



Platinum Jubilee Civic Honours Competition
City Status Application:
Warrington



WARRINGTON
Borough Council

A Summary

Warrington is a dynamic place in every sense of the word. From its humble origins as a crossing place on the River Mersey during Roman Times, to its emergence as a market town in the Middle Ages, through its manufacturing-driven expansion during the Industrial Revolution, and its inception as a New Town in the 1960s, Warrington has developed into a modern economic powerhouse playing an increasingly instrumental role in the North West region.

Now home to over 209,000 people, modern Warrington is an incredibly well-connected place. Superb transport infrastructure, whether by road, rail or water, enables easy access to the entire nation and beyond, and has helped drive transformational economic growth – with Warrington regularly outperforming many UK cities on key economic indicators.

Teeming with civic pride, local people and organisations regularly come together to celebrate Warrington's distinct identity and rich historical and cultural heritage. The town benefits from a strong and vibrant voluntary and community sector, with nearly one-third of residents taking part in some form of volunteering.

A firm and unwavering commitment to diversity and inclusion cuts through Warrington's activities, as demonstrated by events like Warrington Walking Day, the annual MELA festival and world-leading Disability Awareness Day.

Warrington's strong historical and cultural heritage includes over 100 listed buildings, the iconic Golden Gates, Parr Hall concert venue and Museum & Art Gallery. The town is also home to the first public library in the country, one of the founding Rugby League clubs and possesses outstanding industrial and transport heritage.

The town's cultural offer is truly impressive for a place of its size, ranging from the Contemporary Arts Festival to the increasingly popular Neighbourhood Weekender music event, taking in all types of sport from professional rugby league to a network of amateur sports clubs. Warrington people love to get outdoors and nobody is too far from a green space, with more than 60 local parks, green spaces and play areas, topped by our 'jewel in the crown', Walton Hall and Gardens. An ideal terrain for active travel means that the town boasts some of the highest levels of regular cycling by residents in the country, underpinning our aspirations to create a 'mini-Holland' in the future.

The town is brimming with ideas and innovation across private, public and third sectors, building on a solid tradition of industrial innovation from the 18th century onwards. Today, the town is home to a pioneering creative and digital sector, is actively driving environmental and zero-carbon innovation and continues to demonstrate world-leading social innovation.

Warrington has always been an enterprising and forward-looking place. The town has benefitted from strong and stable governance and political leadership since inception as a unitary authority in 1998, with an excellent record in delivering local services and infrastructure. This has provided a great platform for pioneering a forward-looking and leading edge approach to developing alternative income streams and finance models, to ensure that services can be maintained to meet the needs of local people and key infrastructure projects delivered.

For all these reasons, we believe Warrington has genuine and compelling city credentials, and these are elaborated further in the remainder of this document. We therefore request that Her Majesty the Queen grants the honour of city status to the borough of Warrington to mark her Platinum Jubilee in 2022.

B Introduction

We have organised our application under a small number of themes that bring together and highlight the distinct and unique qualities of Warrington as a place. Taken together, we believe they provide compelling evidence as to why the time is right for us to become a city and indicate the ways in which city status will be used to power Warrington's continuing journey. These themes are:

- Dynamic
- Connected
- Inclusive
- Proud
- Innovative
- Enterprising

Dynamic

Our history - Warrington's historical development from its Roman origins illustrates just what a dynamic place it is, and its unique and rich historical and cultural heritage. Warrington became an important market town in the Middle Ages, utilising its position as a key bridging point across the River Mersey, and becoming the first paved town in Lancashire in 1321. Warrington saw a good deal of action during the English Civil War, hosting both Oliver Cromwell's and the Earl of Derby's armies, and was the scene of the last Royalist victory when Scottish troops fought Parliamentarians at the Battle of Warrington Bridge on 13 August 1651.

The Industrial Revolution led to the expansion and urbanisation of Warrington from the 18th century. The town became a focus for the steel industry, with the quality of its wire making recognised around the world and reflected today in the 'Wire' nickname of the Warrington Wolves rugby league club. Besides wire making, other important industries included textiles, brewing/distilling, soap production, tanning and chemicals, all coming together to drive increases in the town's size and prosperity.

Warrington played an important role during the Second World War, with RAF Burtonwood providing the largest military airbase in the UK and serving as the largest US Army airfield outside the United States, handling over 15,000 aircraft and hosting 18,500 servicemen. The Royal Ordnance Factory at Risley manufactured ammunition for the UK armed forces, supplying the bomb that sunk the German battleship, *Turpitz* in 1944.

The town has more than doubled in size since being designated as a New Town in 1968, reaching a population of 209,400 in 2020. Major new industrial and housing developments have been constructed on the former ROF Risley and RAF Burtonwood sites. Heavy industry has declined since the 1970s, to be replaced by a huge increase in light industry, distribution/logistics, advanced engineering, nuclear and retail. The first IKEA store in the UK was opened in the Westbrook area in 1987.

Our economy - Warrington's economy has undergone massive growth in recent years, seeing a 42% increase in GVA from £5,451 million in 2010 to £7.757 million in 2019. The area is home to around 12,000 businesses with 106,000 people in employment, one-third working in the professional, scientific, technical and business support sectors.

Warrington consistently features in reports by the independent Centre for Cities as one of the UK's most economically successful 'cities', with the highest level of GVA in the North of England and ranked fifth nationally for high-skilled sector occupations likely to grow over the next decade.

This is reflected in the town being home to the national, European and global headquarters of an impressive number of companies, including United Utilities, New Balance, Hoover Candy, Stobart Distribution and EMR. In addition, Birchwood Park is home to the UK's key nuclear cluster, including Sellafield, National Nuclear Laboratories and other globally significant businesses.

Warrington's dynamic growth continues apace. The major £142 million Time Square regeneration scheme was completed in 2019, including a cinema and other leisure facilities, a revitalised market hall, new public square and new town centre location for the University of Chester. The ongoing Omega development on the former RAF Burtonwood airfield is one of the largest mixed-use developments in the North of England and is already home to some of the largest companies in the UK, including Asda, Brake Bros, Travis Perkins, Amazon, Hermes and The Hut Group .

The Time Square development has provided a catalyst for new interest in Warrington town centre living. The increased range and quality of leisure opportunities across all ages, together with the opportunity to utilise some outdated developments and brownfield sites in the town centre, has presented an opportunity to deliver 8,000 new homes. The aim is to create sustainable and connected communities where people can live, work and play, supported by low carbon transport systems. Wider housing growth aspirations include the Warrington South East Area Extension, which will deliver 2,400 new homes as part of borough-wide aspirations to build nearly 15,000 new houses over the next 18 years.

The recently awarded £22 million Warrington Town Deal will support economic growth, regeneration, improved transport, digital connectivity, skills funding and culture through seven transformational projects:

- A health and social care academy
- A health and wellbeing hub in the town centre
- An advanced construction training centre
- A new bus depot
- A comprehensive active travel programme
- A digital enterprise hub
- A remastered cultural hub.

Connected

Our geography – Warrington is located in the heart of the North West of England, equidistant from the Liverpool and Manchester conurbations. Warrington's past development was strongly linked to its proximity to these two major cities. However, the town has forged its own distinct identity in more recent years, consistently out-performing both Liverpool and Manchester and other UK cities on a range of economic indicators. Warrington has always been global in outlook, with strong links to the southern hemisphere through a shared passion for rugby league. Long lasting relationships with the USA and Germany were developed through the former Burtonwood airbase, and Warrington today is home to overseas brands such as Asics (Japan), Plastic Omnium (France) and IKEA (Sweden).

Our transport – Warrington benefits from superb transport infrastructure and connectivity, whether water, rail, road or air. The River Mersey flowing through the centre of the town, together with the addition of the Manchester Ship, Bridgewater and Sankey Canals, was a key driver for Warrington's early growth. Warrington is bounded by three motorways - the M6 to the East, M62 to the North and the M56 to the South – and is at the rail crossroads of the North West, with easy access to London and Scotland via the West Coast Mainline and to Liverpool and Manchester and beyond via the East-West Central Line.

These transport connections enable easy access to the entire nation and have been a major factor driving the economic transformation of the town - for example, the Omega logistics development on the old RAF Burtonwood airfield is now home to a number of nationally significant companies. The town is less than 30 minutes driving time to both Liverpool and Manchester airports, which means easy access to international destinations and markets. This incredible transport infrastructure ensures that Warrington is one of the best connected locations in the UK.

Warrington's relatively compact size and fairly flat terrain make it ideal for both cycling and walking, and the proportion of Warrington residents cycling regularly is well above national and regional averages. An active travel strategy has been adopted to increase cycling and walking opportunities by investing in infrastructure to create a 'mini-Holland'.

Our associations with Royalty – One of our earliest well-documented Royal visits took place in 1671 when King James I knighted Sir Thomas Ireland at Bewsey Old Hall. More recently, the newly restored, iconic Golden Gates outside the Town Hall were originally built for Queen Victoria before being moved to their present location in 1895.

The town has been honoured with numerous visits by members of the Royal Family over the years. For example, we have received no less than 24 visits in the 21st century alone. Notable visits have included:

- King George V opening the important bridge over the River Mersey at Bridge Foot in the centre of Warrington in 1913.
- Prince Charles visiting Warrington general hospital, and attending the church service, following the IRA bombings in 1993.
- The Countess of Wessex visiting the Disability Awareness Day 20th anniversary event in 2011.
- Queen Elizabeth II, accompanied by the Duke of Edinburgh, opening the Orford Jubilee Neighbourhood Hub in May 2012.
- The Princess Royal making three separate visits in 2018, including attending the service to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Warrington bombings.

Four military regiments have received the Freedom of the Borough of Warrington – South Lancashire Regiment (1947), Queen's Lancashire Regiment (1970), Duke of Lancaster's Regiment (2006) and 75 Engineer Regiment (2013).

Inclusive

Our civic pride - Warrington teems with civic pride, with local communities coming together to celebrate the town's distinct identity and cultural heritage. A common local saying sums it up perfectly – "People are either born here or drawn here". Quite simply, it is a place where everyone is made welcome, where people look after each other and where people are friendly, passionate and love to get involved. For example, there are over 1,200 voluntary and community sector groups across the borough and nearly one-third of residents take part in some form of volunteering. The strong volunteering ethos is demonstrated by the fact that Warrington had the highest number of volunteer registrations for the next Rugby League World Cup (originally to be held in Autumn 2021 but now deferred to 2022) and also by the sheer volume of volunteers who came forward for town-wide and local community initiatives to support people during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our commitment to diversity - People of all religions and ethnicities come together each year to support Warrington Walking Day. Its origins dating back to 1832, this day-long parade is organised in partnership between Warrington's churches, faith groups, community organisations and the Council. Diversity and inclusion are actively celebrated through the Warrington Ethnic Communities Association's annual 'MELA' festival, dedicated to fostering and showcasing local ethnic talent, breaking down barriers and celebrating cultural diversity through music, dance and food.

The town is home to the leading-edge work of the Warrington Disability Partnership. This includes Disability Awareness Day (DAD), established in 1992 and now the world's largest voluntary-led pan-disability celebration, held in a huge tented village over seven days in the grounds of Walton Hall and Gardens. DAD includes exhibitions, dance, drama and music from across the globe, attracting some of the UK's leading disability entertainers. Since their launch, the aggregate attendance at DAD events has exceeded 600,000, raising over £1 million for charities and inspiring similar events in India, Denmark, Sweden, Cameroon, Uganda, Thailand and seven other countries.

Warrington's commitment to inclusivity and celebrating diversity underpins all our activities. Most recently, the Great Sankey Neighbourhood Hub became the first public building in the world to achieve the prestigious University of Stirling Dementia Services Development Centre 'Gold' Award, The dementia-friendly architecture and design of the building provides a safe and welcoming environment for people living with the condition.

Our resident-led regeneration – the Central 6 Regeneration Masterplan provides a 20 year vision and action plan to tackle socio-economic inequalities and improve the lives of people living in the six most deprived central districts of Warrington. The masterplan was developed in consultation with the residents of these communities, to ensure that it was informed and shaped by their experiences and ideas about what is needed to improve the area and opportunities for those who live there. Residents were engaged at all stages in developing the plan, with over 40 separate events, and are now involved in overseeing its delivery through the Central 6 Masterplan Delivery Board.

Summary of key findings of city status survey

We carried out an online survey to provide people with the opportunity to provide their views on our prospective bid for city status. The survey was hosted on the warrington.gov.uk website and was open for responses from 30 September until 21 October 2021.

We received 1,005 responses in total, with a good age spread and an even balance relating to gender and relationship status. Headline findings were:

- Invited to select up to five from a list of 19 words/phases to best describe Warrington, the top six choices were:
 - Connected (43%)
 - Welcoming (36%)
 - Tight-knit communities (29%)
 - Proud (27%)
 - Enterprising (19%)
 - Unique traditions (18%)
- Bidding for city status did not have universal support. However, younger respondents (age 45 and under) were generally more favourably disposed and saw greater appeal in the potential opportunities of City status compared to those aged over 45.
- The majority of respondents agreed that Warrington has a proud and unique story to tell and has vibrant and welcoming communities.

Proud

Our heritage – Warrington people are humbly proud of our rich history and cultural heritage, which has shaped the town of today. There are more than 100 listed buildings, with the Grade I listed Palladian-style Town Hall sitting grandly at the town’s civic heart behind the iconic Golden Gates. Walton Hall and Gardens, situated in south Warrington, is a major cultural attraction visited by over 200,000 people each year. The former home of Lord Daresbury, Walton Hall has been restored and refurbished, boasting unique antique furniture, Victorian paintings, oak panelled hall, grand staircase and gilded ceilings. It is set within acres of parkland containing formal gardens, conservatories, a zoo and other family attractions.

Warrington Museum & Art Gallery is one of the oldest museums in the country, opened in 1848, housing treasures from all over the world and showcasing the work of internationally-renowned artists such as Grayson Perry, Polly Morgan and Adam Neate. Warrington Central Library was opened in 1848 as the first rate-supported public library in the UK, born from a long-established private subscription library operating in Warrington since 1760. One of the earliest visitors to the public library was the Reverend Dodgson and his son, Charles, later known as the famous author, Lewis Carroll. The Grade II listed Parr Hall concert venue was built for the people of Warrington in 1895 and has hosted leading orchestras, music artists and other entertainers over the years, including legends like the Rolling Stones and The Who.

The Greenhall Brewery Conservation Area to the south of Warrington town centre houses a magnificent collection of listed and other buildings encompassing a Victorian Brewery built by the Greenhall family, including brewhouse, maltbuilding, public house and a range of domestic properties for brewery workers. Warrington also possesses outstanding transport heritage, including the Grade II listed rail Transporter Bridge spanning the River Mersey (which stands as one of the last remaining examples in the world), the world’s first passenger railway on which Stephenson’s Rocket made its journey, and one of the oldest canals in the country, the Bridgewater Canal.

Our cultural activities – Warrington’s cultural offer is quite simply outstanding for a place of its size, hosting a wide range of activities and events for everyone. In addition to the DAD and MELA events mentioned earlier, the town hosts a wide range of other events each year. The Warrington Contemporary Arts Festival is a month-long event held each Autumn, bringing together international art installations while showcasing local talent, and attracts 28,000 people from around the North West to its high quality, accessible arts-based activities.

The town hosts the annual Neighbourhood Weekender festival in Victoria Park, organised by Warrington-based SJM Concerts. This increasingly popular event provides a platform for indie music artists from across the UK, with an overall attendance of 75,000 over the three days of the 2021 event. The Pyramid Arts Centre was opened in 2002 to provide a venue for smaller performances and community events. Held every May Day Bank Holiday since 2007, the Warrington Music Festival utilises the town centre to provide performance opportunities for new and emerging musical talent from the local area and across the North West, also hosting performances by established artists such as the Happy Mondays, Cast and Lightning Seeds.

Our sport – Warrington is synonymous with Rugby League, being one of the original 22 founder clubs of the Northern Rugby Football Union in 1895. Today, Warrington Wolves play at the modern Halliwell Jones Stadium, winning the 2019 Rugby League Challenge Cup and generating a large, passionate crowd for the team’s triumphant bus tour ending outside the Town Hall.

The Halliwell Jones Stadium was the venue for two games during the 2013 Rugby League World Cup, and the town hosted the Samoan national squad. Warrington will host three games, and provide the team base for Papua New Guinea, at the 2021 Rugby League World Cup (now to be held in 2022).

But sporting excellence does not stop at Rugby League. Warrington hosted the finish of one of the stages of the 2021 Tour of Britain cycling event, with exciting racing through the town ending in a sprint finish outside the Town Hall. In addition, Warrington Rylands Football Club are the current FA Vase amateur football champions, and a popular half marathon is held each year in the town.

Our parks and green spaces – Warrington people love to get outdoors, and nobody is too far from a green space in Warrington, whether for recreation or relaxation. Besides the Walton Hall and Gardens ‘jewel in the crown’, there are more than 60 local parks, green space and play areas across the borough. These include the Risley Moss Nature Reserve, Culcheth Linear Park, Sankey Valley Park, a section of the TransPennine Trail and the tranquil Lymm Damm. Located just outside the town centre is Victoria Park which provides a range of play areas and sporting facilities, including an athletics arena, rugby stadium, skate park, bowling greens, angling and football pitches.

Our Peace Centre – A unique building and organisation set up in the wake of the IRA bombing of Warrington in 1993 to honour the two young boys killed. The centre developed an international reputation through its work to prevent violent extremism and support conflict resolution and victims of terror (including survivors from the Bataclan, Brussels and Westminster Bridge incidents). Its annual peace lecture has been presented by Sir John Major, Martin McGuinness, Mo Mowlam and John Reid.

Our famous residents – Warrington has a long list of people who were born or lived here and went on to achieve national and international fame. They include:

- John Harrison (1663-1776) – inventor of the marine chronometer that established longitude and transformed maritime navigation.
- Joseph Priestley (1733-1804) – scientist who discovered oxygen and taught at the Warrington Academy.
- Thomas Percival (1740-1804) – physician who crafted the first modern code of medical ethics.
- Thomas Glazebrook Rylands (1818-1900) – an industrialist who became a prominent, botanist, astronomer and anti-slavery campaigner.
- George Formby (1904-1961) – the popular entertainer lived in Warrington for many years and is buried at Warrington Cemetery.
- Sue Johnston (1943-) – actress, starred in Brookside, The Royle Family and other TV series.
- Roger Hunt (1938-2021) – member of the England 1966 World Cup-winning team and Liverpool FC legend
- Pete Postlethwaite (1946-2011) – actor in a wide range of films and TV series, with a studio at the Pyramid Arts Centre named after him.
- Chris Evans (1966-) – the DJ and light entertainer was born and grew up in Warrington.

Innovative

Economic - Warrington is a place that just does not stand still and is constantly brimming with ideas. From the establishment of England’s first gin distillery by Greenall’s in 1711, to the invention of the wire loom by James Locker in 1811, enabling woven wire to be turned into soft fine wire, gauze or mesh to use in a wide range of applications, through brewing innovations such as the ‘Burton Union’ enabling the export of pale ale, the town has been at the forefront of world-leading industrial innovation.

This pioneering spirit has been sustained, with the town’s reputation as a modern hub of innovation widely recognised - Warrington today consistently tops league tables for places where start-up businesses and small and medium-sized enterprises succeed and is home to a string of national and multinational businesses.

Innovation continues to drive Warrington’s growth and development. The Warrington Town Deal mentioned earlier will provide a launch-pad for Warrington as a base for cutting-edge technical, digital, construction and health and social care skills.

The town is home to a number of pioneering digital and tech companies like Drive Works, a double Queen's Award winner, and has been identified by NESTA as a high growth area for the creative and digital sector, with particular strengths in software, digital marketing and advertising, design and architecture.

Environmental - Innovation is by no means limited to the economic sphere. Warrington is at the forefront of green 'carbon conscious' innovation, with our pioneering work on the climate emergency putting us head and shoulders above many other towns and cities. Investments in solar farms in York and Hull make Warrington the first local authority to produce all its own electricity from clean energy. Warrington has also led the way in installing solar panels on council housing, and the 56 electric vehicle charging points installed at the new Time Square car park represents the highest number of charging points in a single location in the country.

Social - Then there is our capacity for social innovation, which goes well beyond the DAD and MELA events described earlier. The Phoenix Project was established by Warrington Disability Partnership to refurbish mobility and independent living equipment before exporting to Egypt, Thailand, Syria and other countries. The Warrington Wolves Foundation has led the way internationally in developing Physical Disability Rugby League, visiting a number of countries around the globe to promote the game. In 2022, Warrington will host the first ever Physical Disability Rugby League World Cup, as part of RLWC2021.

Enterprising

Warrington was established as a unitary local authority in 1998 and is a polycentric area, comprising a collection of communities born of 1960s New Town development and the 1974 local government reorganisation – from small semi-rural towns like Culcheth and Lymm, ancient villages like Grappenhall and Stockton Heath, large New Town estates in Birchwood and Westbrook, and traditional working class areas like Bewsey and Latchford.

The borough is served by the Cheshire Police and Fire & Rescue Services and forms part of the county of Cheshire for administrative and ceremonial purposes, including the Lord Lieutenancy. Warrington Borough Council maintains strong links with Chester East and Cheshire West & Chester councils whose areas adjoin Warrington, along with other neighbouring local authorities in the Liverpool and Greater Manchester City Regions. Warrington plays a leading role in key county-wide bodies, including the Cheshire & Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership and Cheshire & Warrington Leaders Board.

Warrington Borough Council has enjoyed stable and successful political leadership since its inception as a unitary authority in 1998, with either a Labour majority (1998-2006 and 2011 onwards) or no overall control (2006-2011). Strong, stable and collaborative governance has provided an excellent platform for delivering high quality local services, driving forward local economic growth and developing forward looking and innovative approaches.

In response to reductions in central government funding, the council has taken a leading edge, innovative approach to developing alternative income streams and finance models to ensure that services can be maintained to meet the needs of local people and key infrastructure and regeneration projects delivered. The strategic 'Invest to Earn' approach to commercial activities is aimed at maximising returns while minimising exposure to risk, and places commercial structures, enterprise and income generation at the heart of the council's financial planning.

Warrington's ground-breaking approach has attracted national attention and the council is regularly called upon to share its expertise at conferences and directly with other local authorities across the UK.

Key commercial projects include:

- Acquisition of the 123 acre Birchwood Park business park in 2017, which is already delivering income for the council and provides an excellent strategic development opportunity given its location at the junction of the M6 and M62 motorways.
- Securing a 33% stake in Redwood Bank, a new public/private sector challenger bank based in Warrington providing loans to SMEs in Warrington and beyond.
- Investing, alongside Thurrock and Newham Councils and the British Museum, in the UK's largest operational solar park at Swindon.
- Investing in installing solar panels on 3,000 social homes, generating a financial return for the council while reducing household fuel bills.

A strong commitment to partnership working pervades all aspects of governance across Warrington, whether economic regeneration, health and social care, safeguarding children, tackling homelessness or community safety.

In addition to our statutory boards, examples include:

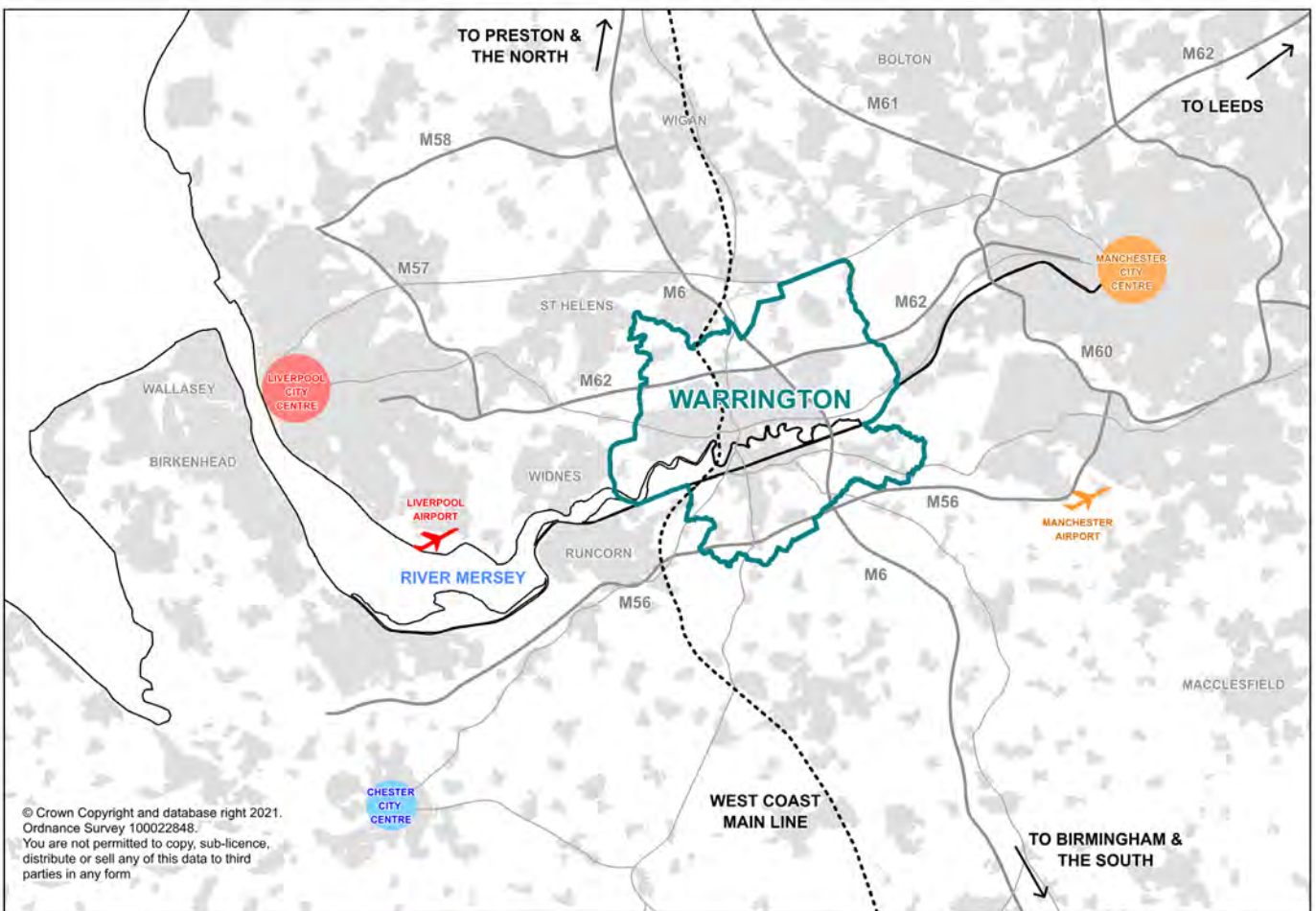
- Warrington Integrated Commissioning and Transformation Board, bringing together health and social care organisations across the borough.
- Hate Crime Incident Partnership, coordinating activity to reduce hate incidents in Warrington.
- Warrington Employment and Skills Action Partnership, bringing together skills providers to coordinate employment support and skills development activities.
- Warrington Third Sector Partnership, which brings together and provides support services to third sector groups across the town.

C Profile

Geography

The current boundaries of Warrington date from the 1974 local government reorganisation, when the former County Borough of Warrington was amalgamated with all or parts of the districts of Golborne, Lymm and Whiston. The borough covers 68 square miles, with the town straddling the banks of the River Mersey and located 20 miles from Liverpool in the west and 20 miles from Manchester in the east. Warrington has a temperate maritime climate with warm summers, cool winters and an even annual rainfall pattern.

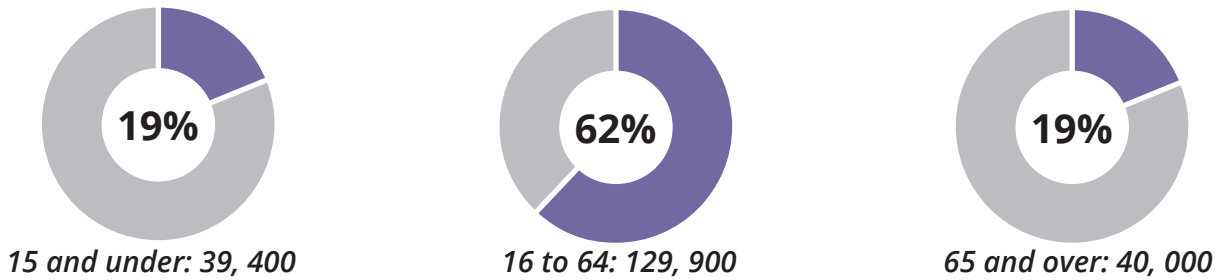
The borough is bounded to the west by the local authority districts of Halton and St Helens, to the north by Wigan and Bolton, to the east by Salford and Trafford and to the south by Cheshire East and Cheshire West & Chester. As explained in Section B, Warrington is bounded by the M6, M62 and M56 motorways, and is divided laterally by four historic and iconic transport corridors: the River Mersey, the Bridgewater Canal, the UK's first passenger railway and the Manchester Ship Canal. The West Coast Main Line runs north-south through the town and the east-west Central Line runs between Liverpool to Manchester, putting the town at the rail crossroads of the North West.



Demography

The resident population of Warrington in mid-2020 was 209,400, with 103,900 females and 105,600 males. The age breakdown is very similar to the North West and England & Wales as a whole.

Age breakdown of Warrington population 2020



The median age is 42, and the working age population (16-64) is estimated at 129,600 (62% of Warrington's total population).

Warrington's size has more than doubled since New Town designation in the 1960s, and the area's population is projected to increase to 214,000 by 2030 (a 2.2% increase on 2020 estimates), with a fall in the number of 15 and under, and 16 to 64, age bands and a large increase in the 65 and over population.

Warrington has a very high proportion of disabled residents (20%) and a growing migrant community. The three largest foreign-born communities in Warrington are Polish (1,650 residents in December 2015), Irish and Indian, but children in our schools between them speak a total of 71 different languages.

Economy

a. Gross Value Added

The total Gross Value Added for Warrington was £7,757 million in 2019, an increase of 42% since 2010.

Growth in Warrington's annual GVA (in millions) over the last ten years

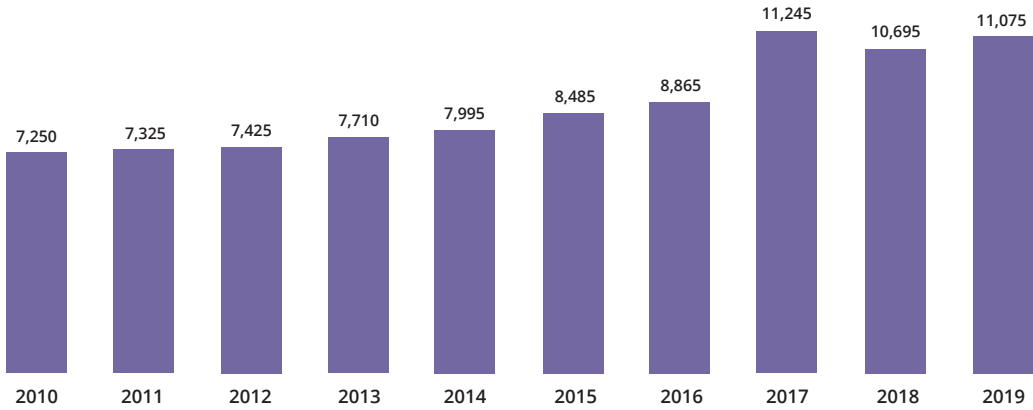


In terms of GVA per head, in 2019, Warrington's figure was £36,937, an increase of 36% in ten years from the 2010 figure of £27,078, and higher than the overall UK average of £29,599.

b. Business and enterprise

The number of business enterprises active in Warrington during 2019 was 11,075, a 3.6% increase on the previous year. The number of enterprises had been steadily increasing in previous years but have stabilised over the last three years (see below). Warrington’s increase in active enterprises is higher than the North West (0.6%) and the UK (2.5%).

Growth in Warrington’s active businesses over the last ten years

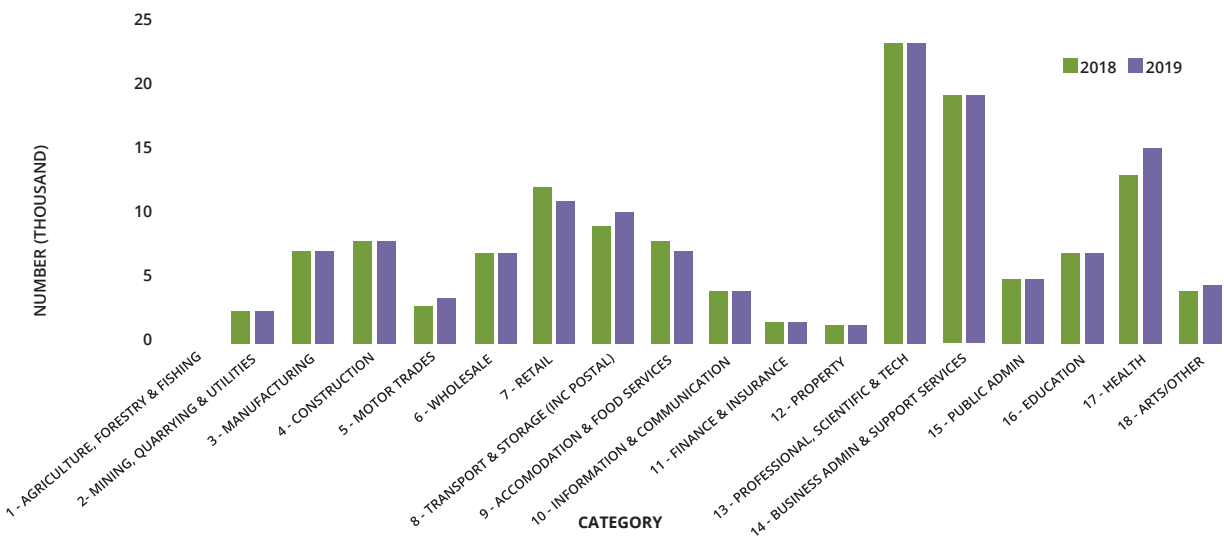


The one-year survival rate for new enterprises in Warrington over the last five years has been around the 90% mark, with a high of 93.5% for businesses started in 2014, slightly higher than the average for the North West and England over this time period.

c. Employment

As at mid-2020, Warrington had 105,900 people in employment, which equates to 81% of the working age (16 to 64) population. The table below shows the industrial sectors in which people work, with around one-third in the Professional, Scientific & Technical and Business Administration & Support Services sectors.

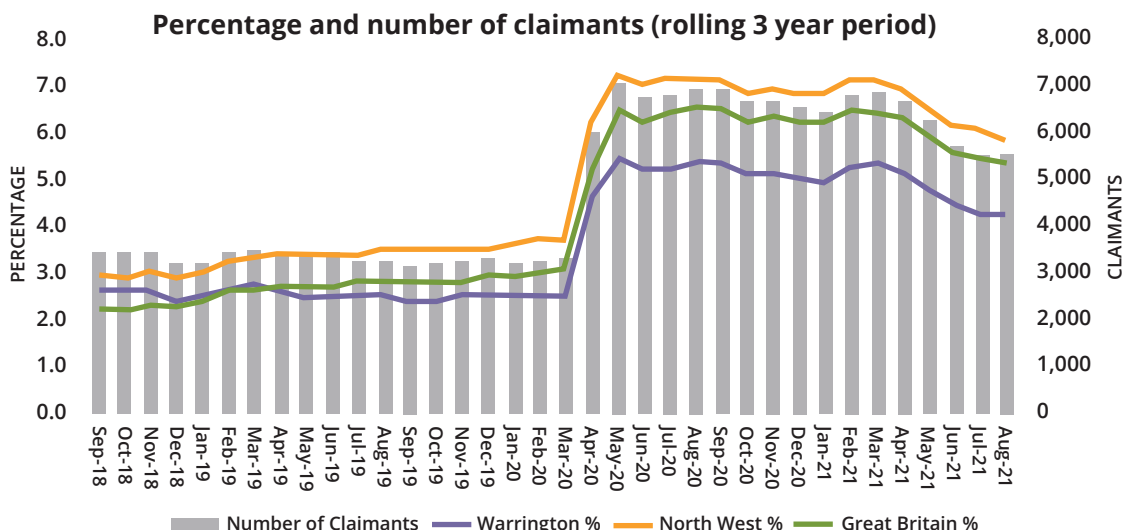
Warrington’s employee jobs by industry type in 2018 and 2019



Warrington has a higher proportion of economically active people, as a proportion of the 16 and over population, when compared to North West and England averages. The latest figure (January to December 2020) for Warrington is 82.6% of the 16 and over population compared to the North West (77.6%) and England (79.1%).

Over the last ten years, Warrington has had more jobs than its 16-64 population. Job density (which represents the ratio of total jobs to the 16-64 population) in 2019 was 1.18, compared with 0.84 for the North West and 0.87 for England. Data looking at commuter in/out flows indicate that around 50,000 people travel into Warrington from other areas to work, while some 35,000 residents travel outside Warrington to work.

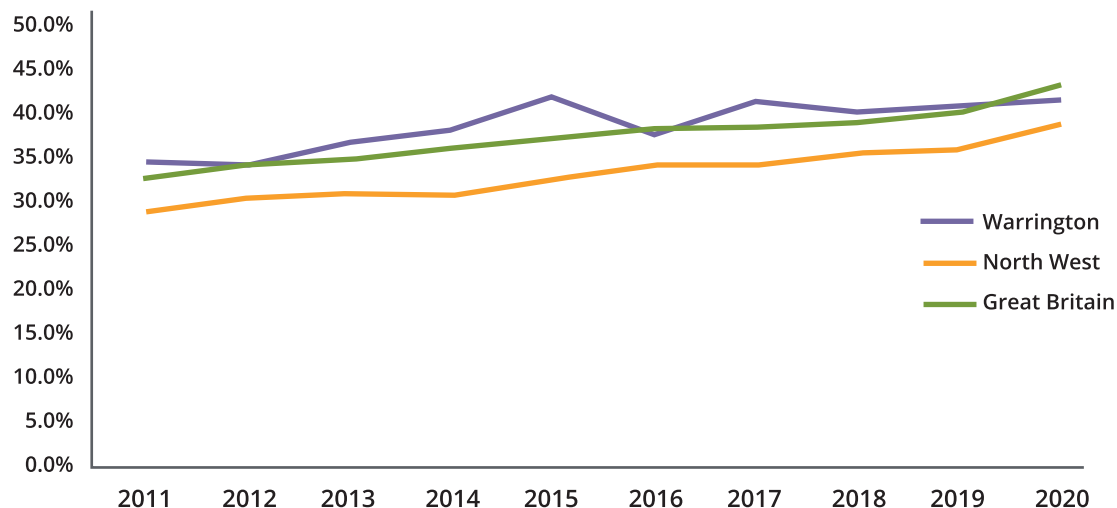
The latest figures (August 2021) indicate that Warrington had 5,485 people claiming out of work benefits. This equates to 4.2% of the working age (16 to 64) population, a lower proportion than the North West (5.8%) and GB as a whole (5.3%).



d. Skills and Qualifications

In 2020, Warrington had 41.8% of residents at NVQ4 and above compared to 38.7% in the North West and 43.1% for Great Britain overall.

Proportion of Warrington residents with NVQ4 and above qualification 2011-2020

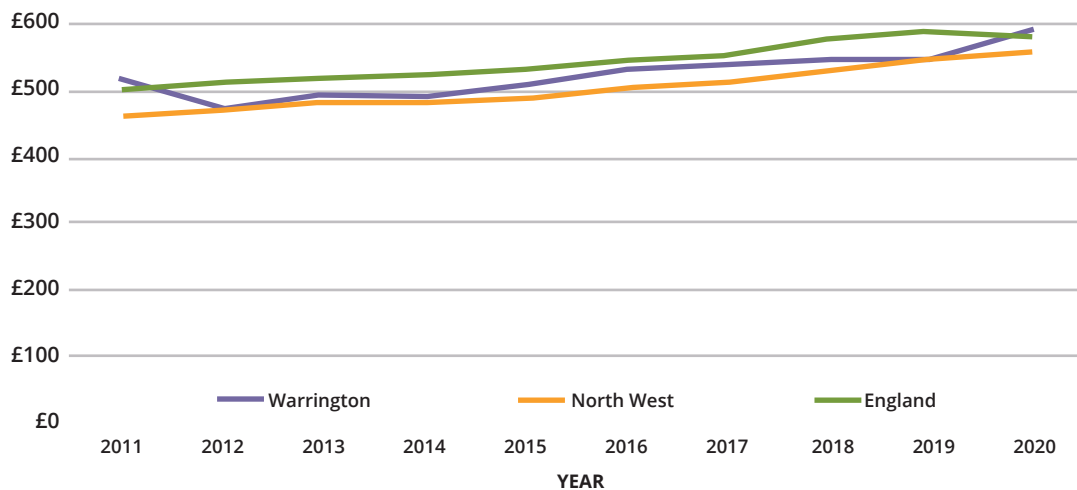


In terms of all levels of education, Warrington is above both the North West (87.6%) and Great Britain (87.9%) with 89.9% having one or more qualification at NVQ1 and above.

e. Wages/earnings

The average gross weekly wage for people who work in Warrington was £592 in 2020, which is 5.5% higher than the North West average (£560) and 0.9% higher than the England average (£587). Over the last ten years, Warrington has consistently been between the England and North West average figures, but in 2020 is higher than both comparators, as illustrated below:

Weekly pay in Warrington compared to regional and national averages 2011-2020

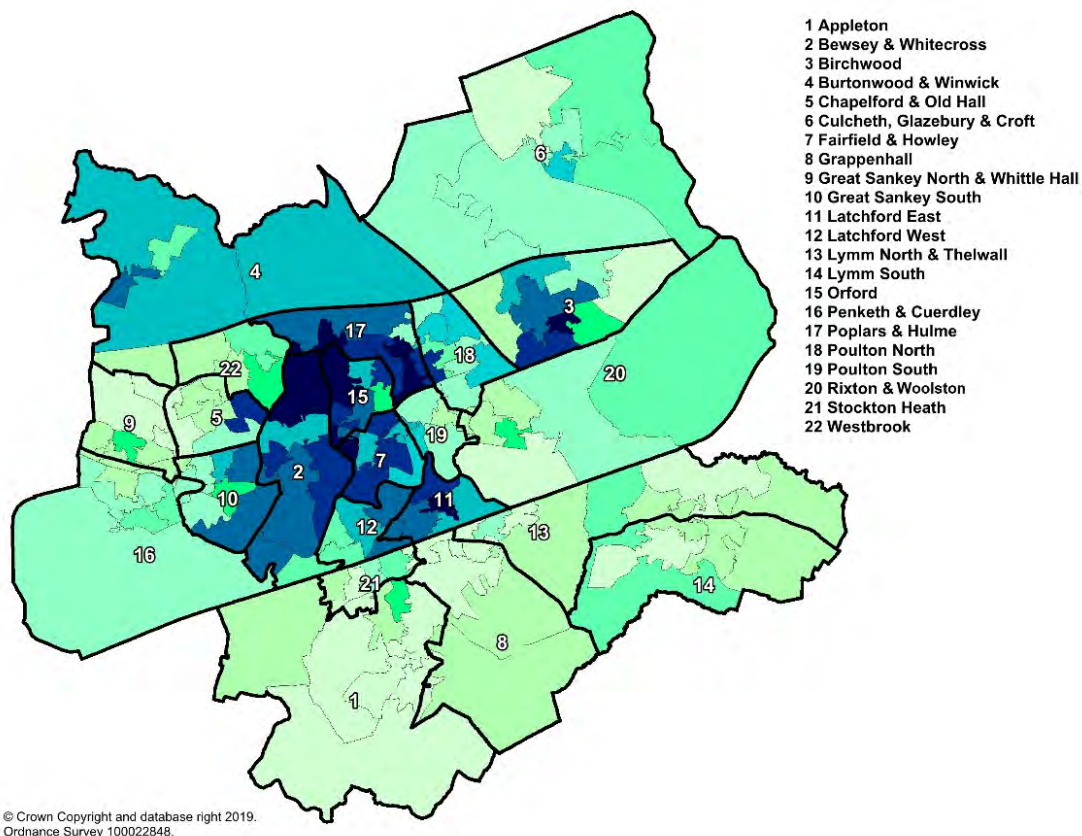


Social deprivation

Beneath Warrington’s economic success lie disparities in wealth and health, with the area containing some of the most persistently deprived communities in the UK - around 18% of our residents live in the 20% most deprived areas in England. Health figures illustrate the extent of socio-economic inequalities across Warrington, with men in inner city Fairfield and Howley living to just 73 years of age – ten years less than residents in affluent Stretton and Walton. We also have above average levels of obesity, with 68% of adults being overweight or obese and above average levels of physical inactivity (almost a third of adults).

The 2019 English Index of Multiple Deprivation positioned Warrington as the 148th most deprived of 317 local authorities across England, with the more deprived areas lying in the central areas of Warrington. The map below shows deprivation levels across Warrington wards, with the blue areas indicating the most deprived communities.

Levels of deprivation in Warrington wards based on IMD 2019



Education

Warrington has 87 primary schools and 20 secondary schools. There are also 12 schools and colleges focused on 16-18 year olds, including two further education colleges: Warrington & Vale Royal College and Priestley College. The University of Chester has a self-contained campus at Padgate which, as noted in Section B, is relocating to the town centre in 2022.

Attainment levels are good across the key stages and generally higher than regional and national averages:

- In 2019, 73% of pupils were achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and maths at Key Stage 2 (end of primary school), higher than both the North West and national average of 65%.
- In the same year, the Attainment 8 score (which measures pupils' achievement across 8 qualifications) at Key Stage 4 (end of secondary school) was 48.8, third highest in the NW and 37th nationally.
- Warrington & Vale Royal College boasts some of the highest pass rates in England, ranked in the top ten colleges nationally for the last three years, and has top quartile student satisfaction scores.

Leisure, sport, recreation and culture

a. Sport and leisure

Livewire, a community interest company, has been managing public leisure, library and lifestyle services for Warrington since 2012. It operates three neighbourhood hubs and two leisure centres providing a range of sports, recreation and lifestyle facilities. In addition, a new community hub has been built in the heart of our most deprived ward, providing doorstep leisure, health and wellbeing, library and community facilities. The facilities operated are:

- Bewsey & Dallam Community Hub
- Birchwood Leisure and Tennis Complex
- Broomfields Leisure Centre
- Great Sankey Neighbourhood Hub
- Orford Jubilee Neighbourhood Hub
- Woolston Neighbourhood Hub

Victoria Park, run by Warrington Borough Council, is located less than one mile from the town centre and provides multiple sports facilities, including a floodlit athletics arena meeting UK Athletics national standards, a rugby league stadium, floodlit football and rugby pitches (including 3G), bowling greens and skate park.

As noted in Section B, professional sport in Warrington is dominated by rugby league, with Warrington Wolves playing their home games at the Halliwell Jones Stadium. However, the game's roots go much deeper than supporting a thriving professional set-up – eight amateur rugby league clubs run adult and junior teams, ensuring that the sport sits at the heart of local communities, with over 1,500 people of all ages playing regularly. Football remains the most popular community sport, with Warrington hosting one of the largest youth grassroots leagues in the country. Interest in sport extends well beyond rugby league and football, with clubs and facilities covering a wide range of sports, including boxing, martial arts, gymnastics, cricket, cycling, tennis, golf, water polo, volleyball and badminton.

b. Cultural venues and events

As illustrated in Section B, cultural development sits at the heart of Warrington's economic growth and place-making agenda. The Cultural Vision and Strategy for 2020-25 aims to utilise the town's historic and cultural heritage and assets to facilitate participation in high quality cultural activities across all groups and communities.

The key cultural infrastructure and assets are council-owned and run, or managed by partner organisations. Culture Warrington, a charitable trust established in 2012, receives £1.3 million annually from Warrington Borough Council to manage the multi-space Pyramid Arts Centre, Parr Hall concert venue and Warrington Museum & Art Gallery. As well as these major venues, the area contains a wide range of other cultural assets, including:

- Museum of Policing
- Museum of Freemasonry
- Lymm Hall, an Elizabethan manor house
- Grappenhall Hays and Walton Lea Walled Gardens

As highlighted in Section B, Warrington hosts a number of major cultural festivals and events, including Disability Awareness Day, MELA, Walking Day, Warrington Music Festival, Neighbourhood Weekender and Warrington Contemporary Arts Festival. In addition, there are a wide range of more local and community-focussed events such as:

- The annual "Bawming the Thorn" ceremony in the village of Appleton, held on the Saturday nearest Midsummer's Day, where local children walk through the village and dance around the village's historic hawthorn tree.
- The Light Up Latchford event held in the run-up to Christmas each year.
- The ten-day Lymm Festival held each summer focused on music, comedy, drama and literature.

Warrington is also home to the Gulliver's World Theme Park Resort, which opened in 1989 and is designed for families and children aged 2 to 13. Attracting visitors from all over the North West, the park's many attractions include traditional fairground rides, indoor splash zone, family shows and other entertainment

c. Parks and green spaces

Besides Walton Hall Gardens and Victoria Park, Warrington has over 60 other parks and green spaces accessible to the public. They include:

- Culcheth Linear Park, including woodland walks and park art and sculptures.
- New Cut Heritage and Ecology Trail, which links together a valuable group of local open spaces.
- Risley Moss Local Nature Reserve, including important mossland and peat bog habitats, woodland walks and designated wildlife sites.
- Lymm Damm, including water features, woodland walks and angling.
- Sankey Valley Park, located along the non-navigable Sankey Canal, including path networks, play areas and park art and sculptures.
- TransPennine Trail, providing a footpath, cycle route and bridleway.
- Birchwood Forest Park, including woodland walks, adventure play area and skate park.
- Rixton Claypits local nature reserve, including woodland and meadow habitats, designated wildlife sites and walking trails.
- Woolston Park, including woodland walks, water features and play areas.

Twelve of Warrington's green spaces are currently in receipt of Keep Britain Tidy's Green Flag Award, including Risley Moss, Walton Hall Gardens and Lymm Damm, but also extending to St Peters Park, St Elphins Park, Alexandra Park and Bewsey Park.

Voluntary and community sector

As noted in Section, B there are over 1,200 voluntary and community groups, charities and social enterprises across the town and nearly one-third of residents take part in some form of volunteering. A 'state of the sector' review in 2016 indicated that the economic impact of Warrington's third sector equates to approximately £51 million across the town. Warrington Borough Council provides an annual grant of £116,000 To Warrington Voluntary Action (WVA) to support the development of a vibrant, thriving and sustainable third sector to meet the needs of local communities.

WVA provides a range of infrastructure and support services for third sector organisations, including:

- Providing information, guidance and resources to enable local organisations to deliver effective services.
- Developing and promoting social action and volunteering by individuals and local communities.
- Initiating and nurturing the development of new groups or activities to meet identified needs.
- Supporting local networks to facilitate effective partnership and cross-sector working.
- Enabling effective third sector representation on key strategic partnership bodies.

WVA played a pivotal role in mobilising volunteers during the COVID-19 pandemic, with 1,630 volunteers recruited to provide a range of telephone support, food/prescription and other vital services to local people. A survey carried out in 2017 revealed that nearly 16,000 residents participated in regular volunteering activity, contributing an estimated 172,000 hours of total time each week. A new survey is currently underway by WVA to build a picture of the way in which the third sector responded to the COVID-19 crisis, including impacts on activities and the key issues moving forward into the recovery phase.

In addition to funding WVA, Warrington Borough Council provides financial support to a range of other third sector organisations. In total, over £1.6 million will be provided in 2021/22 to a range of voluntary organisations under Service Level Agreements to deliver specific services, including Alzheimer's Society, Samaritans, Warrington Disability Partnership, Citizens Advice and Refuge. As well as direct funding, Warrington Borough Council supports third sector organisations in a multitude of other ways, including the provision of accommodation, in-kind support and grants/ logistical support for events such as the MELA and DAD. In addition, the Council funds Livewire and Culture Warrington as third sector organisations to deliver key leisure/lifestyle and cultural services.

Infrastructure

a. Shopping centres

Warrington town centre is a growing retail and leisure destination serving Warrington and the surrounding area. As noted earlier, the major Time Square regeneration scheme has been completed, adding a cinema, a revitalised market and other facilities to an already extensive town centre offer. The Golden Square shopping centre, which opened in 2007, is the other centrepiece, providing a modern mall with around 130 units, housing a wide range of high street fashion, homeware and lifestyle stores, together with restaurants and a tenpin bowling centre.

Beyond the town centre, there are a number of high street shopping areas and retail parks, including:

- Culcheth High Street
- Birchwood Shopping Centre
- Gemini Retail Park
- Riverside Retail Park
- Stockton Heath High Street
- Junction 9 Retail Park
- Westbrook Centre
- Cockhedge Shopping Centre

b. Business Parks

The town hosts three major business parks, as well as a number of smaller facilities, at:

- Birchwood Park - hosting 165 companies of all sizes, including one of the most significant nuclear clusters in the UK.
- Omega Park - straddling the M62, the largest mixed-use development in the North West with around 2.5 million square feet of logistics space and home to a number of nationally significant companies.
- Lingley Mere – a well-established business park, with 1.25 million square feet of business space and home to the regional water company, United Utilities.

c. Public transport/active travel

As noted in Section B, Warrington is well located for both north-south and east-west rail services. Six bus and coach companies provide a network of services covering Warrington and surrounding areas, including Warrington's Own Buses operated by Warrington Borough Council. The Council also owns and manages the Bus Interchange located near to Warrington Central Rail Station in the town centre. An application for ZEBRA (Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas) funding to develop a fleet of electric buses in Warrington has progressed to the second round of the competitive application process.

As outlined in Section B, Warrington's relatively compact size and fairly flat terrain make it both cycling and walking-friendly. Latest statistics released by the Department for Transport (2020) confirm that the proportion of Warrington residents cycling regularly is well above national and regional averages. One in five residents cycle at least once per month and, and one in seven cycle at least once a week, with frequent cycling (5 times per week) increasing by one-third over the last two years. The Council's active travel strategy aims to increase cycling and walking opportunities by investing in infrastructure, including a strategic cycle network, with aspirations to create a 'mini-Holland'.

Other information

Warrington is twinned with Hilden in North West Germany, and Nachod in the Czech Republic, and has been a Fairtrade Borough since 2006.

The visitor economy is growing. Some 9.2 million visits were made to Warrington in 2013 (28% increase since 2009), generating £335 million of visitor spending and an overall economic impact of £447 million. As expected for a growing economy, the visitor base has to date primarily been made up of business and retail visitors. However, more and more people are visiting the town to participate in the developing culture, leisure and hospitality – we know that 10,000 people from outside Warrington attend the Warrington Contemporary Arts Festival each year, for example. We want to build on the developing emphasis on creative, cultural and leisure activities to ensure that our visitor economy continues to grow.

D Photographs

Leisure and Tourism



Time Square, Warrington's beating heart of leisure and hospitality



The iconic Old Fish Market at Golden Square



The award-winning Warrington Market has an outstanding range of local, independent hospitality traders



Cookhouse at Warrington Market - the bustling heart of Time Square



The new Cineworld building at Time Square



The ever-popular Neighbourhood Weekender festival at Victoria Park



Outdoor hospitality thrives at the Old Fish Market, Golden Square



Gulliver's World - a firm family favourite destination in the region



Bridge Street blends the modern and the traditional - with the stunning new Market backing onto a street filled with Victorian and Edwardian architecture



Golden Square shopping centre, the retail heart of Warrington



A view of Warrington from Buttermarket Street



Cockhedge Shopping Centre is nestled in the heart of the town centre and hosts a range of local, independent and multi-national stores

Business, Economy and Skills



The Base, stadium quarter, a thriving hub for start-ups and SMEs in the heart of Warrington



Greenall's Distillery - one of many thriving Warrington-based businesses



Birchwood Park is home to industry-leading companies in the nuclear sector and beyond



Warrington is home to the UK's first IKEA



Amazon is one of a number of national and multi-national companies which operate from Omega business park



Warrington and Vale Royal College

Civic pride



Warrington's iconic and historic Golden Gates, which have stood proudly in the town since 1895



Freedom of the Borough



The Queen's most recent visit to Warrington was in 2012, where she opened the Orford Jubilee Neighbourhood Hub alongside the Duke of Edinburgh



The Cenotaph, which was renovated in 2019 and stands proudly in the heart of the town centre



The iconic Golden Gates and Warrington Town Hall - the civic heart of the borough



Walking Day, a proud civic occasion in Warrington's calendar

History and heritage



The River of Life, a permanent memorial following the tragic Warrington bombing in 1993 by the IRA



St Elphin's Church, which towers above the Warrington landscape - its spire is one of the tallest in the UK



The Grade II listed rail Transporter Bridge spanning the River Mersey (which stands as one of the last remaining examples in the world)



A landscape of Warrington, looking over the town centre and St Elphin's Church



Warrington iconic guardians, which were unveiled in 1999

Connectivity



The bustling Warrington bus interchange



Warrington Central station, one of two town centre-based train stations



The picturesque Bridgewater Canal has connected communities from the 18th century



Bridgefoot is a main transport thoroughfare in the centre of Warrington ensuring connectivity across the River Mersey.



A view of the Manchester ship canal - one of many connections into and around the town and wider region



Warrington bus interchange is a major transport hub, connecting the town with the wider region

Community



The memorable Rugby League Challenge Cup homecoming for Warrington Wolves



The Halliwell Jones Stadium, home to Warrington Wolves and a venue for the Rugby League World Cup 2021



The award winning Great Sankey Neighbourhood Hub



Livewire's Orford Jubilee Neighbourhood Hub offers a range of community-based services



The Gateway, home to a range of voluntary and community services



Disability Awareness Day - the world's largest not-for-profit disability expo



Lymm - one of many bustling local villages which complement the town centre

Culture



The Pyramid Arts Centre, which has supported comedy, music and culture since it officially opened in 2002



The Pyramid Arts Centre mural, which honours Warrington's proud heritage and traditions



Parr Hall, which has played host to The Rolling Stones, Jools Holland and the Arctic Monkeys, and is also home to one of the last remaining Cavallé-Coll pipe organs in the UK



Warrington Museum & Art Gallery - one of the oldest museums in the country, which opened in 1848

Parks and Green Space



Lymm Dam - a firm favourite location in the borough for a peaceful stroll



Victoria Park provides multiple sports facilities and also plays host to the Neighbourhood Weekender festival



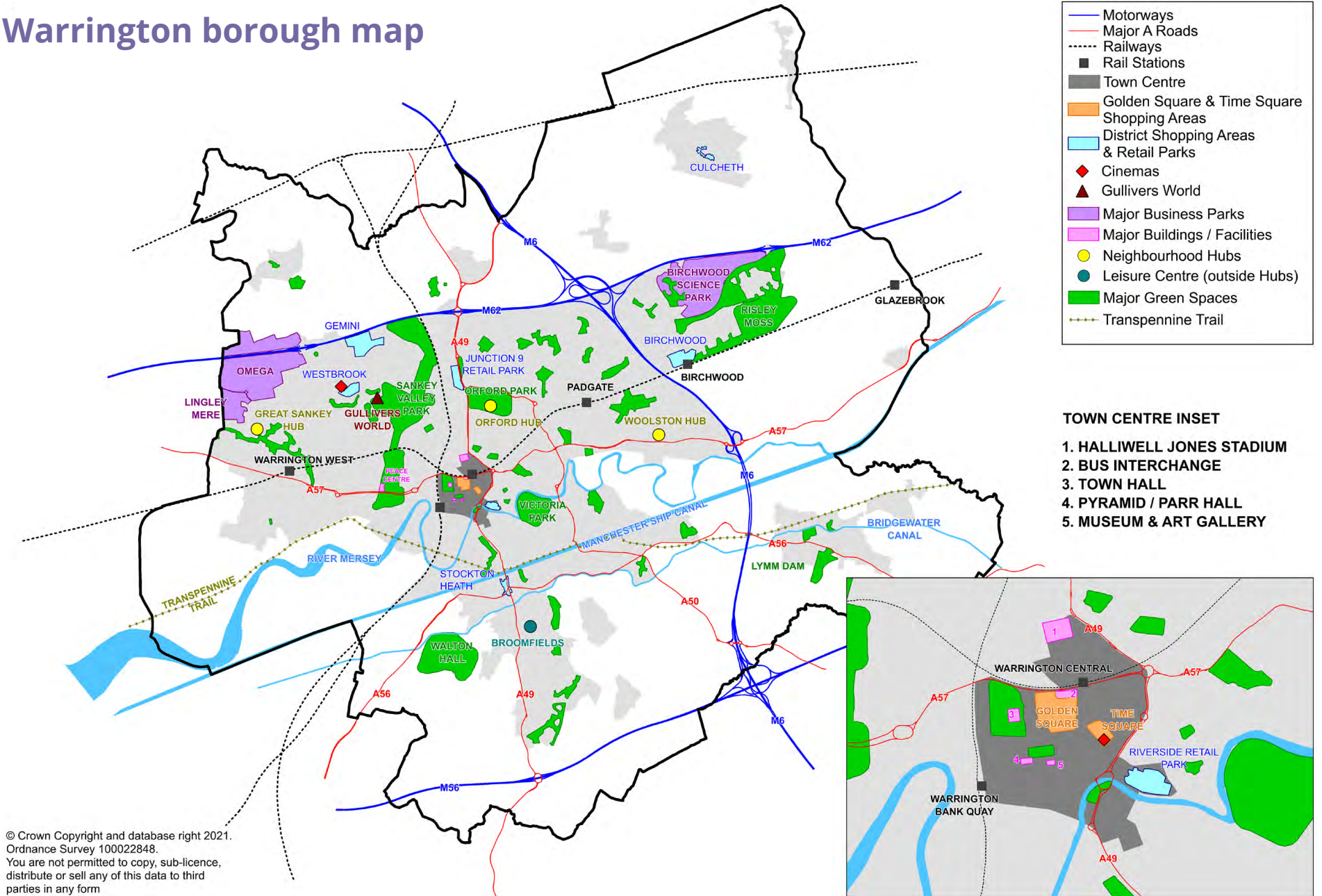
Risley Moss local nature reserve - one of Warrington's many thriving parks and green spaces



The beautiful Walton Hall and Gardens, Warrington's 'jewel in the crown'.

E Map

Warrington borough map



Map of transport links in Warrington

how to get around in Warrington

