

**Warrington Borough Council Local Plan**

**Preferred Development Option Regulation 18 consultation July 2017**

Draft comments from [REDACTED] Mersey Gateway Environmental Trust,  
25/8/2017

Reference	Text
<p><b>General comments</b></p>	<p>The MGET has been set up to promote for the benefit of the public the conservation protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment of the Upper Mersey Estuary.</p> <p>It is a visionary approach to long term management, involving local people and allowing the scope for additional innovative benefits and ecological opportunities to be brought into the Upper Mersey Estuary area. The Warrington Local Plan proposes some long term environmental and development changes : these changes allow scope for the MGET to co-ordinate the ecological opportunities with the Borough Council, in particular on the Waterfront and related policies, to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secure positive environmental outcomes; adding value to development; looking to improve long term resilience.</li> <li>• Think long term and about the big picture, making the estuary more resilient to climate change, flooding, nature diversity;</li> <li>• Adding value by turning a no net loss approach to planning mitigation into net gain. The Mersey Gateway saltmarsh restoration plans, which are currently underway, are a good example of such an approach.</li> </ul> <p>The MGET comments on the Local Plan are framed by its 4 key messages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protecting, managing, conserving and improving the local environment is central to the Trust</li> <li>• The MGET is a unique and innovative approach to environmental management and research that will bring major benefits/improvements to the area</li> <li>• The MGET will be aiming to bring substantial new additional funding to the area</li> <li>• The MGET aim to develop the Upper Mersey Estuary into a ‘Living Laboratory’ available for future generations to enjoy, study and understand.</li> </ul> <p>The MGET is an active charity and company, collecting good quality scientific data from the estuary over a 30 year period. This will help to inform the actions for the long term vision of a better, well connected, wildlife rich estuary.</p>

<p><b>Detailed comments</b></p>	
<p><b>Section 3 Call for Sites</b></p>	<p>The MGET note the content of 3.6:</p> <p><i>3.6 The Council is aware that Fiddlers Ferry power station may come forward for development during the Plan Period. It currently remains an operational coal-fired power station with ash processing operations but its long term future remains uncertain. It may be that the site will continue to be used for power generation but the site could represent a major future brownfield redevelopment opportunity. There is not currently sufficient certainty for it to be allocated as a development site, but given the scale of the site, this will need to be kept under review and the site’s future has been taken into account in the Council’s approach to flexibility of land supply and safeguarding as set out below.</i></p> <p>Comment: the MGET, in their 30 year vision for the Upper Mersey Estuary, recognise that the Fiddlers Ferry site is an opportunity for change, with wildlife improvements to be included in future plans. As an example, the MGET already are working with the owners of Fiddlers Ferry, SSE, on a land management project to improve the saltmarsh and reedbed habitats that are adjacent to the power station area. Such an approach can continue: the MGET recognise there are plenty of scope for environmental improvement in the future development proposals and the MGET welcome the opportunity to be part of the future vision of the landowner and the Borough Council.</p>
<p><b>Section 4 Towards a preferred development option</b></p>	<p>The MGET notes the paragraph on improved infrastructure in paragraph 4.6:</p> <p><i>4.6 The Council believes planning for this level of growth provides a unique opportunity for Warrington to make the transition from a New Town into a New City. In doing so, it can address the severe congestion which impacts on the town, unlock major brownfield development sites and improve the quality of life for existing residents through improved infrastructure as well as enabling the creation of new sustainable communities. Planning for this level of growth will require the Council to work proactively with the public and private sector to ensure the extensive infrastructure required to ensure growth is sustainable is delivered.</i></p> <p>Comment: the MGET has been set up to add value to large scale infrastructure projects and can add value to the detail stage of the Waterfront proposals and adjacent estuary areas</p> <p>The MGET can help to maximise the potential of the closure of Arpley landfill to create a new recreation and wildlife resource as well as a place to further the living laboratory concept that is being developed by the Trust.</p>
	<p>Employment development- assessment of Employment Land options</p> <p>The MGET notes the content of paragraphs 4.79:</p> <p><i>4.79 The Waterfront, including the expansion of Port Warrington, is a long standing strategic priority and the principle of Green Belt release to facilitate this development</i></p>

	<p><i>was established in the current Local Plan Core Strategy. There are obviously locational specific requirements for Port Warrington to be adjacent to the Ship Canal, although its development will be dependent on Western Link enabling significantly enhanced transport connections.</i></p> <p>Comment: The MGET acknowledges the role of Port Warrington expansion in unlocking new opportunities for the Upper Mersey Estuary. The ecosystem services of the whole area including habitat and provisioning; regulating and cultural services are of particular importance and require protection and enhancement in accordance to the scale of the development. With the potential loss of area at Moore Nature Reserve, it is imperative the Local Plan delivers an imaginative solution to high quality development, environmental protection and the engagement of (existing and future) local people.</p>
<p><b>Section 5 Preferred Development Option</b></p>	<p>Warrington Waterfront</p> <p><i>5.24 The Waterfront provides a major development opportunity, with the potential to connect the City Centre to the Mersey and the Ship Canal. This is a significant area of previously developed land comprised of several components in a central and sustainable location adjacent to the City Centre. It also provides the opportunity to create a new community in close proximity to a major new country park that will be created through the restoration of the Arpley landfill site which has now ceased operation.</i></p> <p>Comment: the MGET has experience of delivering environmental improvements as part of the Mersey Gateway Bridge, a major infrastructure project. We welcome the opportunity to add value to the proposals to realise the Waterfront development.</p> <p>The MGET is in an ideal position to work with the Borough Council and landowners to realise the Waterfront.</p> <p>In particular, we see our role in helping to shape the future of Arpley closed landfill, the environmental education area at Moore and adjacent land in the Upper Mersey estuary.</p>