

Warrington Borough Council Local Plan
2021/22 – 2038/39

**Sustainability Appraisal
Adoption Statement**

December 2023

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1. Introduction

1.1 This document is the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Adoption Statement for the Warrington Local Plan 2021/22 – 2038/39. The Local Plan was adopted by Full Council as the development Plan for the Borough on 4th December 2023.

1.2 SA is a systematic, iterative process that must be carried out during the preparation of a Local Plan and incorporates the requirements for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). The final Local Plan SA Report comprises of:

- The Pre-submission SA Report and non-technical summary (August 2021)

[Sustainability Appraisal SA Report – August 2021 \(warrington.gov.uk\)](https://warrington.gov.uk)

- The SA Report Addendum (September 2021)

[Warrington Addendum](#)

- The SA Report Addendum: Appraisal of Main Modifications (March 2023)

[Warrington SA REPORT ADDENDUM March 2023](#)

1.3 In addition to the requirements of Regulation 26 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) for the final SA report to be published alongside the adopted Plan, The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SEA Regulations) also require a number of steps to be taken upon adoption of a Plan.

1.4 Specifically, Regulation 16 sets out the post-adoption procedures and requirements for SEA. The Local Planning Authority must, as soon as is reasonably practicable after the adoption of a Plan for which an SA/SEA has been carried out, make a copy of the Plan publicly available alongside a copy of the SA report and a statement explaining the following:

- How environmental and sustainability considerations have been integrated into the Plan;
- How the Environmental Report has been taken into account during the preparation of the Plan;
- How the opinions expressed by the public and consultation bodies during consultation on the plan and the Environmental Report have been taken into account;
- The reasons for choosing the Plan as adopted, in light of the other reasonable alternatives considered; and
- The measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental and sustainability effects of the implementation of the Plan.

2. Development of the Local Plan

2.1 The adopted Warrington Local Plan 2021/22 – 2038/39 sets out the policy framework and the Council’s approach to meeting Warrington’s need for new homes and jobs up to

2038/39. It also identifies the infrastructure required to ensure Warrington's growth is sustainable.

2.2 The Council started the process of preparing a new Local Plan in 2016, and has undertaken extensive consultation on the Local Plan and its evidence base, including consultation on:

- The scope and content of the Local Plan in 2016, carried out under Regulation 18 of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.
- The Preferred Development Option for the Local Plan in 2017, carried out under Regulation 18 of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.
- The Proposed Submission Version of the Local Plan in 2019, carried out under Regulation 19 of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.
- The Updated Proposed Submission Version of the Local Plan in 2021, carried out under Regulation 19 of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

2.3 Public consultation was undertaken to help make sure that stakeholders views were taken into consideration throughout the Plan preparation process. Issues raised and responses prepared have been documented during the development of the Local Plan and published on the Council's website.

3. How environmental and sustainability considerations have been integrated into the Local Plan

3.1 The Sustainability Appraisal has been undertaken in a way that meets the requirements of the EU Strategic Environment Assessment Directives and UK Government guidance on the preparation of Sustainability Appraisals. As required by the Regulations, the Sustainability Appraisal has been an iterative process and has informed decision making at every stage of the Local Plan.

3.2 The first stage at the start of the process in 2016 involved the development of a Scoping Report and developing a Sustainability Appraisal Framework (SAF). The Scoping Report included a review of the policy context in which the Local Plan would be based. This included a review of existing plans and strategies at local, national and international levels that would influence the Local Plan. The social, environmental and economic baselines of the Borough were all established to set out the existing sustainability of the Borough. This formed a baseline against which the potential effects of the Local Plan could be measured.

3.3 The SA undertaken at each stage of the plan making process considered the likely significant effects of the implementation of the Local Plan on the sustainability objectives for the Borough. For each aspect of the Local Plan, the assessment against the SA Objectives was recorded with a narrative describing any significant effects identified, mitigation of any significant negative effects, and any suggestions for enhancing potential beneficial effects.

3.4 In line with requirements of the SEA Regulations, the appraisal considered effects including short, medium and long term, permanent and temporary, positive and negative, secondary, cumulative and synergistic, wherever possible and relevant. Any gaps or difficulties were also reported. The findings and recommendations of the SA informed plan-making and were integrated into the further development of the Local Plan.

3.5 The Main Modifications to the Warrington Local Plan required to make the Plan sound and/or legally compliant were subject to SA, reported and subject to further consultation. Generally, the SA found that the changes to the Local Plan strengthened the positive effects that had been identified at previous stages of the SA process. The modifications strengthened and confirmed the overall sustainability of the Local Plan.

3.6 The SA reports were all available on the Council's website at each stage of the plan making process and all the responses to comments specifically made and issues raised in relation to the SA have been reported in the Council's Responding to Representations Report. Throughout, the appraisals have been proportionate and appropriate to the stages of plan-making. Therefore, environmental and sustainability considerations have been integrated and the SA Reports taken into account throughout the plan-making process.

4. How the Environmental/SA Report has been taken into account

4.1 As explained above, the SA process for the Local Plan was undertaken iteratively with an SA Report produced at each stage to inform the Plan's development. As part of this process, an assessment of the likely sustainability and environmental effects of the Plan was made through the SA at each stage of its development.

4.2 The SA assessed all sites, policies, and proposals in each iteration of the Local Plan and their reasonable alternatives, including the Proposed Main Modifications made to the Local Plan following its submission for examination.

4.3 Examples of changes made to the Local Plan as a result of the SA process are set out in Table 10.1 and 10.2 of the SA Report (August 2021).

4.4 As can be seen from Table 1 below, each stage of the Local Plan process was accompanied by a detailed SA Report, all made available to view on the Council's website.

5. How the opinions expressed by the public and consultation bodies during consultation on the plan have been taken into account

5.1 At each stage of the development of the Local Plan (as set out below in Table 1), an SA Report has been published alongside the Local Plan document for consultation with the public and consultation bodies specifically referred to in the SEA Regulations (Historic England, the Environment Agency and Natural England).

Table 1: Stages of the SA /SEA process and the plan making process

Local Plan Stage	SA Documents and Consultation
<p>Local Plan Scope and Contents Regulation 18 Part 1 (2016).</p> <p>Consultation undertaken between October and December 2016.</p>	<p>SA Scoping Report (October 2016).</p> <p>Consultation undertaken between October and December 2016.</p>
<p>Preferred Development Option (PDO) Regulation 18 Part 2 (2017).</p> <p>Consultation undertaken between July and September 2017.</p>	<p>Interim SA Report and Technical Appendix: Site Proformas (July 2017).</p> <p>Consultation undertaken between July and September 2017.</p>
<p>Draft Local Plan (PSVLP) Regulation 19 (2019).</p> <p>Consultation undertaken between April and June 2019.</p>	<p>Pre-submission SA Report and non-technical summary (March 2019).</p> <p>Consultation undertaken between April and June 2019.</p>
<p>Draft Local Plan (UPSVP) Regulation 19 (2021).</p> <p>Consultation undertaken between October and November 2021.</p>	<p>Pre-submission SA Report and non-technical summary (August 2021).</p> <p>SA Report Addendum (September 2021).</p> <p>Consultation undertaken between October and November 2021.</p>
<p>Local Plan Main Modifications (2023).</p> <p>Consultation undertaken between March and April 2023 and May to July 2023.</p>	<p>SA Report Addendum: Appraisal of Main Modifications (March 2023).</p> <p>Consultation undertaken between March and April 2023 and May to July 2023.</p>

5.2 The SEA Regulations require that the SEA Adoption Statement provides an account of how any opinions expressed by the public and the consultation bodies have been taken into account.

5.3 The Council's Responding to Representations Report (2022) provides an overview of the consultation that has been undertaken at each stage of the review of the Warrington Local Plan. This includes an overview of the main issues raised in representations received during each consultation stage, and how the Council has taken these into account in the plan making process. As mentioned above, this included representations made on the SA Report.

5.4 The Responding to Representations Report (2022) can be viewed on the Council's website:

[SP6 - Responding to Representations Report for Submission \(Reg 22c\) \(warrington.gov.uk\)](https://www.warrington.gov.uk/SP6-Responding-to-Representations-Report-for-Submission-Reg-22c)

6. Reasons for choosing the Local Plan as adopted, in light of the other reasonable alternatives considered.

6.1 The SEA Regulations require assessment of the likely significant effects of implementing the Plan and “reasonable alternatives,” taking into account the objectives and geographical scope of the Plan; and the reasons for selecting alternatives should be outlined in the Report.

6.2 At each stage of the development of the Local Plan all options and any reasonable alternatives to policies and the spatial strategy have been considered, assessed and documented. This includes a range of reasonable options for higher and lower levels of proposed growth for employment land and housing development, in varying locations across the Borough.

6.3 Overall, the reasons for choosing the Local Plan as adopted include delivering the Vision and Objectives of the Local Plan. The vision seeks to ensure that future growth is supported by wide ranging investment in infrastructure that will not only support new development but will address existing congestion and infrastructure constraints across Warrington as a whole.

6.4 In addition, the spatial option chosen enables the Borough to meet its housing needs in a manner which provides a balance with future employment growth, whilst maximising the use of previously developed land and urban regeneration opportunities and minimising the amount of Green Belt release. In doing so, focusing the majority of Green Belt release adjacent to the main urban area is considered to provide the best development option to ensure the sustainability of Warrington’s growth as a whole, whilst enabling incremental growth to the outlying settlements that will contribute to their long-term vitality.

6.5 In their Report to the Council, the Local Plan examination Inspectors concluded that “the Council has considered reasonable alternatives throughout the Plan preparation process and adapted its approach to take account of changing circumstances”.

7. Measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental and sustainability effects of the implementation of the Local Plan.

7.1 The SEA Regulations require that the significant environmental effects of implementing the Plan should be monitored with the purpose of identifying unforeseen adverse effects at an early stage, and so being able to undertake appropriate remedial action.

7.2 The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) on SA states that it is not necessary to monitor everything and monitoring should be focused on the significant sustainability effects, including significant effects where there is uncertainty and where monitoring would enable preventative or mitigation measures to be taken.

7.3 The Local Plan Monitoring Framework set out in Appendix 2 of the Local Plan 2021/22 – 2038/39 includes a wide range of sustainability indicators and has been informed by the

monitoring indicators as set out in the SA Report (2021), with a link provided for each indicator back to the relevant SA Objective.

7.4 The indicators set out in the Local Plan Monitoring Report and the SA Report (2021) will be incorporated into existing monitoring arrangements and in particular the Council's Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). Local planning authorities are required to produce Monitoring Reports on an annual basis, outlining the progress of the preparation of Local Plans, their implementation; and whether the targets of the Plan are being achieved.

7.5 Through this monitoring process the Council will be able to identify any unforeseen adverse effects arising from implementation of the Local Plan at an early stage. This will be highlighted in the AMR and, if relevant, recommendations will be made regarding the need for revisions to any policies in the Local Plan.