

Public Document Pack



Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board

Wednesday, 15 February 2023 6.30 p.m.
Council Chamber - Town Hall, Runcorn

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'S. Young'.

Chief Executive

BOARD MEMBERSHIP

Councillor Bill Woolfall (Chair)	Labour
Councillor Mike Fry (Vice-Chair)	Labour
Councillor Angela Ball	Labour
Councillor Dave Cargill	Labour
Councillor Sian Davidson	Conservative
Councillor Robert Gilligan	Labour
Councillor Stan Hill	Labour
Councillor Geoffrey Logan	Labour
Councillor Tony McDermott	Labour
Councillor Tom Stretch	Labour
Councillor Sharon Thornton	Labour

*Please contact Kim Butler on 0151 511 7496 or e-mail
kim.butler@halton.gov.uk for further information.*

The next meeting of the Board is to be confirmed.

**ITEMS TO BE DEALT WITH
IN THE PRESENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Part I

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1. MINUTES	1 - 5
2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS (INCLUDING PARTY WHIP DECLARATIONS)	
Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or Other Disclosable Interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda, no later than when that item is reached or as soon as the interest becomes apparent and, with Disclosable Pecuniary interests, to leave the meeting during any discussion or voting on the item.	
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In accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act the Council is required to notify those attending meetings of the fire evacuation procedures. A copy has previously been circulated to Members and instructions are located in all rooms within the Civic block.

ENVIRONMENT AND URBAN RENEWAL POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board on Wednesday, 16 November 2022 at the Council Chamber - Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Woolfall (Chair), Fry (Vice-Chair), Ball, D. Cargill, Davidson, Gilligan, S. Hill, Logan, McDermott, Stretch and Thornton

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None.

Officers present: J. Brussels, T. Gibbs and A. Plant

Also in attendance: None

**ITEM DEALT WITH
UNDER DUTIES
EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD**

	<i>Action</i>
EUR19 MINUTES	
<p>The Minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2022 having been circulated were signed as a correct record.</p>	
EUR20 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	
<p>It was confirmed that no public questions had been received.</p>	
EUR21 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES	
<p>The Board considered the Minutes of the meetings of the Executive Board relevant to the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Minutes be noted.</p>	
EUR22 ANNUAL ROAD TRAFFIC COLLISION & CASUALTY REPORT	
<p>The Board received a report on the latest road safety statistics released by the Department for Transport through the publication of the 2021 Comprehensive Annual Report.</p> <p>The report set out full details of the numbers of traffic</p>	

collisions and casualties in 2021 and compared these figures with those from previous years. Of those killed or seriously injured, the number of adult and child casualties decreased by 2 (total decrease of 4). However, due to the low numbers recorded annually in Halton, this number did fluctuate from year to year.

Halton had achieved its performance targets as set by the Department of Transport and was one of the few Local Authorities to report a fall in both collisions and casualties, against a national picture where road casualties (all categories) increased by 11% in 2021.

In addition, the report highlighted the work the Road Safety Team had undertaken in 2021/22 and the programme for 2022/23 which would continue to cover road traffic reduction schemes, road safety education, training and publicity as well as engaging with Cheshire Police to target effective enforcement action.

Members also considered information on the following road safety initiatives:

- Community Speed Watch;
- “Smiley” Speed Indicative Device/Sign (SiDs)
- Speed Camera A562
- Gyrotory Red Light Camera
- Mobile Speed Camera Sites
- Collision Sites
- Safer Active Travel
- Education
- Halton 2023/24 Programme

Arising from the discussion, a Member asked if a timeline could be confirmed for the installation of the gyrotory red light camera on the A557 Watkinson Way. It was agreed that this would be looked into.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the overall progress made on casualty reduction in Halton over the past decade be noted; and
- 2) the 2023/24 programme of road safety schemes and road safety education, training and publicity be endorsed.

The Board expressed their appreciation to the Road Safety Team on their work.

Operational
Director - Policy,
Planning and
Transportation

EUR23 ENVIRONMENTAL FUND UPDATE

The Board received a report of the Operational Director, Policy, Planning & Transportation, which provided an update on the expenditure of the Environmental Fund. Planning permission for the Runcorn Thermal Power Station (TPS) Plant was granted in September 2008. The Plant was subject to a legal agreement, under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. The legal agreement contained a provision that the owner of the Plant agreed to pay the Council an annual lump sum payment for every tonne of fuel received and processed.

To date, the fund had generated £5,035,120 and the projects that had benefitted from those funds were set out in Appendix 1.

RESOLVED: That the wide range of projects that had benefitted from the fund as set out in Appendix 1 be noted.

EUR24 HOUSES OF MULTIPLE OCCUPATION - WORKING PARTY UPDATE

The Board received an update report on the progress of the Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) Working Party.

The Working Party last met on 27 October 2022 and compiled a list of issues reported by Members relating to HMOs and these was outlined in section 3.2 of the report.

It was reported that the Working Party had agreed an action plan which covered the following:

- Undertake a borough-wide exercise to gather evidence on numbers of small HMOs to identify locations and clustering (using Council data sources);
- Examine the level of clustering of HMOs at Frederick Street, Widnes;
- Use the West Bank area as a pilot area to test interventions;
- Identify small HMOs and private rented properties in West Bank and investigate options for discretionary (selective) licencing of private rented properties. The pilot will be used to inform options for any future borough wide scheme;
- Investigate an Article 4 Direction for West Bank to remove 'permitted development rights' preventing single dwellings becoming small HMOs (note this does not prevent applications being made for

- planning permission);
- Improve the management of waste from HMOs in West Bank;
- Quantify the cost of these interventions for budget purposes; and
- Present recommendations to the Executive Board.

The Board noted the Terms of Reference of the Working Party attached at Appendix 1.

Following discussions, a Member raised concerns regarding the state of some HMO's in the West Bank area and rubbish that was accumulating in the area. It was agreed to raise this matter at the next Working Party meeting in December.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Terms of Reference of the Working Party (Appendix 1) be endorsed; and
- 2) the action plan set out in Section 5.0 be noted.

Operational
Director - Policy,
Planning and
Transportation

EUR25 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORTS FOR QUARTER 2 OF 2022/23

The Board received the Performance Monitoring Reports for Quarter 2 of 2022/23 (1 July 2022 – 30 September 2022).

The key priorities for development of improvement in 2022-23 were agreed by Members and included in Directorate Plans for the various function areas reported to the Board as detailed below:

- Development and Investment Services;
- Highways and Transportation, Logistics and Development Services;
- Waste and Environmental Improvement and Open Space Services; and

The reports detailed progress against service objectives and milestones, and performance targets and provided information relating to key developments and emerging issues that had arisen during the period.

Arising from the discussion, a Member asked why the Council was having difficulties in recruiting Planning Officers and it was suggested that consideration be given to a

retention package, similar to the one adopted for Social Workers.

A Member also questioned if the decline in the occupancy rate at Widnes Market was due to the introduction of car parking charges at Green Oaks. It was agreed that Property Services would clarify this matter.

RESOLVED: That the second quarter performance monitoring reports be received and noted.

Operational
Director - Policy,
Planning and
Transportation

Meeting ended at 7.00 p.m.

REPORT TO: Environment and Urban Renewal Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 2015

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources

SUBJECT: Public Question Time

WARD(s): Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To consider any questions submitted by the Public in accordance with Standing Order 34(9).
- 1.2 Details of any questions received will be circulated at the meeting.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That any questions received be dealt with.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Standing Order 34(9) states that Public Questions shall be dealt with as follows:-

- (i) A total of 30 minutes will be allocated for dealing with questions from members of the public who are residents of the Borough, to ask questions at meetings of the Policy and Performance Boards.
- (ii) Members of the public can ask questions on any matter relating to the agenda.
- (iii) Members of the public can ask questions. Written notice of questions must be given by 4.00 pm on the working day prior to the date of the meeting to the Committee Services Manager. At any one meeting no person/organisation may submit more than one question.
- (iv) One supplementary question (relating to the original question) may be asked by the questioner, which may or may not be answered at the meeting.
- (v) The Chair or proper officer may reject a question if it:-
 - Is not about a matter for which the local authority has a responsibility or which affects the Borough;
 - Is defamatory, frivolous, offensive, abusive or racist;

- Is substantially the same as a question which has been put at a meeting of the Council in the past six months; or
 - Requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information.
- (vi) In the interests of natural justice, public questions cannot relate to a planning or licensing application or to any matter which is not dealt with in the public part of a meeting.
- (vii) The Chair will ask for people to indicate that they wish to ask a question.
- (viii) **PLEASE NOTE** that the maximum amount of time each questioner will be allowed is 3 minutes.
- (ix) If you do not receive a response at the meeting, a Council Officer will ask for your name and address and make sure that you receive a written response.

Please bear in mind that public question time lasts for a maximum of 30 minutes. To help in making the most of this opportunity to speak:-

- Please keep your questions as concise as possible.
- Please do not repeat or make statements on earlier questions as this reduces the time available for other issues to be raised.
- Please note public question time is not intended for debate – issues raised will be responded to either at the meeting or in writing at a later date.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

None.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

None.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 **Children and Young People in Halton** - none.

6.2 **Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton** - none.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton** – none.

6.4 **A Safer Halton** – none.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal** – none.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

7.1 None.

8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

8.1 There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act.

REPORT TO: Environment & Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 15 February 2023

REPORTING OFFICER: Chief Executive

SUBJECT: Executive Board Minutes

WARD(s): Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Minutes relating to the Environment and Urban Renewal Portfolio which have been considered by the Executive Board are attached at Appendix 1 for information.
- 1.2 The Minutes are submitted to inform the Policy and Performance Board of decisions taken in their area.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Minutes be noted.

3.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 None.

4.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

5.1 Children and Young People in Halton

None

5.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

None

5.3 A Healthy Halton

None

5.4 A Safer Halton

None

5.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

None

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

6.1 None.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

7.1 None.

8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

8.1 There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act.

Extract of Executive Board Minutes relevant to the Environment & Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 20 OCTOBER 2022

EXB32	CONTRACTOR INVOLVEMENT IN THE EAST RUNCORN CONNECTIVITY (ERC) PROJECT
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The Board considered a report from the Operational Director – Policy, Planning and Transportation, which sought approval to utilise the SCAPE framework to secure Balfour Beatty to provide contractor involvement in the development of the four schemes that comprised the East Runcorn Connectivity (ERC) project.

The full ERC scheme comprised four elements:

- A558 dualling from Pitts Heath Lane to Innovation Way;
- A56 Major Maintenance – Keckwick Lane to M56 junction 11;
- Potential loop road M56 junction 11 to A533; and
- A suite of active and sustainable travel interventions.

The Scape Framework had been used successfully for the completion of works on Silver Jubilee Bridge, Runcorn Delinking and Runcorn Station Quarter projects. The Scape had six staged as shown in Appendix 1. The report sought permission to utilise the Scape process to the end of Stage 3 (pre-construction). Once Stage 3 was complete and provided technical considerations were favourable and funding was available, a further report would be presented to the Board to seek approval to sign a 'delivery agreement' and proceed into construction.

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EXB33	BRINDLEY GREEN, RUNCORN SCAPE FRAMEWORK
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The Board considered a report of the Operational Director – Economy, Enterprise and Property, which provided an update on:

- the development of the High Street Connectivity project in support of the Runcorn Town Investment Plan; and
- the Inception Phase of the previously approved development of the High Street Connectivity project as per the Town Centre bid, which led to a change in scope.

The report also sought approval to utilise the SCAPE framework for the integration of the already designed Brindley Green plans with the High Street scheme to Project Order stage.

RESOLVED: That the Board approve

- 1) the use of the SCAPE framework for the integration of the already designed Brindley Green plans with the High Street scheme to Project Order stage; and
- 2) the delegation of authority to the Operational Director, Economy, Enterprise and Property to authorise the passing of the SCAPE gateways prior to this stage.

EXB34	ENVIRONMENT SERVICES DYNAMIC PURCHASING SYSTEM
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The Board considered a report of the Operational Director – Economy, Enterprise and Property, which provided an update on:

- the development of the High Street Connectivity project in support of the Runcorn Town Investment Plan; and
- the Inception Phase of the previously approved development of the High Street Connectivity project as per the Town Centre bid, which led to a change in scope.

The report also sought approval to utilise the SCAPE framework for the integration of the already designed Brindley Green plans with the High Street scheme to Project Order stage.

RESOLVED: That the Board approve

- 3) the use of the SCAPE framework for the integration of the already designed Brindley Green plans with the High Street scheme to Project Order stage; and
- 4) the delegation of authority to the Operational Director, Economy, Enterprise and Property to authorise the passing of the SCAPE gateways prior to this stage.

EXB38	SILVER JUBILEE BRIDGE LIGHTING SCHEME
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The Board considered a report of the Operational Director – Policy, Planning and Transportation, which provided an update on the competitive tendering exercise that had been carried out utilising the ‘Scape Framework’ in accordance with Procurement Standing Order 1.4.1 to provide costings for a new architectural lighting scheme on Silver Jubilee Bridge.

The Board thanked Councillor S. Hill for his contribution towards this project.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the ‘Scape Framework’ is used for fulfilling of the supply and installation of the SJB floodlighting scheme in compliance with Procurement Standing Order 1.4.1;
- 2) the tendered sum set out in section 3.4 is accepted and the capital programme amended accordingly; and
- 3) delegated powers are given to the Operational Director – Policy, Planning and Transportation in conjunction with Portfolio Holder for Environment and Urban Renewal to undertake the necessary actions to deliver the proposed lighting scheme.

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 19 JANUARY 2023

EXB67	UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND (UKSPF) DELIVERY PLAN HALTON
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The Board considered a report of the Operational Director Economy, Enterprise and Property, that provided an overview of Halton’s Delivery Plan against the UKSPF allocation for Halton under the following three strands:

- Green, Safe, Resilient Communities - £301,059;
- Local Culture, Arts, Heritage - £188,900; and
- Town Centres - £118,063.

RESOLVED: That the Board approve in principle the Delivery Plan proposals.

EXB72	HIGHWAYS TERM MAINTENANCE CONTRACT
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The Board considered a report of the Operational Director, Policy, Planning and Transportation, on the procurement exercise to award a new contract for Highway Maintenance to commence on 1 June 2023 for an initial period of six years, with options to extend it for up to 4 further years.

RESOLVED: That the award of the Highway Term Maintenance Contract to the successful bidder be approved.

REPORT TO:	Environment & Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board
DATE:	15 th February 2023
REPORTING OFFICER:	Operational Director – Policy, Planning and Transportation
PORTFOLIO:	Environment and Urban Renewal
SUBJECT:	Preston Brook Petition
WARD(S)	Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 A petition has been received via Preston Brook Parish Council containing 52 signatures.
- 1.2 The petition requests the following actions:

“Reduce the speed limit on both Windmill Lane and Chester Road from 30MPH to 20MPH and reduce remove the section of Chester Road that is currently 40 MPH and remove unnecessary industrial signage.”

- 2.0 **RECOMMENDED: That the requests set out in the petition are not supported for the reasons given in the report.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 A56, Chester Road – M56 to Preston Brook

‘A Roads’ are major roads intended to provide large-scale transport links within or between areas. The A56, Chester Road, is a busy strategic route, linking eastern Runcorn, including a large industrial estate, with the motorway network. This section of the A56 from the M56 Junction 11 to Preston Brook was original National Speed Limit (60mph). In recent years this has been reduced to 40mph, and given that there are no frontages and few side junctions, 40mph is an appropriate speed limit. In previous dialogue, Cheshire Police have stated that they would not support a 30 limit along this section.

- 3.2 A56, Chester Road – through Preston Brook

A 30mph limit is already in place. A 20 limit through Preston Brook would not be suitable for an ‘A Road’. It should be noted that a 20mph limit would require the speed camera to be removed. Research does indicate that 20mph speed limits have negligible impact on both traffic speeds and collisions. In previous dialogue, Cheshire Police have stated that they would not support a 20 limit along this section.

3.3 Windmill Lane

Windmill Lane runs through Preston-on-the-Hill, Runcorn, it varies in width from approximately 5.2 meters wide at its narrowest point to over 8 meters wide in the village centre. There are a variety of houses, including terraces, semi-detached and detached houses. In addition, there is a building supplier yard, a plant centre and Windmill Farm. The speed limit starts at 30 mph before increasing to 40 mph (towards the junction with the A56), and whilst vehicles do park on the road, there is enough space for cars to pass.

The Council has previously consulted with Cheshire Police on reducing the speed limit from 30 mph to 20 mph. The Police have advised that they would only support a lower speed limit alongside full traffic calming intervention. The Council's Traffic Calming Assessment Procedure sets out the criteria for prioritising requests for traffic calming and provides that no location will be considered for traffic calming if there has not been an injury accident on the road in question in the previous 5 years. As the Council's road traffic collision data (as supplied by Cheshire Police) confirms that the last and only collision was in 2011, the road does not qualify for traffic calming. As this accords with the Council's assessment criteria and the police do not support lowering the speed limit without traffic calming, a 20mph limit here is not supported.

The option of a community speed watch (CSW) scheme has been discussed with some residents of Preston-on-the-Hill who have contacted the Council in relation to traffic in the village. However, currently there is insufficient interest to implement a CSW scheme.

3.4 Industrial Signage

The Chair of the Parish Council, has already engaged in extensive dialogue with the Council over the presence of industrial signage on the A56.

As explained in that dialogue, the legal duties imposed on the Council under section 122 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and section 16 of the Traffic Management Act 2004 require the Council to secure the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of vehicular and other traffic on the road network. The Department for Transport in its circular on the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016 states:-

“Even in this technological age, traffic signs remain the only method of communicating to all road users what they need to know to complete their journey safely, efficiently and within the law”.

In terms of the sign for the Whitehouse Industrial Estate on Chester Road, Runcorn, the A56 is the only main road from junction 11 M56 to the Whitehouse Industrial Estate. This is a large industrial estate which employs over a 1000 people and generates a vast amount of traffic. The sign was erected in 2010 to mitigate the risk of traffic, especially HGVs, migrating from Chester Road onto the surrounding minor roads. At that time, the Council had

received complaints from local residents and the Parish Council about the level of traffic on the likes of Windmill Lane which was allegedly being used as a 'rat run'. The retention of signage is based not only on the views of the local residents and Parish Council, but a site assessment which found that there were safety reasons which justified the installation of a sign. Retaining the sign secures the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of traffic on and around Chester Road. Retaining signage is therefore legally compliant and entirely reasonable.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no policy implications associated with this report.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no financial or other implications arising from this report.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 The recommendation of this report maintain the current position as regards speed limits and signage. Therefore there are no implications for the Council's priorities.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 There are no risks arising from this report.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 There are no equality or diversity issues as a result of this report.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no implications for climate change arising from this report.

10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

None.

REPORT TO:	Environment & Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board
DATE:	15 th February 2023
REPORTING OFFICER:	Operational Director – Community and Greenspace
PORTFOLIO:	Environment and Urban Renewal
SUBJECT:	Working Party Review of Coppicing Works
WARD(S)	Borough wide

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members of the Board with an update on the outcome of the Working Party review of the Council's coppicing works programme.

2.0 **RECOMMENDED: That**

- 1) **Members of the Board receive and comment upon the report, and;**
- 2) **Members endorse that a dedicated page be established on the Council's website that would display;**
 - i. **General information on the principles of coppicing and the Council's coppicing work programme;**
 - ii. **Timeline photographs of plantations subject to coppicing works by Council operatives, and;**
 - iii. **Information on plantations that would be subject to up and coming coppicing works by Council operatives.**

3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 Coppicing is a pruning technique where a tree or shrub is cut to ground level, resulting in regeneration of new stems from the base. It is a popular conservation practice for the benefits it offers to wildlife and to the trees themselves. Trees naturally retrench (shedding their branches to extend their lifespan) and coppicing can be an excellent way of simulating this to increase the life of the tree. It also increases biodiversity, as greater amounts of light can reach the ground, allowing other species to grow there. Many of these species are food sources for butterflies and other insects, which in turn provide food for birds, bats and mammals.

- 3.2 Management of the Council's structure planting (tree and shrub plantations where the aforementioned coppice management is applied) is carried out in accordance with horticultural best practice standards and is a well-established operation that has been in place since the late 1990's.
- 3.3 In March 2022, it was agreed that a Working Party would be established to undertake a review of the Council's coppicing works programme. The Working Party consisted of Councillor Mike Fry as Chair, and Councillors Angela Ball, Tony McDermott, Bob Gilligan, Andrea Wall and Noel Hutchinson.
- 3.4 The first meeting of the Working Party took place on 12th July 2022 where the scope of the review was established. At the meeting, Paul Wright, Operational Director – Community & Greenspace, delivered a presentation to Members on structure planting. Members were provided with details of what constituted structure planting and how the Council manages its own plantations. Members were advised of the importance of managing structure planting, as if it was not managed, it would ultimately fail and die. Members were also advised of some of the issues that the Council faces as a result of its management of structure planting; including, but not limited to, public perception of works undertaken.
- 3.5 Following a general discussion on the Council's programme for the management of structure planting, and a number of matters raised by Members, it was agreed that the next step would be for a field study visit to be arranged for Members. The purpose of the field visit was to enable Members to observe previous structure planting works that had been carried out at a number of locations across the borough. As well as taking in sites that have had intervention at various stages over recent years, Members would be taken to sites where intervention was planned as part of the Council's 2022/23 works programme.
- 3.6 The field visit was undertaken on 26th September 2022. Accompanied by the Operational Director – Environment and Greenspace, the Environment Services Divisional Manager and the Operations Manager responsible for planning and managing the Council coppicing works programme, Members observed works undertaken at Bloomsbury Way, Old Upton Lane and McKinley Way; areas that had been subject to previous enquiries from members of the public following coppicing works.
- 3.7 At each of the locations visited Members were able to see, and were advised by Officers of, the different stages of growth following coppice management over a number of different years. Following on from the discussion at the previous Working Party meeting, Members and Officers discussed matters such as, but not limited to,

the benefits and reasons for coppice management, the function of structure planting, coppice rotation, wildlife displacement, final spacing and succession planting.

3.8 Members of the Working Party are thanked for their work on the review of the Council's coppicing works programme; the outcome of which is a recommendation by Members of the Working Party that a dedicated page be established on the Council's website that would display;

- General information on the principles of coppicing and the Council's coppicing work programme;
- Timeline photographs of plantations subject to coppicing works. Such photographs to be taken before, after 6 months on, 1 year on and 2 years on, from coppicing works, and;
- Information on locations that would be subject to up and coming coppicing works.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no policy implications associated with this report.

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no financial or other implications arising from this report.

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

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

None

6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

None

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

None

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

Coppicing of trees and shrubs ensures that plants are healthy and robust which reduces the chances of failure and the risk of tree falls.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

The coppice/thinning of the Council's areas of trees and shrubs has

a positive impact by ensuring a sustainable and visibly attractive landscape that makes the urban areas look more attractive.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 Failure by the Council to carry out its coppicing works programme would have an adverse effect upon structure planting across the borough and wildlife reliant upon such associated plantations.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 There are no equality or diversity issues as a result of this report.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The Council's coppicing works programme helps makes a positive contribution towards biodiversity; which has an overall positive impact upon climate change.

10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

None under the meaning of the Act.

REPORT TO:	Environment and Urban Renewal Policy & Performance Board
DATE:	15 February 2023
REPORTING OFFICER:	Operational Director, Economy, Enterprise & Property
PORTFOLIO:	Leadership on Cheshire Sub-Regional matters and Major Projects
SUBJECT:	Update on Mersey Gateway Regeneration
WARD(S)	Boroughwide

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Environment and Urban Renewal PPB on how the construction of the Mersey Gateway is contributing to the development and delivery of the borough's regeneration priorities

2.0 **RECOMMENDED: That the report be noted.**

3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 Prior to the opening of the Mersey Gateway, the Council approved the Mersey Gateway Regeneration Plan (MGRP). The purpose of the Plan is to facilitate the development of a steady pipeline of regeneration and development opportunities over a 10–15-year period. The project pipeline also seeks to use the Mersey Gateway branding as more than the construction of a bridge but an opportunity to present a series of interrelated projects and programmes in a coherent and consistent way. It has served as a framework and provides focus for the Council and its partners to make effective investment decisions relating to a wide range of potential economic regeneration opportunities in the Borough. It has enabled the Council to balance long-term objectives with shorter term necessities and opportunities (such as funding). This has ultimately made it easier to promote the Borough's regeneration opportunities to potential future investors.

- 3.2 Eight priority impact areas were identified. Given the long-term nature of the Plan, these areas are at different stages of development. A copy of the MGRP and a description of the priority impact areas is contained within appendix 1. The main outputs and outcomes of the MGRP are to deliver economic prosperity to the borough through the creation of jobs (20,000) and bringing forward of employment land (200 hectares); new homes (3,000). Appendix 2

summarises the wider economic benefits that have been generated by the opening of the Mersey Gateway.

3.3 There are also a number of strategic benefits that have emerged post Mersey Gateway construction which should not be understated.

3.4 The construction of a 'new' bridge presented an opportunity to 'reimagine' the 'old' Silver Jubilee Bridge leading to successful bids for sustainable transport as well as funding for the regeneration of Runcorn and the 'Runcorn Station Quarter' to include a new Runcorn Station building. In parallel, the delinking of the former Silver Jubilee Bridge Trumpet Loop has enabled the Council to repurpose Weston Point Expressway, therefore, strengthening the business case for reenergising West Runcorn (including improved access to the Port of Weston) through the approval of the Freeport.

3.5 The construction of the Mersey Gateway and MGRP have provided the backdrop for shaping and integrating the borough's spatial plan (the Delivery Allocations and Land Plan) through the following:

The designation of Employment Renewal Areas to protect and prioritise these locations for renewal, investment and local job creation (i.e., Astmoor, Port of Weston and Port of Runcorn Expansion Land, Everite Road).

This has helped to ensure that the borough is regarded as a living and working borough, with a balance of homes and jobs. The MGRP provided the basis for the designation of three Regeneration Areas within the Spatial Plan:

- Halebank and Ditton Corridor, Widnes (expanded 3MG area of influence/opportunity).
- South Widnes (incorporating Waterfront, West Bank and Moor Lane Area).
- West Runcorn (employment growth areas).

Within these areas, the MGRP has also directly led to the allocation of specific priority sites / projects such as Foundry Lane Residential Allocation, 3MG North Employment Allocation (Back 9 of Widnes Golf Course) and West Bank Local Centre.

3.6 Feedback from business has been positive. For example, improvements in nimble and rapid movement within and beyond Halton are reported by business which subsequently improve economic activity. Anecdotally, businesses are reporting that the Gateway impacts on transport journey times and facilitates "just-in-time" technologies, thus reducing production costs.

There are also reports of positive Impacts on individuals and the labour market particularly by supporting attracting highly skilled individuals to highly skilled vacancies and reinforcing workforce resilience with retaining those individuals in the post.

There has been an impact on competition in local markets increasing aggregate salaries, but this issue could be distorted by wider labour market issues impacting in a post-pandemic world with the impact of Brexit.

Immediately following the opening of the Gateway, a baseline for the immediate impact on inward investment was not provided. However, five years since the construction of the Mersey Gateway, there are no reports of a mass-exodus of businesses from Halton which was feared by some commentators. Quite the opposite is true when it comes to available commercial units where there is a notable shortage for some units. Therefore, it appears that the option and desire to stay in Halton is strong.

Journey times are reported to be on average 10 minutes shorter now than they were before the opening of the Gateway improving quality of life for residents, increasing efficiency for business and making the journey to and through Halton much better and easier to plan.

3.7 Work is ongoing to deliver the Key Impact Areas as follows:

3.7.1 **West Runcorn Employment Growth Area** – this comprises a coastal arc of existing employment areas sitting between the Weston Point Expressway and the Manchester Ship Canal / Weaver Navigation, all with waterfront aspects.

It contains a number of strategic assets which can catalyse growth: Port of Runcorn, Port of Weston and Inovyn Campus.

Work has focused on the potential to deliver ‘green growth’ through a multi-modal logistics, supply chain and business cluster centred on the Ports of Runcorn and Weston, complemented by opportunities for advanced manufacturing and high energy end users within the adjoining INOVYN Campus.

A Masterplan has been adopted for the area and it forms part of the Freeport proposition outlined above.

3.7.2 **Astmoor** - A 1960’s planned industrial estate, built as part of Runcorn New Town. Compared to the wider employment offer in East Runcorn, Astmoor has underperformed for a number of years. Prominence and accessibility brought by the Mersey Gateway Crossing can act as catalyst to address its underperformance and create a modern business park environment.

Approximately 7 hectares of residual project land have been handed back to the Council following completion of the construction phase. This represents a significant asset for the Council. A Masterplan and Delivery Plan has been developed and a Development Partner has been appointed. Funding from the Capital Programme has been secured to bring forward development sites to the market and commence works to Astmoor Road.

3.7.3 **Halton Lea** – Halton Lea is an integral part of Runcorn, but whilst the local economy has continued to grow, Halton Lea faces specific challenges around a lack of economic activity amongst residents, lack of connectivity within the area, and poor health outcomes. An Investment Plan was produced which sets out a package of interventions to create a healthier, greener and more connected Halton Lea. This plan enacts and builds on the Halton Healthy New Town Masterplan, and we have engaged with the community and with businesses to identify how to achieve the opportunities that are available. The Investment Plan formed the basis for a bid to the Levelling Up Fund which was unsuccessful. Nevertheless, partners are now seeking funding from the Liverpool City Region Strategic Investment Fund, Sustainable Transport Fund and One Public Estate Brown Field Land Fund to deliver: the delivery of 464 new homes in four regenerated neighbourhoods; a new multi-purpose community hub in the local shopping centre delivering health and wellbeing services that will facilitate another 29,000 sessions of clinical treatment, support, and advice; improved cycling and pedestrian access to nearby employment sites.

3.7.4 **West Bank** – West Bank forms a peninsula that benefits from an extensive waterfront. It sits to the south of Widnes Town Centre but is also close to Runcorn Old Town Centre and Runcorn Mainline Station which are accessible via the Silver Jubilee Bridge. It has a rich history and identity which provide the ingredients for a successful mixed use urban neighbourhood; but it also has challenges holding back its potential.

The Mersey Gateway Project is changing and breathing new life into West Bank through the development and delivery of the handback sites, and the new link road between the Widnes Loops and West Bank with improved connectivity to West Bank, 3MG East/Viking Park. Regarding the handback sites, the Council is undertaking feasibility work to determine improved accessibility to sites and has facilitated a land exchange with a local business to allow for a housing development to progress in another part of the borough.

3.7.5 **Widnes Waterfront** – Widnes Waterfront was designated as an Economic Development Zone which allowed for physical infrastructure improvements to take place. The Council's role has been to work with local businesses to market sites within the area from the perspective of enhanced connections and connectivity

arising from the close proximity to the Mersey Gateway.

- 3.7.6 **3MG Ditton Corridor** – occupies a strategic location on the ‘Speke Approaches’ and encompasses the Mersey Multimodal Gateway logistics hub, it also has a number of areas of vacant and underutilised land and buildings in need of renewal and modernisation.

The distinctive residential community of Halebank provides a complementary housing offer within the immediate locality with opportunities to growth.

The impact area also includes the former Ditton Railway Station, located on the Liverpool Branch of the West Coast Main Line; it has been a long-standing aspiration of the Council to see this station reopened. The Council’s investment in the area is producing results and aligned with improved road connections, sites have been sold for speculative development. Work is also focusing on transforming former employment land for residential use, as is the case with Foundry Lane which has secured funding from the Brownfield Land Fund.

- 3.7.7 **Runcorn Old Town** – as mentioned above, the construction of the Mersey Gateway has presented an opportunity to repurpose the Silver Jubilee Bridge. However, in addition, the Mersey Gateway Bridge has emphasised the latent potential of Runcorn Old Town in terms of communications, connections and connectivity and helped to strengthen a robust proposition to Government to secure Town Deal Funding. 7 projects have been identified to support the regeneration of the town, which are at various stages of development.

- 3.7.8 **Southern Widnes** - sits between the Town Centre and strategic entry points into Widnes. Despite this, the area does not have a clear role, has fragmented land ownership and has developed in an ad hoc way.

As a prominent arrival point into Widnes, it is crucial that this area presents a good first impression for visitors. Consequently, the Council has commenced the development of the Halton Leisure Centre on Moor Lane and is currently considering options for the development of the ‘Kingsway Quarter’, land comprising the former Magistrates Court and Police Station, as well as the existing leisure centre site.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Sections 3.1 to 3.7 serve to demonstrate that the Council’s main policy objective was to ensure that the Mersey Gateway project was ‘more than the construction of a bridge’. Whilst there have been

undoubted productivity gains and improved journey times resulting from the construction of the bridge, it has served as the catalyst for wider regeneration and investment in the Borough.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children & Young People in Halton

None

6.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

None

6.3 A Healthy Halton

None

6.4 A Safer Halton

None

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

None

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 There are no risks associated with this update report.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 There are no Equality and Diversity implications arising from this report.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 As reported above, the Mersey Gateway bridge has improved journey times, resulting in less carbon emissions being produced by vehicles. The MRGP also contains a section on promoting connections with the borough's green assets through 'a necklace of existing green spaces, promenades and visitor destinations, connected by circular trails for cycling and walking, with key access points...By improving access and stimulating increased leisure use, this will introduce greater numbers to the landscape of the Estuary, challenging perceptions and creating an improved environment for investment.

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

None under the meaning of the Act.

IMPACT AREAS SUMMARY

MERSEY GATEWAY *plus* REGENERATION PLAN

1 West Runcorn Employment Growth Area

LCR Growth Sector Focus: Advanced Manufacturing / Low Carbon Energy
New & Renewed Employment Land: 82 Hectares
Key Sites:

- 22 Ha Port Of Runcorn Expansion Land
- 20 Ha Port Of Weston
- 30 Ha+ INOVYN World Class Chemical & Energy Hub - Serviced Plots

Connectivity Opportunities:

- Weston Point Expressway Reconfiguration
- Rail Freight Connectivity & Sidings

2 Halton Lea Healthy New Town

LCR Growth Sector Focus: Health & Life Sciences / Visitor Economy
New Homes: 520
Key Sites:

- 5.5 Ha East Lane, Residential Led Mixed Use Site
- 11 Ha Halton Health & Wellbeing Campus
- Runcorn Shopping Centre Retail Opportunities

Connectivity Opportunities:

- Town Centre Access & Connectivity Improvements
- Central Expressway Halton Lea Entrance Feature

3 Astmoor Business Park

LCR Growth Sector Focus: Maritime & Logistics / Advanced Manufacturing
New & Renewed Employment Land: 23 Hectares
Key Sites:

- 7 Ha Central Redevelopment Area
- 10 Ha Astmoor East Employment Renewal Area

Connectivity Opportunities:

- Astmoor Boulevard
- Estate Footpath Remodelling

4 West Bank

LCR Growth Sector Focus: Maritime & Logistics / Advanced Manufacturing / Visitor Economy
New & Renewed Employment Land: 13 Hectares
New Homes: 150
Key Sites:

- 4 Ha West Bank Waterfront, Mixed Use Commercial Site
- 2 - 4 Ha New Local Retail Centre, Community & Visitor Hub
- 6 Ha+ West Bank Employment Renewal Area
- 3 Ha Residential Neighbourhood Extension

Connectivity Opportunities:

- Silver Jubilee Bridge Sustainable Transport Corridor (West Bank section)
- Mersey Gateway Bridge - West Bank Link Road

5 Widnes Waterfront

LCR Growth Sector Focus: Maritime & Logistics / Advanced Manufacturing / Visitor Economy
New & Renewed Employment Land: 30 Hectares
New Homes: 670
Key Sites:

- 16 Ha Gorsey Point Employment Site
- 7 Ha Routledge Residential Led Mixed Use Site
- 9 Ha Gateway View Waterfront Employment Site

Connectivity Opportunities:

- Widnes Gyrotory Remodelling
- A562 - Gorsey Point / Widnes Waterfront Link Road

6 Southern Widnes

LCR Growth Sector Focus: Advanced Manufacturing / Financial & Professional Services
New & Renewed Employment Land: 12 Hectares
New Homes: 215
Key Sites:

- 5 Ha Moor Lane Roadside Commercial Frontage
- 3 Ha Moor Lane / Victoria Road Housing Opportunity Area
- 4 Ha Ditton Road East Employment Renewal Area

Connectivity Opportunities:

- Silver Jubilee Bridge Sustainable Transport Corridor (Victoria Road section)
- Moor Lane Street Scene Enhancement

7 Ditton Corridor

LCR Growth Sector Focus: Maritime & Logistics / Advanced Manufacturing
New & Renewed Employment Land: 46 Hectares
New Homes: 550
Key Sites:

- 3MG Phase 1/2: Development of Remainder of 1.4m Sqft at Viking Park and 650,000 Sqft at HBC Field & Speke Approach
- 24 Ha 3MG Phase 3 A562 Frontage Employment Site
- Halebank Residential Development Opportunities

Connectivity Opportunities:

- West Widnes Access & Connectivity Project, including A562 Widnes West Jct. Improvements
- Ditton Station Reopening

8 Runcorn Old Town Centre

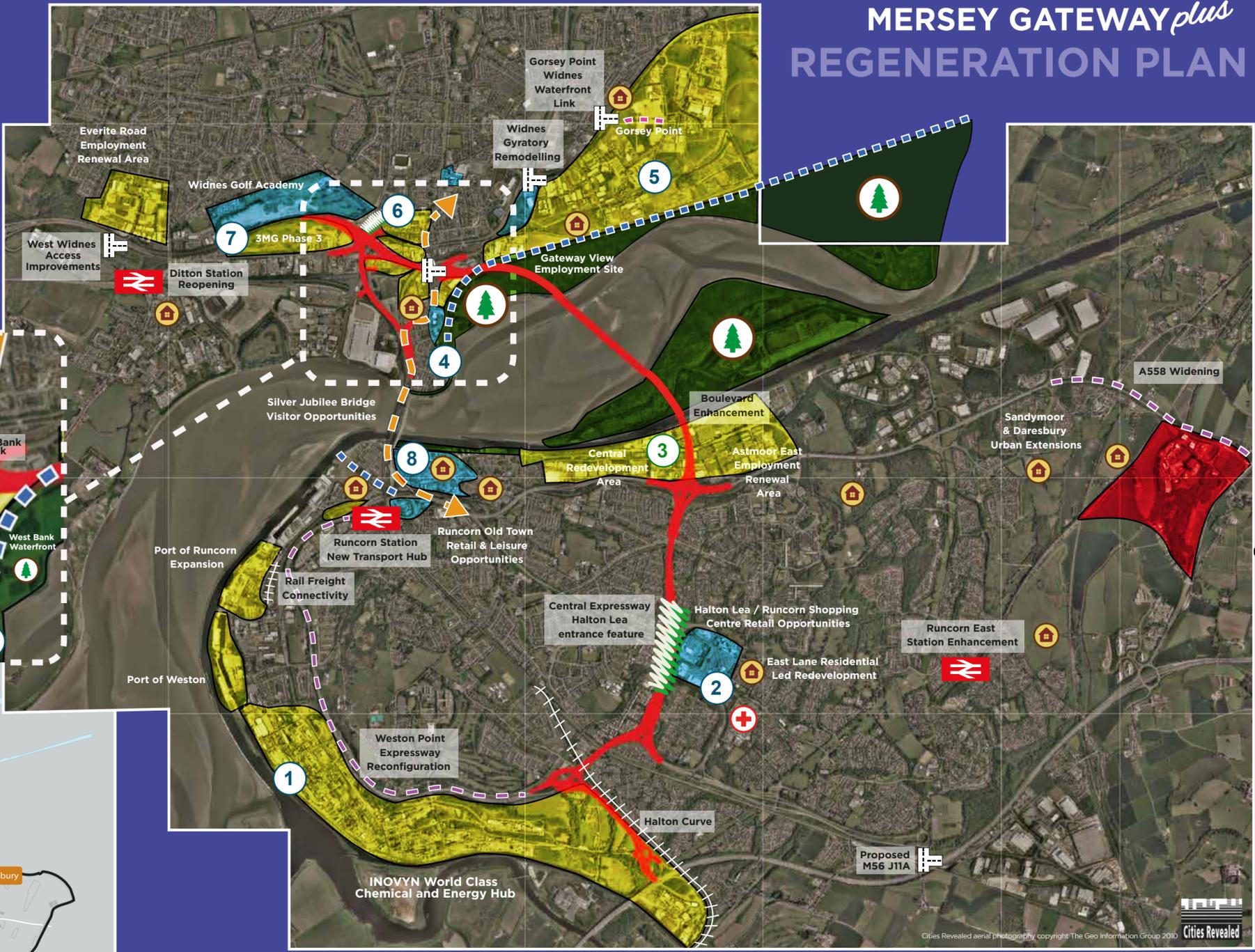
LCR Growth Sector Focus: Visitor Economy / Financial & Professional Services
New & Renewed Employment Land: 6.3 Hectares
New Homes: 530
Key Sites:

- Runcorn Station Quarter, 4Ha Mixed Use Retail & Commercial Development
- Runcorn Old Town Centre Retail, Leisure & Commercial Opportunities
- Old Town Catchment Residential Opportunities

Connectivity Opportunities:

- Runcorn Station Multi-Modal Passenger Transport Hub & Improved Visitor Offer
- Silver Jubilee Bridge Sustainable Transport Corridor (Runcorn Old Town section)
- Runcorn Old Town Centre Street Scene Improvements

Development and Investment Opportunities in Halton 2017-2027

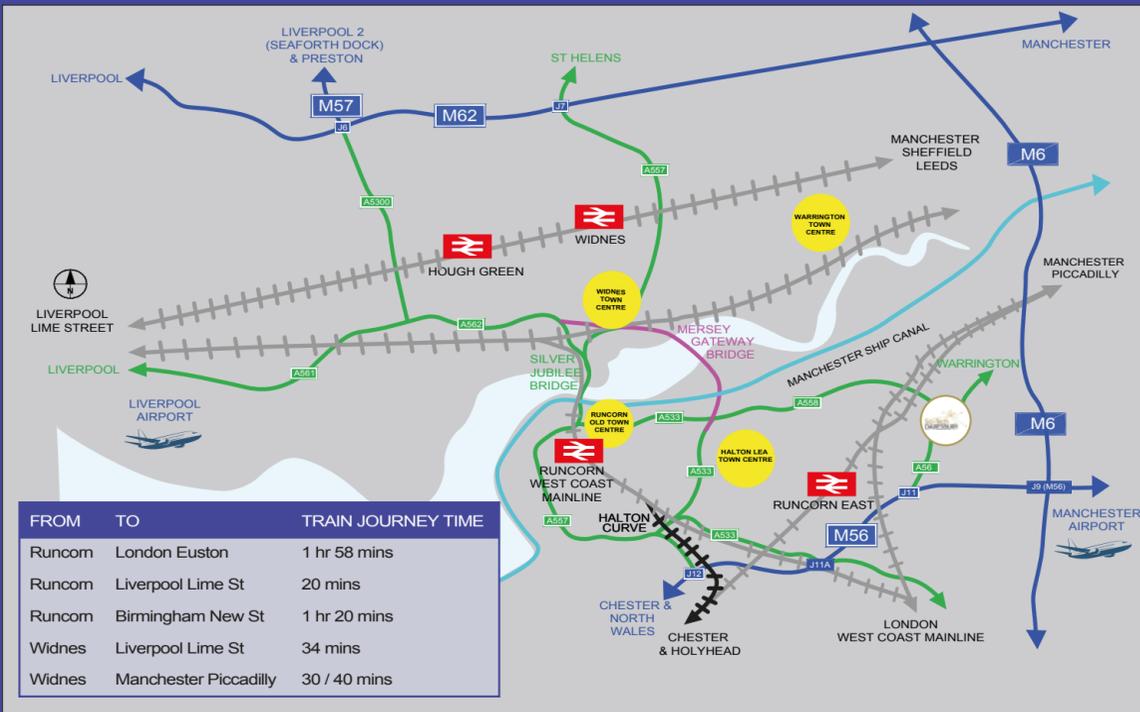


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| <p>Productivity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● New and Renewed Employment Offer ● Sci-Tech Daresbury Enterprise Zone | <p>Connectivity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — SJB Cross River Sustainable Transport Corridor — Mersey Gateway Project Route — New or Improved Rail Link — New or Improved Strategic Road Link — New or Improved Road — Canal Link Restoration Opportunity | <p>Place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🏠 New Homes 🏡 New Retail / Leisure / Mixed Use Area 🏥 Halton Health & Wellbeing Campus 🌳 Mid-Mersey Estuary Park 🌿 Landscape Quality Area |
|--|--|--|

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1 Strategic Context



THE MERSEY MULTI MODAL GATEWAY (3MG) Phase Three

Within the A562 Ditton Corridor there are approximately 24 Ha of redundant and underutilised land. These sites have the potential to continue the regional success story of the 3MG logistics hub in West Widnes and opportunities for advanced manufacturing. This also helps meet demand in the City Region for major commercial sites and drive forward growth in the wider South Liverpool corridor.

THE MID-MERSEY ESTUARY PARK

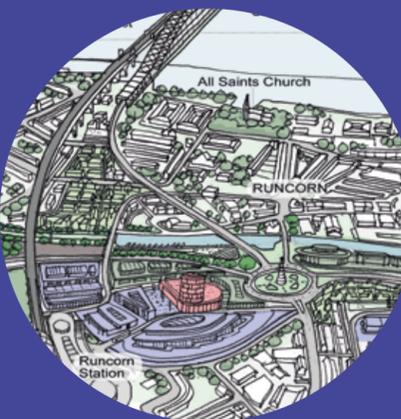
This is an opportunity to significantly enhance the leisure and visitor economy offer, by defining and branding a new park.

This corridor links a necklace of existing green spaces, promenades and visitor destinations. These are connected by circular trails for walking and cycling, with key access points,

stretching from a redefined SJB to Arpley Bridge in Warrington Waterfront. By improving access and stimulating increased leisure use, the new park will introduce greater numbers of people to the landscape of the Mid-Mersey Estuary, challenging perceptions and creating an improved environment for investment.

'DESTINATION RUNCORN' NEW STATION QUARTER DEVELOPMENT

This is a unique opportunity to help realise the potential of Runcorn Mainline Station as a driver for growth and transport improvements. De-linking of the SJB highway approaches has the potential to release redundant highway and open up adjoining land to develop a new station quarter, comprising: new passenger and visitor facilities new transport interchange; improved linkages to Runcorn Old



Town and the Bridgewater Canal; and, new mixed use commercial and residential development. The Council is committed to explore the feasibility of this scheme which could redefine the Old Town and create an improved sense of arrival and impression of Runcorn, Halton and southern gateway into the Liverpool City Region.



2 Impact Areas

Eight regeneration and investment 'Impact Areas' linked to the Mersey Gateway Project have been identified. These are places where the new crossing and the reconfigured road network will unlock land for new development opportunities and reposition the area for further growth. Alongside these opportunities, key infrastructure and enabling projects are also being identified that will be brought forward to complement and support growth. Together these Impact Areas have the potential to deliver approximately:

- 200 Hectares of new and repositioned employment land
- 20,000 jobs (created or safeguarded)
- 3000 new homes

To illustrate the scale and scope of the ambition and the huge potential of these Impact Areas to transform the South of the City Region and beyond, five stand out place-shaping projects have been identified.

INOVYN WORLD CLASS CHEMICAL AND ENERGY HUB

INOVYN is part of the Ineos Group of companies. Ineos is a €3.5 billion turnover company. INOVYN aspires to create a managed, multi-use facility of regional and national significance in Runcorn. The new facility would be attractive to advanced manufacturing and semi-tech companies, companies with high power demands and chemical and related activities which would benefit from access to INOVYN's downstream products and on site facilities.

SILVER JUBILEE BRIDGE (SJB) SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT CORRIDOR

The projected transfer of 80% of cross river vehicle traffic to the new Mersey Gateway Bridge provides a unique opportunity to not only redefine the function of the iconic SJB but also rediscover the historic heart of Halton. The SJB can become more focussed as a 'local link' which promotes cross river walking, cycling and public transport. This new sustainable transport corridor stretches from Runcorn Old Town to Widnes Town Centre and will be delivered in phases. It has potential to change the way we move between our towns and open new commercial frontage and residential opportunities, particularly within the West Bank area of Widnes.

3 Implementation and Delivery



Once construction of the Mersey Gateway is completed approximately 20 Hectares of residual project land will be returned to the Council. This will be available as a resource to contribute to implementation of this plan.

The key to Halton's successful track record of regeneration has been our open approach to collaboration and partnership working, particularly with private sector partners. We recognise that regeneration doesn't happen overnight or in isolation and investors deserve a red carpet, not red tape. We look to support investments through the contacts, resources and functions available to the Council. We also acknowledge the strengths of private sector partners and the dynamism and focus on viability and delivery that is brought to the table.

Our philosophy is that regeneration is not just about constructing buildings and transforming places. Wherever possible, we seek to add value for our local communities by securing local employment, training and apprenticeship opportunities to boost the local economy. Our success is based on promoting inclusive growth and changing lives for the better.

The Council has a proven track record of leadership, partnership working and delivery. Over the years, we have assembled an experienced, capable team of professionals who are able to respond rapidly to enquiries by providing tailored, bespoke programmes of assistance that meet the needs of investors.

LET'S TALK...
You can obtain further information about opportunities in Halton.

0151 511 7307
www.runcorn-widnes.com/merseygateway
EMAIL:
business@halton.gov.uk

INTRODUCTION

I'm pleased to say that during the past five years, thousands of new jobs have been created in Halton by our expanding advanced manufacturing, logistics and service industries. It's estimated that almost £1bn has been invested in the area during that time. This unprecedented period of transformation and economic growth looks set to continue, as The Mersey Gateway Project further boosts commercial confidence in our area.

The Mersey Gateway Bridge will open in autumn 2017. It is a major infrastructure scheme that will provide a new six lane bridge over the River Mersey between the towns of Runcorn and Widnes. In addition, it will create a new transport route linking the Liverpool City Region, North Cheshire and the North West of England to the rest of the country. It will also bring about much needed traffic relief for the iconic, but aging, Silver Jubilee Bridge (SJB).

Mersey Gateway Regeneration Plan *plus* seeks to maximise the long term economic benefits from the new crossing for Halton and also contribute to the Liverpool City Region's (LCR) growth ambitions. It represents a new chapter in our continued transformation.

This document comprises three distinct elements:

- 1 It provides the strategic context for growth.
- 2 It sets out a cohesive package of development and investment opportunities, it also identifies the key infrastructure and enabling projects that we are looking to bring forward to complement and support economic growth.
- 3 It concludes by outlining our approach to implementation and delivery.

In summary, this plan demonstrates our ambition to secure continued growth for Halton.



Councillor Rob Polhill
Leader, Halton Borough Council

Halton is strategically located in the economic triangle formed by Liverpool, Manchester and Chester connecting you to:



This Plan seeks to utilise our assets and build on our strengths as a connected and innovative place.

APPENDIX 2 SUMMARY OF ECONOMIC BENEFITS

Mersey Gateway Impact		
 <p>GVA Halton's GVA has increased since the Bridge has opened and remains the highest in the LCR (per head)</p>	 <p>Businesses After an initial drop in 2018 the number of enterprises has increased</p>	
 <p>Traffic Delays Average delay on A roads in Halton has halved since the opening</p>	 <p>House Prices House prices have increased in particular in the detached category</p>	
 <p>Earnings Average earnings for both residents and workers have consistently increased since the opening (remaining above North West levels)</p>	 <p>CO2 Emissions per capita has decreased since the opening – including transport emissions</p>	
<p>Source data: https://lginform.local.gov.uk/reports/view/research-officer/15916?version=latest Customer Intelligence Unit research@halton.gov.uk</p>		

REPORT TO: Environment and Urban Renewal PPB

DATE: 15th February 2023

REPORTING OFFICER: Director of Public Health

PORTFOLIO: Environment and Urban Renewal and Health and Wellbeing

SUBJECT: Revocation of Halton's Air Quality Management Areas in Widnes Town Centre

WARD(S) Appleton and Central & West Bank

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of the report is to update members on proposals to revoke the current Air Quality Management Areas in Widnes town centre

2.0 **RECOMMENDED: That Members are invited to comment on the proposal to revoke the air quality management areas in Widnes and approve the proposal to proceed with a public consultation.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Local authorities are under a statutory obligation to regularly review and assess air quality in their area. Where air quality is found to exceed legal standards local authorities are under an obligation to introduce Air Quality Management Areas and publish an action plan to improve and safeguard air quality.

3.2 Halton's Air Quality Management Areas were originally declared in 2011 when routine monitoring identified exceedances of the limits for Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂). The cause of the exceedances was considered to be emissions from road vehicles as a result of congestion within the town centre of Widnes. Since 2011 there have been notable improvements in traffic flows through the town centre as a result of the Mersey Gateway Bridge which opened in October 2017 and the reopening of the Silver Jubilee Bridge in February 2021. Further actions included changes to the sequencing of traffic lights to reduce congestion. Improvements in vehicle emission technology will also have contributed to the reduced levels. Maps showing the location of the two Air quality Management Areas are included as Appendix 1 to this report. Area 1 includes Parts of Deacon Road, Albert Road and Peel House Lane. Area 2 includes parts of Gerard Street and Milton Road.

- 3.3 The principal source of Nitrogen Dioxide is the burning of fossil fuels with road traffic accounting for the majority of emissions. Short-term exposure to concentrations of NO₂ can cause inflammation of the airways and increase susceptibility to respiratory infections and to allergens. NO₂ can exacerbate the symptoms of those already suffering from lung or heart conditions.

The Air Quality Standards Regulations 2010 require that the annual mean concentration of NO₂ must not exceed 40 µg/m³ and that there should be no more than 18 exceedances of the hourly mean limit value (concentrations above 200 µg/m³) in a single year

- 3.4 Air quality is monitored within the air quality management area by two fixed automatic sites at Marzahn Way and Milton Road. Further monitoring of air quality across the borough is carried out at 13 non-automatic sites which include sites within the current air quality management areas.

Monitoring at the non automatic sites is undertaken by use of diffusion tubes fixed to lamp posts or street furniture. The diffusion tubes can easily be moved enabling monitoring to be undertaken anywhere in the borough.

- 3.5 Table 1 demonstrates the improvement in air quality between 2011 and to date while table 2 demonstrates the sustained improvement in air quality over the last 5 years.

Table 1 Air Quality Management Areas NO₂ Levels at time of deceleration

AQMA Name	Date of Declaration	Pollutants and Air Quality Objectives	Site Description	Level of NO ₂ : Declaration	NO ₂ : Current Year
Marzahn Way (WidnesNo 1)	01/03/2011	NO ₂ Annual Mean	Roadside Residential Properties	49	27
Milton Road (WidnesNo2)	01/03/2011	NO ₂ Annual Mean	Roadside Residential Properties	49	31

Limit = 40 µg/m³

Table 2 Air Quality Management areas Diffusion tube data last 5 years

Diffusion Tube ID	X OS Grid Ref (Easting)	Site Type	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
4	Milton Road	Road side	37.0	35.0	31.3	25.1	30.1
5	Milton Road	Road side	38.0	35.0	32.5	26.2	32.5
6	Milton Road	Road side	32.0	32.0	26.4	23.7	29.5
9	Peel House Lane	Road side	33.0	33.0	30.0	23.8	26.2
10	Peel House Lane	Kerbside	39.0	38.0	37.5	30.9	34.8
12	Deacon Road	Road side	32.0	30.0	27.2	21.2	23.8
13	Deacon Road	Road side	33.0	28.0	28.1	22.0	24.8

Limit = 40 µg/m³

- 3.6 Local authorities are under an obligation to produce an annual Air Quality Status Report setting out its approach to ensuring and monitoring air quality and the results of this monitoring. The latest Annual Air Quality Status report is available on the council's website. This report must be submitted to DEFRA each year for approval. This year's annual report sets out the proposal to revoke the air quality management areas. The latest report has been duly approved by DEFRA.

The report is available to the public at <https://www3.halton.gov.uk/Pages/planning/air-and-land-pollution.aspx>

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Given the improvements in air quality it is proposed to revoke the air quality management areas as there are no further outstanding actions required to reduce emissions in those areas. Monitoring in those areas will however continue.
- 4.2 The original decision to implement the air quality management areas was taken by Executive Board. It is therefore considered appropriate to seek Executive Board approval for the revocation.

4.3 There is no formal statutory consultation process to revoke the air quality management areas however government guidance suggests public consultation is good practice. The Government must also be notified once the areas are revoked.

4.4 It is proposed to hold a 4 week public consultation beginning at the start of March 2023. The public will be invited to submit comments to a dedicated air quality mailbox. Information on air quality in the borough and the rationale for revoking the air quality management areas will be made available on the council website. The consultation will be publicised via all available media channels.

4.5 It is proposed to bring a further report to the Environment and Urban Renewal PPB with the outcome of the public consultation. At this point, and depending on the outcome of the consultation exercise, the PPB Board will be invited to recommend to Executive Board that the air quality management areas are revoked but that monitoring will continue in those areas.

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report

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

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

None

6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

None

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

Air quality within the air quality management areas has improved and is now within UK legal limits.

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

None

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

None

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 Although it is proposed to revoke the air quality management areas

monitoring of air quality will continue in those areas to ensure air quality remains within legal limits. There are therefore no significant risks from this proposal.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 None.

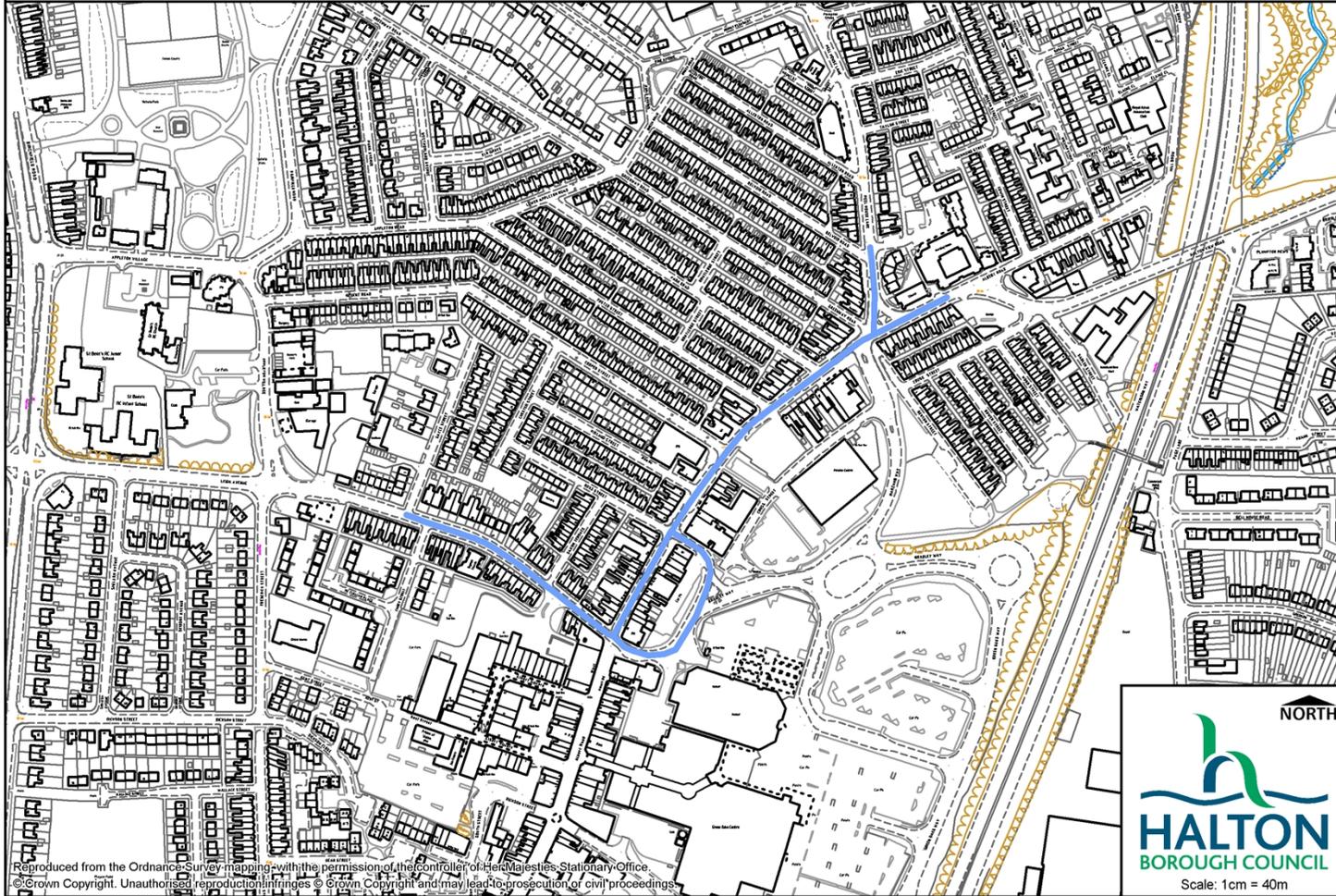
9.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 Regular monitoring has demonstrated an improvement in air quality within the air quality management areas

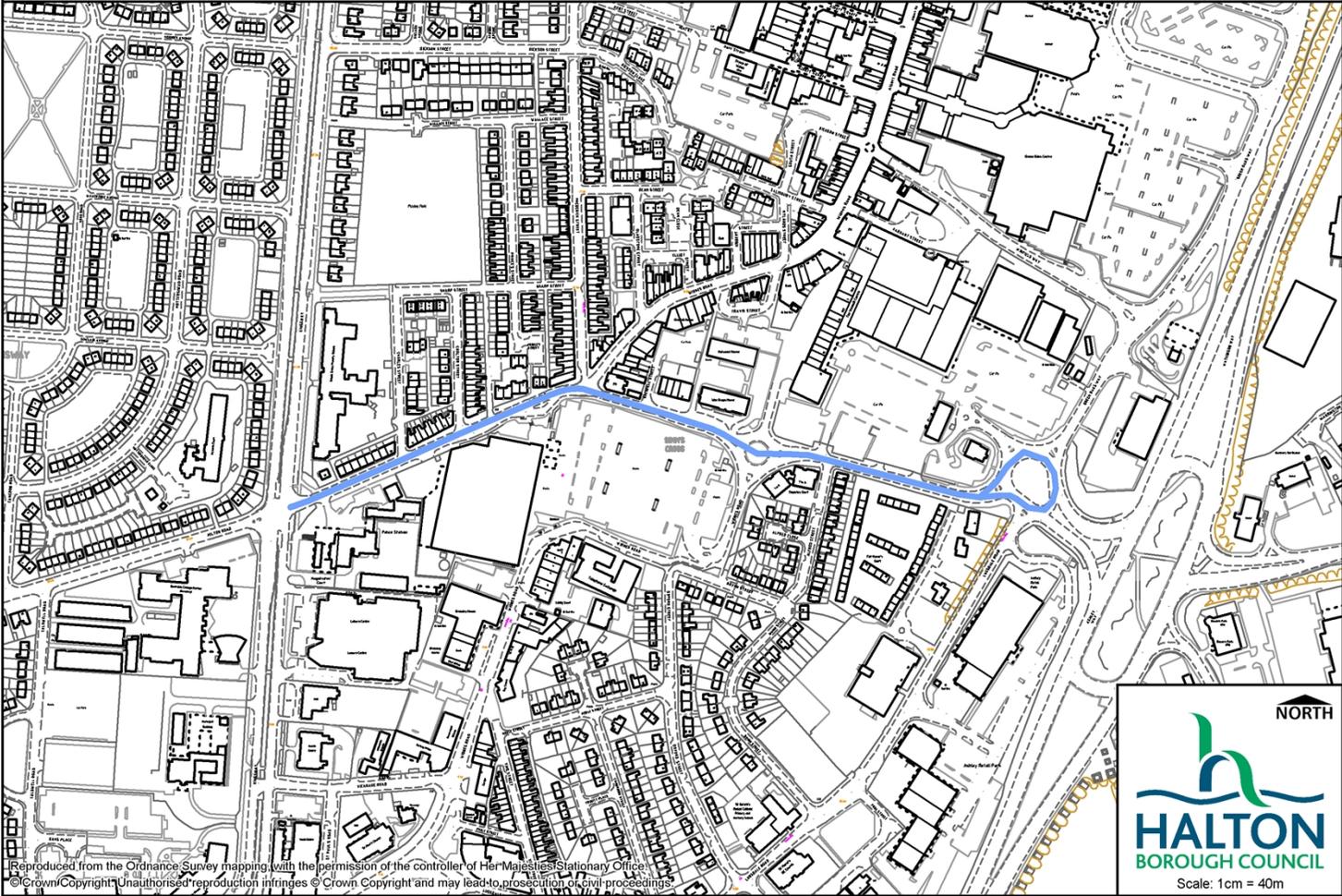
10.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

None.

Air Quality Management Area 1



Air Quality Management Area 2



REPORT TO:	Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board
DATE:	15th February 2023
REPORTING OFFICER:	Operational Director – Policy, Planning & Transportation
PORTFOLIO:	Environment and Urban Renewal
SUBJECT:	HMO - Working Party Update
WARDS:	Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To update the Board on the progress of the Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) Working Party.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

2.1 The Board endorses the updated action plan (Appendix 1)

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 A discussion paper was presented to the Board on 21 September 2022, with a Working Party established to consider those recommendations in more detail.

3.2 The Working Party (WP) met for the first time on the 27 October, a second time on the 19 December, and most recently on the 14 February 2023. A verbal update from the recent WP will be provided on the night of the Board meeting.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Members are keen to ensure that any HMOs or privately rented accommodation provide suitable standards of housing for their tenants.

4.2 In regard to certain issues, like the condition of premises, antisocial behaviour, and management of domestic refuse, the Council has existing powers that can be used to tackle persistent nuisances.

4.3 In terms of new policy recommendations, the Working Party recommends the following:

- Implementation of an Article 4 Direction in areas where there are concentrations of existing HMOs. This would have the effect of removing 'Permitted Development Rights' for automatic changes of use from a single dwelling into a small HMO. Such changes of use would then require the grant of planning permission.

- Adopting a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on HMOs to introduce explicit planning controls on: concentration of HMOs; restricting sandwiching of properties by HMOs; restricting three or more adjacent HMOs; explicitly incorporate property standards; introduce explicit criteria to protect the amenity of neighbours.
- Adopting a Halton Council 'Property Standards for HMOs' policy.
- Investigate options for selective licencing or additional licencing requirements for HMOs and private rental properties.

4.4 The above recommendations for additional policy documents do rely upon having an evidence base to justify need. A specification has been drafted in order to procure external consultants to undertake evidence collation and analysis. The next step is to undertake a procurement process to establish the cost of the evidence document, which takes the form of a stock condition and impacts report. In particular, the evidence document should investigate and assess to following factors across the borough as a whole:

- Accurate information on the current levels of private rental sector properties and tenure change over time by ward.
- Accurate information on the current level of unlicensed smaller HMO's (3-4 Occupants) by ward
- Levels of serious hazards that might amount to a Category 1 hazard or high scoring category 2 hazard (HHSRS) across the private rented sector by ward.
- Ward level information on housing related stressors, including antisocial behaviour (ASB), crime, deprivation, and population changes including migration linked to the private rented sector in general and houses in multiple occupation specifically.
- A detailed survey of properties within the West Bank area to identify the number of private rental properties and the number of smaller and unlicensed HMO's. The survey should identify tenure, property type e.g self contained flat, HMO, the number of unrelated occupants who do not form the same household, the number of bedrooms and details of the landlord and letting agent.

4.5 The preparation and adoption of formal planning policies and licencing controls must follow processes set out in legislation. The timescales for navigating these statutory procedures will be dependent on both available staff resources and the completion of the evidence report that is described above.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 An update action plan (Appendix 1) provides an update on each of the actions agreed at the last Board meeting on 16 November 2022.

5.2 The formal adoption and implementation of the recommended policies will require additional staff resources.

5.3 Formal policy adoption is undertaken by Executive Board. The PPB Board's recommendations will need to be presented to Executive Board in due course.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children & Young People in Halton

None.

6.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

None.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

None.

6.4 A Safer Halton

None.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

None.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 There are no legal or financial risks arising from this report.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 There are no equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no implications for climate change arising from this report.

10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

None under the meaning of the Act.

APPENDIX 1

Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) – Member Working Party (EUR PPB)

ACTION PLAN 2023

Councillor Membership:

Chair – Bill Woolfall (Birchfield)
Sharon Thornton (Halton Castle)
Stan Hill (Central & West Bank)
Ged Philbin (Appleton)
Pamela Wallace (Central & West Bank)
Tom Stretch (Norton South & Preston Brook)
Alan Lowe (Halton Lea)

Meetings

The Working Party was established by the PPB on the 21 September 2022. The WP subsequently met on the following dates:

- 27 October 2022
- 19 December 2022

Reports made to the EUR Policy and Performance Board on:

- 21 September 2022 (WP established)
- 16 November 2022 (WP Terms of Reference agreed)

HMO Definitions

A house of multiple occupation (HMO) is defined as a single dwelling occupied by a number of separate households / unrelated individuals (i.e. they do not form a single household), and who share common areas such as kitchens, bathrooms and living rooms.

The control of HMOs is split between the roles of the Local Planning Authority (planning permission) and the Housing Authority (licencing / inspections / standards).

Town Planning Acts

Under the Town & Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) a small HMO (Class C4) accommodates between 3 and 6 unrelated individuals and a large HMO (Sui Generis – outside of any use class) accommodates 7 or more unrelated individuals.

The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (GPDO) provides permitted development rights for the change of use of a single dwelling (Class C3) to a small HMO (Class C4) without the need to apply to the council for planning permission. The change of use of a dwelling to a larger HMO (Sui Generis) requires the submission of a planning application.

Housing Act 2004

Under the Housing Act the definition of HMO is: any 2 or more people sharing facilities such as kitchen and bathrooms but with separate bedrooms.

- Houses in multiple occupation with 5 or more residents must be licensed and comply with additional requirements including space standards and fire safety
- Smaller HMO's with less than 5 occupants do not require a license but must comply with the requirements of the Housing Health and Safety Rating Scheme.
- All houses must therefore meet the standards set out in the Housing Health and Safety Rating Scheme.
- Note that there will be some properties with 5 or 6 residents that require a HMO license but will not require planning permission.

Housing health and safety rating scheme Properties are assessed to determine that they are free of 29 hazards that may impact on the health and safety of residents. These include

- Damp and mould
- Excessive cold
- Overcrowding
- Falls
- Electrical Safety
- Fire safety

In Halton, Environment Heath exercise the duties of the Housing Authority for HMO licencing and inspection of premises against standards. The Environmental Health Department enforce housing standards in the Private rented sector.

CASE STUDIES

The Working Party considered information from external sources and a number of related case studies:

- Merton Council
- Salford Council

Halton Case Studies

- Planning Appeal – Cartref 61 Derby Lane 21/00408/FUL (appeal allowed)
- Planning Appeal 65 Widnes Road 22/00113/COU– (appeal dismissed)

HMO WORKING PARTY ACTION PLAN

Ref	Task	Progress	Complete
1	Review the concerns raised by Members about HMOs	Complete – discussed at Working Party on 27 October 22 and included in PPB report of 16 November 22	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2	Internal review of Council systems to identify HMOs. Note that small HMOs (4 persons or less) do not require licencing / planning.	Review concluded that door to door enquiry necessary to find small HMOs.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Commission External Evidence			
3	Specify and commission an external research company to report on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current levels of private rented sector (PRS) properties and tenure change over time. • Information on the number of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) as a subset of the PRS. • Levels of serious hazards that might amount to a Category 1 hazard (HHSRS). • Other housing related stressors, including antisocial behaviour (ASB), service demand, population and deprivation linked to the PRS. • Assist the council to make policy decisions, including the possible introduction of property licensing schemes under Part 2 and Part 3 of Housing Act 2004. • Undertake door to door surveys in West Bank (River Mersey up to Waterloo Road) and Fredrick Street to identify private rental properties and small HMOs (4 persons or less that do not require planning permission or HMO licences) • Examine the level of clustering of HMOs at Frederick Street, Widnes • Identify small HMOs and private rented properties in West Bank 	Specification drafted Procurement / commissioning of research during Feb 23	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4	Bid into the Environment Fund with a view to funding the above research	Application for funding being drafted	
Investigate Policy Interventions			
5	Draft and circulate a Planning Policy Scenario test the effectiveness of the policy in specific circumstances (such as Derby Rd, Cholmondeley Street). (Note that a planning policy is required to go through a statutory planning process and public consultation before it can be adopted and given weight in planning decisions).	Complete – policy circulated 19 Dec 2022 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WP to decide if suitable for adoption as HMO Supplementary Planning Document by Exec Board 	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

6	Draft and circulate a Halton Council 'Property Standards for HMOs' document	Complete – document circulated 21 Sept 2022 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WP to decide if document suitable for adoption by Exec Board 	✓
7	Investigate an Article 4 direction for West Bank to remove permitted development rights preventing single dwellings becoming small HMOs (note applications can still be made for planning permission).	Awaiting external evidence report to support approach Will need public consultation Will need Exec Board approval Will need Secretary of State Consultation Will need resourcing	
8	Investigate Additional Licencing of smaller HMO's and other private rented properties. West Bank will be used as a pilot study of potential schemes	Awaiting evidence to support approach Will need Exec Board approval Will need public consultation Additional staff resources to undertake inspections	
9	Investigate options for Selective Licencing of private rented properties. The pilot will be used to inform options for any future borough wide scheme	Awaiting evidence to support approach. Will need Secretary of State Consultation (over 20% of Borough)	
10	Encourage the issuing of community protection warnings (CPW) / notices (CPN) to tackle persistent behaviour that is detrimental to the community	Matter raised with the Council's Enforcement Team who have advised that CPWs and CPNs will be issued to tenants and landlords in circumstances where there is evidence of any such persistent detrimental behaviour.	✓
Other Interventions			
11	To ensure that waste management collections and receptacle provision are appropriate for HMOs, West Bank in particular, and take into account the number of individuals residing at each HMO.	Implemented and to be kept under review	✓
12	Members to consider a Council Motion on HMOs to provide policy direction or propose adoption of 'Property Standards for HMOs' Document in conjunction with Action 5.	Under consideration	✓
13	Invite Inspector Thomas Hall of Widnes Local Police Unit (LPU) to the next WP to discuss Police response to ASB arising from HMOs (Police records are a primary source of evidence to demonstrate ASB is linked to HMOs).	Invite sent and Police attendance confirmed for 14 Feb 23	✓
Resources			
14	Consider appropriate resources to deliver any selected interventions		
Recommendations of Working Party			
15	Report Working Party Recommendations (including necessary resources and timescales) to Executive Board		