

# **Statement of Common Ground**

**Between**

**Warrington Borough Council**

**&**

**National Highways**

**Regarding**

**Warrington Borough Council**

**Local Plan**

**March 2022**

# 1 INTRODUCTION

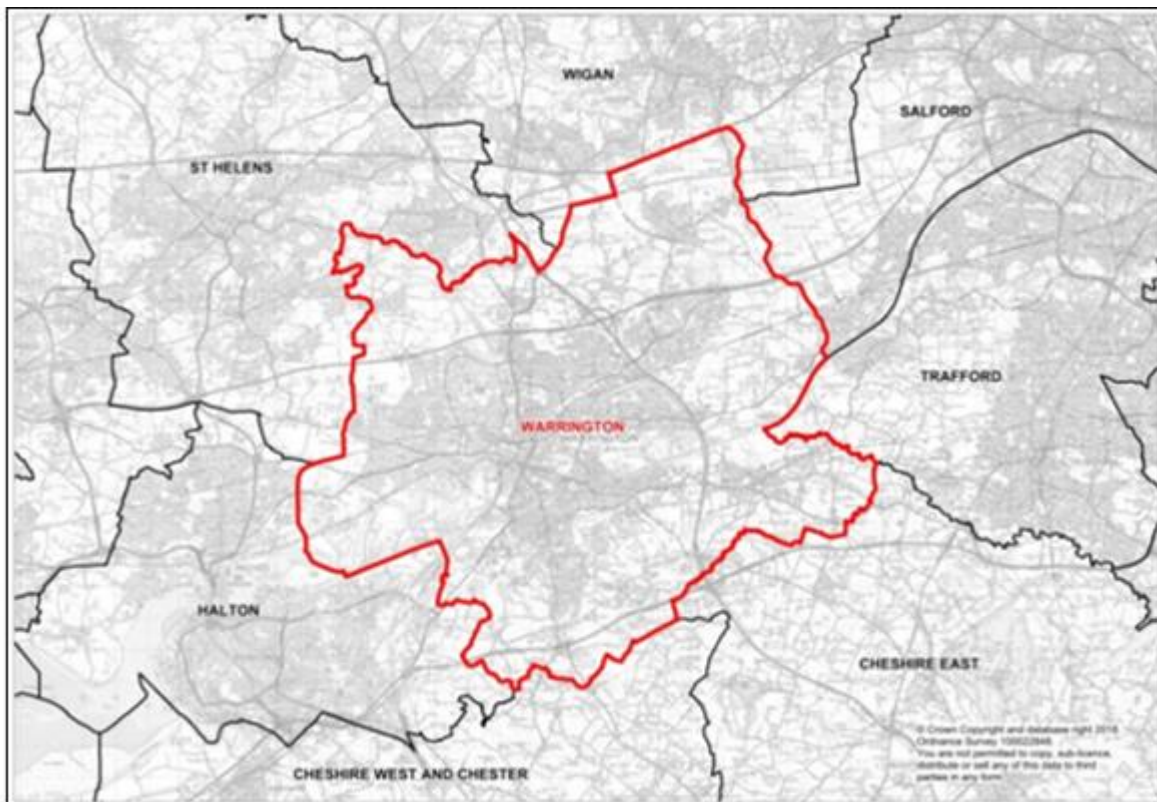
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- 1.1.1. This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been prepared in support of the review of the Warrington Borough Council (the Council) Local Plan, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF).
- 1.1.2. The SoCG outlines the geographical area covered; the key strategic issues it addresses; the plan making authorities responsible for joint working and any additional signatories; and the management and governance arrangements for updating and agreeing the completed statement, in line with the guidance provided in National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG).
- 1.1.3. Where strategic issues have been identified which require agreement or ongoing joint working with National Highways, they are highlighted within Strategic Planning Matters. Through its Duty to Cooperate discussions, the Council has ensured that strategic issues are reflected in this Statements of Common Ground.
- 1.1.4. It should be noted that whilst the Council has prepared this separate statement of common ground with National Highways, it is fully consistent with the main Statement of Common Ground that the Council has prepared covering all strategic matters relating to the progression of the Warrington Local Plan.

## 2 ADMINISTRATIVE\_AREA COVERED BY THE STATEMENT

- 2.1.1. This SoCG covers the administrative area of the Council. It shares boundaries with Cheshire East Council, Cheshire West & Chester Council, Halton Borough Council, Salford City Council, St Helens Borough Council, Trafford Borough Council and Wigan Borough Council.
- 2.1.2. This SoGC is considered to be appropriate given the varied and functional relationships it has with a number of authorities and the fact that the Council is not preparing any joint statutory Plans. It does however identify a proposed allocation site in St Helens which will contribute to meeting Warrington's employment needs and could impact on key highways infrastructure in Warrington's administrative boundary.
- 2.1.3. The statement sets out how the Council is working with the relevant authorities to address strategic matters that cross administrative boundaries. It will also enable these matters to be reflected, where appropriate, in neighbouring Council's SoCGs to which the Council will be a signatory.
- 2.1.4. Work is progressing on discussions with neighbouring authorities through the ongoing Duty to Cooperate process as the Plan progresses

**Figure 2-1 - Warrington Borough Council and Neighbouring Authorities**



## **3 BACKGROUND**

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### **3.1 NATIONAL HIGHWAYS**

- 3.1.1. National Highways is responsible for operating, maintaining and improving England's motorways and major A roads. the Council has been constantly engaging and consulting with National Highways during the preparation of its Local Plan
- 3.1.2. National Highways raised concerns regarding the detail of available transport evidence supporting the Draft Local Plan, although they noted that the Plan was in its early stages. Since then, work to develop the Council's Multi Modal Transport Model has been completed and the Council is continuing to work positively with National Highways on key allocations in the Local Plan, particularly Fiddlers Ferry, the South East Warrington Urban Extension and the South East Warrington Employment Area.
- 3.1.3. Together with National Highways' own modelling work, this work has identified key mitigation requirements which have been reflected in the draft Local Plan policy wording and in the improvements to the Strategic Road Network identified in the Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan. WBC will continue to work constructively with National Highways as the Plan's development proposals are worked up in more detail, to ensure that there is a full understanding of the impact of proposed development (both cumulative and individual) and to agree the detail of the required mitigation measures, ensuring that these measures are both feasible and deliverable.
- 3.1.4. National Highways and the Council recognise the importance of Area Wide Travel Plans and the collective benefits of applying these to wider strategic sites to supplement and/or replace the need for multiple standalone Travel Plans. As part of National Highways 'Net Zero Highways our 2030 2040 2050 plan' there is a firm commitment to integrate a strong modal shift programme in to future roads periods. National Highways and WBC will apply existing commitments and work collaboratively to identify Area Wide Travel Plans and supporting influencing behaviour programmes

The Council will continue to work with National Highways to ensure there is a full understanding of the impact of the development proposed in the Updated Proposed Submission Version Local Plan 2021 (both cumulative and individual), to agree the detail of the required mitigation measures and to keep the Infrastructure Deliver Plan under review in respect of schemes relating to the Strategic Road Network.

## **4 STRATEGIC PLANNING MATTERS**

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### **4.1 HOUSING**

- 4.1.1. The Proposed Submission Version Local Plan sets a minimum housing requirement of 14,688 new homes for the period between 2021 and 2038. This requirement is derived from the Council's Local Housing Need Assessment, published in September 2021. The updated Proposed Submission Version Local Plan (2021) provides sufficient land for an additional 13% on top of this requirement to ensure flexibility of land supply.
- 4.1.2. Most new homes will be delivered within the existing main urban area of Warrington, the existing inset settlements and other sites identified in the Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), which together have identified a deliverable capacity for a minimum of 11,785 new homes.
- 4.1.3. To meet Warrington's housing requirement, the following sites will be removed from the Green Belt and allocated for development:
- South East Warrington Urban Extension – minimum capacity of 4,200 homes of which a minimum of 2,400 homes will be delivered in the Plan Period
  - Thelwall Heys – 350 new homes within the early part of the Plan period
  - Fiddlers Ferry Power Station – Minimum capacity of 1,800 homes of which 1,300 homes will be delivered in the Plan period.
  - Sites adjacent to the Borough's outlying settlements – minimum of 801 homes

### **4.2 EMPLOYMENT**

- 4.2.1. The Proposed Submission Version Local Plan proposes the following new employment location:
- Fiddlers Ferry Power Station – Redevelopment of a former Brownfield Power Station site to provide for a mix of industrial and distribution uses; and
  - Land at M56 Junction 9 – to be removed from the Green Belt
- 4.2.2. The Council has agreed with St Helens in principle that the westward extension of Omega (identified as proposed site allocation 1EA in the emerging St Helens Borough Local Plan), which is within St Helens administrative boundary will contribute to meeting Warrington's employment land needs, subject to resolving access issues.
- 4.2.3. It is noted that employment land at Omega West (which includes proposed site allocation 1EA in the emerging St Helens Borough Local Plan as above) now has consent following the Secretary of State's decision in November 2021

### **4.3 STRATEGIC HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT SITES**

- 4.3.1. South East Warrington Urban Extension (SEWUE) and South East Warrington Employment Area (SEWEA):
- 4.3.2. The proposed Submission Version Local Plan identifies the SEWUE as one of the main areas for residential growth. It is proposed to provide for a new urban extension

of around 4,200 homes and supported by a range of new extensive transport and social infrastructure.

- 4.3.3. SEWEA is a new major employment site at the junction of the M6 and M56 and is a proposed allocation to be built out in its entirety within the Plan Period.
- 4.3.4. The SEWUE and the SEWEA have the potential to have implications on the M6 and M56 motorway as identified by National Highways and on the road network in Cheshire East and in Cheshire West and Chester. The southern extent of the SEWUE and the SEWEA lies close to the boundary between Warrington and Cheshire East.
- 4.3.5. The Council has undertaken transport modelling work as recommended by National Highways to identify the likely impacts of the development on the road networks. Together with National Highways own modelling, this has identified key mitigation requirements which have been reflected in the draft Local Plan policy wording.
- 4.3.6. The Council will continue to work with National Highways as the SEWUE and SEWEA proposals are worked up in more detail to ensure that there is a full understanding of the impact of proposed development (both cumulative and individual). This will agree the detail of the required mitigation measures and to ensure that these measures are both feasible and deliverable.
- 4.3.7. The Council will share the output from that work and continue to work with neighbouring authorities, including Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester, to address any issues arising from the allocation of the sites in the Proposed Submission Version Local Plan through the Duty to Cooperate process. Following an initial review of the highway modelling, Cheshire East Council have raised particular issues regarding potential highway impacts on Swineyard Lane, High Legh and HGV movements. Cheshire East Council consider that it is essential that measures are taken to discourage HGV traffic being directed towards Swineyard Lane. They also seek the strengthening of measures to enhance public transport with the specific aim of mitigating cross boundary flows with Cheshire East.

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| <p>The Council will continue to work with National Highways to ensure there is a full understanding of the impact of the proposed South East Warrington Urban Extension and South East Warrington Employment Area (both cumulative and individual) and to agree the detail of the required mitigation measures.</p> |
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#### **4.4 FIDDLERS FERRY**

- 4.4.1. The former power station is located to the south of A562 Widnes Road. Together with associated land, the site comprises a total of 324 hectares, extending south beyond the St Helens Canal and the Widnes to Warrington Railway line to the River Mersey.
- 4.4.2. Land at Fiddlers Ferry will deliver a minimum of 1,800 homes, of which a minimum of 1,300 will be delivered in the plan period, and approximately 90 ha of employment land.

- 4.4.3. Given the location of the site on the border between Warrington and Halton, it will be important that the development provides mitigation for the impacts on Halton's transport and social infrastructure. It will also be important to ensure a robust Green Belt boundary to maintain separation between Widnes and Warrington.
- 4.4.4. The Council has undertaken transport modelling work to assess the impacts of the development on the transport network and will continue to work with Halton to resolve any issues arising from the allocation through Duty to Co-operate discussions.

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| <p>The Council will work with Halton, St Helens and National Highways to identify and mitigate any impacts on Junction 7 M62.</p> |
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#### **4.5 OMEGA AND FUTURE EMPLOYMENT SITE SERVED BY J8 M62**

- 4.5.1. St Helens' Submission Draft Local Plan was subject to a period of public consultation between January 2019 and May 2019, and an Examination in public during 2021. Consultation on modifications to the Plan concluded in January 2022.
- 4.5.2. St Helens' Submission Draft Local Plan includes a proposal to extend Omega, an employment site within the Council's administrative boundary, westward into St Helens' boundary for employment purposes. Through ongoing Duty to Cooperate discussions it has been agreed that the western extension can, in principle, be part of the Council's employment land supply in the forthcoming new Warrington Local Plan (2021).
- 4.5.3. The Council had undertaken a programme of improvements to the local and strategic highway networks and the public transport network to facilitate the sustainable growth of Omega as a strategic employment location and has taken account of the proposed western extension of Omega in its transport modelling work.
- 4.5.4. It is noted that the planning consent for employment land at Omega West, following the decision of the Secretary of State in November 2021, whilst incorporating the 31.2ha proposed site allocation 1EA in the emerging St Helens Borough Local Plan, also extends beyond it covering an area of 75 ha. To date, no agreement has been reached on which Borough's need the additional land (over and above the 31.2ha allocation area) will contribute to.
- 4.5.5. The Council is concerned about any further growth in this area and considers that this would require significant infrastructure improvements to the local and Strategic Road network. The Council will continue to review any additional employment proposals through ongoing Duty to Cooperate discussions with St Helens and National Highways.

The Council has agreed in principle that the western 31.2 hectares extension of Omega in St Helens, as defined in the St Helens Submission Version Local Plan (site 1EA, land north of Finches Plantation, Bold), will contribute to meeting Warrington's employment land needs.

The Council will continue to liaise with St Helens over the apportionment of the element of employment land at Omega west, which benefits from the planning consent issued by the Secretary of State in November 2021, but is above and beyond the 31.2ha proposed to be allocated in the St Helens Borough Local Plan.

Consideration of any additional land in this area will require a cumulative traffic assessment of the impact on J8 of the M62 and will require a consistent approach between the two Local Plans, agreed through ongoing Duty to Cooperate discussions between the two Councils and National Highways.

## **4.6 PEEL HALL**

- 4.6.1. The Council is proposing to allocate Peel Hall, a Green Field site but within the existing urban area, to provide a residential led development of up to 1,200 homes, supported by a local centre. It should be noted that this site now has outline planning consent following the Secretary of State's decision in November 2021

## **4.7 PARKSIDE (ST HELENS)**

- 4.7.1. The sites at Parkside West and East lie within St Helens Borough immediately abutting the boundary with Warrington. They have a combined area of over 200 hectares and benefit from a location at the heart of the north-west motorway network, a skilled local labour supply, and the scope for direct access to the West Coast Main Line and the east-west ("Chat Moss") line.
- 4.7.2. The St Helens Submission Draft Local Plan proposes to remove the Parkside sites from the Green Belt and to allocate them for a range of employment uses. Proposals have been developed to create a new link road to provide access from the sites onto junction 22 of the M6. The Secretary of State has now approved both the Parkside West Phase 1 and the Parkside Link Road applications. The Submission Draft Local Plan for St Helens contains a range of policies to address the effects of the development at Parkside for example on infrastructure, local heritage and the environment.
- 4.7.3. The development will impact on key infrastructure within Warrington, including the local and strategic highway network. It is therefore essential that Warrington and St Helens Councils, in liaison with National Highways, Wigan Council and the GMCA (as TfGM) work to ensure that these impacts are appropriately mitigated.



The Council and St Helens agree to work together, in liaison with National Highways, Wigan Council and the GMCA (as TfGM) to consider any cross boundary infrastructure requirements or other issues relating to the development of the sites at Parkside West and Parkside East for employment uses. This includes provision for a Strategic Rail Freight Interchange or other rail served employment development within Parkside East.

#### **4.8 BOLD FOREST URBAN EXTENSION (ST HELENS)**

- 4.8.1. The emerging St Helens Local Plan proposes to remove approximately 140 hectares of land at Bold from the Green Belt, to enable it to form a future new Garden Suburb, with capacity for approximately 3,000 new dwellings (proposed site allocation 4HA in the emerging St Helens Borough Local Plan). Whilst this area is within the Borough of St Helens, it is (at its nearest point) about 1 kilometre from the border with Warrington.
- 4.8.2. The Council is particularly concerned about the potential impact on residents in Burtonwood, and as such, has now removed the Burtonwood residential allocation from its new Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan (2021). It is expected that the development of the site would be informed by a master plan exercise. This would consider (amongst other matters) any effects of the development on transport infrastructure in Warrington (including junction 8 of the M62), in liaison with National Highways.

The Council and St Helens agree to work together, in liaison with National Highways, to consider any cross-boundary infrastructure requirements or other issues related to the development of the proposed Bold Urban Extension.



## **5 CONCLUSION**

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- 5.1.1. Both parties agree that finalisation and adoption of the Warrington Local Plan is only the next step in a process of ongoing liaison and partnership between National Highways and the Council.
- 5.1.2. Both parties will continue to work together to develop the infrastructure improvements set out above to ensure delivery within the Plan period.
- 5.1.3. National Highways will continue to support growth in Warrington Borough by supporting funding bids and business case development for these improvements as appropriate, as well as providing technical advice and input as required.
- 5.1.4. The form and nature of National Highways representation to the Warrington Local Plan Examination in Public Hearing Sessions will be discussed with Warrington Council to ensure a clear and transparent representation of National Highways' position at the Examination. Warrington Council will also consider National Highways' position to ensure that both parties work collaboratively post adoption of the plan.

## 6 SIGNATORIES

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| Signed  | Name and Position                                       | On Behalf Of                  | Date                           |
|---|---|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
|  | Michael Bell<br>Planning Policy &<br>Programmes Manager | Warrington<br>Borough Council | 14 <sup>th</sup> March<br>2022 |
|  | Andrew Taylor<br>Spatial Planner                        | National<br>Highways          | 28 <sup>th</sup> March<br>2022 |