

**REPORT TO:** Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board

**DATE:** 25 June 2014

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director – Policy and Resources

**PORTFOLIO:** Physical Environment

**SUBJECT:** Housing and Employment Land Development in the year to April 2014.

**WARDS:** Boroughwide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 This report provides a summary on the results of the annual housing and employment land monitoring surveys undertaken by the Planning & Transport Strategy Section.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the content of the report is noted.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

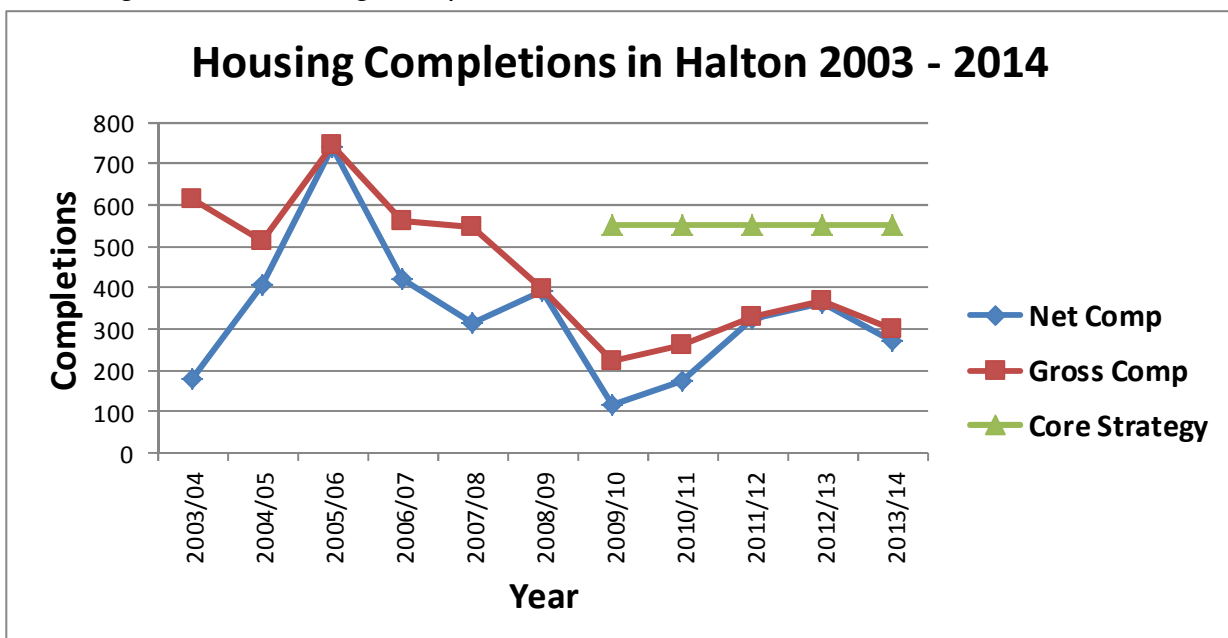
### **Background**

- 3.1 In line with national guidance, the Halton Local Plan sets out policy targets for the delivery of additional housing and the provision of land for employment development.
- 3.2 The plan seeks to facilitate the delivery of 552 dwellings (net gain) per annum (p.a.) and an average of 14 Ha. of employment development land.
- 3.3 The housing policy figure represents a continuation of the previous (now deleted) Regional Spatial Strategy figure of 500 p.a. (9,000 units over the period 2010 to 2018) plus 930 units 'backlog' that existed at the time of the Core Strategy Examination. Government advice is that housing figures represent minimum targets.
- 3.4 The employment land policy figure of 14 Ha. is based on a continuation of the long term take-up rate of employment land by businesses between 1992 to 2010 plus an allowance of 20% to ensure a choice in range of sites (size/type) to the end of the Core Strategy plan period (to 2028). Unlike housing, where the policy represents an annual development target, the employment figure is a target for the supply of land rather than 'take-up' of that land.

## Housing

- 3.5 In the year to April 2014, there were 301 housing completions in Halton with 31 losses/demolitions giving a net dwelling gain for the year of 270 units. Of these, 47 units were in the Naughton Fields Extra Care Scheme off Liverpool Road, Ditton, one of six sites that delivered all of their units within a single year. Two large sites at Upton Rock and Derby Road (Eternit) were completed and there were four sites continuing under construction yielding 139 units this year, with 187 remaining to be completed in future years.
- 3.6 Of the 301 completions (gross), 87%, some 263 units (232 net) were in Widnes with 13%, totalling 38 completions (38 net), being in Runcorn.
- 3.7 49% of completions were on brownfield sites, the lowest proportion since 2005/06, with 70% being at less than the Core Strategy policy target of 30 dwellings per hectare due to greenfield sites in north Widnes currently delivering the majority of units which comprise large detached dwellings (as opposed to smaller dwelling types). For example, Redrow's Lancaster Place development is approximately 15 dwellings per hectare.
- 3.8 Figure 1 shows that the 301 gross completions in Halton (2013/14) represents a modest fall from the previous year which saw 365 gross / 362 net, and is significantly behind the rates achieved before the recent economic upheavals and market collapse.

Figure 1. – Housing Completions in Halton 2003-2014



- 3.9 There were 201 units under construction, 88 in Runcorn (11 sites) and 113 in Widnes (12 sites).
- 3.10 Site locations are shown on the maps appended to this report.

3.11 Permissions were granted for a total of 795 units (787 net) in 2013/14, the highest level for a single year since 2007/08, hopefully indicating that developer confidence is returning and that large sites, most notably in east Runcorn, are coming on stream and should start yielding units in the coming year.

### Employment

3.12 Employment land monitoring recorded the take up of 3.53 Ha of employment land with 2.03 Ha being taken up in Runcorn and 1.5 Ha in Widnes. Development includes 1,951 sqm (21,000 sq.ft) B1a Office, 3,658 sqm (39,374 sq.ft) B2 General Industrial and 6,015 sqm (64,745 sq.ft) B8 warehousing.

3.13 Whilst this represents an increase on the previous year (from 0.92 Ha to 3.53 Ha.) it is significantly behind the prevailing long term average of 14.47 Ha. Figure 2 shows comparative figures for each year since April 1996, whilst Figure 3 provides a breakdown of the category of employment use developed.

3.14 The Employment Land Availability Register (reproduced in the Employment Land Availability Monitoring Report) shows over 175 Ha of land available for employment development.

Figure 2: Employment Land 'Take-Up' 1996/97 to 2013/14.

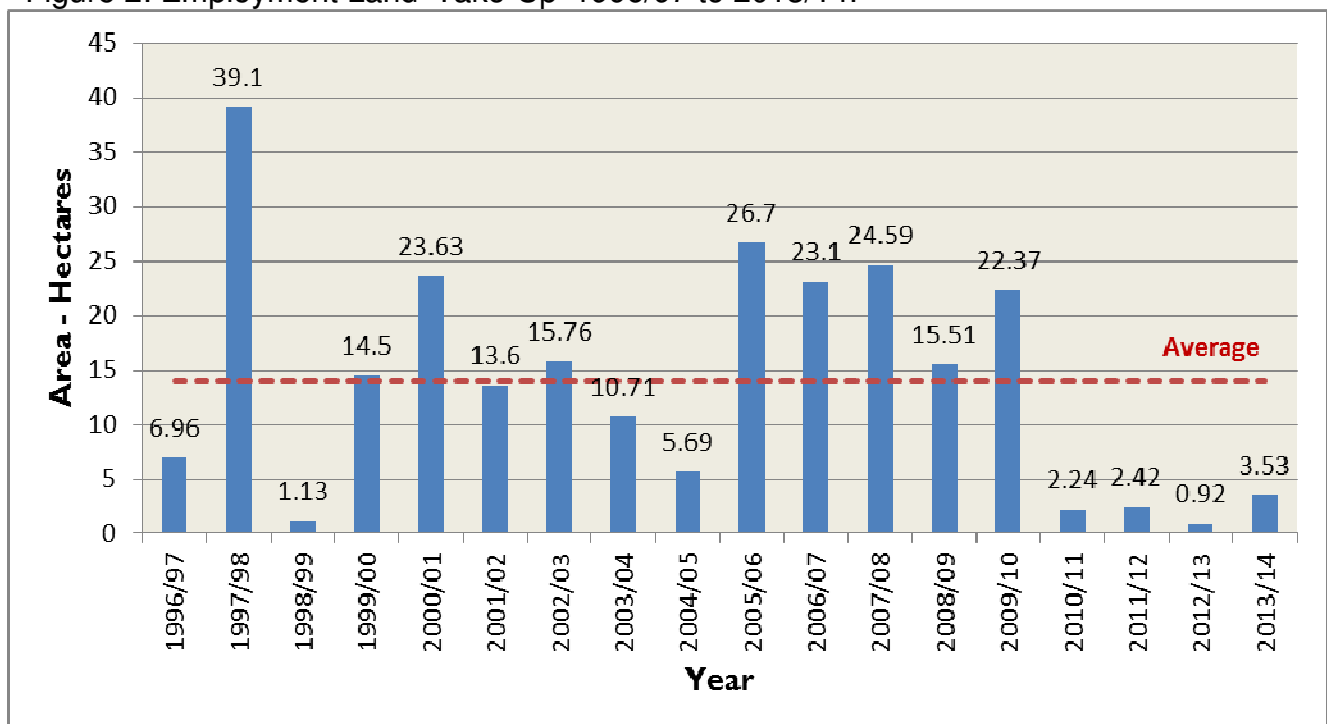
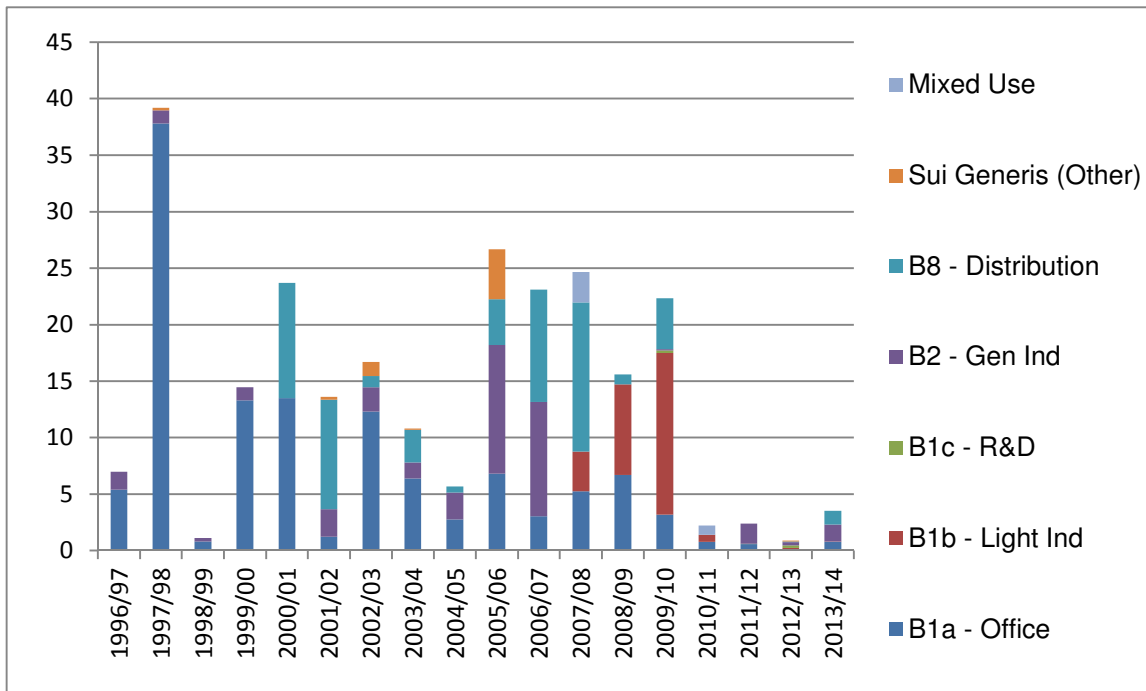


Figure 3: Employment Land 'Take-Up' by Employment Use Class.



## 4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 National guidance requires that Halton set and monitor performance against housing delivery and employment development land policy targets. The National Planning Policy Framework introduces the requirement to demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing, of which the Housing Land Availability monitoring is a part, with the presumption in favour of sustainable development overriding local policy (excluding Green Belt) where this 5 year supply cannot be demonstrated

There is no specific government sanction for failing to meet employment targets. Indeed the figures above, do not represent a lack of available land but rather the lack of specific development by the private sector.

## 5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None identified

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

### **6.1 Children and Young People in Halton**

New residential development approved through the development management system will be expected to conform to current policy including making adequate provision for children's play space. Access to modern 'healthy' housing and enhanced local job opportunities for family members (boosting household incomes and aspirations) or young people as they enter the labour market can have positive effects.

### **6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

Housing development is seen as a major economic driver, creating jobs within the construction sector and boosting demand for goods and services. Halton has experienced periods of population decline and increasing the supply and range of housing is seen as key to helping stabilise/grow the population and maintain the demand for services.

Additions to Halton's commercial property stock, boosts employment opportunities within the Borough on the sites concerned, but can also have significant wider 'multiplier' effects as businesses invest, boosting turnover and demand for supporting services.

### **6.3 A Healthy Halton**

New development approved through the development management system will be expected to conform to current policy, including in the Design for Community Safety SPD. Access to modern 'healthy' housing and to enhanced job opportunities can have both direct and indirect health benefits.

### **6.4 A Safer Halton**

New development approved through the development management system will be expected to conform to current policy, including in the Design for Community Safety SPD.

### **6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

New development, be it on previously developed (brownfield) land or on peripheral greenfield sites represents significant investment within the borough. It provides new or expanded commercial floorspace, boosting or safeguarding employment levels, lifting the quality of the commercial stock boosting economic activity and potentially leveraging in further investment.

New residential development increases and widens the housing stock helping address specific housing needs and/or retaining/attracting new families into the borough.

## **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 None identified. Annual monitoring of development completions has been systematically undertaken for a number of years in accordance with government requirements or guidance. This provides a valuable time series

of robust information that is used to inform planning policy and development management decisions.

## **8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

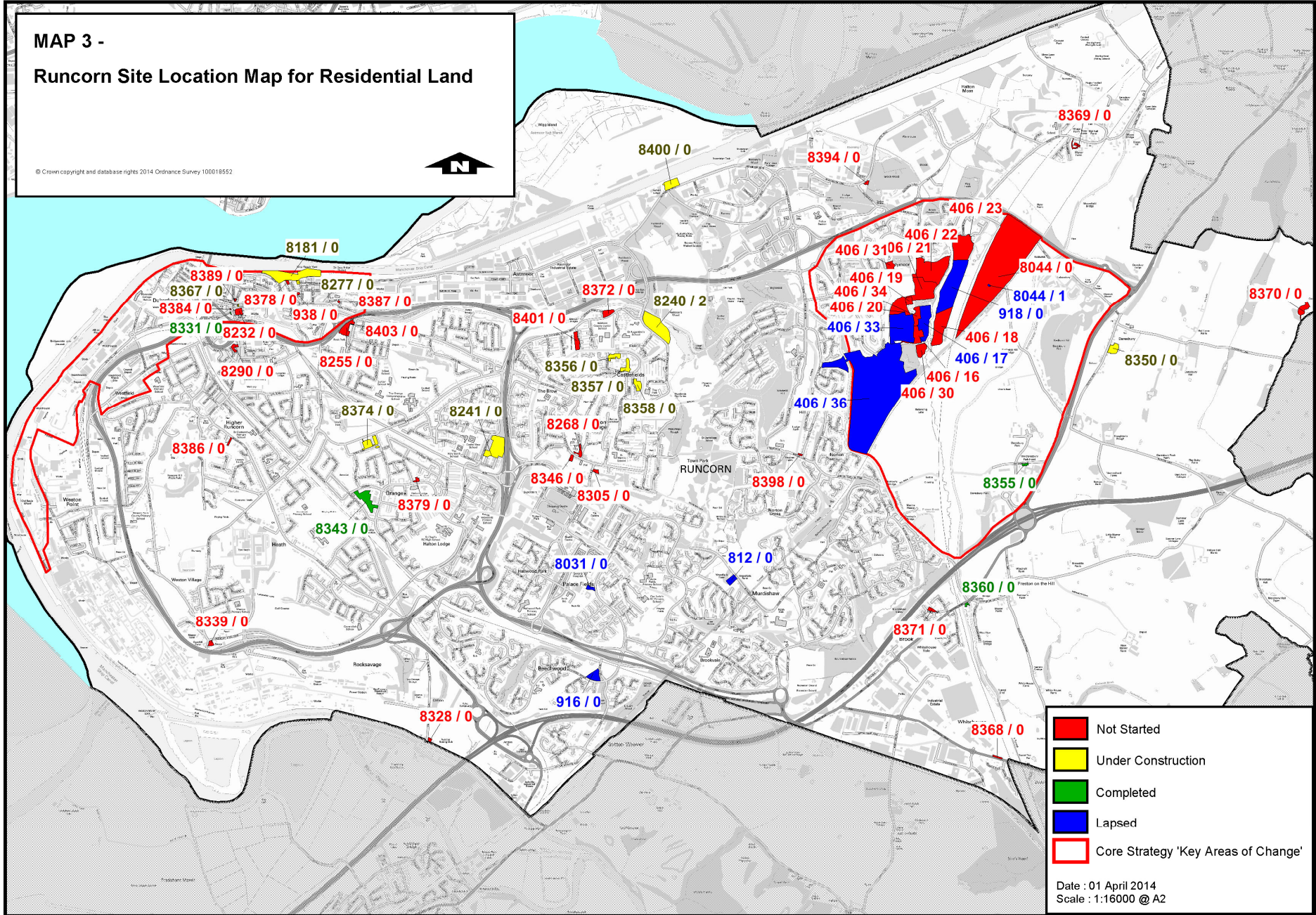
8.1 None identified.

## **9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

<b>Document</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>
Housing Land Position Statement 2014	Planning & Transport Strategy, Municipal Building	Ken Bowen
Employment Land Position Statement 2014	Planning & Transport Strategy, Municipal Building	Ken Bowen

**MAP 3 -  
Runcorn Site Location Map for Residential Land**

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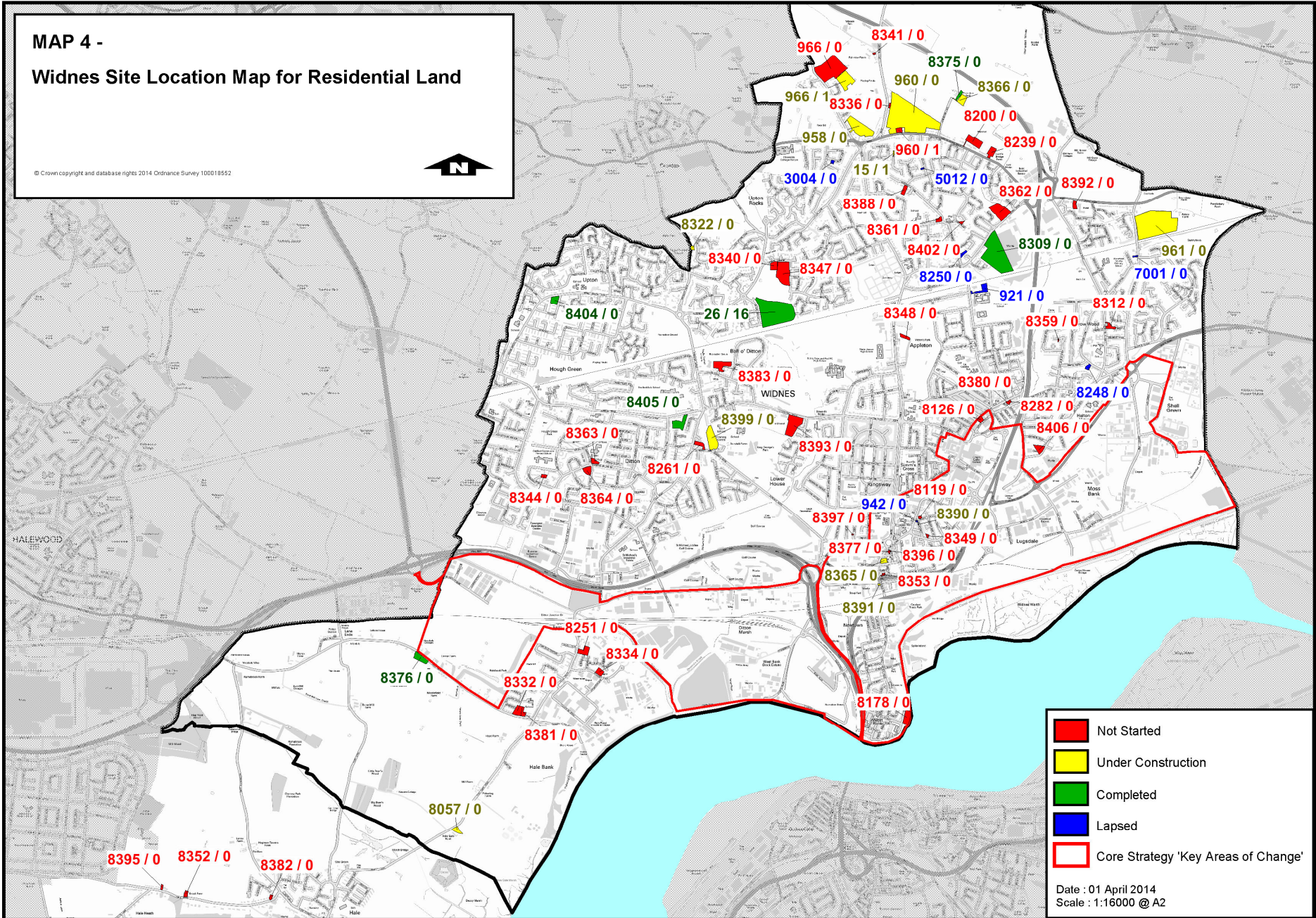
- Not Started
- Under Construction
- Completed
- Lapsed
- Core Strategy 'Key Areas of Change'

Date : 01 April 2014  
Scale : 1:16000 @ A2

# MAP 4 -

## Widnes Site Location Map for Residential Land

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- Not Started
- Under Construction
- Completed
- Lapsed
- Core Strategy 'Key Areas of Change'

Date : 01 April 2014  
Scale : 1:16000 @ A2