

WARRINGTON

UPDATED PROPOSED SUBMISSION VERSION LOCAL PLAN

2021 - 2038

SEPTEMBER 2021



WARRINGTON
Borough Council

8.3 Warrington's Green Infrastructure Network

- 8.3.1 The Borough of Warrington contains significant areas of open countryside, which contain extensive areas of agricultural land, a varied landscape character and important areas of nature conservation value, mostly within the relatively narrow gaps of open land separating Warrington from neighbouring towns and smaller settlements within and beyond the Borough. These areas have been well protected to date primarily through an established and adopted Green Belt.
- 8.3.2 The Borough's environmental assets, include; its sites of international, national and local importance for biodiversity; high value agricultural land on degraded peat and strategic green links such as the Mersey Valley Corridor and Sankey Valley Linear Park, from which a series of wider and parallel links can be accessed. In addition, Warrington lies at the centre of a wetland nature recovery network which stretches from south Lancashire down to south Cheshire, with the international sites of Risley Moss, Holcroft Moss, Rixton Clay Pits SAC and a number of SSSI's (Holcroft Moss, Risley Moss, Rixton Clay Pits and Woolston Eyes) at the heart of it. These assets must continue to be protected and opportunities need to be taken to enhance their function and value, including improving linkages between them, through employing a green infrastructure approach.

Policy DC3 – Green Infrastructure

Strategic Green Infrastructure

1. The Council, in partnership with other agencies and stakeholders will adopt a strategic approach to the care and management of all the Borough's green infrastructure and seek to protect, enhance and extend the multifunctional network in order to maintain and develop the wider public health, active travel, flood management, climate change, ecological and economic benefits it provides.

Green Infrastructure Opportunities

2. A key focus of these efforts will be on reinforcing and maximising the environmental and socio-economic benefits from, the following strategic green links which connect the Borough to the wider sub-region:

- a. The Mersey Valley;
- b. Sankey Valley Park and St. Helens Canal;
- c. The Bridgewater Canal;
- d. The River Bollin; and
- e. The Trans Pennine Trail

3. The Council is committed to supporting wider programmes and initiatives which seek to connect the Borough's Strategic Green Infrastructure assets with residential communities, employment areas and other green infrastructure assets both within and outside of the Borough, including:

- a. Great Manchester Wetlands Nature Improvement Area;

- b. Bold Forest Park;
- c. Walton Hall Estate;
- d. The Mersey Forest;
- e. The Circular Parklands; and
- f. The River Mersey frontage where it passes through the Town Centre.

4. The Council will work with partners to strengthen and expand the network of ecological sites, corridors and stepping stone habitats to:

- a. secure a net gain in biodiversity;
- b. to expand tree cover in appropriate locations across the Borough;
- c. to improve landscape character, water and air quality;
- d. to help adapt to flood risk and mitigate the impacts of climate change;
- e. to contribute to the development of the Mersey Forest;
- f. to contribute to the wider regional nature recovery network of wetland sites by enhancing the wetlands across Warrington; and
- g. to support the retention of underused farmland for habitat creation and management.

Development Proposals affecting Green Infrastructure

5. All development proposals should, as appropriate to their nature and scale:

- a. protect existing green infrastructure and the functions it performs, especially where this helps to mitigate the causes of and addresses the impacts of climate change;
- b. increase the functionality of existing and planned green infrastructure especially where this helps to mitigate the causes of and addresses the impacts of climate change;
- c. improve the quality of existing green infrastructure, including local networks and corridors, specifically to increase its attractiveness as a sport, leisure and recreation opportunity and its value as a habitat for biodiversity;
- d. protect and improve access to and connectivity between existing and planned green infrastructure to develop a continuous right of way and greenway network and integrated ecological system/network;
- e. secure new green infrastructure in order to cater for anticipated increases in demand arising from development particularly in areas where there are existing deficiencies assessed against standards set by the Council in accordance with Policy DC5; and
- f. provide long-term management arrangements for new and enhanced green infrastructure within development sites.

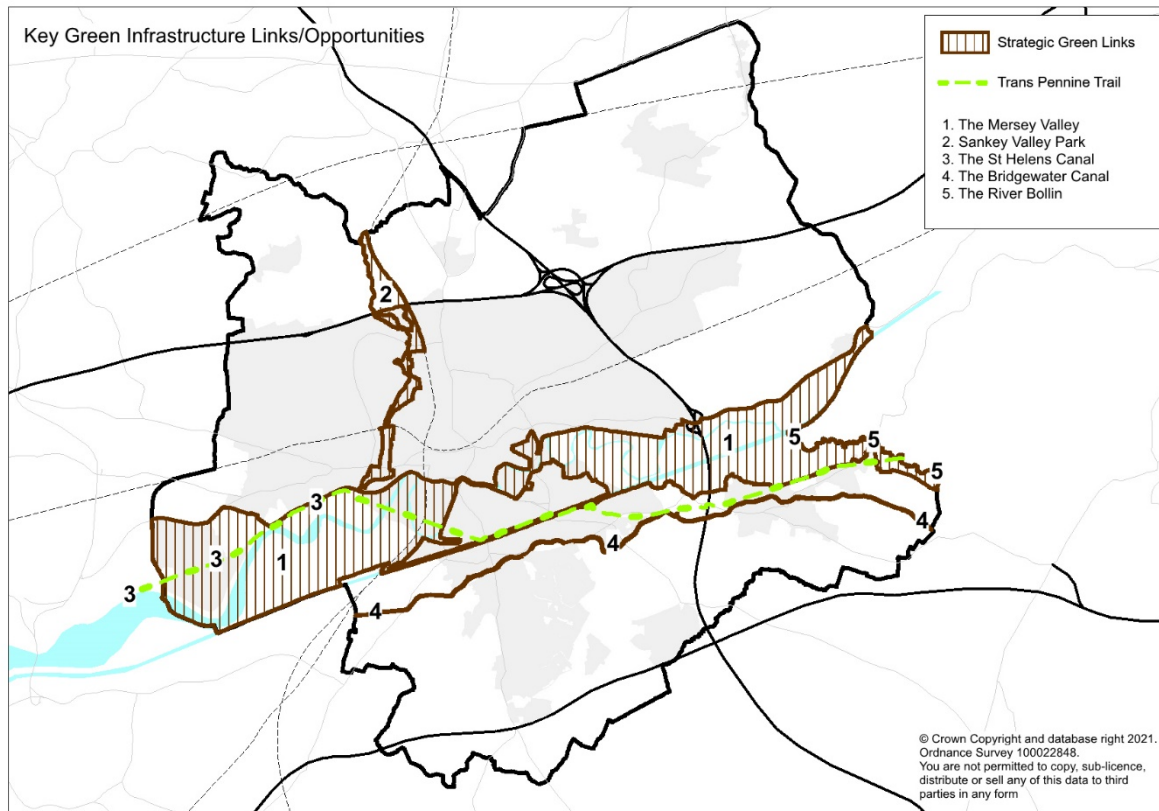
6. Where a loss of, or negative impact on green infrastructure functionality or ecological system/network is unavoidable, development proposals should demonstrate what mitigation measures are proposed and/or replacement green infrastructure will be provided. Any replacement or mitigation measure should seek to secure a net gain in biodiversity assessed against the latest version of the DEFRA Metric and be deployed as closely as possible to the affected green infrastructure asset.

Why we have taken this approach

Warrington's Green Infrastructure Network

- 8.3.3 The NPPF defines green infrastructure as a network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities.
- 8.3.4 In respect of Warrington green infrastructure is considered to constitute the Borough's collective network of green spaces and environmental features including for example parks and formal gardens; village greens; wetlands, woodlands and meadows; all watercourses, including small brooks, canals and the corridors through which they flow; playing fields, amenity space in housing estates; transport corridors and rights of way. Through recognition of the many benefits it can provide for people and for wildlife, green infrastructure is widely recognised as a critical ingredient in creating successful places where people want to live and work. The policy identifies a number of strategic green links that connect the borough with the wider sub-region and represent opportunities for reinforcing and maximising the environmental and socio-economic benefits that green infrastructure provides (Fig XX).
- 8.3.5 The Mersey Valley Corridor constitutes a wide tract of land (exceeding 2kms in places) extending across the Borough from Fiddlers Ferry Power Station in the west, to Hollins Green and the flood plain of the River Bollin in the east. Its value lies in the mix of river valley habitats, notably wetlands, in the context of the Mersey Estuary as a whole - one of the largest estuaries in Europe and supporting internationally important numbers of birds.
- 8.3.6 Sankey Valley Linear Park is an important corridor which runs north-south for over 6 kilometres through Warrington, linking the Green Belt in the north to the River Mersey in the south. It is characterised by 'new town' ecology-led landscaping adjoining Sankey Brook and the St Helens Canal and is important for flora and fauna as well as leisure, recreation and opportunities for active travel.
- 8.3.7 The Bridgewater Canal is a 65km (39 mile) canal stretching from Runcorn to Leigh. It runs through the south of the Borough. From Warrington, the route provides a connection to Runcorn in the west and through Lymm and onwards towards Altrincham in the east.
- 8.3.8 The Transpennine Trail (TPT) is a long distance path running from coast to coast across northern England. It forms part of National Cycle Route 62 and like the Bridgewater canal runs through the south of the Borough, providing a connection to Runcorn/Widnes in the west and through Lymm and onwards towards Altrincham in the east.

Figure XX – Key Green Infrastructure Links/Opportunities



8.3.9 The NPPF (paragraph 175) states that local planning authorities should set out a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure in their Local Plans, planning positively for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries and the NPPG indicates that Local Plans should identify the strategic location of existing and proposed green infrastructure networks.

8.3.10 The NPPG identifies how green infrastructure can help support a number of planning goals including:

- Building a strong, competitive economy by driving economic growth and regeneration and helping to create high quality environments which are attractive to businesses and investors.
- Achieving well-designed places by enhancing the built environment through the provision of features such as green roofs, street trees, proximity to woodland, public gardens and recreational and open spaces and in a wider landscape context reinforcing and enhancing local landscape character, contributing to a sense of place and natural beauty.
- Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes, providing opportunities for recreation, social interaction and play in new and existing neighbourhoods and enhancing local landscape character, contributing to a sense of place.
- Promoting healthy and safe communities by improving the wellbeing of neighbourhoods, helping create safe and accessible environments, providing opportunities for recreation, exercise, social interaction, experiencing and caring

for nature, community food-growing and gardening and thereby delivering mental and physical health benefits.

- Conserving and enhancing the natural environment by contribute a range of benefits, including ecological connectivity, facilitating biodiversity net gain and nature recovery networks and opportunities for communities to undertake conservation work.
- Helping to reduce air pollution, noise and the impacts of extreme heat and extreme rainfall events.
- Meeting the challenge of climate change by contributing to carbon storage, cooling and shading, opportunities for species migration to more suitable habitats and improving drainage (including the use of sustainable drainage systems), managing flooding and water resources; and improving water quality.

8.3.11 The Strategic Green Network/Links that traverse the Borough are of fundamental importance to the natural environment and character of Warrington and as such the spatial strategy seeks to reinforce this. Policy DC3 outlines a strategic approach to the care and management of the Borough's Green Infrastructure and seeks to conserve the Borough's assets as well as protecting the vital and wide ranging functions these assets perform. In order to protect the functions that green infrastructure performs proposals for development will be assessed against the; role that the site plays as part of the existing or proposed Greenway Network of recreational footpaths, bridleways and cycleways (identified on the Policies Map); its landscape and/or nature conservation value; its value as a buffer zone between other uses; its value as a visual amenity or townscape feature in contributing to the character or appearance of the surrounding area; and its importance as a community resource.

8.3.12 To maximise the social, economic and environmental benefits of green infrastructure and to conserve, restore and enhance ecology and biodiversity the Council is promoting an integrated approach. It will seek to ensure that green infrastructure is a multi-functional resource capable of delivering the quality of life and ecological benefits required by the species it serves; as well as those needed to underpin wider sustainability issues such as mitigating the causes of and adapting to the impacts of climate change. Alongside this the Council will also seek to ensure that opportunities to improve the quality of the network, to the benefit of both people and wildlife, are taken, as well as opportunities to connect areas of fragmentation so as to create a continuous right of way network and integrated ecological system throughout the Borough.

8.3.13 The Government's 25 year Environment Plan has a target to increase the coverage of woodland in England by up to 12% by 2060. The Government supports the development of the Northern Forest along the M62 Corridor, through the partnership of the Community Forests and the Woodland Trust. The Mersey Forest Plan is the local delivery Framework for the Northern Forest. The Mersey Forest Plan sets local targets for woodland cover including in Warrington Borough.

- 8.3.14 The built up areas contain a variety of types of urban green spaces. In particular the main urban area of Warrington contains a significant amount of green space as a legacy of its former New Town status. A unique feature of this network is a framework of linked open spaces that form a necklace around the Town Centre and the masterplanning areas (Warrington's "Circular Parklands").
- 8.3.15 In addition, the history and development of Warrington is intrinsically linked to the River Mersey as a major crossing point. However, the river today is a vastly underutilised feature that is hidden from those in the town centre. The Town Centre SPD promotes development along the frontage of the river and seeks to improve access to the river with new green links that can combine to form a linear park alongside the River Mersey and connect the green spaces that surround the town centre. An east to west green link that connects Victoria Park to the east of the town centre with Bank Quay Station in the west has been identified as an important connection to be delivered.
- 8.3.16 In exceptional circumstances where it is not possible to avoid some loss in the functionality of the network it is expected that replacement provision will be provided in order to satisfy national policy. Any replacement provision or mitigation measures should be in close proximity to the site so as to maintain the integrity of the network.
- 8.3.17 The NPPF indicates that Local Plans should seek to secure measurable net gains in biodiversity (Paragraph 179b). The proposed updated DEFRA Biodiversity Metric is designed to provide ecologists, developers, planners and other interested parties with a means of assessing changes in biodiversity value (losses or gains) brought about by development or changes in land management. The metric is a habitat based approach to determining a proxy biodiversity value. An updated version of the tool that was introduced in 2012 is currently out for consultation.
- 8.3.18 The Government's 25 year Environment Plan also sets the UK's ambition to develop a growing and resilient network of land, water and sea that is richer in plants and wildlife. It includes a number of commitments for nature, including publishing a new strategy for nature to replace Biodiversity 2020. The Plan identifies an objective of establishing a Nature Recovery Network. Natural England is supporting Warrington Borough Council in identifying and establishing such a network across Warrington and beyond its boundaries, through developing an ecological wetland network model. This GIS tool can be used to support decisions for land managers, planners, developers and others around appropriate management and creation opportunities for wetlands and their associated habitats to support natural capital benefits.
- 8.3.19 The network has been mapped and modelled by Natural England and shows a wetland nature recovery network of existing core sites, fragmentation zones, enhancement zones and areas of expansion to buffer the wetland network. This network has been created using data which describes the underpinning conditions which are suitable for wetlands, including geology and soil characteristics. It is able

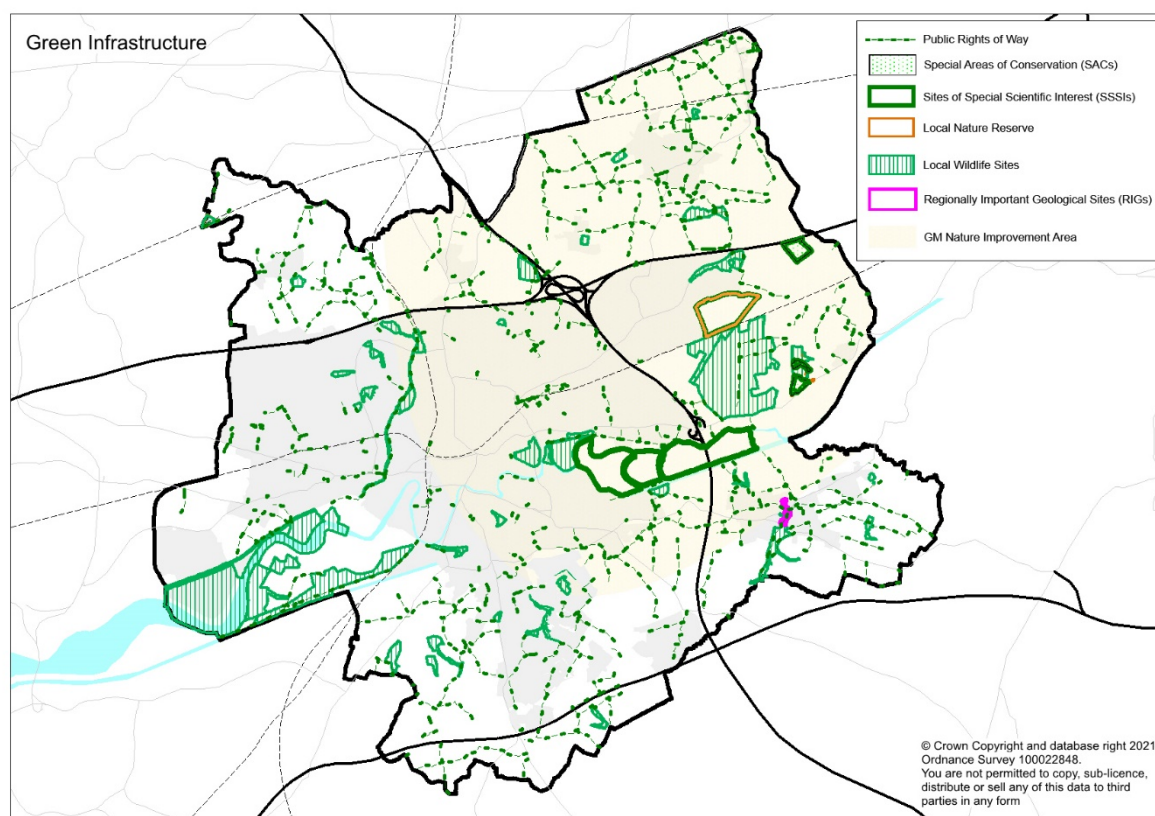
to predict where the ground is suitable for wetlands and as such allows decisions around where and what type of wetland, both natural and more artificial structures such as Sustainable Drainage Systems, could and should be located across the Borough. The Council will continue to work with Natural England to identify a full ecological network and give consideration for the need for the preparation of an SPD that will map out the ecological network and set out the Council's considerations and expectations when such sites are proposed for development or impacted by proposed development nearby.

8.4 Biodiversity and Geodiversity in Warrington

- 8.4.1 In addition, to the strategic green links the Borough's green infrastructure network incorporates a range of designated sites of nature conservation value. These include: Public Rights of Way (PROW); Local Nature Reserves; Local Wildlife Sites; Special Areas of Conservation (SACs); Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs); Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGs); and the Greater Manchester Wetlands Nature Improvement Area (NIA) (see Fig 13).
- 8.4.2 Warrington Borough contains numerous old marl ponds and several former mineral extraction sites, together with significant areas of open countryside that provide important wildlife habitats and are of high nature conservation value.
- 8.4.3 There are three designated European sites of international importance for nature conservation in the east of the Borough. The sites at Risley Moss and Holcroft Moss are two of three sites which make up the Manchester Mosses Special Area of Conservation (SAC) designated for their value as degraded raised peat bogs still capable of natural regeneration. The nearby Rixton Clay Pits comprises part of an, extensive disused brickworks excavated for glacial boulder clay which have filled with water since workings ceased in the 1960s. The site is also a SAC designated for its value as habitat for Great crested newts. The site also supports species-rich grassland, scrub and mature secondary woodland. All three of these sites together with Woolston Eyes are also nationally protected as UK Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), the only such site in the Borough.
- 8.4.4 Warrington has four Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) and 55 Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs). LNRs are a statutory designation made under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. Two of these, Risley Moss and Rixton Claypits, are also sites of international importance for nature conservation (SACs). LNRs are for both people and wildlife offering convenient access to nature and providing special opportunities to study or learn about nature or simply to enjoy it. LWSs are the most important non-statutory wildlife sites in Warrington and cover a wide variety of habitats such as ancient woodland, grassland, and wetlands. The quality and interconnectivity of these sites is vital to sustain wildlife in the context of pressures arising from urbanisation, agricultural intensification and climate change.

- 8.4.5 Warrington also has two Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGs) (formerly Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation - SINCs) identified for their indigenous woodland species and geology outside statutorily protected sites such as SSSIs. They are important as an educational, historical and recreational resource.
- 8.4.6 The Great Manchester Wetlands NIA was adopted by the Greater Manchester and Cheshire Local Nature Partnerships in May 2013 and covers around 40,000 hectares extending across parts of Salford, Trafford, Wigan and Warrington. The area of the NIA within Warrington is shown on the Policies Map. The vision is for the NIA to become an exemplar of biodiversity restoration, enhancement and the delivery of landscape-scale ecological wetland network for wildlife and people.
- 8.4.7 The NIA designation does not prevent new development, and some of the allocations in this Local Plan are within the NIA. However, a location within the NIA makes it essential that a high level of appropriate green infrastructure is incorporated within any development site in order to increase the area of priority habitats, improve connectivity between habitats and species populations and enable the movement of key species within the NIA and beyond. Also the NIA includes extensive areas of peat deposits in the east of the borough (see Fig 16), which are valuable elements of natural capital for the purposes of carbon storage in the form of restorable peat. Opportunities should be taken to restore the degraded bogs, wherever possible.

Figure 13 – Warrington’s Designated Green Infrastructure Assets



- 8.4.8 A number of species of plants, birds and animals are specifically protected by European or national legislation due to their significance or vulnerability. There are a number of protected animals that are found in the Borough. These include bats, water voles, owls, otters and Great Crested Newts.

Policy DC4 - Ecological Network

1. The Council will work with partners to conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity and secure a measurable net gain for biodiversity and enhance public access to nature across the Plan area. These efforts will be guided by the principles set out in the National Planning Policy Framework and those which underpin the strategic approach to the care and management of the Borough's Green Infrastructure in its widest sense contained in Policy DC3.

2. Sites and areas that make up the Borough's ecological network and are recognised for their nature and geological value are shown on the Policies Map and include:

- a. European Sites of International Importance
- b. Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- c. Regionally Important Geological Sites
- d. Local Nature Reserves
- e. Local Wildlife Sites
- f. Wildlife Corridors/Natural Improvement Areas

The specific sites covered by the above designations at the time of publication are detailed in Appendix 4.

Development affecting Sites of International Importance

3. Proposals for development which may affect European Sites of International Importance will be subject to the most rigorous examination in accordance with the Habitats Directive. Development or land use change not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site and which is likely to have significant effects on the site (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects) and which would affect the integrity of the site, will not be permitted unless the Council is satisfied that;

- a. there is no alternative solution; and
- b. there are imperative reasons of over-riding public interest for the development or land use change and where suitable mitigation or compensatory provision has been made. Any mitigation or compensatory provision must be assessed in a project-related Habitats Regulations Assessment and be fully functional before any likely adverse effect arises.

Development affecting Sites of National Importance

4. Proposals for development in or likely to affect Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) will be subject to special scrutiny. Where such development may have an adverse effect, directly or indirectly, on the SSSI it will not be permitted unless the reasons for the

development clearly outweigh the nature conservation value of the site itself and the national policy to safeguard the national network of such sites and the loss can be mitigated through off-site habitat creation to achieve a measurable net gain in biodiversity/geodiversity assessed against the latest version of the DEFRA metric.

Development affecting Sites of Regional and Local Importance

5. Proposals for development likely to have an adverse effect on regionally and locally designated sites will not be permitted unless it can be clearly demonstrated that there are reasons for the development which outweigh the need to safeguard the substantive nature conservation value of the site or feature and the loss can be mitigated through off-site habitat creation to achieve a measurable net gain in biodiversity/geodiversity assessed against the latest version of the DEFRA metric.

Development affecting Protected and/or Priority Species and Priority Habitats

6. Proposals for development which may adversely affect the integrity or continuity of UK priority habitats, irreplaceable habitats, or other habitats of local importance, or adversely affect EU Protected Species, UK Priority Species or other species of local importance, or which are the subject of Local Biodiversity Action Plans will only be permitted if it can be shown that the reasons for the development clearly outweigh the need to retain the habitats or species affected and that mitigating measures can be provided which would reinstate the habitats or provide equally viable alternative refuge sites for the species affected.

7. All development proposals affecting protected sites, wildlife corridors, priority habitats, irreplaceable habitats, EU Protected Species or priority species (as identified in Local Biodiversity Action Plans) should be accompanied by information proportionate to their nature conservation value including;

- a. a site survey carried out by suitably qualified or experienced person to establish the presence, extent and density of these species and identify features of nature and geological conservation importance; an assessment of the likely impacts of the development proposals for the protection and management of features identified for retention;
- b. an assessment of whether the reasons for the development clearly outweigh the nature conservation value of the site, area or species; and
- c. proposals for compensating for features damaged or destroyed during the development process, including mitigation through habitat creation to achieve a measurable net gain in biodiversity/geodiversity assessed against the DEFRA metric.
- d. proposals for compensating for any negative impacts on species during the development process, including mitigation through off-site habitat creation.

8. Where development is permitted, the Council will consider the use of conditions or planning obligations to ensure the protection and enhancement of the site's nature conservation interest and/or to provide appropriate compensatory measures.

Why we have taken this approach

Biodiversity and Geodiversity

- 8.4.9 Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 places a duty on all public authorities in England and Wales to have regard, in the exercise of their functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity. Local planning authorities should take a pragmatic approach, with the aim of fulfilling statutory obligations in a way that minimises delays and burdens, whilst protecting the environment.
- 8.4.10 Conserving biodiversity is an important element of sustainable development. Government guidance in the NPPF (2021) and NPPG indicates that in delivering sustainable development local authorities should enhance as well as protect biodiversity and natural habitats.
- 8.4.11 Paragraph 8 of the NPPF states that achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):
- a) an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;
 - b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and
 - c) an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.
- 8.4.12 In addition, paragraph 174 of the NPPF states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:
- protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, *sites of biodiversity and geological value and soils* (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
 - recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;

- maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;
- *minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;*
- preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and
- remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.

8.4.13 Whilst sites of importance for their nature and geological value fall within the wider remit of 'Green Infrastructure', NPPF (paragraph 175) requires the specific identification of such sites and a distinct policy approach to ensure their protection as well as taking a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure. Policy DC4 responds to this by setting out the formal designations active within the Borough and ranking these in order of their importance, in order to guide the degree of protection afforded to these designated sites.

8.4.14 These designated sites are not only important in their own right but collectively they form part of an ecological network. Ecological networks are habitat patches suitable for particular types of species connected by movement corridors through the intervening habitat matrix which are important for maintaining biodiversity. Some of these sites experience pressure from leisure uses, agricultural practices and development. We must manage the Borough's ecological resource to prevent damage and habitat fragmentation and give appropriate support for wider duties, such as the Water Framework Directive and Habitat Regulations.

8.4.15 The NPPG confirms that the relevant evidence in identifying and mapping local ecological networks can include:

- the broad geological, geomorphological and bio-geographical character of the area, creating its main landscapes types;
- key natural systems and processes within the area, including fluvial and coastal;
- the location and extent of internationally, nationally and locally designated sites;
- the distribution of protected and priority habitats and species;
- areas of irreplaceable natural habitat;
- habitats where specific land management practices are required for their conservation;
- main landscape features which, due to their linear or continuous nature, support migration, dispersal and gene flow, including any potential for new habitat corridors to link any isolated sites that hold nature conservation value, and therefore improve species distribution;

- areas identified by national or local partnerships with potential for habitat enhancement or restoration, including those necessary to help biodiversity adapt to climate change or which could assist with the habitat shifts and species migrations arising from climate change;
- audits of green infrastructure, such as open space within urban areas;
- information on the biodiversity and geodiversity value of previously developed land and the opportunities for incorporating this in developments; and
- areas of geological value which would benefit from enhancement and management.

8.4.16 These networks also form important Green Infrastructure links which Policy DC3 seeks to protect, enhance and extend. Collectively, they form a network of corridors and stepping stones, allowing the survival and dispersal of species of biodiversity priority.

8.5 Open Space, Sport and Recreation Provision

8.5.1 Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation contributes to the health, well-being and cohesion of our communities as well as providing opportunities for active travel. As the Borough's population increases, the pressure on current provision will mount and there will be a need to provide significant areas of new open space and long term management arrangements.

8.5.2 The Local Plan will help deliver aims and objectives of other Council strategies, such as the Corporate Strategy and the Active Warrington Strategy, which seek to improve the health and wellbeing of Warrington's population by ensuring good access to sport and recreation opportunities.

Policy DC5 - Open Space, Sport and Recreation Provision

Open Space Strategy

1. The Council will work with partners to ensure that a comprehensive range of sport and recreation facilities will be provided across Warrington to meet the needs of the existing and proposed population, including:

- a. Equipped play areas
- b. Informal play areas
- c. Parks & Gardens
- d. Natural/Semi-natural greenspaces
- e. Allotments
- f. Sports pitches and facilities

2. The Council will encourage partnership working to ensure that sufficient quantity and quality of, and convenient access to open space, sport and recreation provision is secured through the following measures:

9.8 Environmental and Amenity Protection in Warrington

- 9.8.1 Excessive levels of air, land, noise, vibration, light and water pollution have the potential to have an adverse impact on environmental quality, health and wellbeing. It is therefore essential to ensure that, wherever possible, all forms of pollution are considered, managed and mitigated against as part of the development process.
- 9.8.2 The Council, through its various strategies and action plans, is committed to delivering environmental and amenity improvements across the Borough. The Local Plan plays a key role in implementing these improvements, ensuring that the environment and both existing and future residents/occupiers are not, as far as possible, affected by major existing or potential sources of pollution.

Policy ENV8 - Environmental and Amenity Protection

General Principles

1. The Council requires that all development is located and designed so as not to result in a harmful or cumulative impact on the natural and built environment, and/or general levels of amenity.
2. Development proposals, as appropriate to their nature and scale, should demonstrate that environmental risks have been evaluated and appropriate measures have been taken to minimise the risks of adverse impacts to air, land and water quality, whilst assessing vibration, light and noise pollution both during their construction and in their operation.

Air Quality

3. The Council will seek to ensure that proposals for new development will not have an unacceptable negative impact on air quality and will not further exacerbate air quality in the Council's designated Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs); or will contribute to air pollution in areas which may result in further areas being designated.
4. The main allocations (Policies MD1 to MD6) and the smaller settlement allocations, which line the M62 corridor (Policies OS1, OS2 and OS6) and all other new development that exceeds the thresholds for requiring a Transport Assessment, as specified in the Council's Transport SPD, will be required to consider air quality impacts on the Manchester Mosses Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Any proposals that would result in increased traffic flows on the M62 past the Manchester Mosses SAC of more than 100 vehicles per day or 20 Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) per day must devise a scheme-specific range of measures to reduce reliance on cars, reduce trip generation and promote ultra-low emission vehicles.
5. Development proposals for sensitive end uses (including but not limited to residential, schools, nurseries, hospitals) are not desirable where they are located in areas of poor air quality including AQMAs, unless a suitable assessment, review and identification of mitigation to lessen the effects on future site users is provided. An air quality assessment will be required where a development may place new sensitive receptors in areas of poor

air quality; and/or that may lead to a deterioration in local air quality resulting in unacceptable effects on human health and/or the environment.

Land Quality

6. The Council will ensure that any development proposals on or adjacent to potentially contaminated land; unstable ground or that have a sensitive end use, are suitable for their intended use. The effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, the natural environment or general amenity, and the potential sensitivity of the area or proposed development to adverse effects from pollution, should be taken into account.

7. Development proposals on land that is (or suspected to be) affected by contamination; unstable ground or has a sensitive end use must include an assessment of the extent of the issues and any possible risks. Development will only be permitted where the land is, or can be made suitable for the proposed use.

8. Development proposals will need to demonstrate that any loss of the Borough's best and most versatile agricultural land will be minimised.

Water Quality

9. Development proposals will not be permitted where it would have an adverse effect on the quality or availability of groundwater resources, watercourses or water bodies.

10. Any proposals for new development within Groundwater Source Protection Zones must accord with central government guidance set out in its Groundwater Protection guides, or any subsequent iteration of the guidance. New development within Groundwater Source Protection Zones will be required to:

- a. be planned so as to mitigate the risk of pollution to the public water supply and the water environment;
- b. undertake a risk assessment and mitigation strategy with respect to groundwater protection to manage the risk of pollution to public water supply and the water environment; and
- c. produce a Construction Management Plan to identify the potential impacts from all construction activities on both groundwater, public water supply and surface water and identify appropriate mitigation measures necessary to protect and prevent pollution of these waters.

Noise Pollution

11. The Council encourages consideration for noise and acoustic mitigation during early stages of design, having regard for layout, siting and internal features.

12. Developments which are noise sensitive end uses near to busy roads or noisy existing businesses will need to demonstrate with any application that appropriate mitigation can be employed and implemented to prevent adverse impacts on health and quality of life for future site users. Such developments need to consider and implement the 'agent of change' principle in accordance within the NPPF.

13. New developments should not place unreasonable restrictions on existing businesses or business activities through the restriction of activities, prohibition of works or otherwise.

14. Development proposals generating noise which is likely to create significantly adverse impacts on health and quality of life and which cannot be mitigated and/or controlled through the use of conditions or through pre-existing effective legislative regimes, will not be permitted.

General Amenity Protection

15. Where development is considered to be appropriate but may still have impacts on the following environmental considerations, in addition to those detailed above, the Council will consider the use of conditions or planning obligations to ensure any appropriate mitigation or compensatory measures are secured:

- a. Levels of odours, fumes, dust, smoke, insects, litter accumulation, and refuse collection/storage;
- b. Levels of light pollution and impacts on the night sky;
- c. The need to respect living conditions of existing neighbouring residential occupiers and future occupiers of new housing schemes in relation to overlooking/loss of privacy, outlook, sunlight, daylight, overshadowing, noise, vibration and disturbance;
- d. The need to protect existing occupiers and operators in the surrounding area from new development and its potential impacts;
- e. The effect and timing of traffic movement to, from and within the site and car parking including impacts on highway safety;
- f. The ability and the effect of using permitted development rights to change use within the same Use Class (as set out in the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development Order) without the need to obtain planning consent.

16. Detailed assessments may be required to address any of the above criteria and will need to be submitted to the Council for approval. Where necessary information from assessments is absent to enable consideration of a specific matter, conditions may be recommended or the application refused based on lack of supporting information.

Why we have taken this approach

9.8.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) emphasises the importance of protecting the environment and human health through the planning system and by minimising pollution and other adverse effects on the local and natural environment.

9.8.4 The NPPF (2021) states that in preparing plans to meet development needs, the aim should be to minimise pollution and other adverse effects on the local and natural environment. Paragraph 174 states that planning policies should seek to enhance the natural and local environment by:

- Preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability; and
- Remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.

- 9.8.5 The Council is committed to reducing the exposure of people in Warrington to poor air quality in order to improve the health and wellbeing of all residents. Whilst the majority of Warrington has good air quality, there are areas close to the major roads and the Town Centre that have raised pollution levels and are of concern. We continue to review pollution levels and will designate AQMAs where there is a risk that national limits may be exceeded. The latest air quality data and the information on AQMAs are contained within the Council's Annual Status Reports (ASRs). Development should consider and support, the measures and objectives set out in the Council's Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP). Details of Warrington's AQMAs, ASRs and AQAP can be found on the Council's website www.warrington.gov.uk/airquality. The Council's approach and advice for developers in dealing with air quality requirements is set out within the Council's Environmental Protection SPD.
- 9.8.6 The Manchester Mosses Special Area of Conservation (SAC) has been identified as being at risk of harm from increased air pollution caused by traffic. For this reason, all proposals for development that would cause an increase in traffic levels that would exceed one or both of the thresholds in clause 4 of Policy ENV8 must be accompanied by sufficient evidence to enable the effects upon the SAC to be assessed. Any significant effects would need to be addressed in line with Policy DC4.
- 9.8.7 Warrington has a rich industrial heritage which has provided the foundations for its economic development. The legacy of past manufacturing, engineering and industrial processes has resulted in the potential for residual contamination of sites across the Borough. Certain types of contamination are known to be hazardous to human health, property and the wider environment. Typical causes of land contamination include previous industrial or commercial usage, mining, and the landfilling of wastes. Land may also become contaminated due to its close proximity to contaminated areas. Contaminating substances include metals, organic substances, ground gases and high/low pH. The Council's approach and advice for developers in dealing with contaminated land and remedial requirements are set out within the Council's Environmental Protection SPD.
- 9.8.8 Improvements in water quality and control of water pollution are the responsibility of the Environment Agency (EA) and United Utilities (UU). The Council is responsible for managing development likely to have a detrimental effect on the Borough's watercourses and other water features, and it can support measures to raise water quality standards. The Council will work closely with the EA and UU where necessary to ensure the protection of these water resources.
- 9.8.9 Groundwater is a vital resource, supplying around one third of mains drinking water in England. A large part of the borough lies within Groundwater Source Protection

Zones. Therefore, it is important that an appropriate risk assessment and mitigation strategy in respect of groundwater protection is undertaken, along with careful site master planning and the management of construction activities.

- 9.8.10 The risk assessment should be based on the source-pathway-receptor methodology and should identify all possible contaminant sources and pathways for the life of the development and provide details of measures required to mitigate any risks to groundwater and public water supply during all phases of the development. Within Groundwater Source Protection Zone 1 the mitigation measures should include the highest specification design for the new foul and surface water sewerage systems (pipework, trenches, manholes, pumping stations and attenuation features) to ensure that leakage from sewerage systems is avoided. Any development should be carefully planned in terms of site design and layout to mitigate the risk of pollution to public water supply and the water environment. For example, open space should be designed so it is closest to any boreholes so as to minimise the potential impact on groundwater. In addition, an appropriate management regime will be required for open space features in the groundwater protection zone. Construction Management Plans will be required to identify the potential impacts from all construction activities on both groundwater, public water supply and surface water and identify appropriate mitigation measures necessary to protect and prevent pollution of these waters.
- 9.8.11 National guidance sets out what levels of noise are considered acceptable within the Noise Policy Statement for England (NPSE). Further information, including reference to relevant British Standards, can be found in the Council's Environmental Protection SPD. Noise and acoustic mitigation should always be designed into developments from the outset considering layout, siting and internal design. Sensitive development near to significant noise sources or in noise mapped areas or important areas (noise) will often require acoustic mitigation to be implemented fully prior to use, where this is acknowledged from the outset of the design stage the implementation is often easier and less costly.
- 9.8.12 Additional guidance to support the implementation of this policy is provided in the Design and Construction SPD. Specific guidance on noise, air, odour and general amenity and how these matters should be considered in the design of new properties and conversions of existing property in the town centre is set out in the Warrington Town Centre SPD as the needs of new residents and businesses will need to be assessed alongside those of existing users and activities.

Key Evidence

- National Planning Policy Framework (2021)
- Planning Policy Guidance (PPG)
- Noise Policy Statement for England (NPSE)
- Habitat Regulation Assessment: Proposed Submission Version Local Plan (2021)
- SA Report: Proposed Submission Version Local Plan (2021)

Other Planning Documents

- WBC Design and Construction SPD
- Warrington Town Centre SPD
- Environmental Protection SPD

Council Wide Strategies

- Air Quality Annual Status Report
- Air Quality Action Plan
- Draft Local Transport Plan (LTP4)
- Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy

Delivery Partners

- Private Sector Developers
- United Utilities
- Environment Agency
- HSE

10.6 South East Warrington Employment Area

- 10.6.1 The South East Warrington Employment Area will be a major new employment location of 137 hectares strategically located at the junction of the M6 and M56, adjacent to the existing Appleton Thorn/Barleycastle Industrial Estates.
- 10.6.2 The Employment Area will make a significant contribution to meeting Warrington's future employment land needs at both a local and strategic level. It will comprise large scale distribution, logistics, industrial uses and ancillary offices, benefiting from its accessibility to the motorway network.
- 10.6.3 Transport mitigation measures will be identified to offset the impact of traffic generated by the employment development on Junction 20 of the M6. This will be in agreement with Highways England, with funding streams and trigger points identified for the delivery of the required works to enable development to come forward in the early years of the Plan period.
- 10.6.4 The Employment Area will provide new green infrastructure, ensure the permanence of revised Green Belt boundaries and will preserve and enhance the setting of heritage assets within and close to the site.
- 10.6.5 To ensure the coordinated approach to the delivery of the allocation, the principal landowners will be required to prepare a Development Framework to address the site wide requirements of the policy, relating to access, transport improvements, green infrastructure and utilities. The Development Framework will need to be agreed with the Council and key stakeholders, including Highways England, prior to development coming forward. Once agreed, the development framework will enable individual development proposals to come forward within the allocation in a coordinated manner.
- 10.6.6 The full extent of the Employment Area will be built out and completed by the end of the Plan period in 2038.

Policy MD6 – The South East Warrington Employment Area

MD6.1 Key Land Use and Infrastructure Requirements

- 1. The South East Warrington Employment Area, situated at the junction of the M6 and M56 will be removed from the Green Belt and allocated for employment development to deliver around 137 hectares of employment land to meet strategic and local employment needs.
- 2. The employment land is allocated for distribution and industrial uses (B8 and B2 and related ancillary uses).

MD6.2 Delivery and phasing

3. The principal landowners and developers will be required to prepare a Development Framework for the employment allocation to address site-wide requirements of this policy and wider Local Plan requirements.
4. The new employment development will not be commenced until the funding and the programme for the delivery of the improvements at Junction 20 of the M6 have been agreed with key stakeholders, including Highways England and the Local Highway Authority.

MD6.3 Detailed Site-specific Requirements

Green Infrastructure

5. The Development Framework will include a green infrastructure strategy for the allocation site in order to ensure the provision of an accessible and appropriate level of green spaces to support the employment area.
6. The long term management and maintenance arrangements for the green infrastructure network within the allocation site must be secured.

Natural Environment

7. Development within the allocation site will be required to protect and enhance existing wildlife corridors and provide new corridors to link the site into Warrington's wider ecological network and the Great Manchester Wetlands Nature Improvement Area.
8. The layout of new development must take into account existing landscape features, including watercourses, woodlands, significant hedgerows and contribute to the wider objectives of the Mersey Forest and have regard to sites identified in Policy DC4 (Ecological Network) which should be protected in accordance with the requirements of Policy DC4 and national guidelines.
9. A scheme for measurable Biodiversity Net Gain through the use of the Defra Metric will be required. Mitigation measures for loss of habitat will only be allowed if shown to be necessary by application of the mitigation hierarchy.

Green Belt Boundary

10. The Green Belt boundary is defined by Grappenhall Road to the northern boundary, the M6 to the east and the M56 and Bradley Brook to the south.
11. A scheme of compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of land remaining in the Green Belt will be required. Financial contributions will be considered where this would help to ensure that the benefits of compensatory improvements can be maximised by providing them in the most appropriate location.

Transportation and accessibility

12. A comprehensive package of transport improvements will be required to support the employment area. Required improvements will include:

- a. Ensuring appropriate access arrangements for the site as a whole and for individual phases of development.
- b. Improved cycling and walking routes providing direct and attractive linkages to the existing and planned residential areas and amenities and making use of, where appropriate, the adjacent green infrastructure network.
- c. Providing public transport enhancements to connect the new employment area with new residential areas, Stockton Heath; and Warrington Town Centre.
- d. Improvements to increase capacity at Junction 20 of the M6.
- e. Other network improvements and travel plan measures as identified by an appropriate Transport Assessment at the planning application stage.

13. Good accessibility to public transport services should be provided by ensuring that the bus routes and bus stops within/close to the site are accessible by pedestrians and cyclists via effective footpaths and cycle routes.

14. An area-wide travel plan should be created setting out strategic goals to support the development, encompassing the entire development area. This will help inform the individual travel plans for occupants and enable larger-scale initiatives to be implemented for the benefit of the entire development.

Utilities and Environmental Protection

15. A site-wide foul and surface water strategy will be required across the allocation site as a whole, incorporating appropriate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS) and flood alleviation measures. The surface water strategy will be required to improve on greenfield run-off rates. Development proposals will be expected to incorporate infiltration SuDS and SuDS with multi-functional benefits in preference to traditional underground storage systems.

16. The surface water strategy should be integrated with the site's green infrastructure network in order to maximise ecological and potentially recreational benefits.

17. Improvements to the water supply and sewerage network will be required, ensuring that surface water drainage is not combined with foul discharge. A site wide clean water strategy will also be required.

18. New development should be designed to mitigate the impacts of climate change; be as energy efficient and water efficient as possible and seek to meet a proportion of its energy needs from renewable or low carbon energy sources in accordance with Policy ENV7.

19. Development proposals may be required to assess the impact on the groundwater environment and incorporate appropriate mitigating measures.

20. Development within the allocation site will be required to mitigate air quality impacts on the Manchester Mosses SAC in accordance with Policy ENV8 (Part 4).

Historic Environment

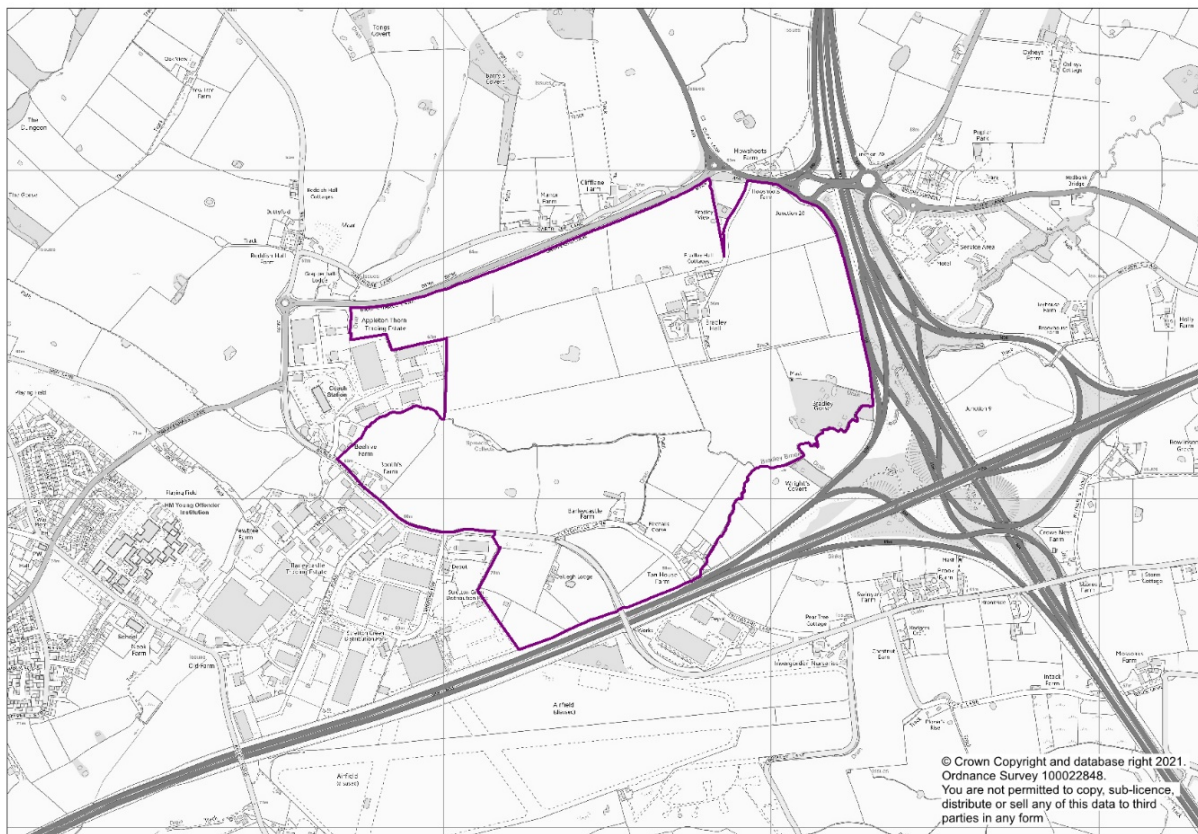
21. Development will be required to preserve and enhance the historic environment, heritage assets and their setting.

22. The Bradley Hall Moated Site Ancient Monument is of particular significance given its location within the Employment Area. Development proposals will be required to be in accordance with the South East Warrington Employment Area Heritage Impact Assessment including the proposed mitigation and enhancement measures.

Why we have taken this approach

10.6.7 The South East Warrington Employment Area Employment Area performed well in terms of the assessment against the objectives of the Local Plan, the requirements of the Government's National Planning Policy Framework and the Local Plan's Sustainability Appraisal.

Figure 22 - South East Warrington Employment Area Boundary



10.6.8 The ability to make such a significant and sustainable contribution towards meeting Warrington's current and long term employment development needs provides the Exceptional Circumstances required to justify the removal of The South East Warrington Employment Area from the Green Belt. It will consolidate a substantial existing Employment location.

10.6.9 The Allocation Policy (including the requirement for a Development Framework) will ensure that development comes forward in a comprehensive manner and clearly sets out key infrastructure requirements to support The South East Warrington Employment Area.

10.6.10 It will also provide a strong Green Belt boundary in this part of Warrington and will ensure that development preserves and enhances the built and natural environment.

Key Evidence

- National Planning Policy Framework (2021)
- Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)
- WBC Green Belt Assessment (2016)
- WBC Green Belt Site Selection-Implications of Green Belt release (2021)
- South East Warrington Employment Area Heritage Impact Assessment (2021)
- Infrastructure Delivery Plan (2021)
- Economic Development Needs Assessment (2021)
- WBC Transport Model (2021)
- Information submitted in support of 'Call for Sites' by developers promoting land
- SA Report: Proposed Submission Version Local Plan (2021)
- HRA Proposed Submission Version Local Plan (2021)

Council Wide Strategies

- Warrington Means Business
- Local Transport Plan (LTP4 2019)

Delivery Partners

- Developers and landowners
- Warrington & Co
- United Utilities
- Highways England