

***Sustainability
Appraisal (SA) of
the Warrington
Local Plan Core
Strategy Primary
Plan Alteration***

Scoping Report
May 2015

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1. Background

1.1 Introduction to the Scoping Report

- 1.1.1 This document is a Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report. It has been prepared as part of the SA process which will support the amendments that will be made to the Warrington Local Plan Core Strategy.
- 1.1.2 Having successfully passed the test of soundness at public examination, the Warrington Local Plan Core Strategy was Adopted by the Council in July 2014. However, a landowner applied to the High Court to reverse the decision to adopt certain aspects of the Plan relating to housing.
- 1.1.3 In February 2015, the High Court ruled in favour of the Landowner on three of nine issues, which means that the following parts of the Plan have been quashed.
- The housing target of 10,500 new homes (equating to 500 per year) between 2006 and 2027.
 - References to 1,100 new homes at the Omega Strategic Proposal.
- 1.1.4 In response to the court ruling, the Council is seeking to re-establish an appropriate housing target. This will involve gathering new evidence about housing supply and need, and testing the sustainability implications of the plan amendments (and any reasonable alternatives).

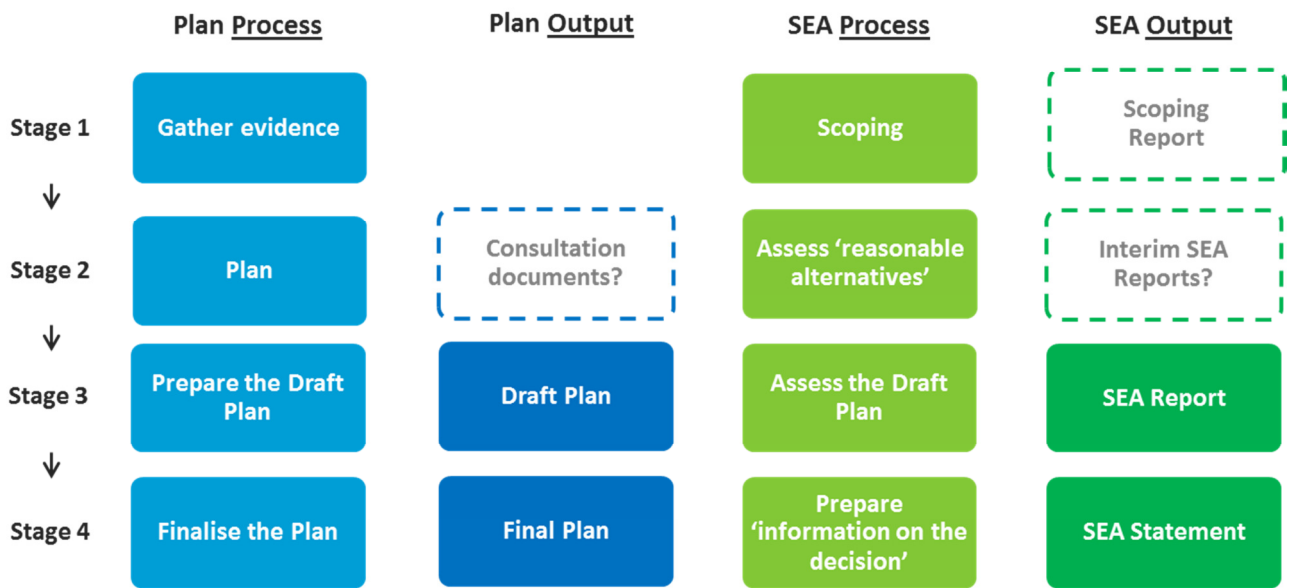
1.2 A summary of the SA process

- 1.2.1 Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is a process for helping to ensure that Local Plans achieve an appropriate balance between environmental, economic and social objectives. SA should help to identify the sustainability implications of different plan approaches and recommend ways to reduce any negative effects and to increase the positive outcomes.
- 1.2.2 SA is also a tool for communicating the likely effects of a Plan (and any reasonable alternatives), explaining the decisions taken with regards to the approach decided upon, and encouraging engagement from key stakeholders such as local communities, businesses and plan-makers.
- 1.2.3 Although SA can be applied flexibly, it is a legal requirement under the 'Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (which were prepared in order to transpose into national law the EU Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive).¹ The regulations set out prescribed processes that must be followed. In particular the Regulations require that a report is published for consultation alongside the draft plan that 'identifies, describes and evaluates' the likely significant effects of implementing 'the plan, and reasonable alternatives'.² The SA/SEA report must then be taken into account, alongside consultation responses when finalising the plan.
- 1.2.4 SA/SEA can be viewed as a four-stage process that produces a number of statutory and non-statutory outputs. As illustrated in Figure 1.1 below, 'Scoping' is a mandatory process under the SEA Directive, but the publication of a scoping report is a voluntary (but useful) output.

¹ Directive 2001/42/EC: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eia/sea-legalcontext.htm>

² Regulation 12(2) <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2004/1633/regulation/12/made>

Figure 1.1 – SEA as a four step process



2. Introduction (To Part 1)

2.1 Introduction to scoping

- 2.1.1 In essence, scoping is the process of gathering information about the area and factors likely to be affected by the Plan (alterations). This information helps to identify what the key issues are and which of these should be the focus of the SA process.
- 2.1.2 Whilst the publication of a Scoping Report is not a legal requirement, it is a good way of presenting the findings of the scoping exercise to the statutory consultation bodies (which are English Heritage, Natural England and The Environment Agency) and other interested parties. This allows for effective consultation and allows for the scope of the SA to be refined as appropriate.
- 2.1.3 The scope of the SA must be set out in an SA Report, with several key requirements emanating from the SEA Regulations. To ensure that these requirements are met, the Scoping Report has been structured so that it answers the following questions as set out in **table 2.1**.

Table 2.1: Scoping questions answered

Scoping Question	Corresponding requirement (The report must include...)
What's the Plan seeking to achieve?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan'
What's the sustainability 'context'?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The relationship of the plan with other relevant plans and programmes' The relevant environmental protection objectives, established at international or national level
What's the sustainability 'baseline' at the current time?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected
What's the baseline projection?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The likely evolution of the current state of the environment without implementation of the plan'
What are the key issues that should be a focus of SA?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any existing environmental problems / issues which are relevant to the plan including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance

2.2 Establishing the sustainability context

- 2.2.1 An important step when seeking to establish the appropriate 'scope' of an SA involves reviewing 'sustainability context' messages (e.g. issues, objectives or aspirations) set out within relevant published plans, policies, strategies and initiatives (PPSIs). Sustainability context messages are important, as they aid the identification of the 'key sustainability issues' that should be a focus of the SA. Key messages from this review are summarised under what has been considered the most relevant 'sustainability topic'.
- 2.2.2 Of particular importance is the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF³). The NPPF, read as a whole, constitutes the Government's view of what sustainable development in England means in practice for the planning system. The NPPF also reflects international and European legislation that planning has a role in implementing. The framework is therefore heavily represented in the contextual review.

³ CLG (2012) National Planning Policy Framework [online] available at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/2116950.pdf> (accessed 08/2012)

2.3 Establishing the current and projected baseline

- 2.3.1 Another important step when seeking to establish the appropriate 'scope' of an SA involves reviewing the situation now for a range of sustainability issues.
- 2.3.2 Doing so helps to enable identification of those key sustainability issues that should be a particular focus of the appraisal, and also helps to provide 'benchmarks' for the appraisal of significant effects.
- 2.3.3 Just as it is important for the scope of SA to be informed by an understanding of current baseline conditions, it is also important to ensure that thought is given to how baseline conditions might 'evolve' in the future under the no plan / business as usual scenario. Doing so helps to enable identification of those key sustainability issues that should be a particular focus of the appraisal, and also helps to provide 'benchmarks' for appraising significant effects.

3. What's the scope of the Sustainability Appraisal?

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 This section sets out the scope of the SA by drawing upon the key messages from relevant plans and programmes, the current baseline position and the projected baseline.

3.1.2 The scope of the SA was originally established in the SA Scoping Reports published in 2006 and 2009 (*prepared in support of the Adopted Local Plan Core Strategy*). These reports both established an SA Framework and methodologies for undertaking appraisals; which have remained fairly consistent throughout the Local Plan Core Strategy preparation process.

3.1.3 It is important to refresh the scope of the SA over time to reflect new policies and programmes and changes to the baseline position. This is particularly important when the Plan preparation process spans over a long period of time, or where a Plan review or alteration is proposed (*as is the case here*). As such, the scope of the SA has been updated on a number of occasions, with the findings presented in the following documents.

- Submission SA Report, September 2012 [LDF0135]
- Addendum to the SA Report, January 2014 [LDF154]

3.1.4 This latest Scoping Report draws upon these previous scoping exercises, updating the scope of the SA again when it is considered that the policy context or baseline position has changed substantially.

3.2 Structure of the Scoping Report

3.2.1 To structure the Scoping Report and avoid duplication of evidence, the scope of the appraisal has been presented within one of eight sustainability themes (listed below).

3.2.2 These themes and topics have been identified by grouping similar sustainability objectives together as established in the existing SA Framework (presented most recently in the SA Report Addendum (January, 2014). How these themes link with the proposed issues identified in Schedule 2(6) has also been identified (*in brackets*).

Sustainability themes and topics covered							
Economy and regeneration <i>(material assets)</i>	Health and Wellbeing <i>(human health, population)</i>	Accessibility <i>(Climatic factors)</i>	Housing <i>(material assets)</i>	Natural Resources <i>(soil, water, air)</i>	Built and natural heritage <i>(cultural heritage, landscape)</i>	Biodiversity and Geodiversity <i>(biodiversity, flora, fauna, landscape)</i>	Climate Change and resource use <i>(climatic factors, material assets)</i>
- Employment	- Health and wellbeing	- Accessibility	- Housing	- Water	- Built heritage	- Biodiversity	- Energy
- Education	- Community safety			- Soil and land	- Landscape character	- Geodiversity	- Climate change
- Regeneration	- Population			- Air quality			- Waste

NB: it should be noted that there are links between different 'topics' and that some information could cut across (or be relevant to) several themes.

3.3 What is the plan seeking to achieve?

3.3.1 The Adopted Local Plan Core Strategy sets out a planning framework for guiding the location and level of development in the borough up to 2027 as well as a number of principles that will shape the way that Warrington will develop between now and then.

3.3.2 The Adopted Local Plan Core Strategy contains 6 strategic objectives as follows:

W1 To secure the regeneration and renewal of the older areas of the town, strengthen existing neighbourhoods and make the most efficient use of infrastructure, ensuring development brings benefits to their host communities whilst: supporting growth in the local and sub-regional economy by providing 277 Hectares of employment land between 2006 and 2027.

W2 To maintain the permanence of the Green Belt and the character of the countryside in the borough and protect them from inappropriate development.

W3 To strengthen the role of Warrington Town Centre as an employment, retail, leisure and cultural destination as well as a transport hub for the borough and the wider region

W4 To be as accessible as possible whilst reducing the need to travel and providing opportunities to move people and goods by non-car modes.

W5 To secure high quality design which reinforces local distinctiveness and protects, enhances and embraces the borough's built and natural assets.

W6 To minimise the impact of development on the environment through the prudent use of resources and ensuring development is energy efficient, safe and resilient to climate change.

3.3.3 The previous reference to delivering a minimum of 10,500 new homes between 2006 and 2027 in Objective W1 was deleted as a consequence of the High Court Judgement. , The Primary Plan Alteration is intended to reinstate a new Local Plan housing target within W1, whilst ensuring consistency with the Plan's Strategic Objectives, including W1 itself. The focus on regeneration and renewal is not therefore anticipated to change.

3.4 What's the plan not trying to achieve?

3.4.1 It is important to emphasise that the plan will be strategic in nature. Even the allocation of sites should be considered a strategic undertaking, i.e. a process that omits consideration of some detailed issues in the knowledge that these can be addressed further down the line (through the planning application process). The strategic nature of the plan is reflected in the scope of the SA.

3.4.2 It is also important to acknowledge that only those aspects of the Plan that were quashed by the High Court ruling will be subject to amendments. Therefore, the SA will focus on these factors, unless the evidence suggests that wider changes to the Plan may be necessary.

3.5 Economy and regeneration

Contextual review

- 3.5.1 The *NPPF* outlines that the planning system should contribute to building a strong, responsive economy by ‘ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure’⁴.
- 3.5.2 Local plans should support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas and promote the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses. The improvement of transport links and the provision of adequate digital infrastructure can facilitate the ‘significant untapped potential’ of rural areas to contribute to economic growth and employment⁵.
- 3.5.3 High streets at the heart of our communities, otherwise known as the *Mary Portas Review* states that in order to revitalise town centres and high streets it is necessary for Local Authorities to re-imagine these places, ensuring that they offer something new and different that neither out-of-town shopping centres nor the internet can offer, rather than simply relying on retail provision⁶.
- 3.5.4 *Parades of shops: towards an understanding of performance and prospects DCLG (2012)* advises that lower order retail and service facilities, which provide neighbourhood level provision, can provide economic resilience, act as a ‘hub’ for local communities, and play an important role in the shopping hierarchy because of their accessibility⁷.
- 3.5.5 In 2013 the Council published ‘*Warrington Means Business*’, its programme to promote economic growth and regeneration, updating the earlier 2009 Warrington Regeneration Framework. The Warrington Means Business programme identifies major development and regeneration schemes and complements this with wider plans to upgrade local and strategic infrastructure, to enhance the quality of Warrington’s residential and natural environment and a package of softer measures to support new and existing businesses.
- 3.5.6 The Warrington Means Business programme is being delivered by Warrington & Co, Warrington’s urban regeneration partnership. Warrington & Co brings together the private and public sector to promote economic development and physical regeneration under the guidance of a private sector led board.

Employment: the current and projected baseline

- 3.5.7 As of December 2014, 77.9 % of economically active people in Warrington were in employment. This compares well with the rest of the North West (69.2%) and Great Britain as a whole (72.4%). Unemployment levels (4.6%) were also lower than in the North West (7.1%) and Great Britain (6.2%)⁸.
- 3.5.8 The types of occupation in Warrington are shown in **Figure 3.1**. The job types are divided into Standard Occupational Classification (Soc) groups. Warrington has a lower percentage of lower classification jobs, except elementary occupations, than both the North West and Britain. It has considerably more people in professional occupations than the North West and is on a similar level with Britain and the North West for managers, directors and senior officials.

⁴ DCLG (2012) National Planning Policy Framework [online] available at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/2116950.pdf>

⁵ Federation of Small Businesses (2012) The Missing Links - Revitalising our rural economy [online] available at: http://www.fsb.org.uk/policy/assets/rural_report_web_final_proof.pdf

⁶ High streets at the heart of our communities: The Government’s response to the Mary Portas Review [online] available at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/regeneration/portasreviewresponse>

⁷ DCLG (2012) Parades of shops: towards an understanding of performance and prospects [online] available at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/regeneration/pdf/2156925.pdf>

⁸ ONS annual population survey (December, 2014) via nomis

3.5.9 **Table 3.1** below shows the earnings by work place. The average weekly pay for Warrington is higher than that of the North West but lower than for Great Britain.

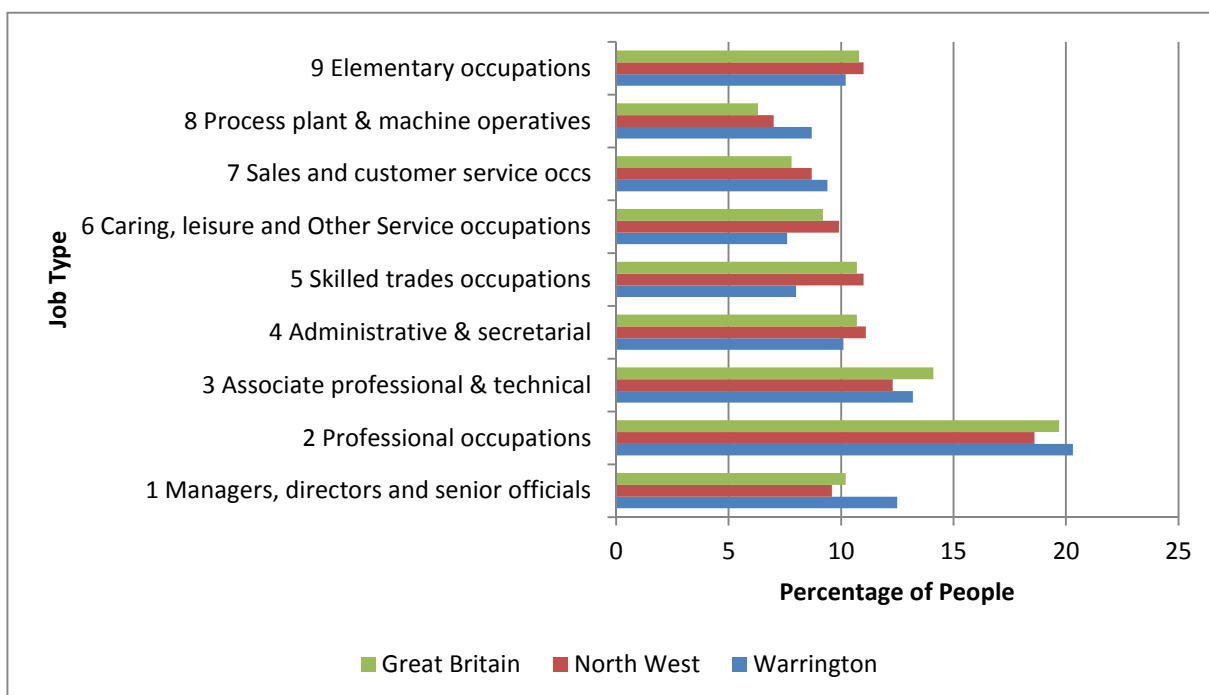
Table 3.1: Gross weekly pay (2014)

Gross weekly pay (£)	Warrington	North West	Great Britain
Full time workers	518.4	484.6	520.8
Male full time workers	583.8	521.3	561.5
Female full-time workers	470.0	436.0	463.0

Source: ONS annual survey of hours and earnings – resident analysis

3.5.10 **Figure 3.1** illustrates that Warrington has a higher proportion of ‘Managers, directors and senior officials’, ‘professional occupations’ when compared to the North West and Great Britain. Forty six percent of all jobs in Warrington fall onto the categories ‘Managers, directors and senior officials’, ‘professional occupations’ and ‘associate, professional and technical. Conversely, Warrington has a lower proportion of jobs in service industries and skilled trades when compared to both the North West and Great Britain.

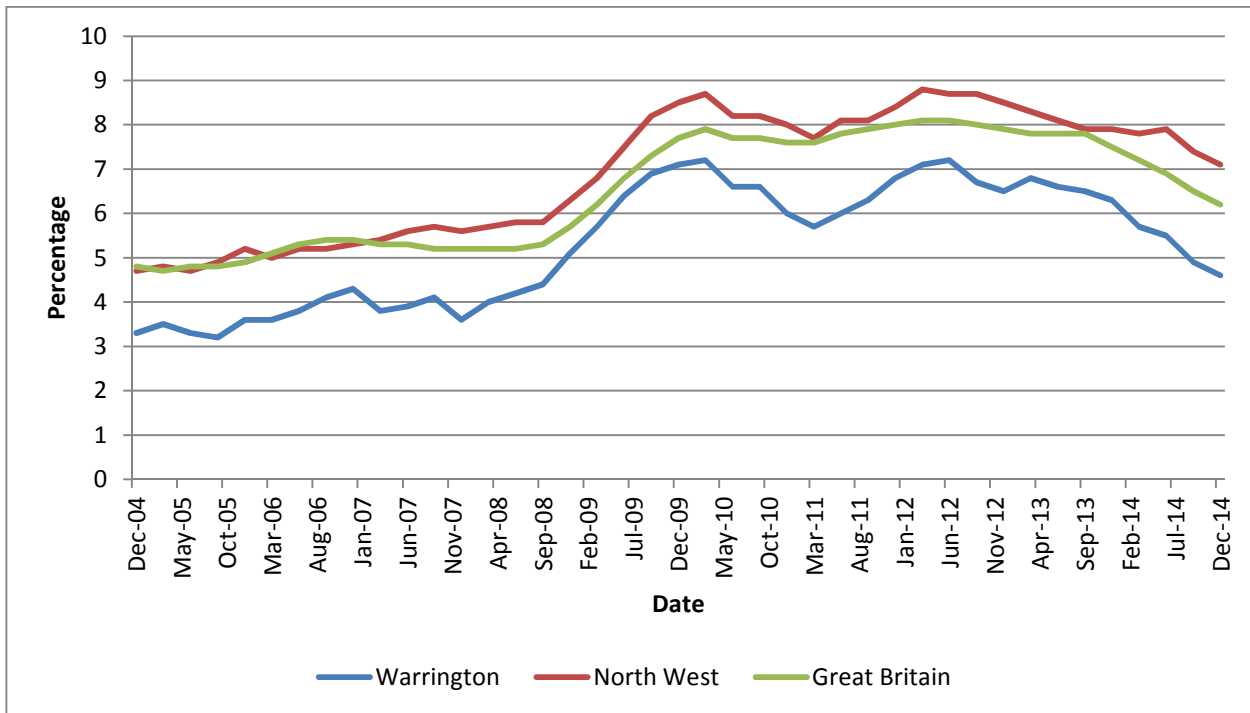
Figure 3.1: Percentage of people in employment type, December 2014



Source: ONS (2015) via nomis

3.5.11 As illustrated in **Figure 3.2**, unemployment in Warrington has consistently remained lower than the North West and British average over the last ten years. It is expected that this trend will continue, as it is supported by aspirations for economic growth by the Local Enterprise Partnership and is also reflected in Objective E2 of the Adopted Local Plan Core Strategy.

Figure 3.2: Unemployment level time series (2004-2014)



Source: ONS (2015) via nomis

Education: The current and projected baseline

- 3.5.12 In December 2014, 38.3% of people in Warrington had an NVQ level 4 or above. This is more than the North West average (30.9%) and Great Britain average (36%). 5.9% of people in Warrington have no qualifications compared to the North West which has 10.6% of people and Great Britain which has 8.8% of people without qualifications.
- 3.5.13 In 10 years, Warrington’s NVQ4 qualifications and above has risen over 10%, from 26.1% of the population in December 2004 to the 38.3% in December 2014. Warrington has in fact seen a rising trend across all qualification types, NVQ1, 2, 3 and 4 with the number of people without qualifications decreasing from 14.4% in December 2004 to 5.9 % in December 2014⁹.
- 3.5.14 The positive trends in terms of improved education levels in Warrington are considered likely to continue as educational facilities are upgraded, apprenticeship schemes are promoted and job opportunities are created.

Regeneration: The current and projected baseline

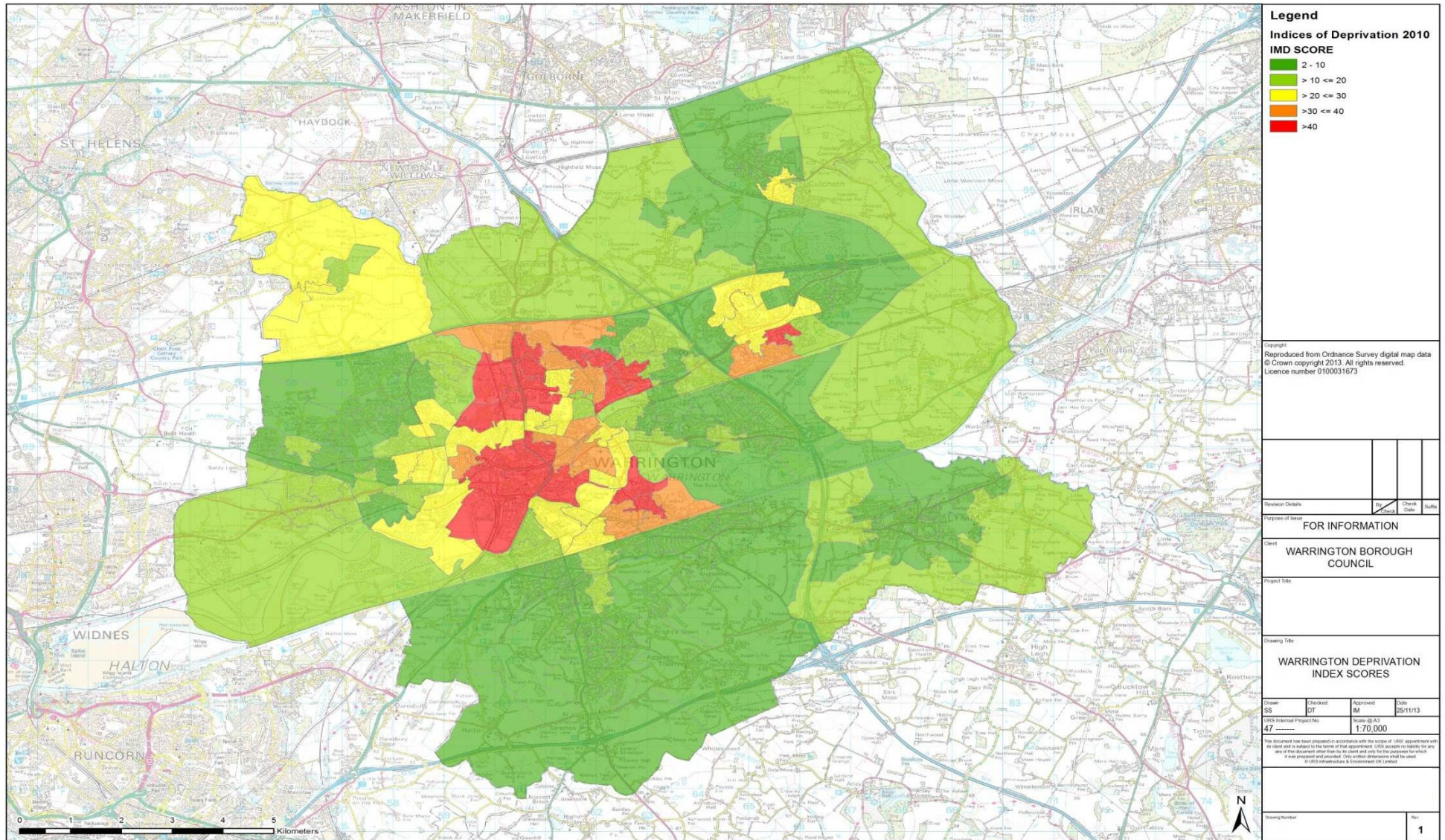
- 3.5.15 The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010 provides indicators of deprivation at local authority and lower super output area level (LSOA). (Lower super output areas are a statistical geography and are smaller in size than wards. They are a cluster of around 1,500 people).
- 3.5.16 The IMD 2010 replicates the methodology and where possible, the indicators used in both the IMD 2007 and 2004, allowing a level of comparability over time. However it must be noted that between the release of the IMD 2010 and 2007 there was a local authority re-structure in a number of areas in England.
- 3.5.17 The IMD 2010 and the comparable IMD 2007 are ranked out of 326 local authorities. The borough ranked 1st is the most deprived. Warrington ranks as the 153rd most deprived authority in England on the ‘rank of average score’ summary. On the comparable 2007 IMD, the Borough also ranked

⁹ Nomis ONS - Annual Population Survey (2015)

153rd. There was little change in the two overall summaries of deprivation, the 'rank of average score' and the 'rank of average rank'.

- 3.5.18 Between 2007 and 2010, there was an increase of one place in relative deprivation on the 'rank of income scale', but there was a decrease in deprivation on the 'rank of employment scale'. Both the employment and income scores measure the actual number of people classified as being employment or income deprived in the Borough. **Figure 3.3** presents the IMD score in Warrington for 2010, illustrating that the most deprived areas are concentrated in the urban centre of Warrington.
- 3.5.19 It is difficult to project the baseline, as deprivation is a complex interaction between multiple factors. Despite efforts to tackle deprivation through regeneration and community development initiatives, there has been little change in Warrington's position in the last 10 years. This trend may therefore be expected to continue. However, the Adopted Local Plan Core Strategy is predicated on a strategy of regeneration and renewal that will help to tackle deprivation and support communities in the areas of greatest need. This could help to reduce deprivation in Warrington in the longer term.

Figure 3.3: Indices of Multiple Deprivation (2010)



3.6 Health and Wellbeing

Contextual review

- 3.6.1 The *NPPF* identifies the importance of the social role of the planning system, which is defined as “*supporting vibrant and healthy communities*”, with a core planning principle being to ‘*take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all*’. The *NPPF* also outlines that high quality open spaces should be protected or their loss mitigated, unless a lack of need is established. Planning policies should be based on robust and up to date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision.
- 3.6.2 *Fair Society, Healthy Lives* (*The Marmot Review*)¹⁰ investigated health inequalities in England and the actions needed in order to tackle them. Subsequently, a supplementary report was prepared providing additional evidence relating to spatial planning and health on the basis that there is: “*overwhelming evidence that health and environmental inequalities are inexorably linked and that poor environments contribute significantly to poor health and health inequalities*”.
- 3.6.3 To ensure that the built environment promotes health and reduces inequalities for all local populations there is a need to:
- Fully integrate the planning, transport, housing, environmental and health systems to address the social determinants of health in each locality;
 - Prioritise policies and interventions that both reduce health inequalities and mitigate climate change by improving active travel; good quality open and green spaces; the quality of food in local areas; and the energy efficiency of housing; and
 - Support developments which provides high quality social infrastructure, including education, skills and sports facilities.
- 3.6.4 The Warrington Partnership and the Warrington Health and Wellbeing Board have updated *The Warrington Health and Wellbeing Strategy* for the years 2015-2018. A draft version of the strategy was consulted upon in January 2015. Once finalised, this will be the overarching strategic document for wellbeing in the borough. The draft strategy sets out a series of priority outcomes including the following, which are particularly relevant to the Local Plan amendments:
- Maintaining a strong economy and continuing to attract investment into key regeneration and infrastructure initiatives;
 - Increase the amount of affordable housing;
 - Increase the numbers of people using sustainable travel;
 - Reduce social exclusion;

Population: The current and projected baseline

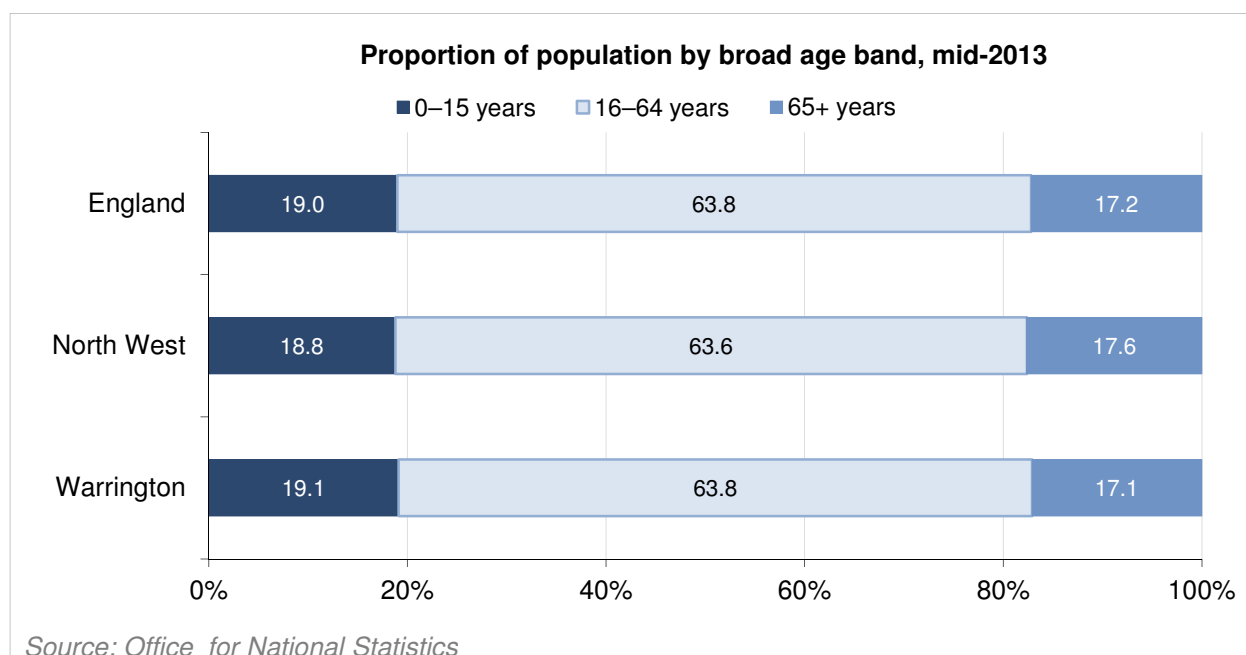
- 3.6.5 In mid-2013, the population estimate for Warrington was 205,100 people. This is a 7% increase (13,500 additional people) from the mid 2002 Office for National Statistics (ONS) data. It represents a greater rate of growth compared with the North West which was 4.7%, but less than for the whole of England which grew 8% over the same period¹¹.
- 3.6.6 In mid-2013 Warrington had 63.8% of its population aged between 16 and 64. This is roughly the same as for the North West region (63.6%) and in England (63.8%).
- 3.6.7 There is a slightly smaller proportion of persons aged 65+ in Warrington (17.1%) than the North West region (17.6%) but a slightly larger proportion of persons aged 0 to 15 (19.1%) in Warrington

¹⁰ The Marmot Review (2011) *The Marmot Review: Implications for Spatial Planning* [online] available at: <http://www.nice.org.uk/nicemedia/live/12111/53895/53895.pdf>

¹¹ Nomis ONS (Office for National Statistics) (2015)

compared to the North West and England. The breakdown of these figures is displayed in **Figure 3.4** below.

Figure 3.4: Proportion of population by broad age band



3.6.8 By 2021 the population of Warrington is projected to increase to 222,400 people, a percentage change of 8.7% from 2012. Significantly, the age group with the greatest projected percentage change in population is 65+ Years (+7.3%)¹². This has implications on a series of factors that affect the economy and social wellbeing of the Borough. This growth in the ageing population is likely to place increased demand on health and social support services in the future.

Health and wellbeing – the current and projected baseline

- 3.6.9 In Warrington, the life expectancy at birth for males in 2011 (78.1 years) was slightly greater than that for the North West (77.4 years). The life expectancy at birth for females in Warrington (82 years) was also slightly greater than that for the North West (81.5 years)¹³.
- 3.6.10 In Warrington, the proportion of children in poverty in 2011 was 14.5%. This is considerably less than in the North West region (22.1%), and less than for England (20.1%)¹⁴. This indicator measures the proportion of dependent children in a local authority who live in households whose income is calculated as below 60% of the contemporary national median.
- 3.6.11 In Warrington, the prevalence of obesity amongst all year 6 children was 17.5% in 2010/11; which is lower than the average prevalence for the North West's (19.7%), and for England (19.0%)¹⁵.
- 3.6.12 The average life expectancy of Warrington residents is improving, but the pace of improvement has slowed in recent years, and the relative gap between Warrington and England has not narrowed. Warrington has variations in affluence within the town. Areas which experience higher levels of socio-economic deprivation experience have correspondingly higher levels of ill health. The variation in terms of life expectancy related to deprivation is over 10 years for men and almost 7 years for women¹⁶.

¹² ONS Population estimates (2013)

¹³ Neighbourhood Statistics, ONS (2012).

¹⁴ HM Revenue and Customs (2012)

¹⁵ The Health and Social Care Information Centre, through Neighbourhood Statistics, Office for National Statistics (2013)

¹⁶ Warrington Borough Council (2014) Annual Monitoring Report http://www.warrington.gov.uk/downloads/file/8187/amr_2014 (accessed 04/2015)

3.6.13 During the five year period of 2009 to 2013, there were 8,966 deaths in Warrington. The main causes of death in Warrington were deaths related to the circulatory system (29.5% of all deaths) and deaths from cancer, which accounted for 27.8% of all deaths. The rate of mortality is consistently higher in the more deprived areas of Warrington¹⁷.

3.6.14 Demands on healthcare in the Borough are most likely to increase due to a growing population and an increase in the proportion of elderly residents. The types of services required may also alter in relation to the change in population profile as associated illnesses may differ. Improved education on healthy eating may help reduce child obesity levels. An increase in energy prices could lead to a higher proportion of people living in fuel poverty.

Community Safety – The current and projected baseline

3.6.15 In Warrington between 2004 and 2014, the overall crime rate has fallen steadily. **Figure 3.5** below shows the total recorded crimes between 2004 and 2014¹⁸.

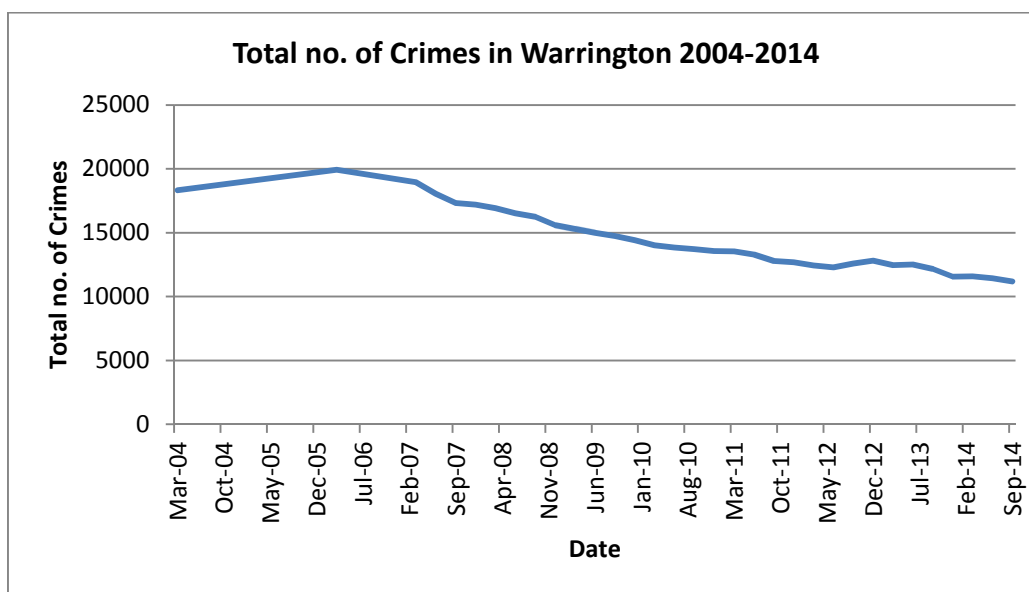
3.6.16 The natures of the crimes are shown in **Figure 3.6**, along with a comparison of September 2013 and September 2014. In 2014, the crime type with the highest rate in Warrington was ‘criminal damage and arson’. This however had decreased by 161 offences overall from 2013. Significant reductions were also found in ‘all other thefts’ (213 fewer offences) and vehicle offences (191 fewer offences)¹⁹.

3.6.17 It is reasonable to assume that the crime rates will continue to fall steadily within the Borough, in keeping with the trend of the last decade. However, crime rates are influenced by a range of factors, which could lead to variations in this trend (most likely this trend could plateau). Particularly important factors would be a reduction in public spending on policing and rehabilitation, an increase in unemployment, a shortage of affordable housing, or a lack of community and youth facilities. It is difficult to predict trends in these factors, but the Adopted Local Plan does seek to address these issues, which could help to maintain the downward trend.

3.6.18 Urban areas and deprived areas have traditionally experienced higher rates of crime, and these trends are also expected to continue.

Figure 3.5: Crime in Warrington over the last ten years

Source: ONS – Crime Survey England and Wales (2014)



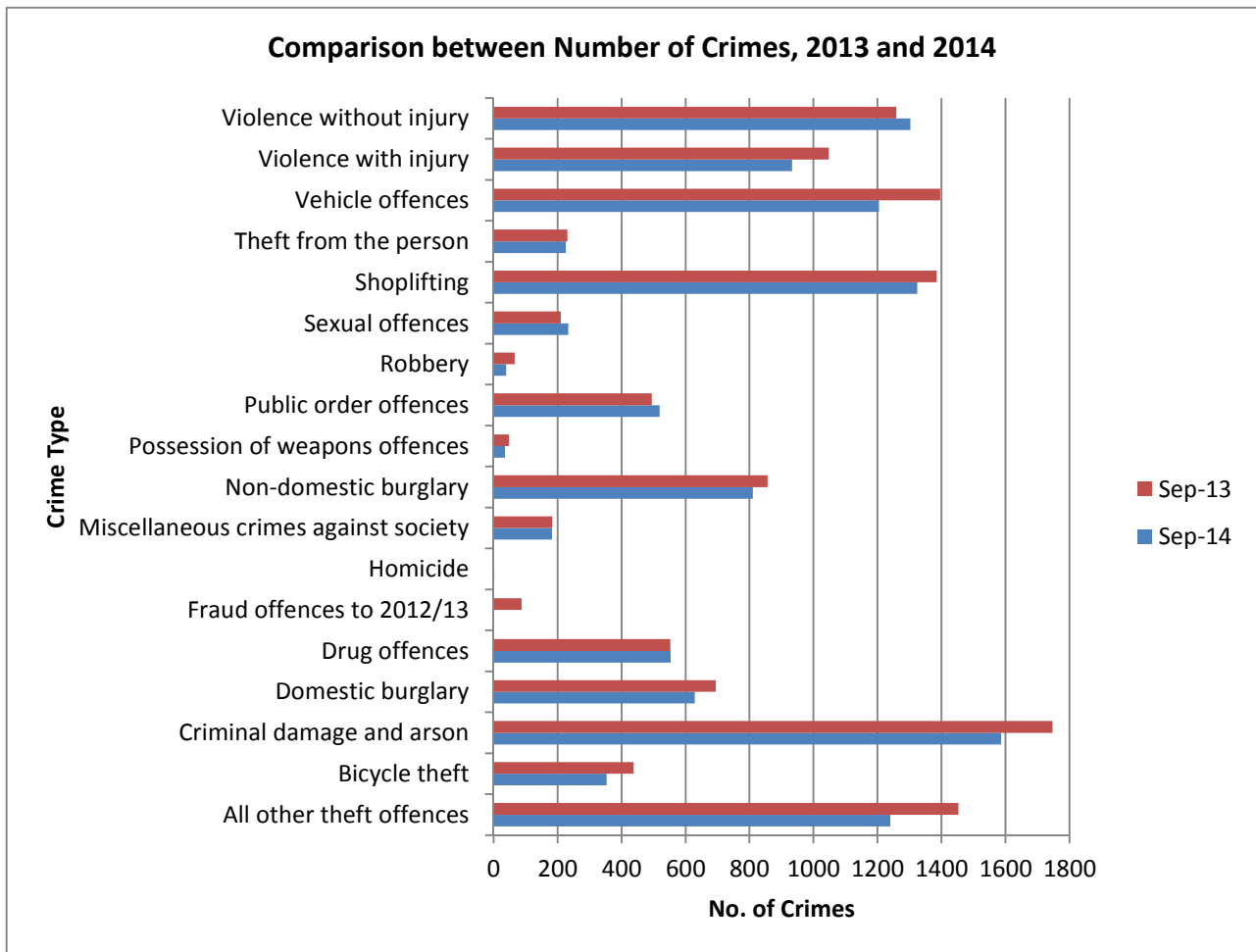
¹⁷ Warrington Borough Council (2014) Annual Monitoring Report http://www.warrington.gov.uk/downloads/file/8187/amr_2014 (accessed 04/2015)

¹⁸ Crime Survey England and Wales (2014) <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/crime-stats/crime-statistics/year-ending-september-2014/rft-08.zip> (accessed April 2015)

¹⁹ Ibid.

Figure 3.6: Crime in Warrington over the last ten years

Source: ONS – Crime Survey England and Wales (2014)



3.7 Accessibility

Contextual Review

- 3.7.1 The *NPPF* states that the transport system should be ‘*balanced in favour of sustainable transport*’, with developments to be located and designed to facilitate these modes of travel, in order to minimise journey lengths for employment, shopping, leisure and other activities. Planning policies should also aim for ‘*a balance of land uses*’ and wherever practical, key facilities should be located within walking distance of most properties.
- 3.7.2 Higher levels of walking and cycling could reduce congestion, improve local environmental quality, improve personal health and reduce transport-related CO₂ emissions²⁰. Plans should therefore ensure that strategic policies support and encourage both walking and cycling²¹.
- 3.7.3 The *One Warrington: One Future - Local Transport Plan (LTP3)*²² sets out the Local Transport Plan Strategy for the period 2011-2030. The objectives of LTP3 are to build and manage a transport network that:
- Is integrated and customer focused and reduces the need to travel by car;
 - Enables the regeneration of the Borough and supports economic growth;
 - Maintains the highway, minimises congestion for all modes of travel and enables Warrington’s ‘smart growth’;
 - Improves everyone’s access to health, employment, education, culture, leisure and the natural environment;
 - Improves everyone’s access to the town centre by all modes of travel;
 - Enhances accessibility for those in disadvantaged communities or groups;
 - Improves neighbourhoods and residential areas;
 - Improves safety and security for all modes of travel;
 - Enhances the image and profile of the place;
 - Improves the quality of public space making Warrington more welcoming;
 - Protects and enhances the natural environment;
 - Reduces the impact of traffic on air quality in Warrington and helps to reduce carbon emissions and tackle climate change;
 - Makes Warrington safer, sustainable and healthier; *and*
 - Integrates with transport networks outside Warrington to enhance the sustainability of cross boundary travel.

Accessibility: The current and projected baseline

- 3.7.4 Warrington lies at the hub of the region’s communications network. The M6, M56 and M62 motorways intersect within the borough, providing excellent access to all parts of the region and

²⁰ Lancaster University, University of Leeds & Oxford Brookes University (2011) Understanding Walking and Cycling: Summary of Key Findings and Recommendations [online] available at: http://www.its.leeds.ac.uk/fileadmin/user_upload/UWCRReportSept2011.pdf (accessed 08/2012)

²¹ National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (2012) Walking and cycling: local measures to promote walking and cycling as forms of travel or recreation, Public Health Guidance PH41[online] available at: <http://guidance.nice.org.uk/PH41>

²² Warrington Borough Council Local Transport Plan 3 2011-2030

beyond. Warrington also lies on the region's main North-South (West Coast Main Line) and East-West (Trans-Pennine) rail routes.

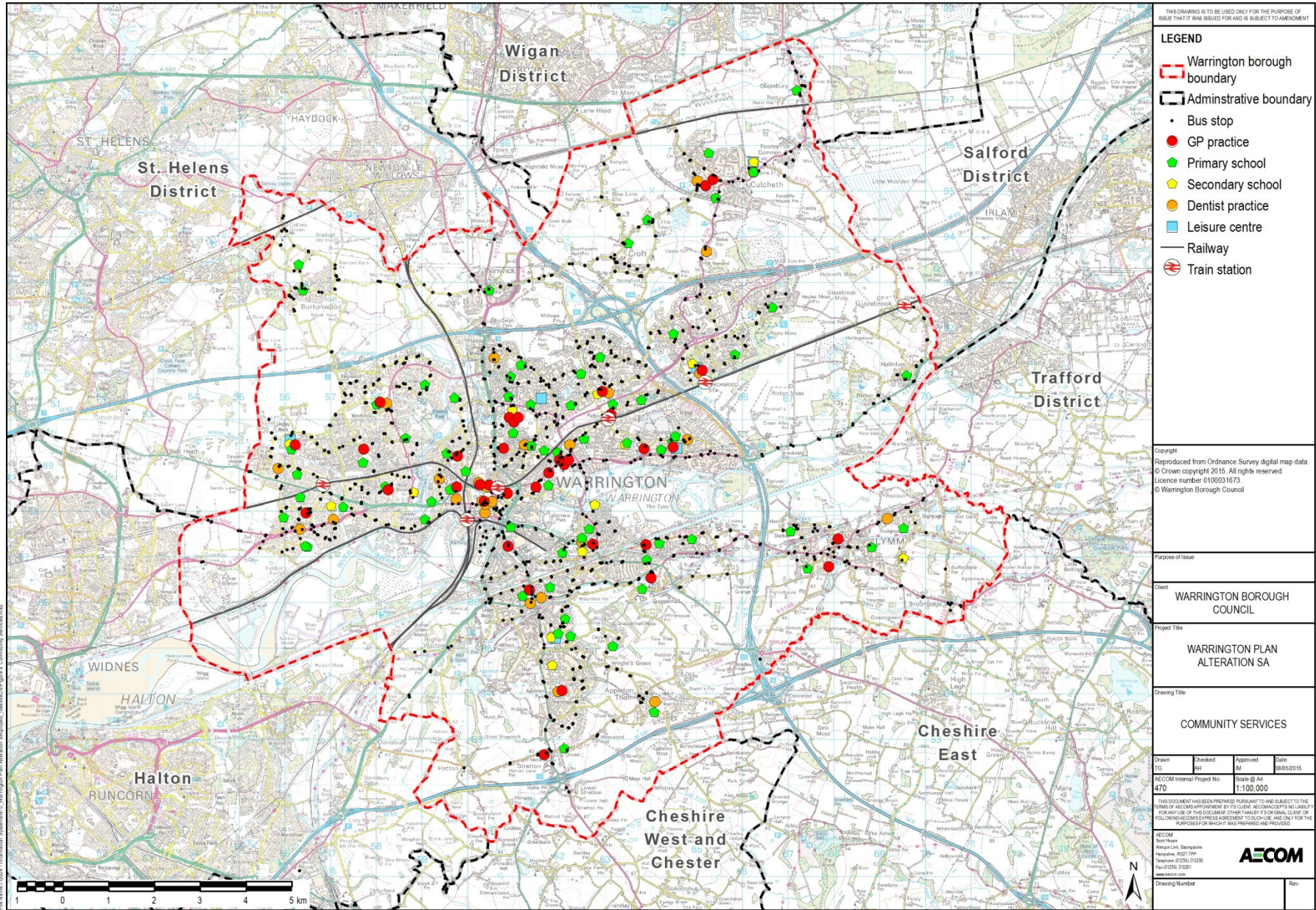
3.7.5 Taken from the 2011 Census and Annual Monitoring Report (2014), the following list identifies some key statistics relating to travel in Warrington:

- The percentage of households with no car is lower in Warrington (19.3%) than regionally (28.0%) and nationally (25.6%) (Census 2011);
- The percentage of households with one car is similar in Warrington to the regional and national situation at approximately 41.8% (Census 2011);
- There is a higher percentage of households in Warrington with two or more cars/vans (38.9%) than both regionally (29.5%) or nationally (32.1%) (Census 2011);
- In terms of the resident population, the 2011 Census shows 45.3% of people aged 16 to 74 in employment in Warrington travel to work mainly by car or van (lower than in 2001 Census at 51.5%). This is higher than the regional figure of 37.0% and the national figure of 34.9%. (AMR 2014).
- A lower percentage of residents aged 16 to 74 in employment in Warrington cycle or walk (6.4%) than is the case regionally (7.6%) or nationally (8.2%) (AMR 2014).

3.7.6 Figure 3.7 illustrates the location of key services and facilities throughout the Borough. As would be expected, the town centre of Warrington is served by the widest range of services and facilities. There is also a good range of essential facilities and good access links from other settlements outside the Warrington urban area including areas such as Lingley Mere, Birchwood and Padgate, which have good train and public transport links. Other larger settlements such as Lymm and Culceth are served by a range of facilities, but are more likely to be reliant on private car use to access higher order services and employment. Smaller settlements in 'rural' areas such as Appleton Thorn, Burtonwood, Winwick and Croft are served by a lower number of essential services, and rely upon larger service centres to access GPs, secondary schools and other services.

3.7.7 As well as establishing how accessible essential services are in terms of proximity, it is also important to understand whether services are capable of accommodating further growth. This will help to identify where development would need to fund expansions to facilities such as schools and GPs, where this may not be possible (due to site constraints for example) or where a surplus exists and development would actually make facilities more viable.

Figure 3.7 – Community facilities and services



3.8 Housing

Contextual Review

- 3.8.1 The *NPPF* seeks to significantly boost the supply of new homes. To achieve this it states that local planning authorities should have a clear understanding of housing needs in their area. They should prepare a Strategic Housing Market Assessment to assess their full housing needs, working with neighbouring authorities where housing market areas cross administrative boundaries. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment should identify the scale and mix of housing and the range of tenures that the local population is likely to need over the plan period.
- 3.8.2 The *NPPF* states that in order to create ‘*sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities*’ authorities should ensure affordable housing is provided.
- 3.8.3 *DCLG Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (2012)* states that Local Plans should seek to treat travellers in a fair and equal manner that facilitates their traditional and nomadic way of life, whilst also respecting the interest of the settled community, through promoting more private traveller site provision, whilst recognising that there will be those that cannot afford private sites; enabling the provision of suitable accommodation from which travellers can access education, health, welfare and employment infrastructure; and having due regard for the protection of local amenity and environment²³.

The current and projected baseline

- 3.8.4 In 2013/14, 693 net additional homes were provided in Warrington which exceeds the average of 559 across the preceding five year period. During the 2013/14 monitoring period, 98% of all new and converted dwellings were completed on previously developed land (697 out of 713). This figure represents a slight decrease of 1% against performance in the preceding 2012/13 monitoring period (99%). In the ten years since 2003 there have been 9741 gross completions within the Borough. 8903 of these (91%) have been on previously developed land²⁴.
- 3.8.5 As stated in the National Planning Policy Guidance, the 2012 sub-national household projections should form the starting point for establishing the objectively assessed housing need for Warrington. However the overall figure may be affected by further factors such as formation rates, local demographics, employment trends and ‘market signals’.
- 3.8.6 The 2012 projections estimate that there are 89,000 households in Warrington in 2015, which is anticipated to rise to 96,000 by 2022, 100,000 by 2026 and 103,000 by 2032. This is an average increase of 823 households per year between 2015 and 2032.
- 3.8.7 No new planning permissions were granted for Gypsy and Traveller sites within the 2013/14 monitoring period. There are currently 20 authorised pitches within the Borough²⁵. The Council intends to make a secondary plan amendment to explore site allocations and policies for Gypsy, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople.
- 3.8.8 Between 2013-2014, overall average house prices in Warrington have increased by 4.8% (from £134,750 to £141,469), there is also an increase of 2.2% in the North West (from £108,420 to £110,790) and a 6% increase in England and Wales as a whole (£161,755 -£171,323).

²³ DCLG (2012) Planning policy for traveller sites [online] available at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/2113371.pdf>

²⁴ Warrington Borough Council – Annual Monitoring Report (2014) [online] available at: http://www.warrington.gov.uk/downloads/file/8187/amr_2014

²⁵ Ibid.

Table 3.2: Average House Prices 2014

	Detached (£)	Semi-Detached (£)	Terraced (£)	Maisonette/flat (£)	All (£)
Warrington	251,621	122,589	82,688	99,485	141,469
North West	215,265	113,021	66,713	105,221	110,790
England and Wales	269,366	161,647	129,223	164,432	171,323

Source: Land Registry (April 2014) / Warrington AMR 2014

- 3.8.9 Warrington Borough Council are currently undertaking a new SHMA (in conjunction with Halton and St Helens), to understand the housing need both for Warrington and the HMA as a whole. Once completed, the findings will be reflected in the scope of SA.
- 3.8.10 A total of 489 sites, covering approximately 1172 Hectares, were identified for and subsequently included within the 2012 SHLAA. Of the 489 sites included in the 2012 SHLAA, 424 (87%) were automatically rolled forward from the 2011 assessment and hence 65 are wholly new sites. Of the 489 sites identified, 126 (26%) had a planning approval on the 1st April 2012. 319 (65%) of the 489 sites identified constituted previously developed land, 161 (33%) were on greenfield land and 9 (2%) were considered to be part previously developed / part greenfield.
- 3.8.11 Warrington Borough Council is currently working on updating the SHLAA for 2015. Once completed, the findings will be reflected in the scope of SA.

3.9 Natural Resources

Contextual Review

Water

- 3.9.1 *The NPPF* states that local planning authorities should produce strategic policies to deliver the provision of a variety of infrastructure, including that necessary for water supply.
- 3.9.2 The *White Paper, Water for Life* says that authorities should encourage and incentivise water efficiency measures at the demand side²⁶.
- 3.9.3 In most cases, and for most of the time, in North West England, there is adequate water available for abstraction. The regional priorities as set out in the *Water Resources Management Strategy* are to reduce the contribution to climate change and to protect sensitive environmental habitats, predominately in Cumbria²⁷.

Air quality

- 3.9.4 The *NPPF* identifies that 'Planning policies should sustain compliance with and contribute towards EU limit values or national objectives for pollutants, taking into account the presence of Air Quality Management Areas and the cumulative impacts on air quality from individual sites in local areas. Planning decisions should ensure that any new development in Air Quality Management Areas is consistent with the local air quality action plan'.
- 3.9.5 The *UK Air Quality Strategy*²⁸ sets out air quality objectives and policy options to further improve air quality in the UK. This is supplemented by more recent guidance on how air pollution and climate objectives can be realised together through an integrated policy approach.

Soil and land

- 3.9.6 The *NPPF* calls upon the planning system to protect and enhance soils. It should also prevent new or existing development from being 'adversely affected' by the presence of '*unacceptable levels*' of *soil pollution or land instability and be willing to remediate and mitigate 'despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate'*.
- 3.9.7 The *NPPF* also calls for planning policies and decisions to 'encourage the effective use of land' through the reuse of land which has been previously developed, 'provided that this is not of high environmental value'. Whilst there is no longer a national requirement to build at a minimum density, the *NPPF* requires local planning authorities to '*set out their own approach to housing density to reflect local circumstances*'. The value of best and most versatile agricultural land should also be taken into account.
- 3.9.8 In *Safeguarding our Soils: A strategy for England*²⁹, a vision is set out for the future of soils in the country. An element of this vision is the condition of soils in urban areas, which are to be '*sufficiently valued for the ecosystem services they provide and given appropriate weight in the planning system*'. Good quality soils in urban areas are recognised as being '*vital in supporting ecosystems, facilitating drainage and providing urban green spaces for communities*'. That planning decisions take sufficient account of soil quality is a concern of the report, in particular in cases where significant areas of the best and most versatile agricultural land are involved. Preventing the pollution of soils and addressing the historic legacy of contaminated land is another element of the reports vision. Changing demands on our soils need to be better understood and it must be ensured that appropriate consideration is given to soils in the planning process.

²⁶ Defra (2011) Water for life (The Water White Paper) [online] available at: <http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm82/8230/8230.pdf>

²⁷ United Utilities, Final Water Resources Management Plan, 2015

²⁸ Defra (2007) Air Quality Strategy for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland [online] available at: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/quality/air/air-quality/approach/>

²⁹ Defra (2009) Safeguarding our soils: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/69261/pb13297-soil-strategy-090910.pdf

Water: The current and projected baseline

- 3.9.9 The majority of Warrington is built on the floodplain of the River Mersey, with about three quarters of the urban area lying between 5 and 12 metres above sea level (AOD). The main source of fluvial flooding is the River Mersey and its five key tributaries, which flow through the centre of the borough.
- 3.9.10 The Manchester Ship Canal plays a vital role in managing fluvial flood risk along the Mersey. Although principally a navigation canal, the canal provides a floodwater bypass channel for Warrington, which significantly reduces the incidence of flooding from fluvial flows.
- 3.9.11 As a requirement of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) the water quality of rivers and lakes in England must be established in terms of their ecological and chemical quality. Measures must then be put in place to protect and improve water quality. Ecological quality is categorised as; bad, poor, moderate, good or high and chemical quality is assessed as a pass, fail or does not require assessment. Water quality in Warrington was assessed in 2009 as part of the River Basin Management Plan process. The findings at that time were that:
- The River Mersey's ecological quality was classed as 'moderate', with its' chemical quality failing. For 2015 it was predicted that it has moderate potential' but its status is 'at risk';
 - The Sankey Canal was classed as having 'moderate' ecological quality, and it was predicted that it had 'moderate potential' for 2015;
 - Sankey Brook was classed as having poor ecological quality, although the chemical quality was classed as good. Its status is 'at risk', but the predicted ecological quality for 2015 was for there to be an improvement to 'moderate'.³⁰
- 3.9.12 Warrington is at risk from many different sources of flooding including; main rivers, ordinary watercourses, surface water runoff, sewer flooding and the residual risks associated with artificial water bodies such as the Bridgewater Canal, the Manchester Ship Canal and reservoirs.
- 3.9.13 As a result of climate change, flood risk in Warrington is likely to become more of an issue, with an increase in the frequency and depth of flooding of floodplains expected. In addition, more intense storm events as a result of climate change could lead to an increase in surface water flooding and flash flooding across the Borough.
- 3.9.14 These risks have the potential to be alleviated through Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems. The Adopted Local Plan (Policy QE4) also states that the Council will only support development proposals where the risk of flooding has been fully assessed and justified by an agreed Flood Risk Assessment.

Air Quality: The current and projected baseline

- 3.9.15 Warrington Borough Council is responsible for the review and assessment of air quality in the Borough. There are three AQMA designations in Warrington;
- AQMA 1 - A 50m continuous strip on both sides of the M6, M62 and M56 motorway corridors.
 - AQMA 2 - An area of central Warrington bounded by Parker Street, Wilson Patten Street, Bold Street, Museum Street, Winmarleigh Street and Sankey Street.
 - AQMA 3 - Residential properties on Baxter St, Lancaster St, Green St, and Lovely Lane surrounding the Sankey Green Roundabout.
- 3.9.16 All three AQMAs are designated due to their levels of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂). An Air Quality Action Plan has been produced that is appended to the Local Transport Plan 3 as part of the Implementation Plan. This Action Plan covers all three AQMAs; presenting a series of short term

³⁰ Environment Agency (2013), Flood Risk and Management (accessed online) http://maps.environment-agency.gov.uk/wiyby/wiybyController?topic=wfd_rivers&layerGroups=default&lang=e&ep=map&scale=8&x=361618&y=388610

and long term actions in the key areas of 'network management', 'smarter choices', 'motorised travel', 'public transport', 'active travel', and 'safety and security'³¹.

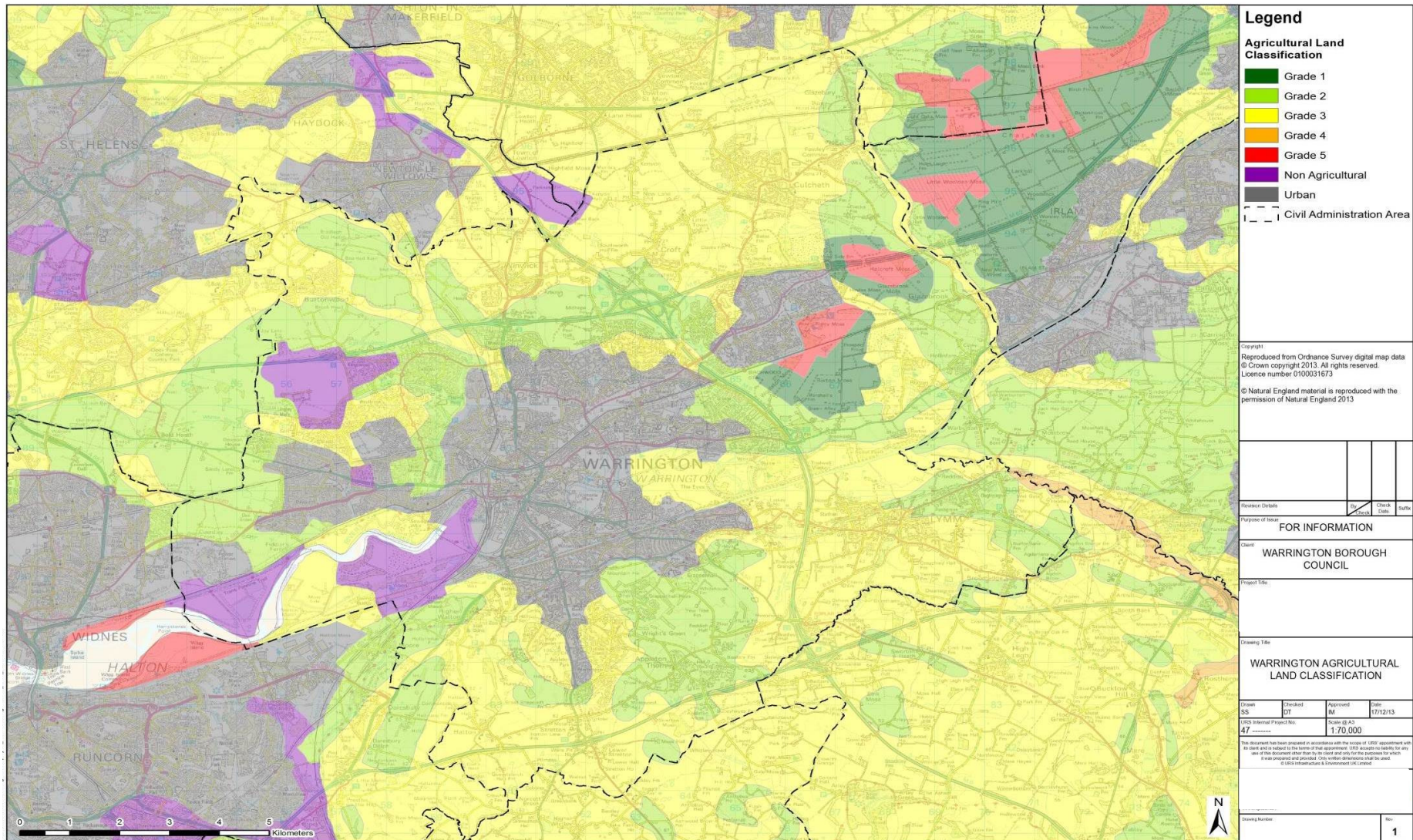
Soil and Land: the current and projected baseline

- 3.9.17 In Warrington during the 2013/14 monitoring period, 100% of additional employment floorspace within the borough has been delivered on previously developed land. During the 2013/14 monitoring period, 98% of all new and converted dwellings were completed on previously developed land (697 out of 713). The latest SHLAA (2012) indicates that over the entire plan period, 94% of new homes will have been delivered on previously developed land³².
- 3.9.18 The Agricultural Land in Warrington is predominantly Grade 2 and 3, which is classified as 'the best and most versatile'. There are only two pockets of Grade 1 land, which are located to the east of the Borough, in the fields north of Manchester Road. The Agricultural Land in Warrington is shown in **Figure 3.8**.
- 3.9.19 The Adopted Local Plan Core Strategy prioritises urban regeneration, which will help to minimise effects on agricultural land. However, the Plan amendments could result in the release of greenfield land, which would be likely to result in a loss of some Agricultural Land.

³¹ Warrington Borough Council (March 2011) Local Transport Plan 3 Implementation Plan; Air Quality Action Plan

³² Warrington Borough Council – Annual Monitoring Report (2014) [online] available at:
http://www.warrington.gov.uk/downloads/file/8187/amr_2014

Figure 3.8 - Agricultural Land Classification in Warrington



3.10 Built and natural heritage

Contextual review

- 3.10.1 The *NPPF* states that Authorities should set out a positive strategy in their local plan for the “*conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment*”, including those heritage assets that are most at risk. Assets should be recognised as being an irreplaceable resource that should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance; taking account of the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation can bring, whilst also recognising the positive contribution new development can make to local character and distinctiveness.
- 3.10.2 The planning system should protect and enhance valued landscapes. Particular weight is given to “*conserving landscape and scenic beauty*”. Local Authorities should adopt policies and measures for the protection, management and planning of all landscapes, whether outstanding or ordinary, that determine the quality of people’s living environment³³.
- 3.10.3 Authorities are encouraged to plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt, with inappropriate development not to be approved except in very special circumstances³⁴.

Warrington Conservation Area Management Proposals

- 3.10.4 *Bridge Street Management Proposal* focuses on the restoration of a variety of historic and locally significant buildings along the street. The proposal also seeks to ensure the character of the area is maintained through the monitoring of the streetscape via the suggestion of photographic studies and an urban design study. These studies would centre on targeting frontage and street aesthetics.
- 3.10.5 *Buttermarket Street Conservation Area Management Proposals* strives to protect shop frontages on the street that might not have listed building status. The proposal suggests several aesthetic amendments to the streetscape such as tree planting and the repainting of street furniture and roadside barriers.
- 3.10.6 *Church Street Management Proposals* proposes infill of development on derelict sites, consideration of design of development within the conservation area, as well as changes/replenishment of street furniture and signage. The proposal suggests that these smaller changes to the street are to be followed up by periodic photographic studies in order to identify and act upon any unauthorised works.
- 3.10.7 *Town Hall Management Proposals* seek to form a strategy for the Town Hall building and ground external works, signage and access. The former baths adjacent to the Town Hall are also considered as requiring an urban design and regeneration strategy. There is also emphasis on preserving the character of the area through the investigation of unauthorised works or signage.

Warrington Conservation Area Appraisals

- 3.10.8 *The Bewsey Street Conservation Area Appraisal (2007)* established that a significant level of progress had been made in improving the declining condition of the area around Bewsey Street. The document states that of the list of some 13 problem areas identified in the designation report, 9 have been ‘satisfactorily resolved’ and two have been ‘partly resolved’. The appraisal confirms that Bewsey Street’s conservation area status has “*undoubtedly helped to restore confidence in the future of the street as a residential and business location*”.
- 3.10.9 *Bridge Street Conservation Area Appraisal (2006)* concluded that further changes were required to reflect new issues on the public realm since the implementation of the plan over almost three decades ago. The appraisal notes the mediocre quality of some of its ground floor frontages on Lower Bridge Street which convey “*an air of neglect and an area which is undervalued*”. The

³³ Council of Europe (2000) The European Landscape Convention [online] available at: <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/176.htm>

³⁴ DCLG (2012) National Planning Policy Framework [online] available at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/2116950.pdf>

document priorities further enhancement of the scheme in relation to Lower Bridge Street, as well as highways signs and street furniture that are in keeping with local character across the area.

- 3.10.10 *Buttermarket Street Conservation Area Appraisal (2007)* identified numerous issues associated with the core of conservation area, including inappropriate design features and other visually intrusive elements of the streetscape along Buttermarket Street and at its junction with Academy Street and Scotland Road. The document also identifies several development opportunities along Dial Street and Fennal Street along with a proposed revision of the Buttermarket Street Conservation Area boundary line.
- 3.10.11 *Church Street Conservation Area Appraisal (2007)* identifies new appropriate design standards for new developments on 'gap sites'. It also indicates that general improvements and the redevelopment of existing 'mediocre' buildings at the western extremity of the conservation area, could form a more visually appealing gateway to the area. The document also provides several objectives associated with revisions to the public realm.
- 3.10.12 *Plamyra Square Conservation Area Appraisal (2007)* divides identified issues between public and private sector. The private sector issues comprise of appropriate alterations to architectural features and the aesthetic of private properties, as well as their general upkeep. This is outlined with the intention of establishing a clearer standard for design across the conservation area, which property owners should conform to. The public sector issues are predominantly focused on removing unnecessary signage, renewing street furniture and ensuring the area's upkeep. The document also proposes several strategies of utilising vacant properties including a Technical School, along with confirmation that outside of a few minor amendments, the Conservation Area boundary shall remain largely unaltered.
- 3.10.13 *Town Hall Conservation Area Appraisal (2007)* outlines a number of 'short-medium term' and 'medium /longer term' measures to target identified issues from the report. shorter-term measures primarily consist of urban design and public realm improvements along with a regeneration program for the former baths and potentially their adjacent areas too. The longer-term measures set out a plan for the reinstatement of the Town Hall railings flanking the 'Golden Gates' along with their central carriage crossing restoration. It also outlines the desire for a strategy for the use and management of Bank Park.

Built Heritage: The current and projected baseline

- 3.10.14 In 2014, there were 375 listed buildings recorded in the Borough, of which seven are Grade 1. There are also 13 Scheduled Monuments and 16 designated conservation areas³⁵.
- 3.10.15 There are ten heritage assets classed as 'at risk' in Warrington³⁶:

- Bewsey Street, Bewsey (Conservation Area);
- Bridge Street, Warrington Town Centre (Conservation Area);
- Church Street, Warrington Town Centre (Conservation Area);
- Town Hall, Warrington Town Centre (Conservation Area);
- Bradlegh Old Hall moated site and fishpond, Burtonwood and Westbrook (Scheduled Monument);
- Bowl Barrow west of Highfield Lane, Winwick (Scheduled Monument);
- Church of St. Thomas, London Road, Stockton Heath (Grade II* Listed Building);
- Bank Quay Transport Bridge (Grade II* Listed Building);
- Gatehouse to Bradlegh Old Hall, Burtonwood and Westbrook (Grade II* Listed Building/Scheduled Monument); and
- Hurst Hazel North Barn, Culcheth and Glazebury (Grade II* Listing Building).

³⁵ English Heritage (2014) Heritage Counts – Understanding the Assets. http://hc.historicengland.org.uk/content/pub/2190644/local-auth-profile-2014.xls?bcsi_scan_AB11CAA0E2721250=1 (accessed April 2015)

³⁶ English Heritage (2015) [http://risk.historicengland.org.uk/register.aspx?rs=1&rt=0&pn=1&st=a&ua=Warrington+\(UA\)&ctype=all&crit=](http://risk.historicengland.org.uk/register.aspx?rs=1&rt=0&pn=1&st=a&ua=Warrington+(UA)&ctype=all&crit=) (accessed April 2015).

Landscape Character: The current and projected baseline

- 3.10.16 Warrington's landscape has taken many thousands of years to evolve and develop. Farming has shaped most of the present landscape, which continues to evolve. As farming techniques become ever more efficient and mechanised, it is likely to cause a corresponding impact on the landscape. Another feature of Warrington's landscape is the exploitation of minerals, stone, sand and salt, as well as the deposition of waste materials which will likely have a permanent effect on the landscape.
- 3.10.17 The landscape is vital for a healthy environment and for providing habitat for a diverse range of flora and fauna. The landscape can also provide leisure and tourism benefits, boosting the rural economy.
- 3.10.18 The Warrington Borough Council Landscape Character Assessment (2007)³⁷ assesses the Borough as having six different character types. Within these character types they include distinctive features. These are listed below.

Character type 1: Undulating enclosed farmland

- Stretton & Hatton;
- Appleton Thorn;
- Winwick, Culcheth, Glazebrook & Rixton;
- Croft;
- Burtonwood; and
- Penketh & Cuerdley.

Character type 2: Mossland Landscape

- Rixton, Woolston & Risley Moss;
- Holcroft & Glazebrook Moss;
- Stretton & Appleton Moss; and
- Pill Moss.

Character type 3: Red Sandstone Escarpment

- Appleton Park & Grappenhall;
- Massey Brook; and
- Lymm.

Character type 4: Level Areas of Farmland and Former Airfields

- Limekilns;
- Former Burtonwood Airfield; and
- Former Stretton Airfield.

Character type 5: River Flood Plain

- River Mersey/Bollin;
- River Glaze; and
- Sankey Brook.

Character type 6: Inter-Tidal Areas

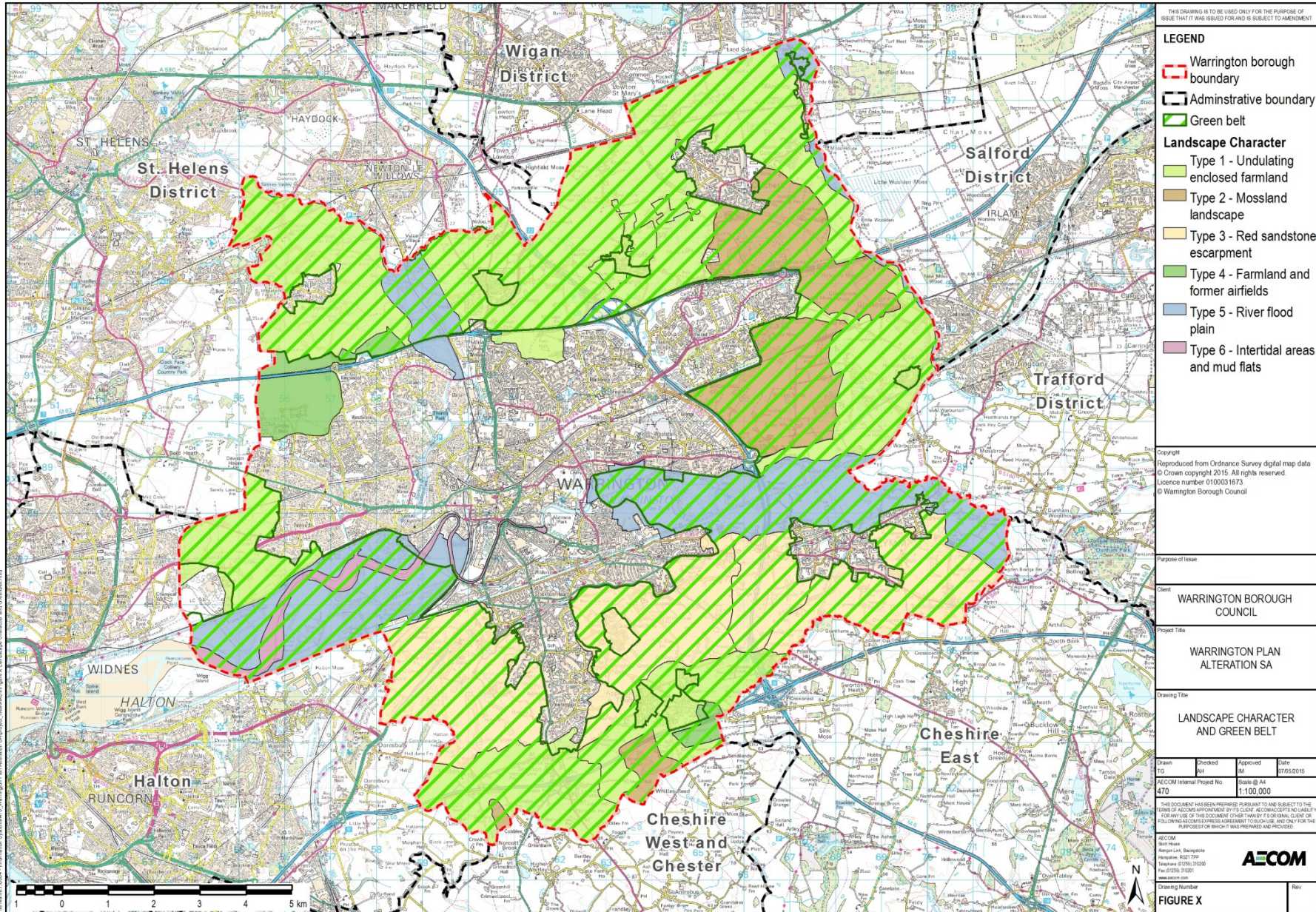
- Victoria Park to Fiddlers Ferry.

3.10.19 These Character Areas from the Landscape Character assessment will need to be respected as they provide base information on the visual status of the landscapes around Warrington, from which Visual Impact Assessments can be judged. These assessments are required when visually dominant developments are proposed

3.10.20 **Figure 3.9** shows the extent of these character areas across the borough. This figure also illustrates the extent of the Greenbelt, which is drawn fairly tightly around the urban areas and contributes to the protection of landscape character in the countryside.

³⁷ Warrington Landscape Character Assessment (2007), http://www.warrington.gov.uk/downloads/file/938/landscape_character_assessment_lca_final_report. (Accessed April 2015)

Figure 3.9 – Landscape character areas and Green Belt



3.11 Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Contextual Review

- 3.11.1 The *Natural Environment White Paper* states that there is a need to halt the overall decline in biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services; and restore them in so far as feasible and seek to deliver net gains in biodiversity where possible³⁸.
- 3.11.2 The NPPF also says that Local plans should support healthy well-functioning ecosystems, encourage the 'preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks' and promote the 'protection and recovery of priority species. There is a need to protect and maximise the value of areas already rich in wildlife; expand, buffer, and create connections and stepping stones between these areas; and make the wider landscape more permeable to wildlife.
- 3.11.3 The Wildlife Trust document *A Living Landscape* says that Local plans should adopt a 'landscape approach' to protecting and enhancing biodiversity. This focuses on the conservation of biodiversity over large areas of land (i.e. at the landscape scale) where habitat patches that are now fragmented would once have functioned more as an interconnected whole³⁹.
- 3.11.4 The TCPA and Wildlife Trust guidance document, *Planning for a Healthy Environment*, suggests that positive planning for 'green infrastructure' is recognised as part of planning for ecological networks and making the built environment permeable for wildlife⁴⁰.
- 3.11.5 The guidance document *Creating Garden Cities and Suburbs Today*, suggests that 'New development should incorporate green space consisting of a 'network of well-managed, high-quality green/open spaces linked to the wider countryside'⁴¹. These spaces should be of a range of types (e.g. community forests, wetland areas and public parks) and be multifunctional, for instance as areas that can be used for walking and cycling, recreation and play, supporting of wildlife, or forming an element of an urban cooling and flood management system.
- 3.11.6 Green infrastructure is defined as being: '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'.
- 3.11.7 According to the *NPPF*, Local Authorities should set out strategic approach to Green Infrastructure in their Local Plans, planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of biodiversity and green infrastructure.
- 3.11.8 *Mersey Forest Plan (Sept 2013): The Refreshed Mersey Forest Plan* incorporates the concept of green infrastructure. The purpose of the plan is to achieve environmental, social and economic benefits for local people through the creation of a community forest – in simple terms it seeks to substantially increase tree cover across Merseyside, Warrington and North Cheshire over the next ten years.

The current and projected baseline

- 3.11.9 There are three SACs in Warrington;
- Holcroft Moss;
 - Risley Moss; and
 - Rixton Claypits.

³⁸ Defra (2012) *The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature* (Natural Environment White Paper) [online] available at: <http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm80/8082/8082.pdf>

³⁹ The Wildlife Trusts (2010) *A Living Landscape: play your part in nature's recovery* [online] available at: <http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/alivinglandscape>

⁴⁰ The Wildlife Trusts & TCPA (2012) *Planning for a healthy environment: good practice for green infrastructure and biodiversity* [online] available at: <http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/news/2012/07/06/planning-healthy-and-natural-environment>

⁴¹ TCPA (2012) *Creating garden cities and suburbs today* [online] available at: http://www.tcpa.org.uk/data/files/Creating_Garden_Cities_and_Suburbs_Today.pdf

3.11.10 There are four Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within Warrington’s boundary. These are:

- Woolston Eyes (breeding bird assemblage);
- Rixton Clay Pitts (grassland and rare species);
- Risley Moss (mosses, open water habitat and vegetation); and
- Holcroft Moss (peat bogs/mosses).

3.11.11 The conditions of these SSSIs at the time of the latest surveys are as follows⁴²:

Table 3.3: SSSI Condition

SSSI	Condition	Last assessment
Woolston Eyes	100% favourable condition	Dec, 2010
Rixton Clay Pitts	75% unfavourable recovering 25% favourable	June, 2013
Risley Moss	100% unfavourable recovering	June, 2013
Holcroft Moss	100% unfavourable recovering	June, 2013

3.11.12 There are four Local Nature Reserves in Warrington; Rixton Clay Pits and Risley Moss (which are also SSSIs), Paddington Meadows and Colliers Moss.

3.11.13 As well as these designated sites, Warrington also has over 50 Sites of Local Importance for Nature Conservation, known as Local Wildlife Sites which represent the best local wildlife sites in the Borough and are vital to the maintenance of biodiversity of the town.

3.11.14 In the 2014 Annual Monitoring Report⁴³, it stated during the monitoring period of 2013-14 there has a net gain of 378ha of land recognised for its biodiversity importance within the Borough. This is due to the designation of several new Local Wildlife Sites such as Rixton Moss.

3.11.15 It is assumed that the number of designated sites would be unlikely to alter substantially in the foreseeable future although improvement should continue. The Adopted Core Strategy provides both biodiversity protection and crucially enhancement in Warrington.

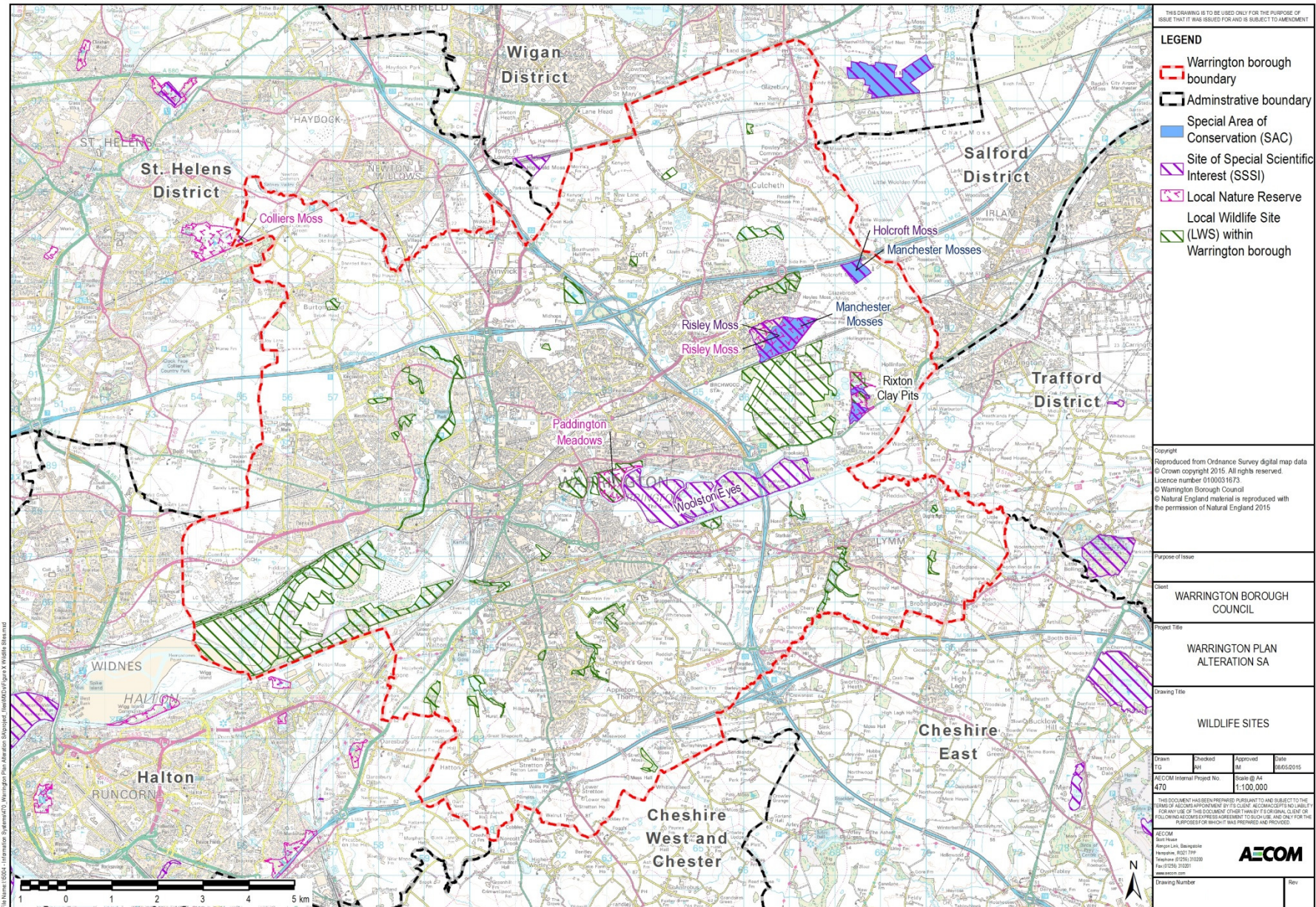
3.11.16 The development of further species action plans would provide an improved foundation for the protection of the various species and increase awareness of their locations so measures may be put in place for enhanced protection.

3.11.17 **Figure 3.10** shows the location of these designated wildlife sites throughout the Borough and in neighbouring authorities.

⁴² Natural England - Condition of SSSI report [online] at: www.sssi.naturalengland.org.uk (accessed 12/2013)

⁴³ Warrington Borough Council (2014) Annual Monitoring Report http://www.warrington.gov.uk/downloads/file/8187/amr_2014 (accessed 04/2015)

Figure 3.10 - Designated wildlife sites



3.12 Climate Change and Resource Use

Contextual Review

- 3.12.1 According to the *NPPF*, the need to ‘support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate’ is a core planning principle. Planning should also play a key role in securing radical reductions in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions planning for new development in locations and ways which reduce GHG emissions in order to meet the targets set out in the Climate Change Act 2008.
- 3.12.2 Local Plans should also take account of the effects of climate change in the long term, taking into account factors such as flood risk, coastal change, water supply and changes to biodiversity and landscape.
- 3.12.3 Local plans should encourage transport solutions that support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and reduce congestion; notably through concentrating new developments in existing cities and large towns and/or ensuring they are well served by public transport.
- 3.12.4 The *NPPF* also states that Planning authorities are encouraged to ‘adopt proactive strategies’ to adaptation. New developments should be planned so that they avoid increased vulnerability to climate change impacts. Where new development is at risk to such impacts, this should be managed through adaptation measures including the planning of green infrastructure.
- 3.12.5 Development should also be directed away from areas at highest risk from flooding, and should ‘not to be allocated if there are reasonably available sites appropriate for the proposed development in areas with a lower probability of flooding’. Where development is necessary, it should be made safe without increasing levels of flood risk elsewhere.
- 3.12.6 *The Flood and Water Management Act*⁴⁴ sets out the following approaches to flood risk management:
- Incorporating greater resilience measures into the design of new buildings, and retro-fitting at risk properties (including historic buildings);
 - Utilising the environment, such as management of the land to reduce runoff and harnessing the ability of wetlands to store water; and Identifying areas suitable for inundation and water storage.
- 3.12.7 *Climate Local – A New Strategy for Climate Change in Warrington (Jun 2013)* refreshes the Council’s pledge to take action on climate change and to lead Warrington toward a sustainable, low carbon future. It identifies three main priorities for action: reducing the Council’s own carbon emissions; helping to reduce carbon emissions across the borough as a whole; and adapting Warrington to cope with changing weather. *Climate Local* is an overarching document that commits the Council to setting appropriate targets and actions under each of the three priority areas. A number of existing strategies and frameworks already include strong targets and commitments to reduce the impact of climate change. The Carbon Management Plan that was published in March 2011 sets an ambitious target of reducing the Council’s own carbon emissions by 40% of 2009/10 levels by April 2015. The recently published Climate Resilience and Adaptation Framework 2013-2018, identifies a number of actions that the Council is going to undertake over the next five years in order to adapt to climate change.
- 3.12.8 The Council’s *Flood Risk Management Strategy (March 2011)*: aims to ensure that the Council prioritises its investment in managing the flood risk in Warrington in the best way possible in the next five years. It identifies where and what the flood risk is, how it can be managed and prioritises the delivery the identified measures.
- 3.12.9 The Government’s *Review of Waste Policy in England (2011)* recognises that environmental benefits and economic growth can be the result of a more sustainable approach to the use of materials. As such, it sets out a vision to move beyond our current ‘throwaway society’ to a ‘zero waste economy’. The report recognises that planning will play a critical role in delivering this ambition.

⁴⁴ Flood and Water Management Act (2010) [online] at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/29/contents>

- 3.12.10 The *Waste Management Plan for England (2013)* concludes that from the 2011 review, further policy measures are not needed to meet the key objectives of the revised Waste Framework Directive
- 3.12.11 The National Planning Policy for Waste (DCLG, 2014) states that waste planning authorities “should prepare Local Plans which identify sufficient opportunities to meet the identified needs of their area for the management of waste streams”. Key principles for waste management are identified including:
- Managing waste with the proximity principle in mind;
 - Encouraging the use of previously developed land and redundant agricultural land
 - Consideration of environmental, social and physical constraints (infrastructure);
 - Seeking to avoid Green Belt;

Waste: The current and projected baseline

- 3.12.12 In Warrington between 2013 and 2014, there was reduction of 1,884 tonnes in total municipal waste arisings. There was also an increase of 7,792 tonnes in the amount of recycled/composted waste that was collected⁴⁵.
- 3.12.13 In 2013/2014 a new municipal waste disposal contract came into effect which now sees non recyclable municipal waste diverted to an Energy from Waste (EfW) facility as opposed to being landfilled. There was a significant reduction of 47,225 tonnes in the amount of waste going to landfill when compared to the previous monitoring period and a consequential significant increase in recordings of the amount of waste incinerated for use as EfW, up by 37,549 tonnes. The EfW will provide Warrington with a much more sustainable way of treating waste.

Energy and Climate: The current and projected baseline

Carbon emissions and energy

- 3.12.14 In 2012, the estimate of total carbon dioxide emissions for Warrington was 8.3 tonnes per head. This represents a 0.2 tonnes per head increase compared to 2011⁴⁶.
- 3.12.15 Excluding emissions attributable to ‘*strategic road and freight*’, gives a figure of 6.4 tonnes for Warrington in 2012, which is lower than the North West and National averages. Warrington is intersected by several Motorways (M56, M62) so it is important to make this distinction in where emissions originate, as much of these emissions cannot be directly influenced by the Local Plan.
- 3.12.16 Table 3.4 below shows comparable figures between Warrington, the North West and England between 2005 and 2012. There is a general downward trend from 2005, to 2012. However there has been an increase in emissions between 2011 and 2012 across the board.

Table 3.4: CO₂ Emissions between 2005 and 2012

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
WBC per capita emissions (total)	9.9	9.9	9.8	9.3	8.5	8.8	7.8	8.3
WBC per capita emissions excluding motorway traffic emissions (dataset J)	7.8	7.7	7.5	7.2	6.5	6.8	5.9	6.4
Percentage difference	-21%	-22%	-23%	-23%	-24%	-22%	-24%	-23%
North West excluding motorways	7.9	7.7	7.6	7.3	6.6	6.9	6.2	6.7
National excluding motorways	8.2	8.2	8.0	7.7	6.8	7.1	6.4	6.7

Source: Department for Energy and Climate Change

⁴⁵ Warrington Borough Council (2014) Annual Monitoring Report http://www.warrington.gov.uk/downloads/file/8187/amr_2014 (accessed 04/2015)

⁴⁶ Department for Energy and Climate Change (2011) <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/local-authority-emissions-estimates>

- 3.12.17 In 2012, the average consumption on energy per household for Warrington was 18.2 MWh, the same as the North West total. This is the equivalent of 1.6 tonnes of oil.
- 3.12.18 Historically, increased development will result in a greater amount of greenhouse gas emissions. The North West Sustainable Energy Strategy sets a target of 10% of North West electricity requirements being met by renewable sources by 2010 (at least 15% by 2015 and at least 20% by 2020). Meeting this target will be dependent upon the successful delivery of a range of carbon reduction activities, including tighter standards for the performance of buildings and an increased provision of low-carbon energy⁴⁷.
- 3.12.19 It is anticipated that emissions will continue to fall over time as emissions targets tighten, the energy efficiency of homes is improved, low carbon energy schemes come on line and vehicle efficiency continues to improve.

Flooding

- 3.12.20 The Warrington Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Volume 2 (2011) followed on from the 2008 Volume which looked at fluvial, tidal, surface water and sewer flood risk. The report looked at each source of flooding in detail. Warrington is at risk from many different sources of flooding including, main rivers, ordinary watercourses, surface water runoff, sewer flooding and the residual risks associated with artificial water bodies such as the Bridgewater Canal, the Manchester Ship Canal and reservoirs.
- 3.12.21 The main source of flooding is the River Mersey and its five key tributaries, which flow through the centre of the borough. Flooding can be both fluvial and tidal in nature with the tidal limit of the Mersey located at Howley Weir, central Warrington.
- 3.12.22 The Environment Agency's June 2011 Flood Map indicated there are 6789 homes, businesses and other buildings within the 1 in 100-year fluvial or 1 in 200-year tidal flood extent (Flood Zone 3) within Warrington. These properties have a 1% (fluvial) or 0.5% (tidal) chance of flooding in any given year. This number rises to 14670 properties when the extreme 1 in 1000-year fluvial and tidal flood event is considered⁴⁸.
- 3.12.23 **Figure 3.11** below sets out the Environment Agency flood maps, as updated in May, 2015.
- 3.12.24 Since 2006, the Annual Monitoring Report (2014) reports there have been no planning permissions granted contrary to the advice of the Environment Agency on flooding and water quality grounds. Between 2013/14 the Council granted planning permission for eighteen development schemes that included condition(s) relating to energy efficiency and /or elements of decentralised and renewable or low carbon energy generation⁴⁹.

⁴⁷ North West Sustainable Energy Strategy (2006),

http://www.4nw.org.uk/downloads/documents/aug_06/nwra_1156410969_North_West_Sustainable_Energy_.pdf. (Accessed 12/ 2013)

⁴⁸ Warrington Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Volume 2 (2011)

⁴⁹ Warrington Borough Council (2014) Annual Monitoring Report http://www.warrington.gov.uk/downloads/file/8187/amr_2014 (accessed 04/2015)

Figure 3.11 - Flood Risk Classification, May 2015.



4. What are the key issues that should be a focus of the appraisal?

4.1 Key sustainability issues

4.1.1 Drawing on the review of the sustainability context and baseline, a range of sustainability issues have been identified to ensure that the SA remains focused. **Table 4.1** below presents a list of the key issues grouped under a series of sustainability themes. In the main, these issues remain unchanged from those identified in the SA Report published alongside the final Submission version of the Local Plan Core Strategy in September 2012.

Table 4.1: Key sustainability issues identified through scoping

Sustainability theme	Key sustainability issues relevant to the Local Plan
Economy and regeneration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pockets of Deprivation – Deprivation across the borough as a whole is below regional and national averages. However, there are high levels of multiple -deprivation, particularly in the inner areas of Warrington. Bewsey and Whitecross, Orford, Poplars and Hulme, Poulton North and Latchford East all have SOAs in the 10% most deprived in England. • There are also specific pockets of deprivation in the ‘Education, Training and Skills’ and Employment’ domains; particularly in the inner areas of Warrington. • Economic Growth – There is a need to continue to promote sustainable economic growth. • Town centres – There is a need to promote the vitality and viability of town centres.
Health and Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ageing population – Life expectancy in the Borough is above regional averages, and similar to national figures. There are significant changes to the structure of the population anticipated with a 37.8% increase in 65 to 74 year olds and an increase of 75.1% in over 74 year olds between 2006 and 2026. • Fear of Crime and Antisocial behaviour – Levels of crime within the borough have fallen steadily over the last 5 years and are similar to regional and national averages. However, household surveys show fear of crime at night is higher than national figures. • Pockets of Health Deprivation – There are pockets of health deprivation, with the IMD2010 showing high levels of health deprivation in 32 SOA’s in the borough.
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility of Employment – Travel to work by public transport / walking / cycling figures for Warrington are lower than regional or national average. Use of car is higher and the problem is exacerbated by the New Town Development pattern. • Increasing car use and dependency – National trend exacerbated by New Town car dependency. • Rising traffic volumes and traffic congestion. • High levels of commuting into and out of the Borough.
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing delivery - There is a pattern of solid housing completions over the last 5 years, with the majority taking place on brownfield land. • Housing needs - The 2012 sub national household projections suggest that there is a need for an average of 823 households per year between 2015-2032. This figure could increase or decrease depending upon local factors that will need to be explored. • There is a shortage of Affordable Housing - As Identified in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2011.

Sustainability theme	Key sustainability issues relevant to the Local Plan
Natural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pollution, air quality and climate change – Three AQMAs are designated within the Borough. One is related to the motorway network; one is focused on Wilson Patten Street and around Bank Quay Station; and a third is focussed on Sankey Green Island. • Quality of land and waterways in the Borough – A legacy of the towns industrial past. There are a large number of potentially contaminated sites within the Borough and a significant length of Warrington's rivers are graded as having poor chemical and biological quality. • Soil quality – Warrington contains considerable areas of Agricultural Land classified as Grade 2 and 3a (i.e. Best and Most Versatile).
Built and natural heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection and enhancement of the historic Environment – There is a significant number of historic assets in the Borough & a number of buildings / monuments have been identified as being in vulnerable or deteriorating condition. • Landscape character – There is a need to preserve and enhance the character of Warrington's countryside.
Biodiversity and Geodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection & Enhancement of Biodiversity and geodiversity Assets – There are significant nature conservation and wider green infrastructure assets in the borough.
Climate Change and resource use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flood protection in the borough – Areas within the Borough are identified on the Environment Agency's Indicative Floodplain maps. • Renewable energy and energy efficiency – There is a need for a more pro-active approach to energy production and usage. • Amount of waste entering land fill – Warrington's waste strategy sets out targets to increase recycling and composting to meet national targets.

4.2 The SA Framework

- 4.2.1 The sustainability issues identified through scoping have been used to establish eighteen sustainability objectives, which have been grouped under eight ‘sustainability appraisal themes’.
- 4.2.2 The sustainability objectives presented in **Table 4.2** remain unchanged (*from the SA Framework established in the Submission SA Report, 2012*) as a result of the scoping updates undertaken and presented in this Scoping Report. However, a set of supporting questions have been established to help identify the effects of the Plan alterations.
- 4.2.3 Given that the focus of the plan amendments will be on housing targets (and possibly distribution), these criteria seek to identify how different housing targets / strategies might affect the baseline position relating to each of the sustainability objectives.
- 4.2.4 Taken together; the SA themes, objectives and supporting criteria make-up the ‘SA Framework’, which provides the basis for undertaking appraisals.

Table 4.2: The ‘SA framework’

SA Theme	SA objectives	Sub criteria / supporting questions
Economy and regeneration	1. Strengthen the local economy and ensure sustainable economic growth	- Will the level and distribution of housing support the local workforce?
	2. Improve the education and skills of the population overall	- Will local schools be able to cope with the proposed level and distribution of housing?
	3. Reduce poverty, deprivation and social exclusion and secure economic inclusion	- Will the level and distribution of housing help to regenerate deprived areas?
Health and Wellbeing	5. Improve physical and mental health and reduce health inequalities	- Will new housing have good access to open space and active transport options? - Will local health services be able to cope with proposed levels of housing?
	7. Reduce crime, disorder and the fear of crime	- Will development be designed to reduce crime and the fear of crime?
	8. Enable groups to contribute to decision making and encourage a sense of community identity and welfare. 10. Provide, protect or enhance leisure opportunities, recreation facilities, green infrastructure and access to the countryside	- Will new housing have good access to recreational facilities on foot and by public transport? - How will the levels of housing affect community cohesion?
Accessibility	4. Reduce the need to travel, especially by car, improve choice and the use of more sustainable modes	- Will new housing be close to public transport links, or be capable of delivering new services? - Will new development be within walking distance of essential services such as schools and health facilities?
	9. Protect and enhance accessibility for all the essential services and facilities.	- Will new housing be in areas that are likely to encourage car usage?

SA Theme	SA objectives	Sub criteria / supporting questions
Housing	6. Ensure access to good quality, sustainable, affordable housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is new housing likely to be affordable given the viability of available land? - Will there be enough homes to meet identified needs of all social groups? - Is housing likely to be of a high quality design?
Natural Resources	<p>14. Protect, manage and improve local environmental quality including land, air and controlled waters and reduce the risk of flooding.</p> <p>16. Ensure the sustainable and prudent use and management of natural resources including the promotion of natural resources including the promotion of sustainable drainage and water conservation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Will new housing contribute to air quality problems, particularly within Warrington's three AQMAs. - Can waste water treatment plants cope with proposed levels of housing? - Could there be a loss of Grade 1, 2 or 3 agricultural land? - What effect will the level of housing proposed have on surface water run-off? - Could housing need to be allocated in areas at risk of flooding?
Built and natural heritage	11. Protect and enhance places and buildings of historic cultural and archaeological value.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Will new housing affect designated and locally important heritage assets and their settings?
	12. Protect and improve the quality and character of places, landscapes, townscapes and wider countryside whilst maintaining and strengthening local distinctiveness and sense of place.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Will housing alter the character of landscapes and the countryside? - Will new housing affect the tranquility of areas?
	19. Ensure high quality and sustainable design for buildings, spaces and the public realm that is appropriate to the locality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is housing likely to be of a high quality design?
Biodiversity and Geodiversity	13. Protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To what extent are different levels of housing development likely to affect biodiversity? - To what extent does new housing development provide opportunities to enhance green infrastructure (including benefits for wildlife). - To what extent can potential effects on wildlife be mitigated at strategic sites?
Climate Change and resource use	<p>15. Limit, mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change.</p> <p>17. Increase energy efficiency and production of renewable energy.</p> <p>18. Minimise waste and maximise reuse, recovery and recycling.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To what extent can household waste be managed locally? - Does housing present opportunities to establish decentralised energy networks? - Could housing development 'sterilise' areas that are suitable for wind energy? - Are there opportunities to enhance green infrastructure networks?

5. Appraisal methods

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 This chapter sets out the proposed methods and assumptions for undertaking the appraisals. The SA Framework set out **Table 4.2** is at the heart of the appraisal process, although the approaches to appraisal will differ slightly for various elements of the Plan. For example, the appraisal of policies would be presented differently to the appraisal of strategic site options.

5.2 Appraisal assumptions

- 5.2.1 It is important to set out any assumptions that will be made when undertaking the SA. This includes assumptions about what aspects of the Plan need to be (re)appraised, the findings from previous stages of appraisal of the Local Plan, and any limitations.
- 5.2.2 It is important to recognise that the majority of the policies within the Local Plan Core Strategy have been Adopted, are uncontested, and will not be affected by the plan amendment process. The SA should therefore be undertaken in this context, without the need to duplicate previous stages of appraisal that have been accepted by the inspector as sound.
- 5.2.3 Having said this, it is also acknowledged that the Plan alteration process is evidence-led and that evidence prepared in support of the alterations may result in the need to consider wider changes to the plan.
- 5.2.4 The High Court Ruling did not conclude that the Submission SA Report (2012) was deficient. On this basis, it is considered unnecessary to reappraise every element of the Local Plan.
- 5.2.5 Although the High Court ruling did suggest there were certain 'deficiencies' with the SA Addendum (Jan, 2014) it was not explicit on what these actually were. The main issue identified was that a separate non-technical summary had not been prepared.
- 5.2.6 We are confident that other elements of the Addendum remain relevant and robust, and should therefore be used to inform the SA for the Plan alternations (along with the 2012 SA Report).
- 5.2.7 In particular, the scoping element of the SA Addendum was not challenged, nor found to be deficient, and it is therefore considered appropriate to make use of this baseline information if it remains relevant and up-to-date.
- 5.2.8 The appraisal findings were only challenged with regards to the Main Modifications relating to the allocation of housing (i.e. the removal of policy CS9, and the allocation of Omega / Lingley Mere). Therefore, the findings relating to other Main Modifications (for example, with regards to policy IW2 and CS8) still remain valid and it should not be necessary to undertake further appraisals of these modifications. Notwithstanding this, the appraisal of the plan alterations will need to identify what the effects of these alterations are in the context of the Adopted Plan.
- 5.2.9 The SA should be focused on those issues relating to the plan amendments (i.e. housing provision) and those covered by the two SA Addendum that were found to be 'deficient' (*i.e. the Main Modifications relating to the allocation of strategic sites for housing*).

5.3 Appraisal methodology

Appraising the housing strategy (and any reasonable alternatives)

- 5.3.1 The Local Plan Core Strategy amendments will identify a fresh, evidence-based housing target for inclusion in the Plan.

- 5.3.2 Whilst the regeneration-based strategy in the Adopted Local Plan Core Strategy is expected to remain in place (*provided the evidence does not suggest that wider plan changes may be necessary*), it may still be necessary to identify different ways in which this new housing target could be delivered. This will involve looking at the distribution of housing (*as long as it is in broad conformity with the Adopted Plan spatial strategy*) and it might also be appropriate to test different levels of housing growth in the SA.
- 5.3.3 The SA will identify and evaluate 'likely significant effects' on the baseline / likely future baseline associated with each sustainability objective in the SA Framework. Effects will be forecast taking into account the criteria presented within Schedule 2 of the SEA Regs and current levels of knowledge. Hence account will be taken of the probability, duration, scale, frequency and reversibility of effects as far as possible.
- 5.3.4 The appraisal findings could be presented in a number of ways.
- 5.3.5 Key to any approach taken is the need to clearly demonstrate why impacts have been determined as 'significant' or not as the case may be. It is also important to present the findings in a reader-friendly format. The example below illustrates our proposed approach to summarising the impact findings when comparing alternative housing strategies.

Figure 5.1: *Example of a strategic alternative appraisal*

Biodiversity	A: Brownfield only	-	B. Partial greenfield	-	C. Further greenfield release	↓
Nature of effects	Increased housing on greenfield land (alternative 3) could have a negative effect on biodiversity through the loss and fragmentation of habitat. Effects would be small scale, permanent and would occur in the short, medium and long term.					
Sensitivity of receptors	There would be negligible effects associated with alternatives 1 and 2 which would avoid greenfield land.					
Likelihood of effects	The majority of land lost and disturbed under alternative 1 would not affect designated wildlife sites.					
Significance	Mitigation measures such as habitat buffers could be secured as part of developments on affected sites. This would reduce the effects, although it is likely that biodiversity would be affected to some extent.					
Significance	Although alternative 2 presents the potential for negative effects, receptors are not sensitive, and mitigation measures would make widespread effects unlikely. Therefore the effects are not considered to be significant for either alternative.					

Appraising strategic site options

- 5.3.6 In order to deliver the spatial strategy, it may be necessary to allocate strategic sites in the Local Plan at certain locations. To inform this process, a site appraisal process would need to be undertaken to identify the sustainability credentials of a range of reasonable site options.
- 5.3.7 This process would provide an appreciation of the issues from the 'bottom up', whilst an appraisal of strategic alternatives would provide the strategic direction from the 'top down'.
- 5.3.8 Using the SA framework as a starting point, a site appraisal methodology has been developed which identifies a range of criteria for assessing the constraints and opportunities associated with potential site options.
- 5.3.9 If site allocations were deemed necessary, a proforma would be completed for each site option, and would be presented as a technical appendix to the SA Report. A summary of the effects identified for each site will also be included in the SA Report, with accompanying rationale as to why sites had been selected or discarded.

5.3.10 **Appendix A** presents the proposed site appraisal framework in full, including any assumptions and limitations.

Appraising the Local Plan Core Strategy ‘as a whole’

5.3.11 Most of the policies in the Adopted Local Plan Core Strategy have already been appraised and it is not considered necessary to appraise the implications of these policies again.

5.3.12 However, it will be necessary to establish what effects the Local Plan Core Strategy is likely to have in light of the alterations. Because the Plan needs to be read ‘as a whole’, it will therefore be important to consider how the existing Adopted policies interact with any new policies relating to housing (*i.e. the cumulative and synergistic effects*).

5.3.13 The appraisal of the plan as a whole will draw upon those appraisals already undertaken at previous stages of plan making (including as appropriate the Submission version of the SA Report [2012] and the SA Report Addendum, January [2014]). The appraisals will however be updated as necessary to reflect the updated scope.

6. Next steps

6.1 Consultation on the Scope of the SA

6.1.1 The Regulations require that: ‘When deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information that must be included in the report, the responsible authority shall consult the consultation bodies’. In England, the consultation bodies are Natural England, The Environment Agency and English Heritage.

6.1.2 Consultation on the scope of the SA was undertaken on a number of occasions as the Adopted Local Plan was being developed. This included the preparation and publication of two scoping reports in 2006 and 2009, and updates to the scope being presented in several SA Reports, including in the SA Report for the Submission of the Local Plan (September, 2012), and the SA Report Addendum (January, 2014).

6.1.3 As discussed previously, there is a need to update the scope of the SA again so that it is up to date and focuses on the appropriate issues relevant to the latest iteration of the plan-making process (*i.e. the Local Plan alterations relating to housing*).

6.1.4 This Scoping Report presents those updates to the scope and the proposed methodologies for appraising the Local Plan alterations.

6.1.5 This Scoping Report has been sent to the three consultation bodies for a period of five weeks to invite their feedback and input on the scope of the SA. Following this period of consultation the Scoping Report will be finalised, taking consultation feedback into account as considered appropriate.

6.2 Consultation questions

6.2.1 We have set out some key questions below to help stimulate thinking about the scope of the SA:

1) Are there other policies, plans and strategies or relevant legislation or regulation that you feel may be relevant to the SA of the Local Plan Core Strategy Primary Plan Alteration?

2) Do you agree that the key sustainability issues affecting Warrington that are relevant to the Local Plan Core Strategy Primary Plan Alteration have been identified? If not, are there others which you think should be included?

3) Do you agree that the draft SA objectives put forward provide an appropriate framework for

assessing the sustainability effects of the Local Plan Core Strategy Primary Plan Alteration?

4) Are the number, focus and level of detail of the proposed objectives and sub-objectives appropriate and proportionate given the aims, geographical scope and likely influence of the Local Plan Core Strategy Primary Plan Alteration?

5) Do you agree with the broad approach outlined for appraising site options?

6) Do you have any specific comments on Appendix A - draft Site Appraisal Framework and the criteria proposed to assess the likely significant effects of allocating sites in the Local Plan Core Strategy Primary Plan Alteration?

6.3 Timetable for the Local Plan Core Strategy alterations

- 6.3.1 The Council has prepared an updated Local Development Scheme which sets out the key milestones for the preparation of the primary plan alterations.
- 6.3.2 The Council is currently gathering evidence in support of the primary plan alteration in relation to housing land supply (SHLAA) and housing needs (SHMA). This work will help the council to identify an appropriate strategy for delivering housing needs. Appraisal of reasonable alternatives through the SA will be an important part of this process.
- 6.3.3 The planning authority intends to undertake the first stage of statutory consultation on the plan alterations between September and October 2015. An interim SA report will be published alongside the draft plan as part of this 'Regulation 18' consultation. This will identify the effects of the preferred approach and any reasonable alternatives.
- 6.3.4 Following this consultation, a draft version of the Local Plan Core Strategy will be prepared reflecting the preferred plan alterations (*taking into consideration consultation responses and SA findings*). A further consultation will be undertaken in January 2016 in line with 'Regulation 19' of the Regulations.
- 6.3.5 It is the intention to submit the Local Plan Core Strategy (amendments) to the Secretary of State in March 2016, and provided the Inspector finds the Plan sound, the estimated date of adoption is October 2016.

Appendix A – draft Site Appraisal Framework

SA objectives	Criteria	Use	Significant positive effects likely	Positive effects likely	Negative effects likely	Significant negative effects likely	Rationale, assumptions and limitations
Economy and regeneration							
Strengthen the local economy and ensure sustainable economic growth	EC1: Would site development lead to the loss of employment land?	Housing and jobs	Employment development proposed	Not allocated for employment	Yes – low quality employment site	Yes – High quality employment site	Creation of employment land will help to encourage investment and job creation. Loss of employment land may not necessarily affect the economy negatively. Low quality / high quality as defined in the Employment Land Review
	EC2: Distance to Principal Road Network by vehicle.	Jobs	<1mile	<3miles	>3miles	>4miles	It is assumed that sites with good access to the principal road network will be more attractive to developers.
Improve the education and skills of the population overall	Not applicable	-	-	-	-	-	The location of development is not considered likely to have an effect on the level of skills and education. New development would be expected to contribute to new school places (if possible) However, accessibility to a school can have an effect on whether pupils can attend the schools they want and can get there in a sustainable, healthy way. Therefore, criteria ACC1 and ACC2 are relevant for this SA objective.
Reduce poverty, deprivation and social exclusion and secure economic inclusion	EC3: How close is the site to key employment sites?	Housing	<1200m away	1.2km – 3km away	3km – 5km	>5km away	It is assumed that access to a job will help to reduce levels of deprivation. The closer job opportunities are likely to be more accessible to communities that do not have access to a car.
Health and Wellbeing							
Improve physical and mental health and reduce health inequalities	Not applicable.	-	-	-	-	-	A range of factors influence health and wellbeing. The location of a site is unlikely to have a major effect, unless this impairs access to health facilities, open space and jobs. These factors are already covered by other aspects of the framework such as accessibility.

SA objectives	Criteria	Use	Significant positive effects likely	Positive effects likely	Negative effects likely	Significant negative effects likely	Rationale, assumptions and limitations
Reduce crime, disorder and the fear of crime	Not applicable.	-	-	-	-	-	The location of a site is not likely to have a major effect on crime and the fear of crime. Scheme layout and design can have an effect, but this would be addressed for individual planning proposals.
Enable groups to contribute to decision making and encourage a sense of community identity and welfare.	HW2: Is the area supported by community facilities? (<i>Village halls, places of worship, community centres</i>)	Housing	New facilities could be delivered	Community facilities within 1200m	Community facilities within 1200m-2000m	Loss of community facilities. No community facilities within 2000m	Access to a community facility is considered positive in terms of enabling groups to meet, build identities and engage in decision making. It is recognised that physical access to facilities does not necessarily encourage community development. Qualitative data will also be sought about the usage, condition and capacity of facilities
Provide, protect or enhance leisure opportunities, recreation facilities, green infrastructure and access to the countryside	HW 3: Access to local natural greenspace (ANGST). To what extent do the sites meet the following ANGST ⁵⁰ standards? 1. <i>Natural greenspace at least 2 hectares in size, no more than 300 metres from home;</i> 2. <i>At least one accessible 20 hectare greenspace site within two kilometre of home.</i>	Housing	Standards met for both criteria.	Standards met for 1 criteria only	Standards not met for either criteria.	N/A	A negative impact is scored where standards are not met as it would require further consideration of mitigation measures. In some instances development could enhance provision, but this is not assumed at this stage. ANGST is considered a useful measure of the sustainability of locations.
Accessibility							
Reduce the need to travel, especially by car, improve choice and the use of more sustainable modes	ACC1: How accessible is the site to the nearest primary school on foot?	Housing	0-5min walk (0-400m) Site development will provide new school	5 - 12.5 min walk (400m-1000m)	12.5 - 25min walk (1000 - 2000m)	> 25 min walk (2000m)	2000m is considered to be the maximum 'reasonable walking distance' ⁵¹ , which could encourage less car use or shorter journeys by other forms of transport. Distance is measured from site boundary.

⁵⁰ Natural England (2010) Nature Nearby: Accessible Natural Greenapace Standards (available online) at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/40004?category=47004>

⁵¹ CIHT (2000) Providing for Journeys on Foot

SA objectives	Criteria	Use	Significant positive effects likely	Positive effects likely	Negative effects likely	Significant negative effects likely	Rationale, assumptions and limitations
Protect and enhance accessibility for all the essential services and facilities.	ACC2: How accessible is the site to the nearest Secondary school?	Housing	<1200m away	1.2km – 3km away	3km-5km	>5km away	The capacity of nearby primary schools will also need to be taken into account and further evidence will be sought to establish whether schools are capable of accommodating growth, and if not whether expansion would be possible. 1000m is considered an acceptable walking distance to schools ⁵²
	ACC3: How well served is the site by a bus service?	Housing and jobs	Regular bus service within 400m	Low frequency bus service within 400m Regular bus service within 400m-800m	Low frequency bus service within 400m-800m Regular bus service within 800m	Low frequency bus service more than 800m away Regular bus service more than 1200m away	The Manual for Streets suggests that 'walkable neighbourhoods' will typically have access to a range of services and facilities within 800m ⁵² . 'Regular' is considered to be a stop which is serviced 3 times in one hour. Low frequency is considered to be a stop which is serviced less than 3 times in one hour.
	ACC4: How accessible is the site to the nearest train station?	Housing and jobs	<1200m away	1.2km – 3km away	3km-5km	>5km away	<1200m is considered a reasonable walking distance ⁵³ .
	ACC5: What is the overall distance to a GP service or health centre?	Housing	<1200m away	1.2km – 3km away	3km – 5km	>5km away	It is assumed that closer facilities will enable communities to better access healthcare, particularly those without access to a car. If information is available about the capacity of GP facilities, this will need to be factored into the appraisal. If there is limited capacity at a nearby GP for example, then the reality might be that the nearest GP is much further away.
Housing							
Ensure access to good quality, sustainable, affordable housing	HO1: To what extent will the development help to meet housing needs? <i>Deliverability and scale</i>	Housing	Site is available for development within the next 5 years Or Site is available for development within the plan	Site is available for development within the plan period	Site is potentially available for development over the plan period There may be issues with the delivery of affordable	Site not available for development (i.e. screened out)	Provision of a higher level of development would contribute more significantly to the Borough's housing targets and would achieve economies of scale. As per policy SN2 in the Adopted Local Plan, affordable housing targets will be higher on sites on Greenfield and outside of inner Warrington. It is important to recongise that availability may change over time.

⁵² Department for Transport (2007) The Manual for Streets

⁵³ CIHT (2000) Providing for Journeys on Foot

SA objectives	Criteria	Use	Significant positive effects likely	Positive effects likely	Negative effects likely	Significant negative effects likely	Rationale, assumptions and limitations
			period and will deliver over 750 dwellings and a high amount of affordable homes		housing)		This assessment does not consider viability.
Natural Resources							
Ensure the sustainable and prudent use and management of natural resources including the promotion of natural resources including the promotion of sustainable drainage and water conservation.	NR1: What are the potential impacts on air quality?	Housing	-	Development more than 1km from AQMA	Housing development within 1km of an AQMA	Development within 75m of AQMA	<p>An Air quality Assessment is generally requested for proposals within 75m of an AQMA.</p> <p>The scale of development will vary from between approximately 150 dwellings to 1500 dwellings at any given site. There may also be the potential for cumulative effects if more than one site is proposed in any area. These factors will need to be taken into account when strategic options are being assessed.</p> <p>It is recognized that development in areas that are not currently AQMAs could worsen air quality in these areas. If possible a qualitative assessment of the effects on air quality in general will be undertaken to supplement this objective assessment.=</p>
Protect, manage and improve local environmental quality including land, air and controlled waters and reduce the risk of flooding.	NR2: Could development of the site lead to the remediation of land potentially affected by contamination?	Housing and Jobs	Site is potentially contaminated and could be remediated.	Site is not thought to be contaminated	Site is potentially contaminated but may be difficult to remediate.		Most contaminated land is unlikely to be remediated without development funding. The presence of contamination could therefore be viewed positively where viability is not adversely affected.
	NR3: Would allocation of the site result in the loss of High Quality Agricultural Land?	Housing and Jobs	Does not contain any agricultural land grade 1-3b	Contains less than 10hectares of agricultural land 1-3	Contains more than 10 hectares of agricultural land class 1-2 or a total of 20 hectares1-3	Contains more than 20 hectares of agricultural land class 1-2	Although there is little guidance, the loss of 20 hectares triggers consultation with DEFRA/Natural England, which can be considered significant.
	NR4: Does the site fall within a Groundwater Source Protection Zone, as identified by the Environment Agency?	Housing and Jobs	-	Falls outside	Site falls within Zone 2 or 3	Site falls within zone 1 (inner protection zone)	Potential for negative impacts in zones 1-3. However, type of use would be important and mitigation would be possible.

SA objectives	Criteria	Use	Significant positive effects likely	Positive effects likely	Negative effects likely	Significant negative effects likely	Rationale, assumptions and limitations
	NR5: Is the site (or part of) within an identified flood zone?	Housing and Jobs	-	Site predominantly within flood zone 1 (>70%)	Contains areas of flood zone 2/3 (>30%)	Site contains large areas within flood zone 2/3 (>80%)	Provided that a site is not wholly within a flood zone 2/3 it should be possible to avoid and/or mitigate impacts. However, proximity to zone 1 is preferable as it reduces the risk and potential cost of mitigation. Sites wholly within zones 2 and 3 should be sieved out. However, for those sites where it is considered mitigation could still be implemented a 'red' categorization is given.
Built and natural heritage							
Protect and enhance places and buildings of historic cultural and archaeological value.	BNH1: Potential for direct impacts upon heritage assets. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conservation Area Nationally listed buildings Scheduled Ancient Monuments Registered Park or Garden. 	Housing and jobs	Opportunity to protect and / or enhance heritage assets	No heritage assets within or adjacent (50m) to the sites	Site contains or is within 50m from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grade II heritage features Conservation area Ancient park or garden 	Site contains or is within 50m from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grade 1 heritage features Ancient park or garden 	The criteria combine a consideration of various heritage features to avoid potential duplication. E.g. an asset could be listed, in a consideration area and also a SAM. Proximity to heritage assets does not necessarily mean that impacts will occur, but it is assumed that they may be more likely. Will seek to supplement this with a qualitative assessment.
Protect and improve the quality and character of places, landscapes, townscapes and wider countryside whilst maintaining and strengthening local distinctiveness and sense of place.	BNH1: Capacity of the landscape to accommodate development, while respecting its character.	Housing and jobs	High	Medium-high Medium.	Medium-low	Low	Relies upon the findings of Landscape Character Assessments and capacity studies.
Ensure high quality and sustainable design for buildings, spaces and the public realm that is appropriate to the locality.	Not applicable	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Biodiversity and Geodiversity							

SA objectives	Criteria	Use	Significant positive effects likely	Positive effects likely	Negative effects likely	Significant negative effects likely	Rationale, assumptions and limitations
Protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity.	BG1: Could allocation of the site have a potential impact on a European Site SSSI, SPA or SAC?	Housing and jobs	-	Outside catchment area	Within catchment area	Within 400m	The distance thresholds used are greater for European sites, then SSSIs, then local sites to reflect their level of designation. This does not mean that effects are automatically more significant though.
	BG1: Could allocation of the site have a potential impact on a SSSI?	Housing and jobs	-	>400m	<400m	Within or adjacent to a designated site (<50m from site boundary)	It is assumed that sites within or adjacent to (<50m) a SSSI are more likely to have a direct impact. However, it is recognised that proximity does not necessarily equate to impacts as this is dependent upon the scheme design and type/condition of wildlife sites,
	BG2: Could allocation of the site have a potential adverse impact on designated Local Wildlife Sites, Local Nature Reserve, RIGs, Potential Wildlife Sites or any other site of wildlife or geodiversity value such as Ancient Woodland (including where BAP species have been recorded)?	Housing and jobs	-	<200m No BAP species recorded	Contains or is adjacent to (50m) a local wildlife site / BAP species have been recorded within 50m of the site. Suitable for biodiversity offsetting.	Contains a locally important site not suitable for biodiversity offsetting	<i>Measurements from site boundaries</i>
	BG3: What is the potential impact on TPOs?	Housing and jobs	-	No TPOs on site	TPOs present that could potentially be protected (i.e. confined to boundaries)	Multiple TPOs that would be difficult to protect (i.e. scattered throughout)	Development on a site containing multiple TPOs that are not confined to one area would be likely to result in unavoidable loss of these assets.
Climate Change and resource use							
Limit, mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Increase energy efficiency and production of renewable energy.	Not applicable	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Site location may present opportunities to develop heat networks. However, the information required to make an accurate assessment of potential is not available.

SA objectives	Criteria	Use	Significant positive effects likely	Positive effects likely	Negative effects likely	Significant negative effects likely	Rationale, assumptions and limitations
Minimise waste and maximise reuse, recovery and recycling.	RU1: Would allocation of the site result in the use of previously developed land?	Housing and jobs	Predominantly brownfield (>70%)	Partial Brownfield (>30%)	Site is predominantly Greenfield (>70%)	-	Brownfield redevelopment is considered likely to have a positive effect on the baseline position by encouraging reuse of land.
	RU2: Is there good access to a Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC)?	Housing	<5km	5km-10km	>10km	-	Use of HWRCs is by car. Access by foot is typically prohibited and unlikely.

