

Sustainability Appraisal for the Pre-Submission Warrington Local Plan (2021-2038)



Non-Technical Summary

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Introduction

This is a Non-Technical Summary document which concisely summarises the Sustainability Appraisal for the Warrington Local Plan (2021-2038). The new Local Plan for Warrington has been under preparation since 2016; it will set out a strategy for the amount and distribution of housing and employment land which is required to meet the Borough's needs until 2038. The Plan will provide direction with locally specific policies and site allocations which will help to deliver the strategy and shape the Borough's built environment. Once adopted, the Plan will replace the existing Local Plan Core Strategy which was adopted in 2014. The purpose of a Sustainability Appraisal is to ensure that the potential environmental effects of a Plan have been considered, including looking at alternative strategies which could reasonably be considered.

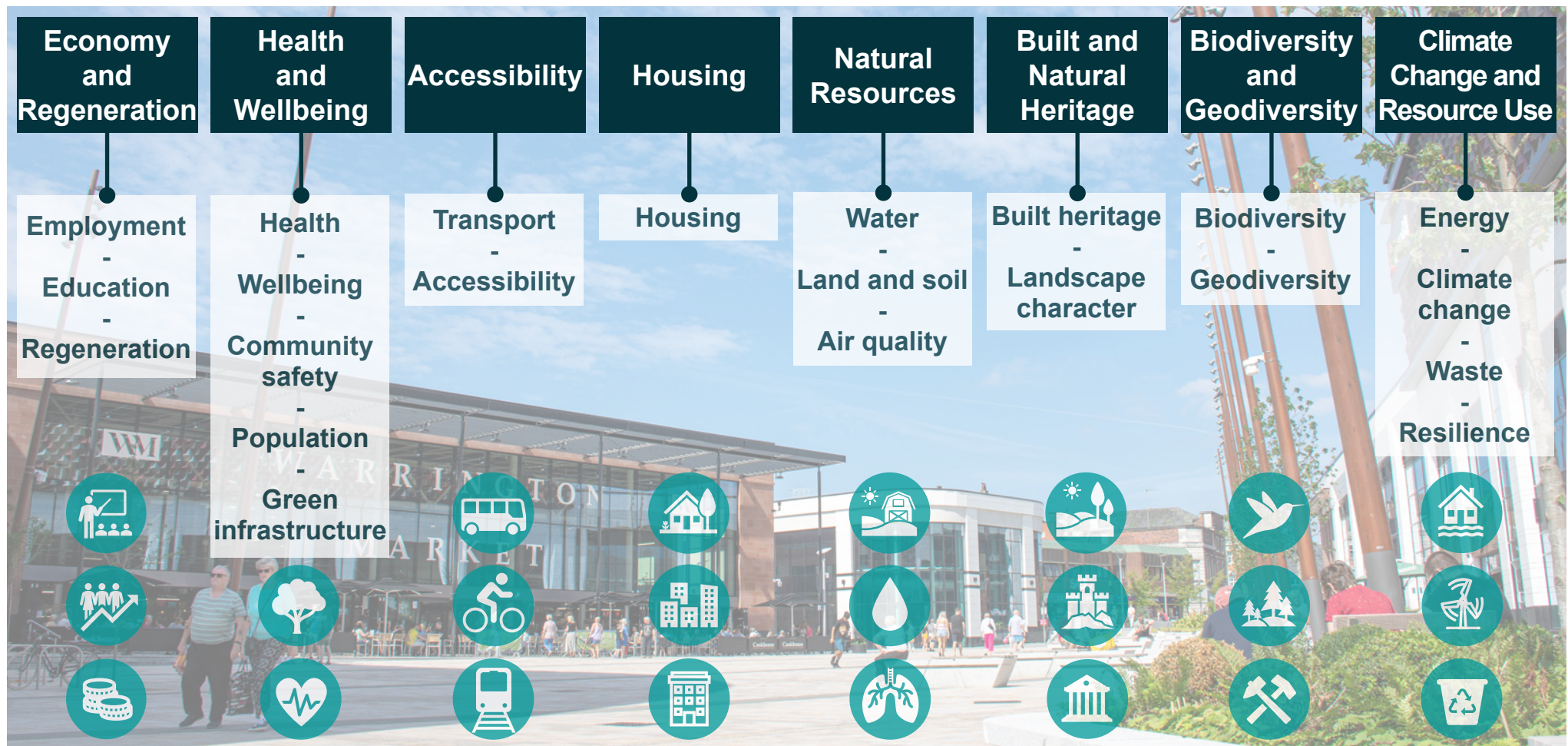
Warrington is a Unitary Authority in the North West of England which lies between the Liverpool City Region (to the north and west), Greater Manchester (north and east) and Cheshire (south). The M62 runs east-west across the Borough, the M6 runs north-south and the M56 runs east-west in the southern part of Warrington. The River Mersey flows from east to west through the Borough, with the Manchester Ship Canal running broadly adjacent to it.



Scoping Summary

A scoping exercise was carried out in order to establish the key sustainability issues and objectives for the area. The cross-cutting topics reflect broad areas of sustainability which could be significantly affected by the Plan.

The below diagram shows the sustainability topics which have been 'scoped in' for consideration within this Sustainability Appraisal, and the themes which are included within each topic.



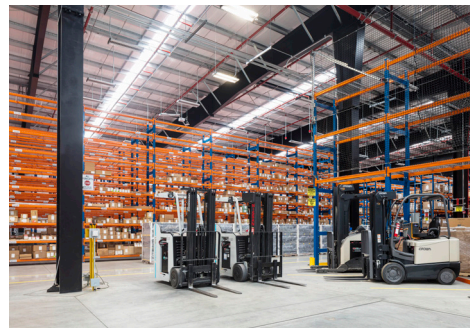
Scoping Key Issues

Economy and Regeneration

Deprivation across the borough as a whole is below regional and national averages, though there are stark inequalities, with high levels of multiple deprivation, concentrated mainly in the inner areas of Warrington.

The 2021 **Economic Development Needs Assessment** identifies a need for 316ha of employment land through until 2038.

There is a need to continue to promote **sustainable economic growth in Warrington**, building upon its existing strong economy.



Accessibility

Car dependency is high in Warrington, with low rates of sustainable transportation (active travel/public transport) amongst commuters; an issue exacerbated by the New Town Development Pattern.

There are rising levels of **traffic volumes** and consequential **congestion**.



Health and Wellbeing

There is a need to support the vitality and viability of **town centres**.

Levels of **crime** have fallen steadily in recent years to match averages, though **fear of crime** is high, especially in deprived areas.

Health deprivation is an issue in Warrington, with central pockets seeing concentrations alongside areas across the Borough.

Green infrastructure provides multi-functional benefits for health and wellbeing and should be protected and enhanced.

Obesity rates amongst adults are rising.

Areas of insufficient capacity for a growing population to access **primary care facilities**.

Housing

Housing delivery rates show recent **consistent deliveries**, mostly on brownfield land.

The **Local Housing Needs Assessment (2021)** evidences the need to be **816dpa**.

A longer-term **shortage** of **sites** for **Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople communities**.

Shortage of affordable housing.



Natural Resources

Warrington has **two AQMAs**, one linked to the motorway and the other to the inner ring road.

The Borough has a large amount of **contaminated land** alongside significant lengths of **poor chemical and biological quality rivers**.

There is a considerable amount of **best and most versatile** Grade 2 and 3a **agricultural land** which

may be lost as a result of Green Belt release.

There is a need to protect **mineral resources** and supporting infrastructure from sterilisation.



Biodiversity and Geodiversity

There are significant **nature conservation** and wider **green infrastructure** assets in the borough that need to be protected, enhanced and made more resilient.

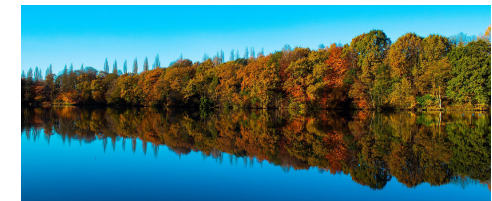


Built and Natural Heritage

There is a significant number of **historic assets** in the Borough and a number of buildings and monuments have been identified as being in **vulnerable** or **deteriorating condition**.



There is a need to preserve and enhance the **character of Warrington's countryside**, whilst recognising the **need to release Green Belt** land.



Climate Change and Resource Use

Certain locations within the Borough are identified as being at risk of flooding.

There is a need for a more **pro-active** approach to **energy production and usage**.

There are European and National targets for **waste reduction** and an increase

in **reuse, recycling** and **composting**.



Summary of Spatial Strategy

Housing Strategy

Several stages of options appraisal were carried out in order to arrive at the preferred spatial strategy for the Pre-Submission Version Local Plan. The options work has been an iterative process which has moved from a starting point of appraising high level scenarios, to a more refined process of appraising specific locations for growth; it has

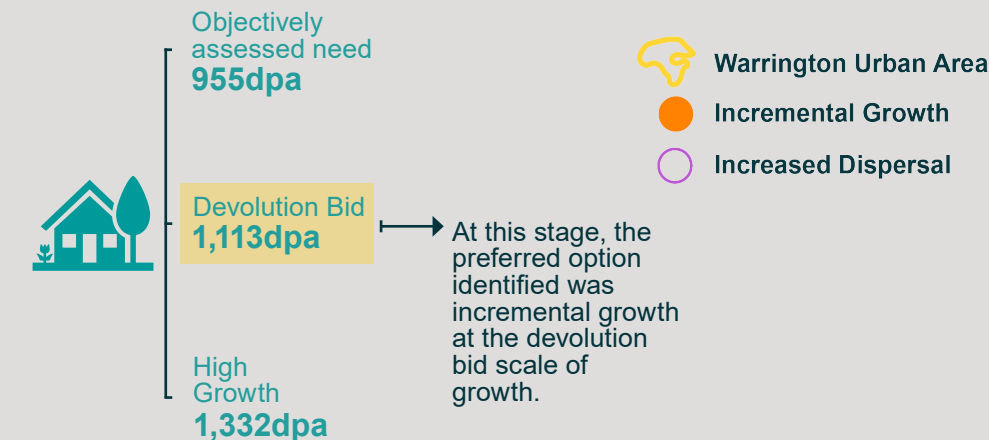
responded to a changing evidence base throughout the plan-making process. Each option assumed that deliverable sites within the urban areas would come forward as constants; strategies then looked at approaches of delivering the additional required growth across the Borough.

The graphics which illustrate the spatial options for Warrington are indicative of locations of growth, and do not represent specific extents of development.

Preferred Options Stage (2017-2018)

Step One- High Level Strategy Options

The first step looked at three different growth scenarios alongside three different distribution options across Warrington. The distributions were as follows: 1. Focus all growth around the urban area of Warrington. 2. Growth in an incremental dispersed manner around other settlements (with a consequential reduction in growth at the urban fringes). 3. Increased dispersal (with further reduction in growth at the Warrington urban fridge).



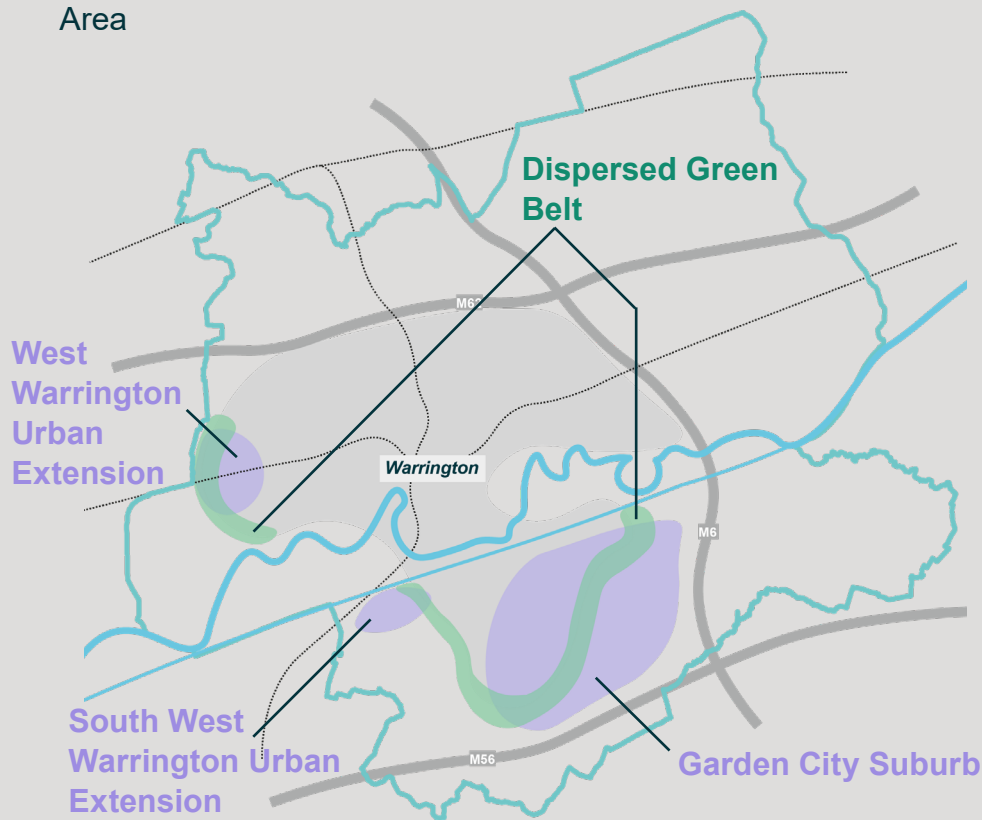
Preferred Options Stage (2017-2018)

Step Two- Options for Growth in Warrington Main Urban Area

Building upon the high level strategy, there were choices in relation to how growth could be delivered at the Warrington urban fridges. Five options were considered, consisting of the following combination of sites/areas of growth:

- Option 1: Garden City Suburb
- Option 2: Garden City Suburb, South West Urban Extension**
- Option 3: Garden City Suburb, West Urban Extension
- Option 4: Garden City Suburb, South West Urban Extension and West Urban Extension
- Option 5: Dispersed Green Belt adjacent to the Warrington Urban Area

**Preferred
Option**



Pre-Submission Stage (2019-2020)

Step One- High Level Strategy Options

Further growth options were tested to reflect updated evidence of housing needs. Once again, three different types of distribution were looked at at each scale of growth.



Standard Methodology (2014)	Standard Methodology (2016)	Economic Growth
735dpa	909dpa	945dpa

Following appraisal of these options, the preferred level of growth was reduced to 945 dwellings per annum. The high level distribution remained the same as preferred options stage.



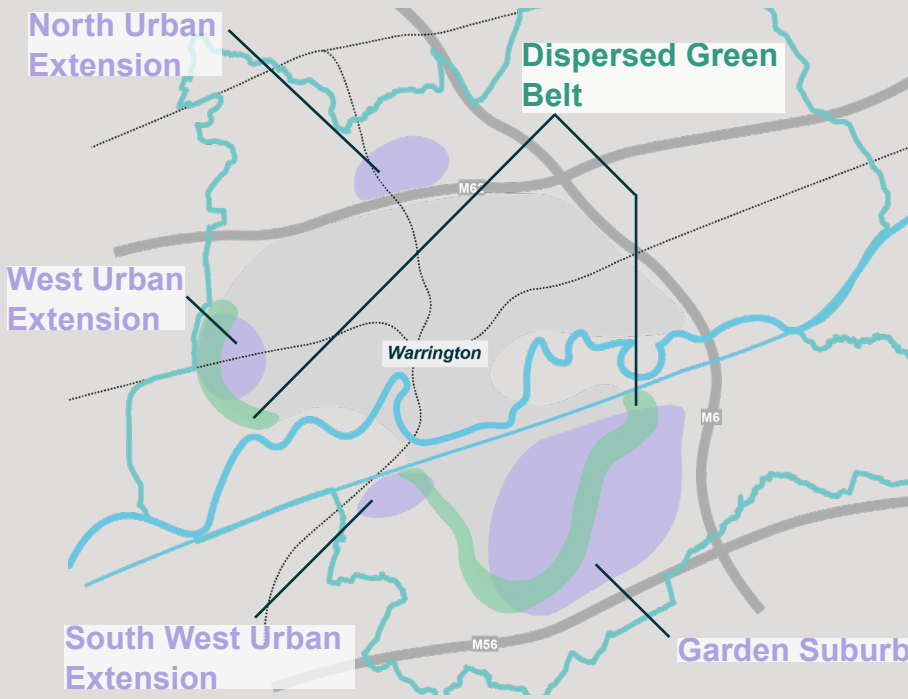
Pre-Submission Stage (2019-2020)

Step Two- Options for Growth in Warrington Main Urban Area

Further appraisal work was undertaken to explore options for distribution at the Warrington Urban Fringes. A northern extension option was appraised, and the extent of the garden village growth was much reduced compared to preferred options stage. The following combination of broad locations were established and appraised:

- **Option 1: Garden Suburb, South West Urban Extension**
- Option 2: Garden Suburb, West Urban Extension
- Option 3: Garden Suburb, North Urban Extension
- Option 4: Garden Suburb, Green Belt dispersed
- Option 5: Garden Suburb, South West Urban Extension, Green Belt dispersed
- Option 6: More dispersed Green Belt adjacent to the urban area.

Preferred Option



Pre-Submission Stage (2020-2021)

Step One- South East Warrington Urban Extension Options

The South East Warrington Urban Extension site (previously referred to as the Garden Suburb) went through several stages of refinement, with multiple scales of growth being looked at throughout the plan-making process.

The latest stage of consideration appraised four detailed options for how to deliver growth in this location, with the parcels which were considered shown in the maps below.



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Preferred Option

Site Options

As part of the process of selecting sites, assessments were carried out on a site-by-site basis to help inform the plan-making process.

Pre-Submission Stage (2020-2021)

Step Two- Refined Growth Options around Warrington

A new high level growth option was looked at in light of updated evidence (816dpa). As a result, less Green Belt release is needed, despite a reduction in calculations of urban capacity. This scale of growth was selected as the preferred option, with the focus remaining on the Warrington urban fringes and incremental growth. The following options were considered to be reasonable at this stage.

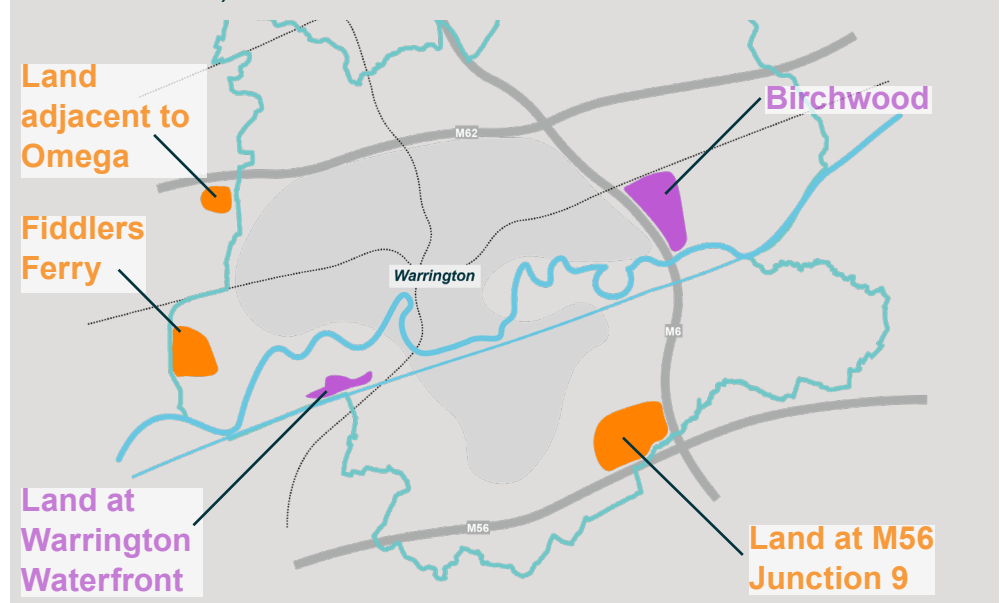
- Option 1: South East Warrington Urban Extension, South West Urban Extension
- Option 2: South East Warrington Urban Extension, Fiddlers Ferry
- **Option 3: South East Warrington Urban Extension, Fiddlers Ferry, Thelwall Heyes** Preferred Option
- Option 4: Fiddlers Ferry, South West Urban Extension, Thelwall Heyes
- Option 5: Fiddlers Ferry, South West Urban Extension



Employment Options

3 broad locations for employment were appraised individually and also in combinations to test different growth scenarios. At the second pre-submission stage two further broad locations were identified as reasonable. Ultimately, options 1, 3 & 4 were selected:

- **Option 1: Land at M56 Junction 9 (Total provided is based on consolidation of a number of individual sites into a strategic employment location,). Approximately 145ha, with a potential further 70ha at a northern extension;**
- Option 2: Land at Warrington Waterfront (Port Warrington site, Business hub/Commercial Park);
- **Option 3: Land adjacent to Omega (Call for sites, Westward extension (within St Helens), Further extension in Green Belt 42ha);**
- **Option 4: Fiddlers Ferry (approximately 100ha non Green Belt, but requires enabling housing development in the Green Belt);**
- Option 5: Birchwood (Total of 47ha of employment land in the Green Belt).



Justifications for Spatial Options

Preferred Options Stage (2017-2018)

Step One- High Level Strategy Option

Devolution Bid Scale Growth with an Incremental Distribution

The **selected option** provided a balance of environmental and socio-economic effects, whilst the distribution offered opportunities to improve accessibility, regeneration and economic growth across the Borough.

High growth options: Significant negative effects were identified across a range of environmental receptors.

Low growth options: Fewer negative environmental effects were identified, but there were limited benefits to housing and socio-economic factors.

Step Two- Options for Growth Around Warrington

Growth at Garden City Suburb and South West Urban Extension

The **selected option** delivers positive effects in terms of accessibility and socio-economic benefits, including infrastructure delivery to support development and the wider areas. It also offers less pronounced and more uncertain negative effects than other options are likely to see.

Negative effects which span across all options affect topics including land and soil, natural resources, built and natural heritage, biodiversity and deliverability issues for supporting infrastructure..

Pre-Submission Stage (2019-2020)

Step One- High Level Strategy Option

Economic Growth Scale with an Incremental Distribution

The **selected option** met the identified housing need in Warrington whilst helping to achieve sustainable growth and supporting the longer-term vitality of outlying settlements across the Borough.

A sole focus on the Warrington urban fringes would not deliver the same benefits for outer settlements, whilst greater dispersal would lead to less sustainable growth and negative effects on landscape and built heritage.

Step Two- Options for Growth Around Warrington

Growth at Garden Suburb and South West Urban Extension

The **selected option** helped to deliver on plan objectives, provide supporting infrastructure for development needs, improve the sustainable development of Warrington and minimise the loss of the Green Belt's strategic function.

Other options were rejected due to infrastructure delivery issues, deterioration of the Green Belt's strategic function as well as issues related to transport.

Pre-Submission Stage (2020-2021)

Step One- South East Warrington Urban Extension Options

Growth at the South East Warrington Urban Extension will be at the Western Parcel

At the Preferred Options plan-making stage, several high growth scenarios were looked at for the growth at the 'garden Suburb' site. Since then, the required growth on the site is considerably less, and hence options for delivering growth in the area were reappraised, under a new name.

Each of the four options appraised performed similarly, with positive effects likely stemming from housing delivery and more negatives relating to land and soil, effects on flooding are likely to be neutral and water quality minor positive.

The **selected option** offered reduced landscape impacts (including Green Belt), as well as scoring well in relation to accessibility and health and wellbeing, although in relation to built-heritage the option has some minor negative effects which are less likely under other options.



Step Two- Refined Growth Options Around Warrington

Growth Focused at South East Warrington Urban Extension, Fiddlers Ferry and Thelwall Heyes

The **selected option** allows housing needs to be met in full whilst making the most of brownfield opportunities and avoiding strategic harm to the Green Belt. Strategic growth locations under the chosen approach permit infrastructure delivery which bring socio-economic benefits.

Employment

Summary of Overall Process

Growth Focused at M56 Junction 9, Land Adjacent to Omega and Fiddlers Ferry

The **selected options** provide for employment needs with a three year buffer and an allowance for displacement. The Fiddlers Ferry site provides needed remediation work to land in the Borough and enables brownfield regeneration. A collection of sites in the south east of Warrington should be allocated in a strategic area of growth. The Omega site was allocated through the Duty-to-Cooperate process; the site is adjacent to Warrington and helps to meet employment needs in an appropriate location, nearby to existing employment land.

Lower growth options were rejected due to a failure to meet the Borough's needs. Other sites were rejected due to objections, land ownership issues, environmental effects, Green Belt performance and road network impacts.

Appraisal of The Plan

Summary of Plan Effects



Economy and Employment

Major Positive Effects



Development is largely focused within the urban area, nearby to employment and in areas which are likely to benefit from regeneration, increased job growth and inward investment to help relieve deprivation. Economic growth is also supported by the provision of new employment land and supporting infrastructure, including housing and facilities to meet the accommodation needs of employees.



Health and Wellbeing

Major Positive and Minor Negative Effects



Benefits of the plan include housing, employment and infrastructure to support communities, including provisions of green infrastructure, healthcare facilities, education, recreation and transport. Conversely, some more negative effects may be seen linked to loss of recreation land and Green Belt in some locations.



Transport and Accessibility



Uncertain Major Positive and Minor Negative Effects



Positive effects are likely to be seen where a large majority of development would be focused in accessible areas; strategic growth and supporting policies would also offer improved sustainable transport options, though the growth is likely to put pressure on the Borough's road network, potentially leading to congestion in central areas.



Housing

Major Positive Effects



Overall, the Plan is predicted to have major positive effects on the baseline position relating to housing. The main benefits relate to the strategy for delivering enough housing in a range of locations to meet identified needs. Supporting policies for the major site allocations also set out the specific types of homes that need to be delivered, which should ensure a suitable mix of homes is built.



Biodiversity and Geodiversity

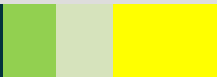



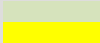
Major Positive and Minor Negative Effects


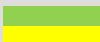


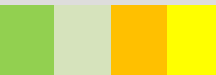
Development on more sensitive sites should be mitigated by policies seeking to mitigate effects and achieve a net gain in biodiversity, though specific scheme details are unknown and hence there are some uncertainties. There is likely to be some more general negative effects resulting from greenfield development, but these are mostly temporary.


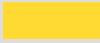
Summary of Plan Effects


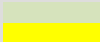
Climate Change and Resource Use  **Moderate and Minor Positive and Minor Negative Effects**


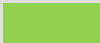
 **Resource Use:**  There is some small scale development sites that overlap with safeguarded minerals. Construction could lead to pressures on materials and resources; though a brownfield focus should minimise this. Resource efficiency policies should ensure longer-term benefits in terms of resource use.



 **Climate Change:**  Climate change mitigation is due to see minor positive effects linked to energy generation and efficient; transportation could see both positives and negatives whilst resilience is expected to see moderate positive effects.

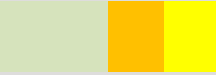
Natural Resources  **Moderate and Minor Positive and Moderate and Minor Negative Effects**


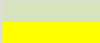
 **Soil:**  Loss of best and most versatile agricultural land associated with strategic sites is negative, but there should be protection for non-developed land, which should help to reduce future losses.



 **Water Quality:**  Potential contamination of water as well as pressures on water management infrastructures. In the longer term, reductions in nitrate run off and improved drainage systems are likely to bring more positive effects.

 **Flooding:**  Sites are largely not at risk of flooding as well as within the built-up area; surface-water flood risk is likely to be managed by flood management practices, including through providing green infrastructure as a key requirement.

 **Air Quality:**  Air quality is likely to be negatively affected by the increase in vehicle journeys associated with increased development, though mitigation measures are likely to reduce the significance of this.

Built and Natural Heritage  **Minor Positive and Moderate and Minor Negative Effects**

 **Historic Environment:**  Regeneration is likely to benefit the historic character of areas, though some of the development in Green Belt is likely to negative affect the local character and settings of historic assets, despite efforts to preserve local character.

 **Landscape:**  Some positive effects stem from an approach which locates housing in areas which are not considered to be as sensitive in terms of landscape impacts (largely inner Warrington and Fiddlers Ferry); that said, loss of Green Belt land with housing and employment developments are likely to be negative.

Monitoring and Mitigation

Mitigation

The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Warrington Local Plan (2021-2038) has been an iterative process, in which proposals for mitigation and enhancement have been considered at different stages. Recommendations have been made based on the findings of the Sustainability Appraisal and implications for the likely effects of the Plan were seen in the following themes of sustainability:

- Positive effects on resource efficiency
- Positive effects on flooding
- Positive effects on climate change and biodiversity
- Positive effects on health, wellbeing, economic and accessibility

The Plan policies are also effective in helping to minimise any potential negative effects associated with site allocations.

Monitoring

There is a requirement to outline the measures envisaged to monitor the predicted effects of the Plan. In particular, there is a need to focus on the significant effects that are identified. It is important to track predicted effects to ensure that positive effects are actually realised and to identify any unforeseen negative effects that may occur.

A number of potential monitoring measures have been set out under each Sustainability Appraisal topic which would allow the effects of the plan to be assessed in relation to its potential significant effects on the Borough of Warrington.

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