburban areas in this context, and take account of local services and infrastructure capacity, including the transport system.

9 Assembling the Strategic Sites

9.1 The development of strategy options is a matter of assembling the strategic sites and their respective policy approaches in different ways. These can be characterised as:

- **Prioritising development on inner Warrington brownfield sites**
- **Prioritising development on inner Warrington brownfield sites with selective release of other sites**
- **Promoting development on all suitable and available development sites**

9.2 In very broad terms these options are illustrated below. The shaded boxes indicate:

Areas where development would be promoted

Areas where development would be reviewed and promoted

Areas where development would be restrained

9.3 At this stage no reference is made to specific sites or specific land use proposals. The object of the exercise is to identify the range of broad approaches that can then be taken forward for further investigation and evaluation at the next stage of the search for the preferred strategy. Central to that stage will be completion of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). This will provide evidence of the capacity of the strategy options to deliver housing and economic growth in terms of both space and time. The Sustainability Appraisal of the options will bring to bear the anticipated social and environmental impacts of the options.

Strategic Option 1: Prioritising development on inner Warrington brownfield sites

Areas where development would be promoted

- The town centre
- Arpley Meadows/Bridgefoot (The Waterfront)
- The older parts of Warrington town, otherwise termed the Regeneration Area
- Chapelford

Areas where development would be reviewed and promoted

- Omega

Areas where development would be restrained

- 'Suburban' areas of the town
- Peel Hall Farm

- English Partnership sites at Appleton Cross, Grappenhall Heys, and Pewterspear
- The countryside and its constituent settlements

Strategic Option 2: Prioritising development on inner Warrington brownfield sites with selective release of other sites

Areas where development would be promoted

- The town centre
- Arpley Meadows/Bridgefoot (The Waterfront)
- The older parts of Warrington town, otherwise termed the Regeneration Area
- Chapelford

Areas where development would be reviewed and promoted

- ‘Suburban’ areas of the town
- Omega
- English Partnership sites at Appleton Cross, Grappenhall Heys, and Pewterspear

Areas where development would be restrained

- Peel Hall Farm
- The countryside and its constituent settlements

Strategic Option 3: Promoting development on all suitable and available development sites

Areas where development would be promoted

- The town centre
- Arpley Meadows/Bridgefoot (The Waterfront)
- The older parts of Warrington town, otherwise termed the Regeneration Area
- Chapelford
- ‘Suburban’ areas of the town
- English Partnership sites at Appleton Cross, Grappenhall Heys, and Pewterspear
- Peel Hall Farm

Areas where development would be reviewed and promoted

- Omega

Areas where development would be restrained

- The countryside and its constituent settlements

Question 4

Are there any other options that could be considered?

Question 5

Which option would be your preferred choice and why?

10 Assessing the Options - How do we decide which one is right for Warrington?

10.1 This will involve:

- Consulting with the community, and public and private sector stakeholders;
 - The framework for this is set out in the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).
- Considering how well the options address the key issues;
 - The key issues are set out previously.
- Measuring the options against what our vision is for Warrington in the future and associated objectives;
 - The vision and objectives are set out previously.
- Reviewing how the options support the delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy;
 - The Sustainable Community Strategy will be published in its final form in March 2009.
- Assessing their environmental, social and economic impacts through Strategic Environmental Assessment, Sustainability Appraisal and Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Regulations.
 - This will ensure that the implications of each option are considered from a social, environmental and economic perspective, by assessing options against baseline evidence and sustainability objectives. More information is set out in the remainder of this section.
- Assessing the ability of Infrastructure to cope with the options, and the capacity of the different options to deliver infrastructure improvements;
 - Infrastructure planning is now a key element of the new planning system and must be addressed in the core strategy. More information is set out below.
- Considering their impacts on Neighbourhoods
 - This will facilitate engagement with local communities through the Neighbourhood Boards.
- Assessing their conformity with national and regional policies, and impacts on neighbouring areas

Assessing Environmental, Social and Economic Impacts

Sustainability Appraisal

10.2 It is a statutory requirement that Local Development Documents should be produced with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development. In preparing a Local Development Document the Council must:

- a. carry out an appraisal of the sustainability of the proposals in each document and
- b. prepare a report of the findings of the appraisal.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

10.3 European regulations specifically require the systematic identification and evaluation of the environmental impacts of a strategic action. It requires that the "likely significant effects on the environment are assessed, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between these factors".

10.4 In the UK the requirements of the SEA Directive are incorporated into the wider Sustainability Appraisal (SA) process as a statutory requirement.

10.5 Sustainability Appraisal is therefore an integral part of the development of the preferred option for the Core Strategy.

Habitat Regulations Assessment

Assessing the Options - How do we decide which one is right for Warrington?

10.6 It will also be necessary to scope out whether an Appropriate Assessment (AA) is required under further European Habitats Regulations that protect sites that are important in a European context.

10.7 We will need to assess the impacts of strategy options in relation to the conservation objectives of European sites and to ascertain whether any would adversely affect the integrity of those sites. Where significant negative effects are identified, alternative options will need to be examined to avoid any potential damaging effects.

10.8 There are three designated European sites of International Importance (Special Areas of Conservation) within the Borough. These are:

- Rixton Clay Pits
- Risle Moss
- Holcroft Moss

Assessing the Ability of Infrastructure to cope with the options and the capacity of the options to deliver infrastructure improvements

10.9 There is a new emphasis on the links between plan-making and infrastructure provision. Serious consideration needs to be given to the issues relating to the implementation of the core strategy and, in particular, to the means by which the required levels of infrastructure will be delivered, by whom and to what timescales.

10.10 Revised Planning Policy Statement 12 (PPS12 June 2008) clearly states that: *'The core strategy should be supported by evidence of what physical, social and green infrastructure is needed to enable the amount of development proposed for the area, taking account of its type and distributions. This evidence should cover who will provide the infrastructure and when it will be provided. The core strategy should draw on and in parallel influence any strategies and investment plans of the local authority and other organisations'*.

10.11 For the purposes of the core strategy infrastructure relates to:

- Utilities infrastructure - the delivery of energy (gas and electricity) including renewable energy, water supplies, waste water treatment and disposal, surface water management, and telephony / broadband.
- Green Infrastructure - the borough's network of parks, green spaces, woodlands and river corridors and their ecology
- Social infrastructure - cultural, leisure, community, sport and other activities, including for children and young people. Facilities catering for these activities are an important component of what gives any area its identity and how good it is as a place to live. For the Core Strategy it is necessary to consider pre-school provision, primary schools, secondary schools, health facilities, indoor sport and recreation, shops and services, and community facilities.
- Transport Infrastructure and services

10.12 An infrastructure capacity assessment will be available as a separate background document. This document will set out existing provision in the area as well as being the means by which to engage infrastructure delivery stakeholders in the planning process.

Considering Impacts on Neighbourhoods

10.13 Four Neighbourhood Coordination Areas and two Neighbourhood Management Areas have been adopted by the Council.

10.14 The neighbourhoods and their constituent wards are shown in Figure 10.1 and comprise:

- **Central Warrington** – Fairfield & Howley, Orford, and Poplars & Hulme.
- **East Warrington** – Culcheth, Glazebury & Croft, Birchwood, Poulton North, Poulton South, and Rixton & Woolston.

Assessing the Options - How do we decide which one is right for Warrington?

- **West Warrington** – Bewsey & Whitecross, Burtonwood & Winwick, Westbrook, Whittle Hall, Great Sankey North, Great Sankey South, and Penketh & Cuerdley.
- **South Warrington** – Latchford East, Latchford West, Hatton, Stretton and Walton, Stockton Heath, Appleton, Grappenhall & Thelwall, and Lymm.

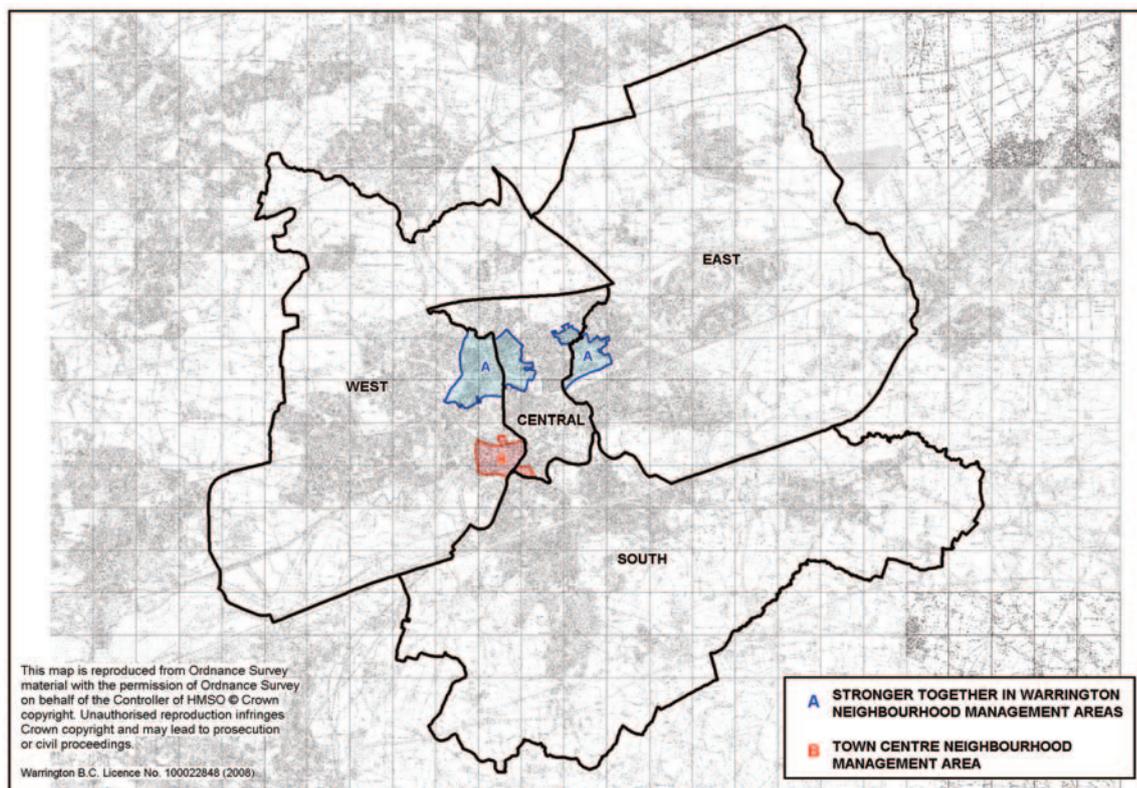


Figure 10.1

10.15 The Neighbourhood Coordination Areas shown above are generally reflected in the Core Strategy background papers for different areas which are being published separately to this document. The only major differences being that for the background papers the East area has been split into East Warrington and Culcheth and Croft and the South Warrington area is defined by the Manchester Ship Canal. The strategy options will have different implications for each neighbourhood and these will be assessed in the context of the overall strategy for the borough. The background papers set out that each neighbourhood contains a mix of strategic sites and areas. There will be some common issues, and others that relate more directly to one neighbourhood or another. It is at this level that discussion may focus more on specific local issues and sites to provide a 'bottom up' view of the strategy options. This will complement the 'top down' emphasis of national and regional policies.

Conformity with National and Regional Policies

10.16 It will be necessary for the preferred option to demonstrate conformity with national planning policies and with the Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West.

10.17 Planning Policy Guidance notes (PPGs) and their replacements Planning Policy Statements (PPSs) are prepared by the government after public consultation to explain statutory provisions and provide guidance to local authorities and others on planning policy and the operation of the planning system.

Assessing the Options - How do we decide which one is right for Warrington?

10.18 They also explain the relationship between planning policies and other policies that have an important bearing on issues of development and land use. Local authorities must take their contents into account in preparing their development plans. The guidance may also be relevant to decisions on individual planning applications.

10.19 The key principles of national and regional policies are set out in more detail in the Topic Papers. The range of national policies that are particularly relevant to the Core Strategy are as follows:

PPS1: Sustainable Development and Climate Change	PPS11: Regional Spatial Strategies
PPG2: Green Belts	PPS12: Local Spatial Planning
PPS3: Housing	PPG13: Transport
PPG4: Industrial / Commercial Development	PPG15: Historic Environment
PPS6: Town Centres	PPG17: Sport and Recreation
PPS7: Rural Areas	PPS22: Renewable Energy
PPS9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation	PPS23: Pollution Control
PPS10: Waste Management	PPS25: Flood Risk

Question 6

Have we set out an appropriate basis for assessing development options?

11 Development Management Policies

11.1 Alongside key strategic policies to deliver the preferred option in terms of the general scale, location and direction of development, the core strategy will include a set of policies that will further its delivery at a more detailed level through the management of development, by providing the basis on which the council as local planning authority will determine planning applications. These will set criteria, standards and requirements for specific development proposals and will underpin the approach to development management to support the core strategy. Most if not all of these will be common ground regardless of which option is chosen.

11.2 Government guidance states that it is not necessary to re-state regional and national policy at the local level. Local policies are nevertheless appropriate where necessary to provide the local dimension to regional and national policies. An example of this would be the policy framework for the historic environment set in Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (PPG15). The local dimension would involve identifying the listed buildings and conservation areas in the borough to which national policies apply.

11.3 This is a change from the old planning system that was characterised by a large number of detailed development control policies as found in the Unitary Development Plan. The council will, therefore, use not only the policies contained within the core strategy to determine applications for development but also, where appropriate, regional and national guidance.

11.4 It is proposed that development management policies in the Warrington Core Strategy will focus on the delivery of:

- sustainable development, with a particular emphasis on climate change considerations; and
- high quality design,

and will set the context for the negotiation of planning obligations.

Sustainable development

11.5 The council will

- expect applicants to use landform, layout, building orientation and landscaping to minimise energy consumption;
- give careful consideration to the extent to which the proposed massing of buildings, density and mix of development helps to minimise energy consumption;
- expect substantial new development to gain a significant proportion of its energy supply on-site and renewably and/or connect to a decentralised, renewable or low carbon, energy supply where available;
- require the provision of public and private open space as appropriate so that new development offers accessible choice of shade and shelter;
- ensure new development does not create adverse local environmental conditions for people or undermine biodiversity;
- secure sustainable drainage systems, pay attention to the potential contribution to be gained to water harvesting from impermeable surfaces and encourage layouts that accommodate waste water recycling;
- require provision for sustainable waste management;
- ensure full consideration is given to creating and securing opportunities for sustainable transport including through:
 - the preparation and submission of travel plans;
 - providing for safe walking and cycling, including where appropriate secure cycle parking and changing facilities; and
 - an appropriate approach to the provision and management of car parking; and
- manage and minimise the potential impacts of traffic growth and mitigate the impacts of road traffic on congestion, road safety, air quality, noise and health.

High Quality Design

11.6 The council will require developments that:

- are sustainable, durable and adaptable and make efficient and prudent use of resources;
- optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development, create and sustain an appropriate mix of uses (including incorporation of green and other public space as part of developments) and support local facilities and transport networks;
- respond to their local context and create or reinforce local distinctiveness;
- are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping;
- create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder or fear of crime does not undermine quality of life or community cohesion; and
- address the needs of all in society and are accessible, usable and easy to understand by them.

Question 7

Is this the correct approach to development management policies?

12 Next Steps

12.1 The processes involved in Core Strategy production are set out in broad terms in the Introduction section.

12.2 The consultation period for this document is programmed to run from the 2nd February 2009 to the 23rd March 2009. It should be stressed, however, that this is an informal consultation period and comments will be accepted after this date. A deadline has been given for consultation so that all comments received by that date can be gathered together and appropriate responses can be given as feedback. A consultation report is expected to be made available in early May 2009.

12.3 The options reported in Section 9 of this document will continue to evolve and be refined and given more detail in consultation with key stakeholders. Once the options have been sufficiently developed, they will be subject to assessment as set out in Section 10 and a further specific consultation period will be undertaken on what is considered to be the preferred option.

13 Glossary

Annual Monitoring Report (AMR): An annual report submitted to the Government by the Local Planning Authority assessing the progress with and the effectiveness of the Local Development Framework.

Appropriate Assessment: Required under The European Community Habitats Directive. An assessment must be undertaken when a project or plan is likely to have a significant effect on a European site in Great Britain (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), and is not directly connected with or necessary to the management for the site.

Baseline: A description of the past and present state of an area, and, in the absence of any plan, the future state of an area taking into account changes resulting from natural events and from other human activities.

Core Strategy: A Development Plan Document that sets out the long-term spatial vision for the local planning authority area, the spatial objectives and strategic policies to deliver that vision.

Development Plan Document (DPD): Local Development Documents that have development plan status. The DPDs that local planning authorities must prepare include the Core Strategy, site-specific allocations of land and, where needed, Area Action Plans. All DPDs must be subject to rigorous procedures of community involvement, consultation and independent examination, and adopted after receipt of the inspector's binding report. Once adopted, development control decisions must be made in accordance with them unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Local Development Document (LDD): These include Development Plan Documents (which form part of the statutory development plan) and Supplementary Planning Documents. LDDs collectively deliver the spatial planning strategy for the local planning authority's area.

Local Development Framework (LDF): This is a non-statutory term used to describe a folder of documents, which includes all the local planning authority's Local Development Documents. An LDF is comprised of:

- Development Plan Documents (which form part of the statutory development plan)
- Supplementary Planning Documents

The local development framework will also comprise of:

- the Statement of Community Involvement
- the Local Development Scheme
- the Annual Monitoring Report

Local Development Scheme (LDS): The local planning authority's timescaled programme for the preparation of Local Development Documents that must be agreed with Government and reviewed every year.

Local Strategic Partnership (LSP): An overall partnership of people that brings together organisations from the public, private, community and voluntary sector within a local authority with the objective of improving peoples quality of life. In Warrington this body is called the Warrington Partnership.

Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004: "The Act" updates elements of the 1990 Town & Country Planning Act. It introduces:

- a statutory system for regional planning
- a new system for local planning
- reforms to the development control and compulsory purchase and compensation systems
- the removal of crown immunity from planning controls.

Planning Policy Guidance (PPG): Issued by central Government. Sets out national land use policies in different areas of planning. Gradually being replaced by PPSs.

Planning Policy Statement (PPS): Issued by central Government to replace the existing Planning Policy Guidance notes, in order to provide greater clarity and to remove from national policy advice on practical implementation, which is better expressed as guidance rather than policy.

Regional Planning Guidance (RPG): Old Style Regional Plan. Most former Regional Planning Guidance is now considered RSS and forms part of the Development Plan.

Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS): Part of the Development Plan. Identifies the scale and distribution of new housing in the region, indicates areas for regeneration, expansion or sub-regional planning and specifies priorities for the environment, transport, infrastructure, economic development, agriculture, minerals and waste treatment and disposal. Prepared by Regional Planning Bodies.

Spatial Objectives: Specific goals that if met will contribute to achieving the Spatial Vision.

Spatial Vision: A description of how the area will be at the end of a plan period (often 10-15 years).

Statement of Community Involvement (SCI): sets out the standards to be achieved by the local authority in involving local communities in the preparation, alteration and continual review of Local Development Documents and development control decisions.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA): A requirement of the SEA Directive. A way of systematically identifying and evaluating the impacts that a plan is likely to have on the environment. Where a plan requires SEA and SA, the former process should be integrated into the latter.

Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA): Part of the Local Development Framework evidence base. A detailed and robust assessment of the extent and nature of the risk of flooding in an area and its implications for land use planning. Can set the criteria for the submission of planning applications in the future and for guiding subsequent development control decisions.

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA): Part of the Local Development Framework evidence base. The document looks to identify sites with potential for housing, assess their potential and assess whether they are likely to be developed in order to identify a five, ten and fifteen year supply of housing for an area.

Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA): Part of the Local Development Framework evidence base. The document estimates need and demand for affordable and market housing and assesses how this varies across the study area. The document also considers future demographic trends and resulting housing requirements.

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD): a Local Development Document that may cover a range of issues, thematic or site specific, and provides further detail of policies and proposals in a 'parent' Development Plan Document.

Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG): provided supplementary information in respect of the policies in the Unitary Development Plan prior to the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the introduction of Supplementary Planning Documents. SPGs can be saved when linked to policy under transitional arrangements.

Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS): A strategy prepared by a Local Strategic Partnership that would include local authority representatives to help deliver local community aspirations, under the Local Government Act 2000.

Sustainability Appraisal (SA): A requirement of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. A process by which the economic, social and environmental impacts of a project, strategy or plan are assessed. The aim of the process is to minimise adverse impacts and resolve as far as possible, conflicting or contradictory outcomes of the plan or strategy. Can incorporate Strategic Environmental Assessment to fulfil the requirements of the SEA Directive.

Unitary Development Plan (UDP): An old-style development plan prepared by a Metropolitan District and some Unitary Local Authorities. These plans will continue to operate for a time after the commencement of the new development plan system introduced by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, by virtue of specific transitional provisions.

Warrington Borough Council
Development Services
Planning Policy
New Town House
Buttermarket Street
Warrington
Cheshire
WA1 2NH

