The Halton’s Unitary Development Plan (UDP) plays an important part in achieving the community’s vision for the future of Halton that will be a thriving and vibrant borough where people enjoy a good quality of life with:

- Good health;
- A high quality, modern urban environment;
- Opportunity for all to fulfil their potential;
- Greater prosperity and equality; and
- Safe and attractive neighbourhoods.

Community involvement and participation has been at the centre of the plan preparation process from the start. The UDP reflects as far as possible the ambitions and concerns of people for a good supply of new jobs and housing balanced by the protection and enhancement of Halton’s built and natural assets.

The new Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 has introduced a new development plans system. Although the Halton UDP policies will be ‘saved’ under the new Act, these changes mean that development plans such as the UDP will progressively be superseded, not by a single revised plan but instead by a Local Development Framework comprising a number of different planning documents. The Council has now begun work on these new plans and will continue to plan for the future in partnership with the whole community of Halton aiming to achieve the community’s vision for the future as set out in the Community Strategy.

Councillor Tony McDermott - Leader of the Council
Councillor Rob Polhill - Executive Board Member

The adoption of Halton’s Unitary Development Plan (UDP) in April 2005 is a significant event in the Council’s history since it became a unitary authority in 1998. It now completes the Local Authority’s strategic and local planning policy framework and replaces the planning policies of the Halton Local Plan and the Cheshire Structure Plan 2001.

A dedicated team of officers and councillors working together has prepared the UDP. The officer’s team has been led by Chris Brough (Operational Director Planning) and Andrew Pannell (Divisional Manager Forward Planning). The Councillors have been led by Councillor Tony McDermott, (Leader of the Council) and Councillor Rob Polhill, (Executive Board member). This team has worked hard to ensure that the Plan’s preparation has involved the participation of the whole community of Halton.

Work began on the Unitary Development Plan with the publication of a video and key issues report in 1999 to stimulate public participation in shaping the aims, objectives and policies of the UDP. This was followed by extensive periods of public consultation on the 1st Deposit Version published in September 2000 and the 2nd Deposit Version published in December 2001.

The UDP was prepared in parallel with the Regional Planning Guidance or the North West (RPG 13), now re-named Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), which the Secretary of State approved in March 2003. The Council has ensured that the UDP is in conformity with the policies of RSS.

A local public inquiry into objections to the UDP was held between January and July 2003. The Inspector’s Report of the Inquiry was received in January 2004 and the following July the Council agreed a statement of Decisions and Modifications to the UDP following consideration of the Inspector’s recommendations.

A further period of public consultation on the decisions and proposed modifications in response to the Inspector’s Report was held during September and October 2004. This resulted in further modifications that were subjected to more public consultation and the results reported back to Council in March 2004. The Council finally resolved to adopt the UDP on 7th April 2005 as the new statutory development plan for Halton.

C.W. Brough
Operational Director - Planning
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PREFACE

Halton Borough Council became a new Unitary Authority in April 1998 and this is its first Unitary Development Plan (UDP). The UDP combines both strategic and local planning functions and therefore contains all the planning policies relevant to Halton. These policies provide the guidance, incentive and control for the development and use of land in Halton up to and beyond 2016.

1 The Unitary Development Plan (UDP) contains two parts. Part I consists of a written statement of Halton’s strategic planning policies. This then forms the framework for the detailed proposals for the use and development of land in Part II of the Plan.

2 The Halton Unitary Development plan was adopted as the Borough’s Statutory Development Plan on 7th April 2005. It replaces the previous statutory development plan that was comprised of the Halton Local Plan (adopted in April 1996) and the Cheshire Replacement Structure Plan (1992), Cheshire Minerals Local Plan (1987) and the Cheshire Waste Disposal Plan (1987).

3 Under the transitional arrangements of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 the adopted Halton Unitary Development Plan will retain development plan status and its policies will automatically become ‘saved’ for a period of three years from adoption. During the three-year period the Council will bring forward ‘local development documents’ (which form the ‘local development framework’) prepared under the new Act to replace saved policies. This will be done in accordance with a programme for the production of ‘local development documents’ known as the Halton Local Development Scheme.

4 Where it can be demonstrated to the Secretary of State that that the saved policies in the Halton UDP reflect the principles of ‘local development frameworks’ and that it is not feasible or desirable to replace them within the three year period, it will be possible to seek the Secretary of State’s approval to extend them as part of a review of the Halton Local Development Scheme.

5 The Halton UDP also conforms with the Regional Planning Guidance for the North West (RPG13) that was published by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in March 2003 (now termed Regional Spatial Strategy). This describes the role that Halton will play in the development and the regeneration of the region as a whole. The UDP conforms generally with national planning guidance as interpreted for the North West by Regional Spatial Strategy.
HALTON UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

THE BOROUGH OF HALTON

HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

1. Halton Borough comprises the towns of Widnes and Runcorn and surrounding villages of Hale, Daresbury, Moore, Preston Brook and Preston on the Hill. It is a predominately urban area with a population of 118,208 (2001 Census). The Borough straddles the River Mersey’s Upper Estuary, part of which is an area of international nature conservation importance. The urban area forms part of the ‘Mersey Belt’ between Liverpool and Manchester.

2. Widnes developed during the 19th Century around the pioneering early chemical industry. Although chemical manufacturing remains important, the economy has now diversified into a broad range of other manufacturing and service industries. Unfortunately, the legacy of the early chemical industry, which is a powerful example of unsustainable development, has left the Borough with a problem of derelict and contaminated land, which limits the scope for its re-development and regeneration through ‘brownfield’ development. This legacy has however, provided an opportunity for the creation of major new recreation uses on reclaimed land including a golf course and riverside parks and the successful expansion of Widnes Town Centre.

3. Runcorn developed as a canal port during the 19th Century and associated ship-building, tanneries, soapworks and chemical industries were developed. It is now home to one of the UK’s larger chemical manufacturing complexes and a number of successful modern business and office parks.

4. Runcorn experienced rapid growth in the 1960’s and early 1970’s following its designation as a New Town in 1964. During this time innovative public transport, shopping facilities and housing layouts were developed. Some of this infrastructure must now be renewed and adapted to meet future housing, shopping and business needs although the unique dedicated busway is well suited to meet the need for integrated transport and the need to reduce car usage.

5. The surrounding villages of Hale, Moore, Daresbury, Preston Brook and Preston on the Hill are set in attractive countryside, much of which in high grade agricultural land. The area is protected by Green Belt policy and ensures separation from surrounding towns.

6. The Borough is well served by rail and motorway links. The M62 lies to the north and the M56 to the south. These are linked through the Borough by new roads and an impressive yet congested bridge over the Mersey (the Silver Jubilee Bridge), listed for its architectural importance.

7. Runcorn has a main line railway station with

MAP 1 HALTON’S LOCATION
direct inter-city links with Liverpool, Birmingham and London and local links with North Wales, Chester and Manchester. Widnes is on the main Liverpool – Manchester line.

8 Halton’s social and economic fortunes are closely linked with surrounding areas within the North West of England. It is:

- at the hub of the North West’s motorway network;
- almost equidistant between the region’s two major conurbations;
- within twenty minutes driving time of the region’s two major airports;
- within thirty minutes of the region’s major seaport connections on Merseyside; and
- at the centre of a market of over 7 million people.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

1 The quality of life for many of Halton’s residents is below average when measured against many social and economic indicators. Despite the considerable investment in Runcorn during the 1960’s and 70’s when it was developed as a New Town and considerable success in Widnes in reclaiming derelict land in the 1970’s and 1980’s, the area has not enjoyed the levels of investment and prosperity that have benefited other areas of the UK in recent decades. This has resulted in higher levels of social deprivation and unemployment than elsewhere.

2 The following material drawn from the “State of the Borough Report” by Halton Borough Council November 2000, illustrate this situation.

POPULATION CHANGE

1 Halton’s population is declining from a peak of 124,900 in 1991 to 118,208 according to the 2001 Census. It is projected to fall to 114,600 by 2010. Most significantly it appears to be the younger, more employable/mobile people of working age (16 - 44) who are leaving. The proportion of older people is increasing (over 75s up 12.2% by 2011) as the ‘New Town’ effect works its way through. The 5-10 and 11-15 year age groups are expected to fall by 14.8% and 17.8% respectively by 2011.

GENERAL DEPRIVATION AND NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL

1 The latest, improved Government Index ranks Halton as the 18th overall most deprived local authority area in England and Wales, with residents facing the complex, inter-linked problems of widespread poverty, and social exclusion.

2 Within this picture of general deprivation, the ‘Index’ shows Halton ranking particularly poorly on health and a cluster of poverty-related indicators.

THE ECONOMY, INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT

1 8 of Halton’s 21 wards rank in the lowest 10% nationally in terms of income and child poverty. 10 Halton wards rank in the lowest 10% for employment. Unemployment amongst the under 25s (at 33.6% of total unemployment the 2nd highest in England and Wales) is a particular concern. Despite these rankings, Halton experienced the greatest improvement in the North West in the 12 months to July 2000. Halton residents, however, do not seem to be sharing fully in the wealth being generated locally. Maintaining a good mix of quality employment opportunities remains an important issue.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT, SKILLS AND TRAINING

1 On a number of measures that are closely linked to life chances and opportunities for local people, Halton performs creditably to similar authorities but still falls below the national averages. In primary schools pupils are improving in literacy and numeracy faster than the national rate. In secondary schools 38% of pupils gained 5 or more GCSE passes at A* - C in summer 2000 compared to the national average of 48%.

2 The local workforce generally also has a low skills base/qualifications and, broadly speaking, experiences difficulty in securing/helping attract better quality and more highly paid jobs. For a variety of reasons, Halton people
HALTON UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN
INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

HEALTH

Halton has a very poor health position. Poor health and poverty/deprivation are closely linked. Halton has the 2nd worst ‘all causes, all ages Standardised Mortality Ratio’ (SMR) - basically how likely you are to die - amongst 354 local authority areas in England and Wales. It has the worst infant mortality and all cancer SMRs. 15 Halton wards are in the worst 10% nationally. Considerable scope exists for Council services to impact on causes of ill-health in the Borough.

ENVIRONMENT – DERELICTION AND CONTAMINATION

Environment/pollution was 2nd highest ranked problem in the Borough by residents. This is a broad area and further analysis is needed. Issues such as pollution and protection of green belt/open space were seen as important, with the Council influential as a policy-maker and regulator. Halton’s history, however, has left an exceptional legacy of dereliction and contaminated land that is beyond the means of the Council alone to resolve. Highly visible areas remain blighted that might otherwise be prime sites for regeneration and redevelopment that could help lift the image of the Borough.

PLANNING PROBLEMS AND ISSUES

The history, geography, economy and social make up of Halton all contribute to the problems and issues that have been identified and which are capable of being tackled through the implementation of the Unitary Development Plan.

Old Industrial Widnes
yards. This legacy presents a major disincentive for development in the Borough and makes it impossible to meet Government policy objectives for most new development to take place on previously used land. This is because the location, unsuitability and costs of such sites in Halton are far worse than is normal of a typical urban area. This peculiar situation in Halton therefore has to be taken into account when evaluating the Plan against national planning policy.

3 Those problems and issues have been described in a series of issues reports published by the Council and summarised in a Key Issues Report. The reports are as follows:

- Strategic Options Issues Report
- Transport Issues Report
- Regeneration Issues Report
- Retail Issues Study
- Greenspace and Nature Conservation Issues Report
- Minerals and Waste Issues Report
- Halton Urban Capacity Study

4 Since the publication of the Key Issues Report another study has been completed. This is the ‘Halton Housing Requirements Study’. This examines the likely future amount of housing growth, where it should take place and the sizes and types of housing that should be provided.

5 Taken together, these documents contain a full description of the planning problems and issues facing Halton. They also contain policy options on how many of them could be tackled.

6 Many of the problems and issues are common across most planning authorities in Britain, but there are some particular local circumstances in Halton that present a particular challenge. These are:

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**POPULATION DECLINE**

1 According to the 1996 based ONS population projections produced for Halton the population of the Borough is projected to fall, if present trends continue, from 124.9 thousand at the time of the 1991 census to 109.5 thousand in 2021. In contrast Halton’s total population remained fairly stable between the 1981 and 1991 census with only a small fall of 0.4 per cent. Its stable population during that period can mainly be attributed to the natural increase of its rather young population. Halton, however has not been immune from population loss during the inter-census period. This has been due to high rates of net out-migration which are closer to rates in deprived Merseyside. As the former high birth-rate is likely to fall in the future then continued high rates of net out-migration will result in a steady fall in population.

2 The consequences of continued net out-migration and population decline on the local economy will increase levels of deprivation and increase the concentration of disadvantaged people who have a greater need for social and welfare support.
3 Despite the projected population decline there is still a demand for new dwellings because the number of people per dwelling continues to fall due to social factors leading to a greater number of single person households for example.

CONTAMINATED LAND

1 The large area and extent of land contaminated by the past chemical industries of the Borough, particularly in Widnes but also in older areas of Runcorn, imposes a strong constraint to development. Much of this land comprises of chemical fill and contains potentially dangerous and hazardous substances. It is extremely costly to reclaim for beneficial use.

2 Local surveys indicate that there are still 190 hectares of derelict land in Halton and it is estimated that 75% of this land is economically and environmentally beyond reclamation for a hard end use. Since 1974 Halton Borough Council has been instrumental in bringing back into use 180 hectares of derelict and contaminated land. Of this the majority (71%) is so badly contaminated that it is only suitable for a green end use. Of the 51 hectares reclaimed for a hard end use, 32 hectares (63%) is still vacant and undeveloped despite extensive marketing.

3 This shows that even after reclamation the majority of derelict land in Halton is only suitable for green after uses. The land that is reclaimed for hard end uses often remains undeveloped because of low land values and other constraints.

4 The public expectation, that new development in Halton can be accommodated on ‘brownfield land’ is clearly not possible without major public subsidy on a far greater scale than has been available in the past and even then there would be no guarantee that development would take place.

5 This is bound to put more pressure on greenfield sites particularly for much needed employment development.

MAJOR ACCIDENTAL RISK INSTALLATIONS

1 Some of the existing chemical industry in the Borough use toxic or dangerous chemicals that are potentially hazardous if accidentally released. These chemical plants are a major source of local employment and prosperity, but storage of these chemicals could have a blighting effect on certain kinds of development in the vicinity and impose slightly increased risk levels for nearby residents. A balance needs to be struck between society’s concerns about safety standards, the blighting effect on development and the economic future of Halton’s important chemical industry.

THE MERSEY ESTUARY AND BRIDGE CROSSINGS

1 The upper part of the Mersey Estuary runs right through the Borough, the wider western part of which is designated for special protection for its nature conservation importance. The Estuary is both a major asset and a major problem for the Borough. The scope for waterfront development and recreation has yet to be fully realised and could help regenerate the Borough, benefiting its poorest areas and most degraded environment. This potential benefit is countered by the major barrier that the Estuary causes to transport between Runcorn
and Widnes and other parts of the sub region. The congestion on the existing single road crossing is a major constraint to the economic development of the area and to social and economic interaction within the Borough.

2 There is therefore a pressing need for a second bridge crossing of the Mersey within Halton built as part of an integrated transport plan. There are also unrealised opportunities for waterside development. Implementation of these developments, whilst protecting and enhancing the nature conservation value of the Estuary are major issues for the UDP to resolve.

THE CHALLENGES

1 One of the greatest challenges for the UDP and other Council strategies is to implement policies and proposals that will reverse population decline through an holistic approach to economic, social and environmental regeneration. The success of this will depend in large part on an increase in investment confidence in the Borough and Region as a whole.

2 However these particular local circumstances of population decline, contaminated land, major accidental risk installations and a congested bridge crossing of the Mersey combine to create a lower level of investment confidence than should occur given the Borough’s locational advantages.

3 The Unitary Development Plan can play a part in helping to generate increased investment confidence by allocating suitable sites for development of housing and growth industries in locations where these constraints are not significant and through supporting and encouraging regeneration development on brownfield and underused sites where feasible.

4 In view of the above local circumstances, national and regional planning policies must therefore be tailored to these circumstances by the UDP if its aims are to be fulfilled.
POLICY CONTEXT

BACKGROUND

1 The Halton UDP must take account of national and regional policies. National policies are described in detail in each of the Issues Reports published with this UDP and there is no need to repeat them here.

REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY
(Previously termed Regional Planning Guidance).

1 The UDP also conforms with Regional Planning Guidance for the North West RPG13 that was published by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in March 2003, now termed Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS).

2 The over riding aim of RSS is to promote sustainable patterns of spatial development. RSS’s seven key objectives are:

- To achieve greater economic competitiveness and growth with associated social progress;
- To secure an urban renaissance in the towns and cities of the North West;
- To ensure the sensitive and integrated development and management of the coastal zone, and secure the revival of the coastal resort towns and other coastal settlements;
- To sustain and revive the Region’s rural communities and rural economy;
- To secure active management of the Region’s environmental and cultural assets;
- To secure a better image for the Region and a high environmental and design quality; and
- To create an accessible region, with an efficient and fully integrated transport system.

3 Halton forms part of the North West’s Metropolitan Area that is to be the focus for new development and urban renaissance resources.

4 RSS also determines the rate of house building that should take place in Halton from April 2002. It also proposes that there should be a strategic study of the green belt across Merseyside and Halton to determine whether there will be a need for changes in the broad extent and location of green belt boundaries to accommodate long term development need to 2021 and beyond.

LOCAL POLICY CONTEXT

“BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE”: HALTON’S COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND THE COUNCIL’S CORPORATE PLAN

1 The Council’s first Community Plan was produced in 1999, setting out the key priorities for Halton for the period to 2002. This first Community Plan has been replaced by two distinct, though related documents:

a The Corporate Plan for Halton Borough Council, which establishes for the Council itself aims, objectives and improvement targets in each of five priority areas:

- Improving health standards
- Promoting urban renewal
- Enhancing life chances and employment
- Tackling poverty and deprivation
- Ensuring safe and attractive neighbourhoods.

The current Corporate Plan covers the period 2001/2 to 2005/6.

b Halton Community Strategy, which is the wider community strategy and action plan to be prepared under the auspices of the Halton Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) - a formal grouping of all the main agencies and voluntary organisations working in Halton. The LSP was set up in April 2001, evolving from the long-established Halton Partnership. In line with government thinking, the Community Strategy provides an overarching “vision” for the area and a framework within which the
more specialised agencies and programmes can operate.

2 The Halton Unitary Development Plan is a significant example of a strategy and plan that complements the Community Strategy and Corporate Plan.

HALTON’S REGENERATION STRATEGY

1 A Regeneration Strategy for Halton was approved in 1998. It was prepared in a partnership between the Council and the Halton Partnership. The purpose of the Strategy is as follows.

- To build on the strengths and embrace opportunities;
- To drive forward the regeneration of the Borough;
- To create a thriving area in which people will want to live, work, and invest; and
- To revitalise Halton.

2 The Strategy identified both areas and themes for regeneration. The UDP’s policies and proposals are a means of delivering the Council’s Regeneration Strategy. Action Areas are identified where land use policies can enable regeneration to take place tailored to particular areas. More general policies of the UDP, that apply to the Borough as a whole, can help to implement the themes of the Strategy.

HALTON’S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

1 In 1999 the Council adopted an Economic Development Strategy as one of the key corporate strategies developed by the Council. It sets out a series of key challenges and specific critical actions which need to be considered. The challenge to ‘enhance the Borough’s economic infrastructure’ is where the UDP can play a major part. The critical actions which are addressed by the UDP are as follows:

- Provision of a portfolio of sites and premises to meet the needs of local businesses and potential inward investors.
- As part of the Council’s Unitary Development Plan process, there is a need to consider options for allocating a new greenfield site in north Widnes to provide for new job growth.
- Targeted environmental improvement and derelict land reclamation programmes in key employment areas to retain and attract industry and commerce into the Borough.
- Developing co-ordinated programmes to increase the vitality, viability and prosperity of the Borough’s Town Centres.
- To work with developers, local companies and public transport operators to facilitate improved transport links to enable local residents to access new job opportunities at the expanded employment areas of Whitehouse Vale, Manor Park and Daresbury Park.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT POLICY CONTEXT

1 Since the 1992 “Earth Summit” in Rio de Janeiro the sustainability agenda has increasingly influenced public policy work of all kinds, at national, regional and local levels. The UK government views the planning system as having a “vital part to play in promoting more sustainable land-use patterns, and has set new arrangements for appraising plans for their sustainability credentials”.

2 The classic definition of sustainable development is that set out in 1987 by the Brundtland Commission on Environment and Development: “development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” In the UK this broad definition has been refined by the present Government into four objectives which need to be met simultaneously:

- Social progress which meets the needs of everyone;
- Effective protection of the environment;
- Prudent use of natural resources; and
- Maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.
3 The contribution to be made by the Halton UDP to the new and still-emerging requirements of sustainability must be viewed within a broad context:

UK LEVEL

1 In October 1998 the Government published a guidance document “Planning for Sustainable Development: Towards Better Practice”. This sets out detailed advice on the production of more sustainable plans, including a suggested methodology for integrating sustainable development into development plan preparation.

2 In May 1999 the Government published an updated strategy for sustainable development for the UK under the title “A Better Quality of Life”. This includes a range of “indicators” against which future progress towards sustainability will be judged - supplementing conventional measures of the state of the economy and society.

REGIONAL LEVEL

1 In July 2000 Government Office for the North West and the North West Regional Assembly acting on behalf of a wide-ranging partnership of North West organisations and authorities, published “Action for Sustainability”, a Regional Sustainability Action Plan. It sets out regional targets and indicators for each of the main themes of sustainability and anticipates that all the authorities making up the NWRA will ensure that their various plans and programmes work towards those targets.

2 The revised RPG and the NW Regional Development Agency’s Regional Strategy were both subject to Sustainability Appraisals, carried out by the same external consultants.

LOCAL LEVEL

1 Local Authorities have (worldwide) been given the responsibility of preparing local strategies for sustainable development, Local Agenda 21 (LA21). In the UK, local authorities were asked to prepare their LA21 strategies by the end of Year 2000. The scope and nature of the LA21 document is within the discretion of the authority, but it is expected to be prepared in consultation with the local citizens and interest groups. The Halton Agenda 21 strategy was adopted in December 2000.

2 The Government recognises that development plans can make a major contribution to the achievement of its objectives for sustainable development. It therefore requires local planning authorities to undertake a sustainability appraisal of their development plans. The Council appointed consultants to prepare an independent and objective appraisal of the Draft UDP and this included four elements.

- Setting sustainability objectives and indicators;
- Testing policy options against these objectives and indicators;
- Testing draft policies against objectives and indicators;
- Preparing sustainability appraisal reports to accompany each Deposit Draft UDP.

TARGETS AND INDICATORS

1 An important thread running through all the above documents is that concerning the measurement of progress towards sustainability. This entails the setting of agreed targets (however broad or detailed) and the specific indicators that will be used to monitor progress towards those targets in the years ahead.

2 The Halton UDP takes account of the work at national, regional and local levels, and seeks to provide a straightforward set of targets and indicators associated with relevant strategic aims and policy objectives. These indicators are set out below under the aims and objectives. These will be revisited on a regular basis, as part of the arrangements for the UDP Annual Monitoring Report.
INTRODUCTION

1 The main function of Part I of the UDP is to state in broad terms the general policies and proposals of strategic importance for the development and use of land in Halton, taking account of national and regional policies and local circumstances. This then forms the framework for the detailed proposals for the use and development of land in Part 2 of the UDP.

2 The UDP provides a strategic framework for development for a period of 20 years from 1996 to 2016. Many policies however, including green belt protection, will endure for a longer period.

3 In accordance with the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, the UDP contains the Council’s policies and proposals for:
   - the development and use of land;
   - the conservation of the natural beauty and amenity of land;
   - the improvement of the physical environment; and
   - the management of traffic.

Policies and proposals in the UDP have been drawn up with regard to:

- Regional Planning Guidance for the North West;
- national policies;
- the resources likely to be available; and
- social, economic and environmental considerations.

STRUCTURE OF PART I

1 Sustainability is the guiding principle in formulating aims, objectives and policies. It is applied to the UDP through a series of tests to discover whether a particular aim, objective, policy or site allocation accords with the principles of sustainable development. The results of these tests are published in the Sustainability Appraisal of the UDP.

2 The main strategic aims and objectives of the UDP have been updated from those of the Halton Local Plan (1996) in order to reflect:
   a the priorities of the Council in its community and corporate plan;
   b its strategic planning responsibilities; and
   c a greater emphasis on providing for necessary sustainable development in a manner and in locations which do not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

3 The strategic objectives are the means of achieving the strategic aims.

4 Where possible objectives are measurable and contain indicators by which to measure progress.

5 The spatial strategy describes the future pattern of development and provides a broad framework for the site specific allocation of sites. It describes areas of growth and areas of restraint including the extent of the green belt and open countryside. It also describes the areas for regeneration and the role of the town centres.

6 Part I Strategic Policies are those which are of strategic importance for the development and use of land in the area. They differ therefore from more detailed development control policies and site allocations which are in Part II of the UDP. The structure of Part I is shown below.

![Diagram 1](image-url)
STRATEGIC AIMS, POLICY OBJECTIVES AND INDICATORS

1 The following are the strategic aims, which the UDP will endeavour to achieve through its objectives, policies and proposals. They are in no particular order of importance but fit within the framework of the Council’s Corporate Plan (aims are in bold text).

2 There are also objectives which relate directly to the strategic aims of the UDP under each topic heading. Where relevant an appropriate indicator is added to aid monitoring and measurement.

MAIN STRATEGIC AIM

To transform the quality of Halton’s environment and improve economic prosperity and social progress through sustainable development.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

1 Aims

a To promote sustainable economic prosperity and create new employment opportunities which broaden the economic base, reduce unemployment and are accessible to local residents.

2 Objectives

a Allocate a sufficient quantity and variety of marketable sites in sustainable locations for business use, general industry and warehousing and distribution uses, in equal balance between Runcorn and Widnes.

b Provide an operating environment which is attractive to existing companies which allows for their expansion needs compatible with the strategic aim of creating a safe, healthy environment.

c Identify opportunities for new retail and leisure developments in or on the edge of Halton’s town centres.

d To promote schemes of economic importance within the Borough including: the New Mersey Crossing, Widnes Waterfront Economic Development Zone, Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park and Daresbury Laboratory and Daresbury Park.

3 Indicators

a Take up rates of employment land in Widnes and Runcorn and as a % of outstanding planning permissions.

b Numbers of new jobs associated with new development.

c Number and variety of sites available for a range of business needs.

d Quality of sites available.

e Proportion of people of working age that are in work.

HOUSING AND POPULATION

1 Aims

a To achieve a reduction in the rate of population decline and an improved balance between the quality and location of jobs and residents in the Borough, by meeting housing needs and creating employment which is accessible to local residents.

b To provide a sufficient amount and appropriate types of housing that meets the needs of the Borough’s population.

c To make residential neighbourhoods more self sufficient and sustainable.

d To protect residential amenity.

e To protect and enhance greenspace within residential neighbourhoods.

f To provide an appropriate level of infrastructure and community facilities to support the revitalisation of local communities and attract new investment.

2 Objectives

a Allocate a sufficient quantity and variety of
marketable sites, in sustainable locations, that ensure a readily available supply of housing that meets the needs of local people.

b Reserve suitable sites for new local centres, protect existing local centres and allow other mixed use developments that create sustainable neighbourhoods.

c Ensure a high standard of design, layout and landscaping in new residential development.

d Ensure that housing densities on new sites allow for a variety of types of housing to meet the needs of new and existing households in the Borough.

e Prevent other uses in residential areas which cause nuisance and loss of amenity.

f Control the design of house extensions to protect the street scene, privacy and the amenities of neighbours.

g Undertake traffic calming measures to ensure residential amenity, safety and opportunities for walking and cycling.

h Ensure that housing density on sites within existing neighbourhoods is compatible with the nature of the site and the character of the surrounding area.

3 Indicators

a Population levels.

b Migration levels in and out of Halton.

c Levels of in and out commuting for work.

d Number of jobs in Halton by ‘standard industrial classification’.

e Changes in housing stock types and tenure.

f Number of vacant residential properties and of homes judged unfit to live in.

g Average housing density on new sites.

h Affordability.(House price and income levels).

i Residents within reasonable walking distance of local centres.

j Number of complaints and enforcement cases to the Council concerning residential amenity.

k Amount and distribution of greenspace within residential neighbourhoods.

l Housing completions compared to notional annual provision.

m Housing completions against outstanding permissions for housing.

n Housing gains and losses through conversions.

o Number of off street car parking spaces per dwelling for completions and permissions.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL ASSETS

1 Aims

a To protect and enhance the natural (land, air and water) environment and man-made heritage.

b To maintain a sustainable balance between the needs of development and conservation by ensuring development shows a net gain of environmental value to Halton’s natural and man-made heritage and to ensure that any significant losses are mitigated or compensated through associated measures.

c To protect and improve recreation, leisure and cultural amenities.

d To protect and improve the tourism attractions of the borough.

2 Objectives

a Protect the best and most versatile agricultural land.

b Protect and improve access to the open countryside.
c Protect and improve sites and areas of nature conservation and landscape value.

d Protect important trees, woodland and hedgerows and increase tree cover and woodland planting.

e Conserve and enhance natural species of plants and animals and their habitats.

f Protect and improve the nature conservation of rivers and canals in balance with their recreational use.

g Protect and enhance the best aspects of the existing built environment as assets for the image and appearance of the Borough.

h Encourage new community facilities.

i Protect important existing and potential recreation greenspace from development.

j Ensure adequate recreation greenspace, including playing space for sport and recreation and children’s playing space is provided in new housing developments.

3 Indicators

a Area of untreated contaminated land.

b Measures of air quality against national and international standards.

c Length of watercourses of good or fair quality.

d Number of listed buildings.

e Number of buildings in conservation areas.

f Populations of wild birds.

g Change and extent of protected nature conservation sites and woodland.

h Area of protected Greenspace.

i Level of investment in public open space and landscape improvement.

j Number of tourism attractions in the Borough and number of visitors.

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

1 Aims

a To create a safe and healthy environment.

b To help reduce or counteract greenhouse gas emissions.

c To help alleviate unavoidable effects of climate change.

d To make contaminated land safe and bring it back into beneficial use.

e To enhance the built environment.

2 Objectives

a Transform areas of poor quality environment where poor design, dereliction and inappropriate land uses create an unattractive environment.

b Ensure that future development is of a quality of design that enhances the built environment.

c Deal with the historical legacy of the chemical industry with its dereliction and contaminated sites.

d Ensure that new development and sources of existing pollution do not create unacceptable pollution.

e Ensure that risk levels from development with the potential to create major accidents are reduced.

f Encourage development of appropriate renewable energy schemes.

g Encourage the use of energy efficient designs in all development.

h Ensure that inappropriate development does not take place in areas at risk from flooding.

i Protect significant green corridors linked to the Mersey Estuary to assist migration and adaptation of species affected by climate change.

j Ensure that unsuitable development does
not take place on or near to contaminated land, sites with potential to pollute and sites with potential to create major accidents.

k Establish a network of off-road routes or greenways for walking, cycling and horse riding.

l Provide safe off-road routes for cyclists linking with the greenway network.

3 Indicators

a Days when air pollution is moderate or high.

b Number of sites designated under the control of major accident hazard regulations 1999 (COMAH).

c Extent of COMAH consultation zones.

d Development on land liable to flood.

e Area of contaminated land treated, and (separately) the area of derelict and vacant land brought back into beneficial use.

f Total annual tonnage of air pollutants emitted by industry, and

g Total annual tonnage of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases emitted by industry.

REGENERATION

1 Aims

a To regenerate and revitalise Halton's older industrial areas and encourage development for the benefit of the community.

b To regenerate run down housing areas through new development.

c To regenerate and revitalise the waterside environment of Halton.

d To increase the vitality, viability and prosperity of Halton's Town Centres.

e To return previously used land to beneficial use.

2 Objectives

a Prepare action area plans for regeneration of run down areas of Halton in accordance with the Council’s Regeneration Strategy.

b Ensure that new development is related to and improves the environment of a waterside location where relevant.

c Enable recreation and tourism use of the Borough's rivers and canals and their environs.

d Ensure improved public access to the waterside.

3 Indicators

a Area of development on previously used land.

b Number of new dwellings on previously used land.

c Number of derelict or vacant non residential buildings.

d Area of vacant and underused land.

e Number of vacant shops in neighbourhood and town centres.

f Length of waterside with public access and/or area of new residential and commercial development with a waterfront.

TOWN CENTRES AND SHOPPING

1 Aims

a To increase the vitality and viability of Halton's town centres.

b To ensure that no retail development is allowed in one town centre that would seriously weaken the trade of another.

c To ensure out of centre or edge of centre retail development does not take place unless need for it has been established, and the vitality and viability of shopping centres in Halton would not be harmed.
d To increase the range and quality of the shops and improve the shopping environment.

e To ensure that new retail development reinforces the strength of the retail core of each centre and does not weaken it.

f To protect neighbourhood centres.

g To ensure that the location, scale and nature of retail developments reflect the hierarchy of shopping centres in the Borough.

2 Objectives

a Concentrate new shopping development in or on the edge of Halton’s town centres.

b Enhance the attractiveness of shopping areas by further pedestrianisation and traffic calming schemes.

c Increase access to town centres by public transport, walking and cycling.

d Protect key shopping frontages and neighbourhood centres from non-retail uses.

e Promote leisure uses on appropriate sites.

3 Indicators

a Total number of outlets and amount of convenience and comparison floorspace in town centres.

b Number and diversity of other commercial, leisure, cultural and entertainment activities.

c Number of retail multiple traders and independent shops.

d Shopping rents and commercial yields on non-domestic property.

e Proportion of vacant street level property in town centre primary and secondary areas and neighbourhood centres.

f Pedestrian flows in shopping streets.

g Proportion of town centre, edge of centre and out of centre retailing.

h Accessibility, including provision of car and cycle parking, public transport and pedestrian and cycle routes.

TRANSPORTATION

1 Aims

a To provide an efficient and effective land use pattern and transport infrastructure which will reduce the overall demand for travel, and allow improved accessibility by a variety of transport modes.

b To develop safe, efficient and inclusive integrated transport systems and infrastructure that encourage sustainable economic growth and regeneration.

c To promote a new sustainable crossing of the River Mersey.

d To encourage increased use of walking and cycling as modes of transport.

2 Objectives

a Enable the provision of an integrated, seamless, Borough-wide public transport network that is accessible to all and links together the communities on both sides of the River Mersey.

b Enable the increased use of cycling and walking through the design of new development.

c Protect the extensive principal road network within the Borough and the road links between the M62 and M56.

d Integrate land use and transport into a sustainable transport network and to provide linkages to and between key development sites in partnership with developers.

3 Indicators

a Traffic volumes on main road routes.
b Bus patronage levels as a percentage of total trips.

c Modal split.

WASTE

1 Aims

a To contribute to regional self sufficiency in dealing with industrial and household waste disposal.

b To encourage sustainable waste management within Halton.

2 Objectives

a Discourage landfill or landraising for non inert and inert wastes.

b Encourage facilities for waste minimisation and recycling.

3 Indicators

a Levels of household waste recycling.

b Number of waste recycling facilities.

SOCIAL INCLUSION

1 Aims

a To provide a policy framework that takes full account of the needs of the disadvantaged section of the Borough’s population.

2 Objectives

a Create more job opportunities through new development and a more diversified economy.

b Provide for suitable access and facilities in developments for people with disabilities and people with young children.

c Protect greenspace from development.

d Protect local shops, recreation and community facilities.

e Improve public transport.

f Provide safe and attractive pedestrian routes and extend pedestrianisation of town centres.

g Encourage a proportion of all new houses to be built suitable for the less mobile.

3 Indicators

a Index of social deprivation.

(Other indicators of social inclusion are listed under other aims and objectives)

MONITORING

1 Government guidance requires that matters that are expected to affect development in a Local Authority area should be kept under review, to enable the development and implementation of a sound policy framework, which will achieve the overall land use objectives for an area.

2 It is recognised that monitoring plays a central role in providing a mechanism for evaluating whether the plan is achieving what it set out to achieve, and identifying where policies need to be strengthened, maintained, changed or deleted. Monitoring is also required to inform not only the Council, but also initiatives and policies of the ODPM and NWRA.

3 Part One of the UDP sets out the broad strategic aims and objectives for the development and use of land in Halton. This section includes a number of indicators, which are designed to aid and direct monitoring to evaluate the effectiveness of the plan policies and changes in land use.

4 All monitoring will be based on the indicators set out under the Strategic Aims and will also take account of Government guidance. Monitoring will be undertaken on a regular basis and will be reported in separate documents to the Unitary Development Plan to allow for updating. The Reports will cover the main land use issues, such as housing, employment, open space and previously developed land. Additional monitoring exercises will be undertaken when necessary to ensure understanding can be gained of other critical features on which the plan is based, and to ensure that policies are effective in shaping development.

SPATIAL STRATEGY

Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West

1 The spatial strategy of the Halton UDP must
reflect the core strategy and spatial strategy of the Regional Planning Guidance (RPG) for the North West (Adopted March 2003), which is now termed Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) following commencement of the Town and Country Planning Act 2004. The RSS is currently subject to a partial review, covering issues relating to climate change, regional parks, strategic views, transport, sustainable energy, waste and minerals.

2 The overriding aim of the adopted RSS is to promote sustainable patterns of development and physical change and its core strategy is to deliver sustainable development to achieve greater economic competitiveness and growth with associated social progress. It sets out principles for the prudent management of the region’s environmental and cultural assets and principles to secure environmental quality.

3 In order to achieve these aims draft RPG has four policies on: economy in the use of land; enhancing the quality of life; quality in new development and promoting sustainable economic growth and competitiveness and social inclusion.

4 The first states that development plans should adopt a “sequential approach” to meeting development needs, taking account of local circumstances. The sequential approach to meeting development needs entails giving consideration first to effective use/re-use of existing buildings, second to the use of previously developed land and third to undeveloped land.

5 The second requires that development plans contain policies that protect against loss of environmental, social and economic capital and ensures that compensation, mitigation or substitution measures are in place to replace lost capital or provide alternative benefits.

6 The third ensures that creativity and innovation in design are carried out to make better use of land to support sustainable development patterns.

7 The fourth ensures that development and investment will help to grow the Region’s economy in a sustainable way and produce a greater degree of social inclusion.

HALTON UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

PART ONE

RPG (RSS) SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

1 Halton is located within the North West Metropolitan Area (NWMA) a large swathe of urbanised land connecting the two major poles of Liverpool and Manchester. The RSS states that a significant proportion of the Region’s development and urban renaissance should be focused on the NWMA. Policy SD2 states that wide ranging regeneration and environmental enhancement should be secured in Widnes and Runcorn and the emphasis here will be on regeneration to complement that in Merseyside and Greater Manchester.

2 Halton is also included within one of the RSS’s ‘Regeneration Priority Areas’ where regeneration must redress the balance between opportunity and need. Policy EC6 states that the region must co-ordinate investment priorities towards Regeneration Priority Areas. This will help achieve urban renaissance in the Region’s towns and cities.

HALTON’S SPATIAL STRATEGY

1 The strategic aims of the UDP, described in detail in the previous section, concentrate on ways to improve economic prosperity and a reduction in the rate of population decline. The way in which these aims are translated in land use terms is through a linked strategy. This is:

- Regeneration of worn out and unsuitable industrial areas and deprived housing areas in both Widnes and Runcorn designated as Action Areas; with

- New sustainable development on the edges of Widnes and Runcorn

This strategy conforms to the policy SD1 (Economy in the Use of Land and Buildings) of Regional Spatial Strategy. This seeks economy in the use of land by adoption of the sequential approach to meeting development needs, taking account of local circumstances and the characteristics of particular land uses in Halton. In the sequential approach, previously undeveloped land (where meeting sustainability criteria) is the last stage in selection.

2 This linked strategy will provide the new...
housing and jobs required to meet local needs and to reduce population decline and help stem out migration. It will help to stimulate new investment for housing, employment and recreation uses in the Action Areas.

3 Phasing policies will also be used to ensure that new uncommitted greenfield housing sites are only released for development after a certain area of brownfield and committed sites are developed.

4 This linked strategy conforms to the preferred Greenfield and Brownfield Development scenario described in the Halton UDP Key Issues Report, which was subject to broad public consultation. It represents a real and practical way of ensuring the Council can encourage the best re-use of contaminated brownfield sites.

5 The very restricted supply of previously used sites in Halton suitable for housing development due to the industrial legacy of contamination is described in the section on Planning Problems and Issues.

6 It is recognised that the development of previously undeveloped land in Halton would be a loss of environmental capital in the form of open space and agricultural land. In order to comply with the principle in policy DP2 Enhancing the Quality of Life in Regional Planning Guidance (Regional Spatial Strategy) that development should, where possible, enhance the quality of life and not result in a net loss of key benefits and services, it would be essential that this loss was replaced or compensated. The UDP policies set out the means, including planning obligations and conditions and the phasing of development, by which any necessary compensation, mitigation or substitution is to be achieved.

7 In addition to these measures, strategic policy S24 Sustainable Urban Extensions contains principles of development which will ensure that woodland planting, buffer zones and recreation open space and green way links will be provided as part of development at North Widnes and East Runcorn. This will also help to mitigate against the loss of farm land and other open land in these areas.

8 The linked strategy will contribute directly to the Council’s second strategic priority in its Corporate Plan “Building a Better Future”, of ‘promoting urban renewal’. It will help achieve the following key objectives within that priority:

   a) Improve the number of and availability of job opportunities for local people.
   b) Promote the sustainable development and regeneration of the Halton economy.
   c) Attract and secure additional investment in Halton.
   d) Regenerate and revitalise Halton’s town centres.
   e) Regenerate and revitalise Halton’s waterfront areas.
   f) Ensure that suitable housing is available to meet the needs of people in the Borough.
   g) To gain approval and funding for a second Mersey crossing.
   h) To reclaim and make most productive use of derelict and contaminated land in the Borough.

9 A linked strategy, that is a combination of both brownfield and greenfield development is required, as it is recognised that a focus on regeneration of previously used land will not on its own secure the conditions necessary to help reduce population decline and stem out migration or to attract private sector confidence and investment in Halton.

HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT

1 The selection of sites for housing and employment development in Halton has taken account of the RPG core strategy policy on the economy in the use of land which states that Development Plans should adopt a sequential approach to meeting development needs, taking account of local circumstances, the characteristics of particular land uses and the locational principles set out in the spatial strategy.

2 In deciding which sites to allocate for housing, their potential and suitability for development have also been assessed against the criteria in paragraph 31 of Planning Policy Guidance Note 3: Housing. These are as follows:
The availability of previously-used sites and empty or under-used buildings and their suitability for housing use.

The location and accessibility of potential development sites to jobs, shops and services by modes other than the car, and the potential for improving such accessibility.

The capacity of existing and potential infrastructure, including public transport, water and sewerage, other utilities and social infrastructure (such as schools and hospitals) to absorb further development and the cost of adding further infrastructure.

The ability to build new communities to support new physical and social infrastructure and provide sufficient demand to sustain appropriate local services and facilities.

The physical and environmental constraints on development of land, including the level of contamination, stability and flood risk, taking into account that such risk may increase as a result of climate change.

In addition to these factors all potential development sites were appraised in relation to marketability, developability and sustainability to find out:

a whether a site was attractive to the market;

b whether a site would realistically come forward for development, and

c whether developing a site would have a generally ‘positive’ impact in terms of urban regeneration, protection of natural assets and minimising environmental impact.

Priority was also given to the selected sites within or adjoining existing residential areas in order to maximise housing availability and choice for existing residents and thereby sustain existing neighbourhoods. Unfortunately, the lack of realistically available sites within existing neighbourhoods has restricted the allocation of such sites resulting in most of new housing land being allocated on the edge of the urban area.

DEVELOPMENT AREAS

In accordance with the foregoing principles new development areas are allocated in the UDP. These are:

a North Widnes Development Area;

b East Runcorn Development Area; and

c Hale Bank Development Area.

These areas have a mixture of new and existing employment areas that establish a close relationship between homes and job opportunities. Sites have been reserved for local centres for shops and community facilities. Through routes for public transport are available and land has been reserved for new railway stations.

The North Widnes Development Area comprises land primarily for housing that may be required for development up to 2016. The land allocated for new businesses will provide sites of sufficient quality to encourage new employment opportunities in Widnes that are accessible to local residents. It seeks to redress the present imbalance between the availability and quality of employment land between Runcorn and Widnes. It is also necessary because the problems of poor location and contamination of the existing employment land supply in Widnes have led to failure to attract much needed employment to the town leading to continued out migration, low economic prosperity and continued social deprivation. (Refer to the Widnes Employment Demand Study 2001).

The proposed East Runcorn Development Area creates a mixed housing and employment area by introducing housing into an area that is currently dominated by Strategic Regional Investment Sites at Daresbury Park and the Daresbury...
Laboratory. There is also scope in this area for introducing new public transport links and community facilities, with sites for a new railway station and a local centre to be reserved.

5 The Hale Bank Development Area will accommodate part of a rail freight and warehousing development that will link directly with the mainline railway. Together with new housing in the Action Area this will provide much needed employment and housing to sustain this community and support a new local centre.

6 Supplementary Planning Documents will be prepared to provide a more detailed development strategy for each of these areas.

**REGENERATION**

1 The spatial strategy of RPG (Policy SD2) states that the emphasis in Widnes and Runcorn will be on regeneration to complement that in Merseyside and Greater Manchester.

2 In Halton, regeneration must include steps to secure the diversification of the area’s economic base and not just seek to channel development to achieve the re-use of urban land. As has been explained above, the development of green field sites as part of a linked strategy is essential to the regeneration of Halton.

3 As described above, an essential part of the UDP linked spatial strategy is to ensure that regeneration of the Borough occurs, in tandem with allowing new development on the edge of the urban area in new sustainable communities.

4 A number of ‘Action Areas’ are designated in the UDP at:
   a Southern Widnes
   b Central Widnes
   c Widnes Waterfront
   d Runcorn and Weston Docks
   e Hale Bank, Widnes
   f Castlefields/Norton Priory, Runcorn

5 These Action Areas are designated in accordance with the Town and Country Planning Act (1990) para. 12(8). This states that Part 2 of a unitary development plan may designate any part of the local authority’s area as an action area, that is to say, an area they have selected for the commencement during a prescribed period of comprehensive treatment by development, redevelopment or improvement (or partly by one and partly by another method) and if an area is so designated that Part of the plan shall contain a description of the treatment proposed by the authority. The Development Plan Regulations 1999 state that the ‘prescribed period’ is 10 years for Action Areas.

6 In accordance with the Act the Regeneration Chapter in Part 2 sets out the acceptable uses and opportunities for new development within each Action Area. The Action Area Plans will be will be prepared as Supplementary Planning Documents as described in Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Development Framework (2004). As such they will be taken into account as a material consideration in assessing planning applications.

7 The Central and Southern Widnes Action Area Plans will help to stimulate new investment and revitalise the communities in this area.

8 The Widnes Waterfront Action Area Plan will contribute to the regeneration of the waterfront of the Mersey Estuary by transforming the legacy of contaminated former industrial land to new leisure, business, open space and recreation uses.

9 The Hale Bank Action Area will introduce new housing, improved access and a new local centre to revitalise this isolated residential and employment area.

10 Runcorn/Weston Docks Action Area has potential for new housing and a new education building in the north and a rail freight depot in the south on the site of the disused Weston Docks.

11 Castlefields and Norton Priory Action Area is an area of predominantly social housing with a significant concentration of deck access flats with potential for reshaping of the estate layout, improved access and a wider range of
new housing and accessible local employment opportunities.

12 The detailed policies for these areas are in Part 2 Regeneration Chapter.

GREEN BELT

1 The Green Belt boundary around Widnes has been amended to incorporate the proposed Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park and a small site between Cronton Road and Norlands Lane as a result of ‘exceptional circumstances’ according to PPG 2 (Green Belts).

2 Any future changes to Halton’s Green Belt will now have to await the outcome of the strategic study of Green Belt across Merseyside and Halton required by policy SD5 Green Belt of RPG13 (RSS). The findings will inform future reviews of RPG (RSS) and a subsequent review of the Halton UDP.

3 In the meantime the Green Belt boundary on the Proposals Map is the statutory Green Belt for Halton.

POST 2016 DEVELOPMENT

1 In order to comply with the sequential search process for land to meet development needs beyond 2016 in policy DP1 Economy in the Use of Land and Buildings in RPG13 (RSS), the Council will have to steadily increase the amount of brownfield housing development land available within the urban areas through its regeneration strategy and particularly through development within the Action Areas proposed in the UDP. However it is anticipated that Greenfield sites will still be required for post 2016 development.

2 The reason why Halton will continue to rely largely on greenfield sites for post 2016 housing development is because the supply of previously used (brownfield) land in Halton is unlikely to increase significantly in the future. This is due to the combined legacy of ground contamination (particularly in Widnes) and the relatively recent infrastructure and layout of Runcorn New Town. It is considered therefore that due to these special circumstances, much of the post 2016 housing development will require greenfield sites on the edge of the urban area.

3 For employment purposes there will continue to be a need for new sites to be available beyond 2016. It is assumed, based on the evidence of local experience, that the locational and contamination problems in Widnes will continue to restrict the supply of marketable employment land beyond 2016. In order for economic development in Widnes to be sustained then it would be prudent to allow for continued employment development in Widnes post 2016.

THE GREEN ENVIRONMENT

1 The essential element of the urban structure, which binds it together, is the current greenspace network comprising all the green open land within the urban area. This will be extended and linked through policies in the UDP to provide amenity, recreation, walking and cycling opportunities for local people and protection for nature conservation. It will also help enhance biodiversity and the ability of the Borough to respond to climate change.

2 The open countryside surrounding the urban area will be protected to support agriculture, nature conservation, prevent urban sprawl and enable open land recreation uses.

TRANSPORTATION

1 The sustainable economic development of Halton and its social cohesion is being hampered by the lack of a second bridge crossing of the Mersey. This is an essential part of the Council’s Local Transport Plan and is reflected in the UDP.

2 New development on the edge of Widnes and Runcorn must be linked to the existing urban area through new road, public transport, walking and cycling links so they become integrated into the existing towns. Detailed policies in Part 2 of the UDP are designed to minimise travel by car and to maximise accessibility.

SHOPPING AND TOWN CENTRES

1 Halton has three town centres at Widnes, Runcorn Old Town and Runcorn New Town Centre (known as Halton Lea). Each of these provides an essential service for the community that it serves. The Council’s strategy for these centres is contained in the document ‘Halton’s Town Centre, an Overall Strategy’ approved in March 1997. The
strategic aims, objectives and policies in the UDP reflect this Strategy.

THE COAST

1. Due to its estuarine location and the number of brooks which run into the Mersey Estuary in Halton, there are areas of Halton that are low lying and have been identified by the Environment Agency as being at risk from flooding. Some of these areas are amongst the most important nature areas in Halton. There are therefore necessary restrictions on development in these areas and this is reflected in the policies of the UDP.

2. Total costs of future flood defences will be considerable. As general sea levels rise and water pushes up against sea defences; the North West will see the loss of mudflats and saltmarshes, resulting in serious environmental disruption for the internationally important bird feeding grounds in the Mersey Estuary.

3. Plants and animals subjected to climatic change tend to migrate northwards or uphill in search of a more suitable climate. Given the highly developed nature of the North West, many of these local habitats and species in Halton are in isolated pockets which offer few natural corridors along which species can migrate. Continuing work on the Halton Biodiversity Audit and the Natural Assets Strategy, together with work by English Nature, will cast further light on these requirements.
STRATEGIC POLICIES (PART 1 POLICIES)

S1 REGENERATION

1 Action Area plans will be prepared for the following areas as Supplementary Planning Documents.
   - Southern Widnes
   - Central Widnes
   - Widnes Waterfront
   - Runcorn and Weston Docklands
   - Hale Bank
   - Castlefields/Norton Priory

2 Development within these Action Areas and throughout the Borough will be expected to:
   a Stimulate economic development and create jobs for local people;
   b Provide housing to meet local needs;
   c Provide local facilities for the community;
   d Reclaim derelict and contaminated land and bring such land back into beneficial use;
   e Protect and enhance the local environment.

JUSTIFICATION

3 The overall aim of the regeneration policies contained within the UDP is to improve quality of life for the residents of Halton.

4 In particular, Action Areas have been identified that require comprehensive development or redevelopment in order to achieve regeneration within the Borough. Each Action Area has particular problems to be overcome and opportunities to be taken. The Action Areas are the subject of Part 2 policies in the Regeneration Chapter that set out the uses that would be acceptable in each area and the principles of development. Priority will be given to completion of the Action Area Plan preparation process during the early years following adoption of the UDP.

5 It is recognised that the regeneration of Halton raises much wider issues than can be provided for just by the land use policies of the UDP. The Regeneration Strategy for Halton (1998) provides for regeneration in its wider context.

6 The UDP can help to achieve wider regeneration objectives by:
   a Helping to create jobs for local people by allocating appropriate sites for employment development;
   b Ensuring a variety of means of access to the new development so that local people are able to reach employment opportunities;
   c Allocating sites for new housing development to meet local needs. This will mean providing a range of different housing sites for a variety of housing types and tenures;
   d Protecting existing local facilities for the community and provide for additional facilities where a need is identified;
   e Reclaiming derelict and contaminated land and bringing such land back into beneficial use, which is an essential part of any regeneration programme for Halton. This is due to the amount of contaminated land in the Borough, which is a legacy of the early chemical industry. The UDP allocates this land for appropriate new uses. The larger areas of contamination are covered by the Action Area policies Part 2 of the UDP;
   f Re-using vacant and underused buildings to bring them back in to beneficial use;
   g Protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment, including open spaces and nature conservation areas, Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings;
   h Creating a safer environment. In land use terms this relates to reducing crime through design, ensuring new developments are safe for pedestrians, cyclists and other traffic, and ensuring air quality is maintained and improved;
i Helping to create an environment that helps to stimulate and attract appropriate new investment.

**S2 THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT**

1 A high quality built environment that is safe, attractive and accessible will be promoted by:

   a Requiring a high standard of design and landscaping in all new development;

   b Protecting buildings, areas and features of acknowledged importance;

   c Conserving and enhancing buildings and features of interest, and their setting.

**JUSTIFICATION**

2 The main strategic aim of the Plan is to transform the quality of Halton’s physical environment and improve economic prosperity and social progress through sustainable development. In part this involves improving the image of the Borough as a place to live, work, invest and visit. There have been notable improvements made to the built environment of Halton over recent years but it is recognised that many parts of the Borough still have a poor quality physical environment. This policy is concerned with bringing about improvements in the quality of the physical environment.

3 It is recognised that by and large the public will judge the effectiveness of achieving this aim by the convenience and appearance of developments that occur. The emphasis on good design of new development is enshrined in national government policy as set out in Planning Policy Guidance. Good design is essential to create attractive, functional spaces and buildings that are safe, accessible and enhance the quality of life of those that use them. Good design is therefore fundamental to the concept of sustainable development.

4 Conservation of the historic environment is by its very nature a key element of sustainability. The historic environment is irreplaceable and must be given due consideration in new development proposals. Conservation and sustainable development should not be seen as separate but as complementary objectives. Appropriate development can revitalise areas, buildings or features of acknowledged importance. Conservation plays a central part in promoting economic prosperity by improving the quality of an area through providing an attractive environment for people to live and work.

5 The elements that constitute the historic environment are many and varied, and, as stated in PPG 15, the historic environment is ‘all pervasive’. Buildings and features of acknowledged importance are of greatest significance but other elements which add local character and identity are worthy of proper consideration when assessing the impact of a development. Archaeology is also an essential element of the historic environment and as stated in PPG 16, it forms part of our sense of identity and has value not only for its own sake but also for its role in education, leisure and tourism.

**S3 THE GREEN ENVIRONMENT**

1 The open land including open countryside, greenspaces and features of nature conservation and landscape importance, will be protected and enhanced by:

   a Protecting sites, areas and features of interest through specific designations;

   b Promoting linkages through the Greenspace Systems;

   c Improving greenspace of poor quality;

   d Creating new greenspace in areas of deficiency;

   e Increasing the amount of tree cover in the Borough and preserving wildlife corridors.

**JUSTIFICATION**

2 This policy is concerned with the protection and enhancement of all valuable open land in the Borough. The UDP has an important role to play in achieving a reasonable balance between the need to make adequate provision for development within the urban area and the need to protect open land from
development. The need for housing, employment, education and other land-uses have been assessed and taken into account in allocating land for essentially open uses.

3 At the edge of the urban area, the open countryside provides both a buffer between agricultural and urban uses and an important recreational resource.

4 Within the urban area and villages, open land is also recognised as being an important land-use in its own right and is identified as ‘greenspace’ in the Plan. The policies in the Plan seek to ensure adequate provision of greenspace in terms of quantity, quality and distribution.

5 Much of the open land in the Borough is also significant for its wildlife and landscape interest. The policies in the Plan seek to protect valuable areas and features from development that would damage or destroy them. There is a need to increase the amount of tree cover in Halton, particularly in the area identified in the Mersey Forest Plan (1994). This will help to improve air quality by filtering air pollutants and absorbing carbon dioxide, thereby helping to counter global warming. Tree planting will also bring recreational, educational and wildlife benefits.

S4 POLLUTION AND HEALTH

1 Development will not be permitted if it is likely to have an unacceptable effect on levels of air, surface water or ground water pollution, or ground contamination or noise or visual intrusion by artificial light.

JUSTIFICATION

2 Pollution relates to the release of substances which are capable of causing harm to man or any other living organisms supported by the environment. Pollution can occur in air, water (including water courses and groundwater) and land.

3 This policy aims to prevent development which is likely to cause unacceptable pollution, contamination, noise or light intrusion. It is necessary and justified for public health, local amenity and global environmental reasons. It is aimed at the prevention of unacceptable levels of pollution which are in particular likely to:

   a prejudice sustainable development;
   b cause environmental harm;
   c have an adverse effect on amenity;
   d cause contamination or a nuisance;
   e prejudice neighbouring land uses, or have an impact on urban regeneration;

4 Targets and standards for measurable pollution levels are set by European Union Directives, The Environment Agency, the Health & Safety Executive and other appropriate organisations. Local Authorities apply these standards where appropriate and as set out by national legislation and guidance.

5 The Borough contains a number of sites identified under Part I of the 1990 Environmental Protection Act. Each site has a planning consultation zone currently identified in PPG23, being 500 metres for development applications near to sites regulated by the Environment Agency and 250 metres for sites regulated by the Local Authority. These sites and the associated consultation zones will be clarified in Supplementary Planning Documents.

S5 MAJOR ACCIDENT LAND USE RISKS

1 Development will not be permitted if it is:

   a Near Liverpool Airport or COMAH Sites and cannot satisfactorily co-exist with their operations; or
   b Likely to significantly increase major accident risks to life or the environment, or to be unduly restrictive to the development of surrounding land.

JUSTIFICATION

2 The Borough contains part of the Public Safety Zone (PSZ) for Liverpool Airport. It extends eastwards from the end of the runway into the centre of Hale. National advice from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) is to refuse planning permission for new significant developments within a PSZ. The definition is based upon international aircraft accident information and policy judgements on the acceptability of risk levels.
3 National advice from the ODPM also exists to restrict the height of new developments in areas near to major airports in the interests of the safety of air travellers.

4 The Borough contains a number of sites identified under the Control of Major Accident Hazards (Planning) Regulations 1999 (COMAH). Each site has a consultation zone notified to the Council by the Competent Authorities. The Authorities are the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) and the Environment Agency (EA).

5 Within each zone there is a requirement to consult the Competent Authority on most significant developments requiring planning permission. Where there is a significant chance of a possible major accident causing accidental death, injury or environmental pollution there has to be a policy judgement as to whether development should be refused or approved. These sites and the associated consultation zones will be identified in Supplementary Planning Documents. These zones are not defined on the proposals map because:

- Significant restrictions on development exist only in extremely limited circumstances as set out in policy PR12.
- The very limited areas affected may alter over the period of the UDP.

6 This policy applies where appropriate to major accident hazard pipelines (as defined in the Pipeline Safety Regulations 1996).

**S6 REUSE AND REMEDIATION OF PREVIOUSLY USED OR CONTAMINATED LAND**

1 The reclamation of derelict, contaminated and previously used land for safe and appropriate beneficial afteruses will be positively encouraged and permitted.

**JUSTIFICATION**

2 All derelict, contaminated and other previously developed ('brownfield') land which is not currently in safe and beneficial use will be assessed for its potential for uses, including housing, employment and open space uses, and will be allocated, reclaimed and decontaminated as appropriate to ensure it will contribute to the creation of a safe, healthy and prosperous economy, environment and society.

3 Uses should contribute to urban regeneration objectives and implementation of ‘Action Plans’ (see Regeneration Chapter).

4 Uses which contribute to urban regeneration including recreation, tourism, education, amenity, heritage and nature conservation facilities, particularly those which also contribute to environmental initiatives such as Mersey Forest, Mersey Basin Campaign and the Council’s Urban Regeneration Initiatives will be encouraged.

5 Previously used and contaminated land are wasted land resources, can be potentially dangerous to health, create nuisance and help create a poor image. This affects not only the health and overall quality of life of the community but also the investment confidence necessary to bring about the urban regeneration essential to the Borough as a whole. Previously used waste disposal sites are the subject of a 250 metre consultation zone in PPG23. These sites and the associated consultation zones will be identified in Supplementary Planning Documents.

6 From 1st April 2000 the Council is required to maintain a form of register of contaminated land.

**S7 MINERALS AND WASTE**

1 Exploration for minerals, the winning and working of minerals, the development of waste treatment or disposal facilities, and development associated with either activity will not be permitted where it would have an unacceptable impact on any of the following:

- The natural heritage;
- Sites of geological or archaeological importance;
- The best and most versatile agricultural land;
- Surface and groundwater resources;
- Air quality;
f The amenity of local people;
g The highway network; and
h Visual amenity.

JUSTIFICATION

2 This policy aims to protect the Borough’s environmental resources, including the amenity of local people, from the potentially harmful effects of these developments, both in the short and long term. It seeks to avoid any unacceptable impacts arising from a minerals development or waste management facility, whether during its development, its operation, or following restoration.

S8 SUSTAINABLE WASTE MANAGEMENT FACILITIES

1 The Local Planning Authority will seek to achieve sustainable waste management. Regard will be given to all of the following when considering applications for waste management facilities:

a The best practical environmental option (BPEO);
b The waste hierarchy and the extent to which a proposal moves up the waste management hierarchy;
c The desire to contribute to regional waste management self-sufficiency;
d The proximity principle;
e The extent to which sustainable transport forms an integral component of proposals;
f Whether development, restoration and aftercare are proposed to an appropriate standard.

JUSTIFICATION

2 It is considered that sustainable waste management has a major role to play in contributing to the aim of raising environmental standards throughout the Borough. National policy guidance requires planning authorities to make provision for an appropriate range of waste management facilities to enable more sustainable waste management to take place. Planning authorities should seek to ensure that waste management proposals constitute the Best Practicable Environmental Option (BPEO). This includes the aim of moving waste management further up the waste hierarchy; taking account of the proximity principle whereby waste is managed close to its source; and in making an appropriate contribution to regional self-sufficiency in terms of waste management facilities.

3 The transportation of waste to facilities can have major impacts, and more sustainable transport methods can be an important contribution to reducing these effects. Where waste management facilities are operational for a temporary period, it is important to ensure that the subsequent restoration of the site is of such a standard to ensure no long-term legacy of potential future problems.

4 Further guidance on the Best Practicable Environmental Option (BPEO) is given in PPG10, and in the Minerals and Waste Chapter in Part 2 of the Plan.

S9 WASTE MANAGEMENT FACILITIES

1 The development of waste management facilities will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that:

a There is a need for the site or facility in terms of the source, type or volumes of waste arisings;
b There is no reasonable existing alternative site or facility; and
c Proposals for waste management facilities should demonstrate long-term environmental benefits, in terms of restoration and aftercare (where appropriate to the proposal) and/or in terms of landscaping and other environmental improvements. The Council will seek to secure such long-term benefits through the negotiation of S106 agreements.

JUSTIFICATION

2 In dealing with proposals for waste
management facilities, the Local Planning Authority will wish to ensure that the release of land is balanced with a proven need for the particular facility or type of facility. Applications will therefore be required to demonstrate the requirements set out in this Policy.

**S10 REDUCING GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS**

1. The Council acknowledges that action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is a key aspect of society’s quest for sustainability. Active consideration will therefore, be given to the ways in which development proposals of all kinds might be designed to help secure such reductions. Applications for major development proposals will be required to demonstrate how they will minimise greenhouse gas emissions.

**JUSTIFICATION**

2. The issues surrounding climate change and “global warming” are among the most complex and problematic facing modern society world-wide. A key contributor to climate change is the “enhanced greenhouse effect” resulting from emissions to atmosphere of a number of gases, most notably carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, and the hydrofluorocarbons. The biggest growing source of carbon dioxide has been the combustion of fossil fuels, especially in energy generation and transport needs. A major source of methane has been the decomposition of biodegradable wastes sent to landfill sites.

3. A number of international treaties are in place obliging national governments to take action to reduce emissions of the greenhouse gases. In responding to these obligations, the UK government has set a target of reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 20% below 1990 levels by the year 2010.

4. The government is concerned to ensure that the planning system plays a full part in meeting these various reductions:
   - through locational policies which help to reduce the need for travel by car;
   - through policies which both encourage energy efficiency and facilitate the development of new and renewable sources of energy;
   - facilitating the necessary changes in waste management, thereby reducing emissions of methane.

5. The UDP policies and proposals have been subject to an independent sustainability appraisal, including the issue of climate change. The appraisal concluded that in many cases the contribution to sustainability will depend strongly upon the way the details of a development are worked out. Prospective developers therefore have a crucial part to play in this matter. UDP Part 2 Policy BE 1, General Requirements for Development, explains the factors that applicants will need to take into account in preparing their schemes.

**S11 RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES**

1. In view of the general environmental benefits associated with harnessing renewable energy sources, the development of renewable energy schemes will be supported provided that it can be shown that such development would not cause demonstrable harm to interests of acknowledged importance.

2. The Council will likewise give favourable consideration to proposals designed to secure significant efficiency improvements related to existing non-renewable energy production facilities.

**JUSTIFICATION**

3. The Government’s policy is to stimulate the development of new and renewable energy sources wherever they have prospects of being economically attractive and environmentally acceptable, in order to contribute to:
   - diverse, secure and sustainable energy supplies;
   - reduction in the emission of pollutants;
   - encouragement of internationally competitive industries.

4. The Government has published Planning
Policy Guidance on renewable energy (PPG 22) together with technical annexes, which set out in more detail the particular issues that local authorities should consider in determining such proposals.

5 The review of Regional Planning Guidance commits the North West Region to working towards the national target of 10% of electricity generation from renewable sources, requiring development plans to include appropriate policies.

6 The Council acknowledges that new and renewable energy sources can potentially contribute to energy needs in a significant and sustainable way. Renewable energy sources offer the hope of increasing diversity and security of supply, and of reducing harmful emissions to the environment.

7 The Council also acknowledges that, over the Plan period, contributions to sustainability may arise from improved technical efficiency at fossil fuel power plants. Improvements of this nature will generally be supported provided no significant harm is caused to the local environment.

S12 AREAS AT RISK FROM FLOODING

1 The Council acknowledges that sea levels are set to rise in the medium-term irrespective of success in reducing carbon dioxide emissions. Supplementary Planning Documents will be prepared for the control of development in those areas at risk from flooding.

JUSTIFICATION

2 Experts now agree global warming will happen: 15 of the world’s hottest years, since records began, have occurred since 1979. Climate change is already a fact of life in the North West of England. Sea levels at Liverpool have been rising by 1cm per decade and average temperatures taken at points such as Manchester Airport have been increasing consistently since the 1960’s. Levels of winter rainfall have been increasing and there is a real need to prepare for an uncertain future. Studies for the UK Climate Impacts Programme have suggested that by the 2050’s average sea level could be between 20 to 80cm higher than today’s level – a far greater rate of increase than previously observed. The studies also suggest that the frequency of high tidal events could increase by factors of between 3 and 10.

3 Greenhouse gas emissions resulting from human activities will add to the natural variability in climate to ensure that the North West’s climate will continue to change dramatically over the next 100 years. Over the lifetime of this UDP it is necessary to take account of these continuing effects and take preventative measures to limit the consequences of predicted sea level rises on the lower lying parts of the Borough. The necessary measures will be further identified in discussion with the statutory agencies and drawn up in Supplementary Planning Documents which will be subject to public consultation. Reference should also be made to the policy PR16 ‘Development and Flood Risk’.

S13 TRANSPORT

1 Safe, efficient and inclusive integrated transport systems and infrastructure will be developed in Halton. Priority will be given to measures which:

   a Promote an integrated transport system;
   b Stimulate sustainable economic growth in sustainable locations;
   c Improve accessibility for all to everyday facilities;
   d Create a safer living environment;
   e Protect and enhance the environment.

JUSTIFICATION

2 In land use terms, the location of different types of development relative to transport provision and the fostering of developments which encourage walking, cycling and public transport use will help to reduce the need to travel by car. The objective and priority measures identified in this policy will help to achieve this aim.

3 The transport policies in Part 2 of the UDP aim to fulfil one or more of the priority measures. The policies have been grouped by priority measure but are not mutually
exclusive and one policy may have an effect over a number of measures. Other policies of the Plan, for example, the location of new shopping development will also reflect the priority measures.

4 The priority measures will provide the basis of transport policy for Halton. Land use planning can help to achieve a fully integrated and sustainable transport system but other transport measures and policy will be essential, particularly the Local Transport Plan (LTP). This policy reflects the aims and objectives contained within the LTP.

**S14 A NEW CROSSING OF THE RIVER MERSEY**

1 A scheme for a new crossing of the River Mersey, east of the existing Silver Jubilee Bridge will be promoted to relieve congestion on the existing bridge as part of an integrated transport system for Halton and the wider regional transport network. Any proposed route of the new crossing will be the subject of an environmental assessment.

**JUSTIFICATION**

2 The existing severely congested Silver Jubilee Bridge is considered a constraint on the economic development of the Region and severely restricts the development of an integrated transport strategy for Halton. A strategic aim of the Council’s Local Transport Plan (LTP) and Part I of this Unitary Development Plan is therefore to pursue the provision of a new, sustainable crossing of the Mersey. (See Map 2 for possible alignments).

3 The Silver Jubilee Bridge carries road traffic over the River Mersey and the Manchester Ship Canal, linking the two towns of the Borough, Widnes and Runcorn. Traffic flows exceed capacity at peak times and this is a constraint on the development of the local and sub-regional economy as well as impeding integrated transport strategies. The congestion on the bridge is a major contributor to the air quality hotspots that have been identified in the adjacent areas. It is seriously congested with sub-standard lanes, poor facilities for pedestrians and no safe facilities for cyclists.

4 Traffic flows over the Silver Jubilee Bridge have increased by 17% over the past seven years, almost double the average growth across the country. The current traffic flow on the bridge is in the order of 80,000 vehicles each weekday [Source: O & D Survey November 1999]. These flows are significantly in excess of the design capacity for the four sub-standard 3.05m wide lanes, and at the same level as traffic flows on the M56 motorway in the area. Future growth in traffic flows seeking to cross the bridge would force trips on to alternative routes, impacting on the Mersey Tunnels and the M6 motorway, particularly at the Thelwall Viaduct.

5 Origin and destination surveys undertaken on the Bridge in November 1999 showed that 80% of traffic on the bridge is making trips across the region. 41% of all traffic movements are trips across the region but with either their origin or destination in the Borough of Halton. 39% of all traffic movements are using the bridge entirely as a through route across the region. Only about 20% of traffic movements across the bridge are purely local, i.e. between Runcorn and Widnes. The impact of short term, temporary closures caused by traffic accidents therefore extends far beyond the local areas of Runcorn and Widnes.

6 In 1999 the Minister for Transport acknowledged that there is a case for a new crossing and made it clear that the way
forward is to develop a scheme for inclusion in the full 5-year Local Transport Plan. The Minister requested that other options should be considered within an integrated strategy. The other options could be at a low level carrying local traffic, bus lanes, cyclists and pedestrians.

A number of studies have been conducted focussing on the options for crossing on an eastern alignment. The studies have been set in the context of an integrated transport strategy with full consideration given to the potential for public transport, walking and cycling. The results of these studies will form an important input into the local transport plan and consequential applications for powers to construct any new crossing. The environmental impact of any proposed route is an important issue due to its location crossing the Mersey Estuary, which is important for its nature conservation value. Any scheme would be subject to an environmental impact assessment and separate statutory procedures.

In addition to pursuing proposals for a second river crossing, the Local Transport Plan includes a Bridge Management Strategy for the existing crossing the Silver Jubilee Bridge. This aims to:

a. ensure availability of the crossing route
b. ensure effective traffic management
c. reduce unnecessary trips
d. increase use of public transport

This policy is consistent with the inclusion of the scheme for a new crossing in Regional Spatial Strategy, as a Regionally Significant Transport Study.

**S15 LEISURE AND TOURISM**

1 Halton’s leisure and tourism industry
will be promoted and encouraged by:

a Supporting developments that promote leisure and tourism in appropriate locations;
b Improving the environment in areas where it is unsatisfactory;
c Conserving buildings and features of interest through specific designations;
d Promoting a Greenway Network for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders;
e Improving access to the open countryside.

JUSTIFICATION

2 The aim of this policy is to promote and encourage the Borough’s leisure and tourism industry. This industry has the potential to make an important contribution to the local economy, and to the regeneration of the Borough generally, and will be promoted in particular through conserving and improving environmental quality, encouraging new leisure and tourism related facilities, and improving accessibility to greenspaces and the open countryside.

3 Areas of the Borough where environmental quality is low have been identified in the Plan as ‘Action Areas’ and ‘Environmental Priority Areas.’ The policies in the Plan will seek to improve the environmental quality and attractiveness of these areas through regeneration and high quality development. An attractive environment is essential to promote and encourage tourism in the Borough.

4 More specifically, the Plan will ensure that all new development in the Borough is of a high standard of design and quality, which at least maintains environmental quality. New development, including that relating to leisure and tourism, will be encouraged, but only in appropriate locations. New development should not erode the very features that make the Borough attractive for tourism.

5 It will also be important to protect existing facilities and attractions on which tourism depends. The Plan contains specific policies relating to the protection of buildings and features of interest.

6 Leisure and tourism do not just relate to the built environment. Part 2 of the UDP contains policies to promote accessibility throughout the green environment through the establishment of a Greenway Network that will link greenspaces in the urban area with the open countryside on the edge of the urban area.

S16 RETAIL HIERARCHY

1 The following hierarchy of shopping centres will be maintained and enhanced in order to provide access to a wide range of shops and associated services for all sections of the community:

a Town Centres at Widnes, Runcorn Old Town and Runcorn New Town Centre (Halton Lea).

b Local Neighbourhood Centres

- Alexander Drive, Widnes
- Ascot Avenue, Runcorn
- Bancroft Road
- Barrows Green, Widnes
- Bechers, Widnes
- Brook Vale, Runcorn
- Castle Rise
- Castlefields
- Cronton Lane, Widnes
- Ditchfield Road, Widnes
- Farnworth, Widnes
- Greenway Road
- Hale Bank, Widnes
- Hale Parade, Hale
- Hale Road, Widnes
- Halton Brook, Runcorn
- Halton Lodge, Runcorn
- Halton Road, Runcorn
- Halton View Road, Widnes
- Halton Village, Runcorn
- Hough Green, Widnes
- Langdale Road
- Liverpool Road, Widnes
- Moorfield Road, Widnes
- Murdishaw Centre, Runcorn
- Palacefields
- Picton Avenue, Runcorn
- Queens Avenue, Widnes
- Russell Road, Runcorn
- The Grange, Runcorn
- Warrington Road, Widnes
- West Bank,
S17 RETAIL DEVELOPMENT

1 No major retail development will be permitted in one town centre that could seriously harm the vitality and viability of another in Halton.

2 Retail development will be directed to allocated sites listed in Policy TC1 and sites within the Primary Shopping Areas of Widnes Town Centre, Runcorn Old Town Centre and Runcorn New Town Centre (Halton Lea) and must be appropriate in scale and character to the town centre.

3 Out of centre or edge of centre retail development will not be permitted unless need for the facilities has been established, and harm to the vitality and viability of any designated town centre or neighbourhood centre in Halton would not occur.

JUSTIFICATION FOR POLICIES S16 AND S17

4 In accordance with the national government guidance as set out in PPG 6 policies S16 and S17 establishes the hierarchy of shopping centres in the Borough and the locational requirements for new retail development to maintain and enhance the retail hierarchy. The aim of these policies is to secure the town and neighbourhood centres as prosperous and attractive centres that will continue to offer a service and focus for the community and a source of employment.

5 The unique circumstances of Halton’s past have culminated in the establishment of three town centres, which is unusual for a community of its size. Initially Widnes and Runcorn town centres expanded to meet the needs of two towns separated by the Mersey. Halton Lea (formerly Shopping City) was built in the 1960’s as the centre of Runcorn New Town which was developed to house the over spill population of Liverpool.

6 All three town centres are now firmly established at the heart of the local communities they serve and the Council is committed to ensuring that each centre develops and prospers. Furthermore the Borough has 34 neighbourhood centres which provide a valuable service for local communities particularly the elderly and those without access to a car.

7 Although primarily these shopping centres have a retail function they have an important range of other complementary roles that a vibrant retail sector supports. They provide a focus for business, leisure activities and the provision of administrative services and social facilities.

8 It is clear that decisions on the nature, size and location of new retail development need to be carefully considered in order to maintain and enhance the current retail hierarchy.

9 As such all major retail developments will be directed to the town centres to maintain and enhance their role in the communities they serve. It is also vital that new retail development in one town centre does not adversely affect the vitality and viability of any other town centre in the Borough.

10 Moreover out of centre retail development will only be permitted if it is demonstrated that it would not undermine or damage the prospects of enhancing the vitality and viability of the town centres.

11 Subsequent Part 2 Shopping and Town Centre Policies aim to maintain the current hierarchy whilst facilitating appropriate retail development in terms of its size, nature and location.

12 In preparing the Plan, the Council undertook an assessment of need for additional retail development up to 2016. This research is contained in the ‘Retail Issues Report’ (January 1999) as updated by the ‘Review of the UDP Retail and Leisure Issues’ (October 2002). The assessment of future capacity for retail development within the plan period provided the justification for identifying sequentially suitable sites for retail development that are listed in Policy TC1. The quantitative capacity for additional retail floorspace may change over the lifetime of the plan commensurate with changes in market conditions, population, expenditure levels or the levels of commitments of new retail floorspace. These aspects will require regular monitoring to establish an accurate assessment of need for
additional floorspace. In relation to retail warehousing facilities, studies have established, as of 2002, the capacity for an additional 13,450 sq.m of floorspace selling bulky goods up to 2016. Land at Venture Fields (northern part of Action Area 3, Warrington Road/Eastern Widnes Bypass (Ref. TC3) and at Chapel Street, Runcorn are considered to be the best opportunities for retail warehousing to accommodate extra capacity. In aggregate, their potential significantly exceeds the identified capacity for additional floorspace.

**S18 PROVISION OF LAND FOR HOUSING**

1. 2,477 dwellings have already been provided 1996-2002. From April 2002 onwards land will be provided for new dwellings in line with the building rate set by RPG13 (2003) (now RSS) of 330 dwellings per annum (net of clearance). Provision will be made in line with the ‘Plan, Monitor and Manage’ approach set out in PPG3 (2000). RPG13 (RSS) Policy UR4 identifies a target for Merseyside and Halton (excluding Liverpool) that on average 65% of new dwellings will be built on previously-developed (PDL or brownfield) land. For the Plan period the target is that at least 55% of new housing in Halton will be built on PDL.

2. Housing provision in the period 2002-2011 will comprise;

   a) windfall sites and allocated PDL sites within the urban areas of Widnes & Runcorn;

   b) commitments in the form of sites with planning permission; and

   c) greenfield allocations at Upton Rocks (Widnes) and Sandymoor (Runcorn) which form large areas of ongoing comprehensive development where there is a need to complete the schemes of infrastructure and provision of community, recreation and local commercial facilities for the growing communities.

3. Housing provision in the period 2011-2016 will comprise;

   (i) windfall sites and allocated PDL sites within the urban areas of Widnes & Runcorn;

   (ii) greenfield allocations within the:

   - North Widnes Development Area
   - East Runcorn Development Area

**JUSTIFICATION**

4. The strategic aim of the Plan is to achieve a reduction in the rate of population decline and an improved balance between the quality and location of jobs and residents. This will be achieved by making adequate provision for housing requirements and creating new employment opportunities that are accessible to local residents, which will help to stem net out-migration from the Borough.

5. In relation to housing requirements, the policies in the Plan will ensure that adequate dwelling provision will be made available during the period 2002-2016 to accommodate around 4,620 dwellings.

6. Currently Halton suffers from a steadily declining population and unless there is a shift in policy to stem the flow, it is forecast that this will continue into the foreseeable future. The Council are confident that policies to improve economic growth in the Borough through implementation of the Regeneration Strategy and a range of local initiatives, including the employment policies of the UDP, will help stem net out-migration. This will result in a higher demand for housing in the Borough than currently forecast.

7. Site allocations are identified specifically in Policy H1 and on the Proposals Map, and will be supplemented by development on windfall sites.

8. A specific allowance (of around 966 dwellings) has been made in the Plan for future potential brownfield windfalls on the basis of an examination of past trends (1996-2002) and an assessment of potential capacity. The supply of land from allocations and windfalls will be closely monitored over the Plan period to ensure that there is adequate provision for housing to achieve the key aim of the Plan.
The commitments and allocations are distributed fairly evenly between Runcorn and Widnes, and are located in four general areas. In Widnes, the commitments and allocations are concentrated at Upton Rocks and in the North Widnes Development Area, including land at Norlands Lane, Lunts Heath, Moorfield Road and Barrow’s Green Lane. In Runcorn, the commitments and allocations are concentrated at Sandymoor and in the East Runcorn Development Area, including land at Wharford Farm and Delph Lane. In addition to these general areas, a number of infill sites have been allocated within the urban areas of Runcorn and Widnes. The detailed site allocations are contained in Policy H1 in the Housing Chapter of Part 2 of the Plan.

In order to comply with Policy UR4 (Setting Targets for the Recycling of Land and Buildings) in RPG13 (RSS), a target of at least 55% of new housing on previously developed land is set. This falls below the 65% target in UR4 as it takes account of the local circumstances in Halton that constrain the amount of PDL suitable for housing development, particularly the legacy of contaminated industrial land. This target will be kept under review and will be revised, if necessary in a future review of this policy.

**S19 PROVISION OF LAND FOR LOCAL EMPLOYMENT**

1 Adequate land will be made available during the period 1996 to 2016 to accommodate around 208 hectares for employment uses, including business, general industrial, storage and distribution development.

2 Sites are made available in these general locations:
   a The Southern Widnes Employment Areas
   b Manor Park, Runcorn
   c Whitehouse, Runcorn

**JUSTIFICATION**

3 The Housing and Population Aim 1 of the Plan seeks to achieve a reduction in the rate of population decline and an improved balance between the quality and location of jobs and residents in the Borough. This will be achieved by making adequate provision for housing requirements and creating new employment opportunities that are accessible to local residents.

4 The Plan will ensure, therefore that adequate land will be made available during the period 1996 to 2016 to accommodate around 208 hectares for local employment uses.

5 The total employment land provision for the Borough in the period of the Plan (1996-2016) is 334 Ha. This consists of 88 Ha. of Local Employment Sites, 126 Ha. of Regional Investment Sites, in addition to 120 Ha. of employment land completions recorded between May 1996 and May 2003 (details contained in the Employment Land Monitoring Report October 2003). For further reference Policy E1 contains details of all the allocated local and Regional Investment sites. This quantity of employment land will be sufficient to meet the forecast demand for employment land within the plan period but also will provide the Borough with a balanced portfolio of development opportunities which will meet the quantitative and locational needs of modern businesses and the needs of the Halton workforce.

6 The continuing need to create prosperity in the Borough makes it essential that quality employment sites are made available to meet the needs of modern industry and business. As such, the Plan makes provision for a range of sites in term of their size and attractiveness of location.

7 The Urban Capacity Study (Pieda 1997) reviewed all identified employment sites weighting them against a range of developability and marketability factors to obtain a true picture of the availability of employment sites in Halton. As such the available supply of existing employment land in the Borough was considered to be approximately 190 hectares (this figure is broadly comparable with the figure proposed in the Draft Cheshire Replacement Structure Plan 2011). However additional sites of quality have been identified for employment use, particularly in Widnes, because the qualitative deficiencies of the existing employment land, given the locational requirements of modern industry, would limit the opportunities to secure new employment investment in the town, particularly in the B1 and B8 sectors.
Also highlighted in the study was the inequitable distribution of employment land in the Borough, with Widnes providing only approximately 18% of the 190 hectares of available employment land. Moreover, employment land take up in Widnes represented only 34% of the total employment land taken up between 1990 and 1997. Inequalities in job creation between Runcorn and Widnes are also found between 1990 and 1996, where 145 jobs were created in Widnes compared to 760 in Runcorn.

To redress this imbalance a portfolio of sites between the towns is required to enable Widnes to compete with Runcorn and the surrounding area on an equitable basis. As such there is a need to identify quality employment land in Widnes in addition to the available supply of existing employment land, identified by the Study, which will prove attractive to both indigenous business and small-scale inward investment.

The allocations have been distributed fairly evenly between Runcorn and Widnes, and are located in three general areas. In Widnes, the allocations are concentrated in the Southern Widnes employment areas, to the south-east of Widnes Town Centre. In Runcorn, the allocations are concentrated at Manor Park and Whitehouse. The detailed site allocations are contained in Policy E1 in the Employment Chapter of Part 2 of the Plan. S20 allocates sites for ‘strategic regional investment’.

The following clusters of sites are provided to meet the needs of economic sectors that are considered significant in raising the competitiveness of the economy of the North West region:

RUNCORN
Daresbury Park
Daresbury Laboratory

WIDNES
Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park

Development of these sites must be to a high standard of design and landscaping, to create a good environmental setting.

This policy takes account of guidance contained in Regional Spatial Strategy (March 2003) for the North West, and in the NWDA’s Regional (Economic) Strategy (March 2003).

1. Policies EC1, EC3, EC4 and EC5 of RPG (RSS) set a framework for Development Plans of individual authorities to play their part in increasing the competitiveness of the regional economy in targeting the key business sectors identified in the Regional (Economic) Strategy and in promoting sustainable development patterns.

2. Policy EC4 requires Development Plans to consider the potential for promotion of “Business Clusters” that meet both the region’s sectoral priorities – encouraging the clustering of businesses operating in the same or complementary sectors, including the knowledge-based sectors.

3. Policy EC5 sets out the Regional (Economic) Strategy’s requirement to identify Regional Investment Sites and requires Development Plans of the relevant authorities to reserve these sites for uses that support the region’s sectoral priorities. The list of sites identified in the Regional (Economic) Strategy published in March 2003 includes Runcorn, Daresbury Park and Widnes, Ditton.

4. The growth target sectors identified in the Regional (Economic) Strategy (and in paragraph 4.7 of RSS) are:

- Environmental technologies
- Life science industries (biotechnology and pharmaceuticals)
- Medical equipment and technology
- Financial and professional services
- Tourism
- Computer software and service internet based services
- Creative industries, media, advertising and public relations.
Attention needs to be focused on developing clusters of activities in these growth target sectors to improve the competitiveness of the region and achieve prospects for growth.

The Regional (Economic) Strategy has formally designated 25 strategic regional sites. The aim was to ensure the ready availability of a portfolio of major sites, well-suited to the development of the identified growth target sectors. The delivery of the 25 sites over the next 20 years is considered critical to the effective implementation of the Regional (Economic) Strategy.

Two sites within Halton are included within the list of regional strategic sites, which are Daresbury Park and Daresbury Laboratories in Runcorn and Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park in Widnes. These sites are considered to be critical to the implementation of the Regional Strategy.

These sites should act as flagship developments for the North West and hence standards of building design, energy conservation, landscaping and urban design should be particularly high and make a positive contribution to environmental quality and sustainability. The Council will be seeking innovative and quality architectural design solutions on all the sites.

There are exceptional circumstances for removing land from the Green Belt for the Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park, as follows:

- The special nature of the rail infrastructure in this location.
- Its juxtaposition with the road and rail network.
- Its existing rail freight profile.
- Ability to deliver critical mass.
- Ability to provide full Intermodal facilities.

The Halton Green Belt accords with the positive purposes of Green Belts as set out in the Government’s Planning Policy Guidance on Green Belts (PPG2). In particular, it will help to safeguard the surrounding countryside, protect agricultural land and assist in urban regeneration.

In the Green Belt there is a general presumption against inappropriate development. Such development should not be approved, except in very special circumstances. Policy GE1 in Part 2 of the UDP is the main policy that controls inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

Moore, Daresbury and Preston on the Hill are “washed over” by the Green Belt where no new building beyond that permitted by Policy GE1 will be allowed.

The process by which need, if any, for changes in the broad extent and location of Halton’s Green Belt boundaries is set out in Policy SD5 The Green Belt of Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). It states that in Merseyside and Halton a strategic study of Green Belt is required to determine the need, if any, for change in the broad extent and location of Green Belt boundaries to accommodate likely development requirements to 2021 and beyond. The policy sets out what the strategic study should involve and matters it should have regard to. The findings of this study will inform the next review of RPG (RSS) and will be taken into account in the next review of the Halton UDP, as part of the Local Development Framework.

On land not coloured on the proposals map which is currently in urban use, it is assumed that present uses will continue as this land is not subject to any site specific policies which propose a change of use. Any proposals for changes of use will be judged in accordance with the relevant policies of the Plan.
JUSTIFICATION

2 Not all land within the Borough is subject to a site specific policy. Most of the land in urban use is either primarily employment, primarily residential or greenspace. In areas where these policies do not apply or are not allocated for new development, then it is assumed that the present use will continue. If changes of use are proposed then they will be assessed against the general policies in the Plan.

S23 OPEN COUNTRYSIDE

1 On land between the urban areas and the Green Belt boundary shown on the proposals map as open countryside, new development will not be permitted unless it is essential for agriculture, forestry, outdoor recreation or for other purposes appropriate to a rural area.

JUSTIFICATION

2 Most of the land outside the urban area is protected in some way by the Green Belt policy and/or various landscape protection and nature conservation policies. The aim of this policy is to preserve the openness and rural nature of the remaining undeveloped land that falls between the urban area and the Green Belt.

S24 SUSTAINABLE URBAN EXTENSIONS

1 Proposed urban extensions at North Widnes and East Runcorn must be planned to follow the principles of sustainable development as set out in Regional Planning Guidance (now known as Regional Spatial Strategy). The extensions must, if required, include the following elements as part of a comprehensive and coherent development.

2 Landscape

a Creation and/or reinforcement of the landscape on the edge of the development by planting of buffer zones and re-enforcement of Green Belt boundaries where relevant.

b Reinstatement and/or reinforcement of landscape structure in outlying areas where land ownership permits or by contributions to the Mersey Community Forest initiative.

c Provision of accessible recreation areas, if required, including playing fields where there is a demand, on areas where land is fragmented, or agriculture is no longer viable.

3 Transport

a Provision of bus, cycle and pedestrian routes that link the urban extension directly with the existing urban area.

b Safeguarding of land for new or improved railway stations at Barrows Green Lane and Ditton, Widnes and at Red Brow Lane, East Runcorn.

4 Education, Community and Shopping Facilities

a Safeguarding of land for school (if required), community facilities and local shops, accessible by public transport, on foot and cycle from all parts of the new development.

5 Recreation Facilities

a Provision of informal open space and children’s play areas in accordance with policies in Part 2 of the UDP.

6 Housing

a A variety of types and mix of housing.

b Imaginative design and layouts which make more efficient use of land without compromising the quality of the environment.

7 Employment

a Employment development should contribute to the mix of land uses, contribute to regional and local employment and create a better balance between employment and housing.
b Employment development should be compatible with and not adversely affect the amenity of adjoining residential areas.

8 The Borough Council will seek to enable, by use of planning obligations, that all the necessary elements described above, are implemented as part of the comprehensive development of urban extensions.

JUSTIFICATION

9 Given the low quantity and poor quality of much previously used land in Halton due to its industrial legacy, much new housing and employment development in Halton will be accommodated on the edge of the urban area. However these new development areas must not result in unplanned sprawl, unrelated to the existing urban area or be dependent on car based travel. Therefore the proposed development areas at North Widnes and East Runcorn must be planned and developed as sustainable urban extensions where there is good access to shops, schools, community, recreation and employment facilities via public transport, walking and cycling. It is also essential that where these developments create the need for new infrastructure, social, recreation and community facilities, that these are provided, either though planning conditions or planning obligations as part of the development.

10 As these areas are on the urban edge it is also essential that landscaped areas are implemented as part of the development to enhance the urban fringe and where appropriate create a landscaped edge to the development to reinforce green belt boundaries.

11 Master plans will be prepared to guide the detailed development of the urban extension areas and adopted as Supplementary Planning Documents. This will be used to assess planning applications and the need for planning contributions and planning conditions.

12 The circumstances where planning obligations will be required are described in Policy S25.

13 The most challenging area for the creation of a sustainable urban extension is at East Runcorn, where most of the social infrastructure will need to be created as part of a phased programme of new development, linked to established employment areas at Daresbury Park and Daresbury Laboratory.

14 East Runcorn will include a mix of employment and housing development, a local centre incorporating local shops and social, recreational and community facilities, and public open space. In order to reduce reliance on car travel the area will also require the provision of a high quality of public transport including a site for a new railway station, bus routes and safe, attractive and convenient pedestrian and cycle routes.

15 The following principles of development should be addressed by a masterplan for the area.

(I) Landscape & Open Space

a Creation and/or reinforcement of landscape features along the outer boundaries of the development in order to maintain, and where desirable, enhance the quality of views from Chester Road and the Daresbury Expressway.

b The preservation of Keckwick Hill as an important local landscape feature.

c Provision of informal open space and children’s play areas in accordance with Policy H3.

d Provision of accessible recreation areas including playing fields.

(II) Transport

a Provision of bus, cycle and pedestrian routes that provide linkages between the various elements of the urban extension and connect it effectively with the existing built-up area.

b Safeguarding of land at Red Brow Lane and/or potentially at Delph Lane for new railway stations.

(III) Education, Community and Shopping Facilities

a Creation of a new local centre, incorporating local shops and recreational, social and community facilities. The centre should be accessible by public
transport, foot and cycle from all parts of the new development.

b Provision of land for a new school accessible to the residents from the housing development.

(IV) Housing

a A variety of types and mix of housing.

b Imaginative design and layouts which make efficient use of land without compromising the quality of the environment.

c Provision of accessible recreation areas including playing fields.

S25 PLANNING OBLIGATIONS

1 Development that would:

a Create or markedly exacerbate significant deficiencies in infrastructure or social, recreational or community facilities, and/or

b Result in the net loss of environmental, social and economic capital, will only be permitted subject to conditions or, if more appropriate, to an agreement under Section 106 of the Act, to ensure that those deficiencies or losses are compensated for, adequately mitigated or substituted before development is begun or occupied.

JUSTIFICATION

2 New development can generate demand for new infrastructure or social, recreational or community facilities which would not have arisen had the development not taken place. It can also have a wider impact involving the loss of environmental, social and economic capital, which are the sources of the benefits we receive from the environment, society and the economy.

3 The Halton UDP Sustainability Appraisal (WS Atkins, August 2000) gives some definitions of ‘assets’ or ‘capital’ for the purposes of assessing the impact of development. The concept of the Quality of Life Capital approach has also been developed by the Countryside Agency, the Environment Agency, English Nature and English Heritage as a tool identifying those elements necessary for sustainable development and with an impact on quality of life. In order to identify important elements of environmental, social and economic capital that may be affected by development, impact assessments of development on these matters will be required as appropriate. By these means, the elements of capital affected by the development can be quantified and any necessary compensation, mitigation or substitution measures can be devised.

4 Planning conditions and where necessary, planning obligations, will be used to ensure that these compensation, mitigation or substitution measures are implemented.

5 In Halton the reliance largely on greenfields to accommodate new housing and employment development will have an impact, particularly on open countryside, agricultural land and landscape. Planning conditions and planning obligations can be used to mitigate and compensate within the area to be developed.

6 The linked strategy of the UDP, is described in the spatial strategy of sustainable urban extensions on the urban fringe linked to regeneration of the urban area.

7 Development on the urban fringe should therefore not just be sustainable within itself, it should also contribute to the objective of sustainable developments for the whole community, particularly the objectives of urban renewal. The Council will seek to achieve these contributions by a process of negotiation with developers to achieve wider benefits to the Borough’s needs.
HALTON UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN
CHAPTER 1
REGENERATION
AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1 The Strategy of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) is to promote social, economic and environmental regeneration in order to improve quality of life throughout the Borough. Although the UDP’s focus relates to the development and use of land, it also has regard to these environmental, economic and social considerations. For example, the UDP may allocate land for community uses with the justification for this being a social need identified in the Regeneration Strategy.

2 The UDP can help the regeneration of Halton by:
   a acknowledging and responding to stated regeneration objectives;
   b providing policies for areas that require redevelopment and regeneration;
   c allocating specific sites for new development, for example allocating housing sites to meet housing need in the Borough;
   d protecting the natural and built environment;
   e protecting and enhancing existing community facilities such as local centres and schools;
   f ensuring health and safety issues are considered when planning for new development.

3 The majority of the policies in this chapter of the UDP relate to the identification of Action Areas requiring redevelopment and regeneration and provides for land use change within these areas. Other policies in the Plan will help in tackling other regeneration issues.

BACKGROUND

1 The Borough has significant economic and consequent social problems. It ranks highly amongst all North West districts on the index of social deprivation, displaying characteristics akin to many inner city metropolitan areas. The latest Government Index ranks Halton as the 18th overall most deprived authority area in England and Wales.

2 In addition to the social and economic problems, there are also physical problems, which hinder development and investment. The most serious of these is the early chemical industry’s historical legacy of highly contaminated land. This combines with other problems within the Borough to affect investment confidence within the established built up areas.

3 The Council has played a vital role in reducing the physical problems arising from industrial change. For example, over 180 hectares of derelict and contaminated land has been reclaimed since 1974, using Government and European funding. This includes the site on which the Green Oaks shopping development in Widnes now stands. In addition to these initiatives, unfit housing has been improved, Council houses have been improved and new public open space has been created.

4 The regeneration process is a continuing one and whilst great strides have been made towards solving problems in Halton, much still needs to be done. The Council, through the Regeneration Strategy 1998, is now taking a holistic approach to tackling the problems within the Borough. The UDP can help in this...
process by promoting social, economic and environmental regeneration in order to improve quality of life throughout the Borough.

THE REGENERATION STRATEGY FOR HALTON

5 The Regeneration Strategy was adopted by Halton Borough Council and all members of the Halton Partnership in 1998. The purpose of the Strategy is:

a to build on strengths and embrace opportunities;

b to drive forward the regeneration of the Borough;

c to create a thriving area in which people will want to live, work and invest; and

d to revitalise Halton.

6 The Strategy identified both ‘areas’ and ‘themes’ for regeneration. It defined geographical areas within which regeneration is needed, while the ‘themes’ relate to the whole of the Borough and are applicable to all areas, for example crime and community safety, community development and sustainable economic development and employment.

7 The Strategy provides the context for other strategies and plans for Halton. The UDP therefore seeks to implement, where appropriate the objectives of the Regeneration Strategy as land use policies and proposals.

ACTION AREAS

8 These are areas within which wider Council enabled regeneration efforts will be aided by flexible land use policies, allowing opportunities for old redundant land uses (particularly industry) to be replaced by new uses such as open space, housing and new commercial development. In the Halton Local Plan, the designation of ‘Primarily Employment and Residential Areas’ assumed that these uses would continue. This assumption has now been removed within the Action Areas to allow for more mixed-use development.

9 These Action Areas are designated in accordance with the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 para. 12(8). This states that Part 2 of a unitary development plan may designate any part of the local authority’s area as an Action Area. An Action Area is an area they have selected for the commencement, during a prescribed period, of comprehensive treatment by development, redevelopment or improvement (or partly by one and partly by another method). If an area is so designated that Part of the plan shall contain a description of the treatment proposed by the authority. The Development Plan Regulations 1999 state that the ‘prescribed period’ is 10 years for Action Areas.

10 In accordance with the Act, the Action Area policies set out the acceptable uses and opportunities for new development within each Action Area. The Action Area plans will be prepared as ‘Supplementary Planning Documents’ (SPDs).

11 Each Action Area is identified on the Proposals Map but only a few land use proposals are shown within them where a degree of certainty exists. Some areas worthy of protection are also shown. Where boundaries of new development are uncertain, the policy lists a range of opportunities for new development and the classes of development, according to the Town & Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987, that would be allowed in principle.

12 In order to make sure that the period of uncertainty for those areas is minimised, each Action Area will be subject to a study that will identify sites for new development, opportunities for improved access, environmental improvements and other land use proposals. These studies will take place as part of wider corporate initiatives to implement the Council’s Regeneration Strategy and will therefore take account of other social and economic development policies outside the scope of the UDP.

13 The Action Area Plans will have the status of ‘Supplementary Planning Documents’ as described in Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Development Frameworks (2004), that will supplement the policies and proposals of the plan itself. As such it will be taken into
account as a ‘material consideration’ in assessing planning applications. Each Action Plan will be subject to consultation with the general public, businesses and other interested parties and will be the subject of a Council resolution to adopt it as a supplementary planning document.

14 The boundaries of the Action Area Plans are purely land use based and may be different to those areas identified in the Council’s Regeneration Strategy wherein a broader range of actions to promote regeneration will be undertaken.

REDEVELOPMENT ON PREVIOUSLY USED LAND

15 During the Plan period, opportunities for redeveloping larger areas of derelict and contaminated land may come forward through the Action Area policies of the Plan. Since it is not certain where and when these opportunities may arise, it was not considered possible to include an estimated redevelopment figure within Policy H1. However, the policies in the Plan are flexible enough to enable the Council to react to redevelopment opportunities. The phased approach to the release of housing land in Policy H1 places priority on the development of previously-used (brownfield) land over the development of greenfield land. In accordance with Policy H1, development of brownfield land within the existing urban area will be permitted, provided that it is in compliance with the policies in the Plan, irrespective of whether or not the land is allocated in the policy.

16 Regular monitoring of housing land take-up, including land not specifically allocated in the Plan, will enable the Council to review the need for further development on greenfield sites in Phases 2 and 3. Should the supply of previously-used (brownfield) land greatly exceed the estimated provision in Policy H1 during the early years of the Plan, it may not be considered necessary to release all of the greenfield sites identified in Phases 2 and 3. The plan, monitor and manage approach will enable the Council to be flexible in reacting to the changing circumstances. Site allocations will be reviewed and up-dated as the Plan is reviewed. Further guidance on the phased approach to the release of housing land is contained in the Housing Chapter of the Plan.

MIXED USE AREAS

17 Government Planning Policy Guidance for Housing (PPG3) 2000, states that local authorities should promote development that combines a mix of uses. The Government considers that it is important not only to accommodate new households but also to bring new life to our towns and cities. It states that local planning authorities should facilitate mixed use developments by identifying appropriate sites in development plans, preparing development briefs for sites, assembling sites for redevelopment and by adopting a flexible approach to planning standards.

18 It is considered that this approach would help to stimulate regeneration in Halton in suitable areas. Action Areas policies have therefore been designed to facilitate mixed use developments as advocated by PPG3.
PART 2
POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

ACTION AREAS
RG1 ACTION AREA I SOUTHERN WIDNES

1 The Southern Widnes Action Area is proposed as an area of mixed uses, including housing. The following uses will be acceptable:

- Business uses (B1);
- General industry (B2), provided that there is no detrimental affect on residential amenity;
- Residential institutions (C2);
- Dwelling houses (C3);
- Community facilities (D1);
- Shops (A1), that serve the local community provided that UDP retail policies are complied with;
- Food and drink outlets (A3) serving the local community;
- Recreation and leisure facilities serving the local community (D2);
- Open space and public spaces.

PRINCIPLES OF DEVELOPMENT

2 There should be a mix of housing and employment uses to provide opportunities for people to work within walking or cycling distance of home.

3 A variety of housing types in terms of size and tenure will be required.
4 A variety of employment uses should be provided for, including provision for small businesses.

5 The car should be safely accommodated without encouraging its use in preference to other means of transport. Parking standards will be assessed in the light of the detailed impact of development proposed.

6 The layout of streets, buildings and spaces should be designed to minimise journeys by car and encourage movement by foot or bicycle.

7 The visual quality of the built and natural environment should be enhanced.

8 The quality of design of any new development should enhance its surroundings in order to raise the overall image and appearance of the area.

9 Public spaces should be included as an integral part of the design of schemes within the Action Area.

JUSTIFICATION

10 Southern Widnes is the old Victorian heart of Widnes where an unhealthy mixture of heavy industry and poor quality housing has largely disappeared. An Action Area Plan prepared in the 1970s by the Council has been successfully implemented with new light industry, new and improved housing, reclaimed land for a riverside park at Spike Island and the Catalyst Museum tourism attraction.

11 Despite these efforts the migration of people to more attractive suburbs, the physical isolation of the area and the lack of sustained private investment has resulted in continuing social deprivation and a poor environment. However the Southern Widnes area remains an area of mixed industry and housing with a strong community identity in West Bank. The industrial and commercial area has a mixture of small and large businesses creating a vibrant employment community.

12 The Regeneration Strategy for Halton concludes that, ‘This is an area in need of investment in its social and physical environments. The advantages of a close community are being eroded by a lack of a positive vision and investment in the area. There is still a need to instil confidence in the area to make it a more desirable place to live.’

13 There is therefore a pressing need for regeneration within the Area particularly investment in the current housing stock, redevelopment of derelict and contaminated sites and improving the overall living and working environment.

14 The aim for this Action Area is therefore to provide a convenient, efficient and pleasing place, within which people can live, work and pursue their daily lives.

15 In order to stimulate regeneration it is essential that the existing residential community is made more sustainable. Planning policies can assist this process by encouraging the development of additional housing and local shopping, leisure and community facilities. New employment opportunities can also be encouraged by development or redevelopment of land for new businesses that are compatible with a mixed-use area. An Action Plan for the area will identify sites for development opportunities, for environmental improvements and improved access to, from and within the area.

16 Regeneration opportunities, which will be considered in the Action Plan, are as follows:

a Open space and sports facilities on vacant and derelict sites;

b Housing on suitable infill sites;

c Neighbourhood shops;

d New passenger railway station;

e Conservation area enhancement at West Bank Promenade;

f Tourism development based on Spike Island and Catalyst Museum;

g Water based recreation facilities;

h Relocation of bad neighbour uses.

17. The UDP directs large-scale retail and leisure
development to the Town Centres and allocated sites. Therefore, any retail, food and drink or leisure provision within this Action Area should be to serve the local community only, in the interests of sustainability.

RG2 ACTION AREA 2
CENTRAL WIDNES

1 The Central Widnes Action Area is proposed as a mixed-use area for uses supporting and enhancing the vitality and viability of Widnes Town Centre. The following uses will be acceptable:

- Financial and Professional Services (A2);
- Food and Drink (A3);
- Business uses (B1);
- Hotels (C1);
- Residential Institutions (C2);
- Dwelling Houses (C3);
- Non-residential institutions (D1);
- Assembly and leisure (D2);
- Shops (A1) that serve the local community, provided that UDP retail policies are complied with.

PRINCIPLES OF DEVELOPMENT

2 New development should be well related to the Town Centre and should be designed to allow ease of pedestrian access within the Area as a whole and to and from the Town Centre.

3 The quality of design of any new development should enhance its surroundings in order to raise the overall image and appearance of the area.

4 Housing development should be of a higher density of greater than 50 dwellings per hectare which is appropriate to the central and accessible location.

5 Parking provision lower than the maximum contained in policy TP12 will be expected in order to accommodate high density residential development and to reflect the edge of centre location and the opportunity for shared use parking areas.

6 It incorporates bus routes and bus stops that enable maximum access by public transport as close as possible to the development. (See policy TP1)

7 Development should not be unsightly nor a source of noise, dust, odour or pollution that is considered to be detrimental to the future regeneration prospects of the area as set out in the Action Area Plan.

JUSTIFICATION

8 In the past this area was the main shopping area for Widnes. Over time the Town Centre has migrated northwards and the area has been in decline. Many small shops and businesses have disappeared, leaving behind run down and neglected buildings through years of under-investment.

9 The Area continues to fulfil a role within Widnes, with a concentration of civic and public buildings, offices and a leisure centre. The aim therefore within this Action Area is to achieve regeneration by building upon this revised role.

10 A wide range of uses will be acceptable within the Central Widnes Action Area including housing. This is to allow flexibility for development proposals in the area. The uses however should be related to the Town Centre both in terms of the type of use and in the actual design and development of the proposed use. For example by building flats above new commercial premises and conversion of existing buildings for mixed uses.

11 There are opportunities for small-scale retail developments within the area to complement the main shopping centre but not to compete with it. Therefore this development must conform to the plan’s general retail policies. It is expected that new retail development should take place through redevelopment of existing worn out buildings unsuitable for
modern retailing uses in order to aid regeneration.

12 Parking provision to the maximum levels will not be expected in this area due to the nature of the area and the edge of centre location. In high density residential areas there is often a trade-off between density and parking. In achieving other residential opportunities, e.g. living over the shop, parking may not be achievable or appropriate. Other uses equally will not need to achieve maximum car parking and may utilise shared use parking and public parking facilities. The accessible location close to the town centre and public transport facilities will offset these lower parking levels.

**RG3 ACTION AREA 3 WIDNES WATERFRONT**

1 Within the Waterfront Action Area the following uses will be acceptable: -

- Employment uses (B1, B2 & B8);
- Residential uses (C2 & C3);
- Leisure uses (D2) where they comply with Policy TC1(2);
- Open space;
- Food and Drink (A3); and
- Bulky goods retail warehousing within Class A1, where it complies with Policy TC1(2).

**PRINCIPLES OF DEVELOPMENT**

2 The nature and design of new development should take advantage of the waterside location beside the St. Helens Canal and Mersey Estuary.

3 A significant improvement should be made to the waterside environment.

4 Provision should be made for increased public access to the waterside.

5 Access into the area should be improved particularly in relation to public transport access.

6 The visual quality of the built and natural environment should be enhanced including along routes into the area.

7 Development should not prejudice the overall objective of securing a further crossing of the Mersey east of the existing bridge.

8 Development should not be unsightly nor a source of noise, dust, odour or pollution that is considered to be detrimental to the future regeneration prospects of the area as set out in the Action Area Plan.

9 Provision should be made for improved pedestrian links from the Action Area to Widnes Town Centre.

**JUSTIFICATION**

10 The declining employment area used to be a major location for the chemical industry in Widnes. Various plant closures have taken place leaving behind a legacy of contaminated land. This forms a large and wide band of vacant land and a disused chemical tip, adjacent to the Mersey Estuary.

11 The opportunity exists to take advantage of the waterside location and regenerate the whole area. This may be by reclaiming the contaminated land for employment or open space uses, and for housing where this is possible. The creation of new waterside open spaces in this area will help to compensate for open land that will be lost to development in the area allocated for housing and business uses in the proposed North Widnes Development Area.

12 The Review of UDP Retail and Leisure Issues [Final Report Oct.2002] identifies capacity for additional retail warehousing in Widnes over the period up to 2016 in excess of that likely to be accommodated within the defined town centre. On the basis of a sequential approach, the Widnes Eastern Bypass site and the northern part of this Action Area (north of the safeguarded Shell Green rail route) are seen as Widnes’ best long-term opportunities for the expansion of bulky goods retail warehousing to accommodate this quantitative need. This particular form of retail development would
be likely to complement the current role and performance of Widnes town centre. A condition of planning permission will be used to restrict the use to the sale of bulky goods. This would be subject to the proposals being within walking distance of Widnes Town Centre and improved pedestrian and public transport links with the town centre. The development of the Venture Fields area for mixed retail warehousing, leisure and employment will enable the Widnes waterfront to be linked to the existing town centre.

**RG4 ACTION AREA 4**
**RUNCORN & WESTON DOCKLANDS**

1. The Runcorn and Weston Docks Action Area is proposed as an area primarily for the development of freight handling and storage and distribution activities. The following uses will be acceptable:
   - Business (B1);
   - General Industry (B2);
   - Storage and Distribution (B8);
   - Open space;
   - Uses ancillary to an employment area;
   - Education and housing.

**PRINCIPLES OF DEVELOPMENT**

2. Part of the Area should be developed as appropriate for a rail freight facility.

3. Provision should be made for the commercial dock to continue and where possible enhanced; however should this not be commercially possible other compatible uses in line with this policy would be allowed.

4. Existing rail links should be enhanced within any new development.

5. Road access should be improved to encourage development and remove traffic from adjoining residential areas. Road access away from residential areas should be in place before any new development becomes operational. Any development should not prejudice the possibility of creating an additional access into the area from Picow Farm Road or the improvement of Percival Lane.

6. The line of the Bridgewater Locks should be safeguarded. Development in that area should be planned to assist the future reopening of the navigable connection between the Bridgewater Canal and the Ship Canal.

7. The visual quality of the built and natural environment should be enhanced.

8. The quality of design of any new development should enhance its surroundings in order to raise the overall image and appearance of the area.

9. Advantage should be taken of the waterside location within any new development.

10. Provision should be made for increased public access to the waterside where this is compatible with continuing commercial use of the waterway, whilst ensuring public safety.

11. Advantage should be taken of the location of the Weaver Navigation within the area, both commercially and as a leisure and tourism facility.

12. Development should not be unsightly nor a source of noise, dust, odour or pollution that is considered to be detrimental to the future regeneration prospects of the area as set out in the Action Area Plan.

**JUSTIFICATION**

13. This is predominantly an area of employment uses and includes commercial docks, general industry, storage and distribution uses, along with a large amount of derelict and underused land.

14. Whilst Runcorn Docks continues as a freight
handling facility, other parts of the area have been in decline due to increased carriage of goods by road. The legacy of previous uses includes large worn out buildings with few services, and large areas of derelict land. Road access is poor, with a history of conflict between heavy goods traffic and local residents. The general image and appearance of the area is poor.

15 There is now an opportunity to reverse this decline and build upon the strengths of the Area for the handling and storage of freight, and the location of the area on the Manchester Ship Canal and with links to the West Coast Main Line. The redevelopment of the area for employment uses will provide much needed employment for Halton.

16 On an area of land adjoining the Dukesfield housing area there is an opportunity for building a new education building for Halton College. Alternatively this area would be suitable for waterside housing. Development in this area should take full account of the historic features, including Bridgewater House and the former Bridgewater Locks. Development should actively assist the goal of reopening for recreational navigation the connection between the Bridgewater Canal and Ship Canal. Recreational navigation on the Ship Canal is only practical on a limited and controlled basis.

17 In building on the strengths of the Area, the weaknesses of derelict land, access, services and poor image and environment should be overcome.

**RG5 ACTION AREA 5 HALEBANK**

1 **Within the Halebank Action Area, the following uses will be acceptable:** -
   - Business uses (B1);
   - Residential institutions (C2);
   - Dwelling houses (C3);
   - Community facilities (D1);
   - Shops serving the local community (A1);
   - Food and drink outlets serving the local community (A3);
   - Recreation and leisure facilities serving the local community (D2);
   - Open space and public spaces.

**PRINCIPLES OF DEVELOPMENT**

2 There should be a mix of housing and employment uses to provide adequate opportunities for people to work within walking or cycling distance of home.

3 A variety of housing types in terms of size and tenure will be required.

4 A variety of employment uses should be provided for including provision for small businesses.

5 The car should be safely accommodated without encouraging its use in preference to other means of transport. Parking standards will be assessed in the light of the detailed impact of development proposals.

6 The layout of streets, buildings and spaces should be designed to minimise journeys by car and encourage movement by foot or bicycle.

7 The visual quality of the built and natural environment should be enhanced.

8 The quality of design of any new development should enhance its surroundings in order to raise the overall image and appearance of the area.

9 Public spaces should be included as an integral part of the design of the Action Area.

10 Community facilities should be provided within the Area including a local shopping centre to serve the needs of the community.

11 Road and public transport to the area...
should be improved including the safeguarding of Ditton railway station to enable its re-opening.

JUSTIFICATION

12 The aim within this Action Area is to provide a convenient, efficient and pleasing place within which people can live, work and pursue their daily lives.

13 Halebank is currently an isolated residential area adjoining a mixed quality employment area, home to a variety of small businesses. There is a need for regeneration within the Area particularly in relation to the redevelopment of vacant and derelict sites, improving housing in the area, providing community facilities and improving the overall living and working environment.

14 On the edge of the residential area is a large food supermarket in older premises where relocation and redevelopment is anticipated. This currently acts as a neighbourhood centre for the local community as well as serving a wider catchment area. Its relocation will mean that local people without a car will not have convenient access to a local food store. Redevelopment of this site should therefore allow for replacement neighbourhood shops, including a food store either on this site or elsewhere within the Halebank area.

15 Uses acceptable within the Area are those appropriate to a mixed residential and employment area.

16 New housing development is proposed in the Action Area to provide a more balanced mix of housing types and tenure in line with Government policy. In order to ensure that this expanded neighbourhood is more sustainable, new housing development will help to support local facilities such as shops, school and public transport services.

17 A new or improved road link to the main road network will make the area less isolated and more attractive to businesses and create more local employment opportunities.

18 An Action Plan will be prepared for the Area in close co-operation with the local community. This will explore the following opportunities:

- The development of a new neighbourhood shopping area.
- Additional housing development through redevelopment of land currently or previously used for business where ground conditions and location are favourable.
- Improved road and public transport access using the railway and possible new road links to the A562 Speke Road.
- New woodland planting on the urban fringe.

RG6 ACTION AREA 6 CASTLEFIELDS AND NORTON PRIORY

1 Development within this area for new housing, open space and community uses will be permitted:

2 Where it is required for the replacement of existing housing and community uses which may become redundant; and

3 To allow for the restructuring of the existing housing and open space areas to accommodate new housing and community facilities.

JUSTIFICATION

4 The Castlefields / Norton Priory area is proposed for designation as an Action Area to provide a flexible planning policy framework to accommodate any major development proposals that may arise from:

- A joint study by the Housing Associations LHT and CDS into the future of the Castlefields Estate. This will include any prospective reshaping of the estate layout (currently serving a significant concentration of deck access flats, which are difficult to let);

- The review by Halton Borough Council, as Local Education Authority (LEA), of secondary and post-16 education provision in Runcorn and takes into account the potential of the former Norton Priory School (now demolished)
and its associated playing fields to accommodate new uses.

5 The overall aim is to help facilitate a prosperous and sustainable community.

6 The overall development of an Action Area will be guided by a development framework which:

   a Takes account of any restructuring of the area formulated by the Housing Associations in consultation with their tenants and stakeholders;

   b Takes account of any restructuring arising from the proposals of the Borough Council as LEA and as provider of leisure services;

   c Provides for a range of alternative housing, business, community or recreational uses for any sites or buildings that may become redundant;

   d Considers the relationship of the existing and new built development with the local landscape and amenities including the Town Park, Bridgewater Canal and the Norton Priory and Walled Garden;

   e Considers the fuller utilisation of these visitor attractions and the need for associated facilities (for example, visitor centre, accommodation for touring caravans, etc);

   f Sets the framework for improved access arrangements (for example, measures to increase the usability of the Busway system, improved road linkages with adjacent neighbourhoods and with Norton Priory Museum, etc).
CHAPTER 2
THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT
AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1 The policies within this Chapter look to achieving the aims and objectives contained in Part I of this Unitary Development Plan (UDP). The built environment aims relate to protecting the man-made heritage of the Borough by ensuring that development does not result in a net loss of environmental value. In addition to protecting the built environment, the UDP also aims to enhance the built environment through transforming areas where there is poor quality of design and where there is dereliction.

INTRODUCTION

PROMOTING A QUALITY BUILT ENVIRONMENT

1 The quality of the built environment is often a strong determining factor in people’s overall perceptions of an area. An unattractive built environment often serves to reinforce visitors’ attitudes about other things. A neglected, unattractive, or poor quality urban fabric is often associated, whether correct or not, with economic and social malaise.

URBAN DESIGN: INFLUENCING QUALITY OF DESIGN

4 Planning Policy Guidance Note 1 ‘General Policy and Principles’ (PPG 1, Feb 1997) recognises the importance of design considerations in the planning process. At Annex A, Handling of Design Issues, it advises that development plans should set out design policies against which development proposals are to be considered. These should be based on a proper assessment of the character of the surrounding built and natural environment, and should take account of the defining characteristics of each local area, for example local or regional building traditions and materials.

5 It also notes that plan policies “should avoid unnecessary prescription or detail and should concentrate on guiding the overall scale, density, massing, height, landscape and access of development in relation to neighbouring buildings and the local area more generally.”

6 Development which incorporates such design matters in a way which exploits positive features of the site, respects any positive characteristics of the surrounding environment, and which properly considers how the development fits into its context is likely to be of a high design quality compared to the usual off-the-peg design solution which is applied irrespective of context. The need to respect the local context is particularly important. Development proposals must...
respect the historical character and vernacular of an area if an attractive and harmonious townscape is to be created. The Council will expect all development proposals to be of a quality of design which at least maintains and where necessary improves the character and appearance of the local environment.

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE

7 To supplement the policies and explanatory material contained in this chapter, the Council has published a number of “Supplementary Planning Guidance Documents” (SPGs):

- House Extension Guidance (2001)
- Shop Fronts and Signs (1999)
- New Residential Developments (1999)
- Securing The Boundaries (1999)
- Children’s Day Nurseries (1999)

8 The Council also prepares planning briefs for major development sites within the Borough. They may also be prepared for smaller sensitive sites such as those in Conservation Areas, where this would help to raise the quality of development. The Briefs will be based upon the general requirements set down in the Policies in this and other Chapters of the UDP, and will assist developers in interpreting those policies in the particular circumstances of each site.

AREA-BASED IMPROVEMENT

9 A combination of badly designed development, poor quality construction, inappropriate land uses, the ageing of the building stock and neglect of the appearance of areas has left the physical environment in parts of the Borough in need of improvement. These problems are closely related to the blighting effect of past industry and present inappropriate industrial uses.

10 The UDP provides the opportunity to identify Environmental Priority Areas - those areas in the Borough most in need of environmental improvement. The main purpose of identifying such areas is to ensure that development is of a quality of design that raises environmental standards in these areas. This area-based approach is vital to improving the most environmentally degraded parts of the Borough and in achieving enhancement to both the built environment and the overall image of the Borough.

ENVIRONMENTAL PRIORITY AREAS

11 Within these areas the Council will expect that development proposals should contribute to the enhancement of the character and appearance of the area. The Environmental Priority Areas cover mainly industrial areas but also include some commercial and retail areas.

12 There are also a number of main transport corridors running through the Environmental Priority Areas where there is a concentration of adjacent land and buildings in a poor, unattractive and neglected condition.

- the A562 from Liverpool to the Silver Jubilee road bridge
- the Liverpool to London railway line from Ditton junction to Runcorn station.

13 Problems along these major transport corridors include vacant and scruffy land, poor or no landscaping, unsightly advertisement hoardings, derelict and neglected buildings and in some cases a general lack of boundary definition.

14 This leaves a strong negative impression for people travelling these routes. To help raise environmental quality the Plan will require that all development that front onto, or are visible from, these main routes are of a very high quality of design and appearance with appropriate screening and landscaping used where needed.

15 The East Widnes By-pass opened up a number of unattractive areas to view and the Council will continue to seek to achieve significant environmental improvements to areas adjacent to and visible from this new major transport route through the Borough.

16 Environmental Priority Areas will also provide a suitable focus for other or area-based improvement initiatives. This could involve:

- improvement schemes involving land,
buildings and landscaping using internal and external funding and grant-aid.

- Use of enforcement action to deal with problem developments and unauthorised land uses.

- Use of other statutory powers to ensure the removal of eyesores and dangerous structures

- Requiring owners of neglected land to properly maintain it by use of Section 215 Notices (under the 1990 Planning Act)

- Refusing advertisement consent for, or use Discontinuance Notices against hoardings, signs or other advertisements which by reason of their size or location detract from the amenity of main transport corridors.

**RELATION TO OTHER AREA BASED SCHEMES**

17 Environmental Priority Areas are primarily a planning-instrument for ensuring a quality of design for developments within their boundaries that significantly enhances the appearance of the area.

18 The boundaries of these areas do not necessarily match the boundaries of other area-based Council initiatives such as regeneration, derelict land and housing estate improvement programmes. These initiatives have a wider remit than the planning-based area initiatives contained in this section.

19 The UDP area initiatives will therefore not constrain or create inflexibility for the operation of wider area-based Council initiatives. However the possibility of gaining grant aid and funding for schemes within Environmental Priority areas may be increased by such designation.

**THE BUILT HERITAGE: ARCHAEOLOGY, LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS**

20 The built heritage of any area is of vital importance for a number of reasons - cultural and aesthetic, educational, environmental and economic. The various aspects of the built heritage reflect the area’s ancient and recent history, and provide many of the key elements that go to make up the area’s attraction and local distinctiveness.

21 National planning policy guidance is contained in PPG 15 (Planning and the Historic Environment) and PPG 16 (Archaeology and Planning), supplemented by a range of guidance notes produced by English Heritage and other government and statutory agencies.

22 Effective conservation of the built heritage requires specialist knowledge and advice. The Council, as a new Unitary Authority, has responded to the government’s request to prepare a management statement showing how such advice will be obtained.

23 Halton has a significant inventory of heritage assets:

- 7 Scheduled Ancient Monuments
- 141 sites in the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR)
- 152 Listed Buildings
- 10 Conservation Areas
24 The policies set out in this chapter are designed to safeguard this heritage, and work currently underway will help to ensure that the available information is kept up to date. The work includes Appraisals of the 10 Conservation Areas and work funded by English Heritage on Historic Towns in Cheshire (undertaken by Cheshire County Council and including work in Halton Borough).

ARCHAEOLOGY

25 Archaeological artefacts and remains are a finite and non-renewable resource and in many cases are highly fragile and vulnerable to damage. The Plan’s policies on Archaeology and their implementation through development control will be especially important in securing the future of archaeological remains.

26 Under the legislation the Secretary of State maintains a national Schedule of Ancient Monuments (SAMs) which have statutory protection against damaging works and development. Locally, this is supplemented by a Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) relating to sites and features which are of recognised significance. In the case of Halton Borough, the SMR is maintained by Cheshire County Council. The County also provides expert advice to the Council on development proposals affecting such sites.

27 Understanding of our archaeological heritage is constantly evolving: English Heritage’s Monuments Protection Programme is continuously reviewing and refining the Schedule of Ancient Monuments, while the scope and content of the County SMR changes as new sites are identified and new information comes to light about known ones. There is increasing recognition of the “added value” of networks of heritage features - where the setting, group value and association of a number of such features may form a historic landscape.

LISTED BUILDINGS

28 The 152 listed buildings in Halton represent only a very small proportion of the total building stock but are a vital part of the area’s character and history. They are attractive, add variety to the urban fabric and are an important cultural and historic link in Halton’s heritage.

29 Because of their importance, Government advice in PPG 15 (Planning and the Historic Environment) sets a strong presumption in favour of the preservation of listed buildings unless a strong case can be made otherwise. They should be protected from demolition, unsympathetic alterations and extensions, and unsuitable changes of use. Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent are needed in most cases for such works.

OTHER POWERS

30 The Council will also use powers at its disposal to ensure that buildings of architectural or historic importance are not demolished or do not fall into an unacceptable state of disrepair. This could include using Urgent Repairs Notice, Repairs Notices, Building Preservation Notices, and general enforcement powers where applicable.

31 The Council will also continue to support and
encourage the improvement and repair of listed buildings through raising awareness of sources of advice and funding available.

32 It is important that the buildings in the Borough are kept in a good standard of maintenance and any repairs are carried out using materials and techniques which do not have an unacceptable effect on the character and appearance of the Building. Sometimes repairs carried out on listed buildings will be more expensive. The Council will therefore encourage owners unable to afford to repair listed buildings to use available grant aid. Grant aid may be available from English Heritage. Some limited funding may also be available from the Council’s Conservation and Listed Buildings budget.

33 Advice on suitable materials and techniques to repairing a listed building can be obtained from English Heritage or from the Council.

CONSERVATION AREAS

34 Conservation Areas are areas of special architectural or historic interest designated by the Council. Within a Conservation Area there is a statutory duty to pay “special attention” to “the desirability of preserving or enhancing its character or appearance”. The Council also has a duty to consider from time to time to determine whether to designate new Conservation Areas and review existing ones.

35 There have been 10 Conservation Areas designated in Halton to date:

- Victoria Square, Widnes
- Hale Village
- Hale Road, Hale
- West Bank, Widnes
- Higher Runcorn
- Halton Village, Runcorn
- Weston Village Runcorn
- Moore Village
- Daresbury Village
- Hale Bank

36 Attention to preserving or enhancing the appearance of Conservation Areas can be achieved in two main ways:

- Controlling development
- Enhancement schemes

CONTROLLING DEVELOPMENT

37 Appropriate development in Conservation Areas is to be encouraged - such areas must not stagnate. However, very careful consideration needs to be given to the nature of the development and the quality of design. The Conservation Area policies outlined in this chapter set out the criterion to be considered when determining proposals to ensure that development preserves or enhances the quality of its environment.

38 The character of a Conservation Area could also be unacceptably affected by an unsuitable change of use of land or buildings e.g. through noise or traffic generation. This is an important consideration in determining applications.

39 Conservation Area policies BE 12 to BE 14 will apply to the 10 designated in Halton, as outlined above, plus any other ones designated within the period of the Plan. Applicants will also be referred to the detailed government guidance that exists regarding development in Conservation Areas.

40 The Council will also consider the use of Article 4 Directions to ensure that similar criteria can be applied to minor developments that would otherwise be classified as “permitted development” and not subject to normal planning control. Detailed appraisals of the Borough’s Conservation Areas have indicated that putting in place Article 4 Directions would be desirable to stem the progressive depreciation in the quality of the visual environment in most of the Conservation Areas through the use of inappropriate materials. In particular the use of UPVC windows and doors as a substitute for timber and the use of non-traditional materials such as stone cladding and concrete tiles.

ENHANCEMENT SCHEMES
41 The planning authority is statutorily obliged from time to time to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are Conservation Areas, under the Planning Acts.

42 PPG15 notes that once a Conservation Area has been designated then the local authority should adopt a positive scheme of enhancement at an early stage.

43 This statutory aspect to Conservation Area designation is often neglected and enhancement schemes have not always followed designation. Once enhancement schemes are completed there is the need for ongoing maintenance.

44 The Council will continue to identify and progress schemes of enhancement in its Conservation Areas throughout the plan period subject to availability of resources and will also encourage and assist others to do so.

45 This could involve improving buildings and the spaces between them, traffic calming measures, landscaping improvements and sympathetic street furniture such as paving, lighting and litter bins.

SHOP FRONTS, SIGNS AND CANOPIES

46 The appearance of shop fronts and their associated fascia designs can have an important influence on the attractiveness of the shopping environment and the overall appearance of town centres.

47 It is therefore important that proper consideration is given to their design and appearance when considering proposals for new or replacement shop fronts. The appearance of canopies and blinds can likewise add to or detract from the appearance of shopping areas according to their design and how they respect the local environment.

48 The appearance of shop fronts and associated fascia signs is particularly important within the Borough’s Conservation Areas where the Council will seek to protect the architectural and historic character of qualities of these areas.

49 Policy BE 16 seeks to ensure that proposals for shop fronts, shop signs and canopies and blinds respect the character of the buildings and areas in which they are set and contribute to overall environmental improvement where necessary.

50 Signs on shop fronts may also need advertisement consent and will have to satisfy advertisement policy BE17 where relevant.

ADVERTISEMENT CONTROL

51 Advertisements are a common sight in today’s towns. Many businesses rely on advertisements to sell their goods and services and therefore they may be important for the success of an enterprise.

52 However, advertisements are by their very nature meant to catch the eye. It is therefore important to strike the right balance between the need to promote commerce and the need to protect the character and appearance of the surrounding environment and ensure public safety.
ACCESS FOR ALL

53 Good planning and design of development should help create a more accessible environment for all people. Good access should be provided into, between, and around all buildings whether they be places of work, shops, public buildings, community facilities or other places to which the public have access whether as workers, visitors or customers.

54 The provision of facilities, access and parking particularly for people with restricted mobility, should be designed into a development at an early stage. Design ‘added on’ at the last minute is rarely as effective and can be much more costly.

55 Ensuring adequate access for people with disabilities in developments is a responsibility under two main professional areas within the Council:

- building control
- planning

The respective roles and responsibilities are summarised below.

ROLE OF BUILDING CONTROL:

56 Building Control controls access within new buildings, covering issues such as internal layout and circulation and the location and detailed design of such things as ramps, stairs, doors and sanitary conveniences. The Local Planning Authority has no control over these issues.

ROLE OF PLANNING:

57 Ensuring that people have adequate access to new buildings is a material consideration and must be taken into account in determining planning applications.

58 Planning can seek to ensure that consideration is given to the provision of adequate access for disabled people in the preparation of site layouts and in the relationship between buildings and their car parking areas and other public access points. Planning can also seek to ensure suitably designed and located disabled parking provision and adequate sign-posting.

NEED FOR JOINT WORKING:

59 There is a degree of overlap in the responsibilities; of building control and planning staff in ensuring reasonable provision for disabled access. It is therefore important that a co-ordinated approach is taken.

60 The Council will therefore encourage developers to contact planning and building control staff at an early stage to agree acceptable provision.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

61 The Government’s planning policy on telecommunications is set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 8 (Telecommunications) as revised. It notes that modern telecommunications are an essential and beneficial element in the life of the local community and the national economy and that modern, reliable communications can attract business to an area, help firms remain competitive and benefit the environment through reducing the need to travel. For these reasons the Government wishes to facilitate the growth of new and existing systems.

62 PPG8 also notes that the Government is firmly committed to environmental objectives including well established national policies for the protection of the countryside and urban areas. It notes that planning authorities should consider the wider environmental impact of telecommunications development and take account of the advice on the protection of urban and rural areas in other planning policy guidance notes with particular mention given to SSSI’s, the Green Belt and areas or buildings of architectural or historic importance.

63 Policy BE 21 reflect this dual commitment to encouraging the growth of telecommunications whilst seeking to protect the environmental quality and amenity of the Borough’s urban and rural areas.
PART 2
POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

PROMOTING A QUALITY BUILT ENVIRONMENT

BE 1 GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR DEVELOPMENT

1 Development will be permitted provided that the following criteria are satisfied, where appropriate:

2 ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
   a It must be of a high quality of design that respects or where necessary creates local distinctiveness.
   b It must contain proposals for a carefully designed landscape scheme that reflects the essential character of the area and the use of the new buildings.
   c It must avoid unacceptable loss of amenity to occupiers or users of adjacent land or buildings, by virtue of, noise disturbance, noxious fumes, and dust or traffic generation. Adjacent residential uses should not suffer unacceptable loss of amenity through overlooking, overshadowing or overbearing appearance.
   d It must be compatible with existing and proposed surrounding uses.
   e It must be designed in such a way that minimises the fear and risk of crime.
   f It must not cause unacceptable levels of pollution or nuisance.

3 ACCESSIBILITY
   a Proposals for the design and layout of roads, footpaths, accesses and servicing areas must comply with the Council’s standards.
   b It must make adequate provision for, and be easily accessible by, pedestrians (including those with restricted mobility), cyclists, public transport and should have easy access to the existing rail network wherever possible in compliance with the Council’s standards.
   c It must not overload the capacity of the surrounding highway network nor be detrimental to highway safety.
   d New buildings where the public will have access must have adequate provision for people with disabilities or restricted mobility, particularly in terms of signage, access, facilities and car parking.
   e It must not prejudice access onto the identified Greenway Network, and where appropriate, should improve or enhance greenway linkages.

4 CONSERVATION OF THE NATURAL AND HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT
   a It must ensure the retention, conservation, enhancement and integration of sites and features of particular historic, archaeological, landscape, ecological or amenity value.
   b It must ensure the retention, conservation, enhancement and integration of features within and adjoining the site if they have intrinsic value or make a valuable contribution to the character or amenity of the site or surrounding area.
   c It must not result in the unacceptable loss of designated greenspace or other important amenity open space.
   d It must not use the best and most versatile agricultural land grades 1, 2, and 3a, and if any agricultural land is used the impact on agricultural viability and
productivity should be minimised.

5 INFRASTRUCTURE

a It must include adequate provision for any necessary improvements to utilities and services resulting from the development. It must not result in unacceptable public expenditure to secure necessary improvements in infrastructure.

b It must meet the Council’s on site drainage requirements and where there are off-site drainage problems this must be dealt with to the Council’s satisfaction.

6 MANAGEMENT OF RESOURCES

a It must not prejudice the planned development of a larger site or area for which comprehensive proposals have been approved or are in preparation.

b It must take into account the need for energy efficiency by means of building orientation, site layout and by use of passive and active energy saving designs.

c It must maximise the use of recycled materials within the development.

d It must minimise the amount of waste produced during construction and subsequent operation of the development.

e It must ensure that adequate on-site provision is made for waste storage and collection, in a suitably enclosed and screened area.

f It must promote means to reduce the demand for water, by making the best use of current resource.

g It must take into account the need and potential for sustainable drainage techniques.

7 JUSTIFICATION

This policy acts as a checklist of the main criteria to be taken into account when determining the acceptability of development proposals.

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

8 The enhancement of the built environment is a primary aim of the Plan. This in turn has an influence on other objectives of the Plan such as promoting economic prosperity and urban regeneration. Ensuring that development is of a high standard of design is a means of achieving these objectives.

9 Promoting local distinctiveness is a further objective of the Plan, which is given support in PPG 1, paragraph 18. Local distinctiveness can be described as “the sum of points of connection between the place and the person” or about “the unique quality of places and their particular cultures”. To respect local distinctiveness, the design of new development proposals need to acknowledge the unique character and appearance of a place or locality. Generating local distinctiveness in areas where it is considered appropriate may be achieved through original and innovative design that would add stronger identity to those areas.

10 The Council will seek particularly high standards of design from development located in an Environmental Priority Area (See policy BE 3) or other high profile or sensitive locations.

11 In determining whether a development proposal is of a high quality design that maintains or enhances the character and appearance of the surrounding area the Council will have regard to the urban design principles set out in policy BE 2 Quality of Design.

12 The quality of the built environment can be greatly enhanced by considered site planning and the integrated use of hard and soft landscape treatments. Landscape design needs to be fully considered at an early stage in the design process in relation to the arrangement of space together with the use, access, and safety and circulation factors as well as the overall location of the development. It will
generally be required that landscape schemes are submitted to the Council with a reserved matters application.

13 A generic landscape scheme (as part of any proposed development) should include the following information, in the form of text and drawings at an appropriate scale:

- **Landscape Survey:** an accurate record of all existing landscape features on the site, including (as appropriate): landform; hard landscape features; trees, shrubs, hedges and other vegetation; other habitats which are of importance to wildlife; water bodies and water courses; important views into and out of the site; and physical and visual links with adjoining landscapes.

- **Protection of landscape features to be retained:** details of how such landscape features will be protected during construction.

- **Design details:** explaining the design philosophy and concepts, and showing the layout of the landscape proposals, and how they relate to the proposed development and the adjoining landscape.

- **Hard Landscape Proposals:** details of boundary structures, hard surfacing, drainage, lighting, play equipment, site furniture etc, including information on height and materials, and an outline specification for installation.

- **Soft Landscape Proposals:** details of planting, seed mixes etc, including sizes, planting densities, and an outline specification for ground preparation, planting, seeding, aftercare, etc.

14 The Council is committed to improving the quality of life of its residents and workers and as such development needs to respect adjoining users, particularly residents. Development needs to be appropriately sited so that unacceptable nuisance or loss of amenity to adjoining users is avoided.

15 The design and layout of development can directly reduce opportunities for crime such as theft, assault and burglary, as well as reducing the fear of crime. Development can be designed and laid out to provide for the surveillance of open spaces, houses can be set out so that the main living areas look out over the access and adequate lighting can provide for surveillance at night. The relationship between buildings, and between buildings and spaces, can influence the sense of community felt by inhabitants that in turn can increase the degree of neighbourly concern for adjoining residents and property. Designing against crime aims to reassure the public by making crime more difficult to commit, increasing the risk of detection and providing people with a safer and more secure environment. Advice on the issue is given in Circular 5/94 Planning Out Crime. The local Police Architectural Liaison Officer may be consulted in relation to proposed developments.

ACCESSIBILITY

16 Concentration of development close to existing urban centres provides the best opportunity to reduce the need to travel, encourage increasing use of public transport, cycling and walking and mitigate the wider environmental damage brought about by dependence on the private car. Development should be sited where it can contribute to minimising travel demand and where the potential for walking and cycling is optimised or where public transport systems can serve it effectively. Providing accessibility for all people means planning for people with disabilities and restricted mobility.

17 The Council is committed to the development of a network of largely car free off road routes in the Borough, that will connect people with facilities and greenspaces within the urban area and to the countryside. Development will not be permitted if it would prejudice this objective. However appropriate development will be required to consider measures to improve the Greenway Network.

CONSERVATION OF THE NATURAL AND HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

18 Conservation of the Borough’s wildlife, landscape, productive farmland, historic and archaeological features, trees, woodlands, hedgerows and open spaces is an essential element of sustainability and serves to maintain the quality of life for the Borough’s residents and employees.
In the natural and built environments, there are some irreplaceable assets that can not be recreated or relocated. These include habitats such as ancient woodlands, important trees and hedgerows, significant historic buildings and monuments. The Council aims to protect all such critical assets from inappropriate development that could irreparably harm their location or setting. In addition there are many features that do not have protected status that nevertheless make a valuable contribution to the character of a site or locality that should be retained and conserved in the interests of fostering local distinctiveness. For instance only a small proportion of significant trees are currently protected by Tree Preservation Orders, Conservation Areas or felling licence requirements. Most trees are not protected but this does not necessarily mean that they are of lesser value to the environment, only that their status has not been formally recognised to date. Whatever the feature it is important to ensure that it is properly integrated into the development to prevent it becoming an isolated or dysfunctional element of the development.

To identify critical assets in and adjoining the site and to include features that have intrinsic value or make a valuable contribution to the character of the site and its surroundings, the Council will encourage applicants to undertake proper site planning and land survey work prior to the formulation of a development layout. For instance an arboricultural survey undertaken at an early stage in the design process, in accordance with British Standard 5837;1991 will identify trees that are essential or desirable to retain, as individuals or groups. This type of survey information should influence the proposed layout of the development and the methods of protection needed to be to enable the trees to be retained in a good condition.

The Unitary Development Plan (UDP) seeks to ensure adequate provision of greenspaces in the Borough in terms of quantity, quality and distribution. There is a presumption against the loss of greenspace in recognition of the important role it plays in the improving the quality of life of residents. There are, however, limited circumstances where loss of greenspace will be permitted and this is set out in policy GE 6.

The Plan also seeks to protect the most productive farmland which if built upon will be lost forever. Quality agricultural land is a scare resource and needs to be protected for future generations.

INFRASTRUCTURE

New development can generate additional demand for utilities and services. To ensure that development is properly integrated into the existing infrastructure provision, the Council’s requirements for services should be met and an appropriate contribution to the cost of such services will be sought from the development.

Discussions with United Utilities and the Environment Agency will be necessary to ensure water infrastructure is or will be in place to serve development proposals. Where improvements are planned or need to be made development will be phased accordingly. This will be to ensure proposals have been assessed regarding their suitability in terms of being served by an adequate means of water supply and foul drainage systems are not overloaded or contribute to or cause further amenity or water pollution problems.

MANAGEMENT OF RESOURCES

Efficient management of the environment and resources is a fundamental aspect of sustainability. Land is a scare resource requiring appropriate management of its use. As such, development proposals that conflict with plans or proposals for a comprehensive approach to land use planning of an area or a large site will be refused.

The commitment to controlling climate change through the reduction in global and UK greenhouse gas emissions, to below existing levels, is likely to require the following:

- Significant changes in energy production;
- The cutting of road traffic emission through fuel efficiency and reducing the need to travel by car;
- Improvements in energy efficiency of industrial processes, homes, & offices.

As such development must demonstrate how
energy efficiency has been considered in the overall design.

28 All development proposals will generate waste, both in the development process and when in subsequent use. As part of encouraging sustainable waste management, the Council will wish to ensure that all development proposals illustrate how this has been addressed. This can be done by maximising the use of recycled materials in the development, and by designing developments so that the amount of waste generated by the development itself is minimised. Once completed and operational, the Council will wish to see developments which operate effectively in terms of on-site waste management, ensuring that waste arisings are securely and tidily housed within the site prior to collection. This can have wider benefits in terms of reducing litter generation, and can also reduce the incidence of crime and vandalism.

MATTERS INFLUENCING OVERALL DESIGN

BE2 QUALITY OF DESIGN

1 The quality of design of a development proposal will be assessed by considering it against the following matters that influence overall design:

- Local distinctiveness & character;
- Energy conservation.

2 In considering a development proposal against the above matters particular regard will be had to the following guiding principles. Development should be designed to:

a Respect and utilise any positive characteristics of the site.

b Respect and relate well to existing adjacent buildings and features of townscape value.

c Optimise the relationship and integration of buildings, and the surrounding hard and soft landscape.

d Respect the nature and character of the surrounding area including its established arrangement and alignment of streets, building frontages, any architectural or historical characteristics, other structures and landscape features and their interrelationship.

e Create visual interest, particularly at street level, by attention to detailing such as decoration, pattern, use of colour and materials, lighting and landscaping.

f Provide an attractive built frontage with quality facing materials if it is easily visible from a road, footpath, open space, canal or railway.

g Maintain and protect views which are important to the character and visual amenities of the area.

h Be of a height, massing, density and layout that respects human scale.

3 Development should also take the following factors into account:

a Original and innovative architecture will be encouraged provided that it respects the character and appearance of its setting.
b Developments which create a landmark or focal point will be acceptable where they will create an attractive ‘reference point’ or help to create identity in an area lacking character or attractiveness.

c Where the existing area has little character or clear form then development should be designed to give a stronger identity to that area; developments of more than one building should have a co-ordinated overall design with consideration given to proper provision of access into and between the various elements of the scheme.

d The provision of public art and the integration of art and craftwork into the design of the development scheme.

External Appearance and Style

4 Planning permission will not be granted for development that would have an unacceptable effect on the character of the surrounding area because of its external appearance and style.

JUSTIFICATION

5 This policy aims to ensure that development proposals properly consider the important issues of design which influence design quality. A development of high design quality should be both functionally efficient and visually attractive. These requirements are closely interrelated.

6 Applicants are encouraged to liaise with the planning authority prior to the submission of a planning application to discuss design matters at an early stage before schemes are firmed up. An important aim of the Council is to assist the applicant in progressing development proposals in a successful manner.

7 PPG 1 Annex A paragraph A4 emphasises the importance of applicants being able to show how their development proposals have taken account of the need for good design. As such all development proposals other than straight forward or small scale proposals not involving sensitive sites will be required to submit a design statement along with illustrative drawings showing the plan and elevation details, photographs of the site and its surroundings and perspective views of the scheme. The design statement should refer to all the matters listed in point one of the policy.

8 If it is proposed to change existing site levels then information on the volume and type of materials to be brought onto or removed from the site will also be required.

9 Incorporating public art into a development can not only raise the overall design quality of development, it can also raise its profile, by creating a focal point of interest. It can also raise the overall quality of the local environment, by making it more attractive and interesting. The Council will actively encourage developers to spend a percentage of the total development costs or a fixed amount of money on providing art and craftwork and on seeking the influence of artists and crafts skills alongside architects and building professionals, to ensure integration of art and craftwork features as an essential part of the design. The Council is currently producing a Public Art Strategy that will provide additional guidance and advice for developers.

ENHANCING THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT

BE3 ENVIRONMENTAL PRIORITY AREAS

1 Within the Environmental Priority Areas the Council will pay particular regard to significantly raising environmental standards:

a Proposals for development will be expected to be of a quality of design that enhances the character and appearance of that area.

b Development adjacent to or visible from the main road and rail transport routes should be of a high quality of design in terms of landscaping, boundary treatments and facing materials.
JUSTIFICATION

2 Unless a strong policy line is taken in environmentally degraded parts of the borough then they will stand little chance of improvement. Enhancing the main transport corridors is seen to be particularly vital to improving the image of Halton because many people travel along these routes if visiting or passing through the borough.

3 Within the Environmental Priority Areas identified on the Proposals Map the Council will judge the level of enhancement required from development by looking at its location, the nature of the site, its visual prominence and the nature of any existing uses.

4 Regard will also be paid to the desirability of not burdening commerce and industry with excessive additional costs, which may impair their ability or willingness to make employment-generating investment in the borough.

5 The Council recognises that there may be difficulties in achieving significant enhancement from some forms of development on major operational sites within the heavy industrial areas. In the limited circumstances where the Council considers this applies it will require as a minimum that development proposals should be of an overall quality of design that makes some contribution to the enhancement of the character and appearance of that area.

THE BUILT HERITAGE: ARCHAEOLOGY, LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS

BE4 SCHEDULED ANCIENT MONUMENTS

1 Development proposals that are likely to have an unacceptable affect on Scheduled Ancient Monuments and other nationally important archaeological sites and monuments or their settings will not be permitted.
JUSTIFICATION

2. The Secretary of State compiles and maintains the Schedule of Ancient Monuments; the monuments on the Schedule are of national importance and have statutory protection. It should be noted that not all nationally important remains meriting preservation will necessarily be scheduled.

3. Scheduled Ancient Monuments in Halton are listed as follows:
   - Duck decoy pond 200m SE of Marsh Bridge, Hale
   - Halton Castle: a ruined keep castle on the site of an earlier motte and bailey
   - Augustinian Abbey known as Norton Priory, Halton
   - Standing cross in St Luke’s churchyard, Farnworth, beside the south porch, Halton
   - Lovel’s Hall moated site and fishpond, Widnes
   - New Manor Farm moated site, Preston Brook
   - Cranshaw Hall moated site, Widnes

4. Scheduled Ancient Monuments and other archaeological remains contain irreplaceable information about our past. They are a part of the national and local heritage and culture. They are valuable for their own sake and for their role in education, leisure and tourism. In sustainability terms they are to be regarded as inviolable or critical assets.

JUSTIFICATION

BE5 OTHER SITES OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE

1. Development proposals that are likely to have an unacceptable affect on other known sites and monuments of archaeological significance will not be permitted. Permission may be granted if it can be demonstrated that measures of mitigation (such as preservation by design or record) and compensation (such as advances in knowledge or public understanding) can be employed to ensure there is no net loss of heritage or archaeological value.

JUSTIFICATION

BE6 ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATIONS

1. Where development proposals affect sites of known or suspected archaeological importance the Council may require the applicant to submit an archaeological evaluation prior to the determination of the planning application. This information will be used to assess the archaeological impact of development proposals.

JUSTIFICATION

2. The prime archaeological objective is the preservation in situ of important remains. This can often be achieved by such methods as design modification and by landscaping in sensitive areas. It is therefore important to obtain a detailed picture of the archaeology of the area of interest, in order that constraints to development can be identified and that, where appropriate, measures of mitigation and compensation can be developed.
DEMOLOITION OF LISTED BUILDINGS

1 Consent for demolition of listed buildings will not be granted other than in the most exceptional circumstances and only when the Planning Authority is satisfied that every possible effort has been made to continue the present use or find a suitable alternative use and such efforts have failed or substantial community benefit would ensue that decisively outweighed the loss of the building.

2 Consent for demolition of a listed building will be conditional on it not being demolished until:

   a A suitable programme of recording features, which are scheduled to be destroyed, is undertaken where appropriate;

   and

   b Detailed planning permission for the redevelopment of the site has been obtained and there is firm evidence that a contract has been let for the redevelopment;

   or

   c A landscaping and improvement scheme is submitted to the satisfaction of the planning authority, plus an agreement to maintain it, if the site is being kept in open space use;

   and

   d A demolition notice under section 81 of The Building Act 1984 has been served.

JUSTIFICATION

3 Listed Buildings are of recognised architectural or historic interest and their loss through demolition would generally be detrimental to the character and appearance of the surrounding area and to the overall heritage of the borough. Demolition will therefore only be permitted in the most exceptional circumstances and only if this is the last feasible option.

4 Sometimes the site of a demolished building would be better kept in open space use, whether public or private, for townscape reasons. This situation is permitted for subject to a suitable scheme being agreed with the planning authority.

CHANGES OF USE OF LISTED BUILDINGS

1 There will be a general presumption in favour of retaining listed buildings for the use for which they were originally designed and intended for.

2 The Council will give favourable consideration to proposals for alternative uses for listed buildings only in the following circumstances:

   a If continuation of the original use is not a practical proposition and a new use is necessary to ensure the long term survival of the building;

   or

   b If the listed building is no longer in its original use and the proposed change of use would be more in keeping with protecting or reinstating the original architectural and historic character of the building.

3 If a proposal meets the circumstances outlined above then a change of use will be permitted unless:

   a It would have a detrimental effect on the appearance or the architectural and historic character of the building;

   or

   b It would detract from the character and setting of the surrounding area by way of noise, traffic generation or other relevant planning considerations.
JUSTIFICATION

4 The best way of preserving the character and appearance of buildings of architectural or historic importance would normally be to keep them in their original use.

5 Some listed buildings are no longer required for their original use and there is a danger that they could lie empty and fall into disrepair, causing an eyesore and increasing pressure for them to be demolished.

6 Therefore the Planning Authority needs to be flexible in considering new uses for such buildings if a new use holds the key to a building’s preservation.

7 For such a change of use to be acceptable it should maintain the integrity of the building in terms of its appearance and character. This would involve retaining such things as the original interior layout and important architectural features.

BE9 ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS TO LISTED BUILDINGS

1 In the determination of an application for planning permission or listed building consent to alter, internally or externally, or to extend, a listed building or a structure within its curtilage, the predominant consideration will be the preservation of the special architectural or historic features and character of the building or structure. Consent will not be granted unless it is shown that the proposed works will best serve that end.

2 Proposals to alter or extend a listed building should comply with all of the following criteria:

a Extensions must respect the character and scale of the original building and not be allowed to dominate.

b The replacement of doors, windows and other features in non-traditional materials will not be permitted.

c Attention should be paid to the retention of the original plan form, roof construction and interior features of merit, as well as the exterior of listed buildings.

d Extensions must as far as possible be built of materials matching those of the original building.

JUSTIFICATION

3 All alterations and additions should not unacceptably affect the essential character of the building, should be in keeping with its architectural style and features and should harmonise with its surroundings.

4 In particular such development will have to be of a high standard of design and external appearance and materials will be expected to match, as near as possible, those of the existing buildings in kind and in detail.

5 In assessing proposals involving the alterations of a listed building the Council will refer to the advice contained in Annex C of PPG 15.

BE10 PROTECTING THE SETTING OF LISTED BUILDINGS

1 Development which would affect the setting of a listed building should aim to preserve both the character of that setting and its historic relationship to the listed building. This will include, where appropriate, the preservation of trees and other landscape features.

JUSTIFICATION

2 PPG 15 recognises that the setting of a building of special architectural or historic interest is often an essential feature of its character. The setting could be its garden, grounds, open space or the general streetscene.

3 It is therefore essential to consider the impact of development and other proposals within the vicinity of listed buildings. Close control over the “quality of design” of development in close proximity to a listed building will the essential to protect its setting. Conditions may need to be imposed on such development to achieve the quality required.
1 Proposals for enabling development will only be permitted if all the following criteria are met:

a. The enabling development will not materially detract from the archaeological, architectural, historic or landscape interest of the asset, or materially harm its setting.

b. The proposal will not result in the management of the heritage asset being broken up in a manner which would be detrimental to its proper management.

c. The enabling development will secure the long term future of the heritage asset and, where applicable, its continued use for a sympathetic purpose.

d. The need for the enabling development arises from the inherent needs of the heritage asset, rather than the circumstances of the present owner or the purchase price paid.

e. Financial assistance is not available from any other source.

f. It is demonstrated that the amount of enabling development is the minimum necessary to secure the future of the heritage asset and that its form minimises disbenefits.

g. The value of the survival or enhancement of the heritage asset outweighs the long term cost to the community (i.e. the disbenefits) of providing the enabling development.

JUSTIFICATION

2. Many proposals affect heritage assets. Most enhance, or are not materially damaging to, the building or its setting. Creative adaptation and development is often vital to securing the future of listed buildings. On occasion, however, “enabling development” is proposed which, whilst achieving benefit to the listed building, particularly one “at risk”, is contrary to other objectives of national, regional, or local planning policy. Such proposals are put forward on the basis that the benefit to the community of conserving the building would outweigh the harm to other material interests. Enabling development is an established and useful planning tool by which a community may be able to secure the future of a heritage asset provided it is satisfied that the balance of public advantage lies in permitting the enabling development.

3. The Council will only accept a full planning application to ensure that the impact of the proposal is precisely defined at the outset. Furthermore, the use of conditions and planning obligations will be used to enforceably link the restorative programme to the enabling development.

BE12 GENERAL DEVELOPMENT CRITERIA - CONSERVATION AREAS

1. Development affecting a Conservation Area will only be permitted if it will preserve or enhance the special architectural or historical character and appearance of that area.

2. Regard will be made to the following criteria in determining applications for development, including new build, alterations, extensions and changes of use, as appropriate:

a. It should be of a high standard of design which respects the appearance and character of the Conservation Area in terms of its bulk, height, mass, vertical and horizontal emphasis, proportions, materials, colour, layout, siting, landscaping and other matters of detailed design such as rooftops and architectural style and detailing.

b. It should harmonise with adjoining buildings, enhance the streetscene and should not detract from
important existing spaces and views.

c Building materials used should be appropriate to the locality and context and sympathetic to those of existing and nearby buildings in terms of type, texture, colour and size.

d Walls, gates and fences should be of a type traditionally used in the locality.

e It must have a satisfactory means of access, not generate excessive traffic and should provide for adequate car parking in a way which is sympathetic to the Conservation Area.

f It should retain important landscape and ecological features, and where possible include measures to enhance these features.

g It should retain important architectural and historical features such as traditional street furniture and paving and should include measures to enhance them where possible.

h It should avoid the loss of open areas, gaps in frontages, and natural and built features (such as trees, hedges, fences, walls and paving materials) if they are important to the character of the Conservation Area.

i It should not spoil or destroy attractive views and vistas into, within and out of the Conservation Area if they are important to the character of the area.

JUSTIFICATION

3 This is to ensure that development preserves or where necessary enhances the special character and appearance of Conservation Areas.
Areas in accordance with Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (Planning and the Historic Environment).

**BE13 DEMOLITION IN CONSERVATION AREAS**

1 Demolition of buildings or structures will only be permitted if they do not contribute to the character or appearance of a Conservation Area.

2 Consent for demolition of a building or structure within a Conservation Area will only be granted if one or more of the following circumstances apply:
   a) It is proved to be wholly beyond economic repair.
   b) It is incapable of reasonable beneficial use.
   c) It is not of intrinsic architectural, historic or townscape importance and its removal or replacement would enhance the appearance or character of the area;
   d) Its removal would allow the redevelopment or rehabilitation of an adjacent larger site which is underused, neglected or derelict if this would enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

3 Consent for demolition of a building will be conditional on it not being demolished until either:
   a) Detailed planning permission for the redevelopment of the site has been obtained and there is firm evidence that a contract has been let for the redevelopment;
      or
   b) A landscaping and improvement scheme is submitted to the satisfaction of the planning authority, plus an agreement to maintain it, if the site is being kept in open space use.

4 A demolition notice under section 81 of The Building Act 1984 has been served.

**JUSTIFICATION**

4 Consent from the Council is needed for most types of demolition in a Conservation Area. If the building is still economically viable or important to the area's character then demolition will be resisted.

5 If the Council approves the demolition of a building in a Conservation Area it will ensure that unsightly gaps and dereliction are not created by requiring that either development of a high quality will replace it or the site is improved to create an attractive open space of townscape value.

**BE14 OUTLINE APPLICATIONS - CONSERVATION AREAS**

1 Outline applications for development within Conservation Areas will only be considered if illustrative plans and elevations are submitted showing important details of the proposed development.

2 These details should include the siting, design, external appearance, means of access, landscaping, materials to be used and the overall scale of the development. These details should also show how the proposed development fits into the context of its surroundings.

**JUSTIFICATION**

3 Outline applications do not generally provide enough information to determine whether a development will protect and enhance the special historical and architectural character and appearance of a Conservation Area. Additional information will therefore be required as needed and applicants are strongly advised to submit full planning applications.

4 Applicants should enquire as to the Council's requirements in respect of each development proposal in a Conservation Area before submitting a formal planning application.
BE 15 LOCAL LIST OF BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES OF ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORIC INTEREST

1 Development proposals that affect the character of a building or structure included within Halton Borough Council’s Local List of Buildings and Structures of Local Architectural or Historical Interest, will be permitted provided that the character of the building or structure is maintained.

JUSTIFICATION

2 Many buildings and structures which do not qualify for listed status are valued as good examples of local architectural styles or for their local historical significance, and thereby contribute to the character of the locality. Such buildings will be included within a Local List of Buildings and Structures of Local Architectural or Historical Interest produced by the Council as a Supplementary Planning Document. This will be a material consideration in dealing with planning applications that directly affect the character of buildings on the list.

SHOP FRONTS, SIGNS AND CANOPIES

BE 16 ALTERATIONS TO AND NEW SHOP FRONTS

Design

1 Proposals for new and altered shop fronts will be permitted provided that all of the following criteria are complied with:

   a Be appropriate to the building in which they are set in terms of proportions, detailing and materials.
   b Respect the context of the street or space in which they are set.
   c Accommodate the shop signage in a way that contributes to the overall design.

Security

2 Proposals for shop front security measures will be permitted provided that they are accommodated in an unobtrusive manner and do not include any of the following:

   a The blanking out of windows.
   b Projecting shutter boxes.
   c Unperforated roller shutters.
   d Galvanised finishes.

Access For Those With Special Needs

3 Proposals for new and altered shop fronts should make reasonable access provision for all people. Particularly those with disabilities and restricted mobility.

JUSTIFICATION

4 Given that the built environment in Halton is undergoing and in need of further improvement, it is considered important to ensure that, with regard to shop fronts, existing features of quality are retained and that developments do not worsen the situation. Particular attention will be given to ensuring that architectural features are retained and that advertisements are in scale with the buildings, are not unduly dominant, do not conflict with architectural features and are positioned so as to be seen as integral features.

5 Whilst the Council acknowledge that the need for security is often paramount to the retailer, the creation of “dead” frontages in town centres and suburban areas can create a desolate and even threatening environment. The Council will therefore seek a balance between the security needs of the industry and the need to protect amenity. With regard to roller shutters, the steel link-mesh see-through style is preferred. Solid shutters may be acceptable if properly integrated and provided with a suitable decorative finish.

6 For those groups in society with special needs access to shopping facilities is an essential aspect of daily life. The Council will therefore require designs to incorporate appropriate
measures, such as ramps, automatic doors, handrails, etc. to facilitate access.

7 It is acknowledged that, in certain circumstances, such as small shop units, the provision of ramps will simply not be practicable. However, in most cases it should be possible to widen doorways and lower stall risers. Where automatic teller machines are being provided, at least one should be placed at the appropriate height for wheelchair users. Special care will need to be exercised in accommodating improved access to shops if it is a Listed Building or within a Conservation Area.

8 Further guidance on shop fronts in Halton is contained in Supplementary Planning Guidance Shop Fronts and Signs.

ADVERTISEMENT CONTROL

BE17 ADVERTISING & ADVERTISEMENTS

1 In considering any application for Advertisement Consent or enforcing the discontinuance of a display after the specified period, if considered reasonable, all of the following criteria will be considered:

Amenity

a Advertisements should be compatible with the character of their surroundings, including the scale and detailing of any building against which they are seen, by reason of their size, siting, height above ground level, materials, colour and design.

b Free-standing displays should be integrated with their surroundings by appropriate design and landscaping.

c Advertisements on buildings should appear as an integral and not a dominant feature of the building.

d Advertisements should not conflict with the character, appearance, architecture, setting or historical merits of Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings.

e The advertisement should not lead to intrusive visual clutter.

f The advertisement should not prejudice the amenity of the occupiers of nearby dwellings or other buildings, either by reason of inappropriate design or means of illumination.

g In the right locations, (and in particular in relation to free-standing poster displays) whether advertisements can offer the opportunity to secure vitality and environmental benefits, by screening eyesores and redevelopment sites or providing a solution to the use of marginal land left by road works, albeit on a temporary basis where appropriate.

Safety

h The effect of the advertisement upon highway safety, the safe use and operation of any form of traffic or transport, including the safety of pedestrians.

i An advertisement should not impede the visibility of road users in the vicinity of junctions, accesses, bus stops and crossing points.

JUSTIFICATION

2 The Council recognises that advertising has a useful role to play in the commercial life of the Borough and the appearance of the built environment.

3 On the other hand, excessive advertising material can create the wrong impression, in terms of inward investment and the detrimental effects on local amenity. For such reasons, it is intended to actually use discontinuance powers wherever appropriate.

4 Government Policy on advertisement control is contained in PPG 19, which recognises that the only factors to be taken into account in determining the acceptability of an
advertisement, are the interests of amenity and public safety. The policy is structured to reflect these two considerations.

5 The DTLR 'Modernising Planning' Consultation Papers - Outdoor Advertisement Control has been considered.

6 In some circumstances hoardings can make a useful contribution to improving the environment, for example by tidying vacant land in the short term with appropriate complementary landscaping. Poster displays will normally be unacceptable in open countryside and residential areas.

7 Free-standing signs can also in circumstances, be incorporated into other 'decorative' or 'Art' features, and contribute to wider environmental incentives.

8 Further guidance on advertisement control in Halton is contained in Supplementary Planning Guidance Shop Fronts and Signs.

**ACCESS FOR ALL**

**BE18 ACCESS TO NEW BUILDINGS USED BY THE PUBLIC**

1 Proposals for new buildings to which the public are likely to have access will be permitted provided that it complies with all of the following criteria:

a Provision of a suitable means of access to the building, particularly for people with disabilities or restricted mobility, which is well sign-posted and easily accessed from adjoining streets, pedestrian routes and car parks.

b Provision of car parking for disabled people and those with restricted mobility, where appropriate, which are conveniently located for ease of access to the building.

c Provision of dropped kerbs and access ramps to facilitate ease of access around the building especially to parking provided to a mobility standard and any main open spaces and recreational areas.

d Access into and around the outside of buildings should be designed to minimise difficulties for partially-sighted and blind people.

2 Where a development proposal involves more than one building a suitable route between the buildings for people with disabilities and restricted mobility will be required.

**JUSTIFICATION**

3 The Council is committed to ensuring better access within the built environment for all sectors of the community, particularly people with disabilities. Ensuring adequate access to new buildings is an important means of achieving this.

4 The Council is statutorily obliged to inform developers of their duty to have regard to BS 5810 “Code of Practice for Access for the Disabled to Buildings” which sets down the minimum requirements needed to satisfy the provisions of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970.

5 Proper planning and provision for people with disabilities will also help other people who may have restricted mobility such as people with prams and pushchairs and will therefore help to improve access for all.

6 Refer to Appendix 1 for Parking Standards.

**BE19 DISABLED ACCESS FOR CHANGES OF USE, ALTERATIONS AND EXTENSIONS**

1 The alteration, change of use or extension of existing buildings to which the public are likely to have access, will only be permitted if suitable access is provided for disabled people and those with restricted mobility and where this is considered practicable and reasonable.

**JUSTIFICATION**

2 For alterations, extensions and changes of use to existing premises the Council will expect applicants to make appropriate access provision for people with disabilities, unless the applicant can effectively demonstrate that this is neither practicable or reasonable.
3 The ability (or otherwise) to provide suitable disabled access including parking or access around the site will be a material planning consideration in determining the acceptability of the proposal.

4 Where disabled access is a requirement of a development involving a listed building or a building within a Conservation Area the Council will also consider its impact on the building’s character and appearance in determining the acceptability of the proposal.

BE20 DISABLED ACCESS IN PUBLIC PLACES

1 All development proposals must provide for ease of access and movement for disabled people and those with restricted mobility between and within public areas by the careful provision, siting and design of parking areas, paths, dropped kerbs, pedestrian crossings, street furniture and open space.

JUSTIFICATION

2 The Council wants to make public places as accessible and safe as possible for all sections of the community whether able bodied or disabled. This should be reflected in the design of the Council’s own schemes for public areas, covering access to open space, pedestrianisation proposals, parking schemes, and street furniture provision.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

BE21 TELECOMMUNICATIONS APPARATUS

1 Planning permission will be granted for telecommunications developments provided that it complies with the following criteria where appropriate:

   a Wherever possible, non-domestic apparatus should not be sited within residential areas.

   b Wherever possible, masts and towers should be shared and mounted apparatus should otherwise be grouped to minimise visual clutter and environmental intrusion.

   c Apparatus should not adversely affect the openness of the countryside or open land within urban areas. Wherever possible apparatus in the countryside and close to open land within the urban areas should normally either be sited so that it is out of sight of the general public or where the landform, buildings, established trees and opportunities for new woodland planting make it possible.

   d Views to the apparatus are masked or broken up.

   e Apparatus should normally be unobtrusive in relation to primary residential areas, areas of mixed use, Conservation Areas and the setting of Listed Buildings. Within Conservation Areas and the setting of Listed Buildings conventional masts and antennae will not be acceptable.

   f In areas frequented by the general public for their business, shopping and pleasure, apparatus should be out of sight from street level, so far as practicable.

   g Wall-mounted dishes and apparatus should be placed in the least obtrusive position possible, taking account of the architectural detailing of the buildings and its neighbours.

   h Dishes and antennae should not wherever practicable be placed above the highest part of the roof of a building, on chimneys or otherwise, except where they would be no more obtrusive than a conventional television aerial.

   i Apparatus, mountings and ancillary structures should be coloured in a durable finish appropriate to the background against which they will be seen, usually so as to merge into it.

   j It is demonstrated that the proposal satisfied the guidelines for public
exposure given within the International Commission On Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) guidelines.

2 The Council will also take the above criteria into account when responding to telecommunications proposals submitted under the General Development Order prior notification procedures.

JUSTIFICATION

3 Government advice (PPG 8 Telecommunications) asks Local Planning Authorities to take account of the strategic requirements of telecommunications networks and to recognise their special needs in preparing development plans.

4 In exercising its powers of control and enforcement as Local Planning Authority, the Council will have regard to the wider benefits of telecommunications developments, the technical consideration which may limit the range of options available to operators providing important services, and the need to strike a sensible balance between operational demands and constraints.

5 This policy is intended to provide guidelines for both commercial and domestic situations in a way that is sufficiently flexible to accommodate the rapid pace of technological change in this particular field. The Council acknowledges that modern telecommunications apparatus facilitates new choices in matters such as banking and working from home; established and new systems contribute in some part to cutting down the need to travel and thus should not be seen as inherently hostile to the environment.

6 The General Development Order provides opportunities to erect many facilities without reference to the Council, though in some cases there is a short notification period which allows for intervention where there is a significant amenity issue. Therefore, with respect to larger and more intrusive installations, where full control exists, it is appropriate to insist on the best possible arrangements. Indeed, it will be for operators to demonstrate that sharing of facilities and other solutions have been fully explored.

7 A variety of options exists for avoiding unacceptable visual impact, down to and including ground siting of equipment on nearby land and running the signal by cable to the reception point.

8 Special issues arise in relation to Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings. In particular conventional poles, antennae or masts are considered not to be visually acceptable. Consideration should given to camouflaging and disguising apparatus or alternatively proposing innovative designs. Listed Building Consent will also normally be required for any apparatus on or within the curtilage of a Listed Building.

9 The design and performance of dish aerials is improving, so that they are generally becoming smaller and generally less obtrusive. However, it remains necessary to ensure that domestic dishes or systems on Listed Buildings or on properties within Conservation Areas are sensitively sited.

10 PPG8 makes it clear that the planning system is not the place for determining health safeguards. If a telecommunication apparatus meets the ICNIRP guidelines for public exposure the Council need not consider further the health issues about them when processing an application for planning permission or prior approval. This policy therefore requires only that proposals demonstrate that they comply with ICNIRP guidelines.

OTHER POLICIES

BE22 BOUNDARY WALLS AND FENCES

1 Boundary fences and walls, that require planning permission, will be required to be visually attractive, constructed of high quality and durable materials and appropriate to the character and appearance of the area in which they are located.

2 Where fences/walls are to be erected forward of established ‘building lines’ and areas that are particularly open, no structures above 1 metre in height will be permitted, unless overriding
security or other such circumstances are satisfactorily demonstrated. Unless, special circumstances exist fencing above 2 metres in height will not be permitted in any location.

JUSTIFICATION

3 The Local Planning Authority is committed to enhancing the quality of the built environment of the Borough. Experience has shown that investment in high quality materials and the construction of walls in preference to fencing will lead to long term quality environments and in turn sustainability.

4 The Authority accepts that in certain locations there may be exceptional circumstances, which require special measures i.e. where security is paramount and gives further guidance on this matter, in its Supplementary Planning Guidance ‘Securing The Boundaries’.

5 The Council will have regard to the amenity and visual impact of all proposed boundary treatments and will also have regard to security considerations in industrial and commercial areas.

6 The erection of a boundary wall or fence may fall within the scope of The Party Wall Act etc 1996 which places responsibilities and obligations on property owners. To find out further information a copy of ‘The Party Wall Act etc, 1996: Explanatory Booklet’ can be requested from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

BE23 TEMPORARY BUILDINGS

Development

1 Proposals for temporary development will be permitted provided that it satisfies all of the following criteria:

   a It will not prejudice the long term after-use of the site.

   b The proposal is for a specified period.

Buildings

2 Where planning permission is required for a temporary or moveable building it will be permitted, for a period commensurate with the quality and life-span of the building, provided that its location or appearance would not create an unacceptable impact on the visual amenities of the site or surrounding area.

3 Where it is considered that the temporary or moveable building would create an unacceptable impact on the visual amenities of the site or surrounding area, planning permission may be granted where all of the following criteria are satisfied:

   a The applicant proves a case of overriding need for the building.

   b The permission is for a maximum temporary period of 5 years, and the building is thereafter removed.

   c The building is of superior quality.

   d The site and buildings are adequately landscaped to mitigate the effects on visual amenity.

JUSTIFICATION

4 Circumstances can arise where a temporary use of land may be appropriate even though this is not the same use as the Plan allocation. Examples might include temporary play facilities, car parks, temporary housing while refurbishment is in progress and so on. The Council will adopt a positive and flexible approach to such circumstances, so long as the proposal is consistent with the Plan’s overall aims and policies.

5 Buildings which are of a temporary nature can result in development of unacceptably low quality and will not normally be permitted.

6 However, any definition of temporary structures will encompass a wide variety of buildings with variable build quality. Where buildings of demonstrable superior performance and high specification of materials are proposed, they can prove to be as durable as buildings constructed in more traditional methods. In such cases, extended temporary planning permissions can be given.
HALTON UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

CHAPTER 3
THE GREEN ENVIRONMENT
AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1 The policies within this Chapter look to achieving the aims and objectives contained in Part I of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP). The green environment aims and objectives, and therefore these policies, are concerned with protecting and enhancing open land in the Borough, including open countryside, greenspaces and features of nature conservation and landscape importance. In particular the policies are aimed at improving greenspace of poor quality and creating new greenspace in areas of deficiency, improving linkages between greenspaces, as well as increasing the amount of tree cover in the Borough. In addition, a secure long-term Green Belt has been established around the edges of the urban areas, and policies in this Chapter will control development in this area of the Borough.

BACKGROUND

1 A healthy environment should be of concern to everyone, as the quality of human life depends fundamentally on the quality of the environment. In recognition of the importance of the ‘green environment’ in contributing to quality of life, this Chapter contains policies for the protection and enhancement of open land and areas and features of wildlife and landscape interest in the Borough.

2 Open land includes greenspaces within the urban and rural areas of the Borough, both those specifically designated as such on the Proposals Map and smaller incidental greenspaces which occur within housing, commercial and industrial areas, as well as the urban fringe and open countryside surrounding the urban area.

URBAN FRINGE, OPEN COUNTRYSIDE AND GREEN BELT

3 Much of the open land within the urban fringe and open countryside is designated as Green Belt in the Plan, and is protected as such. It performs a useful Green Belt function, preventing the unrestricted sprawl of the urban area, preventing the towns of Runcorn and Widnes merging with their neighbouring towns and cities. In addition to its Green Belt function, it also provides informal recreational opportunities for the Borough’s residents and is an important habitat for wildlife.

4 Parts of the open countryside remain safeguarded or undesignated. In these areas it is expected that the land will remain as open countryside, and policies relating to the open countryside in this Chapter apply.

URBAN AND RURAL GREENSPACES

5 Greenspaces that occur within the urban areas of the Borough are recognised as being worthy of a comparable level of protection to that of the open countryside. They are part of the immediate environment to where people live and work and have as much, if not more, influence in terms of day to day amenity and overall quality of life for the Borough’s residents than the open countryside.

6 The amenity value of greenspace is recognised as being wide ranging. Even where greenspaces are not publicly accessible, many of them are recognised as having an important visual, wildlife or structural role to play. They can also have economic significance, in enhancing the overall attractiveness of the Borough.

7 Larger greenspaces with amenity value are specifically identified on the Proposals Map as Spike Island.
designated greenspace and are protected from development. Many of these greenspaces are identified as being important linkages within the Greenspace Systems (identified networks of inter-connecting greenspaces), or as having particular value for sport, recreation or children’s play, or as having special wildlife or landscape interest.

8 Smaller, incidental greenspaces which occur within housing, commercial and industrial areas are not specifically identified on the Proposals Map but should be protected where they have amenity value. This Chapter sets out the particular criteria against which to measure the amenity value of such areas.

SPORT, RECREATION AND CHILDREN’S PLAY

9 Sport and recreation are important elements in the overall quality of people’s lives. Whether the activity is active or passive, energetic or relaxed, participation can contribute to overall health, aid relaxation, provide enjoyment and positive ways of channelling energy, and can create a sense of well-being.

10 In recognition that sport and recreation are an important land use, the Council will ensure that adequate provision is made in the Plan. The UDP has a key role to play both in protecting existing facilities and enabling new developments to take place.

11 In order to promote equity and participation as part of the Council’s sustainability objectives, it will encourage the provision of a wide range of opportunities, in accessible locations, which enable people from all sections of the community to participate.

12 The Green Environment policies focus on the protection, enhancement and creation of outdoor playing space for sport and recreation and outdoor playing space for children, both equipped playgrounds and casual/informal playing space. Indoor sports and recreation facilities are dealt with in the Leisure, Tourism and Community Facilities Chapter.

WILDLIFE AND LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION

13 There are a number of sites in Halton that are statutorily protected under both British and international law. These sites include the Mersey Estuary, designated as a RAMSAR site, Special Protection Area and Site of Special Scientific Interest; Flood Brook Clough and Red Brow Cutting, both of which are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

14 Nature in Halton, however, is not confined to these statutory sites but is found throughout the countryside and in many urban areas. Many urban sites for nature conservation have an enhanced local importance as a consequence of the relative lack of wildlife sites in built-up areas. Sites of local importance to nature conservation have been given a designation by the Council. These sites are important to local communities, often affording people the only opportunity of direct contact with nature. This chapter includes policies to protect statutory and non-statutory designations.

15 Wildlife and landscape features are also protected in this chapter. Such features include woodland, heathland, marshes, mudflats, unimproved grassland, trees, hedgerows, rivers, streams, ponds and canals. They provide habitats for wildlife, as well as helping to create a varied and interesting landscape for people. Canals and rivers in particular also have potential for recreation and tourism development.
16 Statutory and non-statutory sites, together with countryside features that provide wildlife corridors, links or stepping stones from one habitat to another, all help form a network necessary to ensure the maintenance of our biological diversity.

17 The Plan contains policies to help secure biodiversity aims, including the protection of ponds, hedgerows, trees and woodland. Halton’s natural assets provide an attractive and interesting setting for work and play, with known social and health benefits towards raising the quality of life for local people.

18 The Natural Assets Strategy, was published in October 2000, and will provide additional guidance where development affects areas and features of wildlife and landscape interest. The Strategy is a firm statement of the Council’s corporate policies towards its natural resources and will contribute to the Council’s Local Agenda 21 programme.

19 The Strategy is guided by the messages on sustainability and biodiversity from The Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and in the Government’s own Biodiversity Action Plan (1994). Halton has its part in meeting the global need to protect and improve the environment whilst also finding ways to meet social and economic needs.

20 The UDP has a crucial role to play in achieving a balance between conservation and development, thereby ensuring sustainability and maintaining or increasing the biodiversity of the area.
PART 2

POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

URBAN FRINGE, OPEN COUNTRYSIDE AND GREEN BELT

GE1 CONTROL OF DEVELOPMENT IN THE GREEN BELT

1 Planning permission will not be given for inappropriate development within the Green Belt, as defined on the Proposals Map, except in very special circumstances.

2 Planning permission will not be given to proposals for development conspicuous from the Green Belt that would harm its visual amenity by reason of their siting, materials or design.

3 Development in the Green Belt will be regarded as inappropriate unless it is for any of the following purposes:
   a. agriculture or forestry;
   b. the limited extension, alteration, or replacement of existing dwellings, in compliance with Policy GE3;
   c. the re-use of buildings, in compliance with Policy GE4;
   d. essential facilities for outdoor sport and recreation, in compliance with Policy GE5;
   e. cemeteries;
   f. other uses of land which preserve the openness of the Green Belt and which do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

JUSTIFICATION

4 This policy is for the control of development in the Green Belt. Policy S21 establishes the extent of the Green Belt around Halton.

5 It also complies with the positive purposes of Green Belts as set out in the Planning Policy Guidance note “Green Belts” 1995 (PPG2). In particular, it will help to safeguard the surrounding countryside, protect agricultural land and assist in urban regeneration. In addition, the policy of protecting the visual amenity of the Green Belt will help to protect the setting of Halton’s towns and villages.

6 In Halton there are three villages, Moore, Daresbury and Preston on the Hill that are ‘washed over’ by the Green Belt. It is proposed to allow no new building beyond that permitted in this policy. Infill development within the villages of Moore, Daresbury and Preston on the Hill would not be considered appropriate development in the Green Belt.

7 This policy will help to ensure that the Green Belt performs all its intended functions by preventing inappropriate development within it. The appropriateness of development in the Green Belt will be judged against this policy, and, where applicable, policies GE3, GE4 and GE5.

8 PPG2 (Green Belts) gives further explanation as to how this policy will operate. Paragraphs 3.2 and 3.3 state: “3.2 Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Greenbelt. It is for the applicant to show why permission should be granted. Very special circumstances to justify inappropriate development will not exist unless the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. In view of the presumption against inappropriate development, the Secretary of State will attach substantial weight to the harm to the Green Belt when considering any planning application or appeal concerning such development”.

“3.3 Green Belt policies in development plans should ensure that any planning applications for inappropriate development would not be in accord with the plan. These exceptional cases would thus be treated as departures from the development plan, to be referred to the Secretary of State under the Town and Country planning (Development Plans and Consultation) Directions 1992 (see DOE Circular 19/92).”
According to PPG2 (Green Belts), there is a presumption against all ‘inappropriate’ development in the Green Belt that is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt. The exceptions are listed in paragraph 3.4 of PPG2. This list includes 'limited infilling in existing villages', under the circumstances in paragraph 2.11. This states that if infilling only is to be allowed, the village can either be washed over and listed in the development plan or inset (that is, excluded from the Green Belt).

PPG2 states that if infilling only is allowed that the plan should include policies to ensure that any infilling does not have an adverse effect on the character of the village concerned. Therefore, infill development that conforms to such a policy would not be harmful to the Green Belt.

GE2 Hale Village - Green Belt

1 Part of the Village of Hale is inset within the Green Belt. Within the inset boundary, shown on the Proposals Map, the following development will be permitted:

a Limited infilling of a small break in development that would accommodate one or two dwellings that would not having an adverse effect on the character of the Village.

b Limited development (more than infilling) or limited redevelopment that would enhance the physical or visual qualities of the Village and not harm its character.

2 No development will be allowed on the significant open space in the centre of the village east of Town Lane and north of Church End, shown on the Proposals Map, as this will have an adverse effect on the character of the village.

JUSTIFICATION

3 Part of Hale is inset and part washed over by the Green Belt on the basis of relative contribution to Green Belt purposes.

4 The policy is designed to safeguard the character of the village by ensuring that new development enhances the physical and visual qualities of the village and does not harm its character.

5 A significant area of open space in the centre of the village to the east of Town Lane and north of Church End is important to the character of the village and the Conservation area. This will be protected from development and is shown on the Proposals Map.

6 Other important open spaces in or on the edge of the village are protected by the relevant Green Space policies or are washed over by the Green Belt.

GE3 EXTENSIONS, ALTERATIONS AND REPLACEMENT OF EXISTING DWELLINGS IN THE GREEN BELT

1 Proposals for the extension or alteration of existing habitable dwellings in the Green Belt may be permitted where the scale, character and appearance of the property are not significantly changed.

2 Proposals for the rebuilding or replacement of an existing habitable dwelling in the Green Belt may be permitted provided that all of the following criteria can be satisfied:

a The existing structure is not of architectural or historic merit.

b The new dwelling is not materially larger than the dwelling it replaces.

c The new dwelling would not be more intrusive in the landscape than the dwelling it replaces.

JUSTIFICATION

3 This policy provides specific guidance on extensions, alterations and replacement of existing habitable dwellings in the Green Belt, supplementing Policy GE1 relating generally to development in the Green Belt. The policy aims to provide for the reasonable requirements of homeowners for the provision of additional space while safeguarding the countryside from the impact.
of large scale extensions, alterations or replacement buildings.

4 Planning Policy Guidance Note 2 “Green Belts” 1995 (PPG2) states that provided proposals for the extension or alteration of an existing dwelling would not “result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building” they would not constitute inappropriate development (para. 3.6). The interpretation of significant change in this policy will vary according to the character of the property, but as a general guideline, extensions that increase the volume of the original dwelling by more than about one third are unlikely to be acceptable. The cumulative effect of any previous extensions will be taken into account.

5 PPG2 also states that the “replacement of existing dwellings need not be inappropriate, providing the new dwelling is not materially larger than the dwelling it replaces” (para. 3.6). As a general guideline, the volume of the proposed dwelling should not exceed the volume of the original dwelling by more than about one third and the form of the dwelling should not be significantly altered.

6 The rebuilding or replacement of dwellings will not be acceptable where this amounts to the creation of a new dwelling. The replacement of temporary structures, derelict buildings or abandoned dwellings will not normally be appropriate.

GE4 RE-USE OF BUILDINGS IN THE GREEN BELT

1 Proposals for the re-use of agricultural or other buildings in the Green Belt will be permitted provided that all of the following criteria can be satisfied:

a An up-to-date survey has been carried out by a qualified structural engineer certifying that the building is capable of use for the proposed purpose without major or complete reconstruction and can be expected to last for many years with normal repair and maintenance.

b The existing building is considered by the local planning authority to be a substantial building and that its re-use would not harm the visual amenities of the Green Belt by inappropriate use of materials or design.

c The proposed use will not result in the subsequent erection of ancillary buildings, structures, fences or similar developments that would harm the openness and the visual amenities of the Green Belt.

d The proposed use will not result in significant extensions or alterations to its appearance or character.

e Any scheme of conversion should respect the original character of the building. The number of openings should be kept to a minimum and materials matching those of the original structure should be used. Careful attention should be paid to the treatment of any full height or large scale door openings.

f The Local Planning Authority is satisfied that it can maintain effective future control over the appearance of the building within its curtilage. To this end conditions withdrawing development rights (under the appropriate General Permitted Development Order and Use Classes Order) will normally be imposed should the proposal be approved.

g An adequate curtilage is provided to accommodate parking, servicing and other ancillary requirements without causing harm to the visual amenities of the Green Belt.

h Adequate access to a road of suitable standard is provided.

i The building has suitable services, or that the provision of such services would not cause material detriment to the visual amenities of the Green Belt.
JUSTIFICATION

2 This policy provides specific guidance on the re-use of buildings in the Green Belt, supplementing Policy GE1 relating generally to development in the Green Belt.

3 Planning Policy Guidance note 2 “Green Belts” 1995 (PPG2) is supportive of the re-use of buildings in the Green Belt, provided that there are suitable safeguards to ensure that the openness of the Green Belt is not prejudiced (para. 3.7). Indeed, the re-use of buildings in the Green Belt can help to secure the continuing stewardship of land, particularly in assisting farmers in diversifying their enterprises, and may contribute to the objectives for the use of land in Green Belts (as set out in para. 1.6 of PPG2).

4 Substantial buildings are those which are of permanent and substantial construction, and are capable of conversion without major or complete reconstruction.

5 Redundant buildings can provide suitable accommodation for small firms or tourist activities or can be used as individual residences.

GE5 OUTDOOR SPORT AND RECREATION FACILITIES IN THE URBAN FRINGE AND OPEN COUNTRYSIDE

1 Proposals for the development of outdoor sport and recreation facilities in the urban fringe and open countryside will be permitted provided that all of the following criteria can be satisfied:

a They are directly related to an existing or proposed activity that requires an open air or countryside location.

b They are sited and landscaped to be unobtrusive and to complement their rural surroundings.

c They would not spoil the enjoyment of the countryside for other users through the unacceptable increase of noise or excessive traffic, or by unacceptably damaging its character or appearance.

d They would not reduce public access to the countryside.

e They would not cause unacceptable damage to areas or features of wildlife or landscape interest.

f They would not have an unacceptable effect on the amenity of nearby residents through the loss of privacy, the increase in noise or excessive traffic, or the introduction of light pollution.

g They would not cause damage to the best and most versatile agricultural land, or conflict with agricultural interests.

h Facilities should use existing buildings if they are available. New buildings or structures should be sited close to any existing buildings and blend into the landscape in terms of the design, siting, materials and landscaping.

JUSTIFICATION

2 This policy provides a framework for properly considering issues of amenity in determining proposals for recreational development in the urban fringe and open countryside. The majority of open countryside surrounding the urban area is also designated as Green Belt in the Plan. This policy provides specific guidance on the development of essential facilities for outdoor sport and recreation, supplementing Policy GE1 relating generally to development in the Green Belt.

3 Development in the countryside should not spoil its enjoyment for passive recreational activities or cause damage to sites of wildlife or landscape interest.

4 The best and most versatile agricultural land is defined as land in grades 1, 2 and 3a.

5 Sporting and recreational pursuits where an open air or countryside location would be essential, such as playing fields, golf courses and country parks, might be considered...
appropriate uses. Proposals for ancillary buildings and structures must comply with all the criteria in this policy. Particular favourable consideration will be given to proposals that will enhance opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation within the urban fringe, which is more accessible to the majority of the Borough’s population than the open countryside beyond.

**URBAN AND RURAL GREENSPACES**

**GE6 PROTECTION OF DESIGNATED GREENSPACE**

1 Development within designated and proposed greenspace, as defined on the Proposals Map, will not be permitted unless it is ancillary to the enjoyment of the greenspace or, in the case of designated greenspace in educational use, it is specifically required for educational purposes, in compliance with Policy GE8.

2 Exceptions may be made where the loss of the amenity value, which led to the designation of the site as greenspace, is adequately compensated for. Loss of amenity value may be compensated for where either of the following criteria can be satisfied:

   a Development on part of the site would fund improvements that raise the overall amenity value of the greenspace, as measured against the criteria for designation of greenspace set out in the justification to this policy. In assessing whether a proposal would raise the overall amenity value of the site, consideration will also be given to the extent to which accessibility to and through the site, including linkages with other greenspaces, would be improved.

   b The developer provides a suitable replacement greenspace of at least equal size and amenity value, or significantly enhances the amenity value of nearby greenspace. In assessing whether a proposal would significantly improve the amenity value of a nearby greenspace, consideration will be given to the extent to which the quality and accessibility of the space would be enhanced.

   c No proposal should result in a loss of amenity for local residents by forcing them to travel to a less convenient location.

   d In all exceptional cases there would have to be clear and convincing reasons why development should be permitted or that loss of amenity value could be adequately compensated.

**JUSTIFICATION**

3 Recognising greenspace as an important land-use in its own right, the Plan seeks to ensure adequate provision in the Borough in terms of quantity, quality and distribution. The need for housing, employment, education and other land-uses have been assessed and taken into account during the allocation of greenspaces for protection as such.

4 The amenity value of greenspace is measured against the following criteria:

   - its value in providing an important link in the greenspace systems;
   - its value in providing an important link in the strategic network of greenways;
   - its value for organised sport and recreation;
   - its value for informal or unorganised recreation;
   - its value for children’s play, either as an equipped playing space or more casual or informal playing space;
   - its value as an allotment;
   - its wildlife and landscape interest;
   - its value for an existing or potential role as part of the Mersey Forest;
   - its value for environmental education;
   - its visual amenity value (such as providing a visual break or visual variety in an otherwise built-up area);
its structural value, such as defining local communities or providing a buffer between incompatible uses (such as noise attenuation zones);
its value in enhancing the overall attractiveness of the area;
its contribution to the health and sense of well-being of the community.

5 Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 “Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation” 2002 (PPG17) emphasises that the use of land as open space is no less important than other uses. The UDP has an important role to play in achieving a reasonable balance between the need to make adequate provision for development within the urban area and the need to protect greenspaces from development.

6 Greenspaces provide opportunities for sport and recreation, of both an organised as well as more informal or unorganised nature. Many formal facilities, such as pitches, courts and greens, are provided in greenspaces. Standards for the provision of outdoor playing space for formal sport and recreation facilities such as these are contained in Policy GE12. In addition, specific provision for equipped facilities for children is contained with Policy GE15.

7 Not only does informal or casual greenspace provide quiet areas for relaxation, giving people opportunity to get away from the hustle and bustle of urban life for a while, it provides space for spontaneous, unorganised pursuits such as walking, picnicking and informal ball games. In addition, the value of informal greenspaces for children’s play should not be under-estimated. The views of residents and users will be an important consideration where development proposals affect informal or casual greenspace.

8 Greenspaces can also be important for their particular wildlife or landscape interest. Not only do they provide variety and interest within the Borough, many of these sites provide habitats for important and protected species. And even informally managed sites with relatively low wildlife interest can have immense value for environmental education. This applies particularly to areas close to schools with grounds managed formally or without grounds at all.

9 Greenspaces, regardless of whether or not they are publicly accessible, make an important contribution to the quality of life of those who live and work in the Borough. As such, land allocated as greenspace in the Plan is not just public open space or recreation land. It includes land in private ownership such as company sports grounds, private playing fields, grazing land and other land of amenity value.

10 While there is a general presumption against development on designated greenspace, this policy is not intended to act as a block on all development. Instead, it provides a framework for properly considering issues of amenity in determining development applications.

**GE7 PROPOSED GREENSPACE DESIGNATIONS**

The following proposed Greenspaces are shown on the Proposals Map:

- Hutchinson’s Hill;
- Upton Rocks park and structural landscaping;
- Wigg Island;
- Sandymoor open spaces and structural landscaping;
- Land south of Employment site 49 Johnsons Lane;
- Keckwick Brook Linear Park;
- Landscape buffer surrounding employment site 253 ‘Land North of Halebank Road’;
- Future Cemetery Use for Widnes Cemetery.

**JUSTIFICATION**

The Council will continue to improve the Borough by creating further open space and upgrading existing areas of land for its recreation or wider amenity value.

**GE8 DEVELOPMENT WITHIN DESIGNATED GREENSPACE**

1 New buildings required for recreation
and interpretative uses will be permitted within designated greenspace if their function is directly related and ancillary to the use and enjoyment of the greenspace.

2 Development specifically for educational purposes will be permitted on designated greenspace in educational use provided that it would not conflict with Policy GE12.

3 Where development is permitted the buildings should be of a scale, form, layout and design which respects the character and open nature of the greenspace and does not lead to a loss in the overall amenity of the greenspace.

JUSTIFICATION

4 This policy sets out the types of developments which will permitted within designated greenspace that is to remain as open space. Proposals for development within designated greenspace for uses not directly related and ancillary to the use and enjoyment of the greenspace, or, in the case of designated greenspace in educational use, for uses not specifically required for educational purposes, will be assessed against Policy GE6.

5 Buildings directly related and ancillary to the use and enjoyment of designated greenspace for recreational and interpretative purposes will be permitted subject to the requirements of other policies in the Plan. Such facilities would include changing rooms, club houses, ranger and interpretative facilities, visitor centres and small scale recreational facilities such as food and drink kiosks within parks.

6 The Council recognises the need to allow for development for educational purposes on designated greenspace in educational use. Such development would include the alteration or extension of existing school buildings or the development of new buildings, including mobile classrooms. Where the proposed development affects informal or casual areas of greenspace, there are likely to be fewer issues of concern than where development affects playing fields. Where development would encroach on playing fields, consideration will need to be given to the requirements of Policy GE12.

7 In the case of proposals for the redevelopment or change of use of redundant school buildings, regard should be had to Policy GE9.

GE9 REDEVELOPMENT AND CHANGES OF USE OF REDUNDANT SCHOOL BUILDINGS

1 The redevelopment of redundant school buildings washed over by the greenspace designation on the Proposals Map, by the construction of buildings covering a similar built area, and of similar bulk, will be permitted as an exception to Policy GE6.

2 The change of use of school buildings (by redevelopment or otherwise) will not be permitted where there is clear evidence that they are meeting, or are likely to meet in the near future, the current needs of the local community for any use within Class D1 or, where applicable, Class D2(e), of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order, 1987, unless comparable alternative facilities or benefits are provided by way of compensation.

3 Development that would encroach onto designated greenspace, including playing pitches, will not be permitted, except in exceptional circumstances and in compliance with Policies GE6 and GE12.

JUSTIFICATION

4 It is recognised that schools may become surplus to requirements as a result of a number of factors, such as educational reorganisation and changes in pupil and population numbers within the period of the Plan. In these circumstances, there will be demand for their sale and redevelopment. This policy seeks to cater for this whilst also recognising that schools often play a wider recreational and community role within their local area. The footprint of the existing buildings will be established at the time of the planning application.

5 Schools may play an important role in the life of the local community, such as providing a
venue for community groups, societies and evening classes. Sport and recreational facilities, such as sports halls, swimming pools, tennis courts and changing rooms often provide important opportunities for sports use out of school hours. Use Class D1 (non-residential institutions) and Use Class D2(e) (sport and recreation uses) include all of the above uses. The Council will take into account the wider recreational and community value of particular school facilities and the extent to which any wider recreation or community role can be protected or replaced as a result of development proposals.

6 Where buildings or a site are already used for the provision of sport, recreation and other community facilities, and it is expected that they can continue to do so viably, in the same or comparable form, they should not be displaced unless suitable alternative provision is made. It is also recognised that it would not be right to use the planning system to keep redundant school buildings standing empty without any firm expectations of early re-use.

7 Where development affects designated greenspace generally, Policy GE6 is relevant. More specifically, where development affects playing pitches, Policy GE12 is also relevant.

GE10 PROTECTION OF LINKAGES IN GREENSPACE SYSTEMS

1 Greenspace systems, as defined on the Proposals Map, are networks of inter-connecting greenspaces, providing important visual, physical, functional and structural linkages.

2 Development affecting a “greenspace system” will not be permitted in the following circumstances:

   a It would sever or unacceptably affect visual, physical, functional or structural linkages within the system.

   b It would have an unacceptable effect on any part of the system, to the detriment of the overall amenity of the system, measured in terms of visual impact, impact on the landscape, impact on wildlife, and impact on the recreational value of the system.

   c It would be detrimental to the objective of creating a network of inter-connecting greenspaces.

   d It would break visual or cultural links with the historic use of the landscape.

   e It would impair the movement of people on foot, cycle or horse-back.

   f It would impair the colonisation or movement of flora or fauna.

   g It would cause a material reduction in a habitat whose characteristics are of demonstrable value to the Greenspace System.

   h It would cause demonstrable harm to any protected species known to be dependent on the use of the affected part of the system for migration, breeding, feeding or shelter.

JUSTIFICATION

3 Greenspace systems are made up of a network of designated greenspaces that are inter-connected with each other either visually or physically. If greenspace systems are to function effectively, it is vital that no breaks in the network are allowed to occur which would sever or unacceptably effect visual, physical, functional or structural linkages. The value of the whole system is greater than the value of the parts.

4 Greenspace systems provide a visual continuity, which extends out of urban areas and into the urban fringe and open countryside. It may also provide visual and cultural links with the historic use of the landscape, with elements such as hedgerows, tracks, ditches, copses, etc. often being all that remains of how the area used to look. Greenspace systems play an important role in the visual amenity of urban areas, by incorporating a ‘greener’ landscape directly within view of urban developments.

5 Greenspace systems provide important physical and functional linkages. They provide
opportunities for people to move more freely by foot, cycle or horseback between facilities and greenspaces within the urban area and beyond. Important green linkages, part of the “greenway network” defined on the Proposals Map, run through greenspace systems providing valuable off-road routes. These functional linkages should be protected in compliance with this policy and Policy TP9.

6 They also act as an effective network of wildlife habitats and corridors. This is crucial to the continuing success of wildlife in urban areas. The fragmentation of wildlife habitats through the loss of individual sites, particularly as a result of development, is a major problem for nature conservation. Small, isolated sites may support fewer species than large areas, and are more vulnerable to the effects of pollution or catastrophic events. However, if wildlife sites are linked, the problem can be reduced. Planning Policy Guidance note “Nature Conservation” 1994 (PPG9) recognises that statutory and non-statutory sites, together with greenspace systems, all help to form a network that is necessary to ensure the maintenance of current levels of biodiversity.

7 Greenspace systems provide important structural linkages. They provide structure and form to the urban area, and prevent neighbourhoods from merging together. They also help to soften the urban fabric and are a vital element in greening and improving the image of the Borough.

8 In order to function effectively, it is essential that the network of greenspaces is as continuous as possible and that no further breaks occur. Development adjacent to a “greenspace system” may bring opportunities to strengthen the network through the creation of new spaces, habitats and linkages.

GE11 PROTECTION OF INCIDENTAL GREENSPACE

1 Development that would result in the loss of incidental greenspace within housing, commercial and industrial areas will not be permitted where the greenspace is of amenity value, as measured against the criteria for designation of greenspace set out in the justification to Policy GE6.

JUSTIFICATION

2 The justification to Policy GE6 emphasises the importance of greenspace as a land-use in its own right. A wide range of roles and functions are identified as being relevant in assessing the amenity value of greenspaces as designated on the Proposals Map.

3 Greenspaces considered to have amenity value and over 0.25 hectares in size are identified on the Proposals Map as designated greenspace. However, there are many smaller greenspaces in the Borough which have amenity value that merits protection, but which have not been specifically designated as such in the Plan. These greenspaces are referred to as “incidental greenspace” in the Plan. They are of no lesser importance, but were considered too small to specifically identify on the Proposals Map. Many of them have been ‘washed over’ by the Primarily Residential and Primarily Employment designations.

4 There are many casual or informal incidental greenspaces within housing areas that will be of value for children’s play. Some of these areas may contribute to the Council’s adopted standard of 0.8 hectares of children’s playing space per 1,000 population as set out in Policy GE15. Children need a range of different types of playing spaces to stimulate them. Casual and informal playing spaces can complement equipped facilities. The views of children and their families will be an important consideration when development proposals affect casual or informal greenspaces.

5 In considering the amenity value of incidental greenspaces in the Borough, the criteria for designation of greenspace set out in the justification to Policy GE6 are relevant. Particular attention will be paid to the following:

- its value as an informal space for passive recreation;
- its value for environmental education;
- its visual amenity value (such as providing...
SPORT, RECREATION AND CHILDREN’S PLAY

GE12 PROTECTION OF OUTDOOR PLAYING SPACE FOR FORMAL SPORT AND RECREATION

1 Development that would result in the loss of outdoor playing space for formal sport and recreation, such as pitches, courts, greens and athletics tracks, whether in public, private or educational use, will not be permitted unless one or more of the following criteria can be satisfied:

a A carefully quantified documented assessment of current and future needs for the school/educational establishment or local community, has demonstrated that there is an excess of playing field provision and the site has no special significance to the interests of sport.

b The existing facilities are of a poor quality and are underused and development on a small part of the playing space would fund improvements that significantly enhance the quality of these facilities and enhance the potential for the increased usage of the site for outdoor sports and recreation, provided that the development will not affect land forming part of a playing pitch, bowling green or tennis court, (outside a residential curtilage) including any safety margins or the loss of any other sporting/ancillary facility on the site nor reduce the size of the site to an extent which restricted its reasonable use, taking into account longer-term needs of the local community.

c The developer provides a suitable replacement facility, at least equivalent in terms of quantity and quality, and which is in place prior to the existing site being lost.

JUSTIFICATION

2 Planning Policy Guidance note “Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation” 2002 (PPG17) recognises sport and recreation as being important components of civilised life. As such, the government attaches great importance to the protection of greenspace with recreational value from development, and the provision of a wide range of opportunities for sport and recreation, so that people can choose which suit them best.

3 The Council acknowledges that sport and recreation can contribute directly to regeneration by improving health and quality of life of individuals and communities, and indirectly through savings in the cost of providing health care and a reduction in crime and vandalism.

4 In recognising the important role that sport and recreation can play, the Council will seek to ensure that opportunities are available, and accessible, to everyone, including children, adults, the elderly and those with disabilities.

5 The Council will seek to achieve an overall minimum standard for the Borough of 1.6 hectares of outdoor playing space for formal sport and recreation per 1,000 population, of which 1.2 hectares should be for playing pitch provision.

6 This minimum standard is based on the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) minimum standard for youth/adult playing space as set out in “The Six Acre Standard” (1992).

7 The definition of outdoor playing space for formal sport and recreation adopted by the Council for the purposes of assessing adequacy of provision is based on the NPFA...
definition of formal youth/adult playing space and takes into account the following facilities:

a facilities such as pitches (e.g. football, cricket, hockey, rugby), courts (e.g. tennis), greens (e.g. bowls) athletics tracks and miscellaneous sites, such as croquet lawns and training areas owned by the local authority or County Council;

b facilities described in (a) within the education sector and which, as a matter of practice and policy, are available for public use;

c facilities described in (a) which are within the voluntary, private, industrial and commercial sectors, and serve the leisure needs for outdoor recreation of their members, or the public.

8 This policy provides specific guidance on the protection of outdoor playing space for formal sport and recreation, supplementing Policy GE6 relating generally to designated greenspace. Importantly, this policy takes account of deficiencies in provision based on the Council’s adopted standard set out above.

9 A review of existing provision against the adopted standard was carried out in 1999 and showed that there were significant areas of deficiency. Given the recognised importance of playing space for formal sport and recreation, and the deficiencies in provision, it is essential that all existing facilities, whether in public, private or educational use, be protected from development.

10 It is essential that privately owned pitches be kept in their existing use. Development of these pitches would put additional pressure on the already stretched facilities within the public sector. Furthermore, private playing fields, especially company sports grounds, tend to be of very high quality, an additional reason for protecting them from development. Planning permission will not be granted for redevelopment of private playing fields simply because a pitch has been allowed to fall out of use and become derelict.


12 In new housing developments, developers will be expected to provide new formal sport and recreation facilities on site, or contribute towards the provision of new playing space or up-grading of existing playing space. Policy H3 provides specific guidance on the provision of recreational greenspace, including both playing space for formal sport and recreation and playing space for children, in new residential development.

GE13 INTENSIFYING USE OF EXISTING OUTDOOR SPORTS AND RECREATION PROVISION

1 Proposals to increase the use and availability of existing outdoor sports and recreation provision by the introduction of artificial surfaces and/or floodlighting will be permitted provided that they would not have an unacceptable effect on adjacent land uses or the highway, or create other highway dangers.

2 Permission granted for the introduction of floodlighting and synthetic turf pitches may be subject to the following conditions:

   a To limit hours of use so as to protect residential amenity.

   b To provide a maintenance plan setting out clearly the work to be carried out in accordance with the scheme and to what time scale.

JUSTIFICATION

3 In comparison with grass surfaces, full size synthetic turf pitches can accommodate higher levels of use. The quality and consistency of the surface – they are less susceptible to adverse weather conditions and drainage problems - makes them ideal for intensive play. As such many sports have come to value the pitches as training, coaching and competitive venues.

4 However, because of the extended periods of activity possible, the use of floodlighting and the numbers of people these facilities can sustain, particular care must be taken in choosing a location. Floodlighting is essential if the full benefit of the facility is to be realised, considerably extending the hours of use outside the summer months.
5 Particular attention must be paid to the potential dangers floodlighting may cause to highway safety.

6 Where floodlighting is proposed in residential areas, particular sensitive siting and design will be necessary to minimise the impact of light pollution. It is possible to install floodlights so that spillage of light is kept to a minimum and in this way visual disturbance to neighbouring properties can be avoided or limited.

7 The number of floodlights proposed should represent the most energy efficient solution possible. The level of floodlighting needed will vary from site to site, depending on the size of the site and the type and level of activities proposed. The governing bodies of sport have laid down standards for the appropriate level of floodlighting for different levels of play.

8 It is important to ensure that, in the long term, a deficiency of playing pitches does not arise through a dependence on artificial surfaces, which have become unsafe due to the absence of a proper maintenance programme. For this reason proposals for artificial surfaces and flood lighting will require a maintenance plan to be agreed by the council.

**JUSTIFICATION**

2 All outdoor sports generate noise. However, in this policy “noisy outdoor sports” refers to activities such as motorised sports, paintball games, clay pigeon shooting and model aircraft flying. The nature of these activities is such that, in the wrong location, they can be intrusive and disturbing to both people and wildlife, and may even cause damage to natural assets.

3 While the Council recognises that noisy outdoor sports are legitimate land uses, and where there is a clear demand for such sports, will seek to identify appropriate sites that minimise conflict, it may not always be possible to find appropriate sites.

4 Particularly sensitive areas which could be adversely affected by noisy outdoor sports would include residential areas, playing fields, areas or features of wildlife or landscape interest, urban fringe and open countryside.

5 Planning Policy Guidance note “Sport and Recreation” 1991 (PPG17) suggests that: “Criteria for the selection of sites for regular use must include the potential impact of the activity on the site and on adjacent land use and nearby residents.”

6 Suitable sites might include degraded land, former mineral sites and set-aside farming land, close to other sources of noise, and where they would not have an unacceptable impact on the current activity of a site or adjacent land use or nearby residents.

7 Where a code of conduct for use when organising events has been produced by the governing body of the sport proposed, the Council will consult this when considering new sites. In some cases, the Council will also consider whether planning conditions or obligations can successfully mitigate the impact of the noise on neighbouring uses to make a noisy outdoor sport use acceptable.

**GE15 PROTECTION OF OUTDOOR PLAYING SPACE FOR CHILDREN**

1 Proposals for development that would result in the loss of outdoor playing space for children will not be
permitted unless one or more of the following criteria can be satisfied:

a The existing facilities are sub-standard and development on part of the site would fund improvements that significantly enhance the quality, safety and variety of these facilities, appropriate to the site's potential role in the hierarchy set out in Table 1 (Housing Chapter), and provided that it would not reduce the size of the site to an extent which restricted its reasonable use.

b The developer provides suitable replacement facilities, of an acceptable standard in terms of the quality, safety and content of the facilities and in no less convenient location.

JUSTIFICATION

2 Children are one of the greatest users of the outdoor environment and their needs must be fully respected. Children’s need for playing space is significant in its own right. Playing space is essential for their healthy development.

3 The Council will seek to achieve an overall minimum standard for the Borough of 0.8 hectares of playing space per 1,000 population, including 0.3 hectares for equipped play facilities and 0.5 hectares for casual or informal playing space within housing areas. These minimum standards are based on the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) minimum standards as set out in “The Six Acre Standard” publication (1992).

4 The Council recognises that casual or informal playing space within housing areas are important, and will seek to ensure that these areas are protected from development in compliance with Policy GE6 and Policy GE11.

5 The aim of this policy is to ensure that all children have access to playing spaces that are appropriate to their needs. The NPFA recommend three categories of play provision, suitable for children of different age groups, with great importance attached to the ease with which children can reach playing spaces.

6 The Council supports the recommendations of the NPFA, and has adopted the standards set out in Table 1 for the purposes of the Plan. The ease with which children of different age groups can reach playing space is of great importance. If access is problematic then playing spaces are likely to remain under used.

7 This policy provides specific guidance on the protection of playing space for children, supplementing Policy GE6 relating generally to designated greenspaces. Importantly, this policy takes account of deficiencies in provision based on the Council’s adopted standards set out above.

8 A review of existing provision in the Borough against the NPFA three tiered hierarchy of play provision has shown that there are significant deficiencies. Not only are there significant areas of the Borough with no playing spaces, the majority of those which do exist fall short of the specific NPFA standards in terms of their quality, safety and content as set out in “The Six Acre Standard”. Given the recognised importance of playing space for children, and the deficiencies in provision, it is essential that existing playing spaces be protected from development.

9 In addition, the Council will seek to improve opportunities for children's play by up-grading existing playing spaces to the standards recommended by the NPFA and encouraging the provision of new facilities in areas with no current provision as and when opportunities arise and subject to available resources.

10 Children’s play spaces will be listed in a Supplementary Planning Document as they will change over the Plan period.

11 In new housing developments, developers will be expected to provide new play facilities on site, or contribute towards the provision of new playing space or up-grading of existing playing space (as identified above) in line with the three tiered hierarchy of play provision in Table 1. Policy H3 provides specific guidance.
on the provision of recreational greenspace, including both playing space for formal sport and recreation and playing space for children, in new residential development.

**GE16 PROTECTION OF ALLOTMENTS**

1 Development that would result in the loss of allotments will not be permitted unless either of the following criteria can be satisfied:

   a The allotments are badly located, poorly maintained and of an appearance which is detrimental to local amenity, and suitable replacement allotments would be provided in the locality of at least equal size and quality but to a higher visual standard.

   b The allotments are underused and no longer meet, or are unlikely to meet in the future, an important local need, and there is not likely to be a future rise in demand for plots on the allotments in the future, and a change of use would not cause damage to sites of wildlife or landscape interest.

**JUSTIFICATION**

2 Allotments play an important recreational and educational role, especially for those people with small gardens or no gardens at all. They may also have amenity value for their wildlife or landscape interest. The Council will seek to ensure that an adequate supply of allotments is maintained in order to meet existing and future demand.

3 In considering a change of use from allotments, the Council will give priority to the local need for playing space for sport, recreation or children’s play, taking into account existing deficiencies, as well as to the protection of important wildlife habitats or landscape features. The benefits of keeping a site in ‘green’ uses will be assessed first before consideration is given to alternative ‘hard’ uses.

**WILDLIFE AND LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION**

**GE17 PROTECTION OF SITES OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE FOR NATURE CONSERVATION**

1 Development or land use change that may affect a European Site will be subject to the most rigorous examination.

2 Development or land use change not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site will not be permitted if it is likely to have a significant effect on the site unless all of the following criteria can be satisfied:

   a There is no alternative solution.

   b There are imperative reasons for over-riding public interest for the development or land use change.

   c It is necessary for reasons of human health or public safety or for beneficial consequences of primary importance for nature conservation.

**JUSTIFICATION**

3 The RAMSAR Convention on Wetlands of International Importance requires the Government to conserve the wetland sites designated under the Convention. The Mersey Estuary was designated as a RAMSAR site in December 1995.

4 Special Protection Areas (SPA’s) are designated under the EC Conservation of Wild Birds Directive 79/409, in order to conserve the habitat of sensitive species of birds, to ensure their survival and reproduction. The Mersey Estuary was designated a SPA in December 1995.

5 Planning Policy Guidance note “Nature Conservation” 1994 (PPG9) stresses the Government’s commitment to meeting its international responsibilities and obligations for nature conservation.

6 The Council is required to consult English Nature before granting planning permission.
for the development of land within a European Site, or within a designated Consultation Area surrounding one. The Council will take into account any views expressed by English Nature in deciding whether, for the purposes of this Policy, the European Site would be significantly affected by a proposed development.

GE18 PROTECTION OF SITES OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE FOR NATURE CONSERVATION

1 Development in or likely to affect Sites of Special Scientific Interest will be subject to special scrutiny.

2 Development will not be permitted if it would have a significant effect, directly or indirectly, on an SSSI unless the reasons for the development clearly outweigh the nature conservation of the site itself and the national policy to safeguard the national network of such sites.

3 Where development is permitted, the authority will consider the use of conditions or planning obligations to ensure the protection and enhancement of the site's nature conservation interests.

JUSTIFICATION

4 The designation of a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is made by English Nature. The Mersey Estuary, Flood Brook Clough and Red Brow Cutting are designated as SSSI's as they are of national importance as areas of special interest by reason of flora, fauna, geological or physiological features, and as such require protection from development.

5 The Council is required to consult English Nature before granting planning permission for the development of land within a SSSI, or within a designated Consultation Area surrounding one. In other cases, the Government advises, in Planning Policy Guidance note “Nature Conservation” 1994 (PPG9), that English Nature should be consulted if there is any doubt whether or not a SSSI is likely to be affected. The Council will take into account any views expressed by English Nature in deciding whether, for the purposes of this Policy, the SSSI would be significantly affected by a proposed development.

GE19 PROTECTION OF SITES OF IMPORTANCE FOR NATURE CONSERVATION

1 Development and land use change will not be permitted if it is likely to have a significant effect on a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation, as defined on the Proposals Map, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that there are reasons for the proposal that outweigh the need to safeguard the substantive nature conservation of the site.

2 In all cases where development or land use change is permitted which would damage the nature conservation of the site or feature, such damage will be kept to a minimum. Where appropriate, the authority will consider the use of conditions or planning obligations to provide compensatory measures.

3 New sites identified during the Plan period will receive the same protection as those identified on the Proposals Map.

JUSTIFICATION

4 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC's) are recognised by Halton Borough Council, Cheshire Wildlife Trust and endorsed by English Nature. They are recognised as being of Borough wide importance because of their special significance as wildlife habitats in the urban environment, their value to local communities, or other reasons related to their Borough context.

5 The SINC system complements the series of nationally important SSSI’s but does not receive statutory protection other than through Unitary Development Plan policies. Along with the Borough’s internationally designated Mersey Estuary, three Sites of Special Scientific Interest and two Local Nature Reserves, SINC’s represent Halton’s stock of environmental capital. The importance of local, non-statutory sites,
particularly in urban areas, is recognised in Planning Policy Guidance note "Nature Conservation" 1994 (PPG9).

6 All sites covered in this policy have been designated against strict criteria, relating to a site’s characteristics (i.e. its intrinsic value for nature conservation) and community factors, which consider the social context of the site. The designation criteria are set out below:

SITE CHARACTERISTICS

- **Size**: Larger sites are usually more important than smaller sites and they are likely to accommodate more habitat variation. In the absence of large sites, small sites increase in value.

- **Diversity**: This refers to the range and diversity of wildlife species, habitats or geological features present on a site. Some habitats are naturally of low species diversity e.g. heathland and saltmarsh.

- **Rarity**: This considers how common or uncommon are the species or habitats on site. For example, the features of interest may be rare on an international, national or local scale, and a species common in Halton may be rare elsewhere in Britain.

- **Fragility**: Some sites are more vulnerable to change and damage by external influences. Particularly fragile areas require careful conservation to remain viable in the long term. For example, management of heathland to prevent loss to scrub woodland.

- **Irreplaceable**: Some areas, such as ancient woodland once lost or damaged cannot be re-created in hundreds of years. Many sites cannot be re-created elsewhere on account of technical difficulties, land availability, cost, community values, and other ecological and social reasons.

- **Typical or representative**: It is desirable to safeguard a sequence and range of habitat types and geological features. Particularly good examples of typical or representative features include those of an urban nature such as canals, industrial spoil heaps, docks and disused railway lines.

- **Geographical position**: The geographical position of a site may enhance its value, for example because of its location in or adjacent to wildlife corridors within the Greenspace System or its proximity to other habitats of wildlife value.

- **Important populations of species**: Some sites are important because they hold a large proportion of the Halton population of a species.

- **Age or continuity of land use**: Some sites have ecological characteristics derived from their long standing, such as ancient woodland. Old, relatively undisturbed environments tend to be rare in Halton and usually contain a large range and diversity of species.

COMMUNITY FACTORS

- **Community or amenity value**: Sites are assessed in terms of their value to local people. For example, some sites are valued by the local community for their closeness to houses. Others are of significance to the local community because of their links to community history, such as canals, disused railways and quanes.

- **Physical Access**: Physical access to sites is a valuable asset in urban areas. Sites with access for disabled people are particularly important.

- **Visual Access**: Visual access to sites is also an important consideration in urban areas. For example, although there may be no physical access to a site, the local community may be able to observe and enjoy wildlife there from outside the site’s boundaries. Large numbers of people can see some sites, for example, on a prominent hillside.

- **Educational Value**: Some sites may be of particular value for formal or informal education by virtue of their proximity to educational establishments and/or having a range of robust habitats or facilities to aid study and interpretation.

- **Situated in an area lacking natural
**habitats:** The location of a site within an ecologically impoverished area of the borough may enhance its special conservation value.

- **Recorded History:** Some sites have been studied over a number of years or may be the location where a specific discovery was made. These add to the conservation value of the site.

7 All the sites listed below and defined on the Proposals Map have been designated as SINC’s. Some of these sites were previously identified as Sites of Biological Importance by Cheshire County Council, Cheshire Wildlife Trust and English Nature. Other sites have been surveyed by the Council as part of the Biodiversity Audit (1999). It should be noted that all SINC’s are subject to a rolling programme of review over a 5 – 8 year period, allowing for a reassessment of existing SINC’s and for the designation of new SINC’s.

8 Sites designated as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation include:

- Barkers Hollow Wood, Preston Brook
- Beechwood, Runcorn
- Big Wood, Runcorn
- Big Boar’s Wood, Hale
- Clifton Lagoon, Runcorn
- Clifton Cloughs, Runcorn
- Clinton Wood, Widnes
- Clough Wood, Runcorn
- Disused railway line, south of Warrington Road, Widnes
- Dutton Hospital Wood, Dutton
- Green Wood and Pitts Heath, Runcorn
- Haddocks Wood, Runcorn
- Haddocks Wood Pasture, Runcorn
- Haystack Lodge, Runcorn
- Hopyard Wood, Hale
- Land adjacent Preston Brook Marina
- Land north of Hallwood Park, Runcorn
- Land off Lunts Heath Road, Famworth
- Land off Dorchester Park, Sandymoor
- Little Boar’s Wood, Hale
- Lodge Plantation, Runcorn
- Manchester Ship Canal Bank, Astmoor
- Manor Park 3 Woodland, Moore
- Mill Wood, Hale
- Morts Wood, Daresbury
- Murdishaw Wood, Runcorn
- Norbury Wood and Marsh, Runcorn
- Norton Priory
- Old Plantation, Hale
- Oxmoor Wood and ponds, Runcorn
- Pickerings Pasture LNR, Widnes
- Pond at Delphfield, Runcorn
- Pond off Meadway and adjacent grassland, Widnes
- Ramsbrook Plantation, Hale
- Rows Wood, Daresbury
- Runcorn East rail station area
- Runcorn Hill LNR
- St. Helens Canal (reclaimed), Widnes
- Sandymoor Wood, Sandymoor
- Southern verge embankment A533, Brookvale
- Stenhills Open Space, Runcorn
- The Glen, Runcorn
- Upper Mersey Estuary: Widnes Warth and Fiddlers Ferry saltmarsh
- Upper Mersey Estuary: Astmoor saltmarsh and swamp
- Upper Mersey Estuary: Intertidal areas and open water
- Weston Marsh Lagoons
- Windmill Hill Wood, Runcorn

**GE20 PROTECTION AND CREATION OF LOCAL NATURE RESERVES**

1 **Development will not be permitted if it is likely to have an unacceptable impact on existing and proposed Local Nature Reserves, as defined on the Proposals Map.**

**JUSTIFICATION**

2 Local Nature Reserves may be designated by a Local Authority under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act (1949).
The objectives in designating sites as Local Nature Reserves relate to conservation, through better management and the passing of bye-laws, recreation and education. The Council will in consultation with English Nature, declare appropriate sites as local nature reserves.

3 Sites designated as Local Nature Reserves include:

- Pickerings Pasture, Widnes;
- Runcorn Hill, Runcorn;
- Clinton Woods, Widnes;
- Land off Dorchester Park, Runcorn;

**GE21 SPECIES PROTECTION**

1 Development that would cause unacceptable harm to a species of flora or fauna protected under national or international legislation, or its habitat, will not be permitted unless all of the following criteria can be satisfied:

   a That the development is in the interests of public health and public safety, or for other imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment;

   b That there is no satisfactory alternative;

   c That the derogation is not detrimental to the maintenance of the populations of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range.

2 On any site that may be supporting a species of flora or fauna protected under national legislation, or its habitat, an expert on the relevant protected species should carry out a site survey. The survey should be a thorough investigation, with recommendations on how to mitigate the effects of development if this can be permitted without serious disruption to the species involved.

3 Where development is permitted, the authority will consider the use of conditions or planning obligations to ensure the protection and enhancement of the site’s species or its habitat.

**JUSTIFICATION**

4 Over 100 species of plants and wild creatures receive special protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Local authorities have powers to take action against anyone committing an offence under the Act. Development, including the re-use of derelict buildings, can displace creatures, which either live on the site or use it, for example for foraging or roosting.

5 Developments affecting European Protected Species require a licence to derogate from the provisions of the Habitats Directive, issued by DTLR. In considering planning applications which may affect European Protected Species, local planning authorities are bound by Regulation 3(4) of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 to have regard to the Habitats Directive when exercising their functions.

6 The presence of a protected species is a material consideration when the authority is considering a development proposal which, if carried out, would be likely to result in harm to the species or its habitat. On any site that may be supporting wildlife protected under national legislation, an expert on the relevant protected species should carry out a site survey. The survey should be a thorough investigation, with recommendations on how to mitigate the effects of development if this can be permitted without serious disruption to the species involved.

**GE22 PROTECTION OF ANCIENT WOODLANDS**

1 Development will not be permitted if it is likely to cause damage, either directly or indirectly, to Ancient Woodlands, as defined on the Proposals Map.
JUSTIFICATION

2. Ancient woodlands are defined as those sites which have been continuously wooded since at least the year 1600 and all such sites within the Borough have been identified by English Nature and Cheshire Wildlife Trust. They are of great historical, ecological and landscape importance and this is recognised by the Government in the England Forestry Strategy.

3. Ancient woodlands are irreplaceable natural assets containing flora and fauna that have evolved over centuries in a continuous woodland environment. Once the continuity is broken, it can never be regained.

4. Sites designated as Ancient Woodland include:
   - Barkers Hollow, Preston Brook
   - Beech Wood, Runcorn
   - Clifton Cloughs, Runcorn
   - Clough Wood, Runcorn
   - Dutton Hospital Wood, Runcorn
   - Flood Brook Clough, Runcorn
   - The Glen, Runcorn
   - Hopyard Wood, Hale
   - Mill Wood, Hale
   - Murdishaw Wood, Runcorn
   - Old Plantation, Hale
   - Rows Wood, Daresbury
   - Sandymoor Wood, Runcorn

GE23 PROTECTION OF AREAS OF SPECIAL LANDSCAPE VALUE

1. Development within Areas of Special Landscape Value will not be permitted if it would have an unacceptable effect on the visual and physical characteristics for which an area was designated as having special landscape value.

2. Where existing built-up areas are ‘washed over’ by an Area of Special Landscape Value designation development will be permitted if it does not form part of the landscape nor is conspicuous from it.
3 Development in Areas of Special Landscape Value should be capable of meeting all of the following criteria:

a It is in character with the Area, sensitively sited and designed, and constructed of appropriate materials.

b It is integrated and landscaped to a high standard.

c It can be accommodated without affecting the overall quality of the area.

JUSTIFICATION

4 Halton has a diverse natural landscape, which includes the Mersey Estuary and the flat river valley sides, a more varied topography with sandstone outcrops and ridges to the south, and a more typical Cheshire rural landscape around Daresbury and Preston on the Hill. The Countryside Commission in their document 'The Character of England' identified the classification of areas according to their landscape character as an important tool in helping to conserve and promote local distinctiveness.

5 Areas of Special Landscape Value may be made up of several distinct landscape components (e.g. woodland, meadow, watercourses, hedgerows, topographical features, geological features, buildings, artifacts, etc.) which combine to create an important wider landscape. Alternatively, they may include one specific type of landscape component on a large scale (e.g. a river estuary or forest). Either way, they make an important contribution to the local character of the Borough. In order to retain the character that makes these areas special, it is important that no development is allowed which fragments an area, or changes its character.

6 Areas of Special Landscape Value are important because they give an identity to the Borough. This in turn is important in terms of economic regeneration (attracting visitors and new visitors to the Borough), the social, recreational and cultural needs of local residents, and the benefits to wildlife.

7 The methodology for assessing Areas of Special Landscape Value has been based on the Countryside Commission’s Advisory booklet ‘Landscape Assessment Guidance’ (1993). The quality of the landscape is judged against that of surrounding landscapes. Although scenic quality is the essential and overriding factor in designation, the designation criteria also recognise the relevance of non-visual factors, such as special concentrations of historical, wildlife and archaeological features and cultural associations.

8 The designation criteria are set out below. Areas of Landscape Value should fulfil most or all of these criteria:

- Landscape as a resource: The landscape should be a resource of county or local importance for reasons of rarity or representativeness.

- Scenic Quality: It should be of high scenic value, with important views in and out of the site, and visual links with other landscapes. Aesthetic factors, such as balance, scale, enclosure, texture, colour, diversity, unity and form should be considered.

- Unspoilt Character: The landscape within the area generally should be unspoilt by large-scale, visually intrusive industry, mineral extraction or other inharmonious development.

- Sense of Place: It should have a distinctive local character, including topographical and visual unity and a clear sense of place.

- Conservation Interests: In addition to its scenic quality, it should include other notable conservation interests, such as features of historical, wildlife or archaeological interest.

- Cultural Associations: Importance of the area to local communities, and potential for tourism should be considered.

9 All the sites listed below and defined on Map 6 have been designated as Areas of Special
Landscape Value on the Proposals Map:
- Parishes of Daresbury and Preston Brook
- Hale (including coastal area and Pickerings Pasture)
- Mersey Estuary (including beaches, cliffs and salt marshes)
- Runcorn Hill
- Town Park (including Haddock’s Wood and Norton Priory Woods)

**GE24 PROTECTION OF IMPORTANT LANDSCAPE FEATURES**

1. Development will not be permitted if it would have an unacceptable effect on the visual or physical characteristics for which a site was designated as having Important Landscape Features.

**JUSTIFICATION**

2. Halton has a number of important landscape features in addition to those contained within Areas of Special Landscape Value. These are less diverse in their landscape character than Areas of Special Landscape Value, and smaller in scale. They do, however, play an important part in defining or enhancing the character of the overall landscape of the Borough.

3. Important Landscape Features include copses and woodlands, topographical features, watercourses, man-made features, parks, etc. All have important roles to play in giving an identity to the Borough, and many have important cultural and historical associations for the local community, and wildlife benefits.

4. The methodology for assessing Important Landscape Features has been based on the Countryside Commission’s Advisory booklet ‘Landscape Assessment Guidance’ (1993). The designation criteria primarily consider scenic quality, but also other conservation and cultural associations. The designation takes into account the fact that sites are generally smaller and less diverse than the Areas of Special Landscape Value, and therefore their scenic value is more likely to be compromised by nearby landscapes of lower scenic quality. Hence their links with adjacent greenspaces are important.

5. The designation criteria are set out below. Important Landscape Features should fulfil several of these criteria:

- **Landscape as a Resource:** The landscape features should be a resource of county or local importance for reasons of rarity or representativeness.

- **Scenic Quality:** It should be of high scenic value, with important views in and out of the site, and visual links with other landscapes. Aesthetic factors, such as balance, scale, enclosure, texture, colour, diversity, unity and form should be considered. Visual links with nearby landscapes are important.

- **Unspoilt Character:** The landscape within the area generally should be unspoilt by large-scale, visually intrusive industry, mineral extraction or other inharmonious development. However, nearby developments which detract from the overall scenic value should not necessarily compromise the value of the landscape feature itself.

- **Sense of Place:** It should have a distinctive local character, including topographical and visual unity and a clear sense of place.

- **Conservation Interests:** In addition to its scenic quality, it should include other notable conservation interests, such as features of historical, wildlife or archaeological interest.

- **Cultural Associations:** Importance of the area to local communities, and potential for tourism should be considered.

6. All the sites listed below and defined on Map 6 have been designated as Important Landscape Features:

- Big Wood, Runcorn
- Bridgewater Canal, Runcorn
- Clifton Woods, Widnes
- Daresbury Firs
- Green Wood, Runcorn
- Halton Castle, Runcorn
- Lodge Plantation, Runcorn
GE25 PROTECTION OF PONDS

1 Development will not be permitted if it is likely to damage or destroy an existing pond, unless the importance of the proposed development can be shown to clearly outweigh both the amenity value and nature conservation value of the pond.

2 Wherever practical, the design and layout of development should make provision for the retention of an existing pond.

3 If the removal of an existing pond is permitted as part of a development, replacement ponds, at least equivalent in terms of their size and quality, should be created on or near the site.

JUSTIFICATION

4 Ponds are an important feature within the region. They have important educational, cultural and historical associations, as well as being important habitats for native wildlife. Some also retain an economic function and are used for agriculture, fishing and other purposes.

5 Furthermore, many species found in ponds are “Priority Species” in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, including great crested newts, water voles, lesser silver water beetle and the mud snail.

6 Unfortunately, many ponds have been lost over the last century. For instance, in Cheshire, the number of ponds has declined by 60% since 1870 to fewer than 17,000 by 1997.

7 The Council is committed to ensuring the reversal of this decline and will strongly resist future losses of ponds, as well as encourage the creation of new ponds, as and when opportunities arise.

8 Where ponds are affected by development proposals, or new ponds are created as part of development proposals, the importance of retaining buffer zones of terrestrial vegetation around ponds should be recognised.

GE26 PROTECTION OF HEDGEROWS

1 Development will not be permitted if it is likely to damage or destroy an existing hedgerow, either directly or indirectly, unless the importance of the proposed development can be shown to clearly outweigh both the amenity value and nature conservation value of the hedgerow.

2 Wherever practical, the design and layout of development should make provision for the healthy retention of an existing hedgerow.

3 If the removal of a hedgerow is permitted as part of a development, replacement planting, of appropriate length and character, should be included in the landscaping proposals.

JUSTIFICATION

4 Hedgerows are the most traditional form of field boundary in the local countryside and are important for historical, landscape and nature conservation reasons. They form distinctive visual features that contribute positively to the rural landscape. They often contain a great diversity of plant and wildlife species in their own right, but perhaps their greatest value to nature in this area are the links that they provide between habitats. A good network of hedgerows can enable wildlife to move freely along these corridors.

5 The loss of hedgerows from the countryside over the last thirty years or so has been a continuing concern throughout England. The
Environment Act (1995) included an enabling clause to allow the introduction of regulations to protect certain categories of hedgerows. Hedgerows that are eligible for protection under The Hedgerow Regulations (1997) will be made subject to retention orders when notices to remove them are submitted by farmers and landowners, unless the Council is satisfied that the reasons given for removal are exceptional and justifiable.

6 Only a relatively small proportion of Halton’s hedgerows can be afforded long-term protection through the Hedgerow Regulations. This policy is therefore needed to protect the majority of hedgerows on development sites. All planning applications for sites containing hedgerows of predominantly native species should clearly show these natural features on the plans. The plans should also include a method statement giving full details of how hedgerows will be protected from all site works.

GE27 PROTECTION OF TREES AND WOODLANDS

1 Development will not be permitted if it is likely to damage or destroy a tree protected by a Tree Preservation Order or a tree within a Conservation Area or a woodland which is greater than 0.25 hectare in size, has more than 50% canopy and is more than fifty years old, either directly or indirectly, unless either of the following criteria can be satisfied:

a The removal of those trees likely to be affected would be in the interests of good arboricultural practice.

b The importance of the proposed development can be shown to clearly outweigh both the amenity value and nature conservation value of the protected tree.

2 Wherever practical, the design and layout of development should make provision for the retention of all protected trees and woodlands.

3 If the removal of a tree is permitted as part of a development, replacement planting of appropriate number, size and species, should be carried out on or near the site. Where it is not possible to provide adequate replacements within the site, due to space limitations, developers may be required to fund suitable planting nearby on land owned by the local authority.

JUSTIFICATION

4 The careful retention of existing trees and woodlands can give a sense of maturity to a development and should be an important objective wherever practical.

5 Established trees have great visual amenity value that can significantly enhance the appearance of the locality. They provide contrasts of size, colour and texture to the urban fabric and effectively reflect the changing seasons. They can screen unsightly structures and activities. They can give privacy and have a limiting effect on the extremes of weather. Of increasing value to modern living is the contribution that large trees make to improving the quality of the air that we breathe.

6 Trees of particularly significant public amenity value will be protected by making Tree Preservation Orders (TPO’s) wherever appropriate, particularly in situations where it is perceived that the trees may be threatened by development. The effect of a TPO is to prohibit the felling or pruning of the trees concerned without the prior consent of the Council. Trees within Conservation Areas are afforded similar protection for a six week notification period. The Council’s “Natural Assets Strategy” contains the Council’s policies regarding the making of TPO’s, the consideration of applications for tree work made under TPO or Conservation Area legislation and the prosecution of infringements.

7 All planning applications for sites containing trees protected by a TPO or within a conservation area must be accompanied by a full tree survey of the site, to record details of the location, size, species, health and condition of each tree. The plans should also include a method statement giving full details of how established trees will be protected from all site works.
works, with reference to British Standard 5837 “Trees in relation to construction.”

8 British Standard 5837 should be regarded as an essential reference for all those concerned with the development of sites where trees are present. It gives valuable guidance, following a logical sequence of events from the initial survey through the design period to the protection of retained trees from site works. All developers of land in Halton where established trees are present will be expected to adopt these principles when submitting applications for planning permission.

9 Where the potential threat to established trees is a critical issue, developers are advised to engage a specialist consultant to prepare a detailed report about the arboricultural implications of the development and the special methods of working which need to be applied to ensure that the trees are retained in a healthy condition. Such commitment may be necessary to show that all the factors relating to trees have been properly considered and that the granting of planning permission will not result in a net loss to the environment.

GE28 THE MERSEY FOREST

1 In the locations listed in the schedule, planning permission for development will be conditional upon the carrying out of tree planting and other landscape improvements. Where appropriate this should be consistent with the level indicated in the schedule and on Map 7.

JUSTIFICATION

2 The Mersey Forest is the largest in area of twelve community forests being established throughout England. The Council supports the aims and objectives of The Mersey Forest and is one of the partners in this long-term project, together with eight other local authorities in the region, the Forestry Commission and the Countryside Agency. The Mersey Forest Plan was adopted in 1994 and, since then, more than 80 hectares of new woodland has been established in Halton.

3 The guiding principles for The Mersey Forest in Halton are:
provide a woodland buffer around the urban edge and created a wooded edge to the Mersey Estuary;

extend planting into the urban area using all appropriate and available open land, including derelict land;

provide a new woodland structure for surrounding agricultural areas.

Protect and manage the existing resource of urban trees and woodlands in a sustainable manner.

4 The nature of the landscaping required will vary according to the location. In the following schedule, and the locations broadly indicated on Map 7 specific opportunities have been identified.

Schedule:

a Corridor running south from Pex Hill to the A562.

Opportunity for structural woodland planting along the corridor of open and development land.

b Corridor between the A562 and the River Mersey.

Opportunity for structural woodland planting on the reclaimed derelict sites and development areas along the corridor, and the creation of a wooded edge to the Mersey.

c A562 extending into Knowsley Borough.

Opportunity to create a woodland corridor.

d The agricultural area around Hale.

Opportunity to restore hedges, hedgerow trees and ponds, and plant copse and small woodlands in sympathy with the existing field pattern. Opportunity to increase the frequency and size of new woodlands around the urban periphery to the north-east and west. Existing woodlands should be appropriately managed and the important open marshland adjacent to Ram’s Brook should be protected.

e Moss Bank and the north bank of the St. Helen’s canal.

Opportunity to create woodland on derelict sites and as a setting for any redevelopment of the Moss Bank area. Opportunity to create a tree-lined edge along the north bank of the canal.

f Open corridor from Clifton to Runcorn Hill and sandstone outcrops.

Opportunity to create a well-wooded landscape along the open corridor. Areas of lowland heath on the sandstone outcrops should be protected.

g M56 from Clifton to the A56 junction/Corridor at Sutton Weaver/Land at Preston Brook between the industrial area and the village.

Opportunity to establish an ‘in the Forest’ landscape for the M56 motorway. Opportunity to provide a green barrier at Preston Brook between the industrial area and the village.

h Agricultural area from Dutton to Daresbury.

Opportunity to restore hedges, hedgerow trees and ponds, and plant copse and small woodlands in sympathy with the existing field pattern. Existing woodlands should be appropriately managed.

i Eastern edge of Runcorn.

Existing woodlands should be appropriately managed.

j Keckwick Brook and Halton Moss Area.

Opportunity to create a well-wooded setting for the new developments.

k Open land from Keckwick Brook to Keckwick Hill and around Moore.

Opportunity to create a well-wooded landscape. In particular, the extension of planting will help to integrate the railway embankments and infrastructure developments into the landscape. Some open views from the canal towpath should be maintained.
1. Banks of the Mersey, east of Runcorn Bridge.

The important areas of marshland on both banks should not be planted.

m. The Bongs and surrounding open space and school sites.

Opportunity to carry out extensive planting to integrate the new link road into the landscape.

n. Urban areas of Runcorn and Widnes.

Opportunity to extend periphery planting into the urban area by planting on all available and appropriate sites, such as school playing fields.

5. The Council will continue to investigate opportunities for creating new woodlands as part of The Mersey Forest, both on its own land and on privately owned land as part of the development control process. Existing woodlands and other natural features already identified as part of The Mersey Forest will normally be protected from inappropriate development.

6. New planting as part of The Mersey Forest will not be carried out at the expense of important existing wildlife habitats. Where there are existing features of nature conservation value on a Mersey Forest site, these will be protected from any inappropriate changes, to maintain biodiversity.

7. An expansion of the woodland cover of the Borough will bring many recreational, educational, landscape and wildlife benefits. It will help absorb housing, transport routes and commercial development into a greener environment. It will also contribute to improving air quality, a key objective of the “Health Strategy for Halton”, as trees remove carbon dioxide, release oxygen and filter out harmful pollutants.

8. Employment associated with woodland management and timber production is a long term possibility. In the short term, there may be benefits in inward investment due to a significant improvement in the image of the Borough.

9. The vision of percentage woodland cover shown on Map 7 is only for guidance purposes, and is not intended to be prescriptive for any specific unit of land.

GE29 CANALS AND RIVERS

Development adjacent to the St. Helen’s Canal, the Bridgewater Canal or the Trent and Mersey Canal, or adjacent to the River Mersey, River Weaver or Weaver Navigation will not be permitted if it would have an unacceptable effect on one or more of the following criteria:

a. Recreation or tourism opportunities presented by the canal, river or their environs.

b. Important amenity, landscape and ecological characteristics of the canal, river and their environs.

c. The viability of important landscape and wildlife resources.

d. Attractive views along, onto or from the canal or river.

e. The provision or improvement of access points onto the canal’s towpath or river’s edge.


g. The maintenance of a clean, healthy and pleasant canal or river environment.

2. Proposals to develop the Manchester Ship Canal and its environs for recreation and tourism will be encouraged provided that they would not prejudice its operational requirements as a commercial waterway.

3. Development affecting rivers, streams, brooks or ditches, where it would result in the culverting of existing watercourses, or the diversion or alteration of channels, will only be permitted under exceptional
circumstances, unless the proposals would improve their amenity, landscape or ecological characteristics.

4 Waterside development will not be permitted if it would have an unacceptable effect on water quality or cause significant damaging run-off from hard surfaces.

JUSTIFICATION

5 Canals and rivers are extremely important features in the landscape, and it is often around these water-courses that the built environment has evolved.

6 Canals and rivers are also important for their wildlife interest and provide important wildlife corridors, enabling the movement of wildlife through the Borough.

7 Rivers, streams, brooks and ditches all play a key functional role in draining the land by channeling rain water along appropriate channels from the land out into the sea.

8 Canals and rivers also have considerable potential as a resource for recreation. They can provide linear recreation routes for walkers, cyclists and horse-riders, they provide opportunities for water-based recreation, such as fishing, canoeing and pleasure boating, and provide a pleasant environment for both active and passive recreational pursuits.

9 The canals of the Borough in particular have considerable potential as a focus for tourism development, and will be promoted as such, building on their recreational potential and landscape, wildlife, and heritage value. Recreation and tourism related developments, such as moorings, pubs, restaurants, visitor centres, interpretive facilities, boating facilities and marinas will be encouraged, in suitable locations.

10 Developments should not include the culverting of existing water-courses as this will reduce the landscape and wildlife value of the area; similarly, the channels of existing water-courses should not be altered unless this improves the landscape and wildlife value. Where possible, proposals near to canals, rivers and other water-courses should increase the wildlife and landscape value by encouraging the opening up of culverted watercourses, improving the appearance of adjacent areas and screening unsightly developments, to make the waterside more attractive.

11 Exceptional circumstances may be where the development is of very high economic, social or environmental importance, and there is no alternative but to alter or culvert an existing watercourse. In these cases, the interference with the watercourse should be kept to a minimum, and compensatory measures should be provided by the developer elsewhere on the site or on an adjacent or nearby site. Compensatory measures could include improvement of another nearby watercourse, or creation of a new watercourse or pond. The result should be an improvement in the overall amount and/or quality of the water bodies in the area in terms of their amenity, landscape or ecological characteristics.

12 In considering any development proposals which affect canals, rivers or watercourses, and their environs, the Council will ensure that significant user conflicts or problems of public safety would not be caused. The Council will be particularly concerned to ensure that the environment is safe for users and that the security of adjacent land-uses is maintained.

GE30 THE MERSEY COASTAL ZONE

1 Proposals for development within the Undeveloped Coastal Zone, as defined on the Proposals Map, will not be permitted unless either of the following criteria can be satisfied:

a It requires a coastal location; or

b It clearly relates to the recreational use of the zone and is of a scale and nature which will not adversely affect the landscape quality, nature conservation and archaeological value of the coast; or

c It is necessary for reasons of human health or public safety or for beneficial consequences of primary importance for nature conservation.

2 Proposals for development within the
Developed Coastal Zone need not be limited to those which require coastal location. However, all such proposals, including those made in connection with existing uses, should acknowledge their location within the Mersey Coastal Zone by paying particular attention to environmental quality and, where possible, to improving accessibility to the coast. Proposals which would contribute to regeneration, and/or to the enhancement of environmental quality, tourism and recreation will be encouraged.

3 Even where new development requires a coastal location, the developed coast will usually provide the best option. The undeveloped coast should not be expected to accommodate new development that could be located inland or in existing developed areas.

JUSTIFICATION

4 The coastal zone as defined on the Proposals Map is divided between the developed and undeveloped coast and for the most part is determined by:

- areas of tidal flood risk and coastal erosion;
- biological influences relating to maritime conditions;
- the extent of visibility between land and sea;
- patterns of economic activity;
- the extent of maritime influence on the built environment; and
- distinctive boundaries such as coastal roads, railways and field boundaries.

5 The Council are partners in the Mersey Strategy, a partnership between organisations and individuals. Key players include the Environment Agency and United Utilities. In recent years the Mersey Strategy has helped lever major investment in waste water treatment, industrial processes, land reclamation, and environmental improvements. The work undertaken as part of the Mersey Strategy has transformed the image of the Mersey Estuary and developed its position as one of the regions most valued environmental assets. The estuary is now recognised as an attractive area in which to live and work.

6 As an area of international wildlife value, the Mersey Estuary incorporates sites of Special Scientific Interest, Special Protection Area and Ramsar site designations due to its importance for passage and wintering wildfowl and waders. The undeveloped coast is an essential part of the eco systems within these designated areas and as such should be afforded protection from inappropriate development.

7 Opportunities exist within Halton’s developed coastal zone to encourage environmental improvement along coastlines damaged by urban development and the legacy of the chemical industry, such as port facilities, derelict and contaminated land. In line with Planning Policy Guidance “Coastal Policy” 1992 (PPG20), it is envisaged that such improvements could be implemented through imaginative reuse of land and buildings, tourism and recreational use and the enhancement and restoration of the estuaries nature conservation value.

8 Public access to the coast should be a basic principle on both developed and undeveloped coastlines, unless it would be damaging to nature conservation interests. Regeneration and development schemes should include public access through the use of planning obligations.

9 Given the heavily built up nature of Halton’s developed coastal zone it is considered inappropriate to place a requirement on development within the coastal zone to need a coastal location. However, the need to protect the port facilities at Runcorn at Runcorn Docks from development that may prejudice its use as a port has been recognised in policy TP13 Freight.
CHAPTER 4
POLLUTION AND RISK
AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1. The overall aim of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) is to transform the quality of the environment and improve economic prosperity as well as creating a safe and healthy environment. All these elements are interrelated throughout the UDP. This chapter is no exception.

2. This chapter’s objectives are:

   - to reduce the potential of various land uses to cause continuing harm.
   - to improve the potential to create a safe, healthy and prosperous economy, environment and society.

BACKGROUND

1. The Borough has an unusual and challenging legacy derived from its long and complicated history as one of the nineteenth century’s world centres for the alkali chemical industry. The 1865 Alkali Act owes its origins in part to the evidence put forward as to the gross pollution occurring in the 1850’s and 1860’s on the banks of the Mersey within what is now Halton Borough.

2. The modern resulting mix of businesses includes many still with the potential to pollute and others with the potential to create a major accident risk within the Borough close to housing and town centres in a way which is almost unique in the United Kingdom.

3. The range and the degree of residual contamination of land in the Borough is another modern legacy deriving from the alkali chemical industry.

4. This combined legacy has had a major effect on the Borough’s present social, economic and environmental character and on its present image. This affects the confidence that investors have in bringing modern employment and housing opportunities and other facilities to the Borough. This legacy requires special policies to be applied to encourage the continued transformation of the Borough. The large amount of Halton’s contaminated land, the unusually high costs of its remediation, together with the lower land and property prices associated with the overall combined legacy of the chemical industry, makes it extremely difficult to redevelop many of the area’s brownfield sites. This in turn means the area’s declining population cannot be reversed as easily as in many built up urban areas whose problems of population decline have less complicated origins.

5. Also of significance in terms of its potential to create a major accident risk is Liverpool Airport which lies on the western edge of the Borough. It is however, an activity of great importance to a modern local economy and it is necessary to strike the best balance between its benefits and its safety impact on the Halton area.

POLLUTION AND HEALTH

6. The quality of the environment in Halton Borough has improved dramatically in recent years. Smoke and sulphur dioxide air pollution have been reduced, raw domestic sewage discharges into the Mersey have ceased and other discharges have improved, and large areas of contaminated or derelict land have been reclaimed. These improvements should not be jeopardised by allowing new
development which is likely to cause unacceptable pollution.

**MAJOR ACCIDENT RISKS**

7 Throughout the country there exists the possibility of major accidents which could result in major loss of life or damage to the environment. National policies identify two types of land uses in (or adjacent) to Halton which have particular implications in respect of major accident hazards. The first type are airports and the second type are Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) Sites.

8 Halton is relatively unusual in that part of its area lies under the flight path of a major (and expanding) airport of great economic significance in the sub-region. The existence of Liverpool Airport creates a slightly increased risk of the remote chance of a major accident affecting the environment and people of Halton even though it is located within the area of Liverpool City Council. It is essential to reach a proper and satisfactory balance between these safety issues and the economic value of Liverpool Airport.

9 Halton is also unusual in relation to the number of sites where significant quantities of potentially hazardous chemicals are used or stored. This is partly due to the concentration and nature of chemical installations in the area and the length of time they have been there. These chemical plants are a major source of local employment and prosperity but the storage and use of these chemicals can have a blighting effect on certain kinds of development in the vicinity. The potential increased risk levels from new development in or surrounding a COMAH site is partly reflected in the requirement to consult the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and the Environment Agency (EA) when planning applications are submitted within these areas.

10 It is essential to reach a proper and satisfactory balance between society’s concerns about safety standards and the economic future of Halton’s important chemical industry.

11 The proposed policies strike a proper balance by:

- Acknowledging what society currently considers to be an acceptable level of safety in relation to the potential accident effects on the areas surrounding major accident hazards.
- Imposing a powerful but reasonable pressure on those responsible for the sources of major accident risks, by a policy to improve these levels of safety further, whenever opportunities arise (for those sites within the responsibility of Halton Council as Local Planning Authority).
- Imposing appropriate constraints on development opportunities near to these potential major accident hazards.

**VACANT, DERELICT AND CONTAMINATED LAND**

12 The Halton Legacy Report published by Halton Borough Council in 1991 outlines progress the Council has made since its formation in 1974 in dealing with the severe problems of derelict and contaminated land which it inherited.

13 A total of 160 hectares of derelict land were
reclaimed between 1974 and 1990. Yet the problem is a continuing one and there is still a large amount of land to be reclaimed. Standards of reclamation, remediation and potential public funding have risen during the 1990’s. This means that some of the previously completed derelict land reclamation works require revisiting. It also means that areas still requiring treatment are costly to complete.

14 The historical dominance of the chemical industry in the Borough means that much of our reclaimed and existing derelict land is also contaminated. Some of the land may never be available for public use or development purposes due to the severity of the contamination, unless radical steps are taken to ensure adequate funding resources are available. It is not acceptable, in established and densely populated urban areas, to allow contaminated land to remain a permanent danger or to have a permanent effect on the investment confidence and quality of life of an area and its residents.

15 The reclamation of derelict land provides opportunities for creating golf courses, parkland, greenspace, wildlife areas as well as development sites for housing, employment and other purposes. The Government has recognised the need to encourage brownfield development in preference to the use of greenfield sites.

16 The Plan encourages the re-use of derelict and contaminated land whenever possible, subject to appropriate remedial measures and compliance with other UDP policies.
**PART 2**

**POLICIES AND PROPOSALS**

**POLLUTION AND HEALTH**

**PR1 AIR QUALITY**

1. Development will not be permitted where it is likely to have an unacceptable effect on air quality. The phrase ‘unacceptable effect’ includes consideration of the following:
   
   a. Emissions which are likely to have a significantly unacceptable effect on the amenity of the local environment.
   
   b. Where there is the significant possibility that public health may be affected.
   
   c. Where there is a significant possibility that any proposed development will affect air quality standards.
   
   d. Where there is a significant possibility that investment confidence in respect of surrounding land uses may be affected.
   
   e. An air quality assessment may be required before determining applications with a potential to pollute.

**JUSTIFICATION**

2. Unacceptable levels of pollution include emissions that are in excess of those set by regulatory authorities.

3. Where a development is likely to have an impact on the air quality then it may have a serious impact upon investment confidence in relation to the Council’s aim to transform the quality of Halton’s environment and improve economic prosperity. This could in turn prejudice neighbouring land uses (including uses outside the Plan boundary).

4. Poor air quality can cause harmful effects especially to elderly people and people with poor health and other vulnerable groups. It is therefore essential to adopt a precautionary principle approach to assessments of effects on public health.

5. The National Air Quality Strategy requires local authorities to undertake a formal assessment of air quality and where appropriate declare Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) where Action Plans will be drawn up.

6. Applications should consider the air quality impacts on humans, flora and fauna of traffic using the development as well as pollutant emissions from the proposal itself. Applications where air quality could be a material consideration include where:
   
   a. The development could result in the designation of a new Air Quality Management Area.
   
   b. The development would occur in an AQMA and would conflict with the proposals in the associated Action Plan.
   
   c. The development would have an unacceptable effect on air quality in terms of the effects listed within the policy.

7. Consultation with appropriate bodies where necessary, should be carried out at the earliest possible opportunity.

**PR2 NOISE NUISANCE**

1. Development will not be permitted which contains any new noise source likely to cause a significant increase in ambient noise levels for either day or night time conditions and where it is likely to affect land allocated on the Proposals Map for residential or any other existing noise sensitive land uses.

**JUSTIFICATION**

2. Noise is a widespread source of nuisance and resultant loss of amenity. Planning Policy Guidance note “Planning & Noise” 1994 (PPG24) sets the framework for planning policies related to these issues. Where there is evidence that an existing site creates significant
noise problems the Council will negotiate for the overall reduction in noise levels. Conditions may be attached to any planning permission to ensure noise nuisance is not a problem.

3 Some outdoor sports, such as motorised sports, paintball games, clay pigeon shooting and model aircraft flying, generate significant noise levels. Further guidance on appropriate locations for these “noisy outdoor sports” is contained in Policy GE14.

PR3 ODOUR NUISANCE

1 Development will not be permitted if it is likely to create or significantly add to or intensify an odour nuisance, which can be detected beyond the boundary of the site.

JUSTIFICATION

2 Definitions of ‘Odour Nuisance’ will be based upon definitions established by appropriate regulating authorities including the Environment Agency and Halton Borough Council. Wherever such definitions have not been formally defined then odour nuisance will normally be defined by reference to established and accepted scientific tests.

3 Odours are a particular problem in Halton and affect the quality of life for residents, workers and visitors to the area and can deter new investment. Since odour problems can create strong reactions from people it is not considered acceptable in terms of nuisance and associated quality of life issues that the area should continue to be subjected to an unusual range of odour problems.

PR4 LIGHT POLLUTION AND NUISANCE

1 Development will not be permitted if it is likely to have an unacceptable effect on levels of light pollution or nuisance by visual intrusion of artificial light.

JUSTIFICATION

2 There is an increasing problem with light pollution. This can cause problems especially in residential areas and the open countryside. Poorly designed flood lighting from sports grounds, security lighting and street lighting can contribute to lighting having an unnecessary affect on other land uses, as well as having implications on energy resources.

3 The Council will ensure that where development requires external lighting, light spillage is minimised and, where appropriate, landscaping/screening is used. Some forms of lighting can also be detrimental to highway safety and any planning applications should be refused if there is a danger to public safety. However, adequate lighting can positively contribute to the establishment of safer communities and a proper balance may have to be struck between supporting safer communities and minimising residential area and open countryside nuisance.

4 Further guidance on using floodlighting for extending the use of synthetic turf pitches is provided in Policy GE13.

PR5 WATER QUALITY

1 Development will not be permitted if it is likely to have an unacceptable effect on the water quality of water bodies including rivers, lakes and canals or pose an unacceptable risk to the quality of groundwater.

JUSTIFICATION

2 Water is an essential resource and any pollution can have a serious effect on drinking water supply, industrial and agricultural practices. Pollution to water supplies not only poses a threat to humans but also flora and fauna.

3 There is therefore a need to ensure that adequate pollution control measures are incorporated into new developments to reduce the risks of water pollution. Policies should aim to protect water quality particularly groundwater sources.

4 The types of water pollution include inadequately treated effluent from sewage/waste water treatment works, industrial processes. Inadequate foul or surface water drainage provision can cause pollution. Inappropriate/uncontrolled redevelopment of contaminated land can cause pollution.
PR6 LAND QUALITY

1. Development will not be permitted if it is likely to cause contamination of the soil or sub-soil on a development site or on surrounding land uses as a result of pollution. This includes consideration of:
   a. The unacceptable effects of deposits and emissions.
   b. Whether development, through its potential to pollute, is likely to have a serious impact upon investment confidence.
   c. The risk of damage to health.

JUSTIFICATION

2. The Council will consult appropriate agencies when considering a planning application which may cause pollution. It is essential to avoid the possibility of new land uses which may themselves be a future source of land contamination.

PR7 DEVELOPMENT NEAR TO ESTABLISHED POLLUTION SOURCES

1. Development near to existing sources of pollution will not be permitted if it is likely that those existing sources of pollution will have an unacceptable effect on the proposed development (as defined in Policies PR1, 4, 5, 6, 13 and 14) and it is considered to be in the public interest that the interests of the existing sources of pollution should prevail over those of the proposed development.

2. Exceptions may be permitted where the applicant submits satisfactory proposals to substantially mitigate the effects of existing sources of pollution on the development proposal.

JUSTIFICATION

3. The UDP allocates land in such a way as to generally minimise unnecessary conflict between different land uses. Because of this and because of the other policies contained in the UDP it will not be common for this policy to be used. However, it is essential to acknowledge that the public interest may occasionally restrict the range of development uses of land.

4. The developer will be encouraged to negotiate with those responsible for existing sources of pollution to find a solution acceptable to the Local Planning Authority.

PR8 NOISE SENSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS

1. Development that is sensitive to noise will not be permitted near to transportation facilities such as Liverpool Airport, roads or railways unless steps are taken to substantially mitigate the effects of the noise nuisance upon the proposed development.

JUSTIFICATION

2. Nuisance from noise is a common source of complaint, from airports, major roads or railways especially when located near to residential areas.

3. Public transportation facilities are important elements in the economic prosperity of the area.

4. It is in the public interest to require protection of those sensitive developments and thereby minimise the creation of nuisance problems.

PR9 DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE LIVERPOOL AIRPORT PUBLIC SAFETY ZONE (PSZ)

1. Development within the Liverpool Airport PSZ will only be permitted if it falls into one of the following categories:
   a. It comprises a dwelling extension.
   b. It would not reasonably be expected to increase the numbers of people living, working or congregating in or at the property or land.
National advice from the DETR (DfT public safety zones circular 1/2002) in respect of accidental risks around major airports advises refusal of planning permission for significant new development where the individual risk exceeds 10 chances per million (10 cpm) in one year of death occurring to someone on the ground as calculated on a modeling method related to records of actual accidental risks around airports. This risk level restriction relates to the normal range of development proposals.

Certain types of development involving very low density of occupation of land may be allowed in certain circumstances. Other types of development involving very large congregations of people in the vicinity of Liverpool Airport (e.g. a major sports stadium) may not be allowed even where the individual risk level is less than 10cpm.

Within the public safety zone, if the figure exceeds 100 cpm the airport operator would be expected to take steps to remove the development. It is not expected that this will arise within Halton within the Plan period.

The Liverpool Airport Public Safety Zone will be identified in a Supplementary Planning Document.

Development within the Liverpool Airport height restriction zone will only be permitted if it is below the height notified to the Council by the relevant authority and would not cause a hazard to air travellers.

Development within the Liverpool Airport height restriction zone will not be permitted if it would otherwise cause a hazard to air travellers.

Tree planting and other landscape improvements in the vicinity of Liverpool Airport considered under Policy GE28 – The Mersey Forest, must not adversely affect the operational integrity or safety of the airport.

The Council is notified by the Civil Aviation Authority that they wish to be consulted about certain types of development around airports to ensure that the safe passage of air traffic will not be interfered with by, for example, high buildings or waste facilities which might attract large populations of birds near airports.

The varying height zones cover the whole of the Borough and are therefore not shown on the Proposals Map but the Local Planning Authority keeps records of these areas.

While Policy GE28 seeks to encourage tree planting and landscape improvements as part of the Mersey Belt project, it is important that such planting does not adversely affect the operational safety of the airport.

Development that falls within the designated COMAH definition will be permitted provided that all of the following criteria can be satisfied:

- The applicant can demonstrate that the proposal will impose no significant development restrictions in terms of off-site accidental risk assessment on surrounding land users.
- There is no reasonable alternative method of achieving the development’s objective.

Proposals for new COMAH proposals or for the expansion or amendment of existing sites should result in no significant development restrictions that would reduce the effective choice of proper land uses in the surrounding consultation zone notified to the Council by the Competent Authority.
3 Because the processing and storage of hazardous substances means there is an increased possibility of a major accident it is always necessary to ascertain if there is a reasonable alternative.

4 Current COMAH sites and major accident hazard pipelines and their consultation zones will be shown in a Supplementary Planning Document as they may change over the plan period.

5 Significant development restrictions are defined as an overall accidental risk level of 10 chances per million per year as a result of a proposed COMAH development and any other established COMAH sites nearby.

6 In determining planning applications under this policy, the Council will consult with and take account of any advice received from the Health and Safety Executive.

PR12 DEVELOPMENT ON LAND SURROUNDING COMAH SITES

1 Development on land within consultation zones around notified COMAH sites will be permitted provided that all of the following criteria can be satisfied:

   a The likely accidental risk level from the COMAH site is not considered to be significant.

   b Proposals are made by the developer that will mitigate the likely effects of a potential major accident so that they are not considered significant.

JUSTIFICATION

2 The definition of what constitutes a significant major accidental risk is related to the same policy development framework for risk levels set out in the justification to Policy PR9 above, where an individual accidental risk level of 10 chances per million (cpm) in a year is the maximum considered acceptable, with the same provisos set out in the justification to Policy PR9.

3 It may be unacceptable to reject a desirable new development proposal if substantial and comprehensive measures can be taken to mitigate the effects of a major accident. The developer will be encouraged to negotiate with those responsible for existing off-site accidental risks to find a solution acceptable to the Local Planning Authority.

4 COMAH consultation zones in Halton will be shown in a Supplementary Planning Document as they may change over the plan period.

5 In determining planning applications under this policy, the Council will consult with and take account of any advice received from the Health and Safety Executive. The Health and Safety Executives approach aims to balance the principle of stabilising and not increasing the number of people at risk with a pragmatic awareness of the limited land available for development in the UK. The HSE’s approach to risk assessment is set out in a number of guidance documents they have produced, which includes the PADHI land use methodology. This particular guidance is designed to help planners and developers who want to work out for themselves what the likely response of the HSE will be if the HSE were to be consulted about a planning proposal.

VACANT, DERELICT AND CONTAMINATED LAND

PR13 VACANT AND DERELICT LAND

1 Development and reclamation of derelict and vacant land will not be permitted unless all of the following criteria can be satisfied:

   a Reclamation/ decontamination works are carried out to ensure the safety and health of people and the environment on and around the land.

   b The proposal is a suitable after use of the site.

   c Any proposal complies with other relevant policies within the Plan including urban regeneration initiatives identified by the Council.
JUSTIFICATION

2 There are still large areas of derelict and vacant land in the Borough. Derelict land contributes to the lack of suitable and immediately available sites for investors. It also creates a poor image for the Borough, which in turn deters investment.

3 The reuse of derelict land fits in with the sustainability issues of recycling land, and reduces pressure on the development of greenfield sites which are an important resource to the Borough.

4 Vacant and derelict land will usually have some degree of contamination associated with it but would not usually require special remediation techniques before re-use.

PR14 CONTAMINATED LAND

1 Before determining any planning applications for development on or adjacent to land which is known or suspected to be contaminated, the applicant will be required to satisfy all of the following:

   a Submit details to assess the nature and degree of contamination (type, degree and extent of contamination).

   b Identify remedial measures required to deal with any hazard to safeguard future development and neighbouring uses.

   c Submit details of a programme of implementation for the roll out and completion of mitigation measures to be agreed with the Council.

2 The requirement to undertake the above work will be controlled by either planning conditions or, when necessary, by planning obligations.

JUSTIFICATION

3 Many sites in the Borough are known to be contaminated e.g. historical chemical works/tips, former landfill sites. Therefore, discussion prior to the submission of any planning application should be carried out with the appropriate bodies, including the Borough Council.

4 Development on or near to contaminated land can cause the release of contaminants which may result in significant harm to the local environment, and population. It is therefore necessary to assess any risks and identify appropriate remediation measures necessary to make the land developable or to reduce harm to the existing environment, and so that new receptors and pathways are not introduced. It is advisable to liaise and discuss proposals as early as possible with the Council and other appropriate agencies so that a clear understanding of the implications and requirements of the agreed mitigation measures is known.

5 The Council will require that the implementation of mitigation measures are enforceable through either planning conditions or by other forms of planning obligations.

GROUNDWATER AND FLOOD PLAINS

PR15 GROUNDWATER

1 Proposals that are likely to lead to an adverse impact on groundwater resources in terms of their quantity, quality and ecological features they support, will not be permitted.

JUSTIFICATION

2 With groundwater present beneath the whole of the land surface, there are many developments that have the potential to pose a direct or indirect threat to groundwater quality. In order to ensure sustainability for future generations there is a need to protect both the environment and future potential abstractors from pollution and to be aware that groundwater is a precious resource.

3 Many of the types of development likely to pose a risk to groundwater will fall under the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 1999. Where relevant, environmental statements will fully address the potential impacts of any proposal upon the
groundwater environment. Wherever groundwater is vulnerable to land use activities the site-specific considerations of both the geology and proposed operational controls must be considered at the planning stage to ensure adequate protection.

4 Within the boundary of Halton a single major aquifer underlies approximately two thirds of the area. The groundwater is currently extensively exploited for public and industrial supply and past over abstraction has led to saline intrusion from the Mersey Estuary. United Utilities have an abstraction borehole at Daresbury, and other major abstractions lie just outside the Borough boundary at Bold Heath, Cronton, north west of Upton in Widnes, and to the north east of Speke. These abstractions have designated Source Protection Zones around them that, collectively, cover the bulk of the aquifer outcrop in Halton Borough. An underpinning philosophy behind the groundwater protection policy promoted by the Environment Agency is that ‘prevention is better than cure’. Once groundwater becomes polluted it is difficult, if not impossible to rehabilitate.

5 Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) Note 12 (Dec 1999) draws particular attention in the section on effective protection of the environment and the prudent use of natural resources to the need to protect groundwater resources from contamination or over exploitation.

PR16 DEVELOPMENT AND FLOOD RISK

1 Development will not be permitted where:
   a The site is at risk from fluvial or tidal / coastal flooding;
   b It would contribute to the risk of flooding elsewhere;
   c It would cause adverse access or maintenance problems on or adjacent to watercourses;
   d It will cause loss of functional floodplain;
   e It will adversely affect the integrity of existing fluvial or tidal flood defences;
   f It will adversely affect the geomorphology of channels, or increase instability and erosion;
   g It will result in extensive culverting; unless the site is protected to the appropriate standard of defence and it can be clearly demonstrated that sustainable and appropriate mitigation methods can be implemented.

2 A Flood Risk Assessment will be required where it is considered that there would be an increased risk of flooding as a result of the development or the development itself would be at risk of flooding.

3 Where development is allowed, mitigation measures are likely to be required to alleviate flood risk both on and off site. These measures should be derived from a Flood Risk Assessment and be included as part of the development proposals. Such proposals must protect and enhance the environmental quality of the river, its surroundings and natural history interests.

JUSTIFICATION

4 Floodplains are generally flat-lying areas adjacent to a watercourse, tidal lengths of a river or sea where water flows in times of flood or would flow, but for the presence of flood defences where they exist. The effectiveness of a floodplain should not be impaired by development. Present or potential future occupiers should not be put at risk, neither should additional run off from the development exceed flood storage capacity locally or downstream.

5 The Environment Agency should be consulted upon planning applications which may raise flooding issues.

6 Recognising the need for continual maintenance to watercourses once development is completed and in the interests of wildlife, the use of extensive culverting should be avoided.
7 Development, particularly of Greenfield sites, usually results in large areas of impermeable surfaces such as roofs, roads and car parking which can alter the natural water cycle. The amount of rainwater percolating down into the ground and entering local watercourses is reduced and the flow away from the site through drains is increased. Such changes waste valuable water resources, increase the possibility of flooding, and increase pollution risk.

8 Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) can be used to reduce this waste and prevent problems occurring away from the site. Using smaller areas of hard landscaping and more permeable surfaces is an effective means of reducing run-off. Effective management measures can also include using grass swales, wetlands and retention ponds as alternatives to traditional drainage systems. On larger developments, management will need to be maintained over the life of the development if it is to continue to be effective. Legal agreements will be used as necessary.
AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1 The policies within this Chapter look to achieving the aims and objectives contained in Part 1 of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP). The minerals and waste aims and objectives, and therefore these policies, are related to making a contribution to regional self-sufficiency in dealing with waste and encouraging sustainable waste management.

2 The Council must set out a policy framework in the development plan to enable appropriate sites to be developed for minerals exploration/extraction, and waste management developments. The Planning Authority’s key aim in controlling such development proposals will be to ensure that where development does take place, it does so without having unacceptable impacts on the environment, amenity, or other interests of acknowledged importance.

BACKGROUND

MINERALS DEVELOPMENTS

1 Mineral extraction is unlikely to lead to a major number of development proposals within the plan period. This is principally due to the largely urban nature of the Borough. The likelihood of exploration work for hydrocarbons may be higher. It is known that suitable rock formations exist under the Borough and in the past exploration work has been carried out. Another possible minerals-related development that could occur is the use of borrow pits to provide fill materials connected with major engineering or construction projects.

2 It must be emphasised that minerals can only be worked where they naturally occur. This means therefore that possible extraction sites are limited. Where other planning constraints exist, the potential area for development is further reduced. The minerals industry has not expressed any interest in specific sites for future development. In these circumstances, therefore, the Council as Minerals Planning Authority does not propose to make any land allocations for minerals developments. Any proposals which are submitted will be determined having regard to national planning guidance set out in the Minerals Planning Guidance Notes (MPG’s), and to the policy framework set out in this Plan.

WASTE DEVELOPMENTS

3 Examples of a wide range of waste developments can be found in the Borough. These include incinerators, a landfill site, lagoons, wastewater treatment works, scrap metal yards, waste transfer stations, aggregates recycling facilities and household waste and recycling centres. Of these the most numerous are waste transfer stations and scrap yards. In contrast there is only one landfill facility, which caters for many of ICI’s industrial waste arisings.

4 Any move towards more sustainable waste management options is likely to further increase the numbers of waste transfer stations, scrap yards and aggregate recycling facilities, since these are more sustainable waste management options. There may also be composting facilities and waste treatment facilities. Many of these facilities raise different planning issues, and the UDP must set out a
policy framework to enable all such proposals to be considered and approved where appropriate.

WASTE MANAGEMENT PLAN 1996

5 The Council is required to have regard to any waste disposal plan for their area prepared under section 50 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. The approved waste disposal plan is the Waste Management Plan, prepared in 1996 by Cheshire County Council as the Waste Regulation Authority. The plan sets out a strategic framework for waste management decisions for a 10-year period. The UDP must set out the regard which the Authority has had in formulating waste policies to the waste disposal plan, and the reason for any inconsistency between the waste policies and the waste disposal plan.

6 The Waste Management Plan indicates that waste arisings in the Borough were in the region of 230,000 tonnes per annum. This figure was calculated from a waste survey carried out for the year 1992/3.

7 The domestic waste collected from the Borough’s householders is currently disposed of by landfilling. This takes place at Arpley landfill site in Warrington. The contract covering the disposal of this waste, held by 3C Waste Limited, runs until 2008.

8 The Council considers that the policy framework set out in the UDP is in accordance with the aims of the Waste Management Plan, and therefore concords with national guidance. There is no inconsistency between the policies in the UDP and the Waste Management Plan.

NATIONAL POLICY FRAMEWORK

9 National policy for waste management is contained in a number of different documents, both legislative and in the form of guidance. These principally consist of the main planning acts, and further guidance given in Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPG’s). PPG10 “Planning and Waste Management” contains detailed guidance about waste planning, both in relation to policy development and also development control decision making.

10 Another consideration is the Waste Strategy 2000 published by the Government. This document sets out the key principle for sustainable waste management as being:

- the Best Practicable Environmental Option (BPEO)

11 This is supported by three additional principles that can act as a starting point when assessing the BPEO:

- the waste hierarchy
- the proximity principle
- Regional self sufficiency

THE BEST PRACTICABLE ENVIRONMENTAL OPTION (BPEO)

12 This is defined in the 12th report of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution as:

13 “a BPEO is the outcome of a systematic and consultative decision making procedure which emphasises the protection and conservation of the environment across land, air and water. The BPEO procedure establishes, for a given set of objectives, the option that provides the most benefits or the least damage to the environment as a whole, at acceptable cost, in the long term as well as the short term.”

THE WASTE HIERARCHY

14 The waste hierarchy is a conceptual framework which acts as a guide to the options which should be considered when assessing the BPEO.

a The waste hierarchy suggests that the most effective environmental solution may often be to reduce the generation of waste i.e. reduction;

b where further reduction is not practicable, products and materials can sometimes be used again, either for the same or a different purpose: re-use;

c failing that, value should be recovered from waste, through recycling, composting or energy recovery from waste;

d only if none of the above offer an appropriate solution should waste be disposed of.
The Government advises that recycling and composting should be considered before recovery of energy from waste.

15 The waste hierarchy is therefore:

- reduction
- re-use
- recovery (recycling, composting, energy recovery)
- disposal

16 Within the hierarchy, the Government does not expect incineration with energy recovery to be considered before the opportunities for recycling and composting have been explored.

17 The intention of the waste hierarchy is that policies should secure waste management options higher up the hierarchy in preference to those lower down.

THE PROXIMITY PRINCIPLE

18 The proximity principle suggests that waste should generally be managed as near to its place of production as possible. This is to ensure that problems are not exported to other regions or countries, and also to reduce the significant environmental impact that the transportation of wastes can have. The proximity principle should be used by the Local Planning Authority when considering the requirements for and locations of waste management facilities, and can also raise awareness in local communities that the waste they produce is a problem with which they must deal.

19 The proximity principle enables a link to be made between the waste hierarchy and the BPEO. For example, the implications of transporting waste to a more distant waste management facility may on occasions mean that the BPEO may be further down the waste hierarchy. The waste hierarchy and proximity principle will therefore be important considerations in determining the BPEO.

20 It would not be in accordance with national planning guidance for the Borough to restrict waste management facilities in terms of the quantities of waste they deal with. It however will be appropriate to require proposals to take account of the proximity principle; however this must also be in the context of the waste hierarchy and issues of regional self-sufficiency, and the Best Practicable Environmental Option.

REGIONAL SELF SUFFICIENCY

21 The Government believes that waste should not be exported from the UK for disposal. Planning Authorities should aim, wherever practicable, for regional self-sufficiency in managing waste.

THE EUROPEAN LANDFILL DIRECTIVE

22 The EC Landfill Directive will potentially have a major impact on waste management methods within the plan period. The Directive places a requirement on governments to reduce the amount of biodegradable municipal waste being landfilled. This would be done over a 15-19 year period, in three stages. The amount of biodegradable municipal waste being landfilled must be reduced to 75% by 2006; 50% by 2009; and 35% by 2016, and would require the amount of biodegradable municipal waste being landfilled to be reduced to 35% of the 1995 biodegradable municipal waste arisings. This will require substantial amounts of municipal waste to be diverted away from landfill and towards composting and recycling, energy from waste, and other technologies.

RECYCLING AND OTHER METHODS

23 The Government has also set national targets for increasing the recycling of municipal waste. These are:

a. To recycle or compost at least 25% of household waste by 2005
b. To recycle or compost at least 30% of household waste by 2010
c. To recycle or compost at least 33% of household waste by 2015.

24 The development of other waste management methods to replace landfill for biodegradable municipal waste may mean proposals being put forward within the Borough in the plan.
period. The plan therefore needs to put in place a policy framework to determine any such applications.

**WASTE MINIMISATION**

25 The reduction (minimisation) of waste occupies the prime position in the waste hierarchy (see para 15). However, it does not give rise to a need for development subject to control under the Town and Country Planning Act. It is not therefore appropriate for the UDP to include a policy for its encouragement. The Council intends to encourage waste minimisation by all other available means.

**RENEWABLE ENERGY**

26 To achieve the national target of reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 20% below 1990 levels by 2010 the government is concerned to ensure that the planning system plays its part in meeting the objectives of its climate change strategy. The Plan therefore contains polices designed to encourage appropriate development of new and renewable sources of energy.

**THE FORMAT OF THE POLICIES**

27 The UDP is not going to make land allocations for ‘bad-neighbour’ developments, including certain types of waste management facilities. It is considered extremely difficult to forecast likely land requirements for such uses, since it is the waste management industry that is the major player in bringing forward development proposals. Although national policy and the UDP are to encourage more sustainable waste management methods, the extent to which they may be developed is largely a commercial decision to be made by the industry. It has also proved difficult to identify any specific sites that may be suitable for such developments. As a result, it has been decided at this stage not to make any site specific allocations. Developments should instead be directed to Primarily Employment Areas on the Proposals Map. If during the plan preparation period suitable sites become available then the policies can be amended to suit.

28 In relation to the final issue of a criteria based approach rather than a site-specific one for other types of waste management facilities, it is considered that a criteria based plan is the most appropriate. The previous paragraph explains why it has not proved possible to make site allocations for certain waste management developments. It is therefore logical to also use a criteria based approach for other types of waste management facilities.

29 It is considered extremely difficult to predict the likely number, and types of waste management facilities that may be required during the plan period. The type of facility that may prove to be the most appropriate for any particular waste stream is dependent on a number of variable factors, including changes required by European Directive.

30 The likely land requirements for varying types of facility may be greatly different. As an example, a landfill site or incinerator to cater for a similar throughput of waste will have vastly different land requirements. For this reason it is considered that the UDP cannot predict, with any reasonable accuracy, the likely land requirements over the plan period. The Council would not wish to unduly influence the industry’s choice of waste management methods by virtue of potentially constraining land allocations, when this might otherwise prevent the development of a more sustainable waste management facility. In such circumstances, it is considered that the most appropriate way forward is to put in place a detailed set of criteria which proposals must meet. The Council considers that this will provide appropriate guidance to the industry and to the public relating to the development of future waste management facilities.
PART 2
POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

MW1 ALL MINERALS AND WASTE MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENTS

1 Planning applications for exploration for minerals; the winning and working of minerals; and waste management facilities will be assessed with regard to the extent to which they meet all of the following criteria:

a the development will not have an unacceptable detrimental impact on the following interests of acknowledged importance:

- the Green Belt;
- Urban Greenspace;
- dwellings or other environmentally sensitive uses and identified development sites in terms of visual amenity; noise; vibration; dust; windblown materials; odour; litter; vermin; air, land or water pollution or other nuisance;
- quality of the water environment, water resources (surface waters and groundwater), or the capacity of flood storage areas;
- structural integrity and setting of Listed Buildings;
- sites of archaeological interest;
- the best and most versatile agricultural land (Grade 1,2, or 3a of the MAFF Agricultural Land Classification);
- Public Rights of Way and the amenity of users of Public Rights of Way;
- Conservation Areas;
- sites of ecological interest;
- sites of geological or geomorphological interest;
- features of landscape value (including the general landscape setting), protected trees, ancient woodland;
- aerodrome safety; and
- highway safety and highway capacity;

b the development will, where practicable, utilise sustainable transport modes in place of road transport;

c the development will not lead to the permanent loss or reduction in quality of the best and most versatile agricultural land;

d the development will not lead to the unacceptable sterilisation of mineral deposits within the site or adjacent areas;

e the development will be sited at a sufficient distance from dwellings or other sensitive nearby properties, and laid out, fenced and screened so as to avoid nuisance from the sites operation;

f a restoration plan will be required (where applicable). The restoration plan must incorporate a satisfactory scheme for the reclamation of the site to an appropriate after use, or to a state capable of beneficial after use, within reasonable time period: including appropriate provision for aftercare and management.

JUSTIFICATION

2 In considering proposals for minerals and waste developments, the key aim of the Council will be to ensure that proposals do not have unacceptable harm on interests of acknowledged importance as defined by the policies of this Plan. This includes protecting
the natural and the built environment, as well as the amenity and well being of residents and visitors to the Borough. It will wish to ensure that the potential impacts of developments will not be unacceptable. The Council considers that this policy, against which all proposals will be judged, enables these objectives to be met.

**Potential impacts of proposals**

3 The potential environmental impacts of minerals and waste developments can be significant. The Council will wish to ensure that those impacts can be fully assessed when planning applications are submitted. While some proposals may fall within the scope of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations and require a formal Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to be carried out, it is considered that in those cases where the Regulations do not require an EIA sufficient information should be provided with the application to enable the Council to fully consider the proposals.

4 The requirement to provide a restoration plan will not be applicable to all proposals. Temporary developments such as quarries or landfill sites will be required to provide a restoration plan; whereas built facilities such as waste transfer stations and Materials Recycling Facilities (MRF’s) are usually more permanent in nature and as such would not be expected to make provision for site restoration.

**MW2 REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL APPLICATIONS**

1 Planning applications for exploration for minerals; for the winning and working of minerals; for the development of waste treatment or disposal facilities; or for development associated with either activity will not be permitted unless they contain sufficient information to allow an adequate assessment of the long and short term environmental effects of the proposal together with full details of the feasibility and practicality of restoration and aftercare.

**JUSTIFICATION**

2 Decisions on individual proposals must balance the need for facilities with their potential impact. Adequate information is essential to allow a full assessment to be made on the operational aspects of the development together with the longer-term aspects of restoration.

**MW3 REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL WASTE MANAGEMENT APPLICATIONS**

1 Planning applications for waste management facilities, or extensions to waste management facilities, must include a full working statement which will detail all of the following information:

a the types and quantities of materials to be accepted into the facility;

b the duration of operations, and where necessary restoration operations;

c the hours of operation of the facility, including hours of vehicle movements and maintenance of plant and equipment;

d access arrangements;

e the safeguarding and enhancement of existing and potential archaeological, ecological, geological, geomorphological and landscape features within the site;

f adequate and effective measures to control, and where possible make productive use of landfill gas and leachate, both during site operations and after operations have ceased;

g satisfactory restoration of the site and suitable provisions for aftercare;

h on-site provision for all deliveries, collections and storage of materials, and staff and visitor parking;

i drainage and site infrastructure arrangements.
JUSTIFICATION

2 The information required when making a planning application is to ensure that a full assessment of the potential impacts of a proposed development can be made. These impacts may be secondary, cumulative, short, medium or long-term, as well as permanent or temporary, positive or negative. The provision of the required information in a planning application will enable the Council to fully assess the likely impacts of the development, and make a fully informed decision as to whether the proposed development is acceptable. The Council will not grant planning permission where the proposal will cause demonstrable harm to interests of acknowledged importance.

AGGREGATE MINERALS

1 The Council is required to include policies which make provision for developments to contribute to the regional and sub-regional requirements for aggregate minerals.

MW4 AGGREGATE MINERALS

1 In considering planning applications for the extraction of aggregate minerals, regard will be given to all of the following:

a the contribution the proposal may make towards maintaining the sub-regional share of the regional production of aggregates, as expressed in Government Guidelines; and

b the need to maintain a landbank of reserves with permissions within the sub-regional area, in accordance with MPG6 - Guidelines for Aggregate Provisions for England and Wales (1994).

JUSTIFICATION

2 Mineral Planning Guidance Note 6 - Guidelines for Aggregate Provision in England (MPG6) was published in April 1994 and uses the results of the 1989 Aggregates Survey as a basis for forecasting regional production and demand for aggregates to the year 2006. The Government is currently revising MPG6, and new guidance is expected to be published in 2002.

3 The North West Regional Aggregates Working Party (NWRAWP) has apportioned likely demand to Mineral Planning Authority (MPA) level. Halton is grouped with Warrington and the Merseyside and Greater Manchester districts for the purpose of this apportionment. This grouping of Authorities is required to make provision for quantities of sand and gravel, and crushed rock in the period 1992-2006.

4 Within this period Mineral Planning Authorities are required to provide for a landbank of permissions sufficient for at least seven years extraction, unless exceptional circumstances prevail. This is because the overall process of site selection, acquisition, development and the gaining of planning and other approvals, is very time consuming, and there is a need to ensure a steady and regular supply of aggregate minerals to the construction industry.

5 As stated previously in this chapter, Halton has for various reasons not played a significant role in producing aggregate minerals in recent years, and therefore the apportionment and landbank requirements have rested, and are likely to continue to rest on other areas within the Sub-Region.

PROTECTION OF MINERAL RESOURCES

1 Policies are also required to safeguard minerals from development that may sterilise important resources. It is also considered appropriate to consider extraction of minerals prior to a development that would otherwise sterilise them.

MW5 PROTECTION OF MINERAL RESOURCES

1 Where appropriate, known mineral resources will be protected from sterilisation by other forms of development, and where practicable applicants will be required to consider prior extraction of minerals before other development proceeds.
JUSTIFICATION

2 Mineral resources are finite and are likely to be lost when building or other forms of development take place. Resources that are scarce or significant should therefore be safeguarded from sterilisation when alternative development sites can be utilised. Where development is necessary, the prior extraction of the mineral resources will be encouraged where this is practicable.

AFTERCARE

1 The restoration of former minerals or waste sites is only the first stage in returning the land to a beneficial use. Longer term aftercare and management is nearly always necessary to ensure the sites are satisfactorily restored to an appropriate standard.

MW6 AFTERCARE

1 Where appropriate, proposals for exploration of minerals; the winning and working of minerals; and waste management facilities will be required to be subject to a programme of aftercare management for a period of five years from restoration. An extension of the period of aftercare beyond 5 years should be considered where this is necessary to enable reclamation objectives to be met. Schemes will be required to provide for the highest practicable aftercare standards and the Council will require an outline scheme to be submitted as part of the initial planning application.

JUSTIFICATION

2 The need for aftercare stems from the recognition that land which is to be fully reclaimed needs not only the replacement of subsoils and topsoil, but also to be cultivated and managed for a number of years in order to bring it to a satisfactory standard. The ultimate aim behind the concept of aftercare is that, over time, the land will not have to be treated any differently than undisturbed land. Aftercare may also include habitat management.

3 Legislation allows the Council to impose aftercare conditions covering a five-year period, or such other longer period as may be agreed. The Council will impose such conditions where necessary. Differing restoration schemes require differing degrees of aftercare and management. Where a five-year period is insufficient, a commitment to longer-term management of the site will be required. This can be done through agreements under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

4 Long term pollution liabilities (rather than restoration aftercare) are covered by waste management licencing and site monitoring is covered by the Environmental Protection Act 1990, administered by the Environment Agency.

WASTE RECYCLING AND COLLECTION FACILITIES

1 These types of facility are considered to be forms of sustainable waste management, and as such the Council should encourage their provision in preference to other, less sustainable, waste management options.

MW7 WASTE RECYCLING AND COLLECTION FACILITIES

1 The development of waste recycling and collection facilities, including scrap metal yards, aggregate recycling facilities, soil screening facilities, Materials Recycling Facilities (MRF’s), waste transfer stations and other operations that will reduce the volume of wastes requiring final disposal will be supported. Proposals for such facilities should accord with all the following criteria:

a be located in a Primarily Employment Area, provided that it can be shown not to have an unacceptable impact on existing industries, particularly food manufacturing and high technology activities;

b be sited at a sufficient distance from dwellings and other sensitive properties, and laid out, fenced and screened so as to avoid nuisance from the transport, sorting, processing or storage of waste;
c be sited with or adjacent to other waste management facilities, unless over-riding reasons for an alternative location are demonstrated;

d be located within a building when handling non-inert wastes, unless it can be demonstrated that no nuisance would result.

JUSTIFICATION

2 The Council wishes to encourage moves towards more sustainable waste management methods. This will involve a greater use of waste management methods that aim to recycle, re-use or recover waste. These will include developments such as scrap metal facilities; aggregate recycling and soil screening facilities; Materials Recycling Facilities (MRF’s); and waste transfer stations. These types of developments enable the segregation of waste types for possible re-use or recycling, and can reduce the volumes of waste that require final disposal. As such they move waste management methods further up the waste hierarchy, which is to be encouraged.

3 While constituting more sustainable forms of waste management, many of these developments can have an adverse environmental impact if not carefully located and controlled. The Council will therefore carefully consider such proposals to ensure that they are only permitted where they do not have a detrimental impact.

4 This policy directs these developments to Primarily Employment Areas. Within Action Areas, Action Area Plans are to be prepared as Supplementary Planning Documents to control development in those areas designated for regeneration purposes in Policies RG1-7. Applications for waste recycling and collection facilities within Action Areas would have to accord with the general policies for land uses in the Regeneration Chapter and accord with detailed Action Area Plans as Supplementary Planning Documents.

COMPOSTING FACILITIES

1 Composting is a process where the organic content of waste, such as food wastes or ‘green’ garden wastes, is biologically decomposed to form a material suitable for use as a fertiliser or soil conditioner. This is done by an aerobic process. The principle method for aerobic composting is by using windrows. The waste is shredded and laid out in windrows. These windrows are periodically turned to ensure they remain aerobic. The wastes are broken down by micro-organisms in the windrows. Care must be taken to ensure the windrows remain aerobic and with an appropriate temperature and moisture content. Once the composting process is completed, the material may be screened to grade it. It can then be bagged for sale as compost, or used in bulk quantities as a soil conditioner.

MW8 AEROBIC COMPOSTING FACILITIES

1 Proposals for an aerobic composting facility should be located within a Primarily Employment Area, provided that it can be shown not to have an unacceptable effect on existing industries, particularly food manufacturing and high technology activities.

2 In addition, the following areas may also be appropriate for an aerobic composting facility:

   a existing buildings or hardstandings in the countryside;

   b as part of a land reclamation or restoration project, where the facility would be for a temporary period in association with the land restoration scheme;

   c within an existing landfill/landraising site where the facility would be for a temporary period commensurate with the life of the waste management facility.

JUSTIFICATION

3 If correctly carried out, the composting process should not lead to unacceptable odour generation or flies and vermin. Aspects of the process may however lead to noise and
dust, and the release of leachate. There may also be the possibility of airborne microorganisms and pathogens. Again, with adequate control of operations, these issues should not have a detrimental impact outside the site. However, it may be considered appropriate to site such facilities away from particularly sensitive developments such as food manufacturing industries, since public perception of such sites is often negative.

4 While composting is in some ways similar to an agricultural activity, it is essentially an industrial process. This will influence where appropriate locations for such facilities should be. Industrial areas are likely to be the ideal locations for such facilities. However, existing developed sites (“brownfield sites”) in the countryside may also be acceptable, subject to the character of the area not being unduly affected by the scale of the development.

5 The temporary use of land associated with a reclamation or restoration project may also be acceptable, where the composting process can create materials for use in that project. The provision of a composting facility at an existing landfill or landraising facility may also be appropriate to enable some wastes to be processed rather than tipped. Any such facility should however be limited to the life of the landfill site so as not to continue beyond the cessation of tipping and delay restoration of the site.

ANAEROBIC DIGESTION

1 Anaerobic digestion is a process for treating organic wastes. It can produce a compost material for subsequent use. However it is also possible to recover gases such as methane from the digestion process. These gases can be put to productive use for heat or power generation, enabling energy recovery from the waste to take place.

2 Sewage sludge at wastewater treatment works is often treated in digesters, with the gases collected to generate power for on site plant and equipment.

MW9 ANAEROBIC DIGESTION FACILITIES

1 Proposals for an anaerobic digestion facility should be located within a Primarily Employment Area, where the development would not conflict with the need to protect the amenity and environment of adjacent and nearby land uses.

2 The following areas may also be appropriate for an anaerobic digestion facility:

a within the open countryside where the development would not involve the construction of new buildings and would not conflict with the need to protect the amenity and environment of adjacent and nearby land uses.

JUSTIFICATION

3 Anaerobic digestion takes place in closed containers or tanks, where temperatures and moisture contents can be closely controlled. Because of the enclosed nature of the vessels, there should be little adverse effects caused by odour or suchlike. However, public perception of this type of development may often be negative.

4 The type of equipment used is industrial in nature, and this will principally influence where such developments should ideally be located. However, existing developed sites in the countryside may be suitable where the proposal would not require the erection of additional buildings. It should be noted however that in areas of open countryside there may be other planning constraints, such as Green Belt, which will need to be considered.

WASTEWATER AND SEWAGE TREATMENT FACILITIES

1 Domestic, industrial and commercial wastewater (sewage) enters the main sewerage system. North West Water Ltd is responsible for wastewater treatment facilities. The company has wastewater treatment works in the Borough, and has also developed the Shell Green sewage sludge incinerator.

2 The main planning issues relating to waste water treatment works are those of odour, and the visual impact of the treatment facilities.
Odours can arise from some of the treatment processes, this can be minimised by enclosing those parts of the process and fitting odour treatment equipment. The visual impact of the site can be reduced by careful design and layout of the site and by significant landscaping of the site, although larger items of plant may be harder to completely screen.

**MW10 WASTEWATER & SEWAGE TREATMENT FACILITIES**

1. Proposals for wastewater and sewage treatment works should be located within a Primarily Employment Area, where the development would not conflict with the need to protect the amenity and environment of adjacent and nearby land uses.

2. The following areas may also be appropriate for wastewater and sewage treatment works:

   a. within the open countryside where there is no suitable existing or allocated industrial land or land already disturbed by industrial development, and where the development would not conflict with the need to protect the amenity of adjacent and nearby land users.

**JUSTIFICATION**

3. Wastewater treatment works have often in the past been located on the outskirts of towns on the urban fringe. While this generally reduces the number of sensitive properties in the vicinity, it does mean that many existing works are in the countryside where such development would not normally be encouraged. It is considered that future developments should ideally be located in industrial areas, although where it can be shown that there is no suitable industrial land the countryside may be an acceptable location. It should be noted however that in areas of open countryside there may be other planning constraints, such as Green Belt, which will need to be considered.

**MW11 EXTENSIONS TO WASTEWATER TREATMENT FACILITIES**

1. Proposals to extend an existing wastewater treatment facility will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that the proposal would improve the treatment and discharge quality of the wastewater or sewage sludge, and would not have an unacceptable detrimental impact on amenity or the environment.

**JUSTIFICATION**

2. The Council considers that where proposals are put forward to extend existing wastewater treatment facilities, these should be used to achieve environmental improvements in the quality of discharges from the site. The Environment Agency sets the standards of discharges. There may be circumstances where a site with existing high levels of treatment, and consequently high quality discharges, is required to be extended merely to cater for additional volumes of wastewater. Where it would be unnecessary to improve the quality of the discharges, the Council in consultation with the Environment Agency will consider making an exception to that requirement of the policy.

**RECYCLING AND HOUSEHOLD WASTE CENTRES**

1. The Council has a duty to provide sites to enable local residents to dispose of bulky items of household waste. These sites were formerly known as Civic Amenity Sites and Household Waste Sites. The Council currently has two such sites, one in Widnes and one in Runcorn. As well as skips to receive bulky wastes, the sites offer a comprehensive range of containers to receive recyclable wastes such as glass, cans, paper etc. Separate collection of soil and rubble, and green waste for composting is also possible.

**MW12 RECYCLING AND HOUSEHOLD WASTE CENTRES**

1. The development of new, or improvements to existing, Recycling and Household Waste Centres will be supported. Proposals should meet all
the following criteria:

a. be in locations easily accessible from main residential areas;

b. be sited at a sufficient distance from dwellings and other sensitive properties, and laid out, fenced and screened so as to avoid nuisance from the transport, sorting, processing or storage of waste;

c. have access from the principal road network which avoids lorries passing through main residential areas;

d. be large enough to accommodate separate collection facilities for recyclable materials;

e. have segregated access arrangements for commercial vehicles and site users;

f. have adequate space for car parking and collection/servicing vehicles, to prevent vehicles queuing out of the site;

g. be adequately landscaped and laid out so as to minimise the visual impact of the facility.

JUSTIFICATION

2. The Council will support the development of new sites and the improvement of existing sites in order to increase the proportion of waste that may be recycled from the facilities. The policy sets out criteria that will ensure such developments are located in appropriate areas. A balance has to be struck in the location of such facilities. Since the users of such sites are the general public, it is important to locate sites close to main residential areas to minimise distances that have to be travelled. This will minimise traffic generation and the unnecessary use of the car. However, the sites may have local impacts of noise and disturbance, particularly from vehicles visiting the site. For this reason, sites should be located sufficiently far from residential properties to minimise these impacts. Similarly, easy access to the principal road network will help to reduce vehicle movements through residential areas.

ENERGY RECOVERY

1. Waste can be used as a source of energy in a variety of ways. This can include through a digestion process, as fuel in an incinerator, or through decomposition and collection of landfill gas.

MW13 ENERGY RECOVERY

1. Proposals for any facility to dispose of wastes which have a potential for energy recovery will not be permitted unless it makes provision for energy recovery.

JUSTIFICATION

2. The waste hierarchy places all forms of recovery (recycling, composting, energy recovery) above disposal (see explanation of the waste hierarchy at the background of this chapter). Energy recovery is therefore to be preferred to simple disposal. Where it is practicable to recover energy from waste a development proposal for any facility proposed to deal with that waste will be required to make provision for energy recovery. The facility will not be approved if it provides simply for disposal without energy recovery. The Council will encourage more sustainable forms of waste management.

WASTE INCINERATION

1. Waste incineration can constitute a sustainable form of waste management, when associated with the reclamation of recyclable materials and the utilisation of energy from waste, or as part of a combined heat and power process. Proposals for incinerators can lead to large-scale public concern, principally related to safety and health risks from emissions. Whilst public concern over pollution risks may be a material planning consideration, pollution risks from emissions are principally a matter for the Environment Agency who are the competent authority. Government guidance is that planning authorities should not seek to duplicate the controls of other agencies under other legislation.

MW14 INCINERATION

1. Proposals for waste incineration plants must meet all the following criteria:
a be located within a Primarily Employment Area and not within close proximity to residential areas or other sensitive land-uses;

b illustrate that there are no existing suitable disposal facilities, or potential sites for the development of suitable disposal facilities closer to the source of waste arisings;

c not have an unacceptable detrimental visual impact;

d not have an unacceptable detrimental impact on economic regeneration or investment confidence;

e not have an unacceptable detrimental impact on existing industries, particularly food manufacturing and high technology activities;

f incorporate proposals for energy recovery or combined heat and power utilisation;

g incorporate a Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) where dealing with wastes with a recyclable component;

h where practicable be located so as to make use of rail or water transport methods;

i not cause pollution or emissions that would have an unacceptable detrimental impact on surrounding land uses;

j with specific reference to clinical and chemical wastes, the proposal must demonstrate the need for the facility in a regional and sub-regional context.

**JUSTIFICATION**

2 The Local Planning Authority considers that the criteria set out in the above policy will enable development proposals to be assessed and to ensure that any such developments are appropriately located where they will not have an unacceptable impact.

**LANDFILL/ LANDRAISING OF NON-INERT WASTES**

1 The Borough currently has only one active landfill site, that being Randle Island, utilised for industrial wastes by ICI. This is a long-term facility, with a remaining capacity that is likely to extend beyond the end of the plan period. Further new sites of this type would however be at the bottom of the waste hierarchy. While not necessarily preventing their development, the Council will wish to ensure that such sites are not developed where other, more sustainable, waste management options would be more appropriate.

MW15 **LANDFILL/ LANDRAISING OF NON-INERT WASTES**

1 A proposal to develop a landfill/landraising site for non-inert wastes will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that:

   a it constitutes the Best Practicable Environmental Option (BPEO) for managing the waste;

   b the waste will be managed in accordance with the waste hierarchy of reduction, re-use, recovery;

   c there are no existing suitable disposal facilities, or potential sites for the development of suitable disposal facilities closer to the source of waste arisings; and

   d the proposed facility will utilise rail, water transport or pipeline wherever possible and will minimise the distance waste is transported by road.

2 Proposals must also demonstrate that:

   a the wastes to be tipped and the degree of compaction are compatible with the proposed after-use;

   b energy recovery will be carried out,
where technically and economically practicable;

c the development will not have an unacceptable detrimental impact on floodplain capacity or floodwater flow;

d finished contours (pre and post-settlement) are compatible with the proposed after-use;

e the finished landform will positively contribute to the local landscape quality.

f provision is made for satisfactory restoration of the site and suitable aftercare.

JUSTIFICATION

3 Disposing of waste materials in a landfill or landraising site is at the bottom of the waste hierarchy, and in terms of sustainable waste management is therefore the least sustainable option. Government Policy is to move waste management methods further up the waste hierarchy. The Council therefore considers that proposals for landfill or landraising sites should only be permitted where other, more sustainable, waste management methods have been considered but do not constitute the Best Practicable Environmental Option (BPEO).

4 When landfilling is completed, there will be a requirement to satisfactorily complete the restoration of the site, which should take place in a phased manner over the life of the site, to ensure that each phase of the site is restored as soon as is practicable. Following restoration there will also be a requirement for a period of aftercare. The aftercare period that can be imposed by planning condition is a maximum of five years. While a five-year aftercare period may be sufficient for sites being restored to grassland and agricultural use, other types of site restoration would benefit from longer periods of aftercare. Woodland and nature conservation are examples, and the Council would expect aftercare to be carried out for a period of fifteen years or longer where sites are to be restored to such uses. Longer periods would allow successful establishment of the restored site and ensure that the long-term success of the restoration can be more readily secured. Long-term aftercare periods appropriate to the circumstances of the scheme would be secured by means of a Planning Obligation under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

5 Long term pollution liabilities (rather than restoration aftercare) are covered by waste management licensing, and site monitoring is covered by the Environmental Protection Act 1990, administered by the Environment Agency.

LANDFILL/ LANDRAISING OF INERT WASTES

1 Inert wastes have traditionally been disposed of in landfill sites. However there is the ability to recycle or re-use a large proportion of inert wastes. The Council therefore considers that the more sustainable waste management methods should be used wherever practicable, unless landfilling of the wastes will actually prove beneficial in some other way, such as in terms of reclaiming derelict land.

MW16 LANDFILL/ LANDRAISING OF INERT WASTES

1 Proposals to develop a facility for the landfilling/landraising of inert wastes will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that:

   a the proposal is to dispose of waste for which there is no suitable alternative means of waste management; or

   b the proposal is short term, associated with a specific construction project or land improvement scheme, and involves the deposit of the minimum amount of inert waste to achieve satisfactory completion of the project or restoration of the site.

2 Proposals must also demonstrate that:

   a the wastes to be tipped and the degree of compaction are compatible with the proposed after-use;
b the development will not have an unacceptable detrimental impact on floodplain capacity or floodwater flow;

c finished contours (pre and post-settlement) are compatible with the proposed after-use;

d the finished landform will positively contribute to the local landscape quality.

e provision is made for satisfactory restoration of the site and suitable aftercare.

JUSTIFICATION

3 Many inert wastes, such as soils and demolition materials, are capable of re-use or recycling. The disposal of such materials in landfill or landraising sites may not therefore constitute the Best Practicable Environmental Option (BPEO). The Council would wish to see, wherever possible, such materials being re-used or recycled. It is considered therefore that landfilling/landraising with such wastes should only be permitted where it will actually prove beneficial in a wider sense. For example, derelict land may in some circumstances be improved by recontouring, using inert wastes in a land improvement scheme. In such schemes the Council will wish to ensure that the minimum necessary amounts of waste are actually utilised, and that the scheme enables the beneficial afteruse of the land.

4 When landfilling is completed, there will be a requirement to satisfactorily complete the restoration of the site, which should take place in a phased manner over the life of the site, to ensure that each phase of the site is restored as soon as is practicable. Following restoration there will also be a requirement for a period of aftercare. The aftercare period that can be imposed by planning condition is a maximum of five years. While a five-year aftercare period may be sufficient for sites being restored to grassland and agricultural use, other types of site restoration would benefit from longer periods of aftercare. Woodland and nature conservation are examples, and the Council would expect aftercare to be carried out for a period of fifteen years or longer where sites are to be restored to such uses. Longer periods would allow successful establishment of the restored site and ensure that the long-term success of the restoration can be more readily secured. Long-term aftercare periods appropriate to the circumstances of the scheme would be secured by means of a Planning Obligation under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

WASTE RECYCLING

MW17 WASTE RECYCLING

1 Proposals for major development which fall within the categories listed in point 2 below, are likely to attract a significant number of people and will be required to provide:

a Facilities for the source separation and storage of different types of waste for collection;

b Facilities for the public to recycle waste (“bring systems”).

The extent of such provision will depend on the level of existing facilities within the locality of the development.

2 This policy applies to the following developments:

a Residential developments of 100 or more dwellings.

b Development of shopping centres or facilities where the floorspace of existing and new development amounts to 500 square metres or more.

c Development of business, industrial, distribution or storage uses involving a net increase in floorspace of 500 square metres or more.

d Major transport, leisure, recreation, tourist or community facilities.
e Appropriate smaller developments which frequently attract a significant number of people (e.g. community or shopping schemes).

JUSTIFICATION

3 The Council is keen to encourage recycling and collection of recyclable materials. It is considered that the provision of enabling facilities within major developments will make it easier for the public to have access to such facilities. The Council therefore wishes developers to incorporate such facilities within major developments to assist in this process.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

MW18 ENERGY FROM NON-FOSSIL SOURCES

1 Proposals for renewable energy schemes will be permitted if all of the following criteria can be satisfactorily demonstrated:

a The scheme, including any associated power lines, would not result in an unacceptable, adverse, effect on the landscape character of the area.

b That, both during and after construction, measures will be taken to minimise the impact of the development on nearby land uses and residential amenity.

c That the proposal will bring local and wider benefits.

JUSTIFICATION

2 In view of the need for reductions in carbon dioxide emissions, there will in future be greater emphasis on the generation of energy from renewable sources, including energy from waste. The aim of the planning system is to secure economy, efficiency and amenity in the use of land in the public interest. The Council’s policies towards developing renewable energy sources must be weighed carefully with its continuing commitment to policies for protecting the local environment. The Council acknowledges the advice in PPG 22 that proposals to harness renewable energy can display a variety of factors peculiar to the technology involved. Moreover, such schemes can have particular locational constraints since, in many cases, the resource can only be harnessed where it occurs. The Council will need to consider both the immediate impacts of renewable energy projects on the local environment and their wider contribution to reducing emissions of greenhouse gases.

3 The particular setting and characteristics of Halton indicate that the following energy sources might be exploited over the plan period:

- Wind power - initial feasibility studies are being conducted at Hutchinson’s Hill, overlooking the Mersey Estuary. These may lead to planning applications for wind turbines.

- Energy generation within industrial processes - there are already a number of power plants fired by non-fossil fuels, including waste products from within the site. These are a direct response both to the need to generate electricity cost-effectively and to provide means to reduce levels of waste going to landfill. Further schemes of this nature are likely in the future, and planning control will need to be exercised in close cooperation with the pollution control authorities.
AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1 The policies within this Chapter look to achieving the aims and objectives contained in Part I of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) and are consistent with the Halton Local Transport Plan (2000). The transport aims and objectives, and therefore these policies, are related to providing an effective and efficient transport infrastructure and systems. In particular the policies are aimed at providing an integrated transport system, reducing the need to travel by car and increasing accessibility for all. A further strategic aim is to provide a new sustainable crossing of the River Mersey. In addition this Chapter includes policies on safety and the environment in line with the strategic aim to create a safe and healthy environment.

BACKGROUND

1 The integration of transport and land use policies is essential as the location and nature of development affects the amount and method of travel. Planning Policy Guidance note “Transport” 2001 (PPG13) emphasises the need to ensure that land use policies and transport programmes help to reduce growth in the length and number of motorised journeys, encourage means of travel which have less environmental impact and reduce the reliance on the private car. More recently in 1998 the Government published a White Paper on the Future of Transport “A New Deal for Transport: Better for Everyone”. This sets out a new approach to transport policy and is aimed at creating a better and more integrated transport system.

2 The two most important words therefore in relation to land use and transport policy are ‘sustainable’ and ‘integrated’. The policies contained within the UDP have the aims of integrating land use and transport policy and providing a sustainable and integrated transport network within Halton. In order to achieve this, Part I of the UDP sets out aims and objectives that reflect those in the Local Transport Plan 2000.

INTEGRATED TRANSPORT

3 The range of transport options available throughout the Borough to access home, work, leisure and other facilities include public transport, walking and cycling as well as the use of the private car. At present the ability to use different options varies depending on location within Halton, and particular issues can be identified that need to be addressed either within the UDP or within other transport policy documents such as the Local Transport Plan.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT NETWORK: RUNCORN BUSWAY

4 In relation to public transport, the Busway in Runcorn is a particular asset. This is a segregated bus only route that was created as part of the New Town. It provides good access between housing, employment and shopping areas. This Busway however does not extend to the older parts of Runcorn, to the newer housing and employment developments in east Runcorn, to Widnes or to the villages and rural areas. Where the Busway does not exist there is an issue of access by public transport to be addressed.

5 Due to low car ownership within the Borough particularly in areas adjoining the Busway, and the separation of employment and residential...
areas, a particular issue for Halton is providing public transport access to employment areas not currently served by the Busway.

6 The Runcorn Busway remains a valuable and unique asset for the potential development of an integrated transport system. The Council’s Local Transport Plan recognises this by including as one of its strategic aims ‘to reverse the past neglect of the Runcorn Busway and realise its potential to provide a high quality, safe, efficient and preferred means of transport.’

RAIL NETWORK

7 The rail network is well developed within the Borough with six railway lines, including two lines that at present are wholly used as part of the rail freight network running through Halton and four railway stations. Improvements to this network can be made particularly in locations where major development takes place. A particular issue is that rail access into and out of the Borough is good, but it is not possible to travel by train between the Borough’s two towns of Widnes and Runcorn. There is however potential to locate new railway stations on lines to serve areas of new employment and make best use of existing lines.

8 In addition to improving the passenger rail network, improvements to the rail freight network should be undertaken. There is the opportunity to increase rail freight use within the Borough through means such as the allocation of sites as rail freight depots and the protection of rail lines.”

AIRPORTS

9 Halton is within easy travelling distance of both Liverpool and Manchester Airports. These have a role to play in the economy of the Borough by promoting investment and regeneration and providing employment opportunities. In addition, the airports are important elements of the transport network for both passengers and freight.

CYCLE NETWORK

10 The cycle network throughout the Borough is patchy with very few dedicated cycle routes. There is a network of cycle routes through the New Town areas of Runcorn but within Widnes only one dedicated cycle route exists. The issue for the Borough relates to the improvement of safe routes for cyclists and enabling access to and between facilities for cyclists.

PEDESTRIAN NETWORK

11 In the older areas of Widnes and Runcorn pedestrian provision has developed in a traditional way of footways alongside the carriageway, whereas in the New Town areas of Runcorn pedestrian routes are separated from vehicular routes. The different approaches lead to different issues that need to be tackled. However, the aim must be to ensure safe and convenient routes between different facilities.

ROAD NETWORK

12 The road network is well developed in Halton. The Borough is located between the M62 and M56 with major road links to this motorway network. The trunk road network in the Borough consists of the M56 and the A557 (Widnes Relief Road). The latter is to be de-trunked in due course.
13 The Highways Agency rather than the Local Authority is responsible for trunk roads, and it is their aim to maintain, operate and improve the trunk road network. The DfT policy on the control of development near trunk roads, as operated by the Highways Agency, is set out in Section 7.7 of ‘A New Deal for Trunk Roads in England’ and Annex B of PPG13.

14 In general there are few congestion problems, apart from on and at the approaches to the Silver Jubilee Bridge over the River Mersey. This is an essential part of the strategic road network but functions in a similar way to an hourglass, allowing only a thin stream of traffic across at a time from a large road network at either side. This is a major transport issue for the Borough and it is considered that the solution is to provide a second crossing of the Mersey.

SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH

15 Providing for sustainable economic growth is an aim of the UDP. An important element of this is providing access to employment opportunities and retail development by a variety of means of transport. This overlaps with the priority measure above of providing a range of transport options.

16 Employment and retail development sites have been chosen so they can be accessed by public transport, walking and cycling.

17 The UDP transport policies and other transport policies for the Borough ensure that new employment and development is actually accessible by a variety of means of transport. This relates not only to people but to goods as well.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR ALL

18 This is an important aspect of land use planning and transportation. The aim is to provide facilities such as shops, leisure facilities and employment opportunities at locations that are accessible to all, as well as providing for a range of transport options. This is particularly important in Halton due to low car ownership. Accessibility for all includes access for people with disabilities and restricted mobility (see also Built Environment Chapter).

SAFETY FOR ALL

19 In order for people to switch from using their cars to using other forms of transport, the alternative mode must be convenient and safe. The UDP and other transport policy must consider issues of conflict between different transport modes and resolution of that conflict. Crime and fear of crime is a further important issue in relation to safety. For example, pedestrian routes, cycle routes and public transport stops should be well lit and landscaping should not be overgrown and be of a suitable nature for the location.

20 Road safety is an important issue. This includes the reduction in road traffic accidents through traffic management measures. Road traffic accidents may involve pedestrians and cyclists as well as motor vehicles.

THE ENVIRONMENT

21 Transport has an affect on the environment in many ways. There is noise pollution from traffic as well as light pollution as a result of
road lighting. Road construction uses finite resources and large amounts of land are set aside for car parking. Cars are a major contributor to the production of carbon dioxide emissions that affect climate change. Road vehicles are also a major contributor to air pollution problems.

22 Alternative forms of transport such as public transport, walking and cycling can have environmental advantages over the private car. It is therefore important that the UDP provides for a range of transport options. A particular issue for Halton is ensuring that air quality is maintained or improved.

THE WIDER TRANSPORT NETWORK

23 The Borough has an important location on the national and regional transport network including the following:

- the M62 runs to the north of the Borough and the M56 to the south.

- the River Mersey Crossing is an important strategic route.

- the West Coast main railway line runs through the Borough and there is a main line station at Runcorn.

- the Borough is located within easy travelling distance of both Manchester and Liverpool airports.

- the Manchester Ship Canal runs through Runcorn and there are existing port facilities.

24 The above strategic networks provide opportunities, and in some cases constraints, for the Borough. The UDP must take into account the land use implications of these networks.

25 In addition to the existing network, there is a proposal to develop a light rail system within Merseyside. The Council is supportive of such a proposal. If light rail were to be developed within Merseyside then the extension of this into and within Halton would also be supported as part of an integrated transport network.

A NEW CROSSING OF THE RIVER MERSEY

26 The existing severely congested Silver Jubilee Bridge is considered a constraint on the economic development of the Region and severely restricts the development of an integrated transport strategy for Halton. A strategic aim of the Council’s Local Transport Plan (LTP) and Part I of this Unitary Development Plan is therefore to pursue the provision of a new, sustainable crossing of the Mersey.

OTHER ROAD SCHEMES

27 The Halton Local Plan stated that the Council would undertake studies to evaluate other road schemes in addition to those safeguarded in the Local Plan policy. These are carried forward into the UDP where still relevant and are in addition to the road schemes contained within policy TP11.

- The Foundry Lane to Desoto Road link

Proposed New Mersey Crossing
This new link will enable the diversion of heavy industrial traffic away from the residential area of Halebank and open up vacant and derelict land for development within the West Bank industrial area.

b. Alternative access road from Picow Farm Road to Weston Docks

This will enable diversion of heavy industrial traffic away from the residential area of Weston Point and allow the possible regeneration of the disused Docks for new commercial uses such as a rail freight depot.

THE WAY FORWARD

28 The Transport Policies within the UDP aim to help create a sustainable and integrated transport network and land use pattern within the Borough. However, this cannot be achieved through land use policies alone. It is important that measures are included within other transport policy documents for Halton and implemented not only by the local authority but also by bus and rail companies, businesses and other organisations and individuals within the Borough.
PART 2
POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

INTEGRATED TRANSPORT PUBLIC TRANSPORT NETWORK

TP 1 PUBLIC TRANSPORT PROVISION AS PART OF NEW DEVELOPMENT

1 Development will only be permitted where provision exists or is made for adequate access by public transport. No building within the development should be more than 400 metres walking distance from a bus stop or railway station.

JUSTIFICATION

2 PPG13 states that land use policies should maintain and improve choice for people to walk, cycle or catch public transport rather than drive between homes and facilities which they need to use regularly. This is even more important in Halton where car ownership is relatively low. New development should therefore be designed to accommodate public transport.

3 It is essential that people are able to gain access by public transport to major leisure and shopping facilities as well as to work. Public transport access and facilities should therefore exist or be provided in the provision of new dwellings, new employment developments, and new shopping and leisure facilities that attract customers from a wide catchment area (greater than walking distance). Public transport as part of more local facilities such as neighbourhood centres may not be necessary as people should be able to walk to these.

4 A particular issue in the Borough is access to employment areas. It is considered essential that such areas are accessible by public transport so that local people can access local jobs. This may partially be achieved by ensuring that both new housing and new
employment areas are served by public transport.

5 Access to the existing or proposed public transport network should be safe and convenient to encourage people to use the network. The network should therefore be within walking distance of buildings along a safe and secure route. It is considered that 400 metres is a reasonable distance to expect people to walk to a public transport facility. A distance of greater than this would be likely to discourage people from utilising the facility. A recent survey of newly completed housing within the Borough at Upton Rocks and Sandymoor has shown that all the houses are within a 400 metre walk of a bus stop. It is considered therefore that this is both practical and achievable.

6 Provision for public transport may include segregated routes for buses, such as an extension to the Runcorn Busway, specific facilities to assist buses and taxis and new railway stations.

**TP2 EXISTING PUBLIC TRANSPORT FACILITIES**

1 Development will not be permitted that is likely to prejudice any of the following:

   a The use of the Runcorn Busway as part of the public transport network.

   b The present or future use of existing stations, their interchange facilities or railway lines as part of the public transport network.

Improvements to these facilities will be permitted.

**JUSTIFICATION**

2 The Busway in Runcorn is a vital strategic link in the public transport network. It is essential that it is retained for use by public transport, and where possible enhanced. Improvements will include upgrading the Busway track, which is severely deteriorated, along with investment in modern passenger facilities.

3 There are four passenger railway lines running through the Borough. These are:

   a the Manchester to Liverpool line running through Widnes and incorporating Hough Green and Widnes stations;

   b the Manchester to Chester/North Wales line running through Runcorn and incorporating Runcorn East station;

   c the London to Liverpool line running through Widnes and Runcorn and incorporating Runcorn Main Line station; and

   d the West Coast main line running through Runcorn. There are no stations in Halton at present on this line.

4 It is essential that these lines and stations are retained for use by public transport. Improvements may include electrification of lines allowing an enhanced level of service, enhanced station access for pedestrians, cyclists and buses, and improved passenger facilities.

5 In addition, interchange facilities between different modes of public transport are considered to be important. Interchanges will enable a journey to be undertaken using more than one public transport mode. This is particularly important for longer journeys. Interchange facilities will be protected and improvements allowed.

**TP3 DISUSED PUBLIC TRANSPORT FACILITIES**

1 Development will not be permitted that is likely to prejudice any of the following:

   a The use of Ditton Station in Widnes as part of the public transport network.

   b The use of Halton Curve rail line in Runcorn as part of the rail network.

   c The Shell Green Route rail line in Widnes as part of the rail network.

   d The Bridgewater Locks which connect the Bridgewater Canal to the Manchester Ship Canal.

The re-opening of these transport facilities will be permitted.
JUSTIFICATION

2 Ditton Station in Widnes, on the London to Liverpool line, was closed to passenger services in 1994. Runcorn Station to Ditton Station was the only passenger rail link between Widnes and Runcorn. There is an opportunity for the re-opening of this station, particularly with the possible increase in patronage from major industrial, commercial and housing developments in the area. It may be possible to use the station as a park and ride facility.

3 The Halton Curve in Runcorn is not used at present for regular passenger services. The line forms a transport link between Liverpool, Runcorn and Chester/North Wales. This would provide the opportunity for a new local service calling at new stations at Allerton, Ditton and Beechwood. If Ditton Station were to re-open, then the link would be made from Widnes to Chester (this is not now possible by rail). It is important therefore that this line is retained for use by public transport in the future. The line would also provide an important route for the carriage of freight.

4 The re-opening of the Shell Green Route (Ditton - Widnes South - Warrington) would allow improved opportunities for travel between Widnes and Warrington and could form part of the Trans-Pennine linkage.

5 The reopening of the Bridgewater Locks would enable through access between the Bridgewater Canal and the Manchester Ship Canal, opening up economic opportunities by enhancing the recreational value of the canals.

TP4 NEW PUBLIC TRANSPORT FACILITIES

1 Development will not be permitted that is likely to prevent the opportunity for new railway stations to be built in any of the following locations:
   a Upton Rocks, Widnes
   b Barrows Green Lane area, Widnes
   c Beechwood, Runcorn
   d Delph Lane / Keckwick
   e South Widnes
   f Daresbury

The Proposals Map identifies these new stations with diagrammatic notation.

2 New stations and other new public transport facilities, including bus/rail interchanges and park and ride facilities will be permitted.

3 Development will not be permitted that is likely to prejudice the provision of additional rail tracks immediately to the north of the existing rail line between Hough Green Station and Widnes North Station.

4 Development will not be permitted that is likely to prejudice the provision of additional rail tracks alongside the existing West Coast main rail line to the west of the Daresbury Park development site in Runcorn.

JUSTIFICATION

5 The opening of new stations will enable more people to use the public transport network and thus reduce the need to travel by private car. Providing new public transport facilities will increase the prospects of more people travelling by a variety of modes of transport other than the car, as will providing interchanges between rail and bus. This will also increase the potential for access to Liverpool Airport using public transport.

6 It is important to safeguard sites and access where new railway stations should be built. The Proposals Map’s diagrammatic notation indicates that a station in that location is feasible. The notation is not however meant to define the station site precisely. Planning applications that might prejudice new station sites will therefore be assessed in consultation with the relevant authorities.

7 When preparing or assessing major new development proposals within the vicinity of a proposed new station, consideration should be given to providing the station or a commuted sum towards the provision of the station as part of the development. This would form part of the public transport provision required by policy TP1.

8 The additional rail tracks between Hough Green and Widnes North stations would provide a dynamic passing route allowing
additional stops without prejudicing running speeds on the Trans-Pennine route. This would particularly be required if new stations were to open on the line with an extension of Merseyrail electrified trains. Slower trains stopping at all stations could be passed by non-stopping trains running along the new line.

9 The additional rail tracks alongside the West Coast main line in Runcorn would provide a dynamic passing route allowing additional stops without prejudicing running speeds on this line. This would be required for a new station to be provided in East Runcorn serving the East Runcorn Development Area.

TP5 TAXI RANKS AND OFFICES

1 Planning applications for taxicab offices will be considered in the light of any potential impact of noise and disturbance on neighbouring occupiers, the availability of adequate taxi and other parking provision, and highway safety. Taxicab offices will not be permitted within predominantly residential areas.

2 Taxi ranks should be provided as part of major new leisure and/or retail developments.

JUSTIFICATION

3 Taxis and minicabs are an important part of the public transport system, supplementing bus and rail services as well as providing a service in their own right.

4 Taxicab offices can however give rise to problems of noise, disturbance, parking and highway safety, particularly if a 24-hour or late night service is in operation. Taxicab offices need to be located in premises where disturbance to neighbours and traffic congestion are kept to a minimum.

5 Parking provision for taxicab offices do not readily conform to any recognised standard. Discussions should take place with the planning authority at an early stage in the development of proposals to ascertain requirements.

6 Taxi ranks are generally located within town centres and provide a convenient means of transport, for example at times when buses are not available and for people with heavy shopping. Convenient and safe provision should therefore be made for taxi ranks within major new development schemes within town centres. Major new development for the purposes of this policy includes retail and leisure developments over 2,500 sq. m. in size.

CYCLE NETWORK

TP6 CYCLING PROVISION AS PART OF NEW DEVELOPMENT

1 Development will be required to provide all of the following:

   a Safe and convenient cycle access.
   b Cycle links with existing and proposed routes where opportunities exist.
   c Safe, secure and covered cycle parking in accordance with the minimum standards contained in Appendix 1.
   d Where a travel plan or transport assessment indicates the likelihood of a large number of people travelling to the development by cycle, then additional facilities for cyclists should be provided as part of the development.

JUSTIFICATION

2 The provision of a safe and convenient cycle access as part of new development is important in providing a choice of transport mode for all. The encouragement of cycling should help reduce the need to use private cars.

3 This cycle access must link into the existing cycle network whether this is by providing a link to a cycle route where a designated cycle route exists or by providing safe access onto the road network. It is essential that new roads and junctions be designed taking into account safety for cyclists.

4 One disincentive to cycling is the lack of secure cycle parking at destinations. This should therefore be provided as part of new development.
5 Additional facilities for cyclists will encourage people to travel by cycle to and from a development. Facilities will include shower and changing facilities.

PEDESTRIAN NETWORK

TP7 PEDESTRIAN PROVISION AS PART OF NEW DEVELOPMENT

1 Development will be required to incorporate safe and convenient pedestrian footways or other safe pedestrian routes within the design and layout.

2 Pedestrian routes that link into the existing pedestrian network and/or the Greenway Network, to public transport and to local facilities should be provided where appropriate.

JUSTIFICATION

3 The provision of a safe and convenient network of pedestrian routes is important in providing a choice of transport mode for all. The encouragement of walking will help reduce the need to use private cars.

4 In order to encourage and enable pedestrian access within, to and between developments it is essential that consideration is given to the needs of pedestrians as an integral part of a development scheme rather than on a piecemeal basis.

5 In residential areas access roads will normally have separately identified footpaths alongside a road carriageway except where the access road is very short, there are clear visual design reasons not to have a separately identified footpath, or where the developer demonstrates it will be safer not to have a separately identified footpath.

6 Pedestrians often have to use potentially unsafe routes. These routes may be unsafe due to conflict with vehicles or unsafe in a threatening way, such as badly lit routes and overgrown bushes, which contributes to the fear of crime. Consideration should therefore be given to overall design, landscaping, furniture, signing and lighting.

7 Consideration must also be given to convenience of routes. If the route is not convenient, short cuts may be taken that may also lead to accidents or other incidents. Routes must be convenient for people with mobility difficulties including people with sensory impairment and other mobility problems by the provision of for example suitable crossing places and ramps. (See policy BE1 General Requirements for New Development - Accessibility).

TP8 PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES

1 Pedestrian improvement schemes will be implemented in town centres where they are considered appropriate, in the interests of the environment and safety. The following schemes will be implemented during the period of the Plan:

a Regent Street, Runcorn
b Widnes Road, North of Simms Cross, Widnes
c Widnes Road, Simms Cross to Victoria Square, Widnes
e Albert Road up to Ross Street, Widnes
f Church Street (full pedestrianisation)

JUSTIFICATION

2 Traffic within town centres can cause problems and lead to conflicts with pedestrians. Pedestrian improvement schemes are aimed at creating a safer, cleaner and more attractive environment in town centres.

3 Schemes should include the following where appropriate:

a High quality of design
b Rear servicing for shops
c Access for emergency vehicles
d Landscaping and seating
e Pedestrian crossing points
f Design that minimises the fear and risk of crime
Design that minimises potential hazards and permits ease of access for all.

Any scheme for Regent Street in Runcorn will arise out of the Single Regeneration Initiative. The Widnes schemes will be linked to the overall regeneration of the Town Centre.

**TP9 THE GREENWAY NETWORK**

1. The “Greenway Network”, as identified on the Proposals Map, is made up of proposed and potential off-road routes for walking, cycling and, where appropriate, horseriding, connecting people to facilities and greenspaces in and around the urban area and to the countryside.

2. Development proposals for sites that incorporate a “greenway” will be expected to satisfy all of the following requirements:
   a. The condition and appearance of proposed routes should be enhanced.
   b. Potential routes should be implemented.
   c. The route should be appropriately segregated.
   d. Priority should be given to pedestrians, cyclists and horse-riders at any junction.

3. Where development adjoins a “greenway”, improvements and extensions to the network, including the provision of local spurs off the network to service the specific development, will be sought through negotiation.

4. Development will not be permitted if it would prejudice either of the following:
   a. Access onto or through the network, unless specific arrangements are made for suitable alternative linkages that are no less attractive, safe or convenient.
   b. The reasonable enjoyment of the network by unacceptably affecting amenity for its users by way of noise, smells or other forms of pollution.

**JUSTIFICATION**

5. The concept of the “greenway network” is a national initiative being promoted by the Countryside Agency. The aim of the initiative is to provide networks of largely car-free, off-road routes connecting people to facilities and open spaces in and around towns, cities and to the countryside all over the country. The Council is supportive of the aims of the initiative and is committed to the development of a similar network in Halton.

6. The network is intended for shared use by people of all abilities on foot, bike or horseback, for healthy commuting to work or school, for leisure and play. The Council hopes that as well as encouraging more people to walk or cycle in their leisure time, it will be more successful at encouraging people to switch to walking or cycling for journeys to work or school. Not all of the proposed greenway routes will at present be suitable for all modes of transport (foot, bike, horse etc). The Bridgewater Canal towpath for example is not safe in its current state for cyclists. The Local Authority will look to improve the greenway network through the implementation of this policy or through other initiatives.

7. The “greenway network” is made up of proposed and potential routes that have been identified in the Halton Greenways Study (2000) undertaken by the Mersey Valley Partnership. Proposed greenways are off-road routes where a definite route of some description can be followed on the ground, and include footpaths, bridleways, cycleways and rights of way. Potential greenways have been identified where it would be good to develop greenways but where a line on the ground cannot be followed or where the land is in private ownership with no existing public right of access.

8. The aim is to promote the shared use of the network where possible and feasible. However, physical, financial, maintenance and safety factors may prevent this on some routes. The need to prevent undue user
conflict and wider issues of user management and safety will be important considerations in developing routes for shared use.

9 The Council also recognises that in order to provide a workable network it will be necessary to link with on-road routes in some areas and the public rights of way network. Where on-road routes provide essential linking sections in the network, the Council will develop “Quiet Road” schemes to encourage and enable motorised vehicle users to give greater priority to walkers, cyclists and horse-riders, allowing them to share use of the road space more safely. Cycle lanes will also provide important linking sections and extensions to the network and will be further developed during the Plan period.

10 Some of the greenway routes will use existing public rights of way. Support will be given to measures that protect and enhance the recreational potential of the public rights of way network. In particular, where public rights of way are affected by development proposals, improvements to the network, including securing new links from built-up areas, will be sought. The Council is currently producing a Milestones Statement that will set local targets for the management and improvement of the public rights of way network in Halton.

11 An effective network should not stop at the Borough boundary. The Council will encourage a strategic approach to the development of a network of greenways across local authority areas as part of the Mersey Forest. The Mersey Forest is one of a number of national greenways demonstration areas that are being supported by the Countryside Agency. It will work with neighbouring authorities to ensure that people can move more easily and freely by foot, cycle or horseback.

12 The Council recognises that the greenways will run alongside some areas of industry and will not seek to prevent or inhibit development to satisfy the operational requirements of existing users unless there will be a threat to the reasonable enjoyment of the route.

TP10 THE TRANS-PENNINE TRAIL AND MERSEY WAY

1 The Trans-Pennine Trail and the Mersey Way, as defined on the Proposals Map, are important routes in the Greenway Network, as well as being important sections of longer distance recreation routes.

2 Development incorporating or adjoining the Trans-Pennine Trail or the Mersey Way will be expected to comply with Policy TP9.

3 Proposals for the development of recreational, tourism or other related facilities adjacent to, and incidental to, the development and enjoyment of the Trans-Pennine Trail or the Mersey Way will be permitted subject to the requirements of other policies in this Plan being met.

JUSTIFICATION

4 The Trans-Pennine Trail and Mersey Way are important routes in the Greenway Network and as such are protected by Policy TP9. They are also important sections of longer distance recreation routes and therefore have a slightly different role to that of other greenways.

5 They provide valuable recreational routes for the residents of the Borough, opening up the riverfront to public access, enabling people without a car to gain access to the countryside and providing pleasant and easily accessible informal recreational paths. The Trans-Pennine Trail in particular is also an important tourist asset, potentially bringing hundreds of walkers through the Borough. The economic and tourism potential of such a throughput is immense and will be a powerful means of improving the image of Halton.

6 The Trans-Pennine Trail is unique being Britain’s first robust multi-user long-distance recreational route providing for walkers and cyclists with as much of the route as possible suitable for horses and people in wheelchairs. It will generally follow the route of the Mersey Way in Halton except in the vicinity of Hale village where the Trail turns inland through the village to link into the Speke area of Liverpool.

7 A key element in the overall concept of the Trans-Pennine Trail is the provision of associated facilities for its users such as car parking, toilets, visitor centres, interpretative facilities, cafes, pubs, restaurants and overnight
accommodation. The Council will encourage such facilities where they would enhance the recreational and tourism role of the trail, subject to the proposal complying with other policies in this Plan.

**ROAD NETWORK**

**TP11 ROAD SCHEMES**

1. It is proposed that the following road schemes be undertaken during the period of the Plan. Planning permission will not be granted for development that is likely to prejudice the construction of these roads. The routes to be protected of the proposed road schemes are shown on the proposals map.

   a. Widnes Town Centre Circulatory System, Widnes
   b. Peelhouse Lane Link, Widnes
   c. Upton Rocks Distributor Road, Widnes
   d. The Runcorn Station access road

These road schemes will be designed to facilitate walking, cycling and public transport services.

**JUSTIFICATION**

3. Additional road schemes that require further study are included towards the end of the introduction to this Chapter.

4. The Widnes Town Centre Circulatory System is partially in place following the completion of the Green Oaks Centre and associated road system to the east of the Town Centre. Completion of the Circulatory System will aid ease of movement into and around the Town Centre for all means of transport.

5. The Peelhouse Lane Link is included as a proposal in the Local Transport Plan for Halton. This would permit better public transport and pedestrian access to the Town Centre.

6. The Upton Rocks Distributor Road is partially complete. It is essential that this is completed to reduce the impact of traffic generated from the Upton Rocks housing area on surrounding areas. It is also necessary for access to the most northerly housing development site in this area, known as land north of Upton Rocks. The developer of this site will be required to provide or make a contribution to the provision of this road as appropriate.

7. The Runcorn Station access road will cater for traffic west bound from the new junction on the Runcorn Expressway via Chapel Street and Greenway Road. This will be implemented as part of a new commercial development scheme on land off Chapel Street. Increased accessibility to the Station will help to encourage rail use.

8. PPG13 puts an emphasis on reducing the need to travel by private car. These road schemes are considered essential to the overall transport network in Halton. The schemes should therefore maintain and improve the choice for people to walk, cycle or catch public transport rather than simply make it easier for people to drive to facilities.

**TP12 CAR PARKING**

1. Appropriate levels of off-street car parking will be required as part of new development in the interests of highway safety.

2. Maximum car parking standards are contained in Appendix 1. Car parking in excess of the standards will not be permitted.

**JUSTIFICATION**

3. The availability of car parking has a major influence on the means of transport people choose for their journeys. PPG13 (March 2001) states that policies in development plans should set maximum levels of car parking, as part of a package of measures to:
   - promote sustainable transport choices,
   - reduce the land-take of development,
   - enable schemes to fit into central urban sites,
   - promote linked trips and access to development for those without the use of a car, and
• tackle congestion.

Appendix 1 of this Plan contains Parking Standards. These are consistent with the approach set out in PPG13 and with standards contained in Regional Planning Guidance for the North West, now termed Regional Spatial Strategy.

4 The appropriate level of car parking required as part of a new development will be dependent on the circumstances of that development. Car parking up to the maximum allowed under Appendix 1 may not be appropriate for example where other transport choices are available or where shared use of parking is available. However, where it is considered that the level of parking provision proposed would be so low as to be to the detriment of highway safety, the new development would not be allowed.

5 In providing parking spaces as part of new residential development consideration should be given to the requirements of ‘The Building Regulations 1991, Access and Facilities for Disabled People, Part M2 Section 6, Means of Access to and into the dwelling’.

6 Further guidance on the Council’s policy for appropriate levels of car parking for residential development is given in Supplementary Planning Guidance on Residential Development (2001).

SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH

TP1 3 FREIGHT

1 New development within Primarily Employment Areas, Action Areas or Proposed Employment Development Sites that adjoin railways and waterways, including the Manchester Ship Canal and the Weaver Navigation, and which utilises these facilities for the transportation of goods, will be permitted.

2 The following sites have been identified for freight transfer facilities: -
   a Runcorn Docklands
   b Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park

3 Development within primarily employment areas, and employment development sites and Action Areas will not be permitted if it is likely to prejudice the use of existing or disused railway sidings or port facilities in the transportation of freight.

JUSTIFICATION

4 Opportunities exist to promote the sustainable transport of freight within the Borough utilising rail and the waterways, including the Manchester Ship Canal and the Weaver Navigation. In addition to providing sustainable transport facilities, such proposals would also create employment and much needed regeneration along the rail and waterway corridors.

5 Heavy goods vehicles can create noise and air pollution, as well as adding to the problem of congestion on the roads. Rail and water borne freight can help to alleviate these problems, offering significant advantages in terms of speed, the avoidance of congestion and environmental impact.

6 Because of the history of the Borough, Halton is in an advantageous position regarding the transfer of freight from the road. The Manchester Ship Canal runs through the Borough and there are docks within Runcorn. Various freight lines run into the older industrial areas of southern Widnes and west Runcorn. Opportunities for utilising such facilities should be maximised by allocating sites for freight transfer facilities and protecting rail sidings from inappropriate development.

7 The Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park, allocated under Policy E7, promotes the creation of an intermodal freight terminal that is considered to be of regional significance. The Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park was identified by the North West Development Agency (NWDA) as one of 25 sites of regional importance for encouraging inward investment into the Region. The Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park was also considered to be of regional significance in creating a regional network of rail connected intermodal facilities.
ACCESSIBILITY FOR ALL

TP14 TRANSPORT ASSESSMENTS

1 A Transport Assessment will be required to be provided as part of any proposal for employment, residential, retail, leisure, services, education and health development that will have significant transport implications. The scope of the Assessment should reflect the scale of the development.

JUSTIFICATION

2 Developments can have significant transport implications. Transport Assessments should therefore be prepared in order that a better assessment of a proposal can be made and to provide a basis for discussion of the details of a scheme.

3 The coverage and details of an assessment will depend on the scale of the proposal. Assessments for major proposals should:

   a Illustrate accessibility to the site by all modes and the likely modal split to and from the site.

   b Give details of proposed measures to improve access by public transport, walking and cycling.

   c Give details of proposed measures to reduce the need for parking.

   d Give details of proposed measures to mitigate transport impacts.

4 Major proposals for the purposes of this policy are those which are included in Appendix I Transport Assessments. For small schemes the Assessment should simply outline the transport aspects of the application.

TP15 ACCESSIBILITY TO NEW DEVELOPMENT

1 Development which increases traffic to undesirable levels will not be permitted, unless improvements to the transport network, including public transport links and pedestrian and cycling routes, to alleviate traffic problems can be made.

TP16 GREEN TRAVEL PLANS

1 A green travel plan will be required as part of a new development in all of the following circumstances:

   a Major development proposals comprising jobs, shopping, leisure and services.

   b Smaller development proposals comprising jobs, shopping, leisure and services which would generate significant amounts of travel in or near to air quality management areas.

   c Where the green travel plan will help to address a particular local traffic problem associated with the proposal, which might otherwise have to be refused on local traffic grounds.

   d Proposals for new and expanded school facilities (school travel plan).

2 Where a green travel plan is not required, developers will be encouraged to prepare one where

JUSTIFICATION

2 Undesirable levels are those which increase vehicular traffic on surrounding roads up to or beyond the road capacity, taking into account other allocated sites or development proposals that will impact on these roads. Improvements should not be restricted to the highway to increase the capacity for private vehicles, but public transport improvements and pedestrian and cycling improvements should also be considered. This will encourage and enable journeys to be made to the new development by a variety of means of transport and help in the aim of reducing the need to travel by private car.

3 The developer will be expected to pay for any necessary improvements to the transport network and implement such improvements before work on the development commences.

4 Preparation and implementation of a green travel plan may help to alleviate traffic problems and make a proposal acceptable.
appropriate in the interests of sustainability.

JUSTIFICATION

3 Major development for the purposes of this policy are those which are included within Appendix 1 Transport Assessments.

4 Services includes education and health uses.

5 PPG13 (March 2001) states that the Government wants to help raise awareness of the impact of travel decisions and promote the use of travel plans. Green travel plans are aimed at delivering sustainable objectives including:

   a Reductions in car use.
   b Increase in use of walking, cycling and public transport.
   c Reduced traffic speeds and improved safety.
   d More environmentally friendly delivery and freight movements.

6 Green travel plans have a role to play in providing information about the benefits and availability of alternative transport modes, and can help encourage travellers to consider not only their mode of transport but even the necessity of making the trip.

7 Where a green travel plan is required then some or all of the plan may be made binding through either conditions attached to a planning permission or through a planning obligation.

8 In some circumstances, where the development proposed does not fall under the criteria of this policy for the requirement of a green travel plan, it may still be appropriate for a plan to be prepared. Whilst this is not a requirement, developers will be encouraged to prepare such a plan. Such circumstances may include for example where a development is below the standards for definition of “major” development included in Appendix 1, but still employs or attracts a significant number of people.

9 School travel plans should promote safe cycling and walking routes, restrict parking and car access at and around schools, and includes such things as on-site changing and cycle storage facilities.

SAFETY FOR ALL

TP17 SAFE TRAVEL FOR ALL

1 Transport schemes will be designed to maintain or improve safety for pedestrians, cyclists, public transport users and drivers.

2 Development will be required to provide safe access in to the overall transport network and safe on-site circulation to avoid danger to pedestrians, cyclists, public transport users and drivers.

JUSTIFICATION

3 Transport schemes include new roads, new junctions, and changes to the highway network as a result of a development proposal, pedestrian and cycle routes, traffic management schemes and bus priority measures.

4 The reduction of the number of deaths and injuries from road accidents in the Borough is a key priority. The Local Transport Plan puts a high priority on Local Safety Schemes, traffic calming and reducing accidents on the Runcorn Busway. These proposals are mainly in relation to the existing transport network. It is considered essential that these schemes are supported by measures to ensure that new development helps improve transport safety.

5 RPG for the North West, now termed Regional Spatial Strategy, gives a target of a minimum 40% reduction in the number of people killed or seriously injured in road accidents by 2010, compared to the average for 1994 to 1998. In addition, it gives a minimum target of 50% reduction in the number of children killed or seriously injured. The national target of 10% reduction in slight casualty rate should be bettered. The Local Transport Plan contains specific targets for Halton. The UDP will aim to help to achieve these targets.

TP18 TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

1 Development will be required to
incorporate traffic management and traffic calming measures wherever such measures would encourage walking and cycling, improve highway safety and improve the quality of local neighbourhoods.

JUSTIFICATION

2 The Local Authority will be undertaking traffic management measures within the Borough, particularly as part of Local Safety Schemes. Where new development impacts on the highway network, additional traffic management measures may be appropriate. Priority areas for such measures will be within new developments such as new housing areas, in existing residential areas, shopping areas and near to local facilities such as schools. These are areas where it is most likely that pedestrians will come into conflict with motor transport.

THE ENVIRONMENT

TP19 AIR QUALITY

1 In areas where air quality is shown to be poor due to pollution from transport sources, new development that generates traffic which will create additional pollution or intensify the pollution problem will not be permitted.

JUSTIFICATION

2 The guidance note on Air Quality and Land Use Planning issued under section 88 of the Environment Act 1995 states that in determining a planning application it will be important to consider the impact of development in terms of the air quality caused by both the operational characteristics of the development and the traffic generated by it. This policy relates to pollution caused by traffic generation in locations where air quality is already poor.

3 The Council is currently preparing an Air Quality Management Strategy for Halton. This will identify areas where pollutants may not meet the Government’s Air Quality Objectives by 2005 unless action is taken at the local level. If such areas are identified they will become Air Quality Management Areas and action will be taken within these areas to relieve the identified air quality problem.

4 An initial study of air quality in Halton has identified “hot spots” where three pollutants may not meet Air Quality Objectives. These pollutants are nitrogen dioxide, PM10 and sulphur dioxide. The problem occurs around West Bank in Widnes and Runcorn on the Mersey due to proximity of industry and the congested Silver Jubilee Bridge. Further work is being undertaken in relation to these “hot spots” and if this shows that Air Quality Objectives will not be met by 2005 then they will be declared Air Quality Management Areas.

5 Within any potential or designated Air Quality Management Area, new development should not add to the pollution levels or create additional pollution problems. In terms of transport and land use within such areas, development that is only accessible by the private car would not be acceptable for example. However development may be acceptable: -

a where the development is accessible by alternative means of transport other than the private car and it is shown that this will be utilised by those accessing the development;

b where the development is mixed encouraging and enabling cycling or walking between various facilities, thereby reducing the number of journeys made by the private car.

TP20 LIVERPOOL AIRPORT

1 Proposals arising from the Local Transport Plan’s Surface Access Strategy that would improve surface access to and from Liverpool Airport will be permitted.

JUSTIFICATION

2 It is recognised that Liverpool Airport is a key transport facility for the Borough. Surface links to the airport are at present poor and require improvement.

3 The Local Transport Plan for Halton contains a Surface Access Strategy. This includes measures such as providing new and improving existing rail and bus services to the airport from the Borough. This policy is aimed at supporting this strategy.
HALTON UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

CHAPTER 7 LEISURE, TOURISM AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES
AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1. The policies within this Chapter look to achieving the aims and objectives contained in Part 1 of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP). The aims and objectives of the Plan, where they relate to leisure, tourism and community facilities, and therefore these policies, are concerned with protecting and improving the Borough’s existing facilities, as well as encouraging and enabling the creation of new facilities. A high quality environment will be particularly important in ensuring the continuing success of existing and future tourism attractions in the Borough.

BACKGROUND

LEISURE AND TOURISM

1. Leisure plays an essential part in people’s health and well being and, in recent years, there has been a significant increase in the amount of time and money people have to spend on leisure with a consequent increased demand for a greater range of leisure facilities.

2. Leisure and tourism are major growth areas of the national economy, and have the potential to make an important contribution to the local economy. Planning Policy Guidance notes “Open Space, Sport and Recreation” 2001 (PPG17) and “Tourism” 1992 (PPG21) highlight the important economic role of leisure and tourism. Tourism, in particular, can help support a wider range of amenities and services than might otherwise be viable in the Borough.

3. Leisure facilities are provided by both the public and private sectors, and would include: entertainment and cultural facilities, such as cinemas, night clubs and theatres; sport and recreation facilities, such as sports halls and swimming pools; and tourism-related facilities. Sport and recreation facilities would also include sports grounds, children’s playspaces and golf courses, all of which are dealt with in the Green Environment Chapter. This chapter deals only with indoor facilities.

4. The Council itself is involved in the promotion, financing and management of a wide range of leisure facilities and activities, and is involved in providing new facilities, improving existing facilities, promoting increased participation, targeting various groups and promoting excellence.

5. The Council will continue to seek to improve the quality and range of leisure opportunities during the Plan period to ensure that Halton’s residents have easy access to the widest possible range of facilities as an essential contribution to improving their quality of life. It is currently preparing Leisure, Cultural and Tourism Strategies that will help guide development and support future bids for external funding for new facilities, supplementing the policies in this Chapter.
6 However, whilst leisure and tourism facilities need to be encouraged, they should be carefully sited where they will not damage the environment, increase traffic congestion or cause problems for people living nearby. The policies in this Chapter aim to steer developments towards those areas where they are best located.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

7 Community facilities help to maintain and improve the quality of life in a community. They provide places for people to meet socially, they provide leisure opportunities, they provide education and job training, and help promote the health and well being of the Borough’s population. Everyone will benefit from community facilities at one time or another.

8 Community facilities are particularly important elements of residential areas, providing a focus for local people and generating a feeling of community spirit and sense of place. They are also important in sustaining local centres and contributing to their vitality and viability.

9 Community facilities are provided by a wide range of organisations from the public, private and voluntary sectors, and provide venues for a wide range of activities such as sports clubs, youth clubs, interest groups, playgroups, community groups and general leisure activities.

10 It must be recognised that the UDP has a limited role in the protection and provision of community facilities and that there are few instances where the Council itself can operate as a direct provider of such facilities. A major role for the UDP will be in ensuring that new facilities proposed are appropriately located. While small-scale facilities are best located within the local communities they serve, major facilities should be preferably located in town centres.
PART 2
POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

LEISURE AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES

LTC1 DEVELOPMENT OF MAJOR LEISURE AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES WITHIN DESIGNATED SHOPPING CENTRES

1 Proposals for major leisure and community facilities within Primary and Secondary Shopping areas, and on sites allocated in Policy TC1 for leisure uses, as identified on the Proposals Map, will be permitted provided that they are of a size and scale appropriate to the character and function of the centre and contribute to the centres vitality and viability.

JUSTIFICATION

2 Major facilities are those which serve a district or Borough-wide catchment area (or even wider, beyond the Borough boundaries). Major facilities could include a wide range of leisure and community facilities, such as cinemas, nightclubs, theatres, bingo halls, bowling alleys, ice rinks, multi-use sports halls and swimming pools.

3 Since major facilities will tend to generate large amounts of traffic, they should be located where accessibility by public transport is greatest. In accordance with the sequential test, this will tend to be within primary and secondary shopping areas as defined on the proposals map, where there are already a wide range of complementary facilities and services. The development of major leisure and community facilities in primary and secondary shopping areas will improve town centre diversity, promote linked trips and also help to contribute to the vitality and attractiveness of the town centres outside shopping hours.

LTC2 DEVELOPMENT OF MAJOR LEISURE AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES ON THE EDGE OF DESIGNATED SHOPPING CENTRES

1 Proposals for major leisure and community facilities located to the edge of primary and secondary shopping areas will be permitted provided that:

a It is demonstrated that there is a need for the development and that a sequential approach has been applied in selecting the location of the site; and

b The development will form a natural complementary extension to the Primary and Secondary shopping areas; and

c That the proposal is within easy walking distance to a public transport interchange and the Primary and Secondary shopping areas; and

d That it would not either individually, or in combination with other recent or proposed developments, undermine or damage the prospects of enhancing the vitality and viability of the town centres, through diversion of trade, deterrence of investment or through other detrimental effects on carrying out of the Councils regeneration objectives.

JUSTIFICATION

2 Major facilities are those which serve a district or Borough-wide catchment area (or even wider, beyond the Borough boundaries). Major facilities could include a wide range of leisure and community facilities, such as cinemas, nightclubs, theatres, bingo halls, bowling alleys, ice rinks, multi-use sports halls and swimming pools.

3 Leisure proposals on the edge of primary and secondary shopping areas will be required to demonstrate that there is quantitative and qualitative need for the additional facilities and
that there are no suitable sites available within the primary and secondary shopping areas in question. Where a leisure scheme is larger than can be accommodated on a site within designated primary and secondary shopping areas, consideration should be given to the possibility of sub-dividing the scheme into smaller components.

4 In order to promote linked trips, where one trip serves several functions, proposals for leisure development on edge of centre sites should be minded to take into account the walking distances and linkages to and from the proposed site and both public transport interchanges and shopping areas. Edge of centre leisure proposals must not only be within easy walking distance but serve to enhance the quality of the shopping environment.

LTC3 DEVELOPMENT OF MAJOR LEISURE AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES IN OUT OF CENTRE LOCATIONS

1 Proposals for major leisure and community facilities in out of centre locations will not be permitted unless all of the following criteria can be satisfied:

a It is demonstrated that there is a need for development and that a sequential approach has been applied in selecting the location of the site.

b That it would not either individually, or in combination with other recent or proposed developments, undermine or damage the prospects of enhancing the vitality and viability of the town centres, through diversion of trade, deterrence of investment or through other detrimental effects on carrying out of the Council’s regeneration objectives.

c The site is accessible by a choice of means of transport other than the car, and would reduce the need to travel by car.

JUSTIFICATION

3 In the interests of safeguarding the continued viability of the Borough’s town centres and to assist in their regeneration, development of major leisure and community facilities will normally focused within the town centres.

4 When considering the need for leisure development regard will be had to:

a An assessment of the physical capacity and demand for the proposed development;

b Compliance with the Council’s adopted regeneration objectives as set out in both its Regeneration Strategy (March 1998) and Town Centre Strategies.

5 The development of major leisure and community facilities in out-of-centre locations has the potential to significantly effect the vitality and viability of the town centres through the diversion of trade, putting at risk the aims and objectives of the town centre strategies, and the potential to reduce investor confidence in the town centres. As such, planning applications for major out of centre leisure and community facilities must be accompanied by a full justification demonstrating how the above policy criteria can be met to the Council’s satisfaction. This should include evidence on:

a Possible harm to the development plan strategy;

b The adoption of a sequential approach to site selection and the availability of suitable alternative sites;

c The likely economic impacts of the Borough’s town centres including the accumulative effects of recently completed developments and outstanding planning permissions;

d Meeting sustainable travel objectives of reducing the need to travel by car and increasing the use of other modes of travel presented in PPG13 Travel Plan;

e Likely changes in travel patterns over the catchment area; and

f Significant environmental impacts.
CHAPTER 7  LEISURE, TOURISM AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES

**LTC4 DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL LEISURE AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

1. Development of local leisure and community facilities will be permitted in or adjacent to town and neighbourhood centres.

2. Within Primarily Residential Areas, as defined on the Proposals Map, proposals for development other than Class C3 (dwelling houses) will be considered mainly with regard to their effect on the vitality and viability of existing shopping centres and their effect on residential amenity in compliance with Policy H8.

**JUSTIFICATION**

2. Community facilities are provided by a wide range of organisations from the public, private and voluntary sectors, and provide venues for a wide range of activities such as sports clubs, youth clubs, interest groups, playgroups, community groups and general leisure activities.

3. They are an essential element of local life but are often not financially attractive to developers and therefore not easy to provide. Important community facilities therefore need to be protected from redevelopment or change of use to ensure their continued enjoyment by the local community.

**LTC6 CHILDREN’S DAY CARE PROVISION**

1. Proposals for new build and the change of use of properties to children’s day nurseries, crèches and playgroups will be permitted provided that all of the following criteria can be satisfied:

   a. The property is of an adequate size and type and located within an area providing a satisfactory environment for the children.

   b. There are adequate and satisfactory facilities for outdoor play, separate from car parking and service areas.

   c. There is adequate space within the site or, in exceptional circumstances, on the highway, for a dropping-off zone to allow vehicles to park without causing a hazard to other users of the highway.

   d. The site is reasonably accessible by public transport and/or within reasonable walking distance for a residential or employment area.

2. Any consent may be restricted to the specific use applied for, or to only some of the other uses within Class D1.

**JUSTIFICATION**

3. There is increasing demand for childcare...
provision, and this policy seeks to ensure that the development provides a satisfactory and safe environment for children, without undue disturbance to adjoining occupiers.

4 In residential areas, a detached property with a large garden would be considered the most suitable accommodation, although, in exceptional circumstances, the Council will consider a semi-detached or terraced property where there is suitable noise insulation between the party wall.

5 There is, however, no presumption that such provision is best located within residential areas. Provision of childcare facilities within or near the workplace can actually be more convenient for families and cause fewer nuisances to neighbours than in residential areas.

6 The use of a dwelling to care for up to 5 children on a commercial basis will not require planning permission for change of use.

7 The use of a dwelling to care for more than 5 children on a commercial basis will require planning permission for change of use to Class D1 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order, 1987. It is considered that care of more than 5 children on a commercial basis is likely to change the character of the property’s use as a single dwelling and affect the amenity of the surrounding residential area.

8 A restriction on the deemed consent for change of use within Use Class D1, as permitted in the General Permitted Development Order 1995, will be applied where the location of the proposed childcare facility is considered unsuitable for all or some of the other uses within Use Class D1.

9 Reference should also be made to the Council’s Supplementary Planning Guidance on Children’s Day Care Nurseries (1999) which details how this policy will be implemented.

LTC7 THE PROPOSED HALTON ARTS AND CULTURAL CENTRE SITE

1 Land in Runcorn Old Town Centre is allocated for the development of a purpose-built arts and cultural centre. Planning permission will not be permitted for any development on or adjacent to this site that would be likely to prejudice its implementation.

JUSTIFICATION

2 The site in Runcorn Old Town Centre, as defined on the Proposals Map, has been set aside for the development of a purpose-built arts and cultural centre. It is proposed that the centre will provide a large auditorium, studio space, music rehearsal space, dark and wet rooms, and an exhibition area.

3 The need for a purpose-built arts and cultural centre to serve Runcorn was identified in the previous Halton Local Plan. There are currently very limited arts and cultural facilities in the Borough. The Council-run Queen’s Hall and Studio in Widnes and a small facility at Runcorn library are the only significant venues at present. The development of a purpose-built arts and cultural centre in Runcorn will be an important step in strengthening and enriching community life in Halton.

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

LTC8 PROTECTION OF TOURIST ATTRACTIONS

1 Development that would affect an existing tourist attraction will not be permitted if it would be likely to detract from the function, appearance or setting of the attraction.

JUSTIFICATION

2 Although Halton is not a major tourism destination, tourism does have a role to play in the Borough’s economy. It is therefore important that development that would have a negative effect on the tourism potential of its existing attractions is resisted.

3 This would include proposals that would reduce public access to a site or building, reduce the attractiveness of the surrounding environment, destroy buildings or features of interest, or result in noise, smells or disturbance which would detract from the visitor experience.

4 In the main, tourism in Halton is promoted along five themes:
Medieval history - Norton Priory Museum and Walled Garden; Halton Castle;

Lewis Carroll - Daresbury church and the birthplace site;

Industrial and Chemical heritage - Catalyst Museum;

Transportation heritage - the historic canals, the bridges and ferry-crossing site;

Natural heritage - the Mersey Estuary.

Other important attractions include Victoria Park, West Bank Promenade, Halton Town Park Miniature Railway and Ski Centre, the Cycle Museum in Runcorn Town Centre, and the Trans-Pennine Trail.

The water features of the Borough, including the estuary, rivers and canals, are important landscape features, adding variety and interest to the area, as well as being important historically. Policy GE29 in particular recognises the importance of rivers and canals and their potential for sensitive recreation and tourism development.

The Trans-Pennine Trail is an important long-distance route as well as being a key route in the overall Greenway Network in the Borough. Policy TP9 and Policy TP10 aim to protect and enhance the Greenway Network and Trans-Pennine Trail. Importantly, the Trans-Pennine Trail will provide a link from Halton’s own tourist attractions, such as the Catalyst Museum, to important tourist sites outside the Borough, such as Liverpool’s Albert Dock, and further afield, such as York Minster.

LTC9 TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

1 Development that would be likely to enhance the tourism potential of the Borough including improvements to existing facilities or the development of new facilities will be permitted in appropriate locations, in accordance with the policies of the Plan. In particular:

a Proposals that would increase the provision of accommodation in hotels, guesthouses, bed and breakfast establishments and self-catering facilities, whether through new build, extensions or changes of use will be considered favourably. Large-scale, new build accommodation should be located in or adjacent to town centres or close to existing major leisure or tourism facilities.

b Proposals for the provision of site accommodation for touring caravans and for camping may be permitted provided that the proposals are appropriate in size, visually unobtrusive and would not lead to unsatisfactory traffic conditions or other nuisance.

c Proposals for the provision of conference facilities will be considered favourably. Conference facilities should be located on sites in and adjacent to town centres, sites adjacent to railway stations or on sites allocated for business (B1) uses which are capable of access by public transport.

d Proposals that increase the tourism potential of the Bridgewater Canal and the Weaver Navigation will be considered favourably.

JUSTIFICATION

2 The Council is committed to improving the image of the Borough. One of the most effective ways of achieving this is to better market its assets. Halton has a rich and interesting history which should be greater promoted through tourism.

3 Tourism has an important role to play in the local economy and can be an important tool for urban regeneration. It can create jobs, it can support local amenities and services and create income for local businesses, and it can act as a driver for environmental improvements.

4 The majority of tourism in Halton is currently day visits. The Council will build on the existing day visits market by continuing to promote existing tourist attractions and encouraging the provision of new facilities and attractions that will increase the number and duration of visits and/or enhance the visitor experience.
5 Proposals that would enhance the attractiveness of, and improve the facilities offered at, existing tourist attractions, and respond sensitively to the local environment, will be considered favourably.

6 In relation to new facilities and attractions, the appropriateness of the location will depend on the nature of the facility or attraction proposed. For example, small-scale facilities which are ancillary to the enjoyment of the countryside or greenspace, such as visitor centres and interpretative facilities, may be permitted in the countryside or on greenspace in compliance with Policies GE5 and GE9. Major leisure and community facilities, such as cinemas, nightclubs, theatres, bingo halls, bowling alleys, ice rinks, multi-use sports halls, swimming pools and religious buildings, should preferably be located in and adjacent to the town centres, in the Central Widnes Action Area and on sites allocated in Policy TC1 for leisure uses, in compliance with Policy LTC1.

7 Conference tourism will be a potential growth area in the Borough with the development of conferencing facilities as part of the Halton Stadium South Stand proposals. Conference facilities can generate combined business and leisure visits and expenditure in the area. New facilities that will complement this provision and further develop conference tourism in the Borough will be considered favourably.

8 Conference and exhibition facilities do not tend to be free standing developments, but usually form an integral part of hotel, leisure, further education and prestige employment or training developments. Given that the facilities will attract business trips from outside the Borough (and possibly even outside the region), they must be located at sites capable of being served by public transport.

9 The opportunity to develop new water sports, leisure and boating facilities exists at Spike Island/Widnes Warth. Spike Island is already home to the Halton Show, an annual two-day event with a variety of exhibitions, stalls, and entertainment attracting over 80,000 visitors. Proposals that would increase the attractiveness of the area for leisure and tourism will be permitted in compliance with Policy RG3.

LTC10 WATER-BASED RECREATION

1 Development of facilities which promote non-powered riverside and water-based recreation will be permitted, subject to satisfactory measures to ensure that their operation will not conflict with any of the following:

   a Commercial water based traffic;
   b Existing water-based recreational activity;
   c The amenities of other occupiers or visitors;
   d Nature conservation interests.

2 Watersports and associated facilities will be permitted on the balancing lake at Wharford Farm, as shown on the proposals map.

JUSTIFICATION

3 Water sports (Canoeing, rowing, bathing etc.) have all enjoyed an increase in popularity over the past decade. Advice in PPG17 states that development plans may encourage the imaginative use of redundant mineral workings, disused commercial docks and unused agricultural land near water to provide moorings and watersports facilities.

4 Water sport participants need changing facilities, car parking areas, social facilities, training areas and chandlery services. In improving sporting and recreational facilities, this policy will help to benefit the economy, through development of the leisure industry, it will also present a more attractive image to inward investors thereby supporting the local economy.

5 Powered watersports are normally incompatible with other users and generate high levels of noise pollution. Facilities for powered watersports can only be considered where conflict with other users and adverse impact upon amenity and nature conservation interests can be acceptable.

6 Wharford Farm presents an opportunity to create watersports facilities.
HALTON UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

CHAPTER 8
SHOPPING AND TOWN CENTRES
AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1 The policies within this Chapter look to achieving the aims and objectives contained in Part 1 of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP). The aims and objectives of the Plan, where they relate to Town Centres and shopping, and therefore these policies, are concerned with consolidating and improving existing shopping provision in the Borough’s town and neighbourhood centres to maintain their position at the heart of the communities they serve.

BACKGROUND

THE ROLE OF TOWN CENTRES

1 Shopping is traditionally linked with town centres where many other services and facilities are available. In Halton, all the main shopping facilities are in the town centres of Widnes, Runcorn Old Town and Runcorn New Town. (The last, for many years referred to as ‘Shopping City’, has been renamed ‘Halton Lea’.)

2 Town centres are the hub of urban life, and represent many years of investment and development. They contribute to the quality of life, with their provision of shopping facilities including specialist shops, banking and business services, catering services and leisure and cultural facilities. They are linked to public transport systems and so are accessible to those without their own means of transport - an important element in considering shopping policies for Halton, where the level of car ownership is relatively low. A thriving town centre acts as a good advertisement for an area, promoting its attractiveness, its sense of worth, and a good image.

3 Planning Policy Guidance 6 ‘Town Centres and Retail Developments’, (PPG6, June 1996) relates retail development to town centres’ vitality and viability and gives support to the notion of sustaining town centres in their role as a focus for shopping, leisure facilities, restaurants, entertainment, offices and other services, with the retail function continuing to underpin such centres.

4 In Halton’s case the town centres need to be revitalised if they are to prosper. They need to fulfil a promotional role and provide satisfactory shopping provision for residents. The relative decline of the town centres, through lack of investment shown by the poor range of shops and the declining state of the buildings is being steadily reversed through concerted efforts to improve the qualitative deficiencies in retail provision and the quality of the environment of all three town centres.

5 To co-ordinate public and private investment decisions and to enable the town centres to prosper without damaging the health of any other, the Council has produced town centre strategies for all three town centres. It has also approved development proposals for Widnes in the ‘Widnes Town Centre Renewal Plan’ and for Runcorn Old Town as part of the ‘Runcorn on the Mersey’ Single Regeneration Budget Programme. These have helped guide investment decisions and promoted development opportunities as well improve the attractions, accessibility and management of the town centres.

RETAIL ISSUES STUDY

6 In 1995/96 consultants Herring Baker Harris
(HBH) prepared a Borough-wide retail assessment which incorporated detailed household surveys on existing shopping patterns and also examined future retail development potential within the three main centres of Widnes, Runcorn New Town and Runcorn Old Town.

7 Three years later, it was acknowledged that further information was required on the current situation and the potential for additional retail development in, or close to, the town centres. The application of the ‘sequential test’, as required by PPG 6, was a pre-requisite to the process of identification of any sites for development for town centre uses.

8 To ensure that the policies and proposals of the Plan are based on a factual assessment of retail trends and capacity for retail growth, the Council commissioned consultants Chesterton, to undertake a Borough wide retail study (Halton Retail Issues Study Jan 1999) with the following terms of reference:

a To undertake a ‘health check’ on the vitality and viability of the Borough’s three major centres and 34 neighbourhood centres;

b To assess the scale and type of additional retail investment which could be supported by the centres;

c To evaluate the merits of existing undeveloped sites identified for retail development as well as considering additional sites compatible with PPG6;

d To advise on appropriate retail policies for inclusion in the Halton UDP;

e To include a review of Primary and Secondary shopping areas in the town centre.

9 This study was further updated in October 2002. The key findings of the studies reflected in the strategic objectives, policies and proposals of the Plan are as follows:

**Borough-wide issues**

- To protect established centres.

- Re-focus future comparison goods provision to Widnes.

- Pro-active response to future development opportunities and site assembly.

- Consolidation of town centre provision.

**Widnes**

- More flexibility for non retail uses in Secondary (other) Shopping Areas.

- General environmental improvements.

- Identify locations for growth in non-food floorspace.

**Runcorn New Town**

- Little scope for retail expansion after development of Trident Park.

- Pro-active management of the public realm.

- Improve pedestrian circulation.
Runcorn Old Town

- Provide a food store in the Central Area development site.
- Review Primary and Secondary (other) Shopping Areas.
- Resist further expansion of non-A1 uses.
- Identify sites for non-food goods.

Neighbourhood Centres

- Protect vibrant centres.
- Improve & deregulate centres of average performance.
- Protect centres that serve an important
- Redevelop failing centres.

A further study into Neighbourhood Centres was under taken by consultants Chesterton (Local Centres Study Nov 1999) to assess the relative performance of the centres to determine the extent to which planning policy restrictions on non retail uses should apply.
PART 2
POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

PROVISION FOR RETAIL DEVELOPMENT

TC1 RETAIL & LEISURE ALLOCATIONS

1 The following table of sites are allocated for the uses specified, on the basis of both an assessment of need for new retail and leisure facilities in the Borough and a sequential approach to site selection.

2 In addition to the above sites, bulky goods retail warehousing within Class A1 and leisure uses will be permitted within the Widnes Waterfront Action Area to the north of the Shell Green protected rail route where it can be demonstrated that there is a need for the development and where the use is within reasonable walking distance of Widnes Primary Shopping Area. It will also be permitted at the Warrington Road/Eastern Widnes Bypass site subject to compliance with the terms of Policy TC3.

3 A neighbourhood centre within the North Widnes Development Area will be permitted to serve the needs of this new residential area.

JUSTIFICATION
SITE SELECTION AND ASSESSMENT OF NEED

4 Retail: In Jan 1999 the Council commissioned the Retail Issues Study to appraise the quantitative and qualitative need for retail development in Halton and to assess all potential town centre sites. A sequential approach to site selection was undertaken. After considering the need for retail development in the shopping catchment area of Widnes and Runcorn all suitable and available town centre sites that were identified were allocated prior to considering suitable edge of centre sites, then lastly out of centre sites in each town centre.

5 Building on the findings of the 1999 study the Council commissioned the Review of Retail & Leisure Issues (October 2002) to examine the potential implications of accommodating additional growth in retail floorspace that may occur between 2011-2016 (the 1999 study looked only to 2011). This was in response to amending the plan period to be line with Regional Planning Guidance. In addition it was considered that the evidence of shopping patterns used in the 1999 study was becoming outdated. The Council, therefore, funded a household survey with Warrington Borough Council in 2000. The 2002 retail and leisure study used this survey to reassess the need for additional retail floorspace to 2016. Future retail capacity identified by the 2002 Study will be periodically reviewed to reflect changes in retail expenditure estimates and population projections.

6 Convenience Goods: It found that there is unlikely to be need for additional convenience goods floorspace in Widnes over and above the convenience goods floorspace already present at the three larger format stores at Morrisons, the new Asda and the Co-op and the smaller stores in and around the town centre. It found that in Old Runcorn Town Centre there is a surplus of £2m convenience good expenditure over the £1-1.5m generated by the new 1040 sq m food store as part of the central Runcorn development; assuming the Kwik Save store on Church Street were to close as planned. For Halton Lea it found no quantitative capacity for a new food store but found that the poor performance of the Tesco store impacts on the vitality and viability of the shopping centre as a whole. It concludes, therefore, that there may be a qualitative need to improve convenience good facilities in Halton Lea to help reverse the decline of the centre.

7 Comparison Goods: As highlighted in the 1999 study the level of retail warehouse provision within the Borough as a whole is limited. To address this limited provision it was assumed that 50% of the growth in capacity for comparison goods should be targeted at the development of bulky goods retail warehousing. The 2002 Study found that there is need for an additional of 13,450
sq m of bulky goods retail warehousing (excluding commitments). In terms of the most suitable locations it concluded “that both the Widnes Eastern Bypass site and the Widnes Waterfront site currently represent Widnes’ best long term opportunities for the expansion of retail warehousing and large scale leisure uses. (paragraph 6.23)

8 The 2002 study also estimated an additional town centre floorspace requirement (representing the remaining 50% growth in capacity) of 880 sq m for Runcorn Old Town, 2,300 sq m for Halton Lea and 5,300 sq m for Widnes Town Centre up to 2016 (excluding commitments). The report concluded in particular that there was a real need to improve Halton Lea’s market share of comparison goods expenditure from the very low 5.5%. A small increase in market share to 7.5% would translate into a further need for approximately 7,000 sq m over an above the “2,300 sq m (9,300 sq m in total) needed to maintain its existing market share.

9 Leisure: Sites allocated for leisure were selected after an appraisal of all potential town centre development options. In assessing the need for leisure development emphasis has been placed on the regeneration benefits that will be gained in terms of; improving the vitality and viability of the town centres, bringing physical improvements to the town centre environments, increasing visitors and linked trips and raising the retail and investor confidence in the borough.

TOWN CENTRE SITES

10 The following sites are considered town centre sites because they are within designated Primary Shopping Areas.

11 Central Area Runcorn Old Town: The central area redevelopment site is identified in the Council’s Runcorn Old Town Strategy (1997) and the Halton Development Partnership’s Four Sites Initiative and appraised in the Retail Issues Study’s (1999) sequential approach to identifying suitable development sites and is the subject to a planning brief guiding its redevelopment. The proposal was at the heart of a successful Single Regeneration Bid ‘Runcorn On The Mersey’ aimed at combining public and private investment into the town to improve its vitality and viability.

Development Proposals for 3300 sq m. of retail floorspace was granted full planning permission in January 1999.

EDGE OF CENTRE SITES

12 The following sites are considered to be in edge of centre locations since they are outside a Primary Shopping Area but within reasonable walking distance of it. (refer to Planning Policy Guidance Note 6 Annex A for definition of edge of centre locations for retail and leisure proposals)

13 Land Rear of 59-69 High Street , Runcorn Old Town: This site is identified in the Runcorn Old Town Centre Strategy (1997) and the Halton Development Partnership’s Four Sites Initiative and appraised in the Retail Issues Study’s (Jan 1999) sequential approach to identifying suitable development sites. It has development potential for a mix of uses including, retail, leisure, offices and food and drink establishments. The development must maximise and enhance its waterside location, face the town centre and establish good physical pedestrian links to the town centre.


15 Ex. Crossville Bus Depot Site, Runcorn Old Town: The Ex. Crossville Bus Depot Site is identified in the Runcorn Old Town Strategy 1997 and the Halton Development Partnership’s Four Sites Initiative and appraised in the Retail Issues Study’s (1999) sequential approach to identifying suitable development sites. The site has development potential for leisure and entertainment uses, restaurant/ pubs and roadside uses. All highway access improvement off the Expressway are in place. Any development must make maximum advantage of its canal side location. The site is approximately 300m from the Primary Shopping Area and considered edge of centre but it is important however that new pedestrian links to the town centre across the canal are established.
and improvements to existing routes are also incorporated.

16 **Site F, Halton Lea:** Site F is a former employment site identified in the Urban Capacity Study’s (1997) as having limited potential for employment uses but marketable for town centre uses. It is a gateway site for Halton Lea and has development potential for a restaurant/pub to complement the adjacent leisure and retail uses at Trident Park.

17 **Widnes Road & Broseley Square, North Albert Road and Simms Cross:** The following Widnes town centre sites: Widnes Road & Broseley Square, North Albert Road and Simms Cross, were originally identified as potential redevelopment sites by the Widnes Regeneration Partnership, which is made up of key local stakeholders. It produced the Widnes Town Centre Outline Renewal Plan to promote redevelopment of key areas in the town centre for new retail and commercial development. The concept behind the Renewal Plan is to consolidate the town centre shopping environment which has over time migrated to its current position leaving a legacy of vacant and run down shopping areas at its fringes.

18 The potential to regenerate the town centre fringes was also considered by the Retail Issues Study (Jan 1999) which was commissioned by the Council to consider quantitative and qualitative need for development in all the town centres and assess all potential town centre development sites for the purposes of the review of the Unitary Development Plan. The study identified the north and south fringes to Widnes’ primary retail area as potential areas where comprehensive land assembly and redevelopment should be considered. It considered that comprehensive redevelopment on these sites; Widnes Road & Broseley Square and Simms Cross immediately south of the primary shopping area and north Albert road site to the north, will provide two anchor retail developments to consolidate the town centre shopping environment, provide attractive gateways for visitors and strengthen linkages within the retail core.

19 Outline planning permission was granted in September 2000 by the Secretary Of State after a call in inquiry, for a supermarket and mixed retail scheme on the Widnes Road and Broseley Square site linked to the closure of the existing Asda store at Hale Bank through a legal agreement (Section 106 of The Town And Country Planning Act 1990) . Outline planning permission was also granted by the Council for a retail park at the North Albert Road Site in August 2000.

20 The guiding principles of development are set out in the Council’s Supplementary Planning Guidance for the development: “Widnes Town Centre Renewal Phase I; Widnes Road & Broseley Square Development Brief. In brief the development should:

- safeguard the amenity of adjacent residential areas,
- provide a scale of development in context with its surroundings,
- enable a strong physical and visual integration of the development with the town centre and Broseley Square,
- be of a high standard of design and materials,
- be orientated to follow the existing street pattern as far as possible.
- keep Widnes Road for predominantly pedestrian access
- have elevations of a human scale
- provide a coherent landscape character
- provide appropriate on and off site highway works
- provide pedestrian links to the town centre.

**OUT OF CENTRE SITES**

21 The following sites are considered to be in out of centre locations since they are outside the definition of edge of centre in Planning Policy Guidance Note 6 Annex A.

22 **Land at Chapel Street, Runcorn Old Town:** The Land at Chapel Street site is identified in
the Halton Development Partnership’s Four Sites Initiative and appraised in the Retail Issues Study’s (1999) sequential approach to identifying suitable development sites. All highway access improvements off the Expressway are in place. The site has development potential for a mix of uses including, roadside uses (petrol station, hotel, restaurant), offices and retail warehousing. Planning permission for a DIY store, associated garden centre, fast food outlet and offices was granted in August 2000.

**ACTION AREA 3**

23 **Land at Venture Fields, Widnes:** It is considered that where quantitative or qualitative need for retail and/or leisure uses can be identified, the sites at Venture Fields, Widnes which are located within the northern part of Action Area 3 ‘Widnes Waterfront’ (Policy RG 3) would be an appropriate location for this need to be fulfilled. This would be subject to the proposals being within easy walking distance of Widnes Town Centre and improved pedestrian and public transport links with the town centre. The development of the Venture Fields area for mixed retail, leisure and employment will enable the Widnes waterfront to be linked to the existing town centre which is a key initiative of the Halton Local Strategic Partnership, and formed the backbone of the Council’s bid for Economic Development Zone funding (New Widnes Waterfront Vision: A Gateway Development For The North West 2001).

24 **New Neighbourhood Centres:** Land is allocated for new neighbourhood centres at new housing areas at Upton Rocks and Sandymoor to serve the local community and to discourage car use in accordance with the aims and policy objectives of the Plan to make neighbourhoods more sustainable. The location of neighbourhood centres at both

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOWN CENTRE SITES</th>
<th>Site Ref</th>
<th>Site Name</th>
<th>Town Uses</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Central Area</td>
<td>Runcorn Old Town</td>
<td>Mixed retail (A1, A2, A3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>EDGE OF CENTRE SITES</th>
<th>Site Ref</th>
<th>Site Name</th>
<th>Town Uses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Widnes Road &amp; Broseley Square</td>
<td>Widnes</td>
<td>A1, A2, A3, 1st floor residential &amp; offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Simms Cross</td>
<td>Widnes</td>
<td>A1, A2, A3, 1st floor residential &amp; offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>North Albert Road</td>
<td>Widnes</td>
<td>A1 (non food), D2 (leisure)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Land rear of 59-69 High Street</td>
<td>Runcorn Old Town</td>
<td>Leisure (D2), retail (A1, A2, A3), 1st floor residential &amp; offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Camden Gardens</td>
<td>Runcorn Old Town</td>
<td>Leisure (D2), theatre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Crosville Bus Depot</td>
<td>Runcorn Old Town</td>
<td>Leisure (D2), food and drink (A3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Site F</td>
<td>Halton Lea</td>
<td>Retail (A1, A2, A3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>OUT OF CENTRE SITES</th>
<th>Site Ref</th>
<th>Site Name</th>
<th>Town Uses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Land at Chapel Street</td>
<td>Runcorn Old Town</td>
<td>Retail warehousing (non food), food and drink (A3), hotel, offices</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NEW LOCAL CENTRE</th>
<th>Site Name</th>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Uses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upton Rocks</td>
<td>Widnes</td>
<td>Local shops and community facilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandymoor</td>
<td>Runcorn</td>
<td>Local shops and community facilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Upton Rocks and Sandymoor housing areas were determined by supplementary planning guidance. In the same vein the exact location of any future neighbourhood centres at North Widnes and East Runcorn will be determined through supplementary planning documents to guide all aspect of planning these two urban extensions.

**TC2 RETAIL DEVELOPMENT TO THE EDGE OF DESIGNATED SHOPPING CENTRES**

1. Retail Development Proposals on the edge of a Primary Shopping Area or neighbourhood centre will be permitted provided that:
   
a. It is demonstrated that there is a need for the development and that a sequential approach has been applied in selecting the location of the site; and
   
b. The development will form a natural complementary extension to the Primary Shopping Area or neighbourhood centre and be within easy walking distance of it.
   
c. It would not either individually, or in combination with other recent or proposed developments, undermine or damage the prospects of enhancing the vitality and viability of the town centres, through diversion of trade, deterrence of investment or through other detrimental effects on carrying out of the Council’s regeneration objectives.

**JUSTIFICATION**

2. An edge of centre location is identified in PPG 6 for shopping purposes as one that constitutes easy walking distance from the Primary Shopping Area, between 200-300m. The limits to what constitutes easy walking distance will be determined by the local topography, the barriers to pedestrian movement, the shopping appeal of the centre and the attractiveness of the route to and from the centre.

3. Retail proposals to the edge of the retail core of existing centres, defined on the Proposals Map as the Primary Shopping Areas and Neighbourhood Centre boundaries, will be required to demonstrate that there is quantitative and qualitative need for the additional facilities and that there are no suitable sites available within the retail core of the centre in question.

4. A further important element in the consideration of edge of centre proposals will be their relationship with the centre which must not only be within easy walking distance but serve to enhance the quality of the shopping environment. Regard will need to be had to the aims and objectives of the Council’s town centre strategies.

**TC3 WARRINGTON ROAD/EASTERN WIDNES BYPASS**

1. Development for bulky goods retail warehousing and leisure uses will be permitted on the Warrington road/Eastern Widnes bypass site after 2011, provided that:
   
a. The sites known as Widnes Road & Broseley Square and North Albert Road have been fully developed;
   
b. Need for the development can be demonstrated;
   
c. The Widnes Traffic Circulation System is completed;
   
d. A pedestrian link is provided across the Eastern Widnes Bypass, from the site to the town centre.

**JUSTIFICATION**

2. This site is identified in the Halton Local Plan (April 1996) as an area of special development opportunity and in the Council’s Widnes Town Centre Strategy (March 1997) as being suitable for the following uses; retail warehousing, leisure/entertainment and offices. The site was considered in the Retail Issues Study (Jan 1999) and the review of UDP Retail and Leisure Issues (2002) as being suitable for bulky goods retail warehousing but both these studies counselled that public transport and pedestrian links across the
Eastern Widnes Bypass would be essential to link the site with the town centre.

3 The Warrington Road\ Eastern Widnes Bypass site is currently in operational use and there is no commitment that it would become available for retail or leisure development before 2011. It therefore cannot be allocated. A further review of the Plan would reconsider allocating this site subject to an assessment of need. This policy however recognises the suitability of this site for retail warehousing, which would be permitted subject to compliance with the specified criteria of the policy.

4 The current operation use of the site is unaffected by this policy.

REQUIREMENTS FOR RETAIL DEVELOPMENT

TC4 RETAIL DEVELOPMENT WITHIN DESIGNATED SHOPPING CENTRES

1 Retail development proposals within Primary Shopping Areas and designated neighbourhood centres will be permitted provided that they are of a size and scale appropriate to the character and function of the centre and contribute to the centre’s vitality and viability.

JUSTIFICATION

2 Retail development shall include extensions to existing buildings, material change of use to existing buildings or land and erection of new buildings for retail trading. In line with requirements of Planning Policy Guidance Note 6 ‘Town Centres and Retail Developments’ (PPG6 June 1996) to sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of existing town centres, retail proposals should be directed to the retail core of existing centres defined on the Proposals Map as the Primary Shopping Areas and Neighbourhood Centre boundaries, in order to strengthen existing facilities.

3 The main consideration in dealing with planning applications for retail development will be the likely effect of the proposal on the vitality and viability of the relevant town centre(s), and also on the prospects of enhancing vitality and viability. The Council intends to strengthen the shopping function of the centres by keeping them compact and well defined. As such the scale and character of the proposals will be important considerations.

4 The most appropriate location for the majority of local shops will be in existing neighbourhood centres which are the focal points for the local community and already provide a range of shops, services, leisure and community facilities. Consolidating facilities in these centres will both ensure their continued vitality and viability and enhance existing public transport links.

5 Where a retail scheme is larger than can be accommodated on a site consideration should be given first to sub-dividing the scheme into smaller components.

TC5 DESIGN OF RETAIL DEVELOPMENT

1 Retail development, including extensions to existing premises, will be permitted provided that it complies with all of the following criteria:

   a Design proposals should not present blank frontages particularly to main shopping streets or be inward looking.

   b Existing building lines should be maintained.

   c The building design must add to the vitality of the street scene.

   d Where appropriate car parks should be located away from the street frontage that is closest to the main shopping streets.

   e Purpose built recycling facilities should be provided in large retail development schemes.

JUSTIFICATION

2 Retail development should contribute positively to environmental quality of the Borough’s town centres as well as develop
and enhance local character. Retail schemes of good design will help to strengthen and promote the town centre’s viability and attractiveness. Providing recycling facilities for glass, cans, plastics and newspapers into the design of new superstores and supermarkets with dedicated car parks is advocated in PPG6 (para.2.39), in the interests of conserving resources and encouraging linked trips. To avoid creating an unsightly area as well as to avoid conflict with cars and pedestrians, the recycling area should be a purpose built facility dedicated to recycling and appropriately designed to ensure ease of use and servicing.

TC6 OUT OF CENTRE RETAIL DEVELOPMENT

1 Retail development proposals in an out of centre location, apart from those described in point 2 of this policy will only be permitted provided that they comply with all of the following criteria:

a It is demonstrated that there is a need for the development and that a sequential approach has been applied in selecting the location of the site.

b That it would not either individually or in combination with other recent or proposed developments undermine or damage the prospects of enhancing the vitality and viability of the town centres, through diversion of trade, deterrence of investment or through other detrimental effects on the carrying out of the Council’s regeneration objectives.

c That it would not either individually or in combination with other recent or proposed developments damage the vitality and viability of nearby neighbourhood centres listed in Policy TC9 (paragraph 1 and 3), through diversion of trade or deterrence of investment.

d It would not create an increase in the need to travel by car and would be accessible by a choice of means of transport.

2 Small scale retail proposals designed to serve purely local needs within a Primarily Residential Area or within a Primarily Employment Area that is some distance from existing retail facilities, will be permitted providing all the following criteria are satisfied:

a The local need that is to be addressed by the proposed development has been clearly demonstrated.

b The size of the store proposed is of an appropriate scale and nature to address local need.

c The proposal would not either individually or in combination with other recent or proposed developments damage the vitality and viability of nearby neighbourhood centres listed in Policy TC9 (paragraph 1 and 3), through diversion of trade or deterrence of investment.

JUSTIFICATION

3 The Plan is clear in its aims and objectives that retail development should be within existing town centres in order to safeguard the continued viability of those centres and to help their regeneration through enhancing their vitality and viability. The Halton Retail Issues Study 1999 undertook an assessment of demand and capacity for retail development within the Borough and reviewed all of the available town centre sites. The result is the allocation of sites for retail development in Policy TC1. However it is recognised that sites may become available during the Plan period and therefore this policy sets out criteria against which development proposals in out of centre locations will be judged.

4 When considering the need for retail development regard will be had to;

- an assessment of the physical capacity and demand for the proposed development;
how the development will tackle the qualitative deficiencies in both the existing retail provision and the shopping environment;

- compliance with the Council's adopted regeneration objectives as set out in its Regeneration Strategy (March 1998)

5 The Council considers that major retail development proposals in out of centre locations have the potential to have a significant impact on Halton's existing town and neighbourhood centres. As such the applicant will be required to fully justify the proposals. This should include evidence on:

- Possible harm to the development plan strategy.

- The adoption of a sequential approach to site selection as defined by PPG6 paragraph 1.10 and the availability of suitable alternative sites.

- The likely economic impacts of the Borough's town centres including the accumulative effects of recently completed developments and outstanding planning permissions.

- Meeting sustainable travel objectives of reducing the need to travel by car and increasing the use of other modes of travel presented in a PPG 13 Travel Plan.

- Likely changes in travel patterns over the catchment area; and

- Significant environmental impacts.

6 In circumstances where existing neighbourhood centres are not meeting the needs of local people by virtue of their location, retail mix, remoteness or condition, the provision of new local shops outside existing shopping centres and within Primarily Residential Areas may be considered appropriate. Moreover new areas of housing development may create sufficient demand for the provision of new local shopping facilities to meet a demand for local facilities. The provision of retail services in employment areas may also be beneficial to employees where existing retail services are not within reasonable walking distance from the site of employment. (considered to be a 10-minute walk or a distance of 400m). The provision of small scale complementary facilities such as banks and shops, or food outlets may be appropriate. Policy E4 Complementary Services and Facilities within Primarily Employment Areas, will also apply. In all cases the applicant must demonstrate that nearby designated neighbourhood centres listed in Policy TC9 (paragraph 1 & 3) would not be detrimentally affected, through loss of trade or deterrence of investment. In all cases the effect of the proposal on residential amenity as defined in Policy H8 Non Dwelling House Uses will be a primary consideration.

7 The use of conditions will be considered to control the impact of a development on the vitality and viability of established shopping centres, to include restrictions on the types of goods to be sold.

8 An appropriate size of store to serve local needs is considered to be about 200 sq. m., as being a typical size of local convenience store. A slightly larger unit may be appropriate but only if local need for the development could be justified.

**NON-RETAIL USES**

TC7 EXISTING SMALL-SCALE LOCAL SHOPPING FACILITIES OUTSIDE DEFINED SHOPPING CENTRES

1 The change of use of existing local shopping facilities (not defined on the Proposals Map) to non retail uses will only be permitted provided that:

a The existing use is not a convenience goods store or other retail outlet which is necessary for the convenience and amenity of residents in the neighbourhood;

or

b It can be demonstrated that the unit is no longer viable for retail purposes and that it has remained vacant for a substantial period of time, despite evidence of attempts to sell it or let it on reasonable terms;

and
c The proposed use is either residential or B1 (office).

JUSTIFICATION

2 In the interests of fostering sustainable communities the Council wishes to protect small-scale shopping facilities to meet local needs. Such facilities are of particular value to elderly people and those without a car. They can provide an important service within a local community and help reduce the need to travel.

3 It is a reality however that the provision of small-scale local shopping facilities is not always economically viable and hence this policy allows for change of use to non retail uses in certain circumstances.
1. Class A2 (financial and professional services) and Class A3 (sale of food and drink) uses and other appropriate non-retail town centre uses will be permitted at ground floor level in Primary and Secondary Shopping Areas subject to the following requirements on their number and concentration:

2. Widnes Town Centre
   a. In the Widnes Primary Shopping Area, as defined on the Proposals Map, up to approximately 20% of outlets within each retail frontage as defined on Map 9 will be permitted for Class A2 and Class A3 uses and other appropriate non-retail town centre uses. There should not be more than two adjacent non-retail frontages.
   b. In the Widnes Secondary Shopping Area there will be no restriction on the level of Class A2 and Class A3 uses and other appropriate non-retail town centre uses.

3. Runcorn Old Town Centre
   a. The retail frontages along both sides of Church Street located within the Runcorn Primary Shopping Area, as defined in the Proposals Map, up to approximately 20% of outlets will be permitted for Class A2 and Class A3 uses and other appropriate non-retail town centre uses. There should not be more than two adjacent non-retail frontages.
   b. In the Runcorn Secondary Shopping Area, up to approximately 50% of outlets will be permitted for Class A2 and Class A3 and other appropriate non-retail town centre uses.

4. Proposals that would take the number and concentration of non-retail uses marginally above the limits listed in paragraphs 2 & 3 will be considered against the following criteria whichever are appropriate:
   a. The unit is no longer viable for retail purposes and that it has remained vacant for a substantial period of time, despite evidence of attempts to sell it or let it on reasonable terms.
   b. It will not result in the loss of a convenience goods store or other retail outlet which is beneficial to the vitality and viability of the centre.
   c. The use of an existing building is supported on overriding environmental, urban renewal or historic/architectural grounds.
   d. The frontage of the property in question is narrow and as such represents a poor retail premise.
   e. The proposed development, because of its particular nature and qualities, will make an exceptionally valuable contribution to the vitality and viability of the centre.
   f. The proposed use cannot satisfactorily be located elsewhere in the shopping centre.

5. Non-retail uses other than a shop (Class A1), which would be appropriate within a town centre, are Class A2 (professional and financial services), Class A3 (sale of hot food) and some Sui Generis uses (e.g. amusement arcades, launderettes).

6. One of the aims of the UDP is the regeneration of town centres, and the Council considers that a healthy shopping role for established centres will contribute to their vitality and viability. Although non-retail uses within town centres can complement and strengthen the function of the centres, a balance needs to be achieved in order to retain their essentially retail nature. While the Council has no control over the distribution...
of different kinds of shops, it can seek to ensure that a disproportionate level of non-retail uses does not occur and stultify the vitality of centres.

7 There is support for this approach in PPG6, (Annex B, Para.8), which states that Development Plans may distinguish between Primary and Secondary frontages and that Primary frontages may be restricted to a high proportion of retail uses (A1), while in Secondary frontages, there is scope for more flexibility.

8 In the Primary Shopping Areas of Widnes and Runcorn Old Town, the Council wishes to rigorously protect the retail function of the centres and considers that in their present state, a level of around 20% is as far as the non-retail uses could reach before having an unacceptable effect on the vitality and viability of these centres. Within the Primary Shopping Area of Widnes three distinct frontages have been identified, Widnes Road, Albert Square and the Windmill Centre. These are shown on Map 9 The percentage restriction on non retail uses will be applied to outlets within each frontage.

9 In the case of the Widnes Secondary Shopping Area there is no restriction on non retail uses. Reference should be made to Policy RG 2 Action Area 2 that advocates a mix of uses in line with the regeneration objectives for the area.

10 In the Runcorn Secondary Shopping Area, a fairly strong retail function is considered necessary to support the centre as a whole and therefore non-retail uses will be restricted.

11 When assessing the level of non-retail uses within a shopping area, account will be taken of any unimplemented planning permissions for change of use and a reasoned judgement will be made in each case to decide whether the proposal is likely to be implemented and should be included in the assessment.

12 Where proposals do not comply with the restriction on non retail use the proposal will
be considered in light of the potential damage it would have on the viability and vitality of the centre.

**TC 9 NON-RETAIL USES WITHIN NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES**

1 In the following neighbourhood centres Class A2 (financial and professional services) and Class A3 (sale of food and drink) uses will be permitted at ground floor level provided that the number of A2 or A3 uses does not exceed approximately 50% of the total outlets within the centre.

- Ascot Avenue, Runcorn
- Bechers, Widnes
- Brook Vale, Runcorn
- Castlefields
- Cronton Lane, Widnes
- Ditchfield Road, Widnes
- Farnworth, Widnes
- Hale Bank, Widnes
- Hale Road, Widnes
- Halton Brook, Runcorn
- Halton Road, Runcorn
- Liverpool Road, Widnes
- Moorfield Road, Widnes
- Murdishaw Centre, Runcorn
- Palacefields
- Picton Avenue, Runcorn
- Queens Avenue, Widnes
- The Grange, Runcorn
- Windmill Hill, Runcorn
- Weston Point

2 Proposals that would take the number and concentration of non retail uses marginally above the limits listed above will be considered against the following criteria whichever is appropriate:

   a That the unit is no longer viable for retail purposes and that it has remained vacant for a substantial period of time, despite evidence of attempts to sell it or let it on reasonable terms.
   
   b That it will not result in the loss of a convenience goods store, post office or other retail outlet which is beneficial to the vitality and viability of the centre.
   
   c That the use of an existing building is supported on overriding environmental, urban renewal or historic/ architectural grounds.
   
   d That the frontage of the property in question is narrow and as such represents a poor retail premise.
   
   e That the proposed development, because of its particular nature and qualities, will make an exceptionally valuable contribution to the vitality and viability of the centre.

3 In the following neighbourhood centres Class A2 (financial and professional services) and Class A3 (sale of food and drink) uses will be permitted at ground floor level except where:

   a The existing unit is a viable convenience goods store or post office.
   
   b Alexander Drive, Widnes
   b Greenway Road
   b Halton Lodge, Runcorn
   b Halton View Road, Widnes
   b Halton Village, Runcorn
   b Hough Green, Widnes
   b Langdale Road
   b Russell Road, Runcorn
   b Warrington Road, Widnes
   b West Bank,

4 In the following neighbourhood centres conversion to residential use will be permitted.

- Bancroft Road
- Castle Rise

5 In the following neighbourhood centres proposals for residential development will be permitted provided that:
an appropriately sized shop or shops is provided in a prominent position on the site or elsewhere within the neighbourhood, accessible by a choice of means of transport, with adequate short stay parking in front of the shops.

- Barrows Green, Widnes
- Hale Parade, Hale

**JUSTIFICATION**

6 The growing trend of less reliance on local shopping facilities in favour of doing both the main and top-up shopping in major supermarkets has ensured that nationally, retail representation within neighbourhood centres has declined rapidly.

7 The levels of patronage at neighbourhood centres within the Borough depend on both the local community’s access to major supermarkets and on the range of goods on offer at neighbourhood centres. The spatial concentration of supermarkets in the Borough is such that some neighbourhoods are some distance from a major supermarket. When this factor is combined with the low level of car ownership in the Borough certain neighbourhood centres are in fact trading strongly and provide a diverse range of goods which meet the local needs of those communities. In some centres retailers have been able to establish a niche market which enables them to compete effectively for a share of local expenditure.

8 The Neighbourhood Centre Audit (Retail Issues Study, Jan 1999) and Neighbourhood Centres Study (Nov 1999) shows that there are distinct contrasts in neighbourhood centre provision within the Borough and as such this policy reflects this position.

9 In the more successful centres it is proposed that restrictions on non-retail uses of 50% would be achievable without resulting in increased vacancies. It is hoped that the retail mix in these centres can be maintained or improved. The centres that are performing reasonably well which have limited vacant units but are in need of environmental improvement have no restriction on A2 & A3 uses to stimulate future demand.

10 By contrast however some centres are performing badly, where the vacancy rates are very high, appearance, retail mix and facilities are poor. As a result the poor environmental quality of the centres blights the surrounding residential areas. These centres have been highlighted for alternative uses either for residential conversion where appropriate or residential development combined with a smaller neighbourhood shop or centre where viable.

**MIXED TOWN CENTRE USES AREA**

**TC 10 RUNCORN TOWN CENTRE MIXED USES AREA**

1 Within the Mixed Town Centre Uses Area of Runcorn as defined on the Proposals Map, the following uses will be permitted:

- Financial and Professional Services (A2);
- Food and Drink (A3);
- Business uses (B1);
- Hotels (C1);
- Residential Institutions (C2);
- Dwelling Houses (C3). Housing development may be appropriate as part of a mixed development;
- Non-residential institutions (D1);
- Assembly and leisure (D2);
- Retail A1, provided it would serve local needs;
- Other non-retail uses appropriate to a town centre will be permitted.

**JUSTIFICATION**

2 PPG 6 paragraph 2.13 guides local Planning Authorities to set out policies for mixed use development in town centres by identifying suitable areas and sites. This area policy relates to Runcorn Old Town whilst policy RG 2 Action Area 2 refers to the Central...
Widnes area and fosters mixed use development in a regeneration context.

3 The concentration of a mixture of business, housing and supporting uses such as; restaurants, local shops and services close to the town centre, increases activity and adds vibrancy and vitality to the town centre. The Runcorn Mixed Town Centre Uses Area is intended to complement the shopping areas of the centre. It is not intended to provide competition with the shopping areas that might undermine their retail function as well as result in a more dispersed shopping centre. Consequently retail development proposals within the Mixed Town Centre Uses Area, including new build and change of use of existing buildings, should meet a local need and be of small scale.

FOOD AND DRINK OUTLETS

TC11 FOOD AND DRINK OUTLETS

1 Proposals for new build, extensions and change of use of existing buildings for food and drink outlets (takeaways, restaurants, cafes, snack bars, public houses and wine bars and other similar uses) will be permitted provided that they comply with all of the following criteria:

a Adequate short term customer parking is provide off street or at the kerb side as a minimum, and no hazard to highway and pedestrian safety is created;

b the hygienic emission of fumes and smells can be achieved effectively with external flues or ventilation ducting designed and sited so that they do not detract from the appearance of the locality;

c An enclosed refuse area should be provided on site. It should be of an appropriate design and suitably located to minimise nuisance to adjacent uses.

JUSTIFICATION

2 Some food and drink outlets will be considered appropriate in town and neighbourhood shopping centres and in a limited number of other locations in accordance with the requirements of other policies of the Plan.

3 Particular close scrutiny will be made of proposals where there are residential properties, including flats above shops, which through their general proximity and orientation are likely to be affected. Such proposals will necessitate a detailed evaluation of potential levels of nuisance including whether the associated noise will rise significantly above prevailing ambient levels. The imposition of conditions will be considered to alleviate potential problems of noise, general disturbance, smell and litter by restricting uses, activities and hours of opening in order to protect amenities of nearby residents. Whilst the last two issues are subject to other statutory controls the significance of their impact will be considered along with other material considerations.

4 Adequate provision must be made for the disposal of refuse arising from the operation of the business, including customer food and drink containers. It should be fully recognised that where a development is deemed acceptable in principle but on detailed consideration is found likely to generate unacceptable levels of noise, disturbance and/or traffic generation which cannot be overcome through the imposition of appropriate conditions, then planning permission will be refused.

5 Applications should include, wherever possible, details of the location of kitchens, extractor ducts, flues and other plant including storage and refuse areas. In accordance with the policy these details will need to demonstrate that there will be no detrimental effects on the external appearance of the building or the amenities of adjacent property and occupiers.
AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1 The policies within this Chapter look to achieving the aims and objectives contained in Part I of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP). The aims and objectives of the Plan, and therefore these policies, are concerned with achieving a better balance between the number of jobs and residents, by meeting housing needs and creating employment which is accessible to local residents. In addition, the policies in the Plan are concerned with creating sustainable residential neighbourhoods, which are safe, attractive, accessible and self-sufficient.

BACKGROUND

PROVISION FOR NEW HOUSING

1 The housing policies and proposals aim is to ensure that there will be sufficient housing to meet the varied requirements of the population up to 2016, through there being an adequate supply of land for housing, with a choice of location and a range of dwelling types and sizes, without harm to environmental quality.

2 In March 1997, the Council commissioned consultants Pieda Plc to undertake a study examining the urban capacity of the Borough. The study focused on both the demand and supply side, determining the future residential and employment requirements and providing an assessment of the real availability and deliverability of housing and employment land in the Borough (Halton Urban Capacity Study, 1997).

3 Following on from this study, additional sites, including open spaces, open countryside and Green Belt land were reviewed to assess their potential to accommodate future housing and employment requirements, and recommendations were made as to the possible mix of greenfield and previously-used (brownfield) land that could be allocated for housing and employment in the UDP (Halton Strategic Options - Scenario Building Report, 1998). Further urban capacity research was carried out to provide evidence for the UDP Public Inquiry 2003.

4 In March 1999, the Council commissioned the University of Manchester Housing Research Group to undertake a study of housing requirements in the Borough. An important element of this Study was to establish a relationship between various socio-economic factors influencing demand and supply decisions and local residents’ current housing needs and preferences which would help the Council in considering the types of dwellings and sites that should be planned for in the UDP (Halton Housing Requirements Study, 1999).

5 Further work on urban capacity for housing development was undertaken for the 2003 public inquiry into objections to the UDP. These have been published as inquiry documents. In 2004 this work was updated for Halton as part of the Merseyside Urban Capacity Study 2004.

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY

6 A key aim of the UDP is to achieve a reduction in the rate of population decline and an improved balance between the quality and location of jobs and the number of residents in
the Borough. This will be achieved by making adequate provision for housing requirements and creating new employment opportunities that are accessible to local residents, which will help to stem net out-migration from the Borough.

7 In order to contribute to the reduction of population decline the policies in the Plan will ensure that adequate land will be made available during the period 1996-2016 to be consistent with the figures allocated to Halton within Regional Planning Guidance, now termed Regional Spatial Strategy, of 4,620 dwellings (330 dwellings per year between 2002 and 2016). This is in addition to the 2,477 dwellings completed between 1996 and 2002 (total 7,097).

8 Available land for housing within the urban areas of Runcorn and Widnes is severely limited. In Runcorn, this is due to the fact that it is a new town with very few opportunities for infilling. In Widnes private housebuilders have been reluctant to invest in sites that are heavily contaminated, not only because much of the land is considered unsuitable for housing but also as the average price of homes in Widnes has not enabled housebuilders to cover the costs of decontamination. The Council will continue its efforts to secure funding from all available sources in order to improve the prospects for development of sites that may in the past have been too contaminated to allow their development for housing.

9 All available and potentially developable sites within, and immediately adjacent to the existing urban area have been identified and included as commitments where they have planning permission or shown as allocations in Policy H1. In order to meet the residual requirement of the UDP, former open countryside in east Runcorn and north Widnes has been allocated for housing development. Developers will be expected to contribute to the funding of the development of public transport linkages between the new developments and existing employment, shopping and leisure opportunities within the existing built up area, and new local centres and community facilities to serve the new developments.

LINKING WITH THE SPATIAL STRATEGY

10 The strategy in Part 1 of the UDP is to create two sustainable communities at North Widnes and East Runcorn on the edges of the existing built up areas at the same time as steps are being taken to regenerate existing housing and industrial areas which are designated in the UDP as Action Areas. This linked strategy conforms to the preferred Greenfield and Brownfield Development Scenario described in the UDP Key Issues Report, which was subject to broad public consultation.

SUMMARY OF HOUSING PROVISION 2002-2016

11 The residual dwelling provision is an estimation of the number of dwellings that will be built on committed and allocated sites and on windfall sites during the remaining period of the Plan (May 2002 to May 2016). Where sites already have planning permission or New Town permission for development, the number of dwellings have been taken from the planning application. Where sites did not have...
planning permission (at May 2003), a minimum density of 30 dwellings per hectare was applied. On appropriate sites, densities higher than 30 dwellings per hectare will be encouraged.

**PLAN, MONITOR & MANAGE**

12 In accordance with the Government’s Planning Policy Guidance Note on housing (PPG3) 2000 a phasing policy has been introduced to ensure that new uncommitted greenfield housing sites (phases 2 & 3) are only released for development after brownfield sites and committed greenfield sites are developed in preceding phases. This is described in more detail in the justification to Policy H1.

13 Regular monitoring of land take-up, including land not specifically allocated in the Plan, and of clearances, will enable the Council to review the adequacy of the overall dwelling provision. Additional brownfield windfalls may come forward during the Plan period as current land-uses become vacant and opportunities for redevelopment arise that could not have been planned for. The successful implementation of the Action Area policies may bring forward additional brownfield sites for housing development, which may mean that the allocated sites in Phase 2 & 3 will be released later than expected.

**RESIDENTIAL AMENITY**

14 The UDP housing policies are also concerned with ensuring a high quality of environment in residential areas and the protection of residential amenity. Any proposals for residential development, such as new housing, extensions and conversions, or other uses within residential areas, will therefore be considered with regard to standards of design and residential amenity.

15 General requirements, relating to environmental quality, accessibility, conservation of the natural and historic environment, infrastructure and resources management, that apply to all new developments are contained within Policy BE1 in the Built Environment Chapter. In addition, the criteria in Policy BE2 have been adopted to ensure high standards of design and the protection of residential amenity.

16 Supplementing the policies relating to new residential development in the Plan, Supplementary Planning Guidance relating to new residential development contains more detailed guidance in relation to density, design, layout, recreational greenspace provision, landscaping, boundary treatment, road layout, parking, crime prevention and security.

**AFFORDABILITY**

17 Affordable housing is needed where there is an ‘affordability gap’ between people’s incomes and the cost of buying or renting in the open market. The Halton Housing Requirements Study (1999) stated that affordability in Halton was not an issue for those in employment, and that there was already an adequate supply of affordable ‘market’ housing in the Borough.

18 The Housing Requirements Study (1999) states (at p71) that a policy for a quota of “affordable” homes on sites with 25 or more dwellings or on sites of more than 1 hectare might prove problematic, even in areas with higher than average house prices, for a
number of reasons. The study goes on to quote examples, these include a reduction in the attraction of social housing units elsewhere, which would accentuate the existing difficult to let problems being experienced by some social landlords. The provision of new affordable housing opportunities in outer wards will not necessarily increase the wider opportunities available to local households who may not have the means to commute or the skills to take up jobs in nearby employment hotspots.

19 The Housing Requirements Study concludes that it is impossible to recommend a fixed target given Halton’s current housing stock balance and demand characteristics. The Council will however, continue to monitor the need for affordable housing within the Borough. This may indicate a need to develop a policy for affordable housing at some point in the future.

20 In Halton, however, a significant proportion of the population is unemployed. This means that there is still a major role to be played by the Council and Registered Social Landlords (RSL’s) in providing homes for those who do not have the option of becoming homeowners.

21 The ability of people in Halton to access housing on the open market is more of an employment issue than a housing issue. Increased employment opportunities are the key to providing people with greater housing choice. The UDP has an important role to play in facilitating employment opportunities for those without jobs.

22 The need to diversify the Borough’s traditional industrial base, provide sites for a wide range of employment opportunities, and attract high technology and business investment in the Borough, has been addressed in the Employment Chapter. In particular, it will be important to ensure that jobs created on the edges of the urban area are accessible to Halton’s residents by means other than the private car.

**MOBILITY HOUSING**

23 Part M of the Building Regulations 1991 requires that all new houses built after 25th October 1999 are accessible to disabled people. The Council welcomes the introduction of Part M, which will ensure that all new houses offer greater flexibility to potential households by removing some of the barriers to changing patterns of occupation.

**NEW TOWN SITES**

24 Those housing sites in the former Runcorn New Town, owned by English Partnerships and with Section 7.1 approval under the New Towns Acts are mostly under the planning control of English Partnerships, which has its own planning powers over such sites until an initial land disposal takes place. The Council, as a main consultee of English Partnerships over future developments, will use the policies in this chapter as a basis for its response to any consultations over these sites. When the land has been sold to a private developer, the Council becomes the Local Planning Authority for that land and the Council’s policies will apply.

**VACANCY RATES**

25 The number of vacant properties in Halton is within the threshold needed to facilitate the
movement of households within the borough. Research undertaken by the Northern Consortium of Housing Authorities shows that in May 2001 around 1,758 dwellings were vacant in Halton, just above 4% (1,640 dwellings) of total housing stock within Halton, needed to allow the market to operate efficiently.

HOUSING RENEWAL

26 The bulk of the housing stock in the Borough is in a decent or moderate condition, so in general the housing stock condition is unlikely to be a matter of concern during the Plan period. However, the largest problems of housing stock condition are likely to take place within pockets of the Borough, which suffer from low housing demand, which is the result of relatively unpopular system built or terraced housing types. In order to boost demand for housing within some of these areas it will be necessary to undertake a program of clearance and replacement of unpopular housing stock with traditional lower density dwellings. The provision of new housing to diversify the mix of dwellings will be critical in providing market choice.
In compliance with Part 1 Policy S18, land will be provided for new dwellings in line with the building rate set by RPG13 (2003), now termed RSS, of 330 dwellings per annum (net of clearance), as from April 2002 onwards. Future housing development will be phased. Two phases are defined to cover the residual period from 2002 to 2007 (5 years) and 2007 to 2011 (4 years). A further 3rd phase will cover the period 2011-2016 (5 years).

### UDP PHASE 1: HOUSING PROVISION AND PHASING

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing Completions &amp; Requirement</th>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Annual Rates</th>
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<tr>
<td>Phase 1 RPG Allowance (Net of Clearance)</td>
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### UDP PHASE 1: HOUSING PROVISION AND PHASING

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<th>Housing Completions &amp; Requirement</th>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Annual Rates</th>
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<td>WINDFALLS Estimated PDL Windfalls</td>
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<td>Allowance of Windfalls within the Castlefields Action Area 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Not Started</td>
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<td>1,241 248</td>
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<td>PDL Dwelling Allocation</td>
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<td><strong>Gross Phase 1 Provision</strong></td>
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For Phase 1 the following sites are identified as commitments and allocations

**PHASE 1 COMMITTED SITES**

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<tr>
<th>Site ref</th>
<th>Site Address</th>
<th>Site Status May 2003</th>
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<th>Type</th>
<th>Remaining Capacity</th>
<th>Size (Hec)</th>
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<td>Greenfield</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.18</td>
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<tr>
<td>8059</td>
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<td>Runcorn</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.04</td>
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<tr>
<td>8070</td>
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<td>Greenfield</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>948</td>
<td>Widnes 6th Form College</td>
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<td>Greenfield</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>953</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Greenfield</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Kemberton Drive</td>
<td>Under Construction</td>
<td>Widnes</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>502</td>
<td>Norton Cross 13</td>
<td>Under Construction</td>
<td>Runcorn</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>865</td>
<td>Knights House Farm</td>
<td>Under Construction</td>
<td>Widnes</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 965      | Moorfield Road                   | Under Construction   | Widnes | Greenfield    | 7                  | 4.36       | 7             | 115         | 26  

**Sandymoor Masterplan- Remaining Sites**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site ref</th>
<th>Site Address</th>
<th>Site Status May 2003</th>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Remaining Capacity</th>
<th>Size (Hec)</th>
<th>Total Capacity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>406</td>
<td>25 Sandymoor 6A</td>
<td>S7.1 (Full Consent)</td>
<td>Runcorn</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>406</td>
<td>26 Sandymoor 9</td>
<td>Under Construction</td>
<td>Runcorn</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1.38</td>
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UDP PHASE 2: HOUSING PROVISION AND PHASING

HOUSING COMPLETIONS & REQUIREMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Annual Rates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase 2 RPG Allowance (Net of Clearance)</td>
<td>1,320</td>
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<tr>
<td>(2007-2011)</td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
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<td>4 Years Estimated Demolitions/Clearance</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allowance for loss of dwellings in Castlefields Action Area 6</td>
<td>400</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,856</td>
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<td>PHASE 2 PROVISION (MAY 2007 to APRIL 2011)</td>
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</table>

WINDFALLS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Estimated PDL Windfalls</th>
<th>276</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allowance for new build within Castlefields</td>
<td>276</td>
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<tr>
<td>Action Area 6</td>
<td>228</td>
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ALLOCATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greenfield Dwelling Allocation</th>
<th>1,410</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Provision</td>
<td>1,914</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Upton Rocks Masterplan-Remaining sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site ref</th>
<th>Site Address</th>
<th>Status May 2003</th>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Remaining Capacity</th>
<th>Size (Hec)</th>
<th>Total Capacity</th>
<th>Density</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>933 2</td>
<td>Land North of Upton Lane</td>
<td>Full Planning Permission</td>
<td>Widnes</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 11</td>
<td>Upton Rocks Site D</td>
<td>Outline Planning Permission</td>
<td>Widnes</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>26 12</td>
<td>Upton Rocks Site H</td>
<td>Outline Planning Permission</td>
<td>Widnes</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>4.98</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>26 15</td>
<td>Upton Rocks Site H (West)</td>
<td>Outline Planning Permission</td>
<td>Widnes</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>26 16</td>
<td>Upton Rocks Site (East)</td>
<td>Outline Planning Permission</td>
<td>Widnes</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>5.09</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>26 13</td>
<td>Upton Rocks Site L</td>
<td>Under Construction</td>
<td>Widnes</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>4.36</td>
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<td>27</td>
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<tr>
<td>26 14</td>
<td>Upton Rocks Site P</td>
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<td>Widnes</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>4.99</td>
<td>144</td>
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<td>Under Construction</td>
<td>Widnes</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>6.48</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>933 3</td>
<td>Land North of Upton Lane</td>
<td>Under Construction</td>
<td>Widnes</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>15</td>
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PHASE 1 ALLOCATED SITES

Infill/Redevelopment Sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site ref</th>
<th>Site Address</th>
<th>Site Status May 2003</th>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Remaining Capacity</th>
<th>Size (Hec)</th>
<th>Total Capacity</th>
<th>Density</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>921 0</td>
<td>Part Fairfield School Site</td>
<td>UDP Allocation</td>
<td>Widnes</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>934 0</td>
<td>Halebank Road</td>
<td>UDP Allocation</td>
<td>Widnes</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>938 0</td>
<td>Trinity Street</td>
<td>UDP Allocation</td>
<td>Runcom</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>150</td>
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<tr>
<td>942 0</td>
<td>24-28 Widnes Road</td>
<td>UDP Allocation</td>
<td>Widnes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8001 0</td>
<td>Liverpool Road, Ditton</td>
<td>UDP Allocation</td>
<td>Widnes</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Site ref | Site Address          | Status May 2003 | Town       | Remaining Capacity | Size (Hec) | Total Capacity | Density |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>933 0</td>
<td>Land North of Upton Lane</td>
<td>Under Construction</td>
<td>Widnes</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>6.48</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>933 3</td>
<td>Land North of Upton Lane</td>
<td>Under Construction</td>
<td>Widnes</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PHASE 2 PROVISION (MAY 2007 to APRIL 2011) Gross Provision Annual Rates

| Windfalls | 276 |
| Action Area 6 | 228 |

Gross Total Provision | 1,914 |

Gross Phase 2 Provision | 1,914 |

Gross Phase 2 Housing Requirement | 1,856 |

Gross Provision | 464 |
For Phase 2 the following sites are identified as allocations

**PHASE 2 ALLOCATED SITES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site ref</th>
<th>Site Address</th>
<th>Site Status May 2003</th>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Remaining Capacity</th>
<th>Size (Hec)</th>
<th>Total Capacity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>812 0</td>
<td>Stockham Lane</td>
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<td>Runcorn</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>12 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>914 1</td>
<td>Penare</td>
<td>UDP Allocation</td>
<td>Runcorn</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>32 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>916 0</td>
<td>Beechwood</td>
<td>UDP Allocation</td>
<td>Runcorn</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>12 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>920 0</td>
<td>North of Barnfield Avenue</td>
<td>UDP Allocation</td>
<td>Runcorn</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>35 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>920 1</td>
<td>North of Barnfield Avenue</td>
<td>UDP Allocation</td>
<td>Runcorn</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>30 36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>955 0</td>
<td>Woodfalls Farm</td>
<td>UDP Allocation</td>
<td>Runcorn</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>17 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>962 0</td>
<td>Upton Green Bechers</td>
<td>UDP Allocation</td>
<td>Widnes</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>11 30</td>
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Sandymoor Masterplan - Remaining Sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site ref</th>
<th>Site Address</th>
<th>Site Status May 2003</th>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Remaining Capacity</th>
<th>Size (Hec)</th>
<th>Total Capacity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>406 13</td>
<td>Sandymoor 12</td>
<td>S7.1</td>
<td>Runcorn</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>33 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>406 14</td>
<td>Sandymoor 14</td>
<td>S7.1</td>
<td>Runcorn</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>60 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Sandymoor 15</td>
<td>S7.1</td>
<td>Runcorn</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>138 31</td>
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<tr>
<td>406 16</td>
<td>Sandymoor 16</td>
<td>S7.1</td>
<td>Runcorn</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>75 22</td>
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<tr>
<td>406 17</td>
<td>Sandymoor 17</td>
<td>S7.1</td>
<td>Runcorn</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>69 36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>406 18</td>
<td>Sandymoor 18</td>
<td>S7.1</td>
<td>Runcorn</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>76 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>406 19</td>
<td>Sandymoor 19</td>
<td>S7.1</td>
<td>Runcorn</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>37 116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>406 20</td>
<td>Sandymoor 20</td>
<td>S7.1</td>
<td>Runcorn</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>127 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>406 21</td>
<td>Sandymoor 21</td>
<td>S7.1</td>
<td>Runcorn</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>87 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>406 22</td>
<td>Sandymoor 25</td>
<td>S7.1</td>
<td>Runcorn</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>100 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>406 23</td>
<td>Sandymoor 28</td>
<td>S7.1</td>
<td>Runcorn</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>4.87</td>
<td>175 36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>406 28</td>
<td>Sandymoor 13A</td>
<td>S7.1</td>
<td>Runcorn</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>52 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>406 29</td>
<td>Sandymoor 13B</td>
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<td>Runcorn</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>1.73</td>
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<td>406 30</td>
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<td>Runcorn</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.67</td>
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<tr>
<td>406 31</td>
<td>Sandymoor</td>
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<td>Runcorn</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>12 32</td>
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<td>Greenfield</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>4.89</td>
<td>150 31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 Development on the sites allocated for housing in Phase 2 should not begin until May 2007 and provided that:

- around 1,650 (at 330 a year 2002-2007) dwellings in Phase 1 have been developed and
- the number of dwellings completed on windfall sites is not substantially higher than allowed for in Phase 1.

**UDP PHASE 3: HOUSING PROVISION AND PHASING**

**HOUSING COMPLETIONS & REQUIREMENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Annual Rates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase 3 RPG Allowance (Net of Clearance)</td>
<td>1,650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Years Estimated Demolitions/Clearance</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allowance for loss of dwellings in Castlefields Action Area 6</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Gross Phase 2 Housing Requirement** | 2,320 | 464 |

**PHASE 3 PROVISION (MAY 2011 to APRIL 2016)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Annual Rates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WINDFALLS Estimated PDL Windfalls</td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allowance for new build within Castlefields Action Area 6</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALLOCATED Greenfield Dwelling Allocation</td>
<td>1,753</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Gross Phase 3 Provision** | 2,383 | 477 |
Land is identified for release in Phase 3 (2011-2016), should monitoring of development during Phases 1 and 2 and the rate of emergence of windfalls indicate a need for the release of Phase 3 land. The following sites are provided as allocations:

### PHASE 3 ALLOCATED SITES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>East Runcorn Development Area</th>
<th>North Widnes Development Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Site ref</strong></td>
<td><strong>Site ref</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Site Address</strong></td>
<td><strong>Site Address</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Site Status May 2003</strong></td>
<td><strong>Site Status May 2003</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Town</strong></td>
<td><strong>Town</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type</strong></td>
<td><strong>Type</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Remaining Capacity</strong></td>
<td><strong>Remaining Capacity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Size (Hec)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Size (Hec)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Capacity</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total Capacity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Density</strong></td>
<td><strong>Density</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 954 | Wharford Farm | UDP Allocation | Runcorn | Greenfield | 390 | 13.00 | 390 | 30 |
| 8044 | Delph Lane North | Proposed Modification | Runcorn | Greenfield | 510 | 17 | 510 | 30 |
| 8045 | Delph Lane East | Proposed Modification | Runcorn | Greenfield | 259 | 8.64 | 259 | 30 |

- around 2,970 (at 330 a year 2002-2011) dwellings have been developed in the combined Phases 1 and 2;
- the number of dwellings completed on windfall sites is not substantially higher than allowed for in combined Phase 1 and 2;
- no sequentially preferable sites have emerged that are suitable for housing and available.

### PHASING MECHANISM

5 The release dates of sites may be moved forwards or backwards within the plan phases if through monitoring

- The windfall allowance catered for within the Plan has not been met, through either substantial shortfall or an oversupply in capacity; or,
- The anticipated rate of development on Phase 1 sites has not come forward for such reasons as;
- unforeseen physical or economic constraints;
- the required prior investment not being forthcoming.

6 Proposed changes to the policy that affects the release of sites as the result of any of the above circumstances occurring will be consulted upon and issued within a Supplementary Planning Document.

7 There may be unanticipated occurrences, which are so fundamental to the Plan’s strategy that seeking to accommodate them through the mechanism in the UDP for the managed release of sites would be inappropriate, if such circumstances occur they will be dealt with through a review of the Plan.
IDENTIFYING AND ALLOCATING SITES

8 In identifying sufficient land to meet the UDP housing requirement, the Council has followed advice contained in the Government’s Planning Policy Guidance note “Housing” 2000 (PPG3), and related best practice documents.

9 In accordance with para. 30 of PPG3, a search sequence was followed:

- starting with the identification of land and buildings within the existing urban area, including that previously-used;
- then identifying land and buildings located on the edge of the existing urban area which it was considered could form a sustainable extension to it.

10 An initial scoping exercise of housing and employment allocations, as identified in the Halton Local Plan, and potential redevelopment sites known to the Council, was carried out by Pieda and is documented in the Halton Urban Capacity Study (1997). In particular, the Study examined the potential for reallocating some of the Borough’s employment sites for housing. This was followed by a wider study that examined potential development opportunities on open spaces, undesignated land and Green Belt land, as allocated in the Local Plan, and is documented in the Halton Strategic Options - Scenario Building Report (1998).

ALLOCATION CRITERIA

11 All land identified in the Plan has been examined against a series of marketability, developability and sustainability criteria, taking into account the particular criteria identified in PPG3 (para. 31), to assess its potential and suitability for development.

12 In relation to developability, sites were assessed in terms of planning, access, infrastructure, contamination and ownership constraints. In relation to sustainability, sites were assessed in terms of their location (within or outside the urban area), accessibility (whether accessible by public transport and/or within walking distance of local facilities), physical characteristics (whether previously-developed) and environmental constraints (whether currently protected by environmental designations).

13 The last criterion in para. 31 of PPG3 is concerned with the physical and environmental constraints on development of land. In Halton the problem of contamination, in particular, presents a major and unusual restriction on the availability of previously-used sites suitable for housing. PPG3 also emphasises that ‘it is essential that the operation of the development process is not prejudiced by unreal expectations of the developability of particular sites’ (para. 34). Therefore it was considered important to examine the marketability and developability of land for housing to ensure that sites allocated in the Plan were capable of being developed. The potential supply of housing land was therefore also evaluated in accordance with these requirements.

14 Large areas of land in the Borough are severely contaminated as a result of past industrial and chemical processes and tipping. While significant areas have been successfully reclaimed over the last few decades for open space and, more recently, for employment uses, redevelopment for housing raises significant environmental health, infrastructure and cost issues. A survey of vacant brownfield land in the Borough, carried out in 2001, to identify development potential, concluded that the vast majority of this land was not suitable for housing.

15 In addition to examining the real availability of land for housing, it was considered important to take account of sustainability issues. This helped to identify priorities for development and potential problems that would need to be resolved through the planning process before a site could be given planning permission for development. Sites were not necessarily rejected on sustainability grounds if mitigating measures could be required that would ensure that a site could be developed in a sustainable way.

PLAN, MONITOR AND MANAGE

16 In the light of this research it has been necessary to phase the release of housing in Halton to take account of local circumstances
which have resulted in a severe restriction on the amount of previously used sites for housing than would normally be expected within an urban area.

17 PPG3 and its companion guidance ‘Planning to Deliver’ (2000) fully support phasing as a suitable mechanism for managing the release of housing sites over the Plan period. Phasing is a key device in the implementation of the Plan, Monitor and Manage approach. Para. 32 of PPG3 states that the presumption will be that previously-developed sites should be developed before greenfield sites, and para. 31 provides key criteria for assessing the potential and suitability of sites. Proposals for the release of Phase 2 and 3 greenfield allocations ahead of time would be refused planning permission unless the criteria set out within Policy H1 are met.

18 The phasing policy allows for 3 phases. Each successive phase is designed to manage the increasing level of uncertainty. This is in order to achieve the aims of securing a greater percentage of development on previously-developed land and place greater emphasis on regeneration of the existing urban area, in the context of local factors.

19 The focus for Phase 1 and 2 is the existing urban area and land immediately adjacent to it. Development in Phase 1 and 2 will result in the further intensification of the existing urban area, through development on infill sites and redevelopment of previously-used land, and planned extensions to it, as part of comprehensive development proposals at Sandymoor and Upton Rocks, previously identified in the Halton Local Plan. Parts of Sandymoor and Upton Rocks have already been completed, parts are currently under construction, and parts are still undeveloped. The final stages of development at Sandymoor will complete the master plan for Runcorn, as drawn up by the New Town Corporation.

Housing provision in Phase 1 is made up of:
- previously-used (brownfield) windfall sites;
- allocated previously-used (brownfield) sites identified as having potential for housing at May 2003;
- committed sites that were under construction at May 2003;
- committed sites with planning permission (outline or full) at May 2003.

Phase 2:

Taking account of an allowance for ‘windfalls’ and ‘occupied clearances’, adequate provision exists in Phase 2 to meet the Borough’s housing requirements from 2007 to 2011.

Housing provision in Phase 2 is made up of:
- a previously-used (brownfield) windfall sites;
- b Greenfield sites within the existing urban area and land immediately adjacent to it at Upton Rocks and Sandymoor.

Taking account of an allowance for ‘windfalls’ and ‘occupied clearances’, adequate provision exists in phase 3 to meet the Borough’s housing requirements from 2011 to 2016.

21 To meet housing requirements between 2011 to 2016, and taking account of an allowance for ‘windfalls’ and ‘occupied clearances’, it may still be necessary to release more greenfield sites for development in order to accommodate additional households and ensure a continued supply of housing land.

Housing provision in Phase 3 is made up of:
- previously-used (brownfield) windfall sites;
- allocated greenfield sites within the East Runcorn and the North Widnes Development Areas. These will be planned as new sustainable neighbourhoods as extensions to the urban area as set out in S24.

22 A number of reasons why allocated sites within Phase 3 may not be required to meet RPG (RSS) requirements are envisaged, including:
Windfalls for the years up to 2011 could exceed the figure set out within this policy;

Density assumptions currently built into UDP housing calculations are increased;

Not all clearances/demolitions are replaced within Phases 1 and 2 of the plan;

RPG (RSS) build rates change through the review process, which is intended to happen at least within 5 years and at similar intervals thereafter;

Sequentially preferable sites as defined in RSS policy DP1 ‘Economy in the Use of Land and Buildings’ (in particular sites that are in closer proximity in relation to houses, jobs, other services and infrastructure and are more accessible by public transport, walking or cycling) may come forward or be identified through the Plan, Monitor and Manage process.

The phasing mechanism allows for the release dates of sites in Phase 3 to be held back in the event that any or a combination of these circumstances or unforeseen circumstances occur that would have the effect of meeting RPG (RSS) housing requirements without the release of Phase 3 sites.

An allowance for a loss of 1,400 (57 per year) dwellings within the Castlefields and Norton Priory Action Area.

The relatively low windfall figure reflects:

a The thoroughness of the initial survey work carried out as a part of the National Land Use Database (NLUD) initiative that has identified many sites that would potentially have contributed towards the Windfall allowance;

b A relatively high allowance for demolition/clearance rates to reflect local circumstances relating to predicted substantial clearances within the Action Areas.

It is expected that there will be a significant increase in the demolition rate in the Castlefields & Norton Priory Action Area within the plan period. The full replacement of occupied dwellings is unlikely, because the 1,400 properties to be demolished in Castlefields are made up of high rise / deck access flats. It is anticipated that only 60% of the demolished dwellings will be replaced in order to improve the quality and diversity of the residential environment.

Windfall gains and clearance rates will be closely monitored as part of the Plan Monitor and Manage approach. The monitoring process may identify unforeseen brownfield windfalls and clearances during the Plan period in circumstances where current land-uses become vacant and opportunities for redevelopment arise that could not have been planned for. Additional opportunities for redeveloping larger areas of derelict and contaminated land during the Plan period may come forward through the Action Area policies in the Plan. The successful implementation of the Action Area policies will help to regenerate the existing urban areas of Runcorn and Widnes. Any of the aforementioned circumstances may affect the release of sites through phasing.

MANAGING THE RELEASE OF SITES

Regular monitoring of housing land take-up including land not specifically allocated in the Plan, will enable the Council to review the need for further development in greenfield
sites in Phase 2 and 3. Where monitoring indicates that a persistent, and significant, gap exists between what has been planned for and what is occurring in reality, it will be important to consider whether the plan’s approach to the managed release of sites remains valid. A change of approach may be required in the assignment of sites to phases. The monitoring programme may be used to re-assign sites to different phases without causing a formal revision to the plan. Any proposed adjustments to the assignment of sites will be made public through Supplementary Planning Documents (‘SPD’, which would ensure an effective consultative route). This process will not re-open the question of a site’s general acceptability for development since that has been tested through the plan process already. For more detailed information on the release of sites see the ODPM better practice document “Planning to Deliver” 2001.

PLN ALTERATION OR REPLACEMENT

29 A number of situations can be envisaged which may lead to the policies in the plan needing to be altered or the plan replaced. These include:

a housing requirements changing in the light of a strategic review of the annual rate of provision set out in RPG (RSS);

b insufficient windfalls arising, leading to a (consistent) shortfall in anticipated supply, raising the issue of whether greenfield sites need to be allocated or plan policies changed to facilitate a wider range of windfalls or to generate more windfalls from identified sources;

c significant additional windfalls coming forward consistently leading to excess supply;

d anticipated planning applications not being received for particular sites for reasons such as:

• unforeseen physical or economic constraints;

• the required prior investment not being forthcoming.

H2 DESIGN AND DENSITY OF NEW RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

1 Densities of less than 30 dwellings per hectare net, should be avoided. Densities of 30-50 dwellings per hectare will be encouraged.

2 High density development of greater than 50 dwellings per hectare net will be encouraged on sites in, or adjacent to, the existing built-up area, provided that any of the following criteria can be satisfied:

a The development contributes to a more sustainable pattern of development by being within reasonable walking distance of a town or local centre, or of an existing or proposed railway station.

b The development provides housing for special local needs such as small units for single persons or dwellings for the elderly or disabled people.

c Where feasible, the design of development should incorporate a mix of dwelling types and sizes, at varying densities, to meet a wide range of housing needs.

JUSTIFICATION

3 This policy has been drafted in accordance with Planning Policy Guidance note “Housing” 2000 (PPG3), which states that local planning authorities should encourage housing development that makes more efficient use of land (between 30 and 50 dwellings per hectare net) and seek greater intensity of development at places with good public transport links, such as town or neighbourhood centres. For the purposes of the Plan, the definition of ‘net site density’ contained in the ODPM publication ‘The Use of Density in Urban Planning’ and listed in PPG3 (Appendix D) has been adopted. The term “high density” refers to net site densities of over 50 dwellings per hectare.

4 Development with a net site density of over 30 dwellings per hectare is better able to
support local services, including shops, leisure and social facilities, as well as support and enhance the public transport network. As such, it can contribute to a more sustainable pattern of development. In addition, recent independent research - The Halton Housing Requirements Study (1999) - found that there was a large price gap between existing housing within the central areas of Widnes and Runcorn and the newly built properties around the north and west fringes of Widnes and east fringes of Runcorn. Higher density development consisting of a wider range of type and size of dwelling may help to achieve mixed sustainable communities and meet housing needs better.

5 The North Widnes and East Runcorn Development Areas will be expected to achieve a minimum density of 30 dwellings per hectare net overall. However, within the overall development area, the design of the development should provide for a range of dwelling types and sizes, at varying densities, to meet a wide range of housing needs. As such, sub-sites within the development area may have densities of lower or higher than the minimum, provided that the target can be achieved as a minimum overall. A mixture of smaller houses suitable for first time buyers and larger houses suitable for families will be encouraged.

6 High density development (net site density of 50 dwellings per hectare or more) can meet a range of different needs, both of a general and special nature. Reasonable walking distance would be interpreted as approximately 400 metres (depending on the topography). Specific guidance on the provision of special needs housing for the elderly is provided in Policy H4.

7 Standards for car parking are stated as maximum standards in Policy TP12, and provision considerably lower than these maximums will be encouraged to accommodate higher density development in compliance with this policy. In addition, Policy H3 provides sufficient flexibility to allow developers to meet the requirements for recreational greenspace off-site or through contributions to improve and/or expand an existing facility or create a new one. In the case of sheltered housing and special needs housing for elderly people, Policy H4 contains an exception to the provision of recreational greenspace.

8 In the past, higher density development in the Borough has resulted in poor residential amenity, which in turn has given rise to significant social and management issues, including difficult to let properties. If higher density is to work this time the quality of the design and layout of development will be particularly important. High density does not necessarily require high rise. The Halton Urban Capacity Study (1997) demonstrated that with good design higher densities could be achieved in all areas of the Borough, from the inner urban areas to the urban edge, without compromising residential amenity. The design and layout of development should respect the character and local distinctiveness of the area, and be of the highest quality.

**REQUIREMENTS FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT**

**H3 Provision of Recreational Greenspace**

1 For new residential development, developers will be required to ensure that there would be sufficient recreational greenspace to meet the local needs of the people living there.

2 Proposals should include provision within an agreed timescale in accordance with the following guidelines:

   a In residential developments well located local open space should be provided at a standard equivalent to 0.8 hectares per thousand population for children’s play and casual recreation and 1.6 hectares per thousand population for formal sport and recreation.

   b Where the proposed development is of sufficient size it will normally be required to incorporate children’s playing space in accordance with the structure outlined in Table 1. The three categories of play provision will satisfy the 0.8 hectares per thousand population for children’s play/casual recreation.
EXCEPTIONS TO ON-SITE REQUIREMENTS

3 It is required that as much as possible of the 2.4 hectares per thousand population should be provided on or adjacent to the proposed development. However, this requirement may be waived where it can be demonstrated that there is no practical alternative or that it would be better to do so. In such circumstances, provision of the recreational greenspace off-site or through contributions to improve and/or expand an existing facility or create a new one will be permitted. Any off-site provision should be fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development proposal and be in a location where it would be of direct benefit to the occupiers of the new development.

OTHER EXCEPTIONS

4 Exceptions will be made in the case of sheltered housing and special needs housing for elderly people in the provision of playing space.

5 Exceptions (or partial exceptions) to the provisions of this Policy will be made where it can be demonstrated that existing provision in the vicinity exceeds the minimum requirements as set out in this policy and includes adequate playing space on the basis set out in Table 1 such that it can meet all (or part) of the demand likely to be generated by the new development.

JUSTIFICATION

6 Developers of new housing, excluding the exceptions set out in this policy, will be expected to make adequate provision for recreational greenspace either within or adjacent to the new development or in the form of financial contributions through Section 106 agreements. Recreational greenspace includes playing space for formal sport and recreation (based on the National Playing Field Association (NPFA) definition of formal youth/adult playing space) and playing space for children (based on the NPFA three categories of play provision, as set out in Table 1 below).

7 Policy GE12 and Policy GE15 of the Green Environment Chapter provide additional guidance on the provision of playing space and reinforce the minimum standards set out in this policy. A review of existing provision in the Borough against these standards was carried out in 1999 and showed that there were significant deficiencies. New residential development will further compound deficiencies by creating additional demand, which puts increasing pressure on existing facilities.

8 Recreation greenspace will be required for any new residential development. This will mean that recreation greenspace provision will be calculated for the development of a single dwelling unit or a scheme for a number of dwelling units. The exception to this will be, for example, for sheltered or special needs housing. Increasing emphasis upon windfall housing development and on brownfield rather than extensive Greenfield sites will

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Walking Distance</th>
<th>Straight Line Distance</th>
<th>Minimum Size Nearest House (sq)</th>
<th>Properties Boundary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LAP (Local Area for Play)</td>
<td>1 min</td>
<td>100 m</td>
<td>60 m</td>
<td>100 m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEAP (Local Equipped Area for Play)</td>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>400 m</td>
<td>240 m</td>
<td>400 m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEAP (Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play)</td>
<td>15 min</td>
<td>1000 m</td>
<td>600 m</td>
<td>1000 m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
make the commuted payment an increasingly important and necessary source of contribution to recreation greenspace provision.

9 This policy requires that all proposed residential developments be assessed to establish their recreational greenspace needs. In order that the system is equitable and effective in keeping pace with development, it will be applied to small residential developments and to net increases in accommodation, such as in the case of conversions and redevelopment, and also where applications are made to renew existing residential planning permissions.

10 In some cases, provision of open space at the above rates, particularly formal open space, may not be practical or reasonable. For example, in smaller residential developments or developments with particular physical constraints. In other cases, it may be considered better to provide off-site provision in order to achieve higher densities on site. This particular example would only be considered appropriate in locations that were within reasonable walking distance of a town or local centre in compliance with Policy H2, relating to the design and density of new residential development. In all such cases, the Council may permit provision of open space off-site or contributions towards public provision of open space within the area.

11 In the case of sheltered housing and special needs housing, developers will be required to provide reasonable private garden space for use by the residents in compliance with Policy H4. However, it would not be necessary for developers to provide additional playing space in compliance with the provisions of this policy. A proposed new development may fall within the effective catchment area of an existing recreation greenspace facility, which would be adequate in terms of the policy standards to cope with the needs of the new development in addition to those of the existing population within the catchment. In such a case, there is no reasonable basis for imposing a requirement upon the developer in question to pay for additional facilities within the catchment area.

12 In the majority of cases, existing provision falls well short of the minimum requirements as set out in this policy. A review of existing provision of playing space for formal sport and recreation in the Borough against the adopted standard (1.6 hectares per 1000 population) was carried out in 1999 and showed that there were significant areas of deficiency in the Borough. A review of existing provision of playing space for children in the Borough against the NPFA three tier hierarchy of play provision was carried out in 1999 and showed that there were significant deficiencies. Not only are there some areas of the Borough with no playing spaces, the majority of those which do exist fall short of the specific NPFA standards in terms of their quality, safety and content as set out in the “Six Acre Standard”.

CALCULATING THE REQUIREMENT

13 The exact requirement for the provision of recreational greenspace will depend on the anticipated population of the proposed development, which in turn will be related to the size of the development and the size of the dwellings proposed. The anticipated population of the proposed development will be calculated on the basis of an assumed potential capacity for a particular sized dwelling. The table below assumes a potential capacity of two persons in the first bedroom and only one in each of any additional bedrooms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table of Potential Capacity of Dwellings</th>
<th>persons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Bedroom dwelling</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Bedroom dwelling</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Bedroom dwelling</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4+ Bedroom dwelling</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPROACH TO CONVERSIONS

14 Where a single dwelling house is to be converted to two or more self contained dwellings or flats a calculation shall be made to assess the net increase in the population. Using the above table it will be necessary to assess the occupancy of the existing dwellings and subtract this from the population, which will be generated by the proposal. A contribution will be required for each additional person. This ‘trade off’ can only apply where the building remains at the time the planning application is made and is either converted or
is to be demolished to make way for the development.

PLAYING SPACE HIERARCHY

15 In relation to playing space for children, Table 1 sets out three categories of play provision, based on the recommendations of the NPFA:

- Local Area of Play (LAP)
- Local Equipped Area of Play (LEAP)
- Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP)

16 Where a new development is not of a size to require all three categories of play provision it will be necessary to provide as much as possible of the standard. A development accommodating approximately 50 people would be required to provide a LAP. All houses should be within the safe prescribed walking time of each type of playground. Users should not have to cross busy main roads or other hazards.

17 Opportunities to combine a LEAP and a NEAP in the same locality can achieve considerable savings in the amount of land needed for the buffer zone, and marginal savings in activity zone land use. However, a LAP should not be combined with a LEAP or NEAP because combining the different age groups and facilities is not appropriate.

18 The play areas need to be of suitable shape and topography to permit the activities outlined in Table 1. This may not be practicable in all cases and the requirement will be relaxed where adequate justification can be given.

DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS

19 Funds raised in lieu of physical provision will only be used in a way that they are directly related to reducing deficiency of open space in the vicinity of the proposed development. In the case of playing space for formal sport and recreation, it is considered that people travel some distance to use the facilities. Accepting that there are two separate housing markets in Halton, and taking account of the significant congestion problems on the Runcorn-Widnes Bridge, it is considered that to ensure a direct relationship between the development and the future investment contributions, funds raised in lieu of physical provision of playing space for formal sport and recreation can only be used within the town where the development is proposed. That is, if the development is located in the town of Runcorn, the contribution must be used within the town of Runcorn, and if the development is located within the town of Widnes, the contribution must be used within the town of Widnes.

20 In the case of playing space for children, three categories of provision are identified in Table 1 to meet the needs of children of different age groups. To ensure a direct relationship between the development and the future investment contributions, funds raised in lieu of physical provision for children’s playing space can only be used within 100 metres (on a LAP), 400 metres (on a LEAP) or 1000 metres (on a NEAP) of the funding development. The Council has developed a strategy that will create a network of LAP’s, LEAP’s and NEAP’s at existing sites within the Borough. Existing playing spaces identified as having the potential to perform the function of a LAP, LEAP or NEAP with some improvement are set out in supplementary planning guidance and a map showing the location of these. The Council may invest the funds on other facilities provided that it would be within the guidelines of this policy.

21 It is clear that some financial contributions, in themselves, are not adequate to bring about improvements immediately. When funds are added to by other contributions and thresholds are reached monies will be employed as soon as possible to improve facilities. It is necessary for the Council to hold the funds for a reasonable period of time to allow this process to take place. Further information on the implementation of this Policy is to be provided in Supplementary Planning Documents, which will contain more detailed information, such as the formulae for calculating the financial contribution towards capital costs and commuted sum payment towards maintenance costs.

AGREED TIMESCALE FOR PROVISION

22 In all cases, conditions will be attached to the planning application to ensure that the
required playing space is completed before the first homes are occupied. In large developments, where a number of playing spaces are being provided to serve different parts of the development, it may be practical to phase the completion of the playing spaces in line with the phasing of the housing development. Such details will be the subject of planning conditions or Section 106 agreements in relation to individual applications.

**LONGER-TERM MAINTENANCE**

23 In terms of maintenance, the Council will require developers to maintain or pay commuted sums for the maintenance of recreational greenspace. In cases where it is agreed between the developer and the Council that the Council will carry out the maintenance of open space on the developer’s behalf it will be necessary for the developer to pay a sum covering the future maintenance of the finished area.

**H4 SHELTERED HOUSING**

1 Proposals for sheltered housing development will be permitted provided that all of the following criteria can be satisfied:

   a. The site is relatively level.

   b. The site is located within reasonable walking distance of local community facilities and is located so as to enable access to local community facilities within reasonable walking distance over level ground.

   c. Reasonable private garden space is provided for use by the residents of the sheltered housing.

**JUSTIFICATION**

2 Sheltered housing is purpose built or converted self-contained accommodation, with the support of a warden and often with communal facilities, normally designed for the use of elderly people or for institutional care. Units without a warden or shared facilities will be treated on the same basis as ordinary flats and houses.

3 Dwellings for elderly people must be carefully located to minimise any disadvantages to residents. The policy is designed to ensure that only sites and locations suitable for sheltered accommodation are granted permission.

4 Special attention should be paid to the gradient of the site and surrounding area, the accessibility of the site to the public transport network, and the proximity of the site to local community facilities, such as shops, post offices, health care, libraries, day centres and public open space. Steep gradients should be avoided. Reasonable walking distance to local community facilities would be interpreted as approximately 400 metres (depending on the topography).

5 In addition, developers will be required to provide reasonable private garden space for use by the residents of the sheltered housing. However, it would not be necessary for developers to provide additional playing space in compliance with Policy H3.

6 High density development (50 dwellings per hectare or more) will generally be acceptable for sheltered housing provided that all the criteria in the policy are met. The quality and design of such development will be particularly important.

7 Where the development involves an extension to an existing building, Policy H6 relating to house extensions will also apply.

8 The provision of adequate access for disabled persons will be a valid consideration when assessing planning applications for sheltered housing, although detailed standards will be controlled under the Building Regulations.

**H5 GYPSY SITES**

1 Proposals for the development of sites to accommodate gypsies residing in or resorting to Halton will be permitted provided that all of the following criteria can be satisfied:

   a. The site would not be affected by pollution or other environmental factors that would result in unacceptable living conditions.

   b. The site is well designed and
landscaped to give privacy between pitches and, where appropriate, between the site and adjacent users.

c The site has adequate vehicular access and provision for parking and circulation.

d The site has appropriate work areas, where required, so long as their use would not create unacceptable air or noise pollution or other nuisance, or present a risk to the health and safety of those living on or near the site.

e The site is capable of facilitating adequate sanitation.

f The proposals would not be detrimental to the amenity or character of the surrounding area or be visually intrusive.

JUSTIFICATION

2 The Borough Council has provided and manages one official 23 pitch capacity site at Warrington Road in Widnes. There are currently no gypsy owned or managed caravan sites in the Borough. Any proposals for such private sites will be considered in compliance with the criteria in this policy. Circular 1/94 “Gypsies and Planning” (1994) also provides guidance, with particular reference to characteristics of sites for settled occupation, temporary stopping and transit purposes.

3 People living in mobile homes have as much right to a satisfactory environment and acceptable living conditions as those living in permanent homes. As such, proposals for the development of sites to accommodate gypsies in heavy industrial areas, which would be considered unsuitable locations for housing, would not be permitted.

4 Special attention should be paid to the amenity and character of the surrounding area and the potential of the site to accommodate the necessary infrastructure and traffic associated with the development. Where work areas are needed on the site, people living nearby need the same protection from pollution or disturbance as from any other business or commercial activity near people’s homes.

EXTENSIONS AND CONVERSIONS

H6 HOUSE EXTENSIONS

1 Proposals for house extensions will be permitted provided that all of the following criteria can be satisfied:

a The proposal would not unacceptably alter the appearance or character of the original dwelling but relate closely to it and harmonise with it in terms of their scale, proportions, materials and appearance.

b The proposal would not create dangerous highway conditions by obstructing visibility for pedestrians or drivers of motor vehicles.

c Reasonable private garden space is provided for use by the residents of the extended property.

JUSTIFICATION

2 A large proportion of planning applications received by the Council relate to house extensions. Although most proposals for such extensions are small-scale developments, their impact on the street scene and on the privacy and amenities of neighbouring occupiers can be considerable.

3 Specific design guidance and the relevant standards for the various types of house extensions, including detached garages, are set out in the Council’s Supplementary Planning Guidance on “House Extensions” (1998).

H7 CONVERSIONS TO FLATS

1 Proposals for conversions from dwelling houses to self-contained units will be permitted provided that all of the following criteria can be satisfied:

a The dwelling house to be converted is large enough to provide satisfactory living accommodation for future residents.

b The conversion is possible without
the need for major alterations and extensions, or additional new buildings which would unacceptably alter the appearance or character of the original dwelling.

c The units would be self-contained.

d Access to units is via the front of the dwelling house.

e All units have access to a yard or garden area.

f A covered bin store is provided for the use of residents.

g Where parking is to be provided in any area fronting a highway, one third of that area is provided with soft landscaping and screening.

h The conversion would not result in an over-concentration of converted property to the detriment of the character of the area and the amenity of residents.

JUSTIFICATION

2 A self-contained unit is one with its own bathroom, w.c. and kitchen facilities behind its own front door. Minimum floorspace standard and general requirements may be obtained from the Housing and Environmental Health services of the Council. Approval will also be required under Building Regulations to ensure that the conversion is of the required standard with regard to structure, fire safety, sound insulation, ventilation and waste disposal.

3 The Government’s Planning Policy Guidance note on “Housing” 2000 (PPG3) states that planning authorities should provide a greater choice and better mix of housing, in terms of size, type and location. The sub-division of existing dwelling houses into smaller houses or flats can help to create a better mix of dwelling types and sizes in established residential areas. In particular, it can be a way of providing lower-cost residential units for low income, small (e.g. one-person) households. Furthermore, the sub-division of a large building may be the only way to economically maintain it and preserve it.

However, the Council also recognises that controls are necessary to protect the environment and ensure those more modest-sized houses, especially terraced houses, are generally retained for single family occupation.

5 The existence of converted properties in a street or area does not guarantee that planning permission will be granted for further conversions. If it is found that an over-concentration of converted property has occurred, indicated by a deterioration in the environmental quality, unacceptable traffic congestion or an unbalanced social mix, the Council may decide that no more conversions will be permitted within that area.

6 Proposals for conversions to flats of unused accommodation above shops (‘over the shop’ schemes) will be encouraged, where appropriate. Proposals for such conversions will be considered with reference to appropriate parts of this policy, in particular parts 3 to 5.

7 In terms of design and accessibility, the Council will encourage developers to plan for disabled access on the ground floor of the conversion in compliance with Part M of the Building Regulations.

NON DWELLING HOUSE USES

Within Primarily Residential Areas, as defined on the Proposals Map, proposals for development other than Class C3 (dwelling houses) will be considered mainly with regard to their effect on residential amenity. In such cases, development will be permitted provided that all of the following criteria can be satisfied:

a The development itself would not detract from the character of the area or the amenity of residents.

b The development would not result in an over-concentration of non-dwelling house uses to the detriment of the character of the area or the amenity of residents.
c Where parking is to be provided in any area fronting a highway, one third of that area should be provided with soft landscaping and screening.

JUSTIFICATION

2 Primarily Residential Areas are those areas of the Borough where housing is, and will continue to be, the predominant land use in the area. These areas are defined as such on the Proposals Map.

3 The overriding concern of this policy is in protecting the amenity and public safety of existing residents, and conserving the character and environmental quality of these Primarily Residential Areas.

4 While housing will be the predominant land use in Primarily Residential Areas, the people living there need some local facilities to meet their everyday needs. Schools, churches, corner shops, a small doctors’ or dental surgery, and public houses can be appropriate non-dwelling house uses provided that they are subservient to residential amenity.

5 The majority of local shopping, leisure and community facilities should be located in town and neighbourhood centres in compliance with Policy TC4, Policy LTC1 and Policy LTC4. Proposals for small scale retail development or local leisure and community facilities outside existing shopping centres will be assessed against the criteria in Policies TC2, TC6 and Policy LTC4, respectively.

6 Other land uses, which do not directly meet local needs, may also be acceptable within Primarily Residential Areas. Residential uses that are non-dwellings - i.e. Class C1 (Hotels) and Class C2 (Residential Institutions), which includes residential homes, of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 - may be suitably located within Primarily Residential Areas, but will be subject to safeguards to protect the character and amenity of the area.

7 Small hotels and guesthouses may fit in with the residential surroundings of Primarily Residential Areas. Large developments are likely to cause problems of noise, traffic and parking and are unlikely to be acceptable.

Policy LTC9 provides guidance on appropriate locations for larger hotel, conference and exhibition facilities.

8 There are also certain business activities, which by virtue of their nature and scale can reasonably be carried out within Primarily Residential Areas without detriment to residential amenity. Such business activities will tend to fall within Class B1 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987. Class B1 is defined as:

Use for or any of the following purposes:

a as an office other than a use within Class A2 (financial and professional services);

b for research and development of products and processes;

c for any industrial process, being a use which can be carried out in any residential area without detriment to the amenity of that area by reason of noise, vibration, smell, fumes, smoke, soot, ash, dust or grit.

9 In practice, it may be difficult to determine if an application for an industrial process is one that would fall within Class B1(c) as the effect on residential amenity as defined above may be difficult to assess.

10 Where necessary, temporary consent will be granted to monitor the impact of the development over a period of time, and conditions are likely to be imposed to restrict the scale of the development and the hours of working. Any permissions granted may be restricted to the use applied for, and will normally be subject to conditions to ensure that residential amenity is protected.

11 Commercial childcare provision can also be appropriate in a Primarily Residential Area as well as in the workplace. Policy LTC6 provides additional guidance in relation to day nurseries and playgroups, and will also be taken into account when considering planning applications for child minding operations.
AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The policies within this Chapter look to achieving the aims and objectives contained within Part 1 of this Unitary Development Plan (UDP). The employment aims, and therefore the policies in this Chapter, are related to promoting sustainable economic prosperity and creating new employment opportunities in order to broaden the economic base and reduce unemployment. It is particularly important to provide employment opportunities that are accessible to local residents.

BACKGROUND

PROVISION FOR EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT

The UDP employment policies and proposals seek to support the main aims of the plan to transform the quality of Halton’s environment and improve economic prosperity and social progress through sustainable development by:

- The allocation of sufficient supply of employment land to meet the needs of industry and business with a choice of location, size, type and quality.
- Providing clear direction as to the type of development considered acceptable.
- Promoting economic diversification.
- Requiring high standards of design in buildings, layout, materials and landscape works.

CONTEXT

In March 1997, the Council commissioned consultants Pieda Plc to undertake a study examining the urban capacity of the Borough. The study focused on both the demand and supply side, determining the future residential and employment requirements and providing an assessment of the real availability and deliverability of housing and employment land in the Borough (Urban Capacity Study 1997).
3. Following on from this study, additional sites, including open spaces, open countryside and Green Belt land were reviewed to assess their potential to accommodate future housing and employment requirements, and recommendations were made as to the possible mix of greenfield and brownfield land that could be allocated for housing and employment in the UDP (Strategic Options - Scenario Building Report, 1998).

4. The Urban Capacity Study concluded that:

   ‘in order to succeed in the market for new employment development and the attraction and retention of scarce mobile investment the Borough must therefore aim to maximise its abilities to satisfy the more qualitative needs of new firms and those looking to relocate’ (paragraph 5 Executive Summary).

5. It also highlighted a number of key issues for the development of planning policy from the analysis of the local industrial and business market:

   - Demand for industrial and business land is concentrated amongst local companies. Land should be allocated to satisfy this.

   - The majority of demand is industrial related and is particularly concentrated within the manufacturing sector. Demand is less apparent in the service sector. Land allocations should therefore primarily seek to satisfy the locational requirements of manufacturers.

   - Demand is greatest for sites of up to 4 hectares - land use allocations should reflect this.

   - Widnes is disadvantaged in comparison to Runcorn due to an absence of attractive, readily available development land. Particular consideration needs to be given to addressing land supply deficiencies in Widnes.

6. The supply of employment land identified by the Urban Capacity Study was 360 hectares. The study considered, however, that this figure represents a considerable over estimation of the true availability of employment land, particularly when the location and characteristics of individual sites are set against the location requirements of modern industry.

7. The study consciously weighted the review of employment sites towards marketability factors, which reduced the realistically available supply to approximately 190 hectares.

8. As a consequence of the inequitable distribution of employment sites between Runcorn and Widnes it is necessary to ensure that there is a balanced portfolio of sites between the two towns that operate as separate markets. It is also important to tackle the qualitative differences in the Widnes employment land supply by putting forward a principal employment site in Widnes, which would prove attractive to both indigenous business, and small scale inward investors which the town currently lacks.

9. The Council commissioned consultants to undertake an assessment of employment land in Widnes that concluded that there were no existing employment sites that could meet the needs of modern industry in Widnes. It recommended that a quality employment

themPhos, Widnes
sites targeting Widnes’ service sector, located close to the motorway network, served by public transport, unconstrained and hence readily developable, should be allocated in the UDP.

LINKING WITH THE SPATIAL STRATEGY

10 The plan will make provision for approximately 208 hectares of local employment land. Between May 1996 and May 2003 120 hectares of employment land was completed therefore the residual amount of land to allocated in the Plan for employment uses is 88 hectares.

11 A linked spatial strategy is proposed to achieve the Council’s strategic aims of increasing economic prosperity, stemming net out migration of population from the Borough and regenerating existing urban areas. This entails the creation of sustainable communities on the edges of Widnes and Runcom linked to the regeneration of Action Areas for housing, employment and recreational uses.

12 The linked spatial strategy conforms to the preferred Greenfield and Brownfield Development Scenario described in the Halton UDP Key Issues Report, which was subject to broad public consultation.
In accordance with Part I Policy S19, land is allocated for around 88 hectares on the following local employment sites.

### E1 Local & Regional Employment Land Allocations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Widnes Local Employment Sites</th>
<th>Site Ref</th>
<th>Area (Ha)</th>
<th>Greenfield/Previously Developed Land</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Use Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ditton Road / Speke Road</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>PDL</td>
<td></td>
<td>B1, B2 &amp; B8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex. Sleeper Depot, Ditton Jt</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>17.24</td>
<td>PDL</td>
<td></td>
<td>B1, B2 &amp; B8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fieldgate</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>PDL</td>
<td></td>
<td>B1, B2 &amp; B8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundary Lane</td>
<td>34/3</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>PDL</td>
<td></td>
<td>B1, B2 &amp; B8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnson’s Lane</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>8.66</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td></td>
<td>B1, B2 &amp; B8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingsway / Moor Lane Phase II</td>
<td>209/1</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td></td>
<td>B1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shell Green</td>
<td>28/0</td>
<td>6.02</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td></td>
<td>B1, B2 &amp; B8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shell Green</td>
<td>28/3</td>
<td>5.95</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td></td>
<td>B1, B2 &amp; B8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanhouse Lane, Moss Bank Road</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>PDL</td>
<td></td>
<td>B1, B2 &amp; B8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land at Mill Lane</td>
<td>294/0</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>PDL</td>
<td></td>
<td>B1, B2 &amp; B8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land at Mill Lane</td>
<td>294/1</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>PDL</td>
<td></td>
<td>B1, B2 &amp; B8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Quantity of Employment Land at Widnes** 45.01

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Runcorn Local Employment Sites</th>
<th>Site Ref</th>
<th>Area (Ha)</th>
<th>Greenfield/Previously Developed Land</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Use Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjacent Tannery Farm</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td></td>
<td>B1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davey Road (Astmoor)</td>
<td>53/5</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td></td>
<td>B1, B2 &amp; B8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairoak Lane</td>
<td>8/2</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td></td>
<td>B1, B2 &amp; B8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land at Chester Rd, Whitehouse Vale</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td></td>
<td>B1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land at Rock Savage, Clifton Leave</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td></td>
<td>Roadside User(Petrol Station, Restaurant Hotel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manor Park II</td>
<td>236/1</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td></td>
<td>B1, B2 &amp; B8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manor Park II</td>
<td>236/1</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td></td>
<td>B1, B2 &amp; B8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manor Park II</td>
<td>236/4</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td></td>
<td>B1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manor Park II</td>
<td>236/6</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td></td>
<td>B1, B2 &amp; B8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manor Park II</td>
<td>236/8</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td></td>
<td>B1, B2 &amp; B8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manor Park III</td>
<td>237/0</td>
<td>15.32</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td></td>
<td>B1, B2 &amp; B8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manor Park III</td>
<td>237/2</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td></td>
<td>B1, B2 &amp; B8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manor Park III</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>10.46</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td></td>
<td>B1, B2 &amp; B8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rivington Road (Whitehouse Vale)</td>
<td>8/1</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td></td>
<td>B1, B2 &amp; B8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Quantity of Employment Land in Runcorn (Ha)** 43.32

**Total Quantity of Local Employment Land (Ha)** 88.33
2 In accordance with Part I Policy S20, land is allocated for around 126 hectares on Regional Investment Sites.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regional Investment Sites</th>
<th>Site Ref</th>
<th>Area (Ha)</th>
<th>Greenfield/Previously Developed Land Status</th>
<th>Allocated Use Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daresbury Park</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>29.65</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td>Growth target sectors within Use Class B1(a) &amp; (b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daresbury Park</td>
<td>240/0</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td>Growth target sectors within Use Class B1(a) &amp; (b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daresbury Park</td>
<td>240/7</td>
<td>7.64</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td>Growth target sectors within Use Class B1(a) &amp; (b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park Site 1</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>45.7</td>
<td>PDL</td>
<td>Strategic Rail Freight park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park Site 2</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>PDL</td>
<td>Strategic Rail Freight park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North of Hale Bank Road</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td>Strategic Rail Freight park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North of Daresbury Laboratory</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>5.22</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td>Growth target sectors within Use Class B1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West of Daresbury Laboratory</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td>Growth target sectors within Use Class B1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East of Daresbury Laboratory</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td>Growth target sectors within Use Class B1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South of Daresbury Laboratory</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>Greenfield</td>
<td>Growth target sectors within Use Class B1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total quantity of Regional Investment Sites (Ha)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>126.01</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**JUSTIFICATION**

3 The process of identifying employment land allocations in the UDP took the following stages:

- An additional assessment of the development opportunity on open spaces, undesignated land and land in the Green Belt as part of the Strategic Options - Scenario Building Report (1998) which assessed three development scenarios;
- Greenfield, brownfield and greenfield/brownfield in meeting the future employment and housing requirements of the Borough.
- An examination of sites against a series of marketability, developability and sustainability criteria to assess their
potential and suitability for employment development.

- An assessment of both the quality of employment land and level of demand for employment sites in Widnes.

**ALLOCATION CRITERIA**

4 The important scoping work undertaken in the Urban Capacity Study and Strategic Options - Scenario Building Report provides the background to Part 1 Policy S19 of the plan. This strategic policy sets out the objective to provide a range of employment sites spread between Runcorn and Widnes to meet the future needs of industry and business.

5 All allocated employment sites in the plan were examined against a series of marketability, developability and sustainability criteria to assess their potential and suitability for development.

6 In light of the large areas of contamination present in the Borough as a legacy of past industrial and chemical processes it was considered important to ensure that allocated sites were realistically available for employment use through examination of the marketability and developability of sites.

7 To assess the marketability of sites the following question was posed; Is the site attractive to the market?

8 Sites that were located in close proximately to markets, suppliers and labour, and had good transport links and good links with other businesses were given a higher score than sites that were not in close proximately to these factors.

9 To assess sites developability, the known planning, access, infrastructure, contamination and ownership constraints were examined. Sites that had no known constraints were given a higher score than sites with known constraints.

10 Each site was also assessed against a set of sustainable development criteria. The criteria were designed to reflect government guidance on sustainable development as expressed in Planning Policy Guidance. The following criteria were used:

- Development within the existing Urban Area - sites within the existing urban area were given a positive sustainability score.
- Development on previously developed land - sites previously developed were given a positive sustainability score.
- Reclamation of contaminated land - sites that are contaminated were given a positive sustainability score.
- Protection of high grade agricultural land - sites that were not of high agricultural land were given a positive sustainability score.
- Accessibility by public transport - sites accessible by public transport were given a positive sustainability score.
- Accessibility by rail/water (freight) - sites accessible by rail/water (freight) were given a positive sustainability score.

11 The sustainability audit highlighted those sites, which obtained an overall negative sustainability score. Such sites were not rejected if mitigating measures could be required that would ensure that a site could be developed in sustainable way. For instance supplementary planning documents will be produced for the sites identified in the North Widnes and East Runcorn Development Areas to ensure the creation of new sustainable communities to include a mix of uses, accessible local facilities and good transport links with the existing urban area. Refer to part 1 policy S24 for more information. In respect of Daresbury Park the Council set out in its Planning Brief for Daresbury Park (Jan 1996) and subsequently secured through Section 106 Obligations as part of the planning approval for the development, high quality landscaping designed to be prominent within the site and from views to it. This was seen as an essential element of the development for the enjoyment of park users and to make a positive contribution to the character of the development and its setting.

12 The total quantity of employment land allocated in the UDP is made of 34% (72 hectares) of Previously Developed Land and 66% (142 hectares) of Greenfield Land.
13 The Regional Economic Strategy Summary Action Plan (2003-2006) includes an action to establish a major science campus at Daresbury Laboratories as a focus for world class research and development and commercial activities. The expansion sites, to the edges of the established complex, are recognised as important sites with the potential to support clustering around the existing research facility with the scope to develop linkages and shared resources.

14 Section 106 Obligations will be sought to ensure that employment uses on regional investment sites are in the target growth sectors identified in the North West Development Agency's Regional Economic Strategy (2000) and part 1 policy S20. The growth target sectors identified in the Regional Economic Strategy (2000) and in paragraph 4.7 of Regional Planning Guidance for the North West (2003) now termed Regional Spatial Strategy are:

- Environmental technologies
- Life science industries (biotechnology and pharmaceuticals)
- Medical equipment and technology
- Financial and professional services
- Tourism
- Computer software services and internet based services
- Creative industries, media, advertising and public relations.

PRIMARILY EMPLOYMENT AREAS

E3 PRIMARILY EMPLOYMENT AREA

1 Development falling within Uses Classes B1 (Business), B2 (General Industry), B8 (Storage and Distribution) and Sui Generis industrial uses will be permitted in the Primarily Employment Areas identified on the Proposal Map.

JUSTIFICATION

2 Primarily Employment Areas are those areas of the Borough where employment is and will continue to be, the predominant land use in the area. These areas are defined as such on the Proposals Map. Primarily Employment Areas are different from Action Areas identified in the Regeneration Chapter, which promotes a mix of uses in a regeneration context.

3 Industries that have the potential to cause noise, smell, dust, noxious omissions, nuisance or unacceptable loss of amenity to surrounding uses are unlikely to be acceptable within or adjacent residential areas or within business parks or near recreational areas. They are best located within general or heavy industrial areas where they are more likely to be compatible with surrounding uses. However even in general or heavy industrial areas they have the potential to have an unacceptable impact on the operation of adjacent industrial and commercial users (i.e. food processing) and as such when determining the location of such industries.

E2 PRIORITY EMPLOYMENT REDEVELOPMENT AREAS

1 The Priority Employment Redevelopment Areas identified on the Proposals Map are considered suitable for employment redevelopment as and when they become vacant, are fully reclaimed and when land assembly takes place.

JUSTIFICATION

2 These sites are identified as potential employment sites that require redevelopment. Realising the potential of these sites will depend on the provision of significant levels of resources to assist with decontamination, infrastructure and reclamation works and therefore the re-use of these sites is part of a longer-term development strategy. If sufficient resources are forthcoming these sites could make an effective contribution to the Borough's employment land bank and increase the amount of new employment development on previously used 'brownfield sites'. The Council will use its compulsory purchase powers to facilitate the regeneration of these sites.
The compatibility with surrounding uses will be a primary consideration.

4 The Council wishes to diversify the local economy away from the over dependence on heavy chemical industry and improve the environmental quality of the Primarily Employment Areas through restricting these industries to appropriate locations and where the use already exists on site.

5 Sui Generis Industrial Uses are those that fall outside the B2 Class, which is described in the Use Classes Order as ‘use for carrying on of an industrial process other than one falling within class B1.’ The use of the term ‘industrial process’ is specifically defined in article 2 of the Use Classes Order. This definition does not for example include industrial uses listed in article 3 of the Order. There are also industrial processes which are classified as sui generis by the courts, such as abattoirs and chemical waste transfer stations.

**E4 COMPLEMENTARY SERVICES AND FACILITIES WITHIN PRIMARILY EMPLOYMENT AREAS**

1 Development that provides a service or facility, which is complementary to and compatible with the surrounding industrial uses and for which there is a demonstrable need, will be permitted within a Primarily Employment Area.

2 Housing, that forms an integral part of a mixed use development, will be permitted within a Primarily Employment Area if it is located in or, adjacent to, a town centre.

**JUSTIFICATION**

3 This policy is intended to apply to applications for uses such as a children’s day nursery, a service provision (e.g. a bank, shop, restaurant, sandwich bar) or a conference facility within Primarily Employment Areas. Such complementary services and facilities may be acceptable within a Primarily Employment Area where they are needed to serve the workforce or to help the employment area function well.

4 Mixed use schemes incorporating office, retail, and flatted accommodation in higher density developments in or adjacent to town centres can create attractive and vibrant places well suited to a town centre location.

**SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT**

**E5 NEW INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

1 Proposals for new industrial and commercial development, including extensions to existing premises, will be expected to comply with the following requirements where applicable:

a To ensure that the development is compatible with existing and proposed surrounding uses, in particular adjoining residential areas, Landscape buffer zones must be provided to separate uses. Other measures such as sound insulation, pollution control and restricted hours of working to minimise potential amenity problems will be required.

b Unsightly outside storage areas must be screened from public view.

c Open storage of loose materials will not be permitted.

d Refuse storage areas must be enclosed.

**JUSTIFICATION**

2 The requirements of this policy are intended to complement Policy BE1 and Policy BE2 in ensuring that new industrial and commercial development is compatible with neighbouring uses, particularly residential areas and also to ensure that the external appearance of a development would not have a detrimental effect on the character of the surrounding area. Where necessary the use of planning conditions and legally binding agreements to secure these requirements will be considered.

**E6 DARESBURY LABORATORIES**

1 Development will be permitted on this Primarily Employment Area identified
on the Proposals Map if it falls within Use Class B1(a) & (b) and there is a clear case for it being situated here. The design and height of new buildings should be in harmony with its sensitive rural location.

JUSTIFICATION

2 The national and international importance of the Daresbury Laboratories for scientific research is a valuable asset of the Borough. There are clear benefits in locating related activities on the same site. Regional Investment Sites (listed in policy S20) 246, 225, 247 & 250 have been allocated on the fringes of the laboratories site to cater for its future expansion requirements and to facilitate the development of a business cluster.

E7 DITTON STRATEGIC RAIL FREIGHT PARK

1 A phased strategic inter-modal rail freight park will be developed on land at Ditton, Widnes in accordance with an overall master plan to be approved as a Supplementary Planning Document. Within the defined park Sites 253, 255 and 256 are allocated for development. Development will be permitted provided that it complies with all of the following (and in the case of 253 subject also to compliance with paragraph 2 below):-

a It is for use by businesses that would utilise the railway for the transportation of freight, and uses offering support services to them.

b It would be of a quality suitable for occupation by companies of regional or national distribution importance, which would give rise to additional new employment opportunities for residents of Halton and surrounding local authority areas.

c It would not have a significantly adverse impact on the environment and on the amenity of local residents, particularly in the Halebank areas, and would contribute to urban regeneration.

d It would not prejudice the improvement of the passenger rail network or improvements to it identified in the UDP.

e It is demonstrated through a detailed Transport Assessment and Travel Plan that it would not have a significant adverse impact on the local transport networks and trunk road network.

2 Development will not be permitted on site referenced 253 on the proposals map and known as land north of Hale Bank Road, unless all of the following also apply:-

a It is part of a comprehensive proposal for a strategic rail freight park at Ditton in accordance with an agreed phasing plan.

b Development of the strategic inter-modal rail freight park on the previously developed sites 255 and 256 identified on the proposals map and policy S20 has already commenced in accordance with an agreed phasing plan set out in a Supplementary Planning Document.

c Unless already implemented as advance structural landscaping, landscaped buffer zones are provided on the land shown as Proposed Greenspace on the Proposals Map to the south, east and west of site 253.

d A warehouse development proposal comes forward of larger than 25,000 sq metres floorspace and of a sufficient size or character that would be incapable of being accommodated within the remaining areas in the defined Park.

e It is designed to be rail-served, including the provision of dedicated rail sidings adjacent to it.
The layout of development incorporates measures actively to discourage the direct movement of goods vehicles from the site to the local road network in the Halebank area. In order to achieve this aim a road system shall be provided to connect Sites 253, 255 and 256 where they are divided by public highways or railway lines.

**JUSTIFICATION**

3 Intermodal for the purpose of this policy is understood to be where an interchange takes place in the moving of container freight between at least two different modes in a transport chain, where one is rail.

4 The potential of the Ditton location to support rail-based freight development has been highlighted in two reports:

   a the Merseyside Freight Study, prepared for the joint Merseyside authorities and Halton Borough Council by MDS Transmodal and WS Atkins Consultants Ltd, June 2000;

   b the Report identifying the Strategic Regional Sites, published by the NWDA in December 2001.

5 The Merseyside Freight Study was commissioned to provide the basis for a strategy and action plans for freight distribution within, to and from Merseyside that would:

   - Promote future economic growth;
   - Reduce accidents, health risks, disturbance and environmental damage;
   - Be affordable, practical and capable of implementation.

6 The Study drew on relevant policy guidance at EU, national and regional level. It pointed to the common theme that non-road modes (rail and waterborne transport) should be promoted through land use policies that locate industrial and distribution development at rail or water connected sites to support sustainable transport objectives. Attention was drawn to the EU’s strategy for revitalising railways, including advice on the encouragement of “freight villages” at which heavy transport users and supporting activities would be clustered in order to make best use of extensive intermodal facilities.

7 The Study noted the potential for the “extension and restructuring of the Ditton area, exploiting the two new intermodal terminals, bringing into play redundant land and creating a new road link to the A5300.” The new road link would connect with the existing primary road network. It would also ensure that freight traffic generated from this proposal would not directly enter Halebank, reducing its local impact. Ideally, the area would become a managed and secure estate allowing internal freight movements off the public highway. It will be vital to create a suitable local ambience to attract new occupiers and so properly exploit Ditton’s geographical advantage.

8 The NWDA published its Regional Economic Strategy in March 2003 and in its Summary Action Plan 2003-2006 it identifies this site in Key Activity 9.1.

9 In Regional Planning Guidance for the North West (2003), now termed Regional Spatial Strategy, policy T7 states that local authorities in the North West should develop freight strategies through the local transport plan process and they should satisfy themselves that the prime purpose of any proposed site is to facilitate rail freight when allocating land in development plans. The Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park proposal supports this intention as it will assist the transfer and handling of freight on a key rail corridor of international standards, through the provision of an inter-modal interchange in a regionally strategic location.

10 This policy facilitates the kind of development envisaged in Regional Planning Guidance for the North West (2003), now termed Regional Spatial Strategy, the Merseyside Freight Study and in the Regional Economic Strategy (2003). It goes on to take account of the technical, commercial and environmental considerations raised in discussion with existing and potential new inter-modal transport developers and operators. These have shown that a balance of greenfield and brownfield development will provide potential for a phased development of 200,000 sq m rising to 400,000 sq m that will
support both the new rail infrastructure: including 800m sidings, an expanded inter-modal terminal, and the reclamation/decontamination costs associated with some of the previously-used sites. The Proposals Map shows all land considered to have potential for development as part of the scheme within the UDP period, but sites 253, 255 and 256 are allocated for development as the Core Areas of the development.

11 The policy sets out the safeguards needed to ensure that the development takes place in a comprehensive manner, including the development of the previously developed areas in advance of development on the greenfield areas. The greenfield site 253 should not be developed in isolation or before the other areas of the proposed Rail Freight Park. It is considered to be the key to facilitating the reuse and regeneration of currently contaminated and unattractive previously used land in the immediate area that would otherwise remain as such. The provision of railway sidings will be required as part of any proposal for the development of site 253. This requirement will be the subject of conditions of any planning permission for site 253.

12 Development of this facility should create a significant number of jobs for local people and be a driving force in diversifying the local economy, and support regional and national policies. It should also provide a real opportunity to make lasting improvements in the quality of the built environment: and the Council will require that the design of new buildings and landscaped areas are of high quality.

13 In relation to site 253, in particular, the landscape buffer zones are considered essential, and will be affected by detailed technical considerations involved in any EIA and in creating a new road link to the A5300. In addition, the angling pond in the south-eastern corner of the Greenspace strip should be retained. Planning conditions and S106 Obligations will be used to ensure that environmental and amenity standards are protected.
APPENDIX I
TRANSPORT PARKING STANDARDS

The standards for car parking contained within this Appendix are the maximum to be provided within any development. Previous standards used within Halton referred to minimum parking space requirements. If developers wanted to provide more than the minimum, there were no grounds for objection unless other site specific considerations deemed them to be inappropriate. These ‘maximum standards’ provide a greater degree of control on parking allowing for better demand management to meet strategic objectives. Where it is shown that linked trips will be undertaken utilising the parking made available from a development thereby increasing the usage of that parking, then an increase in parking above the maximum may be acceptable. This will be considered on a case by case basis.

The increased use of bicycles is recommended by the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution. Levels of parking for bicycles are included alongside those for car parking within these standards. Cycle parking levels are expressed as a minimum standard.

Provision of motor cycle parking should be made within each large development site, defined as a site with a total of 25 or more car parking spaces. The standard for this is one motor cycle space for every 25 car parking spaces.

In order to meet the needs of disabled people and those with restricted mobility, 10% of all car parking spaces shall be provided to mobility standard (minimum width 3.6 metres). No less than half of these spaces shall be signed as being for the exclusive use of disabled people. Where less than 10 car parking spaces are to be provided, at least one space shall be provided to ‘mobility standard’. These should be provided in a safe and convenient location.

Notes: -
All figures in sqm relate to gross floor area unless otherwise stated.
* Relates to predominantly drive through/take away establishments. Drive through featuring significant seating should be considered as a conventional restaurant.

** Having regard to the advice in PPG13 and that parking guidance is more likely to influence modal choice rather than car ownership rates, it is not considered appropriate to set maximum or minimum levels of parking for housing development. A flexible approach to parking in association with dwellings is considered appropriate. These figures offer broad guidance as to the levels of parking which may be appropriate for various types of housing development.

TRANSPORT ASSESSMENTS (TA)

Guidelines recommend that a TA should normally be produced where one or other of the following thresholds are exceeded:

- traffic to and from the development exceeds 10% of the two way traffic flows on the adjoining highway
- traffic to and from the development exceeds 5% of the two way traffic flows on the adjoining highway where traffic congestion exists or will exist with the assessment period or in other sensitive locations.

Furthermore there will be some developments that will be so significant in size that TA’s should be undertaken as a matter of course.

Major development for the purposes of providing a transport assessment is where the development is equivalent or greater than the following:

- Retail - 1,000 sqm
- Assembly and Leisure - 1,000 sqm
- Business uses (B1 & B2) - 2,500 sqm
- Warehousing (B8) - 10,000 sqm
- Residential - 200 units
- Higher and Further Education - 2,500 sqm
- Stadia - 1,500 seats
- 100 trips in/out combined in the peak hours
- 100 on site parking spaces
In respect to developments that may have an impact on the trunk road network, reference should be made to Circular 4/2001. This Circular sets out the considerations that planning authorities will be expected to take into account when assessing planning applications for development affecting trunk roads, and any requirements placed on a proposal by the Highways Agency to secure highway improvements where appropriate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land Use</th>
<th>Specific Use</th>
<th>Car Parking (max)</th>
<th>Cycle Parking (min)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1 - Shops</td>
<td>Food Retail</td>
<td>1 space per 18 sqm</td>
<td>1 space per 180 sqm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-food Retail</td>
<td>1 space per 20 sqm</td>
<td>1 space per 200 sqm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2 - Financial &amp; Professional Servs.</td>
<td></td>
<td>space per 25 sqm</td>
<td>1 space per 250 sqm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3 - Food &amp; Drink</td>
<td>Restaurants</td>
<td>1 space per 5 sqm public floor area</td>
<td>1 space per 50 sqm public floor area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fast Food - Drive Through</td>
<td>1 space per 7.5 sqm</td>
<td>1 space per 75 sqm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1 - Business</td>
<td>Stand Alone Offices</td>
<td>1 space per 35 sqm</td>
<td>1 space per 330 sqm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business Parks</td>
<td>1 space per 40 sqm</td>
<td>1 space per 450 sqm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2 - General Industry</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 space per 50 sqm</td>
<td>1 space per 500 sqm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B8 - Storage and Distribution</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 space per 50 sqm</td>
<td>1 space per 500 sqm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1 - Hotels and Hostels</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 space per bedroom including staff</td>
<td>1 space per 10 s bedroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2 - Residential Institutions</td>
<td>Nursing, Rest and Care Homes</td>
<td>1 space per member of staff (full time equivalent) + 1 space per 5 residents</td>
<td>1 space per 5 employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Residential Schools, Colleges, Training Centres &amp; Halls of Residence</td>
<td>1 space per bedroom</td>
<td>1 space per 10 bedrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hospitals</td>
<td>1 space per 4 staff + 1 space per 3 day visitors</td>
<td>1 space per 30 bed spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C3 - Dwellings</strong></td>
<td><strong>Family Housing</strong></td>
<td>2 spaces per dwelling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Single Bed Housing</strong></td>
<td>1 space per dwelling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Sheltered Housing</strong></td>
<td>1 space per 3 dwellings + 2 spaces per warden</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Community Homes</strong></td>
<td>1 space per 2 staff + 1 space per 6 occupancies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D1 - Non Residential Institutions</td>
<td>Medical/Health Services</td>
<td>1 space per 2 staff + 4 spaces per consulting room</td>
<td>1 space per 3 consulting rooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creche, Day Nursery and Day Centre</td>
<td>1 space per staff + 3 visitor spaces</td>
<td>1 space per 3 car parking spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Primary &amp; Secondary Schools Higher and Further Education</td>
<td>1 space per classroom</td>
<td>4 spaces per classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Art Galleries, Museums and Libraries</td>
<td>1 space per 30 sqm</td>
<td>1 space per 300 sqm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public Halls, Exhibition Halls and Places of Worship</td>
<td>1 space per 10 sqm</td>
<td>1 space per 50 sqm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D2 - Assembly and Leisure</td>
<td>Cinemas, Theatre, Bingo and Conference Facilities</td>
<td>1 space per 5 seats</td>
<td>1 space per 75 sqm open floor area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other Leisure</td>
<td>1 space per 22 sqm</td>
<td>1 space per 75 sqm open floor area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>Stadia</td>
<td>1 space per 15 seats</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Car Sales</td>
<td>1 space per 50 sqm display area</td>
<td>1 space per 500 sqm display area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fuel Stations</td>
<td>1 space</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vehicle and Repair Garages and Service Stations</td>
<td>1 space per 50 sqm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## APPENDIX 2: HOUSING ALLOCATIONS (2002 – 2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Brownfield</th>
<th>Greenfield</th>
<th>All Sites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dwellings Gained Through New Build</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>573</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(April 2002-March 2003) 1 year</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dwellings Gained Through Conversions</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(April 2002-March 2003) 1 year</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dwellings Lost Through Conversions</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(April 2002-March 2003) 1 year</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dwellings Demolished</td>
<td>-198</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(April 2002-March 2003) 1 year</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated Brownfield Windfalls</td>
<td>966</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(April 2002-March 2016) 14 years</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated Demolitions/Clearance</td>
<td>-2,106</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-2,106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(April 2002-March 2016) 14 years</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dwellings from Phase I Allocations</td>
<td>460</td>
<td>1,446</td>
<td>1,906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under Construction</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan allocations/ Lapsed Permissions</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning Permissions</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>1,241</td>
<td>1,457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(April 2002-March 2007) 5 years</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dwellings from Phase II Allocations</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1,638</td>
<td>1,638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan allocations</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1,638</td>
<td>1,638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(April 2007-March 2011) 4 years</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dwellings from Phase III Allocations</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2,038</td>
<td>2,038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan allocations</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2,038</td>
<td>2,038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(April 2011-March 2016) 5 years</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Dwelling Gain</td>
<td>1,716</td>
<td>5,421</td>
<td>7,137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Dwelling Loss</td>
<td>-2,305</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-2,305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (Net)</td>
<td>-589</td>
<td>5,421</td>
<td>4,832</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 3.
THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (USE CLASSES ORDER) 1987

A1 Shops
Shops, retail warehouses, hairdressers, undertakers, travel and ticket agencies, post offices, pet shops, sandwich bars, showrooms, domestic hire shops, funeral directors.

A2 Financial and Professional Services
Banks, building societies, estate and employment agencies, professional and financial services, betting offices. (These must serve the visiting public. Health and medical services are not included [in Class D1]).

A3 Food and Drink
Restaurants, public houses, snack bars, cafes, wine bars, shops for sale of hot food.

B1 Business
(a) Offices not within Class A2
(b) Research and development, studios, laboratories, ‘high tech’ uses.
(c) Light industry
(These uses must be able to be carried out in a residential area without detriment to the amenity of that area).

B2 General Industry
Any industrial use not falling within the Business Class.

B8 Storage or Distribution
Wholesale warehouses, repositories, wholesale cash ‘n’ carry, open storage.

C1 Hotels
Hotels, boarding and guest houses (where no significant element of care is provided).

C2 Residential Institutions
Residential homes for the care of people in need, hospitals, nursing homes and residential schools, colleges or training centres.

C3 Dwelling Houses
Dwellings, residences for up to six people living as single households even where care is provided (includes flats).

D1 Non-residential Institutions
Community facilities such as: Places of worship, church halls, clinics, health centres, creches, day nurseries, consulting rooms. Museums, public halls, libraries, art galleries, exhibition halls.

Non residential schools, colleges and training centres.

D2 Assembly and Leisure
Cinemas, concert halls, bingo halls, casinos, dance halls. Swimming baths, skating rinks, gymnasium or areas for other indoor or outdoor sports or recreation not involving motorised vehicles or firearms.

Sui generis - unclassified i.e. any planning use not falling within a specific Use Class above, and which is therefore a use on its own.

Examples are:
Theatres
Amusement arcades or a funfair
Launderettes
Car Showrooms
Petrol filling stations
Taxi businesses and vehicle hire
Scrap yards
Car parks, lorry parks
Garage and transport depots
Open space
Hostels

Any work registrable under the Alkali etc. Works Regulation Act 1906 (former Special Industrial Class B3).
APPENDIX 4

THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (USE CLASSES) ORDER 2005

The Use Classes Order 1987, outlined in Appendix 3, was in force at the time that the Unitary Development Plan was drafted and adopted. A new Use Classes Order came into effect on 21st April 2005. Whilst the changes between the two orders are quite minimal the Use Classes Order (2005) is summarised here for point of reference.

A1 Shops
Shops, retail warehouses, hairdressers, undertakers, travel and ticket agencies, post offices, dry cleaners, internet cafes, pet shops, sandwich bars, showrooms, domestic hire shops, funeral directors.

A2 Financial and Professional Services
Banks, building societies, estate and employment agencies, professional and financial services, betting offices. (These must serve the visiting public. Health and medical services are not included [in Class D1]).

A3 Restaurants and Cafes
Restaurants, snack bars, cafes

A4 Drinking Establishments
Pubs and bars

A5 Hot Food Take-Aways
Take-Aways and fast food premises

Sui Generis
Shops selling and/or displaying motor vehicles, retail warehouse clubs, launderettes, taxi or vehicle hire businesses, amusement centres, petrol filling stations

B1 Business
(a) Offices, not within A2

(b) Research and development, studios, laboratories, high tech

(c) Light industry

B2 General industry
General Industry

B8 Storage or Distribution
Wholesale warehouse, distribution centres, repositories

Sui Generis
Any work registrable under the Alkali, etc. Works Regulation Act, 1906

C1 Hotels
Hotels, boarding and guest houses (where no significant element of care is provided).

C2 Residential Institutions
Residential homes for the care of people in need, hospitals and convalescent/nursing homes, residential schools and colleges.

C3 Dwelling houses
Dwellings, residences of up to six people living as single households even where care is provided (includes flats), small businesses at home which do not change the character of the residential use.

Sui Generis
Hostel, live/work units

D1 Non-residential Institutions
Places of worship, church halls, clinics, health centres, creches, day nurseries, consulting rooms. Museums, public halls, libraries, art galleries, exhibition halls Non - residential education and training centres

D2 Assembly and Leisure
Cinemas, music and concert halls, dance, sports halls, swimming baths, skating rinks, gymnasiums. Other indoor and outdoor sports and leisure uses, bingo halls, casinos

Sui Generis
Theatres, nightclubs
APPENDIX 5
GLOSSARY

Action Area
These are areas within which wider Council enabled regeneration efforts will be aided by flexible land use policies, allowing opportunities for old redundant land uses to be replaced by new uses such as open space, housing and new commercial development.

Advertisements
As defined by the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 “any word, letter, model, sign, placard, board, notice, device or representation, whether illuminated or not in the nature of, and employed wholly or partly for the purposes of advertisement, announcement or direction, and (without prejudice to the previous provisions of this definition) includes any hoardings or similar structure used, or adopted for use, for the display of advertisements”.

Aerobic Composting
Biological decomposition of organic wastes to form a fertile soil-like material, using aerobic methods.

Affordable Housing
Housing accessible to people whose incomes are insufficient to enable them to afford adequate housing, locally, on the open market. Includes rented or shared ownership housing provided by housing associations or Local Authorities and low cost homes for sale at a discount.

Agriculture
Includes “horticulture, fruit growing, seed growing, dairy farming, the breeding and keeping of livestock (including any creature kept for the production of food, wool, skins or fur or for the purposes of its use in the farming of land), the use of land for woodlands where that use is ancillary to the farming of land for other agricultural purposes”. Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Section 336.

Aggregates Recycling Facility
Facility for producing secondary aggregates from construction and demolition wastes.

Agricultural Land Classification
Agricultural land classification maps are produced by the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs primarily for planning purposes. Land is graded according to the degree to which its physical characteristics impose long-term limitations on agricultural use.

Allocated Land
Land which is defined in the Local Plan as being acceptable in principle for development for a particular purpose and which is not already in use for that purpose. The development of all such sites will be dependent on planning permission being obtained.

Allotments
An area of open land, usually in one ownership but divided up into separate plots, which are then rented by individuals. These people usually grow flowers, fruit and vegetables for their own consumption. Allotments are also sometimes referred to as “leisure gardens”.

Anaerobic Digestion
Biological decomposition of organic wastes carried out in sealed vessels to form compost materials and produce gas.

Ancient Woodlands
Those sites which have been continuously wooded since at least the year 1600 and all such sites within the Borough have been identified by English Nature and Cheshire Wildlife Trust. They are of great historical, ecological and landscape importance and this is recognised by the Government in the England Forestry Strategy.

Archaeological Evaluation
Research comprising a minimum of professional archaeological assessment and/or investigation needed to determine the extent and importance of archaeological remains whilst causing the minimum of damage to archaeological strata. May be limited to documentary research only.

Areas of Special Landscape Value
These areas may be made up of several distinct landscape components (e.g. woodland, meadow, watercourses, hedgerows, topographical features, geological features, buildings, artefacts, etc.) which combine to create an important wider landscape. Alternatively, they may include one specific type of landscape component on a large scale (e.g. a river estuary or forest). Either way, they make an important contribution to the local character of the Borough. In order to retain the character that makes these areas special, it is important that no development is allowed which fragments an area, or changes its character.
Borrow Pits
Temporary quarries to provide fill materials, usually close to and connected with large-scale construction projects.

Brownfield Site
Land that has previously been developed.

Business Park
Site with a high standard of development and landscaping accommodating a range of business uses (light industry, offices, research and development) storage and distribution.

Business Use
This is defined in Class B1 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (SI 1987 No 764) and includes use as an office other than a use within Class A2 (financial and professional services), for research and development of products or processes or for any industrial process being a use which can be carried out in any residential area without detriment to the amenity of that area by reason of noise, vibration, smell, fumes, smoke, soot, ash, dust or grit.

Caravan Site
A static caravan site is a site that is occupied by caravans positioned there for some specified period or for the whole year. These sites are normally rented from a site owner.

A transit caravan site is a site that acts as a stopping point on or near a through route where mobile caravans can stay overnight. These sites are normally for recreational purposes only.

COMAH Site
Development of sites designated under the Control Of Major Accident Hazards (Planning) Regulations 1999.

Committed Site
Land which is already considered as being acceptable for a particular purpose by virtue of having an approved or past planning permission, an existing allocation, or which is presently under construction.

Community Forest
A large area of wooded landscape in and around towns containing a mixture of woodlands and other land uses including farmland, villages, leisure enterprises, nature areas and public open space.

Conservation Area
Areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. Such areas are designated by Local Planning Authorities under the Town and Country Planning Acts.

Contaminated Land
Land which is polluted by noxious or toxic substances.

Construction and Demolition Wastes
Masonry and rubble wastes arising from demolition, construction or other civil engineering projects.

Coast
The place where the sea meets land.

Coastal Zone developed
Usually urbanised but also containing other major developments (e.g. ports, power stations, etc).

Coastal Zone undeveloped
Conserved both for its landscape value and for its nature conservation interest.

Derelict Land
Land so damaged by industrial or other development that it is incapable of beneficial use without treatment (Circular 68/65 MHLG).

This includes disused spoil heaps, worked-out mineral excavations, abandoned industrial installations and land damaged by mining subsidence. It excludes land derelict from natural causes, land still in use and land with a planning permission containing conditions requiring after-treatment.

Designated Shopping Centres
These are the town centres (made up of primary and/or secondary shopping areas) and neighbourhood centres listed in policy S16 and annotated on the proposals map.

Development
Defined in Section 55 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as:
“The carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, or, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any buildings or other land.

Economic Development Zone (EDZ)
An Economic Development Zone is an
opportunity driven regeneration initiative that is of regional significance.

Energy-From-Waste (EFW)
The recovery of energy from waste materials, such as heat from incineration, or gas generation.

Environment Agency
The Government body with responsibility for protecting and improving the environment in England and Wales. Their remit covers issues relating to the state of land, air and water.

Environmental Improvement
Landscaping and other measures taken to improve the appearance and character of an area.

Environmental Priority Area
Areas designated by the Council that require significant environmental improvement to enhance their character and appearance, due to current environmental degradation.

Freight
Transportation of goods in containers or by water, air or land.

General Permitted Development Order (GDPO)
Sets out those categories of development that may be carried out without the need to apply for planning permission i.e. “permitted development”. The Local Authority can seek to make a legal direction requiring planning permission to be obtained for development that would normally be permitted by the Order. Such a direction is known as an Article Four direction.

Green Belt
Area of land, largely rural in character, which is adjacent to the main urban areas and which is protected from development by permanent and severe restrictions on building. The emphasis is on restricting the sprawl of urban centres, preventing the coalescence of neighbouring towns and preserving the individual character of settlements, although Green Belts may also provide suitable locations for recreational development and act as a buffer between the most rural countryside and the pressure of growing towns.

Greenfield Site
Land on which no development has previously taken place.

Greenspace
All openspace of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can act as a visual amenity.

Green Waste
Garden wastes from householders or landscape contractors.

Gypsy
Person of nomadic habit of life, whatever their race or origin. (This does not include members of a group or organised travelling show people or circus people).

Hazardous Industry
An industry or related installation which because of the nature of its process or the raw materials used present a potential threat to the safety of employees or the general public. It will have been certified a hazard by the Health and Safety Executive.

Health and Safety Executive
A body set up under the 1974 Health and Safety at Work Act, responsible for safeguarding the health, safety and welfare of workers and the public, as well as providing an advisory service to local planning authorities on hazards and risk assessment.

Highways Agency
An executive agency of the Department for Transport responsible for the management and maintenance of the motorway and trunk road network in England.

Household or Domestic Waste
Wastes arising from private houses, caravans, residential homes etc.

Housing Land Supply
The number of additional dwellings becoming available, either under construction or on land with planning permissions, or allocated within a Local Plan.

Hydrocarbons
Principally oil, gas and coal bed methane.

Incinerators
Waste disposal facilities utilising high temperature combustion processes.
Industrial Waste
Waste from factories and industrial and commercial facilities.

Inert Waste
Wastes that do not undergo any significant physical, chemical or biological transformation.

Infilling
The filling of a small gap in an otherwise built-up frontage. (A small gap is one that could be filled by one or two houses). Where a site could accommodate more than 2 dwellings it will be treated as being a small group.

Infrastructure
When referring to a particular site it is the system of communications and services, i.e. water supply, electricity, gas, drainage required before new development can begin. When referring to a wider area the term includes the provision of more general services such as schools, shops and public transport.

In-migration
People moving into Halton to live from outside the Borough.

Inter-modal
Inter-modal is defined by the SRA as a load carrying ‘box’ designed to be conveyed by more than one transport mode with transfer between modes.

Lagoons
Sites where liquid wastes are deposited to allow the suspended solids to separate out from the liquids.

Landfill Gas
Gas, principally methane and carbon dioxide, resulting from the biological decomposition of wastes within a landfill site.

Landfill Tax
Tax imposed by the government on wastes disposed of in landfill/landraising sites.

Landfilling
The process of depositing waste into a void, hollow or cutting, to raise the level of the land to surrounding ground levels.

Landraising
The process of depositing waste into a void, hollow or cutting, to raise the level of the land to surrounding ground levels.

Leachate
Potentially polluting liquid resulting from the biological decomposition of wastes within a landfill site.

Listed Building
A building included in a list compiled by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport as being of special architectural or historic interest.

Local Nature Reserve
The objectives in designating sites as Local Nature reserves relate to conservation through better management and the passing of bylaws, recreation and education.

Local Transport Plan
This plan has four main functions: to interpret and apply the broad strategy set out in the Structure Plan; to provide a detailed basis for development control; to provide a basis for co-ordinating new development; to bring local and detailed planning issues before the public.

Materials Recycling Facility (MRF)
Facility where a waste stream is separated to allow recyclable components to be removed.

Mersey Basin Estuary Zone
The Estuary Zone extends from Woolston Eyes upstream of Warrington to several miles offshore into Liverpool Bay (to the jurisdiction of the maritime authorities), including the dredging deposit grounds in Liverpool Bay. The Mersey Estuary Zone overlaps with the Dee Estuary Strategy Zone to the west and the Ribble Estuary Zone to the north. The Estuary zone also includes land related to or influenced by the water.

Mersey Community Forest
The Mersey Forest is one of 12 community forests being established throughout England. The proposed community forests will cover large areas on the edge of the town and cities, filtering into urban areas where possible to create well-wooded landscapes. The Mersey Community Forest is an initiative being funded and co-ordinated by the nine Local Authorities in the Mersey Basin area in partnership with the Countryside Commission and Forestry Commission. A Forest Plan has been produced in consultation with landowners, farmers and local
communities, which sets out a plan of action to implement the Mersey Forest.

**Minerals**
Underground materials won by mining.

**Monitoring**
Continuous survey aimed at discovering and measuring significant deviations from a plan of its underlying assumptions.

**Municipal Waste**
Waste collected and disposed of by, or on behalf of, a Local Authority. Generally consists of household waste and some commercial and waste taken to Recycling and Household Waste Centres by the public. It may also include road and pavement sweepings, gully emptying wastes and some construction and demolition wastes arising from Local Authority activities.

**Nature Conservation**
The planning and management of wildlife and habitats to secure their wide use and continuity of supply while maintaining and enhancing their quality, value and diversity.

**Neighbourhood Centre**
This is small-scale retail/community centre located within local communities to serve local needs. A list of designated neighbourhood centres is contained in policy TC9.

**Non-Conforming Industrial Uses**
Industrial and/or waste management uses which by virtue of their character and impacts may be inappropriate if located with other general industrial activities.

**Non-inert Waste**
Waste that may undergo significant physical, chemical or biological transformation.

**Office**
Office now falls within Classes A2 and B1 in Class 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (SI 1987 No 764) and includes a bank and premises occupied by an estate agent, building society or professional services and other offices for research and development, studios and laboratories.

**Open Countryside**
The rural area outside the settlement policy boundaries for towns and villages shown on the Proposals Map.

**Permitted Development**
Specifies various classes of development, which may be undertaken upon land without the permission of the local planning authority or the Secretary of State. There are 33 “parts”, each part may itself include a number of classes of development, for example:
- **Part 3** - Changes of Use
- **Part 6** – Agricultural Buildings and Operations
- **Part 32** – Schools, Colleges, Universities and Hospitals.

**Phasing**
The gradual release of land over a period of time to avoid over-provision.

**Planning Policy Guidance Note (PPG)**
A note issued by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister which is the Government statement of planning policy on a particular subject. Guidance Notes are material considerations, which must be taken into account in preparing development plans and determining planning applications.

**Previously Developed Land**
Previously developed land is that which is or was occupied by a permanent structure (excluding agricultural or forestry buildings), and associated fixed surface infrastructure. The definition covers the curtilage of the development. Previously developed land may occur in both built-up and rural settings. The definition includes defence buildings and land used for mineral extraction and waste disposal where provision for restoration has not been made through development control procedures. The definition excludes land and buildings that are currently in use for agricultural or forestry purposes, and land in built-up areas which has not been developed previously (e.g. parks, recreation grounds, and allotments even though these areas may contain certain urban features such as paths, pavilions and other buildings). Also excluded is land that was previously developed but where the remains of any structure or activity have blended into the landscape in the process of time, (to the extent that it can reasonably be considered as part of the natural surroundings), and where there is a clear reason that could outweigh the re-use of the site – such as its contribution to nature conservation – or it has subsequently been put to an amenity use and cannot be regarded and requiring redevelopment.

**Primarily Employment Area**
Those areas of the Borough where employment
is, and will continue to be, the predominant land use in the area.

**Primarily Residential Area**
Those areas of the Borough where housing is, and will continue to be, the predominant land use in the area.

**Primary Shopping Area**
The main area of continuous retail frontage in each town centre with a predominance of shops trading in durable goods. The quantity of non retail uses and the type, scale and location of new retail and leisure development is controlled within it. The boundary, shown on the proposals map, is also used to denote an edge of centre location for retail and leisure development.

**Ramsar Site**
Area of wetland which is of international importance and have been identified by English Nature and designated by the Secretary of State. All listed Ramsar sites are also Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

**Reclamation**
The treatment of derelict land to bring it into a condition suitable for development. This work can include the removal of unwanted buildings and works and usually involves landscape improvements.

**Recycling and Household Waste Centres**
Sites, formerly known as Civic Amenity Sites, where the public can deposit bulky items of household waste for recycling or disposal.

**Redevelopment**
Development that takes place after the demolition of existing buildings.

**Regeneration**
The holistic process of reversing economic, social and physical decay in areas where it has reached a stage when market forces alone will not suffice.

**Regional Investment Sites**
Sites that are allocated to meet the needs of economic sectors that are considered significant in raising the competitiveness of the economy of the North West Region.

**Retail Warehouse**
A large single storey store selling non-food household goods such as carpets and also DIY goods, which generally cater for car borne customers.

**Runcorn Busway**
The busway is a 22km long, exclusive bus-only route built in the 1970’s by the former Runcorn New Town Development Corporation. It was designed to offer easier access to most land use activities than can be achieved by car.

**Scheduled Ancient Monument**
Sites judged by criteria to be of national importance. Many ancient monuments are of regional or local importance. The Council should strive to secure the preservation of all important archaeological remains, whether scheduled or not scheduled. English Heritage is currently undertaking a “Monument Protection Programme” which aims to increase the number of sites particularly of the industrial periods.

**Secondary Shopping Area**
This is a fringe town centre shopping area. The quantity of non retail uses and the type, scale and location of new retail and leisure development is controlled within it. The Secondary Shopping Area boundary, shown on the proposals map, is also used to denote an edge of centre location for leisure development.

**Sequential Test**
The process of assessing alternative sites for retail and leisure development, giving priority to defined centres, followed by edge of centre and then out-of-centre sites.

**Site of Biological Importance**
Identified as important sites for wildlife in the County. Sites are graded A, B or C according to (i) planning criteria, (ii) habitat types and their rarity and (iii) species diversity and their rarity and are of County, district or local importance respectively.

**Site of Special Scientific Interest**
An area of land identified and designated by English Nature as being of special national interest by reason of any of its flora, fauna or geological or physiographical features.

**Soil Screening Facility**
Facility where construction and demolition wastes are screened to allow re-usable soils to be separated from the mixed wastes.

**Single Regeneration Budget (SRB)**
A central government funding stream to support integrated neighbourhood regeneration initiatives.
Supermarket
Single level self-service store selling mainly food with a trading area of usually more than 2,500-sq m trading floorspace.

Sustainable Development
Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

Traffic Calming
Physical measures which slow down traffic to make areas safer to pedestrians and cyclists.

Traffic Management
The promotion of the more efficient movement of traffic and appropriate use of street systems by rearranging the flows, controlling the intersections and regulating the times and places for parking by means of traffic orders. Traffic management can give priority to different forms of transport, such as buses, or to pedestrians.

Tree Preservation Order
An Order made by the Local Planning Authority to prohibit the felling, lopping or wilful destruction of a single tree, group of trees or substantial woodland specified in the Order without the prior consent of the Local Planning Authority.

Trunk Road
Major roads for which the Department of Transport is the Highway Authority and for which construction and maintenance are funded by Central Government.

Underused Land
Land which is not used for any productive purpose for long periods of time.

Washed Over Village
A village wholly contained within the Green Belt within which Green Belt policies apply.

Waste Disposal Facility
A facility at which waste is finally disposed of, such as by landfill or incineration without energy recovery.

Waste Management Facility
A facility at which waste is managed, i.e. treated or disposed.

Waste Transfer Stations
Sites where general wastes, often delivered in skips, can be sorted for recycling and re-use, and bulked-up for efficient transportation to a waste management facility.

Waste Treatment
The collection, bulking-up, sorting, separation, biodegradation, chemical thermal or mechanical processing of wastes.

Wastewater Treatment Works
Facilities for the treatment of wastewater from the sewage system prior to discharge into watercourses.

Woodland
An area that is largely occupied by growing trees.