

Public Document Pack



Executive Board

Thursday, 24 October 2024 2.00 p.m.
The Boardroom, Municipal Building

S. Young

Chief Executive

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

PART 1

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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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*Please contact Gill Ferguson 0151 511 8059 or
gill.ferguson@halton.gov.uk for further information.
The next meeting of the Committee is on Thursday, 14 November 2024*

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PART II

In this case the Board has a discretion to exclude the press and public and, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, it is **RECOMMENDED** that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, having been satisfied that in all the circumstances of the case the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item(s) of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

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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.

EXECUTIVE BOARD

At a meeting of the Executive Board on Thursday, 12 September 2024 in The Boardroom, Municipal Building

Present: Councillors Wharton (Chair), Ball, Dennett, Harris, M. Lloyd Jones, T. McInerney, Nelson, P. Nolan, Thompson and Wright

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: G. Cook, S. Young, M. Reaney, E. Dawson, S. Wallace-Bonner, G. Ferguson, W. Rourke and H. Hamlett

Also in attendance: None

**ITEMS DEALT WITH
UNDER POWERS AND DUTIES
EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD**

EXB23 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2024, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO

EXB24 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

The Board considered a report from the Director – Finance, which presented the Treasury Management Annual Report 2023-24

The report updated Members on the activities undertaken on the money market, as required by the Treasury Management Policy.

Information was provided on the economic outlook, interest rate forecast, borrowing and investments, budget monitoring, new long-term borrowing, policy guidelines and treasury management indicators. The Council's approved Treasury and Prudential Indicators for 2023-24 were set out in the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and was attached as Appendix one.

Action

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

EXB25 2024/25 SPENDING AS AT 31 JULY 2024 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL FORECAST

The Board received a report from the Director – Finance, which reported the Council’s overall revenue net spending position as of 31 July 2024, together with a 2024/25 forecast outturn position. The report also included an update on the Council’s medium term financial forecast over the four years to 2028/29 (Appendix 5).

A summary of spending against the operational revenue budget position as at 31 July was presented in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 and these provided detailed figures for each individual Department. In overall terms net spending as at 31 July 2024 was £6.561m over budget. The outturn forecast for the year estimated that net spend would be over the approved budget by £19.777m. It was noted that the forecast position is of great concern and without action the Council would not be in a position to provide a balanced budget by financial year-end.

The report detailed a review of the Council General Reserve as at 31 July 2024. The current balance of reserves is £11.581m and this was well below that required to help provide a balanced budget position.

Members were advised that Council had previously approved the capital programme for 2024/25 at its meeting on 6 March 2024. Since then, the capital programme had been revised to reflect a number of changes in spending profiles and funding as schemes had been developed. Appendix 3 presented the Capital Programme as at 31 July 2024. Appendix 4 outlined the saving measures against the budget for the two year period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2026 together with information on action to date to achieve the target saving.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) all spending continues to be limited to only absolutely essential items;
- 2) Executive Directors continue the urgent action to identify areas where spending could be reduced or suspended for the remainder of the current financial year, or additional funding secured;
- 3) Council be requested to approve the Capital

Director of Finance

Programme as set out in paragraph 3.21; and

- 4) the updated Medium Term Financial Forecast included at Appendix 5 is noted.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO

EXB26 HIGH NEEDS PROVISION CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS – PROPOSED EXPANSION OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS & DISABILITY PROVISION: STATUTORY CONSULTATION - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director – Children’s Services, which advised that in March 2024 the Council had been notified by the Department of Education that it would receive a further allocation of £2.1m High Needs Provision Capital funding over a two-year period to support the provision of new places and/or to expand existing provision for pupils and students with high needs.

The Council had previously consulted with schools on the opportunity to expand their existing Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) offer or offer new SEND provision. The report sought approval to commence a statutory consultation to expand the number of SEND places available at Ashley School in Widnes through the provision of four additional classrooms to meet need for children and young people with a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), taking the total number of places available at the school site from 112 to 152.

Reason(s) for Decision

The Council is required to demonstrate appropriate identification of need against spend from the High Needs Capital Allocation Grant. To deliver and implement the High Needs Provision Capital Funding Programme.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

Implementation Date

It is intended that the additional provision, if approved, could be offered from September 2026.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) approval be given for the commencement of a

statutory consultation process for the expansion of Ashley School in Widnes for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder to become a 152 place school; and

Executive Director
of Children's
Services

- 2) a further report is brought to the Board in December 2024 detailing the outcome of the statutory consultation and next steps.

EXB27 YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN 2024-27

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director – Children’s Services, which presented the Youth Justice Plan for Cheshire for 2024-27, for recommendation to Council at its meeting on 23 October 2024. This was in compliance with the Youth Justice Board Guidance (Ministry of Justice) and Regulation 4 of the ‘Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000’.

RESOLVED: That

Executive Director
of Children's
Services

- 1) the 2024-27 Youth Justice Plan be recommended for approval by the next full Council; and
- 2) authority be delegated to the Executive Director – Children’s Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Families, to approve and submit an annual refresh of the Youth Justice Plan in 2025 prior to formal approval by Council next year.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENT AND URBAN RENEWAL PORTFOLIOS

EXB28 HALTON LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (LDS)

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director Environment and Regeneration, which sought approval of the proposed update to the Local Development Scheme (LDS) (attached as Appendix A). The LDS set out the timetable for the production of the Local Plan and also identified and described the Planning Policy documents that the Council intend to prepare and gave target dates for key stages in their production.

RESOLVED: That

Executive Director
Environment &
Regeneration

- 1) the report be noted;

- 2) the Strategy be approved;
- 3) the Halton Borough Council Local Development Scheme 2024 Revision (Appendix A) be formally adopted and shall have effect from September 2024; and
- 4) authority be delegated to the Director of Planning and Transport, in consultation with the Executive Board Members for Environment and Urban Renewal and Climate Change, to approve any minor changes to the wording and/or timelines of the production of documents in the Local Development Scheme as required.

EXB29 DRAFT NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director – Environment and Regeneration, that provided information on the proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and presented the potential implications for Halton. The Government consultation would close on 24 September.

It was noted that Halton's current Delivery and Allocations Local Plan (DALP) was adopted in 2022 and the guidance in the NPPF remained that Local Plans should be reviewed every 5 years. The resource implications for a review of the Local Plan for the Planning Team were outlined in the report.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) Members consider the proposed reforms and potential implications for Halton; and
- 2) approval be given to the Director of Planning and Transportation in consultation with the portfolio holders for Climate Change and Environment and Urban Renewal, to prepare a response to government.

Executive Director
Environment &
Regeneration

EXB30 SCHEDULE 12A OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

The Board considered:

- 1) whether Members of the press and public should be excluded from the meeting of the Board during

consideration of the following item of business in accordance with Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 because it was likely that, in view of the nature of the business to be considered, exempt information would be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100 (1) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972; and

- 2) whether the disclosure of information was in the public interest, whether any relevant exemptions were applicable and whether, when applying the public interest test and exemptions, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed that in disclosing the information.

RESOLVED: That as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed that in disclosing the information, members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business in accordance with Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 because it was likely that, in view of the nature of the business, exempt information would be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100 (1) and paragraphs 1 and 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

DEPUTY LEADER'S PORTFOLIO

EXB31 FREEPORT: PORT OF WESTON

The Board considered a report from the Executive Director – Environment and Regeneration, which provided an update on progress relating to Halton's Freeport.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) approval is given to allow officers to continue with due diligence with a view to preparing a formal offer to purchase the Port of Weston using Freeport Seed Funding;
- 2) Officers provide update reports to Members, as appropriate, as the project progresses;
- 3) Officers work with the Combined Authority and the Freeport Board, to seek approval from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to reallocate remaining Freeport Seed Funds for the planning and construction of an access

Executive Director
Environment &
Regeneration

road onto Port of Weston and to purchase the Port of Weston and fund remediation works, contingency and negotiate above the initial purchase offer; and

- 4) delegated authority is given to the Executive Director Environment and Regeneration and the Director Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Deputy Leader, to draw up a collaborative agreement with prospective stakeholders as outlined in section 3.12 of the report.

CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO

EXB32 CARPENTER ADDITIVE

The Board considered a report which sought approval for the assigning of the lease for Carpenters Inc on Dennis Road, Widnes.

RESOLVED: That the Board authorises the Executive Director - Environment and Regeneration, to arrange for all required documentation for the assignment to be completed to the satisfaction of the Director Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services.

Executive Director
of Children's
Services

EXB33 TERM MAINTENANCE AND MINOR WORKS CONTRACTS

The Board considered a report which sought approval for the award of the term maintenance and minor works contracts for mechanical, electrical and building elements for use across the Borough following a procurement exercise undertaken via the Chest.

RESOLVED: That the term maintenance and minor works contracts be awarded to the successful contractors as detailed in paragraph 3.4-3.6 of the report.

Executive Director
Environment &
Regeneration

EXB34 STAFF LEAVE

The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director, Chief Executives Delivery Unit, which outlined a proposal to reintroduce the four days unpaid leave arrangement during the Christmas period.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the report be noted; and

Corporate
Director - Chief
Executive's
Delivery Unit

- 2) the Board approves the commencement of the formal process to consult with the workforce regarding the re-introduction of four days unpaid leave during Christmas period.

MINUTES ISSUED: 17 September 2024

CALL-IN: 24 September 2024 at 5.00 pm.

Any matter decided by the Executive Board may be called in no later than 5.00pm on 24 September 2024.

Meeting ended at 2.50 p.m.

REPORT TO: Executive Board
DATE: 24 October 2024
REPORTING OFFICER: Chief Executive
PORTFOLIO: Leader
SUBJECT: Urgent Decisions
WARDS: Borough Wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To bring to the attention of Executive Board urgent decision/s taken since the last meeting.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the report is noted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The Council's Constitution gives authority to the Chief Executive to take urgent decision/s which are required before the next formal meeting of Executive Board.

These must be made in consultation with the Leader of the Council where practicable, and with the Director – Finance and/or Director – Legal and Democratic Services, where necessary. They must also be reported for information to the next practically available meeting of the Board.

3.2 More information on each can be found on the Council's website:

<http://councillors.halton.gov.uk/mgDelegatedDecisions.aspx?bcr=1>

3.3 The urgent decision/s taken since the last meeting of Executive Board:

Date Decision taken	Decision details
30 August	2 X Resourcing Officers
30 August	Job Family Approach to Pay
30 August	Improvement Co-ordinator
5 September	2 x Eclipse Systems Analysis
5 September	CS Programme Communications Officer

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are none other than the constitutional requirement to report urgent decisions for information.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

None.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 The report is for information, and there are no risk issues arising from it.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 None.

9. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no climate change implications.

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

10.1 No background papers were used in the preparation of this report. Further information on the decision/s taken is available from the link in Paragraph 3.2.

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 24th October 2024

REPORTING OFFICER: Director - Finance

SUBJECT: Discretionary Non-Domestic Rate Relief

PORTFOLIO: Corporate Services

WARD(S): Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to consider two applications for discretionary non-domestic rate relief, under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988.

2.0 RECOMMENDED That;

- (i) The application for 15% discretionary top up relief from Community Integrated Care, be rejected for the reasons outlined within the report;**
- (ii) The application for discretionary rate relief from Runcorn Amateur Boxing Club, be approved at 90%.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 Under the amended provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, the Council is able to grant discretionary rate relief to any business ratepayer. This relief had previously only been available to organisations that were a registered charity, a community amateur sports club or a not-for-profit organisation.
- 3.2 From 1st April 2017 the Council became responsible for meeting the full cost of all mandatory and discretionary relief granted, as part of the Liverpool City Region 100% Business Rates Retention Pilot Scheme.
- 3.3 Two applications for discretionary rate relief have been received as outlined below.
- 3.4 Currently, where discretionary rate relief has been granted to registered charities and non-profit organisations, it has been provided until 31st March 2025 in order to provide the organisations with some degree of certainty.

Community Integrated Care
Old Market Court, Miners Way, Widnes, WA8 7SP

- 3.5 Community Integrated Care is a registered charity, and as such receive 80% mandatory rate relief. The organisation has requested top-up discretionary rate relief and if granted the Council's policy is to only provide 15%, with the organisation themselves meeting the remaining 5%.
- 3.6 The main objective of the organisation is to promote for the public benefit the relief of those in need because of youth, age, ill-health, or disability throughout the United Kingdom in various ways including;
- (a) providing specially designed or adapted housing, and items, care or other services or facilities intended to ease the needs of such persons and support individuals with care needs to live independently;
 - (b) assisting in the treatment and care of persons suffering from mental or physical illness of any description or in need of rehabilitation as a result of such illness, by the physical provision of facilities for work and recreation;
 - (c) advancing training (including vocational training) and life-long learning by the funding of research and adding to collective knowledge and understanding of specific areas of study and expertise which shall include (but not limited to) autism, dementia or other illness which the trustees of the charity may agree to include from time to time;
 - (d) supporting research into the care and treatment of persons suffering from illness or disability by the provision of lectures, research, for and by the publication of newsletters devoted to the care and treatment in social healthcare;
 - (e) raising public awareness of the needs and welfare of such persons, their families and carers.
- 3.7 The premises at Old Market Court, Miners Way, Widnes, WA8 7SP is the organisations registered office.
- 3.8 Community Integrated Care works across the whole of the care spectrum delivering diverse support and care services across England and Scotland. The charity provides supported living for people with learning or physical difficulties and/or mental health concerns. Their purpose is to enable their customers to live the best life possible to help increase independence, maximise potential and fulfil their aspirations with dignity and respect while helping to shape an inclusive society that recognises people who have support needs as valued citizens and enables their potential, supports the people who deliver and benefit from social care, and champions the importance of the sector. Community Integrated Care provides supported living and care within the community.

- 3.9 If 15% discretionary top up relief were awarded in respect of the organisation's premises at Old Market Court, Miners Way, Widnes with effect from 1st April 2024, the costs to the Council would be as shown in the Appendix.
- 3.10 Community Integrated Care operates throughout England and Scotland. Historically, the Council has chosen to only support organisations who operate solely or mainly within the Borough. On this basis the recommendation is to not award discretionary rate relief in this instance.

Runcorn Amateur Boxing Club
206a Runcorn Shopping Centre, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 2EU

- 3.11 Runcorn Amateur Boxing Club (Runcorn ABC) aims to help the community with improved fitness and physical health, helping to boost self-confidence and improve mental health. The organisation provides a safe environment for people of all backgrounds to learn boxing, keep fit, build confidence & relationships and learn. They also provide opportunities to make new friends and teaches self-discipline and respect for others through education and the provision of role models
- 3.12 Runcorn ABC is a community non-profit sports club affiliated to England Boxing and has applied for discretionary rate relief.
- 3.13 The property is used for amateur boxing training and community fitness and the organisation offers an open-door policy to people of all ages and backgrounds. Runcorn ABC has strong working relationships with the local police and schools, and ran an anti-knife campaign aimed at youths. In addition, the club provides training classes for the elderly, disabled, juniors and women only.
- 3.14 Runcorn ABC already receives 90% discretionary rate relief in respect of the neighbouring property of 206b Runcorn Shopping Centre, Runcorn.
- 3.15 If 90% discretionary rate relief were awarded in respect of the Organisation's premises at 206a Runcorn Shopping Centre, Runcorn with effect from 1st April 2024, the costs to the Council would be as shown in the appendix.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Board is required by the regulations to consider each application on its own merit. Any recommendations provided are given for guidance only, are consistent with Council policy and, wherever possible, previous decisions.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Appendix presents the potential costs to the Council of granting rate relief.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL’S PRIORITIES

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

Community Integrated Care assists in the treatment and care of persons suffering from mental or physical illness of any description or in need of rehabilitation as a result of such illness.

Runcorn ABC provide sporting facilities for the community, which should assist with improving the health and wellbeing of residents

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

Runcorn ABC provides a safe environment for children and young people of all backgrounds to learn boxing, keep fit, build confidence & relationships and learn. Runcorn ABC provides opportunities to make new friends and teaches self-discipline and respect for others through education and the provision of role models

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 There are no key risks associated with the proposed action.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 The applicants offer their services to all sections of the community, without any prejudice.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None.

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

10.1	Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
	Application forms and supporting documents	DCBL Stadium, Lower House Lane, Widnes	Adel Tomkins Senior Rating Officer – Business Rates

APPENDIX

Ratepayer	Address	Annual Rates Liability 2024/25 £	Mandatory Rate Relief Awarded	Annual Cost of Mandatory Relief to HBC 2024/25 £	Discretionary Rate Relief Awarded	Annual Cost of Disc. Rate Relief to HBC 2024/25 £	Actual Cost of Mandatory & Disc. Relief for 2024/25 £
Community Integrated Care	Old Market Court, Miners Way, Widnes, WA8 7SP	74,256.00	80%	59,404.80	15%	11,138.40	70,543.20
Runcorn Amateur Boxing Club	206a Runcorn Shopping Centre, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 2EU	1,996.00	n/a	n/a	90%	1,796.40	1,796.40

REPORT TO:	Executive Board
DATE:	24 October 2024
REPORTING OFFICER:	Executive Director, Adults
PORTFOLIO:	Health & Wellbeing
SUBJECT:	Homelessness Funding Grant Allocation
WARD(S)	Borough-wide

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 This Report outlines the grant funding allocated for the period 2024 – 2025. The funding allocation issued by Central Government to reduce and prevent homelessness within the Borough. It makes proposals for the allocation of these grants for 2024/2025.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That**

- i) **Executive Board note and consider the contents of this Report; and**
- ii) **Approve the recommendations for expenditure against the grants, as described in Appendices 1 and 2.**

3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 **Context:**

3.1.1 The Government confirmed the allocation of a key element of the overall investment: funding through the Homelessness Prevention Grant, which is available to local authorities in 2024/25 to support and deliver services to prevent and tackle homelessness.

3.1.2 Halton has been allocated homelessness grant funding of £369,000 for 2024/25. The government streamlined the funding allocation to simplify the process; with the Homelessness Prevention Grant replacing the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant and the Homelessness Reduction Grant.

3.1.3 The funding grant allocation will be ring-fenced to ensure the Local Authority has the resources to take action to prevent homelessness and utilise the funding to continue to implement the Homelessness Reduction Act implemented in 2018.

3.2 **Purpose of Grant**

3.2.1 The purpose of the Homelessness Prevention Grant is to give local authorities control and flexibility in managing homelessness pressures and supporting those who are at risk of homelessness, and to deliver the following priorities:

- To fully enforce the Homelessness Reduction Act and contribute to ending rough sleeping by increasing activity to prevent single homelessness.
- Reduce family temporary accommodation numbers through maximising family homelessness prevention,
- Eliminate the use of unsuitable bed and breakfast accommodation for families for longer than the statutory six-week limit.

3.2.2 This funding will be provided upfront in April 2024 and can be used flexibly as part of the councils' resourcing to contribute to the costs of statutory duties, including implementing the Homelessness Reduction Act , domestic abuse and supporting with the costs of temporary accommodation.

3.3 **Proposed Funding Allocation**

3.3.1 The Homelessness Prevention Grant will be allocated to improve and deliver statutory services and develop new initiatives to prevent homelessness. The proposed Prevention grant funding allocation is outlined within Appendix 1.

3.3.2 Prevention

Within the grant allocation funding, there is an amount identified amount of £60,000. It is proposed that the funding will provide financial incentives to prevent homelessness and offer vulnerable clients financial assistance, to support and prevent homelessness and sustain tenancies.

These services have proven successful during the latter years and assisted clients to remain within their homes or have the necessary assistance to move into alternative suitable housing accommodation.

3.3.3 Private Rented Sector

One of the biggest barriers for clients accessing private rented accommodation is the need for guarantors. The LA reviewed the Bond Guarantee Scheme in 2023 and now offers a guarantor service for up to 6 - 12 months. The service enables vulnerable client groups to access properties in the private rented sector, enabling officers to remove barriers and encourage landlords to work directly with the Local Authority. The scheme will also link in with the Bond Guarantee Scheme to offer longer term support and reassurance to landlords.

3.3.4 Triage Officer

The triage officer will be a new post, which will offer front line support to the team to complete initial assessment and ascertain what interim action is required. The officer will manage the temporary accommodation placements and address all identified issues relating to homelessness clients placed within the accommodation. The post will reduce the pressure upon the team, thus allowing officers to focus upon homelessness prevention measures.

3.4 **Debt Management Officer – CAB**

3.4.1 The present economic crisis has affected many households, who struggle with issues of debt and affordability. Currently the Citizens Advice Halton (CAH) designated debt advice officer works across both services, to offer a more efficient and robust service to clients. The officer works directly with the designated Housing Solutions Officer who specialises in repossession orders within the social and private rented sector and the Mortgage Rescue.

3.4.2 The joined-up approach enables both services to reach vulnerable clients, offering an accelerated approach to tackle both housing and debt related issues. The service offers.

- A designated Housing/Debt adviser who has undertaken Homelessness training The adviser has detailed knowledge of council processes/procedures and qualifying criteria.
- Anyone presenting as threatened with homelessness (or actual homelessness) at CAB will be given a detailed assessment of their housing rights and options and crucially would be given an accurate assessment of the likelihood of them being classed as homeless (threatened or actual). Notifying Housing Solutions for further intervention
- By managing client expectation there has been a reduction in speculative appeals and speculative cases being referred to a solicitor (although that is the client's ultimate choice).

3.5 **Housing Solutions Activity**

3.5.1 The Local Authority has seen an increase in the level of clients approaching the Housing Solutions Team for support and assistance, due to many landlords issuing Section 21 no fault notices to gain possession of their properties. The table below illustrates the level of repossession notices issued within the social, private, and home ownership sectors during past two years.

Year	Home Ownership	Private Rented Sector	Registered Social Landlord
April 2024 – Sept 2024	35	152	191
April 2023 – March 2024	52	384	499
April 2022 – March 2023	42	336	271

3.5.2 Within the Housing Solutions Team there is a designated officer who is actively involved in the court process. The officer works directly with lenders to reach an agreement that will allow the clients to remain within their home. The Mortgage Rescue Scheme and possession process has been identified as a priority and funding allocated to assist homeowners and tenants.

3.5.3 Although the number of private and social rented sector illustrates the highest possession figures, not all will result in the landlord pursuing possession of the property. Staff are working tirelessly with clients and landlords to address any issues and utilise the prevention fund to offset arrears, save the tenancy and prevent homelessness.

3.5.4 There is a robust process in place with the registered social landlords that notifies the housing solutions adviser at early stage of pending action. The process has proven successful with the officer achieving positive outcomes to reduce evictions and negotiations to enable the client to remain within their home. Level of activity during April 2023– March 2024 (**See Appendix 2**).

3.6 **Rough Sleepers Initiative Funding**

3.6.1 The Rough Sleeping Initiative Funding (RSI) will continue to run up to March 2025. The annual funding award of £106,000 was reduced for period 2024/25, this was due to Public Health picking up the associated costs with the Health Nurse Practitioner role. The funding is ring fenced and enables the Local Authority to maintain existing services and ensure the funds are dedicated to achieving the shared ambition of ending rough sleeping.

3.6.2 This funding is described as being made available for local authorities to support people who are street homeless. The Local Authority funding award for 2024/25 was £69,000. This will enable the continuation of the identified support service delivered by Whitechapel across Halton, which has proven successful and been highlighted as best practice. The outreach support services will work with all rough sleepers to assist them off the streets and access to short- and long-term sustainable accommodation.

3.7 **External Funding Grants**

- 3.7.1 The Local Authority has been successful in securing a number of grant funding to improve support and service delivery across Homelessness Services.

Funding Grant	Initiative	Total Award
Rough Sleeper Grant	Accommodation / Support	£69.000
Combined Authority Trailblazer Grant	1 x Early Intervention Officers	£39.000
Combined Authority AFEO – Ex Offenders	1 x Offender Co-ordinator Posts (across Halton & Knowsley)	£60.000

- 3.7.2 The trailblazer funding is part of the Housing First Programme that initially funded two early intervention officers for Halton, which was reduced to one officer in 2024/25. The contracts are due to end September 2025; however, the Combined Authority has submitted another bid to DHLUC to continue with the service provision, whereby, the funding decision is due to be confirmed September / October 2024.

- 3.7.3 The AFEO funding introduced a new co-ordinator post in 2021/22 to work across offender services and improve service delivery. The post has achieved successful outcomes and there has been a vast improvement in communication, partnership working and a consistent approach across Local Authority services. Subsequently, no offender has been released back to Halton or Knowsley without a full pathway plan and accommodation route. The service has been deemed good practice and the remaining Liverpool City Region Local Authorities have recently introduced the same approach.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no policy implications arising from this report.

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The financial implications are as described in this Report. The increased demand in homelessness presentations has placed additional pressure upon the team. The funding grant will provide additional staffing to deliver homelessness services and reduce/prevent homelessness and will complement the ongoing delivery of services for homelessness clients, with additional financial assistance to promote lifestyle change and sustainability. The funding implication for the new debt advice officer is for a 12-

month period and presently funded via the Homelessness Prevention Grant, which will be reviewed.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

The funding allocation is to provide vulnerable people threatened with homelessness to secure alternative suitable accommodation and promote sustainability, The Prevention funding supports vulnerable clients to remain within their homes by offering financial incentives to support them to resolve homelessness issues and improve health and wellbeing.

Key elements of the services for rough sleepers include the provision of an outreach nurse practitioner, and an outreach team to help entrenched rough sleepers to engage with services, move off the streets and address housing and health needs. The nurse practitioner can prescribe and can provide direct health advice and support, thereby reducing pressures on hard-pressed GP and secondary care services.

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

The Funding grant enables the Local Authority to support vulnerable homelessness clients to secure accommodation to promote sustainability within communities.

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

The services and support provided by the Housing Solutions Team apply to young people, families, and care leavers, as well as to individuals who find themselves homeless. These can be some of the most vulnerable groups in our communities, and many rely on accessing suitable social housing to meet their needs.

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

The Housing Solutions Team support vulnerable clients to resolve homelessness, tackling inequality and ensuring the relevant support is made available to meet the needs of this vulnerable client group.

Although the number of rough sleepers in Halton is small, they can be perceived as being complex and a public nuisance, particularly when associated with begging. The services and support are funded by the grant allocation to help reduce the numbers of people sleeping rough and to manage their situations more effectively.

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

There are no direct implications arising from this report.

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

There are no direct implications arising from this report.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 On an individual basis, the provision of help and support from the housing and homelessness service is addressing the needs of some of the most vulnerable people in our area.

7.2 The provision of services to support rough sleepers and potentially homeless people is a statutory requirement. Without the services and support described in this Report and funded by grant allocation, the council would be at risk of legal challenge.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 There are no equality implications arising from the contents of this report.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no implications arising from the contents of this report.

Proposals for allocation of the Homelessness Prevention Grant

Funding	Service Delivery	Purpose
£36.000	1 x Housing Solutions Adviser	Increased levels of homelessness put additional pressure upon Housing Solutions Team.
£28.000	Triage Officer	Additional officers to meet demand and ensure LA is fully compliant with statutory requirement
£33.000	Debt Consolidation Officer	Staffing resource delivered by CAB, work alongside Housing Solutions Adviser to assist vulnerable clients facing repossession.
£60.000	Prevention Fund	Offer financial funding to prevent homelessness. e.g. rent arrears, safety certificates, deposits etc.
£10.000	No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) – Families	Assist migrant Families (including those experiencing domestic abuse) who have NRPF, whilst applying for immigration status.
£10,000	Rough Sleeper Prevention Fund	Financial assistance for rough sleepers, e.g., enhanced deposits, rent in advance etc.
£25.000	Mainstay & Jigsaw	Homelessness data reporting IT system (Jigsaw) Accommodation and support referral IT system across LCR Mainstay
£40.000	Bond Guarantee Service	Financial uplift for private landlords to encourage engagement and assist with accommodation provision.
£20.000	PRS Guarantor Scheme	The LA will act as guarantor for homelessness clients to enable them to access private rented accommodation and encourage private landlord engagement

Funding	Service Delivery	Purpose
£30.000	Mortgage Rescue	Financial assistance to homeowners to prevent homelessness
£32.000	GIFT Initiative	Furniture package for homelessness clients to assist when undertaking new tenancy.
£5.000	Staff Training	Additional training for staff to ensure they are compliant with Homelessness legal requirements
£40.000	Beam	A pilot scheme implemented, to delivers a service to vulnerable homelessness single clients to support them into private rented accommodation and employment

Appendix 2

Repossession Notice Activity

Registered Social Landlord Activity	Total
Referrals	499
Evictions prevented via Crisis Interventions	159
Evictions prevented via Relief Stage	259
Property Relinquished / Tenant Deceased	9
Total Eviction Loss	28
Court attendance – Suspended Orders	125
Prevention Funding Applications	47 - £22,840
Discretionary Housing Applications	29 - £28,200

Home Ownership Activity

Owner Occupier Activity	Total
Referrals	52
Total evictions prevented	42
Cases carried over 24/25	10
Total eviction loss	0
Sold Property and rehoused via PPP	0

REPORT TO:	Executive Board
DATE:	24 October 2024
REPORTING OFFICER:	Executive Director of Adult Services
PORTFOLIO:	Community Safety
SUBJECT:	Gypsy Traveller Warden Contracts
WARD(S)	Borough Wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of the report is to inform Executive Board of the present Romani traveller wardens role and contract renewal. The proposed contract will be for five years, offering three, plus one, plus one years to cover the period 2024 - 2029.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- 1) **The Executive Board note the contents of this report.**
- 2) **The Board consider and agree the proposed employment contract for the two traveller wardens.**
- 3) **Agree that the in-house wardens will continue to provide site management and support across the three council owned sites.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Halton Borough Council has three sites upon which pitches are made available for members of the Romani traveller community. Two are permanent sites: Riverview in Widnes and Canalside in Runcorn, and between them provide a total of 35 pitches. The third site is what is termed a transit site with 14 pitches, for members of the community who do not wish to live permanently in the area, and to accommodate those people who are initially in illegal encampments in the area.

3.1.2 Halton Borough Council (HBC) has a full time Romani and Traveller (GTLO Liaison Officer who is based at the Riverview residential site. He is responsible for the day-to-day management of the G&T Service including the G&T sites, unauthorised encampments, general enquires and complaints relating to G&T within Halton

3.1.3 In practice, HBC has a number of duties and responsibilities which impact on the lives of Halton's population including Romani people and Travellers: education, public health, community safety, and

equalities and social cohesion in all aspects of service provision.

- 3.1.4 As the success in working with and the social welfare of Travelling communities is fundamentally linked to the availability and quality of accommodation, including the HBC transit site, any degree of success for HBC in addressing health, education, employment and unauthorised encampments will be inextricably linked to the success in supporting the provision of authorised sites, both publicly and privately owned resulting in the fundamental need for HBC to provide a Gypsy and Traveller Service.

3.2 Site Wardens

- 3.2.1 Presently there are two site wardens that cover the three sites. The wardens have been sub-contracted by the Local Authority for the past three years, which has proven successful.
- 3.2.2 The first warden is situated at Riverview, which is a permanent residential site, and the mobile warden is situated at the transit site, but also covers Canalside. The wardens also form part of the out of hours cover and address any urgent issues across the three sites.
- 3.2.3 The Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officer will remain on site at Riverview to maintain a presence and deal with any issues. Riverview is an established site, as many residents have lived on site for a number of years, which offers stability.
- 3.2.4 The advantages of employing site wardens are to have a presence to effectively deal with any emerging issues, also offering.
- A more consistent and corporate approach
 - Provide a more cost-effective service.
 - Work directly with the GTLO across all three sites.
 - Remain at the transit site to tackle any issues.
 - Provide an out of hour's service across the three sites to deal with emergencies.

3.3 Purpose of the Service

- 3.3.1 The purpose of the service is to provide site management and residential support to the Gypsy Traveller Community, in accordance with legislative and Local Authority guidelines. The site management typically involves-
- Ensuring the sites and the pitches are maintained, with repairs being commissioned as necessary to keep all facilities operational, e.g., the hard standing, fencing, etc. is maintained to a good standard.
 - Ensuring that the sites remain safe for residents and visitors.

- Collection of rent from residents.
- Collection of payment for utilities.
- Ensuring plots remain occupied.
- Managing a fair Allocation policy to ensure vacant plots are allocated based on need.
- Ensuring all residents agree to, and abide by, pitch licence agreements.
- Working to facilitate good relationships between the Romani and Traveller and settled communities.
- Acting to prevent misuse of site facilities and unauthorised residency.

3.3.2 **Service Ethos**

The following values shall underpin all that the service provider does in delivering the Service:

- A person-centred approach that values and respects each of the Romani and Traveller community as individuals.
- Providing services that are flexible and tailored towards the resident needs, which are regularly reviewed to ensure they remain appropriate.
- Collaborating effectively with statutory bodies and other agencies and stakeholders.
- Support each individual to overcome barriers and to achieve their own solutions.
- Sensitively catering for the residents' cultural needs, views and preferences.
- Ensure the site and its facilities are fit for purpose, to the regulated standards required by the Council.
- The warden will ensure that the residents' needs are assessed and met accordingly.

3.3.3 **The Service**

In accordance with the contract specification, Halton Borough Council would assume responsibility for the management of the council owned sites. The Contractor will manage and support the Romani families / individuals, residing at the council owned sites, which will include:

- On site attendance and daily inspections
- Maintain and monitor health and safety on the site,
- Maintaining a safe environment and arranging for rectification work when required.
- Site inspections to determine signs of damage and maintaining communication with the Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officer and Property Services.

- Maintaining site management records.
- Licence fee collection, including advising residents, facilitating support, and liaising with other Council services to resolve problems.
- Supporting the Council with licence site fee and rent arrears collection.
- Licence/Tenancy management through liaison with new and existing residents.
- Identifying and acting on licence breaches and working with partner organisations.
- Providing a responsive repair and maintenance service to the utility blocks and communal areas
- Manage void pitches, to ensure vacant pitches are appropriately and promptly occupied.
- Site management to ensure the site remains clean and tidy,
- Managing site improvements where funding is available.

3.3.4 Halton Borough Council will remain responsible for arranging site improvements or developments, and appointing building contractors for any major works required at the site.

3.4 Warden Contracts

3.4.1 The local authority has subcontracted the two wardens to provide site management for the past three years, which has proven successful. The proposal to continue with the existing service provision and offer a five-year contract will maintain stability and trust across the three sites.

3.4.2 During the later years, other Local Authorities have recruited none traveller officers to manage their sites. This has led to serious issues, and consequently, sites were closed.

3.4.3 The warden contracts will initially be for three years, further offering the option to extend by two further years, subject to performance and will be reviewed annually. The combined contract value for the two wardens will be £ 48,876 annually and a combined cost of £244,380 across the five-year period.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no policy implications.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The continuation of the warden service will provide a more cost-effective service to the Local Authority. As the service is

subcontracted, the wardens are therefore, deemed self-employed, so there are no additional financial implications for the local authority.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

The wardens are on site to provide additional support to residents and families and signpost them to the relevant services to address any health and wellbeing issues and promote sustainable living.

6.2 Building Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

There are no implications arising from the contents of this report.

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

There are no direct implications for young people, as the wardens are situated on site and address any tensions or concerns raised, informing the relevant officers if further involvement is required.

The Riverview site has additional provision that is used for young people and their families, to provide education and informative sessions, which are supervised by the wardens to address any concerns.

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those who are Most in Need. Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

The on-site warden provision supports all residents across the three sites to tackle inequality and ensure the right support is made available to address all issues.

The wardens role is to be available and address any issues on site. This will also include supporting residents to access all the relevant services and signpost them accordingly to address both health and housing needs.

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

There would be no direct implications across the warden contractual roles.

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community.

The wardens strive to ensure that the Romani Gypsy Travellers are supported to integrate within the community.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

The identified risk would be to further outsource the service and employing none traveller officers. The consequence could result in unrest and further tensions across the sites.

8.0 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

8.1 No additional implications arising from this report. The contract extension and continuation of the site management service will provide stability and trust across the three sites.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no implications arising from this report.

10.0 REASON(S) FOR DECISION

10.1 The proposal to extend the wardens employment contract will ensure a consistent approach and stability across the three traveller sites within Halton. As the wardens are situated on site, this offers an out of hours service.

11.00 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

11.1 Due to previous issues raised, it would not be advisable to consider further service options or employing none traveller wardens, as this would prove more costly and could result in serious issues across the three sites.

12.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE

12.1 The contract implementation date will be 1st November 2024 for a period of three, plus one, plus one years.

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

13.1 None under the meaning of the Act.

REPORT TO:	Executive Board
DATE:	24 th October 2024
REPORTING OFFICER:	Executive Director Environment and Regeneration
PORTFOLIO:	Environment and Urban Renewal
SUBJECT:	Additional Highway Maintenance Allocations
WARD(S)	Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report seeks Executive Board approval to accept capital funding from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority in compliance with Standing Orders.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- 1. The board approves the Director Planning and Transportation, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder Environment and Urban Renewal be delegated to accept the Grant Funding Agreement and enable timely delivery of the agreement; and**
- 2. The Director Planning and Transportation in consultation with the Portfolio Holder Environment and Urban Renewal be delegated to deal with any matters relating to procurement and operation of this agreement.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 In addition to the current capital funding arrangements through the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA), Halton has now received two Highways and Improvements Grants for £306,781.20 each, and a Traffic Signal Maintenance and Improvement Grant for £44,394.12.
- 3.2 The cost of works undertaken as part of these grant funding agreements will be met entirely from the approved budget allocations for this additional capital funding.
- 3.3 The work would be designed by existing Halton officers and construction would be delivered via existing Term Contracts.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The method of procurement has complied with the Public Contract Regulations, 2015 and the Council's own Procurement Standing Orders being carried out in conjunction with the Procurement Centre of Excellence.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The work to be covered entirely by this grant funding agreements have no requirement for HBC match funding.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

Well maintained Highways ensure that the public can travel quickly and easily on the Highway network.

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

Well maintained Highways ensure that the public can travel quickly and easily on the Highway network.

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

None

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

Well maintained Highways ensure that the public can travel quickly and easily on the Highway network.

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

None

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

Well maintained Highways ensure that the public can travel quickly and easily on the Highway network.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 7.1 Failure to proceed with the works would breach the terms of the agreement and contribute the continued deterioration of the Highway.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 8.1 There are no direct equality and diversity issues associated with this report.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The two Highway and Improvement Grants are to be invested in the Highway Network likely utilising materials which have high carbon

values, such as bituminous and concrete products. However, the service aims to use lower carbon materials if possible, such as warm mix asphalt rather than hot mix which reduces carbon emissions. Similarly proprietary materials are used where they are suitable which overall as a process have been independently evaluated as carbon neutral.

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

Grant Agreement Highways Improvement and Maintenance Grant
2023/24

Grant Agreement Highways Improvement and Maintenance Grant
2024/25

Grant Agreement, Traffic Signal Maintenance and Improvement
2024/26

REPORT TO:	Executive Board
DATE:	24 th October 2024
REPORTING OFFICER:	Executive Director - Environment and Regeneration
PORTFOLIO:	Environment and Urban Renewal
SUBJECT:	A Strategy for Halton's Trees and Woodlands
WARD(S)	Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to ask Members to consider and approve an updated Halton Trees and Woodlands Strategy.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

Executive Board approve the updated Trees and Woodland Strategy attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 At the meeting on 13th December 2018, the Council's Executive Board considered a report on the adoption of a Strategy for Halton's Trees and Woodlands. Executive Board was advised that the intention of the Strategy was to clearly articulate how the Council would manage its trees and woodlands and help to identify priorities for its work programme.
- 3.2 The draft Strategy presented to Executive Board followed the principles developed by a Member-led Tree and Woodland Working Group that was established under the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board. At the meeting on 13th December 2018, Executive Board approved the adoption of the Strategy that set out the Council's Policy for the management of Halton's trees and woodland assets (Minute EXB71/2018 refers).
- 3.3 A review and updating of the Council's adopted Trees and Woodland Strategy has recently been undertaken as one of the Council's Climate Change Action Plan objectives ES10. A proposed new draft Strategy is attached as Appendix 1
- 3.4 Members are advised that there are no material changes to the Council's Policy since the adopted Trees and Woodland Strategy was approved by Executive Board in December 2018. The primary updates to the proposed new draft Trees and Woodland Strategy

are limited to those matters set out below:

- The refreshed Strategy acknowledges the new burdens to local government authorities under the Environment Act 2021, namely:
 - The UK Governments target to increase tree cover from 14% to 17%.
 - The introduction of a 'Duty to Consult' on the Felling of Street Trees which are not exempt.
 - Biodiversity Net Gain during the planning process on applicable sites.
- New data that has become available which has allowed the following to be included:
 - Introduction of a Borough-wide target for tree canopy cover of over 23%; an increase of over 7.5% from 2022 levels by 2030 - This will be monitored through Bluesky National Tree Map dataset.
 - Mapping of Canopy cover down to Ward level to allow targeting of resources where constraints allow and the identification of 12 priority wards.
 - Reports from the Woodland Trust's Tree Equity Score highlighting the effect of Halton's urban forest on communities living on low incomes and others disproportionately impacted by extreme heat, pollution, and other environmental hazards.
- Emerging information relating to tree pests and disease, and the effects of climate change on species selection.
- The draft Strategy makes references to updated Council Policy and Plans, such as:
 - Delivery and Allocations Plan (DALP) 2022
 - Climate Change Action Plan 2022 – 2027
 - Big Halton Forest Project.

3.5 The draft Trees and Woodland Strategy has been shared with external partners for comment, including The Mersey Forest, The Woodland Trust and Tree Equity Score. The draft Strategy has also been shared with the Council's Planning, Highways and Property Services Teams from comment.

3.6 Members are asked to consider and approve the updated draft Trees and Woodland Strategy attached as Appendix 1.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no new Policy implications as a result of this report.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no new Financial implications as a result of this report

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

Maintaining healthy Trees, and Woodlands for people to enjoy, will contribute significantly towards health and wellbeing.

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

Trees and woodlands have a significant positive impact on the attractiveness of the Borough. An attractive environment encourages inward investment and development.

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

Trees and Woodlands contribute towards the positive development of children and young people by creating pleasant environments in which to play and learning can take place.

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

No direct impact

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

Please see comments in 9.0 below.

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

As per 6.3 above, all residents can enjoy the pleasant environments that our woodlands provide.

Further, the strategy contributes towards a 'safer Halton' as it sets out how the Council will inspect and maintain its trees to ensure a safe environment for all.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 There is a risk in not having an up to date and fit for purpose Strategy to guide the Council's approach and actions for the management of its Trees and Woodland. Maintaining existing Policy, allied to an updated Strategy, would mitigate the risks associated with these assets.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

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

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The management and improvement of the Council's trees and woodlands, and the extension to the planting of trees via the Big Halton Forest, will have a positive impact upon the Council's climate change Action Plan, objectives and targets.

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

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Executive Board Report- 13 th December 2018: A Strategy for Halton's Trees and Woodland	Municipal Building Kingsway Widnes	Jimmy Unsworth – Head of Environment Services
Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board - 23 rd March 2016: Findings and recommendations of the 2015 Tree Working Group	Municipal Building Kingsway Widnes	Jimmy Unsworth – Head of Environment Services

A Strategy for Halton's Trees and Woodlands



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1. INTRODUCTION

Trees are often seen as static objects in the environment. They are sometimes referred to as “street furniture”. However, they are much more than that. They are dynamic living systems that have evolved with remarkable resilience, enabling them to adapt to challenges such as limb loss, changing of environment, and many fungal and bacterial diseases. They can respond and adjust to the changing conditions of their surroundings and their own structure. There is now a large body of evidence supporting that trees play a cost effective and crucial role in enhancing people's quality of life, supporting the local economy, and preserving the natural environment not only for the individual but also society as a whole (Trees and Design Group (TDAG), 2021). As humankind is becoming more urbanised than ever before and with the England having over 80% of its population living in an urban setting (Government Office for Science, 2021), it is now more important than ever for us to make trees a key component of our infrastructure. It is essential to urban society that we find a delicate balance, to ensure that the natural processes of trees do not pose risks to the safety of individuals and property all whilst we are able to maximise the benefits trees provide us.

The importance of trees has been emphasised by several government reports including a national survey of England’s urban trees and their management entitled *Trees in Towns II*, published in February 2008 and in December 2011, the National Tree Safety Group released its guidance on how tree owners should approach tree safety management (3.3 refers). More recently, the Government’s *England Trees Action Plan 2021*, highlighted the many benefits of trees which included climate change mitigation and nature recovery.

Under the Occupiers Liability Act 1957, it is the legal responsibility of the landowner to carry out reasonable tree risk assessment and ensure that any foreseeable hazards are identified and made safe as soon reasonably possible. It is not always possible to completely eliminate the risks associated with trees, but there are often some indicators that may be used to identify an increased risk. These could be crown dieback, structural faults or decay sites, including pathogenic pests or diseases. Qualified arboriculturists can conduct thorough investigations to address these issues effectively and this tree and woodland strategy will help us to make evidence-based decisions on how we manage our trees and woodlands.

Halton Borough Council acknowledges the paramount importance of safety when it comes to managing our trees. We are committed to developing a harmonious relationship between public safety and our tree population by promoting the local benefits that trees provide but not at the expense of public safety. Trees offer numerous benefits to society, ranging from aesthetic appeal to social cohesion, economic value, and health advantages.

They reduce noise pollution, provide shade and cooling, filter pollution, and improve air quality. They also support wildlife and biodiversity, enhance property values, provide recreational opportunities and improve people’s mental and physical health.

Therefore, let us work together to protect and enhance our natural environment while also promoting safety and prosperity for our communities. By doing so, we can ensure that we enjoy the benefits of a healthy and thriving urban forest while minimizing the risks associated with trees.

1.1 BENEFITS OF TREES

- Trees play a vital role in urban and rural ecosystems by helping to support a great variety of wildlife.
- A large beech tree can provide enough oxygen for the daily requirements of ten people.
- Property in tree lined streets is worth 18% more than in similar streets without trees.
- Trees intercept water, store some of it and reduce storm runoff, and the possibility of flooding.

- Trees help to lock up the carbon emissions that contribute to global warming. For example, 1 hectare of woodland grown to maturity and looked after forever would absorb the carbon emissions of 100 average family cars driven for one year (Climate Care/Trees for Cities estimate).
- Trees have a positive impact on the incidence of asthma, skin cancer and stress related illness by filtering out polluted air, reducing smog formation, shading out solar radiation and provide an attractive, calming setting for recreation.
- Trees can also save up to 10% of energy consumption through their moderation of the local climate.

1.2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Halton Borough Council changed the way it manages its trees in following the adoption of the policy document A Strategy for Halton's Trees and Woodlands in 2018. This new approach focussed resources into the management of trees that are in Council ownership by routinely inspecting trees in accordance with a risk-based methodology. If during an inspection, a tree poses an unacceptable risk of harm to people or property, remedial work will be carried out. The Council now only prunes or removes trees for sound arboricultural reasons and is no longer be able to routinely respond to requests for tree works for any reasons other than safety or the prevention of damage. The Council will however seek to act as a "good neighbour"; officers will treat enquiries with diligence and respect, and in some cases action resident requests where appropriate in keeping with the themes of this strategy. The Council will inspect, undertake remedial works, and respond to tree enquiries according to urgency. Timescales are proposed in this document and should be adopted as standard.

1.3 VISION STATEMENT

Halton Borough Council is committed to protecting and enhancing our urban forest. Our goal is to ensure that future generations can benefit from the natural capital that a healthy treescape can bring. By 2030, we will have a comprehensive understanding of the trees and woodlands in our Borough. We will also work with partners across the Liverpool City Region to identify and protect our ancient woodlands and veteran trees. This will be achieved by collecting data through monitoring and routine inspections of trees. The information obtained will enable us to make evidence-based decisions regarding our tree management practices. Additionally, it will provide us with a better understanding of the ecosystem services that these trees provide and how we can maximize their benefits to the Borough.

1.4 WHAT IS THE HBC TREE AND WOODLAND STRATEGY?

Halton Borough Council has developed and implemented a comprehensive framework known as the HBC Tree and Woodland Strategy. This strategy aims to guide the management, conservation, and enhancement of the trees and woodlands within the Borough. Additionally, it aims to promote sustainable practices, protect existing trees and woodland, and encourage the creation of new ones. The Tree and Woodland Strategy outlines the Council's aims and actions to ensure the future of the treescape, as well as the benefits it will provide to the environment, public health, communities, and wildlife.

1.5 WHY DOES HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL NEED A TREE AND WOODLAND STRATEGY?

With the UK Government target of increasing total tree cover in the UK from 14 to 17% and the emergence of new obligations under the Environment Act 2021, HBC is in a timely position to update our strategy. This will ensure we continue to maintain a high level of commitment to the responsible safe management of our trees and woodlands.

This updated strategy will enable us to maximize the social, economic, and environmental benefits trees provide us as a multifunctional asset and natural resources in our Borough. While the fundamental principles and methodology of the strategy will remain unchanged, the new version will focus on implementing improved evidence-based management and expanding the total canopy cover whilst also expanding our knowledge aiding in understanding our urban forest better. This approach aligns with the targets set by the UK Committee on Climate Change for increasing forestry cover, aiming to enhance the positive impact of our tree stock on the public and the environment.

On October 16, 2019, Halton Borough Council declared a climate emergency, acknowledging the urgent need to mitigate the impacts of climate change at a local level. This led to the development of the Halton Borough Climate Change Action Plan 2022-2027. As part of this plan, a 3-stage action plan for our tree and woodland strategy has been created. This strategy will work alongside other policies, both local and national, such as the upcoming Local Nature Recovery Strategy, The Big Halton Forest, and Biodiversity Net Gain.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STRATEGY

Sustainability is at the heart of the Council's long-term aims and this Tree and Woodlands Strategy sets out how the benefits provided by trees and woodlands will be maintained and enhanced. This will include positive steps to consolidate tree stocks and address some of the recurring problems associated with the Council's trees.

The primary aims are summarised as follows:

- To take an evidence-based approach on the management and planting of our trees
- Identify new appropriate planting site.
- Develop effective planting and after care programs for new planting sites to increase tree establishment rate.
- Continue to be a responsible landowner by routinely inspecting the trees on Council owned land that could pose a threat to the public or property.
- Increase our understanding of our tree stock by collecting further data on our collective tree species, size and age and monitoring pathogens.
- Ensure staff's competencies by keeping qualifications and training up to date.
- Raise the awareness of trees as a multifunctional asset and the value they bring to people and the environment.
- Increase community engagement by creating community planting opportunities and tree planting programs.
- Increase the tree canopy cover across Halton by 7%, with priority given to areas with low canopy cover.
- To protect, consolidate and, where necessary, restructure the legacy of established trees and woodland.
- Maximise the ecosystem services provided by the Council's trees.

- To continue to improve our urban forest resilience by increasing our tree species diversity and age range.
- Promote biodiversity and conserve tree and woodland eco-systems.
- Conserve and protect ancient woodland and ancient trees with significant ecological, historical and amenity value.
- Work with partners to expand the woodland cover through sustainable external funding to ensure the delivery of the Council's 'Big Halton Forest' initiative to plant 130,000 new trees across the Borough by 2030.
- Fulfil the Council's duty of care with responsible management of its tree stocks. By using appropriate tree risk management systems like Quantified Tree Risk Assessment (QTRA) and monitor the health and condition of the trees with the aim to keep risks as low as it is reasonably practical to do so.

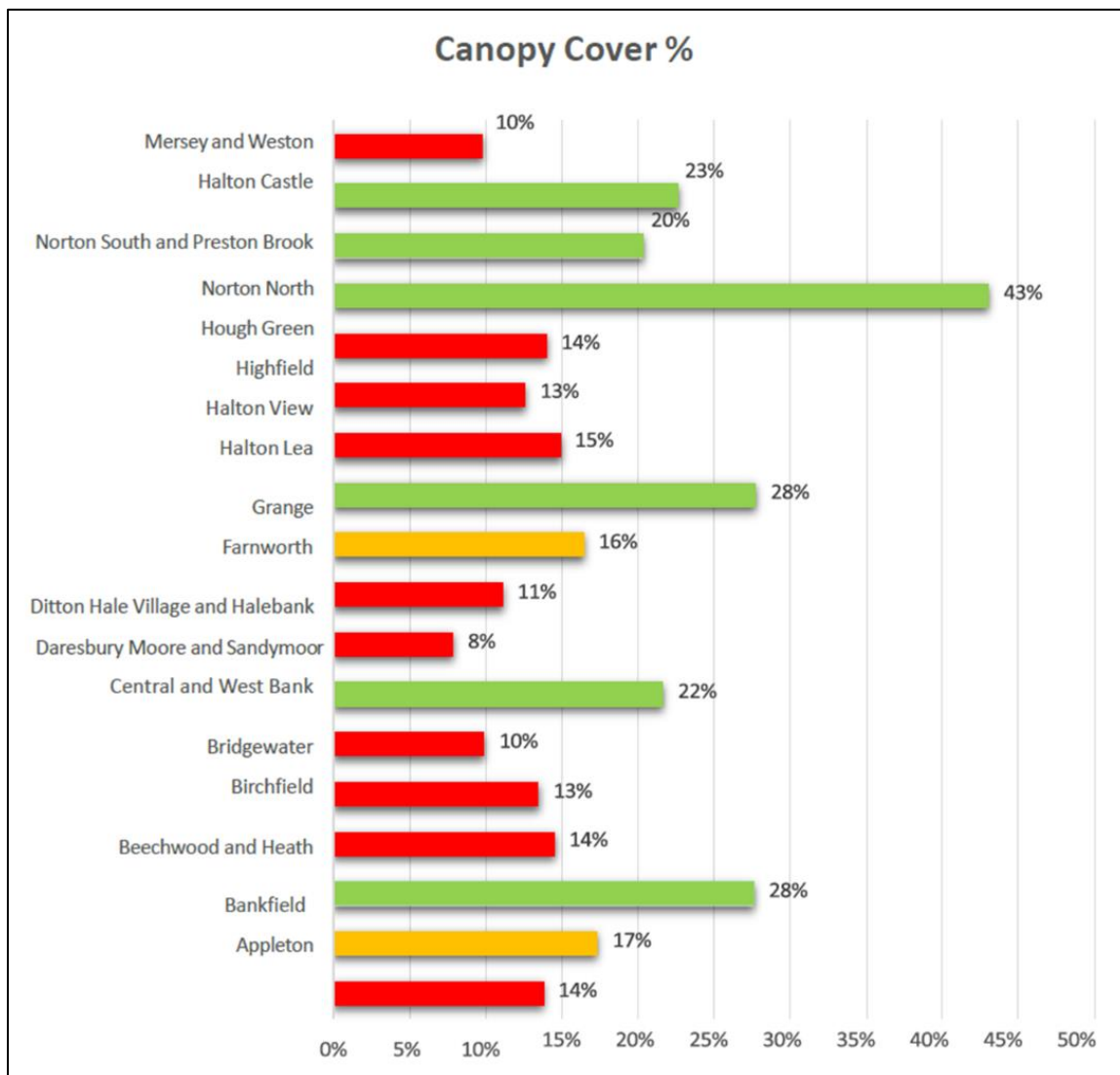
2.1 HALTON'S URBAN FOREST OVERVIEW

Using the most recent data from Bluesky's National Tree Map we have been able to take a more comprehensive look at Halton's urban forest, with the data showing a total canopy cover of approximately 16.2% for the entire Borough. Although HBC canopy cover is slightly higher than the average of other local authorities at 15.8%, there is still room for improvement to achieve the UK Government target of 17.5% canopy cover by 2050. Recent studies have recommended that the UK canopy cover target should be 20% or more (Doick et al., 2017)

Halton, however, boasts a total of 6 wards exceeding the recommended target of 20% canopy cover according to our analysis of the Bluesky data, with Norton North having a total canopy cover of 43%. The data also shows that the Borough has at least 275,000 trees above 3m tall; these trees are spread throughout the 18 wards, all with different varying coverage. Approximately 68,000 of these trees are located on Halton Borough Councils land; this makes Halton Borough Council one of the biggest custodians of trees in the Borough.

We have used this information to improve our understanding of the current situation in our urban forest. We have been able to identify the total canopy cover within the Borough, calculate the canopy cover per ward, and identify 12 priority wards where increasing the canopy cover will be most beneficial to the public.

Figure 1: Halton Borough Councils approximate canopy cover in percentage per ward. Wards are displayed with a traffic light system indicating priority. Red top priority, Amber = medium priority, Green = no priority.



We have also used free open-source data provided by the Tree Equity Score UK to investigate the current disparities in Halton’s canopy cover and which neighbourhoods are benefiting the most or the least. The information we found has helped us identify neighbourhoods where tree planting efforts will have the most benefit to people’s health and wellbeing and climate resilience.

There are multiple factors that can impact an area's priority in addition to canopy cover alone. Our research suggests that factors such as population density, air pollution levels, temperature variation, Tree Equity Score, and Tree Canopy Gap can affect the benefits attained from increasing our canopy cover. By utilizing the open-source data available through Tree Equity Score UK, we have gained a deeper understanding of these benefits.

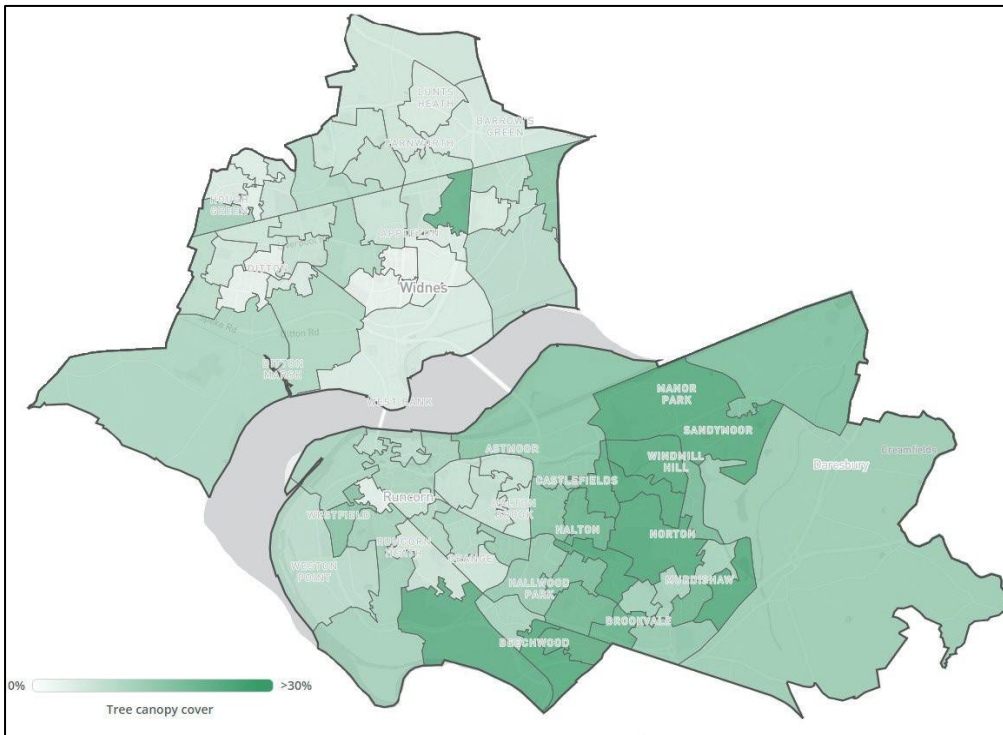
It is important to note that information collected by the Woodland Trust in their Tree Equity Score UK database is based on neighbourhoods, not wards, which may cause some discrepancies when compared to our Bluesky data on based on current wards.

Table 1: Table showing the 12 priority wards in order of canopy cover from lowest to highest; Source data from Bluesky.

Neighbourhoods	Canopy Cover %
Ditton Hale Village and Halebank	8%
Mersey and Weston	10%
Central and West Bank	10%
Farnworth	11%
Highfield	13%
Bridgewater	13%
Appleton	14%
Hough Green	14%
Birchfield	14%
Halton View	15%
Grange	16%
Bankfield	17%

It is important to note that although we have listed our wards based on their canopy cover percentage, we have not determined priority on this metric alone.

Figure 2: Tree canopy cover taken from Tree Equity score UK showing the neighbourhoods with the best canopy cover in darker green and lighter green indicating lower canopy cover.



Projects such as the Big Halton Forest, where the Council and its partners aim to plant 130,000 trees by 2030, will increase our tree equity score from 79 up to 100 by the time the trees reach medium size.

Not only will this increase Halton's tree equity score, but these trees will also contribute to society with their ecosystem services (see Figure 4). It is estimated that around 5.86 sq.-km of canopy expansion is required to reach an increase in canopy cover of 105,095 medium-sized trees. The Borough's current land size is 1,624 sq. km (Halton Borough Council, 2024).

Figure 3: A map of Halton's tree equity score sourced from treeequityscore.org

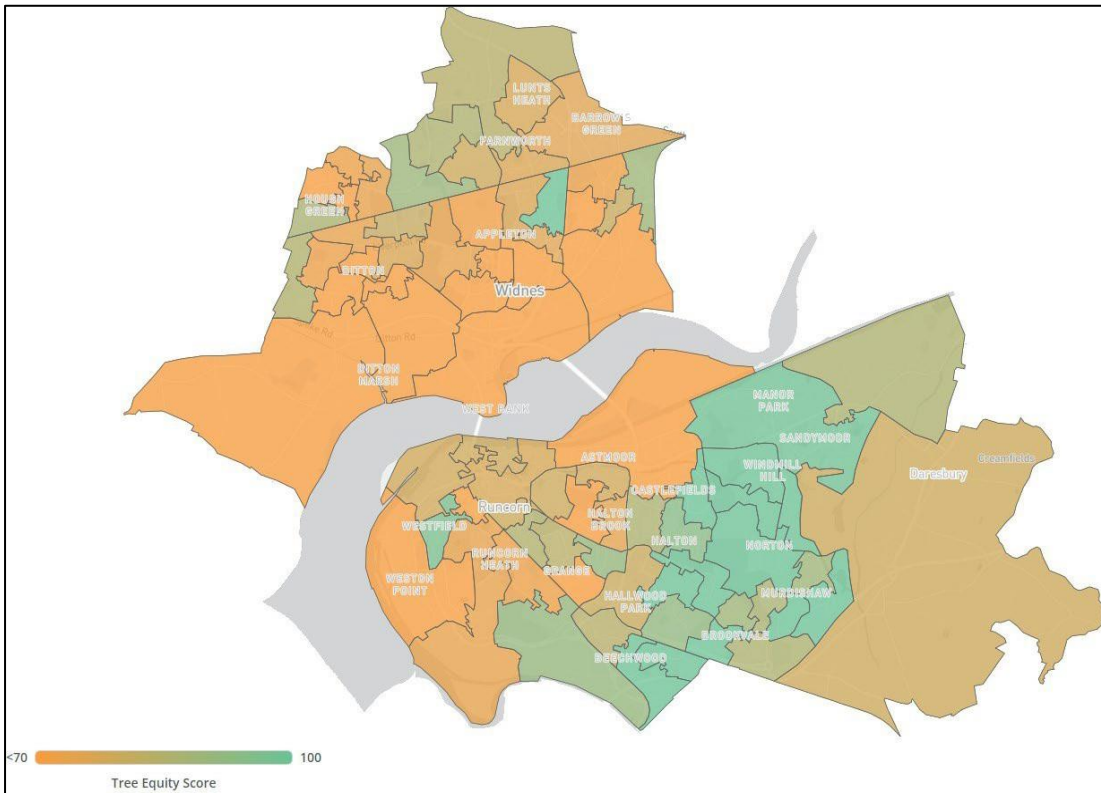
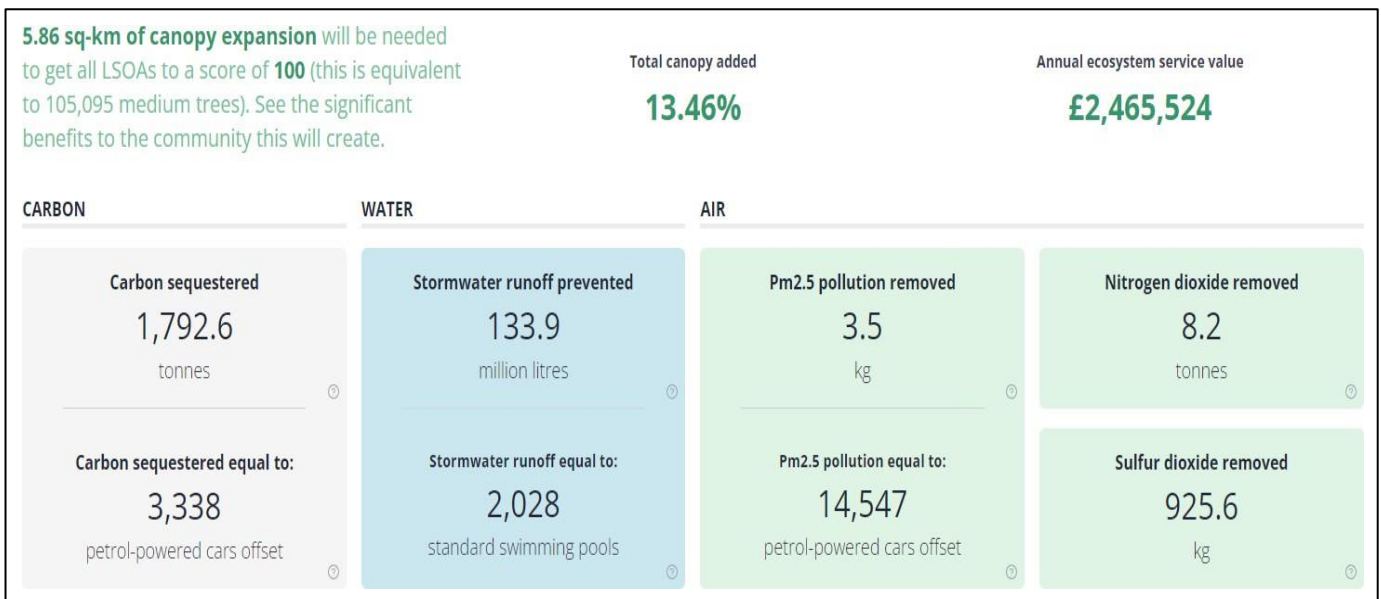


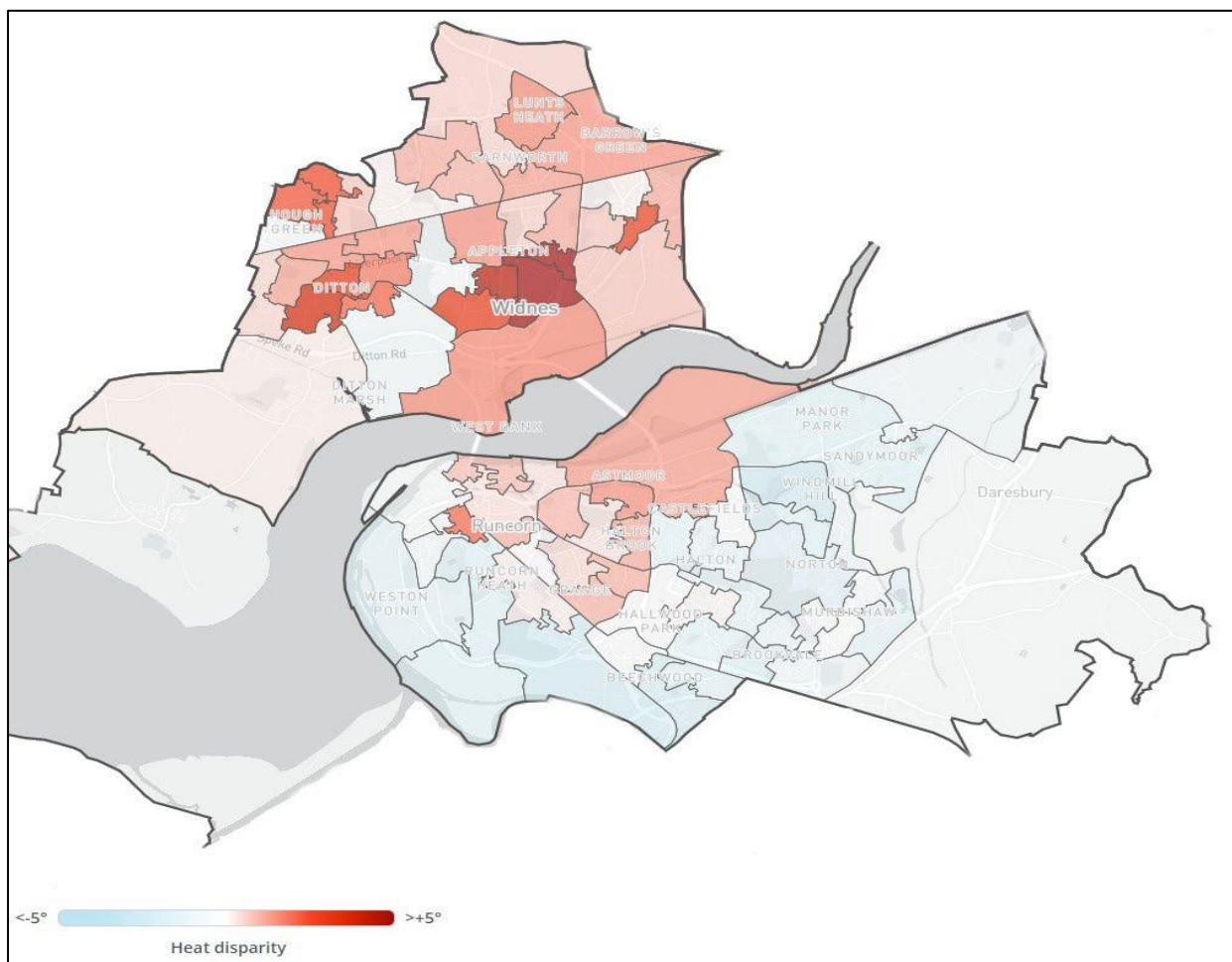
Figure 4: Image taken from <https://uk.treeequityscore.org/reports/local-authority/E06000006> Tree Equity UK Showing varying statistic on the ecosystem services provided by planting 105,095 trees that reach medium size.



The temperature variation within Halton's urban forest will be factored in when determining which areas require priority attention. It is common for urbanised regions to be warmer, typically by 1-2°C, when compared to their less urbanised counterparts.

The presence of a higher number of artificial surfaces that trap and gradually release heat, coupled with a lack of greenery, gives rise to the "urban heat island effect" (Ferranti et al., 2021). The Met Office has predicted that the UK will continue to experience hotter temperatures for more extended periods, with the highest temperature on record being 40.3°C in 2022.

Figure 5: Map of Halton's heat disparity. Sourced from Tree Equity Score UK.



Research shows that 20% of homes in England suffer from overheating, and this risk is expected to increase in the future. The elderly and vulnerable populations are particularly at risk, which means that there is a higher chance of overheating and poor indoor air quality. Vulnerable communities that lack access to indoor air cooling or green spaces are most affected by overheating. In addition, the elderly population is also at a higher risk (Ferranti et al., 2021). In Halton, the second largest demographic age group is 65+, which accounts for 19% of the Borough's total population (Halton Borough Council, 2024).

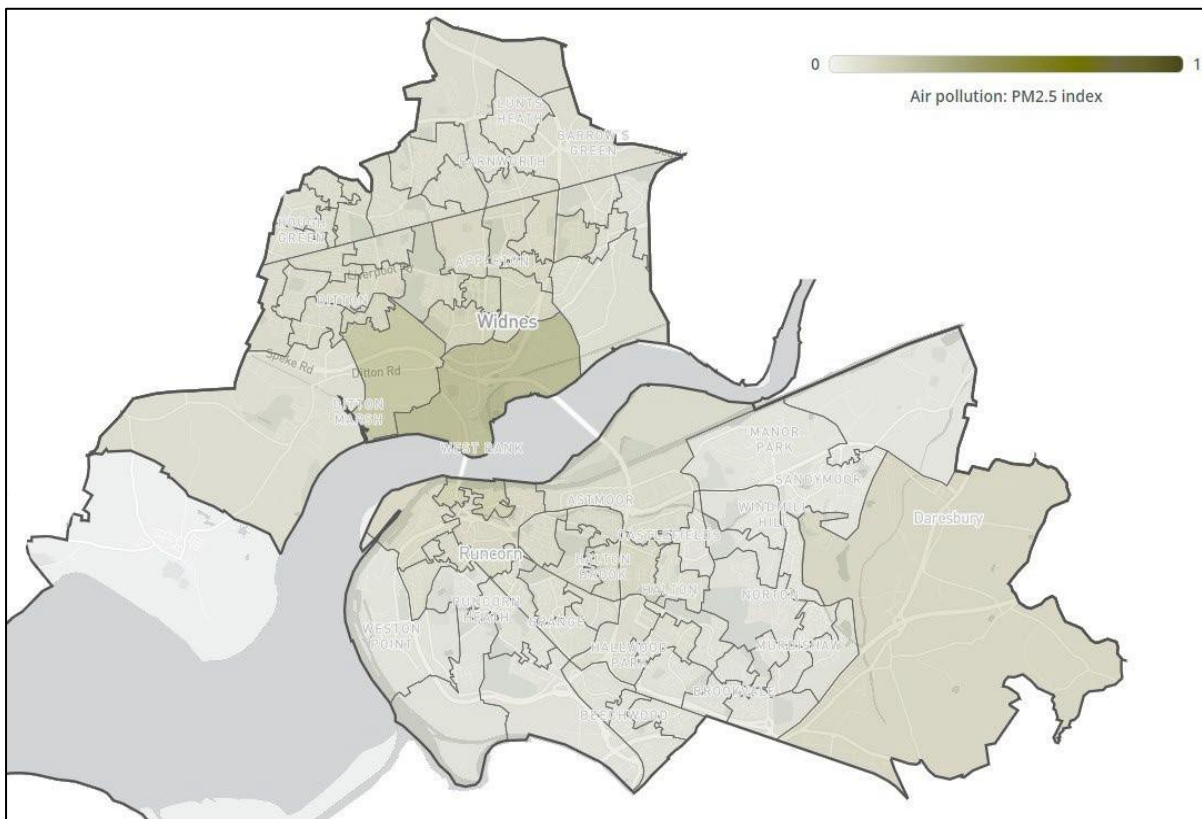
The air quality standards set by the World Health Organization (WHO) are not met in 90% of cities, and the WHO recognizes that air pollution is the leading environmental risk to global health. In the UK alone, poor outdoor air quality is responsible for 50,000 deaths annually. The most susceptible groups are children, the elderly, and people with pre-existing medical conditions.

Air pollution is largely determined by urban design with green infrastructure such as trees, parks, and green walls playing a vital part in combating particulates in the air. The design of urban infrastructure also decides how air pollution is dispersed (Ferranti et al., 2019); it is widely acknowledged that trees are an effective means of filtering small particulate matter from the air.

Research has indicated that conifers demonstrate better particulate filtration capabilities than other species, outperforming broadleaf trees by more than double (Matthias Steinparzer et al., 2023). It is essential to explore and implement effective means of mitigating air pollution.

In order to implement a strategic planting plan to maximise the benefit of conifers in our urban forest we must collect further data on our species diversity for future planting.

Figure 6: Map of Halton's Air pollution PM2.5 sourced from Tree Equity Score UK



2.2 THE BIG HALTON FOREST

The Big Halton Forest is an initiative which aspires to deliver a green recovery by tackling the climate emergency head on through the planting of trees and enhancement of green infrastructure of Runcorn and Widnes and its villages. The Council will work with individuals, communities, organisations, and businesses with the aim of adding a new tree for every citizen by 2030 across the Borough of Halton. This will be in addition to the approximately 1,500 new trees we plant each year.

The following goals for the Big Halton Forest are:

- Plant 130,000 trees by 2030, one for every person across Halton, which could increase canopy cover from 16.2% by 7.7% to a total of 23.9% when trees reach maturity.
- Restore or expand greenspaces and woodlands for the benefit of both communities and wildlife.
- Inspire a passion for trees, woods & waterfronts.

2.3 CHALLENGES

Not all wards will be able to increase their canopy cover due to varying constraints such as:

- Space availability - Not all wards will have the same available space for expanding green spaces or appropriate soil volume for planting trees.
- Infrastructure – The current and existing infrastructure such as buildings, roads and utilities often play a pivotal role in the canopy cover of urban areas.
- Cost – Some built up urban areas can cost considerably more to plant, establish, and maintain trees due to access and ground conditions.
- Community engagement – It is important that the stakeholders affected most by the planting of the trees are informed and engaged in the selection, planting, and establishment processes. Effective engagement can reduce unwanted vandalism and creates a sense of community and ownership towards the trees.

- Species selection – It is important that the correct tree is chosen for the local climate and growing conditions.
- Long-term sustainability – Ensuring the long-term survival of newly planted trees is vital to increasing the canopy cover of our Borough and reaching our canopy cover targets.

3. CONTEXT

Halton Borough Council has adopted the following Plans, Strategies and Guidance which support this strategy document.

- Delivery and Allocations Local Plan (2022)
- Sustainability Appraisal Report
- Habitats Regulations Assessment
- Halton Borough Council Climate Change Action Plan 2022 – 2027
- Halton Borough Council Infrastructure Plan

These documents provide a strategic plan to deliver a network of high-quality green spaces. They set out to ensure green space will be designed and managed as a multifunctional resource, delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits. Trees and woodlands are a very important part of this and play a vital role in defining Halton's green environment.

Woodlands, especially old trees and ancient woodlands are amongst our richest habitats. The highest levels of biodiversity are often found in woodlands that are actively and sensitively managed. Their diversity is even greater when they form part of a mixed landscape near other features such as ponds, grasslands and even residential gardens.

Hedgerows linking woodlands act as wildlife corridors and so greatly promote the extent and range of wildlife. To protect this ecological asset an evaluation will be given to the sensitivity of the species and habitats identified to ensure public access remains appropriate, without affecting biodiversity.

The challenge in the future will be to maintain and enhance diversity. Planning and management needs to be aimed at providing a natural environment which is resilient to climate change. Climate change will impact on the range of native wild plants and animals and hence the character of our woods. Woodlands protect ground water from pollution and lessen the likelihood of flooding by intercepting rain before it reaches watercourses. Strategically planted shelterbelts intercept air pollutants.

To realise integrated and multifunctional landscape management the Council will work closely with external partners and a variety of landowners. The Trees and Woodland Strategy is mutually compatible with these overlapping plans and strategic documents and thus provides a clear direction for the management of the Halton's Green space and natural environment assets.

3.1 THE LOCAL PLAN

The Delivery and Allocations Local Plan (DALP) 2022 provides a robust and up-to-date policy framework to guide future development within the Borough. This document reviews, replaces or compliments several core strategy documents. It is important to note that the Local Plan should be read as a whole as the policies are cross cutting and inter-relate.

3.2 SECTION 20- KEY POLICIES IN THE LOCAL PLAN PERTINENT TO THIS STRATEGY

HE1: Natural Environment and Nature Conservation

Halton benefits from a broad range of diversity in landscapes and townscapes, which identify the area's unique and beautiful natural environment. There are also several designated areas identified for their unique landscape or rare habitats and species that require protection from development which would be damaging and harmful. The Council recognises the importance of these features and assets and the planning policies contained within this document provide the opportunity to ensure that not only are these features and assets protected, but where possible enhanced for the enjoyment of current and future generations.

HE2: Heritage Assets and the Historic Environment

Halton contains a range of heritage assets which are not only of historical value but provide a social and economic resource and contribute to the character of the Borough. These assets should therefore be conserved and where possible enhanced for current and future generations and to ensure a strong sense of place and improve local distinctiveness.

Halton Borough Council has a duty to conserve and enhance the significance, character and appearance of the Borough's historic environment when carrying out its statutory functions and through the planning system.

HE3: Waterways and Waterfronts

One of the defining characteristics of the Borough are its unique waterways and waterfronts. This includes the Mersey Estuary which both divides and unites the principal towns of Runcorn and Widnes, the Manchester Ship Canal, the Bridgewater Canal, St Helens Canal and the Weaver Navigation. Halton's waterways provide an attractive setting for waterside development, are a recreational resource and contribute to the Borough's 'sense of place'.

HE4: CS(R)21: Green Infrastructure

Green Infrastructure is a network of multi-functional green spaces, urban and rural, which can deliver a wide range of environmental, economic, and quality of life benefits for local communities. Therefore, Green Infrastructure is considered a key element similar to water, waste, transport and energy infrastructure.

Recognising greenspace as an important land-use, the Plan seeks to ensure adequate provision in the Borough in terms of quantity, quality, and distribution. 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.

HE5: Trees and Landscaping - Woodlands, Trees and Hedgerows

Woodlands, Trees and Hedgerows are an important visual and ecological asset; they provide a significant contribution to an area's distinctiveness as well as playing a significant role in mitigating and addressing climate change. Whilst the landscape of Halton encompasses all outdoor space; from town centre squares and pedestrian precincts to the Green Belt and open countryside, each play a key part in creating a distinct local character.

HE7: Pollution and Nuisance

This policy together with CS23 – Local Plan: Managing Pollution and Risk looks to ensure that development considers the potential environmental impacts on people, buildings, land, air and water arising from the development itself and any former use of the site, including adverse effects arising from pollution and nuisance.

HE9: Water Management and Flood Risk

In recent years, planning policy relating to flood risk has evolved to reflect the greater concern and awareness of the consequences of flooding has to the health and safety of the public. Parts of Halton are at risk from different sources of flooding including, main rivers, ordinary watercourses, surface water runoff, sewer flooding and the residual risks associated with artificial water bodies such as the Manchester Ship Canal, the Bridgewater Canal, St Helens Canal, the Weaver Navigation and reservoirs.

4. COUNCIL POLICY

In December 2018 'A Strategy for Halton's Trees & Woodlands' was approved by the Executive Board following a report of the member led Tree and Woodland Working Group established by the Urban Renewal Policy & Performance Board.

The aim of the strategy was to clearly articulate how the Council manages its trees and woodlands within the resources that it has. It sets out exactly what the Council will and will not do in relation to tree and woodland management.

The strategy explains how the Council will inspect its trees and woodland and how it will prioritise its work programme.

In 2022 the Council agreed its first formal five-year Climate Change Action Plan for the years 2022 – 2027 and appointed an Executive Board Member for Climate Change with the aim for the Council's operations to reach carbon net zero by 2040.

Within this five-year plan it was recognised that actions are already underway in the wider Borough & with Council partners on tackling climate change, as the Council journeys to a wider Borough- wide climate change strategy.

Two key themes of this action plan which relate to this tree and woodland strategy are climate change mitigation and climate change sequestration.

A key initiative to help address these themes is the Big Halton Forest which was also launched in 2022. This is an eight-year plan to help improve green and blue infrastructure in Halton and includes a pledge to plant an additional 130,000 new trees across Halton by 2030.

4.1 LITERATURE, LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE.

Other relevant legislation/guidance includes:

Environment Act 2021 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/contents>

National Planning Policy Framework

[https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework --2](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2)

‘A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment’ (2018)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan>

DEFRA Tree Health Resilience Strategy (2018) Building the resilience of our trees, woods and forests to pests and diseases

Tree health resilience strategy (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Forestry Commission – How to protect and manage the Urban Forest.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-protect-and-manage-the-urban-forest>

4.2 NATIONAL TREE SAFETY GROUP

The National Tree Safety Group (NTSG) comprises representatives from 20 organisations. These range from tree specialists such as the Arboricultural Association and the Institute of Chartered Foresters, to tree owners and managers such as the Country Land and Business Association, National Farmers Union and the Forestry Commission, to conservation organisations such as the National Trust, Woodland Trust and Ancient Tree Forum.

The aim of the NTSG is to develop a nationally recognised approach to tree safety management and to provide guidance that is proportionate to the actual risks from trees. Its national guidance document entitled Common Sense Risk

Management of Trees was released in December 2011. The NTSG guidance is underpinned by 5 key principals:

- Trees provide a wide variety of benefits to society
- Trees are living organisms that naturally lose branches or fail
- The overall risk to human safety is extremely low. With the annual risk of death being 1 in 10,000,000
- Tree owners have a legal duty of care
- Tree owners should take a balanced and proportionate approach to tree safety management

The NTSG has produced three documents:

- Common sense risk management of trees (The main guidance document)
- A Landowner Summary (for estates and smallholdings)
- Managing Trees for Safety (for the domestic tree owner)

These are downloadable free from the Forestry Commission’s Publications website <https://ntsgroup.org.uk>

4.3 STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

It is very important that stakeholders and residents living in Halton understand the principles set out in this strategy, particularly that cyclical renewal and management of trees is necessary to ensure their long term sustainability. This strategy will be available on the Halton Borough Council web site.

It is hoped residents will be assured that Halton's trees are being sensitively and professionally managed to achieve long term sustainability. The Council would like residents to feel a sense of involvement and communal ownership and take pride in Halton's extensive tree cover, woods and greenspaces. The Council will seek to support further community-based projects regarding trees, in particular to encourage schools and youth groups to become involved in Halton's trees and woodland. This work will build on successful schemes delivered with local housing associations, sports clubs, volunteer groups, and private businesses through the delivery of the Big Halton Forest.

Trees and woodlands offer a variety of outdoor opportunities for recreation and learning. The priority will be to provide high quality access near to where people live and work. To ensure trees and woodlands remain valued as a 'lifelong' resource appropriate information needs to be freely available. This should include recognition of their historic, archaeological and cultural significance.

Partnership working promotes community involvement, and so links to existing partners should be strengthened and new ones established by providing advice and support to communities with plans to create and maintain their own woodland or become involved in managing existing blocks of woodland in their neighbourhood. Partnerships can help support funding applications and could qualify for funding from organisations such as The Woodland Trust.

To create further engagement with stakeholders the Council employed 2 rangers in 2021 who have actively worked with volunteer groups on planting projects. The Council is currently in discussions with The Mersey Forest regarding the renewal of our membership.

5. SERVICE DELIVERY, POLICIES AND PRIORITIES

5.1 STANDARDS OF SERVICE DELIVERY

Trees are complex organisms with a long natural lifecycle, to manage them sustainably, a strategic operational approach is essential. As understanding of the way pruning affects trees has evolved; the basic premise has not changed: all tree surgery is not for the benefit of the tree, other than to enable it to continue to coexist in an artificial human environment.

The management and maintenance of trees is therefore a complex and skilled task, often requiring different services and organisations to work closely together in order that trees are appropriately managed to minimise the risk they may pose and may be posed to them.

An important part of delivering an effective risk management system is ensuring that the tree managers have the pre-requisite skills, with suitable qualifications and experience to meet the challenges.

The complexity of tree stock within Halton requires well trained Arboriculturists as an integral part of a defensible tree and woodland management service. This has been substantiated by industry best practice, peer review and confirmed in common law precedence.

The breadth of arboriculture knowledge and skill is not only needed by those who undertake the works, pruning, planting and removing trees, but in this highly regulated industry, also those inspecting the trees, responding to service requests and specifying works must be appropriately qualified.

Analysis of tree related enquiries has enabled the Council to monitor customer concerns, prioritise work and the way that it is undertaken. Improved levels of consultation and communication have been developed, which are detailed below. Equally, firmer policies have been developed that inform residents of the Council's actions in respect to common concerns. These policies are integral to a more proactive level of service delivered within financial constraints.

5.2 COMMON LAW RIGHTS

In the English legal system, Common Law refers to laws that have been developed through precedent set by similar cases as opposed to being created through legislative statutes.

Under English Common Law Rights, you have a right to remove (abate) the nuisance associated with trees encroaching onto your property. The following advice with respect to encroaching trees is given for general guidance only. You are advised to obtain independent legal advice before acting:

- a) You can only consider removing those parts of the tree from the point where they cross the boundary of your property. You must not go beyond your property boundary without the permission of the tree owner. You have no legal right to cut or remove any part of a tree that does not overhang your property.
- b) You are strongly advised to consult a professional tree surgeon for guidance on how best to prune back encroaching trees, unless the works are trivial meaning you could do the works with hand secateurs or similar.
- c) You are strongly advised to tell the owner of the trees what you plan to do. You can find out if the trees are owned by the Council by telephoning the Halton Direct Link.
- d) Before you consider doing any works to the trees you should find out if they are protected by a Tree Preservation Order or if they are in a Conservation Area. If trees are protected, then you will need to gain consent by making an application / give notice to the Council. For guidance on how to check if the trees are protected and how to make an application, please telephone the Contact Centre.
- e) Legally you do not own those parts of the tree that encroach over your property, and you should make arrangements to return these to the owner. You are advised to discuss this with your neighbour to agree a mutually acceptable solution.
- f) If your actions render a tree to be unsafe you may be liable for any subsequent damage, or injury that results from tree failure.

5.3 LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS (MEETING THE COUNCIL'S DUTY OF CARE)

The risk presented by trees is low. For example, the Health and Safety Executive estimate the risk of death caused by a failing tree or branch is 1 in 10,000,000, which is much lower than the risks accepted by people on a day-to-day basis such as using the roads where the risk of death is 1 in 16,800. These low risks must also be balanced with the benefits trees provide.

The Council has a duty of care to employees and members of the public in respect of the safety of trees in its ownership. This does not mean that the Council must maintain all its trees in a safe condition. Trees are dynamic organisms, subject to the forces of nature, which can fail without showing warning symptoms and can never be classed as entirely safe. However, the Council must try to keep risks presented by trees as low as is reasonably practicable.

The most recent guidance in the Tree Health and Safety Group's "Common Sense Guide to the Management of Tree Safety" published by the Forestry Commission in 2011 sets out how a Local Authority should approach tree safety. This involves zoning areas based on the usage of the ground around the trees, working out a level of tree inspection needed, employing trained and competent staff to complete various levels of survey and recording and storing all findings on a database.

In support of this Strategy the Council has produced a Tree Risk Management Plan (Appendix 4), which includes all the measures recommended in current guidance.

6. GENERAL POLICIES

6.1 PRIORITIES

TP1: The Council will maintain its trees and woodlands in accordance with its obligations to observe duty of care and the safety of both people and property.

TP1.1: Implement the regime of periodic tree inspections and data recording as set out in the Tree Risk Management Plan.

TP1.2: Staff employed to manage the Council's tree stock will keep up to date training and continued professional development to ensure that tree management decisions are well founded and in line with current industry practice.

TP1.3: To undertake tree works in line with the risk-based prioritisation.

TP2: The Council will encourage a better understanding of tree and woodland management and in so doing promote community involvement.

TP2.1: The Council will seek to disseminate information on its tree and woodland activities as widely as possible.

TP2.2: The aim will be to support and maximise community involvement in the Halton's trees and woodlands.

TP3: The removal of trees and woodlands shall be resisted, unless there is sound Health and Safety, or arboricultural reasons supported within this strategy.

TP3.1: The removal of healthy trees in response to complaints shall be resisted unless the complaint has an overriding justification, and no alternative management practice can be implemented.

TP4: The Council will maintain its trees and woodlands in a way that demonstrates best practice, providing worthy examples of management for others to follow.

TP4.1: To provide plans for long term management and development of trees and woodlands as essential components within the landscape.

TP4.2: To ensure the best use of resources is made during the planning of operations.

TP4.3: To supplement the Council's spending by seeking additional funding from external sources wherever possible.

TP4.4: To realise any economic potential of trees, and woodlands, or materials generated from them, where this does not conflict with the other policies and priorities of the Strategy.

7. OPERATIONAL POLICIES

7.1 BIRD DROPPINGS

TP5: Council trees will not be pruned or removed to stop or reduce bird droppings from trees, nor will the Council remove bird droppings from private land.

Bird droppings may be a nuisance, but the problem is not considered a sufficient reason to prune or remove a tree. Nesting birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (and other related wildlife law).

TP5.1: Residents will be advised of their powers to exercise your Common Law right to remove the nuisance associated with encroaching trees or alternatively that warm soapy water is usually sufficient in removing bird droppings.

7.2 BLOSSOM

TP6: Council trees will not be removed to stop or reduce blossom from trees and fallen blossom will not be removed from private land.

Blossom is a natural occurrence, which cannot be avoided by pruning.

TP6.1: Roads, streets, foot or cycle paths will be swept of excessive blossom as part of normal cleaning cycles.

TP6.2: Residents will be informed of their entitlement to exercise their Common Law right to remove (abate) the nuisance associated with encroaching trees.

7.3 LOW TREE BRANCHES; ROAD, CYCLE OR FOOTPATHS

TP7: The Council will carry out work to a Council owned tree with the aim to maintain a minimum of:

- Road – 5.5 metres height clearance to comply with Highways Act S 154
- Cycle path next to a road or highway – 3 metres height clearance
- Footpath next to a road or highway – 2.5 metres height clearance

TP7.1: These works will be identified and actioned in routine pro-active surveying and as a result of reported breaches of these standards.

7.4 TREES OVERHANGING PROPERTY

TP8: Council owned trees will not be pruned or removed to stop the nuisance of overhanging branches.

TP8.1: All trees will be inspected every on a frequency determined by the trees target occupancy level in line with QTRA guidance. Maintenance will be carried out if the tree is considered likely to touch property structures prior to re-inspection.

TP8.2: Residents will be informed of their entitlement to exercise their Common Law right to remove (abate) the nuisance associated with encroaching trees.

7.5 DRAINS

TP9: The roots of Council owned trees will not be pruned, removed or cut to prevent roots entering a drain that is already broken or damaged.

TP9.1: Residents will be advised that tree roots typically invade drains that are already broken or damaged.

TP9.2: Trees themselves very rarely break or damage a drain. Tree roots found in drains are usually due to an underlying problem with a broken pipe.

TP9.3: If residents are concerned about the condition of their drains, they are advised to contact their Water and Sewerage Company or a drainage expert.

7.6 FRUIT, BERRIES, NUTS AND SEEDS

TP10: Council owned trees will not be pruned or removed to stop or reduce the nuisance of fruit, berries, nuts or seeds, nor will the Council remove fallen fruit, seeds or seedlings from private land including gutters.

TP10.1: Should fallen fruit lead to significant anti-social problem residents will be advised to contact the police.

TP10.2: Residents will be advised that the maintenance of gutters is the responsibility of the landowner and that the Council is not obliged to remove fruit/berries/nuts/seeds or seedlings that may have fallen from Council owned trees.

TP10.3: Residents or the Council's tree team will report a road, street or highway that needs to be cleaned to the Environment Services.

7.7 POISONOUS BERRIES

TP11: There is no general policy to remove trees bearing poisonous fruit / foliage (such as yew trees). However, where it is claimed or known that unsupervised young children or livestock are likely to be exposed to poisonous berries or foliage, such cases will be investigated and appropriate action considered.

TP11.1: All reported concerns over a tree with poisonous berries that unsupervised young children are exposed to will be investigated promptly.

7.8 LEAVES

TP12: Council owned trees will not be pruned or removed to stop or reduce leaf fall nor will the Council remove fallen leaves from private property.

TP12.1: Residents will be advised that the loss of leaves from trees in the autumn is part of the natural cycle and cannot be avoided by pruning.

TP12.2: Residents will be advised that the maintenance of gutters is the responsibility of the landowner, and the Council is not obliged to remove leaves that may have fallen from Council owned trees.

TP12.3: Where leaves have been reported to have accumulated on Council owned roads, footpaths these will be reported to Environment Services.

7.9 LIGHT

TP13: A Council owned tree will not be pruned or removed to improve natural light in or to a property. This includes properties with (or planned to be installed) solar panels.

TP 13.1: Residents will be advised that in law there is no general right to light.

7.10 SUCKERS FROM TREE ROOTS

TP14: Council owned trees will not be pruned or removed to stop or reduce the nuisance of sucker growth on private land.

TP14.1: Residents will be advised of their rights to remove suckers on their land.

7.11 PERSONAL MEDICAL CONDITION – COMPLAINT

TP15: There is no policy regarding personal medical conditions that may be specifically affected by nearby Council owned trees. Such cases will be investigated, and appropriate action considered.

TP15.1: Residents will be informed of their entitlement to exercise their Common Law right to remove (abate) the nuisance associated with encroaching trees.

7.12 POLLEN

TP16: Council owned trees will not be pruned or removed to stop or reduce the release of pollen.

TP16.1: Residents will be advised that pollen is a natural and seasonal problem.

7.13 TREES AFFECTING STREET LIGHTS, SIGNS AND TRAFFIC VIEW

TP17: Work on Council owned trees will be undertaken to maintain clear sight lines (where feasible) at junctions, access points (associated with a street, road or highway), traffic signals and street signs.

TP17.1: These works will be identified and actioned in routine pro-active surveying and as a result of reported, breach of standards.

7.14 SAP AND HONEYDEW

TP18: Council owned trees will not be pruned or removed to reduce honeydew or other sticky residue from trees.

TP18.1: Residents will be advised that honeydew is a natural and seasonal problem. When new trees are planted, we try to choose trees less likely to cause this problem.

7.15 SUBSIDENCE DAMAGE TO PROPERTY (TREE-RELATED)

TP19: The Council has in place active tree management systems to minimise risk of damage being caused to buildings and other structures because of the action of Council owned trees.

TP19.1: Residents will be advised that if they have concerns about tree related subsidence damage to property, that they should contact their insurance provider for advice.

TP19.2: If a resident wishes to make a formal claim for damage they will be advised to contact the Council Insurance Team Direct. Alternatively, the case will be investigated by the Council's Environment Services Team, once reported.

7.16 TRIP HAZARDS

TP20: The Council will make safe an unacceptable trip hazard caused by the growth of Council owned trees.

TP20.1: All reported cases will be investigated and actioned accordingly.

7.17 TREE TOUCHING BUILDING

TP21: If a Council owned tree is touching a property (house, boundary wall, garage etc.) action will be taken to remove the problem.

TP21.1: All reported cases will be investigated and actioned accordingly.

7.18 TREE TOO BIG / TOO TALL

TP22: Council owned trees will not be pruned or removed because they are considered to be too big or tall.

TP22.1: Residents will be advised that a tree may seem too big for where it is, but this does not make it dangerous.

TP22.2: All trees inspected every on a frequency determined by the trees target occupancy level in line with QTRA guidance.

7.19 TREE AND TV / SATELLITE RECEPTION

TP23: Council owned trees will not be pruned or removed to prevent interference with TV / satellite installation / reception.

TP23.1: Residents will be advised that their satellite or TV provider may be able to suggest an alternative solution to the problem.

7.20 VISTAS AND VIEWS

TP24: Council owned trees will not be pruned or removed to improve the view from a private property.

TP24.1: The Council will promote the amenity value offered by trees in their own right.

7.21 WILD ANIMAL / INSECT PEST

TP25: Council owned trees will not be pruned or removed to stop or reduce incidents of perceived pests such as bees, wasps, or wild animals, unless it is in the national or public safety interest to do so due to a harmful invasive species.

TP25.1: On private land residents will be advised that external companies provide a chargeable service for removing certain pest species.

8. POLICIES AND PRIORITIES FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF COUNCIL OWNED TREES

The Council's tree stocks can be divided into 6 main categories as follows:

- 1. Street Trees and Trees in Residential Areas:** Street trees are planted in pavements or road verges. These help to filter traffic pollution; provide shade for car parking and improve the overall appearance of the street scene. Trees in residential areas are trees growing within and around housing estates to enhance the local environment.
- 2. Parks and Open Spaces:** These are frequently the trees of greatest local significance and provide maximum visual amenity for both residents and visitors.
- 3. Woodlands:** These are usually dating back to historical local landowners and areas of Halton's agricultural past. These woodlands are usually a valuable wildlife and amenity resource within the urban fringe and form many of Halton's Local Nature Reserves.
- 4. Highway Structure:** Mostly new plantings alongside major roads to attenuate noise; filter traffic pollution and provide visual amenity and habitat for wildlife corridors.
- 5. Village and Rural Trees:** The villages have a unique character, much of which is achieved by their content of historic trees, as well as those growing within the surrounding countryside.
- 6. New and Replacement Planting:** policies and priorities in respect of new and replacement planting are a key element of the strategy and decisions made now will have a bearing on the future resilience and sustainability of Halton's tree cover.

Each category of tree cover is assessed below and the specific policies and priorities that relate to them are detailed.

8.1 STREET TREES AND TREES IN RESIDENTIAL AREAS

The trees in streets and residential areas have to survive in difficult environments. Utilities demand space, as do road signs, streetlights and aerial telecommunications. The limited space is made even more challenging because of polluting car emissions, road salt, oil and other contaminants. Against the odds, trees can and do survive but often with a limited life expectancy.

The character of Halton's street trees vary, from the older roadside planting in areas like Higher Runcorn and Northern Widnes, to the newer developments of Upton Rocks and Sandymoor.

Many of Halton's streets have tree populations that are over-mature. Such trees are vulnerable to climatic change, disease and damage. As time progresses this overmature population of street trees will be removed as individual trees deteriorate. In these areas new trees will be introduced between the mature specimens to ensure that there will be continuous future tree cover.

A large proportion of trees fringe housing estates that enhance the environment and are very important to the quality of life for the residents. However, as the trees mature, design faults such as planting trees too close to each other, property and gardens and selecting inappropriate species for a given situation become evident.

Problems of branch and root encroachment are therefore common and make up a high proportion of enquiries to the Council.

TP26: To endeavour to protect street trees from threats such as loss of verges and damage to same.

TP26.1: Work with and monitor the activities of utility companies to minimise accidental operational damage to trees.

TP27: To place a priority on the replacement of ageing street trees; particularly where these adjoin major traffic routes. Planting will ensure the selection of the most appropriate species for the location.

TP27.1: To plant new and replacement street trees in appropriate sites, giving priority to streets where trees are currently standing or have been in the past.

TP27.2: To consider alternative planting positions and methods of establishment where maintenance of street trees in the same positions of the trees to be replaced will be either unduly difficult or expensive to maintain.

TP28: To renew and restructure tree stocks planted within residential areas;

TP28.1: Consider a phased removal of trees growing too close to buildings and replace with new planting more appropriate to the situation or relocate planting areas to more suitable sites in the neighbourhood. Replanting will be, as far as is practicable, carried out using a combination of standard trees, whips and bare root transplants.

TP28.2: To thin dense groups of trees to allow full crown development where there is sufficient space.

TP28.3: To ensure that replacement planting is sufficient to retain the existing level of canopy cover in the area.

TP29: To maintain the formal arboriculture features in the urban landscape by careful management and timely renewal as required.

TP29.1: To consider the long-term development and safe life expectancy of mature avenues and instigate a policy of gradual renewal and replacement in advance of them becoming untenable. Measures could include pruning, total removal and replacement, partial removal and replacement.

TP30: To take action to restructure avenue trees planted with inappropriate species too close to neighbouring properties.

TP30.1: In areas where avenue trees pose a potential threat to adjoining buildings, the Council will manage or restructure the avenues to minimise the impact on the properties. Options will include but not be limited to:

- Removing avenue trees and replacing with low water demand species.
- Removing avenue trees adjoining buildings and filling the gaps with smaller low water demand species.
- As far as possible maintaining regular spacing and the avenue effect.

8.2 PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

Trees are fundamental to the structure of parks and very important contributors to the environment of the area. The nature of different parks and green spaces is very variable. For example, Victoria Park has a declining tree population displaying over maturity in comparison to Town Park with younger but neglected stock, which is now in need of management by selective thinning. The latter is now urgently required to prevent very high losses over the next ten years. For this reason, management must be planned on a site-by-site basis.

Certain newer areas of Halton contain large open spaces of short grass and minimal structural planting. These areas are ideal for enhancement. Research in The Woodland Trust's report "Trees or Turf" aims to demonstrate that management of woodlands could be markedly cheaper than maintaining some types of grassland. By creating small woodlands on such amenity grassland opportunities for wildlife can be promoted in addition to landscape enhancement.

An example of this has been realised in recent decades in the Arley Woods area of West Widnes, which now has an approved masterplan for its further development as a natural parkland. This area of land also includes a designated area of wild grassland which is valuable to nature. Town Park has also benefitted from its own bespoke masterplan, and further masterplans are in development for sites including Spike Island.

TP31: To maintain tree cover within Halton's parks by renewing the tree stocks and increasing the range of age classes present and Species diversity.

TP31.1: To commence a replacement programme that incorporates a diverse range of tree species and, where appropriate, to re-establish historic landscapes.

TP31.2: To ensure that management work takes into consideration the sensitivities of the residents who use and care about the parks. Ensure that the reasons for operations are explained to the public before commencement.

TP31.3: To carry out tree removal and replanting in a phased way rather than causing large amounts of disturbance and change to the landscape of the park in one operation.

TP31.4: To carry out replacement tree planting in anticipation of the need to replace older tree stocks in the future. Planting of low maintenance bare rooted whips with appropriate guards will be favoured over larger planting stock.

8.3 WOODLANDS

Woodland's provide considerable benefits in terms of ecosystem services, biodiversity and landscape amenity however, some woods have a flaw, which is that many trees, including some unsuitable fast-growing species are too close to residential properties as illustrated in Image 1 and Image 2. It has been identified that the issue of proximity, particularly encroaching branches, accounts for the majority of enquires received by the Council.

The Council will also work closely with the Local Planning Authority and developers to mitigate the effects of new development on existing mature woodlands (see Section 11).



Image 1 - Woodland trees affecting property 1



Image 2 - Woodland trees affecting property 2

TP32: The Council will seek to reduce impact of woodland trees on adjoining properties.

TP32.1: Where necessary, the woodland belts will be restructured cutting trees back from the edge of property boundaries. Following the tree removal new native small trees and woody shrubs will be planted to form a woodland fringe. The replanting will both replace the lost biomass and provide improved wildlife habitat. In addition to the edge clearance some light selective thinning will be carried out in the belts to ensure some of the best trees have room for proper crown development. The aim of the thinning is to slowly reduce the number of trees in some of the belts to achieve the effect of groves of full crowned trees rather than dense woodland conditions. However, this process will be done in stages, to maintain stability and to spread the significant financial impact.

TP32.2: Visual tree inspections will be periodically carried out on boundary trees to monitor the health and condition of the tree, any foreseeable risks to property will be assessed by a suitably trained officer. This assessment will determine what mitigation is needed if any.

TP33: Woods will be managed in a fully sustainable manner which may include periodic thinning to allow proper crown development and light to reach the woodland floor.

TP33.1: In suitable woods, selective thinning will be carried out removing no more than 10% of the trees by number.

TP33.2: Woodland belts that are unsuitable for either thinning or restructuring with a dense understory cover of species such as hawthorn and blackthorn will be managed as non-intervention areas.

TP34: The woods will not be clear felled, and management will be on a continuous cover basis.

TP34.1: Natural re-generation within the woodland belts will be managed and encouraged.

TP34.2: Management will endeavour to increase the age range and species diversity within the woods.

TP35: The Council will encourage community involvement and where practical, advise residents when work is proposed.

TP35.1: The Council will try to address the problems of anti-social behaviour in woodlands.

TP35.2: The Council will encourage community involvement in the woods and support projects such as Coppicing and Woodcraft.

8.4 HIGHWAY STRUCTURE

The Borough of Halton has excellent transport links being part of the region's transport network. The M56 motorway runs through the south of the Borough and the M62 to the North. These motorways are linked by the local roads network built during the 1960 and 70's as part of the New Town Development spanning the River Mersey with the Silver Jubilee Bridge and the new Mersey Gateway. This network of high-speed roads is heavily planted with pioneer species such as Poplar, Willow, Sycamore, Ash, Alder, Maple and Birch.

TP36: To maintain the formal arboriculture features in the Highway by careful management and timely renewal as required.

TP36.1: To consider the long-term development and safe life expectancy of highway tree plantings and instigate a policy of gradual renewal and replacement in advance of them becoming untenable. Measures could include pruning, total removal and replacement, partial removal and replacement.

TP36.2: To thin dense groups of trees to allow full crown development where there is sufficient space. Replanting will be, as far as is practicable, carried out using a combination of standard trees, whips and bare root transplants.

TP36.3: To ensure that replacement planting is sufficient to retain the existing level of screening and canopy cover in the area.

8.5 VILLAGE AND RURAL TREES

Many of the trees in the civil parishes and rural areas are privately owned. Despite this the Council still has responsibility for a small proportion. These trees include trees up to 200 years old and are amongst the oldest managed by the Authority.

Distinctive village scenes can be maintained and enhanced by planting tree species that originally generated such landscapes. The use of native species will be prioritised within locations where appropriate i.e. rural verges. In certain village locations, the use of non-native stock may be considered where site restrictions or the surrounding landscape dictates. For the foreseeable future planting of ash will not be supported.

Many trees have been planted on verges by village communities. Where possible, the Council has helped facilitate these requests by offering suitable planting locations and the commitment to manage those trees planted on Council-owned land. The Council will fulfil its duty of care in respect of Council-owned trees in villages which will be surveyed in line with the Tree Risk Management Plan.

TP37: The Council will preserve and enhance the distinctiveness of village and rural trees in its ownership.

TP37.1: To ensure that all Council-owned trees in Villages are mapped on the Tree database and receive appropriate inspections in line with the Tree Risk Management Plan.

TP37.2: To replace all trees which are removed in these areas and attempt to expand tree cover where this is appropriate.

TP37.3: To re-plant using suitable trees except where this would result in loss of familiar vernacular.

8.6 NEW AND REPLACEMENT PLANTING

A key aim of this strategy is to increase the canopy cover of trees within Halton by both increasing the rate in which we plant new trees and replacement planting. Opportunities to improve wildlife habitats and connectivity between woods and tree groups will be a major consideration in identifying new planting areas.

Prior to 2023, circa 1,500 trees annually were budgeted for as new or replacement plantings by the Council. The Big Halton Forest provides the opportunity to ensure new plantings across the Borough can be increased by 130,000 trees during the project period 2022 - 2030.

Trees as living organisms have a finite life expectancy. Whilst relatively long-lived, the stress and strain of the urban environment significantly shortens their life span. Tree surveys and inspections in Halton have revealed a large number which are not suitable for their location in the medium to long term.

The expansion of tree cover will be on a planned basis. To build in resilience to pests and diseases, planting stock will be selected from a wide range of genera and species. The guiding principle for new planting will be using no more than 10% of the same species, no more than 20% of the same genus and no more than 30% from the same plant family. However, this principle must be balanced with other factors such as site conditions and design criteria. The best way to have a resilient urban forest is by increasing its biodiversity.

While the aim is to produce a more even spread of canopy cover over Council owned land it is important that we set targets to achieve this within Council tree planting budgets. As detailed earlier within the strategy, the Council has very high levels of canopy cover on land within its ownership.

The aim will be to retain and expand this cover in the following ways:

- Council owned street trees that are removed will be replaced on a one for one basis, using established nursery grown standard trees.
- Trees felled owing to them being inappropriate for their location will typically be replanted on a one for one basis.
- Trees felled within groups, avenues or woodlands will not be replaced, where it is considered appropriate arboricultural or woodland management, to reduce competition between species.

Many of the problems encountered during the daily management of trees can be directly attributed to the inappropriate choice of species at the time of planting. Greatest long term economic savings in tree management can be achieved by ensuring the philosophy of “Right Tree in the Right Place” is followed every time a new or replacement tree is selected and planted.

Deciding which tree species to plant will take account of a range of factors beyond purely ornamental or conservation values. Trees must be selected in the light of the need for resilience to changes caused by climate change in particular drought resistance. Some diseases such as Ash Dieback will be a major limiting factor for the use of certain species or genera.

Planting is only the first stage in the process of planted trees achieving independence in the landscape. Well drafted planting specifications will ensure healthy trees are established, failures minimised, and defects, which could affect the mature condition of the tree, removed at the time which is most cost effective. A tree requires space in which to grow if it is to thrive and provide its many positive benefits. To achieve this any proposed site should provide adequate space for both the tree and, most importantly, its root system to develop in the long-term. Species selection must be with consideration to the tree's ultimate size.

The constraints of the urban environment can make the planting of street trees and avenues impractical. With fore-planning and management of open spaces, the addition of trees within the urban environment can be created.

TP38: The Council will encourage an increase in tree cover by new and replacement planting, placing great emphasis on the use of appropriate tree species.

TP38.1: To implement the planting plan that sustains the tree population, with emphasis on the long-term replacement of mature and over mature trees.

TP38.2: Secure new external funding to ensure the delivery of the Big Halton Forest initiative.

TP38.3: As and when the prospect arises, to work with other organisations to secure additional funding streams for the establishment and management of tree stocks.

TP38.4: To pay careful attention to the site conditions in particular providing sufficient space for root development.

TP38.5: To ensure that all planting stock used, of whatever type, is healthy and has a well- formed root structure. Imported plants must have spent at least one growing season in the UK and be free from pests and diseases.

TP38.6: To ensure all newly planted trees achieve independence in the landscape by virtue of a sustained programme of maintenance.

TP38.7: As far as is practicable, reduce the tree maintenance commitment by the use of smaller planting stock that will establish quickly and require less attention.

TP39: To maintain a high level of training and awareness of tree pests and diseases and take prompt action, in accordance with best practice guidance, to, as far as is practicable, alleviate the impact when they are discovered.

TP39.1: The condition of Council owned trees will be monitored as part of the normal health and safety inspections policy and promptly dealt with if they present a significant risk to the public. This does not mean that all infected or dead trees will be removed. The Council's policy on tree pests will be reviewed on an annual basis.

TP39.2: Where appropriate and advised, simple biosecurity measures such as cleaning boots, shoes and tyres after visiting woodlands will be implemented.

TP39.3: With regard to protected trees, the Council will not grant permission to fell infected ash trees unless the disease has caused the tree to become dangerous or to present a significant health and safety risk.

9. CLIMATE CHANGE

The effects of climate change, caused by anthropogenic carbon emissions which are enhancing the greenhouse effect of the upper atmosphere include summer drought and more frequent storm events. Measures to address mitigation, adaptation and sequestration for these predicted effects of climate change will be incorporated into the tree and woodland strategy wherever possible, taking full account of the Halton Borough Council Climate Change Action Plan 2022 – 2027 and associated action plans.

The urban forests in the UK are anticipated to experience substantial effects due to climate change. This is projected to result in changes in the dynamics of tree growth, health, and species composition, impacting the overall ecosystem.

The effects that Climate Change can have on our urban forests:

- Increased Temperature:
 - Impact: Rising temperatures can lead to heat stress in trees, affecting their growth and overall health.
 - Shift in Species: Some tree species may struggle to adapt to higher temperatures, leading to a change in species composition in urban forests.
- Changes in Precipitation Patterns:
 - Drought Stress: More frequent and severe droughts can increase water stress in trees, making them more vulnerable to pests and diseases.
 - Flooding: Intense rainfall events can lead to soil erosion, root damage, and increased risk of tree failure in urban areas.
- Pests and Diseases:
 - Range Expansion: Warmer temperatures may allow pests and diseases to thrive in regions where they were previously limited, posing a greater risk to urban trees.
 - New Invasive Species: Climate change can facilitate the introduction and establishment of new invasive species that can harm urban forests.

- Extreme Weather Events:
 - Storm Damage: More frequent storms and extreme weather events can cause physical damage to trees, leading to loss of canopy cover and reduced urban forest resilience.
 - Windthrow: Increased wind speeds associated with climate change can uproot trees and impact the structural integrity of urban forests.
- Altered Growing Seasons:
 - Phenological Shifts: Changes in growing seasons and flowering times can disrupt the ecological relationships between trees, pollinators, and other wildlife in urban environments.
 - Early Leafing: Warmer temperatures may trigger early leaf emergence, exposing trees to late frosts and potential damage.
- Carbon Sequestration:
 - Reduced Capacity: Climate change can affect the ability of urban forests to sequester carbon, potentially reducing their role in mitigating greenhouse gas emissions.
- Change in Strategies:
 - Tree Selection: Planting climate-resilient tree species that are better adapted to future conditions.
 - Water Management: Implementing irrigation systems to mitigate drought stress and improve tree health.
 - Green Infrastructure: Integrating urban forests with green infrastructure to enhance resilience and provide multiple benefits to cities.

9.1 BIO SECURITY

Climate change presents significant challenges to the biosecurity of urban forests in the UK. The warming climate and changes in environmental conditions increase the risk of invasive species infestations. As temperatures rise, invasive pests and diseases find more favourable conditions for establishment and spread, posing a threat to the health of urban trees. This shift in pest dynamics could lead to the expansion of ranges for existing pests, introducing new threats to the urban forest ecosystem.

Implementing effective biosecurity measures is crucial for safeguarding the health of Halton's urban forests.

- Regular monitoring of tree health to detect early signs of pest infestations or diseases.
- Educating the public on the importance of biosecurity and the role they play in preventing the spread of pests.
- Prioritising purchase of UK and Ireland Sourced and Grown (UKISG) tree stock.
- Raising awareness among stakeholders about the risks associated with invasive species.
- Developing and implementing effective risk management strategies to mitigate biosecurity risks.
- Engaging with relevant agencies such as the Forestry Commission North West Tree Health Group and Forest Research Tree Alert to enhance biosecurity awareness.
- Operation staff will be made aware of biosecurity protocols and best practices to prevent the spread of pests and diseases
- Ensure that all equipment used during tree surgery, such as cutting tools and climbing gear, is properly sanitized to prevent cross-contamination when working with diseased trees.

Key practices including regular monitoring and surveillance to detect early signs of pest infestations or diseases. Education and awareness initiatives play a vital role in informing the public about biosecurity risks and prevention methods. Conducting thorough risk assessments helps identify potential threats, leading to the development of targeted management strategies.

Enforcing quarantine measures for plant material and implementing integrated pest management strategies are essential components of biosecurity planning. Collaboration with government agencies, research institutions, and local communities enhances biosecurity efforts. Training programs for arborists and greenspace management professionals will improve the Councils ability to respond to biosecurity threats effectively.

By following these best practices, urban forest managers and stakeholders can create a resilient and sustainable urban forest ecosystem that is better equipped to combat the challenges of invasive species and climate change.

10. PEST AND DISEASE

The management of our urban forests has always been a difficult task. Due to the expansion of urbanisation threatening our natural environment the increase in international trade and climate change our urban forests are now in an extremely vulnerable position.

Since the 1960s, the UK has lost approximately 30 million Elm (*Ulmus procera*) trees due to the spread of Dutch Elm Disease (*Ophiostoma novo-ulmi*). This is a good example of the extent a pathogen can have on our trees if not prepared.

Ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) has been present in the UK since 2012, we are expected to lose up to 80% of our Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*). *Phytophthora austrocedri* and *Phytophthora lateralis* are also present in the UK. These pathogens alone can cause a devastating effect to our tree stock if not managed appropriately.

10.1 PRIORITY PESTS AND DISEASES THAT ARE PRESENT IN THE UK.

Ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*)

Host species:

Ash, with European ash being very susceptible.

Figure 7: Diamond shaped lesion on the stem of Fraxinus excelsior. Credit Peter Crow - Forest Research



Figure 8: Dieback of canopy in Fraxinus excelsior. Credit Gosling - Woodland Trust.



Ash Dieback, otherwise known as Chalara has had a significant impact on the ash trees of the UK. The disease was first identified in the UK in 2012 and has since spread throughout the country, affecting trees of all ages. The fungus grows inside the tree, blocking the essential water and nutrient transport systems, often leading to fatality. This disease has resulted in significant losses of ash trees in the UK.

Chalara causes distinctive diamond-shaped lesions on the branches and stems of the tree, usually near the point where a shoot or branch connects to the trunk. Other symptoms include wilting of leaves and shoots, as well as dieback of branches. Later in the season, small, white, cup-shaped fruiting bodies of the fungus can be found in the leaf litter at the base of the tree.

Acute oak decline (AOD)

Host trees:

Mainly pedunculate oaks and sessile oaks.

Figure 9: Bleeding on bark and leaf loss Credit: Forestry Commission.



Figure 10: D-shaped boring hole created from the native oak jewel beetle (*Agrilus biguttatus*) Credit: Forestry Commission.



AOD, is a complex disease involving several casual agents. AOD was discovered in the UK in the late 20th century. It mainly affects pedunculate and sessile oaks but can be found in other oak species. Researchers believe that AOD could occur due to environmental conditions and some studies have also shown it could be a result of historical stress. Research into this disease complex is ongoing.

AOD typically affects older oak trees, but it has also been found in younger trees. It causes dark bleeds down the trunk of the tree. You may find small, D-shaped exit holes of the oak jewel beetle in the bark. In severe cases the tree starts to lose leaves, causing the crown to thin. AOD can be fatal within 4 to 6 years of the symptoms first appearing.

Dothistroma septosporum

Host species:

A range of conifer species, in particular pines.

Figure 11: Red-brown needles caused by Dothistroma septosporum Credit: Forestry commission.



Figure 12: Discoloured leaves in canopy Credit: Forestry Commission.



Dothistroma needle blight is a disease of conifer trees, with pines demonstrating to be the most susceptible species. It has been spreading across the UK since the 1990s and is now found throughout the country. Its origin is unknown. The fungus causes the needles to develop red spots and bands. As the disease progresses, the entire needle turns a red-brown colour, while the needle base remains green. This typically occurs in the older needles first, making it possible to distinguish from frost damage, which affects younger needles initially. This infection leads to needle shedding in late summer. Continued shedding of needles over a few years can weaken the tree and be fatal.

Elm zigzag sawfly (*Aproceros leucopoda*)

Host trees:

English elm, wych elm, field elm.

Figure 13: Larvae of the Aproceros leucopoda eating the leaf of a elm tree Credit: Max Blake - Forest Research.



Figure 14: Elm leaf with a distinctive zigzag pattern created by the larvae of the Aproceros leucopoda Credit: Peter Crow-Forest Research.



The elm zigzag sawfly is an invasive pest from eastern Asia. It poses a serious threat to our elm trees, which are already rapidly declining due to the introduced Dutch elm disease. If we experience additional losses of elm, it will further endanger our elm-dependent species, such as the white-letter hairstreak butterfly. Similar to many of our other priority pests, this pest causes damage to the tree during its larval stage.

The larvae resemble small green caterpillars and feed on elm leaves in a distinctive pattern, creating a zigzag between the leaf veins. However, it is important to note that as the larvae mature, these patterns become less noticeable, and eventually they stop feeding in this manner. Other signs of infestation include dieback and leaf loss. The elm zigzag sawfly is present in England, specifically in the South East and East Midlands.

Horse chestnut leaf miner (*Cameraria ohridella*)

Host trees:

Horse chestnut and some maple trees.

Figure 15: Horse chestnut leaf with Cameraria ohridella. Credit Suzy Sancisi - Forest Research.



The horse chestnut leaf miner is a species of moth believed to be native to south-eastern Europe. It was first discovered in the UK in 2002. This pest feeds on horse chestnut trees and shrubs of the *Aesculus* genus. Although it is thought not to pose a serious threat, its main impact is on the visual appearance of the tree.

The larvae of the horse chestnut leaf miner live and feed within the leaves of the tree. They create small white or brown blotches between the leaf veins, which can cause the entire leaf to turn brown later in the season. As a result, an infested horse chestnut tree can appear orangery brown in summer.

Oak processionary (*Thaumetopoea processionea*)

Host trees:

Oak trees (*Quercus* sp.).

*Figure 16: Elm leaf with a distinctive zigzag pattern created by the larvae of the *Aproceros leucopoda* Credit: Peter Crow-Forest Research.*



The Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) is originally from central and southern Europe but has since spread to northern Europe, possibly assisted by the trade and movement of live oak trees and currently present around London. OPM caterpillars feed on the foliage of oak trees, and their hairs can cause skin irritation, so it is important to avoid touching or approaching the caterpillars or their nests. In the UK, the government is currently conducting a surveillance and control programme to minimize the population and prevent further spread.

The caterpillars move in processions from their nests to feeding areas and are recognizable by their distinctive movement. They form a line, sometimes multiple caterpillars wide, and move together. Their nests, made from white silk-like material, can be found on branches or the trunk of the tree and range in size from that of a golf ball to a rugby ball. Caterpillars and nests are typically observed in late spring and summer. The adult OPM moth is seldom seen and can be difficult to identify.

Oriental chestnut gall wasp (*Dryocosmus kuriphilus*)

Host trees:

Sweet chestnut trees.

Figure 17: Photograph of *Dryocosmus kuriphilus*. Credit Gyorgy Csoka Hungry Forest Research Institute, Bugwood.org



Figure 18: Gall on Chestnut leaves. Credit: Matteo Maspero - Forestry Commission.



This pest was first discovered in 2015 by an Observatree volunteer in Greater London, indicating that it had spread from its potential introduction site or had been introduced twice. This pest is native to Asia and targets sweet chestnut trees. It has spread and is now present in and around London and the southeast.

This particular pest is the only known species that causes galls on sweet chestnut trees, so finding galls is an important symptom to watch for. Galls are circular growths that can appear on the buds, leaves, or leaf stalks. If a tree has many galls, it can weaken the tree, making it more vulnerable to other pests and diseases, such as sweet chestnut blight, which can be fatal.

Phytophthora austrocedri

Host species:

Juniper and cypress trees

Figure 19: *Phytophthora austrocedri*. Credit Forest Research.



Phytophthora austrocedri is a highly destructive pathogen that affects juniper and cypress trees, often leading to dieback and death. Its origin is currently unknown, but the disease was first identified in the UK in 2011 by Forest Research, during their study of dieback in juniper trees. The pathogen has been detected in England and Scotland but nowhere else.

This disease poses a significant threat to juniper, which is one of only three native conifer species in the UK. The remaining juniper woodlands are limited, and many of them are under protection. The pathogen has been discovered in the second largest juniper population at the Upper Teesdale National Nature Reserve.

The primary target of the pathogen is the tree roots, but it can also spread upward. Symptoms of infection include foliage discoloration, dieback, and lesions, which are not visible without removing the bark.

Phytophthora lateralis

Host species:

Mainly Lawson cypress.

Figure 20: Mainly Lawson cypress. Credit Ian Murgatroyd - Forestry Commission.



Phytophthora lateralis is a pathogen that affects the Lawson cypress tree. It can also affect red cedar, Sawara cypress, Pacific yew, and juniper. This phytophthora is thought to be from Asia. It was first found in the UK in 2010, but how it got here is unknown. It is possible it arrived on imported plants. It has been found in all four countries of the UK but tends to be found more in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The pathogen primarily attacks the tree's roots but can move further up the tree. Symptoms include discoloration of foliage, dieback, and lesions. The lesions are not visible unless the bark is removed.

Sweet chestnut blight *Cryphonectria parasitica*

Host species:

European sweet chestnut.

Figure 21: Image of bark cracking from Cryphonectria parasitica. Credit Ana Pérez Sierra - Forest Research.



In North America, severe outbreaks of sweet chestnut blight have led to widespread losses of sweet chestnut trees. The disease originated from Asia and has been present in England since 2011, but only at a small number of sites in central and southern England. Any sites found with chestnut blight are subject to eradication programs.

The fungus enters the tree through bark cracks or wounds. There is some evidence that it can also enter via damage caused by the Oriental chestnut gall wasp. Symptoms include cankers, cracking and discoloration on the bark, bright orange fruiting bodies, wilting and dying back of foliage, and epicormic growth beneath the cankers.

10.2 DISEASES THAT ARE NOT YET PRESENT IN THE UK BUT ARE AT RISK OF ENTERING.

Agrilus fleischeri

Host trees:

Poplars and willows.

Figure 22: Agrilus fleischeri larval galleries. Credit Mr Zang Kai.



Figure 23: Adult Agrilus fleischeri with D-shaped exit hole. Credit Mr Zang Kai.



Like its relatives *A. fleischeri* is a wood borer, the larvae cause destruction by feeding and tunnelling under the bark of the tree. Whilst generally not fatal to the host it is thought that the beetles can reduce their productivity and vitality and make them more vulnerable to other pests and diseases. Fatal infestations have however been reported in Lombardy poplar (*Populus nigra* var. *italica*) in China, but the species also affects several other poplar species and narrow- leaf willow (*Salix schwerinii*).

The non-native but closely related *A. ater* has recently been found breeding in the UK and is physically similar to *A. fleischeri*. The larvae of both are found in poplar trees but *A. ater* seems to prefer stressed or dying trees whereas *A. fleischeri* appears to be more aggressive and can also attack healthy trees.

Signs to look out for include D-shaped exit holes in the bark, like other *agrilus* species. Infestation is likely to be difficult to detect until the symptoms become severe because much of the insect's life cycle is hidden within the tree.

Asian longhorn (Anoplophora glabripennis).

Host trees:

A broad variety of broadleaf trees.

Figure 24: Image of Anoplophora glabripennis. Credit George Gate - Forest Research.



Asian longhorn beetle is not currently known to be in the UK. In 2012 an outbreak occurred in Kent, resulting in a rapid eradication programme. This programme was successful, no evidence of Asian longhorn beetle has been found in the area since. This pest is native to Asia and could potentially enter the UK in wood products or live plants.

The beetles have a juvenile larval stage in their lifecycle. The larvae cause destruction by feeding and tunnelling under the bark of the tree. This can weaken the tree and ultimately be fatal. Signs to look out for include circular exit holes in the bark (1 cm in diameter), sawdust-like waste material around the base of the tree and feeding damage to the bark, shoots and leaves. As most of the pest's life is spent inside the tree, detection can be difficult.

Emerald ash borer (*Agrilus planipennis*).

Host trees:

Most ash species.

Figure 25: Agrilus planipennis with D-shaped exit holes. Credit Fera Science Limited.



The emerald ash borer is a pest originally from Eastern Asia, but it has spread outside its native range to the USA and Canada, causing significant losses of ash trees. Its range is expanding westward across Eurasia, bringing it closer to the UK.

This pest causes damage to trees during its larval phase and spends most of its life inside the tree, making it hard to detect. The larvae feed within the tree, disrupting its essential water and nutrient transport systems. Symptoms of infestation include leaf loss, dying branches, epicormic growth, and larval galleries under the bark. When the adults emerge from the tree, they leave behind D-shaped exit holes. An infestation is usually fatal, and small trees can die within a year.

Plane wilt (*Ceratocystis platani*)

Host species:

Plane trees.

Figure 26: Wilting of foliage on a Plane tree. Credits Panos Tsopelas, FRIA, Greece.



Figure 27: Staining of under bark. Credit Forest Research.



The causal agent is a fungus native to North America. It is not present in the UK but is present in mainland Europe and has been reported in countries as close as France. The disease affects the tree's water and nutrient transport systems and is fatal within 3 to 7 years of infection.

This disease causes sudden wilting of foliage. This can occur across the whole crown if the fungus entered via the roots, or in discrete areas of the crown if the fungus was introduced above ground. Leaf loss and yellowing may also occur. The disease causes cankers, these can be difficult to see and can appear as vertical cracks in the bark. Under the bark dark brown staining may be evident.

Although these pathogens are not yet present in the UK, they all pose a serious threat to Halton's current tree stock.

11. PRIVATELY OWNED TREES AND WOODLAND POLICIES AND PRIORITIES

11.1 TREES AND DEVELOPMENT

The significance and changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance means there will be major investment in housing, community facilities and infrastructure. This brings with it opportunities for innovative and strategically planned tree and woodland enhancement. It is essential that trees and woodlands are recognised as an essential part of the design and fabric of growth.

Accommodating the predicted growth in Halton's population and economy provides significant opportunities for a strategic approach to tree and woodland planting. There are several initiatives to enhance the natural environment. They all offer opportunities to increase the tree and woodland cover of Halton as part of the mosaic of green space and habitats. However, as each has its own agenda and priorities, efforts should be made to ensure that they are coordinated and complimentary.

The scale of development which will need to take place in the coming decades will facilitate significant funding for the creation of attractive and green residential and business environments. Developers have a valuable role as the key players in the majority of land use changes. They need to respect the existing trees and where appropriate incorporate tree planting within new developments. There is extensive research showing that retained trees and newly planted trees increase the sale value of new properties providing firm financial reasons for developers to consider trees as integral part of their projects.

TP40: The Council will respond to tree issues within planning applications, in accordance with Local Plan Policies, in such a way that ensures the retention of good quality trees and woodland coverage or ensures its creation. Development will not be supported that would directly or indirectly damage existing ancient woodland or ancient trees.

TP40.1: To be guided by best practices and local policies for a consistent approach to assessing planning applications.

TP40.2: Trees and woodlands are to be given significant consideration within planning applications, requiring submission of Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) surveys in accordance with British Standard 5837:2012 "Trees in relation to demolition, design and construction – Recommendations". Where trees are on or within influencing distance of a potential development (within 15m of the development area) an AIA must be prepared and submitted as part of the planning application.

TP40.3: The British Standard sets out a process to protect trees at every stage of a development. The Council will, normally, condition the tree protection measures set out in the AIA. This will include proper provision for arboricultural supervision by a qualified Arboriculturist and a timetable for inspection visits and the method of reporting findings to all parties including Council Open Space Officers.

TP40.4: Producing an AIA is only the first stage in protecting trees during construction. The tree protection measures set out in the AIA are often either disregarded or are poorly implemented once planning permission has been granted. The Council will seek to enforce conditions relating to tree protection and to consider prosecution when planning conditions are breached or there are breaches of Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) or the requirements of Conservation Area regulations. Trees and woodlands need long term management to ensure their current and future value. Opportunities will be taken on both Council and private land to achieve this long-term management. This will be done through funding applications, working with communities, partner landholders and land managers and, within developments, through planning conditions and obligations as set out in the approved Delivery and Allocations Local Plan (2022).

TP40.5: It is extremely important that plans for remedial tree planting and green infrastructure submitted as part of planning applications come to fruition. When granting planning permissions, the Council will set conditions for the protection, planting and proper maintenance of trees and periodically check on compliance.

TP40.6: Where appropriate, the Council will allocate funds produced from the Community Infrastructure levy and external funding opportunities for community tree planting projects.

TP40.7: The Council will utilise planning powers to retain and protect good quality existing trees threatened by new development including changes to existing properties and enforce the tree protection measures put in place.

TP41: The Council will require that new and replacement tree and woodland planting to be included in new development proposals wherever it is practicable to do so.

TP41.1: To require developers to submit details of tree species, size of planting stock to be used and numbers to be planted as part of their proposals. Planting should aim to replace any loss of biomass and, where practicable, retain or increase the canopy cover on the site. Where it is difficult to achieve, the Council will consider offering alternative planting sites on its own land.

TP41.2: To ensure that provision made for tree planning takes account of industry best practice, in particular, BS 8545:2014 “Trees from nursery to independence in the landscape-Recommendations”. Further guidance is available from the publications of the Trees and Design Action Group (TDAG).

TP41.3: The Council will encourage planting of healthy plant material. In the light of the threat from imported pests and diseases all planting stock used in Halton should be healthy and sourced from reliable sources with appropriate documentation such as plant passports or Plant health management standard where required. While British grown stock is preferable, if imported stock is used it should have spent at least one year in a UK nursery under observation. Similarly, landscaping materials should be sourced from pest and disease-free areas only.

TP42: Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) became mandatory on 12 February 2024. BNG is a way of creating and improving natural habitats. BNG makes sure development has a measurably positive impact (‘net gain’) on biodiversity, compared to what was there before development.

TP42.1: The Liverpool City Region is developing a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). The LNRS enables the first step of urgent action required to restore the natural environment, which provides a range of benefits to the people of the region. Nature-based solutions can improve our air and water quality, help us to achieve Net Zero, build resilience to climate change and provide access to thriving green spaces. Council officers have submitted a long list of sites within Halton to the Liverpool City Region as opportunities for the delivery of the LNRS priorities within the Borough.

TP42.2: The Council will update its Bio-Diversity Action Plan (2003) to ensure the contribution of new tree plantings or other works (such as to water courses/reed beds) arising from the Big Halton Forest initiative or BNG can be realised.

TP43: Orchards. Traditional and organically managed orchards, such as at Norton Priory are a much-loved part of our heritage and countryside. They are recognised as a Priority Habitat by the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. Orchards can be attractive places yielding food for people and habitat for wildlife. Threats to old orchards include neglect, intensification of agriculture and pressure from land development.

TP43.1: Halton BC will not allow the loss of traditional orchards to development and where traditional orchards are under threat it will protect these e.g. through the use of Tree Preservation Orders.

TP43.2 To encourage healthy eating and to provide the next generation of traditional orchards, HBC will support the planting of community orchards where possible.

12. TREE PRESERVATION ORDERS

There are currently 112 TPOs and 10 Local Authority Conservation Areas in Halton (Under review). The pressure for development sometimes necessitates the pro-active use of Tree Preservation Orders (TPO's). TPO's are also used reactively when a threat to the condition or retention of a tree is known. The Council will, as far as funding will allow review many of its older Tree Preservation Orders.

The work on trees protected by a TPO places a duty on the tree owner to be granted permission from the Council prior to undertaking the work. The Council has a duty to respond to these requests within 8 weeks. In the event that the Council refuse permission for work on, or removal of a protected tree, the owner can appeal to the Planning Inspectorate.

Before carrying out any tree work or felling of trees within a Local Authority Conservation Area the Local Planning Authority must be given six weeks advance notice. During the six-week period the Council may decide to protect the trees in question. However, if no response is received from the Council work may proceed.

To carry out work, damage or remove trees which are the subject of Tree Preservation Order or within a Conservation order without permission is a criminal offence that, on conviction, carries fines of up to £20,000 per tree. However, if trees are illegally removed to facilitate development, then the fine per tree is unlimited and may reflect the increase in land value that has resulted from the loss of the tree.

12.1 PROTECTION THROUGH ADVICE

Where necessary and appropriate the Council will provide advice on trees in relation to planning TPOs and work in Conservation areas with the aim of making the process more efficient and therefore provide a cost-effective service.

There are, unfortunately, many people willing to offer tree advice, which is inaccurate and may have serious consequences for the tree and its owner. Arboriculture is an established technical discipline where qualifications at various levels are available. Research is carried out to further our knowledge of trees and their care, good advice is available and should be sought from reliable sources. Tree owners should be aware that research has resulted in updated and changed tree management in the last 20 years. Consequently, any person offering advice should keep their knowledge up to date, through membership of an appropriate professional body.

Also of concern is the numbers of people who carry out tree surgery work whose technical abilities are poor. This can lead to low standards of work, which are not in the interests of the tree or its owner. Only reputable companies, capable of working to recognised standards of work such as "British Standard 3998: 2010, "Tree work Recommendations", should be engaged to carry out tree work. Companies or individuals undertaking tree work should hold Public Liability Insurance cover and proof of cover should be provided before commencement.

As the Local Planning Authority, the Council has a statutory duty to protect trees of greatest amenity value. This section sets out Halton Council's approach to the protection of privately owned trees.

TP44: The Council will seek to ensure that all trees and woodlands making a positive contribution to the environment* are protected.

TP44.1: To utilise and enforce planning powers to retain and protect trees through Tree Preservation Orders and Conservation Area status.

TP44.2: To comment and advise on strategy and other initiatives which affect trees and woodlands. *based on the quality and value categorised using the criteria within BS5837:2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – Recommendations

TP45: The outright removal of good quality trees and woodlands shall be resisted unless there are sound arboricultural and technical reasons such as irrefutable evidence of damage caused to a property by soil volume change associated with trees.

TP45.1: To protect trees of amenity value.

TP46: The Council will promote public awareness and a better understanding of tree and woodland management through community consultation and involvement and via its established communication channels.

TP46.1 The Council will promote good standards of tree and woodland care.

TP46.2: To, as far as possible, encourage owners of notable trees that are worthy of protection to adopt better practices of tree care. TP45.3: To support community tree initiatives.

TP46.4: To support the work of national bodies such as the Tree Council.

TP46.5: To publish suitable advisory information on the Council website.

12.2 FORESTRY FELLING

Statutory protection is afforded to trees under the Forestry Act 1967 (as amended) and permission from the Forestry Commission (FC) to fell growing trees is often required. There are certain exemptions which include trees in gardens, orchards, Churchyards and designated public open spaces. This permission is granted by the FC via a Felling Licence. Typically, an application would be required where trees above 8 cm stem diameter at 1.3 m diameter above ground level need to be felled. If the felling is for thinning a plantation the minimum diameter rises to 10 cm and in the case of coppicing the minimum is 15 cm. A licence is not needed to fell up to 5m³ of timber within a given calendar quarter. However, this drops to 2m³ if the timber is sold. Any felling approved as part of a planning permission will not need a felling licence. Felling trees within the scope of the regulations without a felling licence is illegal and subject to prosecution and fines.

12.3 TREE PROTECTION

Sale of Council land

Where Council land is sold or leased there may be an increased risk of tree loss and failure to replace them. Valuable trees will be identified and protected prior to sale or transfer of the land to retain the Borough's asset for the benefit of the wider population.

In conjunction with its duty, as set out in the Town and Country Planning Act, the Council will incorporate policies relating to Trees and Woodlands within its Local Development Framework. Policies protecting trees exist within the Core Strategy and Planning Policies Development Plan documents.

12.4 MEMORIAL TREE PLANTING

Requests for tree memorialisation can sometimes be accommodated within parks or cemeteries wherever such requests coincide with planned revisions to existing planting schemes. Any agreed planting will be subject to the conditions of the Memorial Tree Planting in Parks Policy.

Customer Advice:

Requests for memorial tree planting should be made to the Parks Manager at: Environment Services, Picow Farm Depot, Runcorn WA7 4UB or via HDL@halton.gov.uk.

There is a cost attached to all memorial plantings. The price is variable and will be based upon the cost of the tree, planting materials and associated labour. However, due the tree being a species and siting/location of the Council's choosing, the final cost to the client will represent a percentage of the total cost, the remainder being met by the Council as part of a wider scheme.

TP47: Requests for tree memorialisation can sometimes be accommodated within parks and cemeteries wherever such requests coincide with planned revisions to existing planting schemes.

In the planning of such works, suitable plots within the park will have been identified in advance by parks management along with a suitable species of tree for that given location.

TP47.1: At the point of request, clients may be invited to select one of these plots (complete with the allocated tree species for that plot), and then invited to contribute towards the establishment of that tree.

TP47.2: Plantings will not be accompanied by a plaque in any case; however accurate maps and records will be kept of all trees which have been planted in conjunction with a request for memorialisation. A copy of this plan may be supplied on request to the contributing party so they may retain a record of where the tree is located, its species and date of planting.

TP47.3: Aspects of the planting procedure will be completed in accordance with the Council's standard tree planting good practice.

TP47.4: Every stage of the planting process will be completed by parks staff and at a time of the departments choosing. The scheduling of planting may be subject to changes at short notice due to variables such as unsuitable weather conditions.

TP47.5: The time of planting will be communicated to the contributing party; however, it is not intended that plantings become a ceremony of any kind.

TP47.6: Where the planting takes place in the absence of the contributing party, they will be contacted shortly afterwards and informed that the planting has been completed.

TP47.7: Except where Civic requirements dictate, Tree plantings will only take place at a suitable time of year (usually mid-winter). This will often lead to a delay between the initial request for memorialisation and the final planting operation but will give the greatest chance of successful establishment of the tree.

TP47.8: The cost of memorial planting does not entitle the requesting party to ownership of the tree.

TP47.9: The tree will remain the property of the Council and as such the Council assume responsibility for all aspects of maintenance and aftercare of the tree and reserve the right to carry out any form of maintenance necessary to keep the tree in a safe and healthy condition for the duration of its life.

TP47.10: In the case of trees becoming damaged or failing beyond natural recovery during its normal establishment period, the Council will replace the tree with a similar species where possible.

TP47.11: In cases where a tree successfully establishes, matures and reaches the end of its natural life, the Council reserves the right to remove the tree and not replace it.

TP47.12: No other form of memorials shall be placed on or around the tree or upon the surrounding ground. Any such additional memorial or decoration will be removed and disposed of by Council staff.

13. SUMMARY OF THE KEY ELEMENTS TO THIS STRATEGY

This strategy highlights the immense value of Halton's trees and woodlands to the wellbeing of its residents and the substantial contribution it makes to Halton's sustainable future. The focus of this new strategy is consolidation of the Council's trees stocks; the majority are even aged and all growing towards maturity at the same time. Up to this point they have required relatively low maintenance. However, increasing growth rates are causing conflicts with private properties on the boundaries of the woods and close to trees growing within residential areas. Dealing with these problems is taking up a high proportion of the allocated funds and unless positive management steps are put in place the level of service requests will increase exponentially.

It is important that the need for this programme is recognised, and adequate resources allocated. Faults of both design and implementation such as planting trees too close to each other and buildings and allowing deviation from carefully planned species layouts and mixtures need rectifying by restructuring woodlands, and tree and tree groups in residential areas. Where it is necessary to remove trees, these will be replaced with more suitable species while retaining or improving the level of canopy cover. Shallow, narrow crowned and un-thinned trees provide only a fraction of the ecosystem services of healthy full crowned trees.

Dense woods prevent light reaching the ground leading to lack ground flora and poor natural re-generation of tree species. It is therefore necessary to instigate a programme of periodic thinning in many of the woods and tree groups. The tree stock must be carefully managed to provide a degree of resilience to both imported pests and diseases and the climate change. The expansion of the 'urban forest' will be a priority to ensure that the ecosystem services can be maintained to meet the needs of a growing population. However, this will be carefully planned and targeted to as far as possible avoid the mistakes of the past. Development in Halton presents both challenges and opportunities for its tree cover. The Council will seek to ensure suitable trees are retained on development sites and commensurate and appropriate provision is made for new tree planting and green space.

Unless adequate resourcing chains are provided there is a danger that the problems will get progressively worse to the point where the tree stocks become a negative asset. It is hoped that both stakeholders and residents of Halton will appreciate that the 'urban forest' requires careful management to thrive and provide the considerable benefits of which it is capable. The Council's policies and priorities contained in this strategy represent a commitment to sustainable management of Halton's trees for both the existing and future generations. Every effort has been taken to make this Tree and Woodland Strategy as comprehensive as possible. However, we acknowledge that it would not be possible to anticipate every eventuality. The Council therefore reserves the right to exercise discretion in application of policies where this is in the best interests of the Council.

14. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This strategy has been developed with assistance from The Mersey Forest and supported by data from Tree Equity Score UK. We carry out tree risk assessments using the QTRA methodology when appropriate.

15. REFERENCES

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16. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Ancient Trees – Trees significantly older, and often larger in girth, than the general tree population providing a rich variety of habitats for wildlife.

Ancient Woodlands – Woodland thought to have been in existence since at least 1600 and designated on the Natural England register of ancient woodlands.

Biomass – Renewable vegetation that can be used as a carbon neutral fuel source. This includes not only the timber but small branches and foliage.

Carbon neutral fuel - The term carbon neutral fuel is used for wood used for fuel that comes from sustainably managed woodlands where the carbon loss will rapidly be mediated by replacement trees

Canopy Cover – The area of ground occupied (covered) by the overall branch spread of trees normally expressed as a percentage of the total land area.

Coppice and Standards – A traditional woodland management practice of retaining a proportion of single stemmed trees within an area of coppice to grow on for timber production

Coppicing – 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. Management of the Council's structure planting (tree and shrub plantations where the 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.

Ecosystem disservices – Trees can cause problems in conditions particularly when growing in close association with roads, railways and buildings.

Trees can also have negative effects on the urban atmosphere for example roadside trees trapping polluting gasses under the canopy. However, most researchers see the net effect of trees on the atmosphere as positive.

Ecosystem Services – Services provided by trees and vegetation that contribute to the quality of the environment such as their capacity to sequester carbon from the atmosphere and reduce surface water runoff.

Heat Island Effect – Urbans areas are warmer than the surrounding countryside by virtue of the concentrated activities their population particularly energy use. Hard surfaces store thermal energy and release it slowly keeping up nighttime temperatures. In heat waves urban conditions can lead to even higher temperatures.

High Water Demand Trees – Trees that take up large amounts of water from the soil in comparison to other species with a lesser capacity to extract water.

Mature trees – Trees in the second third of their life cycle and still growing strongly.

Natural Regeneration – Young self-sown trees derived from naturally distributed seed produced by nearby trees.

Newly planted trees – Trees that require regular maintenance and have yet to become established in the landscape

Over mature trees – Trees in the final third of their life expectancy and beginning to decline with very slow growth rates of growth or signs of natural retrenchment (bare dead branches in the upper crown with a healthy but reduced crown at a lower level)

Pollarding – A traditional management technique often used in deer parks and wood pasture which involves cutting off the tree at a height of around 3 to 4 m on a cyclical basis to provide firewood and small poles; the regrowth is then safe from browsing livestock and deer. In an urban situation pollarding is often used to control the crown spread of trees and reduce the water demand. Cyclically reducing trees to a low framework of branches is a form of pollarding. Some species are particularly tolerant of this treatment such as lime, London plane and willow.

Semi Mature Trees – Trees in the first third of their life cycle and growing strongly.

SUDS – Acronym for Sustainable Urban Drainage Schemes which allow for natural drainage of water runoff from roofs and hard surfaces into the ground, rather than directing runoff into the sewerage and main drainage systems.

Specimen Trees - Largely free standing, Council owned trees in streets or public open spaces.

Structured Soils – Specially formed soils that can be compacted but still allow root growth and water percolation. Normal structural soils have a high percentage of sand and gravels.

Tree Stocks – The total of Council owned trees.

Tree Belt – Narrow belt of trees typically 15 to 20 m often planted for screening and shelter. Tree belts were widely planted by PDC surrounding residential areas and edging roads.

Urban Forest – All trees and woody vegetation which grow within a town or city, or any urbanized area collectively form the urban forest regardless of ownership. This includes street trees, Parks and gardens both public and private, trees in woodlands and along waterways and trees on agricultural land.

Veteran Trees – Traditionally, trees with the same characteristics as given for ancient trees. However, more recently, the term has been expanded to include trees of any age that have features that support wildlife such as splits, cracks, holes and dead wood.

Wet Woodlands – Woodland growing on soils subject to seasonal waterlogging, often in river valleys and adjacent to watercourses. Common species in wet woodlands include alder, willow, aspen and birch.

Whips – Transplanted and bare rooted nursery stock 60 cm to 1.2 m.

Young Trees – Recently established trees that have achieved independence in the landscape.

Appendix 1 - The Right Tree in the Right Place Framework

Right Tree in the Right Place Framework

Landscape Impact

- Consider the existing use of the space and question whether the presence of trees would be a positive addition.
- Identify the landscape type and what constraints this will place on the selection of species.
- Examine existing habitats to assess their compatibility with additional trees and woodlands and therefore the latter's ability to add value.
- Establish the history of tree cover to determine whether new additions would be appropriate.

Site Constraint

- Maintain local distinctiveness
- Assess the impact of planting on vistas.
- Consider the presence of underground and overhead services.
- Meet the statutory safety requirements of access for pedestrians and vehicles.
- Assess impact on the nearest buildings to be sure that future potential problems can be minimised, particularly
- subsidence.
- Prioritise sites in relation to where greatest public benefit can be realised.

Species Consideration

- Select species known to thrive on the soil type, its compaction, nutrients and available water.
- Consider space available relative to size of tree at maturity unless the tree is destined for controlled management such as coppicing or pollarding.
- Select the largest growing species the site will reasonably accommodate.
- Consider use of natural regeneration where appropriate.
- Use native species where possible.
- Maintain diversity within the tree population planting no more than 10% of any species, 20% of any genus and 30% of any plant family.
- Consider the species' tolerance to disease and wind damage.
- Consider the use of fruit tree planting as a productive and attractive feature.
- Consider potential nuisance of fruit fall in the autumn, slippery paths, and associated requests for service to deal with problems.

Appendix 2 - Consultation Protocol

Consultation Protocol

TREE WORK OPERATIONS - tree Work Operations are described as follows:

Major Tree Work Operations

These operations are classified as any work that alters the appearance of a tree significantly. These works may include:

- Felling of any live tree over 20cm diameter at 1.5m from ground level.
- Transplanting a tree that, prior to transplantation, does not require the support of a stake or underground guying system.
- Major crown reduction - in excess of 30% of the canopy.
- Pollarding, if the tree has not been pollarded before, or has not been pollarded within the last 10 years.
- Coppicing, if the tree has not been coppiced before, or has not been coppiced within the last 20 years.
- Schedule of minor works that would have a significant cumulative impact on a landscape character or habitat.

Minor Tree Work Operations

These procedures are good management practice and are carried out in accordance with BS 3998:2010 'Tree Work-Recommendations'. Some of the operations are undertaken on a regular, cyclical basis. The work should have no adverse impact upon the health of the tree, or significantly change its appearance, such that the amenity of the tree, or the townscape, is diminished. This work includes the following operations:

- Felling of dead trees.
- Felling of dying or diseased trees, where 40% of the canopy has died and no recovery is possible.
- Felling of newly planted trees that had been damaged, vandalised, diseased, dead or dying.
- Pollarding, when the tree is under a regular management regime.
- Coppicing, when the tree is under a regular management regime.
- Formative pruning of young trees to promote a well-developed canopy.
- Cleaning out the canopy. This operation includes the removal of dead wood, diseased or dying branches and snags, which may harbour pests and diseases. It also includes the removal of crossing branches, unwanted climbing plants and objects.
- Crown lifting is a procedure which removes the lower branches from the main stem, or branch system, up to a specified height above ground. It is usually carried out to provide sufficient headroom for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles to pass under the canopy, or to allow light to reach surrounding plants and buildings.
- Crown thinning is an operation carried out to reduce the density of foliage. This may help to make the tree safer by reducing wind resistance, giving a more balanced weight distribution and removing unsafe branches. It stimulates good growth by admitting more light and air to the crown and encourages good branch development in young trees. Thinning may also be carried out to allow light into buildings.
- The following pruning operations: - The removal, or shortening, of branches which are interfering with overhead public utility wires and lamp heads; The removal, or shortening of branches which would, in time, become excessively long and heavy; Shortening branches so as to manage excessive end weight; Removing, or shortening, branches which are weakly attached, dead, detached but hanging, cracked, seriously decayed or a hazard; Balancing the crowns of storm-damaged trees; Crown reduction and crown thinning to reduce the lever arm or the sail area of hazardous trees and root pruning to abate minor structural damage, or a trip hazard.

TREE MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES

Tree Management Procedures fall within four categories which are described as follows:

Proactive Works: These are the subject of planned management surveys. These surveys are usually undertaken on a cyclical basis. In some circumstances, the client service may request a survey to be undertaken of a tree(s) on land for which it is responsible. Works set out in the schedules may include tree work operations of a major and minor nature.

Reactive Works: This is reactive work. It is usually scheduled in response to enquiries or notifications to the Council but may also include work identified as part of an unscheduled inspection. Works may include operations of a major and minor nature.

Emergency Works: These works are required to make a tree safe without delay.

Under the Framework Agreement the contractor appointed to deal with such work shall be available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and is required to respond to a call out immediately. Occasionally, an event may occur whereby a tree does not present a hazard, but the situation, or circumstance, requires an immediate solution which can only be resolved by pruning or felling. These works may include operations of a major and minor nature.

Urgent Works: These works are required to rectify a hazard and, in accordance with the Framework Agreement, must be undertaken within 7 or less working days. These works may include operations of a major and minor nature.

CONSULTATION PROCESS FOR TREE WORK OPERATIONS

Major Tree Work Operations Consultation will take place in advance of any works being undertaken. The consultation will comprise the following:

1. Relevant Ward and Parish Councillors shall be advised of Major tree work operations that are programmed 14 days in advance of the works.
2. The works will be advertised on the Council's website.
3. Notices shall be posted on trees stating the nature of the proposals and a brief explanation for the reasons for undertaking the work.

Minor Tree Work Operations Consultation – no formal consultation will take place in advance of the works other than relevant Ward Members and Parish Councils notified of the pro-active works commencing in their area.

Emergency Works Consultation - No consultation will be undertaken
Urgent Works Consultation - No consultation will be undertaken.

Duty to consult on the felling of Street Trees - Under Section 115 of the Environment Act 2021, the Council has a statutory duty to consult with residents on the felling of street trees where no exemptions apply. The Council anticipates that the Duty to Consult will be required on a small number of trees felled under the Authority's control.

In order to ensure that members of the public are aware of the proposed felling, the local highway authority should ensure that: A notice is placed on the street tree or trees in question; the consultation runs for at least 28 days; the local highway authority publishes a response to the consultation. After 2 years the results of the consultation will expire, and a new consultation must be undertaken if the local highway authority wishes to fell any street tree or trees previously consulted on.

The Duty to Consult does not apply to trees that are:

- a) of a diameter not exceeding 80mm (measured over the bark, at a point 1.3 metres above ground level).
- b) dead. A dead tree no longer produces leaves or foliage (where it should). The stem's outer bark and cambial tissue layers are dead.
- c) required to be felled under the Plant Health Act 1967. Under this Act, statutory plant health notices can be issued that require the owner or manager to eradicate or contain notifiable pests and diseases. This can include felling a tree and failure to comply can result in enforcement action and prosecution. An order must be received under this Act for the removal of the tree/trees for this exemption to apply.
- d) required to be felled under any enactment on the basis that the tree is dangerous. required to be felled to comply with a duty to make reasonable adjustments in the Equality Act 2010 because the tree is causing an obstruction (see section 20 of that Act). Under this act, trees can be required to be felled if the authority considers that this is necessary to comply with its duties under the act because the tree is causing an obstruction. This exemption does not apply where appropriate and proportionate engineering solutions can remedy the obstruction and felling is not required to meet these duties.
- e) required to be felled to comply with a duty in section 29 of the Equality Act 2010 (prohibitions on discrimination etc in the provision of services) because the tree is causing an obstruction. Under this act, trees can be required to be felled if the authority considers that this is necessary to comply with its duties under the act because the tree is causing an obstruction. This exemption does not apply where appropriate and proportionate engineering solutions can remedy the obstruction and felling is not required to meet these duties.
- f) required to be felled for the purpose of carrying out development authorised by planning permission granted under section 70, 73, 76D, 77 or 79 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Provided that the planning permission specifically permits the felling of the street tree or trees in question.
- g) required to be felled for the purpose of carrying out development authorised by outline planning permission granted under section 92 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Provided that the planning permission specifically permits the felling of the street tree or trees in question
- h) subject to other exemptions. A Statutory Undertaker undertaking emergency operational works that require the felling of a street tree.

Appendix 3 - Summary of Tree Policies

TP1: The Council will maintain its trees and woodlands in accordance with its obligations to observe duty of care and the safety of both people and property.

TP2: The Council will encourage a better understanding of tree and woodland management and in so doing promote community involvement.

TP3: The removal of trees and woodlands shall be resisted, unless there is sound Health and Safety, or arboricultural reasons supported within this strategy.

TP4: The Council will maintain its trees and woodlands in a way that demonstrates best practice, providing worthy examples of management for others to follow.

TP5: Council trees will not be pruned or removed to stop or reduce bird droppings from trees, nor will the Council remove bird droppings from private land.

TP6: Council trees will not be removed to stop or reduce blossom from trees and fallen blossom will not be removed from private land.

TP7: Policy: The Council will carry out work to a Council owned tree with the aim to maintain a minimum of:

- Road – 5.5 metre height clearance
- Cycle path next to a road or highway – 3 metres height clearance
- Footpath next to a road or highway – 2.5 metres height clearance

TP8: Council owned trees will not be pruned or removed to stop the nuisance of overhanging branches.

TP9: The roots of Council owned trees will not be pruned, removed, or cut to prevent roots entering a drain that is already broken or damaged.

TP10: Council owned trees will not be pruned or removed to stop or reduce the nuisance of fruit, berries, nuts, or seeds, nor will the Council remove fallen fruit, seeds or seedlings from private land including gutters.

TP11: There is no general policy to remove trees bearing poisonous fruit / foliage (such as yew trees). However, where it is claimed or known that unsupervised young children or livestock are likely to be exposed to poisonous berries or foliage, such cases will be investigated and appropriate action considered.

TP12: Council owned trees will not be pruned or removed to stop or reduce leaf fall nor will the Council remove fallen leaves from private property.

TP13: A Council owned tree will not be pruned or removed to improve natural light in or to a property. This includes properties with (or planned to be installed) solar panels.

TP14: Council owned trees will not be pruned or removed to stop or reduce the nuisance of sucker growth on private land.

TP15: There is no policy regarding personal medical conditions that may be specifically affected by nearby Council owned trees. Such cases will be investigated, and appropriate action considered.

TP16: Council owned trees will not be pruned or removed to stop or reduce the release of pollen.

- TP17: Work on Council owned trees will be undertaken to maintain clear sight lines (where feasible) at junctions, access points (associated with a street, road, or highway), traffic signals and street signs.
- TP18: Policy: Council owned trees will not be pruned or removed to reduce honeydew or other sticky residue from trees.
- TP19: The Council has in place active tree management systems to minimise risk of damage being caused to buildings and other structures because of the action of Council owned trees.
- TP20: The Council will make safe an unacceptable trip hazard caused by the growth of Council owned trees.
- TP21: If a Council owned tree is touching a property (house, boundary wall, garage etc.) action will be taken to remove the problem.
- TP22: Council owned trees will not be pruned or removed because they are considered to be too big or tall.
- TP23: Council owned trees will not be pruned or removed to prevent interference with TV / satellite installation / reception.
- TP24: Council owned trees will not be pruned or removed to improve the view from a private property.
- TP25: Council owned trees will not be pruned or removed to stop or reduce incidents of perceived pests such as bees, wasps, or wild animals, unless it is in the national or public safety interest to do so due to a harmful invasive species.
- TP26: To endeavour to protect street trees from threats such as loss of verges and damage to same.
- TP27: To place a priority on the replacement of ageing street trees; particularly where these adjoin major traffic routes. Planting will ensure the selection of the most appropriate species for the location.
- TP28: To renew and restructure tree stocks planted within residential areas;
- TP29: To maintain formal arboricultural features in the urban landscape by careful management and timely renewal as required.
- TP30: To take action to restructure avenue trees planted with inappropriate species too close to neighbouring properties.
- TP31: To maintain tree cover within Halton's parks by renewing the tree stocks and increasing the range of age classes present.
- TP32: The Council will seek to reduce impact of woodland trees on adjoining properties.
- TP33: Woods will be managed in a fully sustainable manner which will include periodic thinning to allow proper crown development and light to reach the woodland floor.
- TP34: The woods will not be clear felled and management will be on a continuous cover basis.
- TP35: The Council will encourage community involvement and where practical, advise residents when work is proposed.
- TP36: To maintain formal arboricultural features in the Highway by careful management and timely renewal as required.
- TP37: The Council will preserve and enhance the distinctiveness of village and rural trees in its ownership.

TP38: The Council will encourage an increase in tree cover by new and replacement planting, placing great emphasis on use of appropriate tree species.

TP39: To maintain a high level of training and awareness of tree pests diseases and take prompt action, in accordance with best practice guidance, to, as far as is practicable, alleviate the impact when they are discovered.

TP40: The Council will respond to tree issues within planning applications, in accordance with Local Plan Policies, in such a way that ensures the retention of good quality trees and woodland coverage or ensures its creation. Development will not be supported that would directly or indirectly damage existing ancient woodland or ancient trees.

TP41: The Council will require that new and replacement tree and woodland planting to be included in new development proposals wherever it is practicable to do so.

TP42: Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) became mandatory on 12 February 2024. BNG is a way of creating and improving natural habitats. BNG makes sure development has a measurably positive impact ('net gain') on biodiversity, compared to what was there before development.

TP43: Orchards. Traditional and organically managed orchards, such as at Norton Priory, are a much-loved part of our heritage and countryside. They are recognised as a Priority Habitat by the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. Orchards can be attractive places yielding food for people and habitat for wildlife.

TP44: The Council will seek to ensure that all trees and woodlands making a positive contribution to the environment* are protected.

*based on the quality and value categorised using the criteria within BS5837:2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition, and construction – Recommendations

TP45: The outright removal of good quality trees and woodlands shall be resisted unless there are sound arboricultural and technical reasons such as irrefutable evidence of damage caused to a property by soil volume change associated with trees.

TP46: The Council will promote public awareness and a better understanding of tree and woodland management through community consultation and involvement.

TP47: Requests for tree memorialisation can sometimes be accommodated within parks wherever such requests coincide with planned revisions to existing planting schemes.

Appendix 4 - A Strategy for Halton's Trees and Woodlands Part 2: Tree Risk Assessment

1. Tree Risk Management

The Local Authority either in its capacity as owner or manager, is responsible for trees located on land for which it manages or has control over under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Occupiers Liability Act 1999. As such, it has a common law and statutory duty of care in relation to its trees.

Compliance with this duty requires the operation of a reasonable systematic inspection of all its trees and to ensure that members of the public and staff are not put at risk because of a failure by the Council to take all reasonable precautions to ensure their safety.

A Risk Assessment is required under the Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1999 along with a need to inspect trees in or near public places, or adjacent to buildings or working areas. This is to assess whether they represent a risk to life or property, and to take any remedial action as appropriate.

This document sets out minimum standards of inspection; competence and record keeping that Halton Borough Council will commit to and is in accordance with the industry guidelines.

2. The Nature of Tree Risk Failure

Where land is constantly occupied by people or by valuable property, a moderately small tree might, by virtue of its position, represent a significant "Risk of Harm". On the other hand, a large tree in an area of low access such as a remote woodland or country park will represent only a very low "Risk of Harm" even where its stability is substantially compromised.

In the latter scenario, access to a remote area will be considerably reduced during the high wind events that are most likely to result in failure of trees and as a result the risk from tree failure in these areas is further reduced.

3. The System

Halton Borough Council has adopted a system known as Quantified Tree Risk Assessment (QTRA). This methodology has led the way in the field of tree safety management with a risk assessment approach that is led by the usage and value of the targets having potential to be affected by trees. The target led approach to tree safety management is a considerable shift from the generally accepted wisdom where the tree assessor focuses on identifying defects in trees and then seeks to remove or modify the tree.

One of the greatest benefits of QTRA is that it enables an informed overview of the risks associated with a tree population to be carried out as a desktop exercise before the survey of trees. When the risk overview is complete, the assessment will usually record only the general attributes of groups or collections of trees. Assessing and recording individual trees will be necessary only where they are likely to be significant in relation to the targets.

3.1 Target

In tree risk assessment, a target is a person/s or property or other things of value which might be harmed by mechanical failure of the tree or by objects falling from it.

3.2 Definition of Tree Failure Hazards

For a tree-failure hazard to exist, two criteria must be fulfilled. There must be potential for failure of the tree and potential for injury or damage to result. The issue that the inspector must address is the likelihood, or risk, of a combination of factors resulting in harm, and the likely severity of the harm. The starting point of the inspection process is to establish that there is potential for significant harm to occur, and in this regard, there must be something of significance (a significant 'target') that is exposed to a risk from tree failure. *There cannot be a significant risk of significant harm in the absence of something significant to be harmed.*

At all times hazards are to be assessed in relation to the target. Parts of the tree or group that are not significant in their relationship with targets will not be assessed further for tree failure.

3.3 Hazard

A hazard is the disposition of a thing, a condition, or a situation to produce injury (Health and Safety Executive 1995) A tree-failure hazard is present when a tree has potential to cause harm to people or property.

3.4 Probability

Statistical probability is a measure of the likelihood of something happening.

3.5 Risk

Risk is the probability of something adverse happening. The QTRA system is a risk assessment process which uses numerical estimates.

3.6 Reasonable Practicability

The concept of "reasonable practicability" is a central tenet of English law, which is evident throughout the English Health and Safety legislation and guidance (e.g. Health and Safety at Work Act 1974), and in judgements of the higher courts in relation to tree failure.

3.7 Acceptable Risk

The Local Authority is constantly exposed to risk and accepts or rejects risks of varying degrees.

When evaluating tree-failure hazards, two types of risk will be considered. Consideration is given to the person upon whom a risk is imposed.

With regard to the level of acceptable risk, The British Medical Associations Guide "Living with Risk" (Henderson 1987) states '*few people would commit their own resources to reduce an annual risk of death that was already as low as 1/10,000*'. It is therefore suggested that a 1/10,000 might be a suitable place to start with the limit of acceptable risk. The Health and Safety Executive identified that 'For members of the public who have a risk imposed on them 'in the wider interest' HSE would set this limit at 1/10,000 per annum.'

3.8 Cost and Benefit

The benefits of trees are always under-estimated; they are essential to our well-being and enhance our built and natural environments. It is essential within our management principles to maintain a balance between the benefits of risk reduction and the cost of risk reduction; not only financially but also in terms of the lost amenity and other tree related benefits.

3.9 Assessing the Level of Risk and Zoning

Assessments will be undertaken by the appropriately qualified Council Officer with sufficient local knowledge and with advice from relevant on-site staff and colleagues.

Zoning is a practice whereby landowners and managers define areas of land according to levels of use. This practice prioritises the most used areas, and by doing so contributes to a cost-effective approach to tree inspection and focusing resources where most needed. As groups and individual trees are inspected, each area is assigned a refined risk zone which will in turn inform the re-inspection regime for that tree or group of trees.

For a programme of tree inspection to be manageable, most resources need to be directed to areas where there is potentially most risk to people and property. This is initiated by designating a site, or each part of a site to one of three Risk Zones (Table 1 refers).

These zones will reflect typical usage but must be kept under review. The level of risk changes over time. For example, plans to hold an event involving many people in a moderate risk zone will change its status to high risk for the duration of the event; new facilities or activities may change the patterns of public usage permanently and may require a review of the designated risk zone originally associated with the area in which the trees or tree groups are located.

The designation of Risk Zones is a matter of informed judgement and periodic review. It is the responsibility of the Council to ensure that risk is periodically reviewed, realistically assessed and decisions documented within the inspection data.

The criteria to define Halton Council tree risk zones shown in Table 1, are as follows:

- Highway characteristics are prioritised according to traffic volume, speed, and emergency accessibility. Top priority areas include congested junctions, major roads, and emergency access routes.
- Public areas and buildings are prioritised according to occupancy. Top priority areas around schools, shopping precincts, emergency, and medical facilities.
- Tree population characteristics are primarily prioritised according to age and species. Discrete populations of trees that are mature to over-mature, or key single veteran specimens will be prioritised.

Table 1 - Tree risk zone categories and examples

Hazard Zone Categories	Examples of target criteria
<p>High Hazard</p> <p><i>N.B. All Highway Inspections are undertaken every 6 months as a minimum by virtue of the planned highway inspection. Non-highway related sites are inspected every 18 months</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Street trees in defined town centre. Inspection areas include Category 1 footways • Street trees on Category 2 footways • Street trees on urban Category 2 & 3 roads (40mph and below) • Public buildings (high use sites) * • Schools and Social Service sites* • Footpaths and cycle ways* • Major play areas* • Parks and public space areas* • Cemeteries • Seating areas • Car park areas adjacent to high use sites* • Sites identified by Open Space Officers as high risk • Trees with high-risk characteristics identified by Open Space Officers <p>*High use sites = >36 people per hour</p> <p>Sites to receive Highway Tree Inspections are marked blue and underlined (4.1 refers).</p>
<p>Medium Hazard</p> <p><i>Inspections every 2½ years</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Street trees on Category 2 & 3 rural routes (over 40mph) • Public buildings (all other sites with moderate use) ** • Schools and Social Services** • Informal play areas, minor paths, and grass recreational areas** • Woodlands** • Car parks** • Sites identified by Open Space Officers as moderate risk • Trees with moderate risk characteristics identified by Open Space Officers <p>**Medium use sites = <36 people per hour</p> <p>• Sites to receive Highway Tree Inspections are marked blue and underlined (4.1 refers).</p>
<p>Low Hazard</p> <p><i>Highway or Level 1 Inspection every 5 years</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Street trees on remaining roads, detached footways or cycle ways • Low use parks or public areas with dispersed recreation • Open areas, woodland and peripheral areas with limited use or access • Pedestrian rates lower than 1 per hour • Trees with moderate risk characteristics identified by Open Space Officers <p>• Sites to receive Highway Tree Inspections are marked blue and underlined (4.1 refers).</p>

The timing of high and moderate risk inspection is designed to ensure that trees are seen at different times of year, both in the winter and when in leaf. This will give a better overall indication of a tree's physiological and structural condition. It would be an advantage if the low-risk inspections are carried out at different times of the year for the same reason. Sites should be checked for hazardous trees or branches after strong winds.

3.10 Assessing Hazards

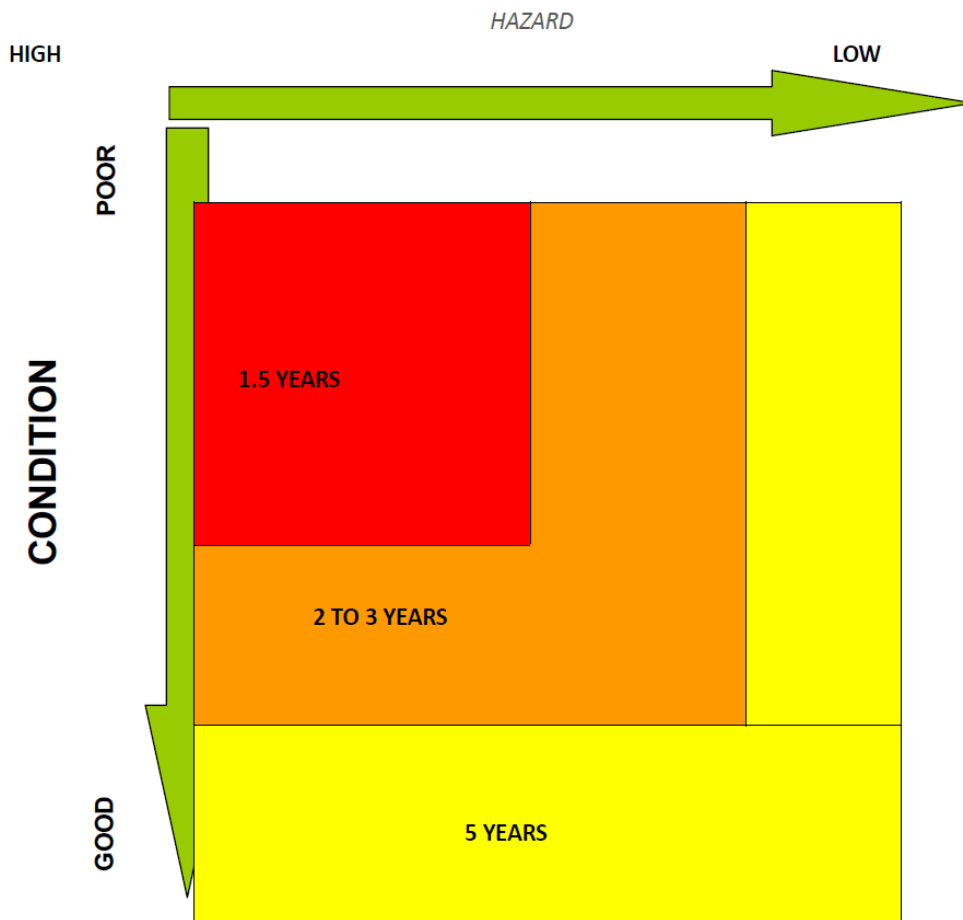
Many trees are potentially hazardous, but only the conditions most likely to lead to injury or damage to people or property can reasonably be addressed by inspectors. In practice only visible defects are likely to be identified during an initial survey unless a more detailed individual inspection is undertaken.

It is the responsibility of the inspector to ensure that the hazard is assessed within a level of their competency and recorded accurately. The frequency, condition and method of inspection will reflect the designated Risk Zones shown within the tables below.

Table 2 - Frequency and method of inspection showing the reflection of designated Risk Zones

Hazard Zone Categories	Timing of Inspections	Recommended Inspection Methods	Comments
High Hazard	<1.5 years	Walk-by tree inspections	Trees will be viewed from all sides using a systematic process to look for obvious defects. (4.4 Refers - Competence)
Medium Hazard	2 to 3 years	Walk-by tree inspections	
Low Hazard	5 yearly	Walk-by tree inspections	

Table 3 - Frequency of inspection showing target and tree condition for re-inspections



The timing of inspections is to be led by two components. If for example a tree in good condition in a high hazard area the inspection regime will be 5 years. If a tree is identified as in poor condition and in a low hazard area the inspection will still be 5 years.

3.11 Recording Information

The Council uses Alloy as its tree management system, which enables tree inspectors to record and store all inspections and public enquiries with a clear audit trail.

Information is recorded against individual trees or groups irrespective of whether works are specified or not. Where it is appropriate, photographic evidence will be attached to the tree record for future reference.

3.12 Work Priorities

The priority for implementing remedial action will depend on both the assessment of risk, presented hazards and the subsequent risk score.

In a high-risk area trees which show obvious signs of imminent collapse, or are otherwise seriously hazardous, should be dealt with immediately on the best advice of the inspector.

Works identified during inspections will be prioritised as follows within Table 4.

Table 4 - Reactionary timescales following inspection

Urgency	Risk of harm	Notes	Time to complete works
Emergency	High	Response to trees where the associated risks are perceived to be imminently dangerous.	Council will attend site and make safe normally within 1 hour and always within 2 hours. The site can be made safe by completing works or by cordoning off area/s at risk until works are completed.
Urgent	Medium	Response to trees where the associated risks are perceived as urgent but not imminently dangerous.	7 working days to complete. If resources are not available to complete works within 7 working days then areas at risk will be cordoned off.
Essential	≥1/10,000 per year	Works on trees that are not considered high risk but where remedial work is required.	1 year to complete
Desireable	≥1/10,000 per year	Improvement works to enhance streetscene or public space...Work to abate nuisance caused by Council trees.	5 years to complete
Private - Urgent	<i>The degree of risk will determine the actions to be taken by the local authority. In the first instance the owner or occupier will be given every opportunity to mitigate the risk posed*</i>	Response to trees where the associated risks are perceived to be imminently dangerous. Site can be made safe by completing work, or by cordoning off areas at risk until work completed	Council will attend site and make safe normally within 1 hour and always within 2 hours. The site can be made safe by completing works or by cordoning off area/s at risk until works are completed.

*The local authority can act without consent using the Local (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 (Section 5 refers).

3.13 General Legal Duty

No matter how low the risks, the need remains to consider the safety of trees under the Local Authority control. Halton Borough Council as owners have a duty (under English Law) to ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, that people and property are not exposed to unreasonable levels of risk from the mechanical failure of trees under the Council's control.

To achieve this, evaluation of tree hazards is only carried out by trained Council Officers, and experienced or qualified Council Arborists (Section 4.3 refers).

4. The Tree Inspection Procedure

It is the responsibility of the Council to ensure that tree safety inspection procedures are in place and that they are undertaken only by staff or others who meet the requirements of competency (4.4 refers).

Initial assessment; detailed inspection and prescribing remedial action need not be undertaken by the same person.

4.1 Highway Tree Inspections

This type of inspection is restricted to all highways in Halton. The inspection will be carried out by Highway Inspectors as part of their inspection process at frequencies dictated by a risk-based code of practice and defects found will be recorded in the Mayrise computerised system. Highway Inspectors will have attained the Level 1 Tree Inspection Certificate. The procedure will ordinarily consist of a walked inspection consistent with current highway inspection procedures. The inspector will observe trees within the highway on both sides on the road systematically looking for obvious defects that are described in the Level 1 Tree Inspection Course (4.4 refers).

Occasionally and where appropriate, drive by inspections will be undertaken by two officers, one a dedicated driver whilst the other person observes. If a defect is seen that requires closer investigation, a more detailed inspection will be undertaken on foot.

It should be noted that reliance on drive-by inspections is not appropriate in busy urban areas. Initial drive-by inspections can, when appropriate, assist in deciding where tree management, walk-over or detailed inspection might be necessary.

Where tree defects are found on the highway, these will be referred to Open Space Officers to inspect in greater detail, who will initiate the remedial action.

4.2 Level 1 Tree Inspections

This inspection procedure will be carried out at all other Council sites, public buildings, parks, woodlands, and open spaces. The frequency of inspections will be dictated by the site zoning regime shown in Table 2. The person carrying out the inspection will have attended the Level 1 Tree Inspection Course, passed the assessment, and gained the Level 1 Tree Inspection Certificate (4.4 refers).

4.3 Professional Tree Inspections

Halton Borough Council's Open Space Officers are qualified and can demonstrate competence to undertake systematic expert tree inspection, in order to identify and recommend remediation for hazards arising from impaired condition or structural integrity in trees.

These inspections will be undertaken following identification of significant defects by Highway Tree and Level 1 Inspections. Professional Tree Inspections will also be carried out in response to reactive Level 1 Inspections. Systematic inspections of high-risk trees identified by the Council's Open Space Officers will be carried out at the designated times.

4.4 Competence

The rating of target areas (zoning) must be done in accordance with the guidelines in table 2 above and by suitably qualified members of staff and who may have specific local knowledge.

The HSE (2007) considers that someone to be competent requires a working knowledge of trees and their defects but need not be an arboricultural specialist.

The Council has finite resources to reasonably meet its duty of care by demonstrating a defensible, proactive tree management regime. Currently, trees will receive initial inspection as per the frequencies shown in Table 2, and by officers who have received, as a minimum the initial basic tree survey training - a Level 1 Tree Inspection Course. Trees identified with defects and consequently posing a medium to high risk to the public are referred to Open Space Officers who have training and experience to undertake a systematic professional tree inspection in order to identify and recommend remediation of hazards arising from impaired condition or structural integrity.

Officers who are undertaking initial inspections, the Council will ensure the provision of a Level 1 Tree Inspection Course based on accredited courses delivered by the Arboricultural Association or LANTRA. This one-day course is designed for people with limited, or no arboricultural knowledge. The Level 1 course is also a preliminary qualification for tree surgeons, dedicated tree inspectors, and assistant and principal arboricultural officers wishing to complete a higher-level programme. There is an assessment at the end of the day. A certificate is awarded to those candidates who pass the assessment.

The candidates on the course are trained to visually assess a tree for obvious defects, record them, assign a hazard rating, and provide a report of their findings. The type of defect that a candidate is trained to look for are detailed below:

- Dieback of the crown – i.e. foliage not dense, foliage not the right colour or size
- Dead branches (especially on species that are not oaks)
- Dead trees
- Detached branches, hanging branches or branches lodged within the canopy
- Compression forks
- Cracks and splits
- Major or numerous cavities
- Dead bark
- Significant bulges
- Evidence of root damage or severance
- Presence of ivy and its significance
- “Bleeding” areas and fluxes

There can be only 3 outcomes of a Level 1 inspection:

- 1) The tree has no observed significant defects and therefore requires no action
- 2) The tree requires a more detailed inspection, or the inspector needs further advice or clarification from an Open Space Officer. The inspectors will be trained to assign a priority of low, medium, or high risk so that a professional tree inspection can be programmed accordingly
- 3) The work is an emergency (such as a hanging branch over a highway or footpath, or a tree is in imminent danger of collapse).

Depending on the competence and confidence of individual employees, Level 1 Tree Inspection training may need to be refreshed. However, the skills learnt on the course will be applied regularly through inspection and the employee will learn informally from the Open Space Officers as and when further advice is sought. It is therefore possible that refresher training will be rendered unnecessary.

NB. It is important that Level 1 Tree Inspectors are aware of current legislation relating to trees and wildlife and Halton Borough Council's Tree Policy when carrying out their inspections.

In emergency situations the Level 1 inspector can order the work directly e.g. for a hung-up branch over a busy carriageway.

Although emergency work is exempt from the Tree Preservation Order and Conservation Area legislation the Local Planning Authority must still be notified of works carried out to trees subject to such constraints.

4.5 Reactive and Emergency Tree Inspections

In addition to the planned inspections, reactive Level 1 Tree Inspections will be carried out because of customer complaints, concerns and enquiries, events, storms or following reports of damage to a tree or its root system from accidental or environmental causes.

5. Inspection of Trees in Private Ownership

Trees on private land within falling distance of a highway, or Borough Council land can also present a hazard to the public.

Owners are responsible for trees on their property and have a legal duty of care. "This duty of care is to take reasonable care to avoid acts or omissions that cause a reasonably foreseeable risk of injury to persons or property" (NTSG 2010). Best practice advice on fulfilling this duty is now available from the National Tree Safety Group (NTSG).

It is advisable for Level 1 Tree Inspectors, when looking at trees to give a cursory glance to neighbouring trees within falling distance of the Highway or Council land. They should note any trees that may be of concern to them during their planned inspection. They should follow the procedure for further advice or assistance from the Council's Open Space Officers

6. Measuring Performance

The following local indicators have been developed to measure the performance of all the key areas of the system.

- Percentage of work required on Council owned trees falling in the emergency category (target annual reduction)
- Percentage of planned work undertaken on time (target annual increase)
- Percentage of re-inspections undertaken within the assigned re-inspection date – target percentage rate is 100%

Performance targets will be further defined as data becomes available from tree inspections.

7. References

Ellison, M.J. (2005) Quantified Tree Risk Assessment (QTRA)

Lonsdale, D. (1999) Principles of Tree Hazard Assessment, Stationary Office Health and Safety Executive (1996) Use of Risk Assessments within Government Departments - HSE Books

Health and Safety Executive (1998) - Five steps to risk assessment INDG163, HSE Books Heliwell, D. R. (1990) - Acceptable Level of Risk Associated with Trees

Mynors, C. (2002) - The Law of Trees, Forests and Hedgerows Adams, J. - Arboricultural Journal 2007 Dangerous Trees

Local (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 c.57 Part 1 GENERAL - Dangerous trees and excavations s23

Highways Act 1980 c.66 Part IX LAWFUL AND UNLAWFUL INTERFERENCE WITH HIGHWAYS AND STREETS s154

Appendix 5 - QTRA Practice Notes - Quantified Tree Risk Assessment - Balancing Risks with Benefits

"When you can measure what you are speaking about, and express it in numbers, you know something about it; but when you cannot measure it, when you cannot express it in numbers, your knowledge is of a meagre and unsatisfactory kind"

William Thomson, Lord Kelvin, Popular Lectures and Addresses [1891-1894]

1. INTRODUCTION

Every day we encounter risks in all our activities, and the way we manage those risks is to make choices. We weigh up the costs and benefits of the risk to determine whether it is acceptable, unacceptable, or tolerable. For example, if you want to travel by car you must accept that even with all the extensive risk control measures, such as seat-belts, speed limits, airbags, and crash barriers, there is still a significant risk of death. This is an everyday risk that is taken for granted and tolerated by millions of people in return for the benefits of convenient travel. Managing trees should take a similarly balanced approach.

A risk from falling trees exists only if there is both potential for tree failure and potential for harm to result. The job of the risk assessor is to consider the likelihood and consequences of tree failure. The outcome of this assessment can then inform consideration of the risk by the tree manager, who may also be the owner.

Using a comprehensive range of values¹, Quantified Tree Risk Assessment (QTRA) enables the tree assessor to identify and analyse the risk from tree failure in three key stages. 1) to consider land-use in terms of vulnerability to impact and likelihood of occupation, 2) to consider the consequences of an impact, taking account of the size of the tree or branch concerned, and 3) to estimate the probability that the tree or branch will fail onto the land-use in question. Estimating the values of these components, the assessor can use the QTRA manual calculator or software application to calculate an annual Risk of Harm from a particular tree. To inform management decisions, the risks from different hazards can then be both ranked and compared and considered against broadly acceptable and tolerable levels of risk.

A Proportionate Approach to Risks from Trees

The risks from falling trees are typically low and high risks will usually be encountered only in areas with either elevated levels of human occupation or with valuable property. Where levels of human occupation and value of property are sufficiently low, the assessment of trees for structural weakness will not usually be necessary. Even when land-use indicates that the assessment of trees is appropriate, it is seldom proportionate to assess and evaluate the risk for each individual tree in a population. Often, all that is required is a brief consideration of the trees to identify gross signs of structural weakness or declining health. Doing all that is reasonably practicable does not mean that all trees must be individually examined on a regular basis (HSE 2013).

The QTRA method enables a range of approaches from the broad assessment of large collections of trees to, where necessary, the detailed assessment of an individual tree.

Risk of Harm

The QTRA output is termed the Risk of Harm and is a combined measure of the likelihood and consequences of tree failure, considered against the baseline of a lost human life within the coming year.

ALARP (As Low as Reasonably Practicable) Determining that risks have been reduced to As Low as Reasonably Practicable (HSE 2001) involves an evaluation of both the risk and the sacrifice or cost involved in reducing that risk. If it can be demonstrated that there is gross disproportion between them, the risk being insignificant in relation to the sacrifice or cost, then to reduce the risk further is not 'reasonably practicable'.

Costs and Benefits of Risk Control

Trees confer many benefits to people and the wider environment. When managing any risk, it is essential to maintain a balance between the costs and benefits of risk reduction, which should be considered in the determination of ALARP. It is not only the financial cost of controlling the risk that should be considered, but also the loss of tree-related benefits, and the risk to workers and the public from the risk control measure itself.

When considering risks from falling trees, the cost of risk control will usually be too high when it is clearly 'disproportionate' to the reduction in risk. In the context of QTRA, the issue of 'gross disproportion'², where decisions are heavily biased in favour of safety, is only likely to be considered where there are risks of 1/10 000 or greater.

Acceptable and Tolerable Risks

The Tolerability of Risk framework (ToR) (HSE 2001) is a widely accepted approach to reaching decisions on whether risks are broadly acceptable, unacceptable, or tolerable. Graphically represented in Figure 1, ToR can be summarised as having a Broadly Acceptable Region where the upper limit is an annual risk of death 1/1 000 000, an Unacceptable Region for which the lower limit is 1/1 000, and between these a Tolerable Region within which the tolerability of a risk will be dependent upon the costs and benefits of risk reduction. In the Tolerable Region, we must ask whether the benefits of risk control are sufficient to justify their cost.

In respect of trees, some risks cross the Broadly Acceptable 1/1 000 000 boundary but remain tolerable. This is because any further reduction would involve a disproportionate cost in terms of the lost environmental, visual, and other benefits, in addition to the financial cost of controlling the risk.

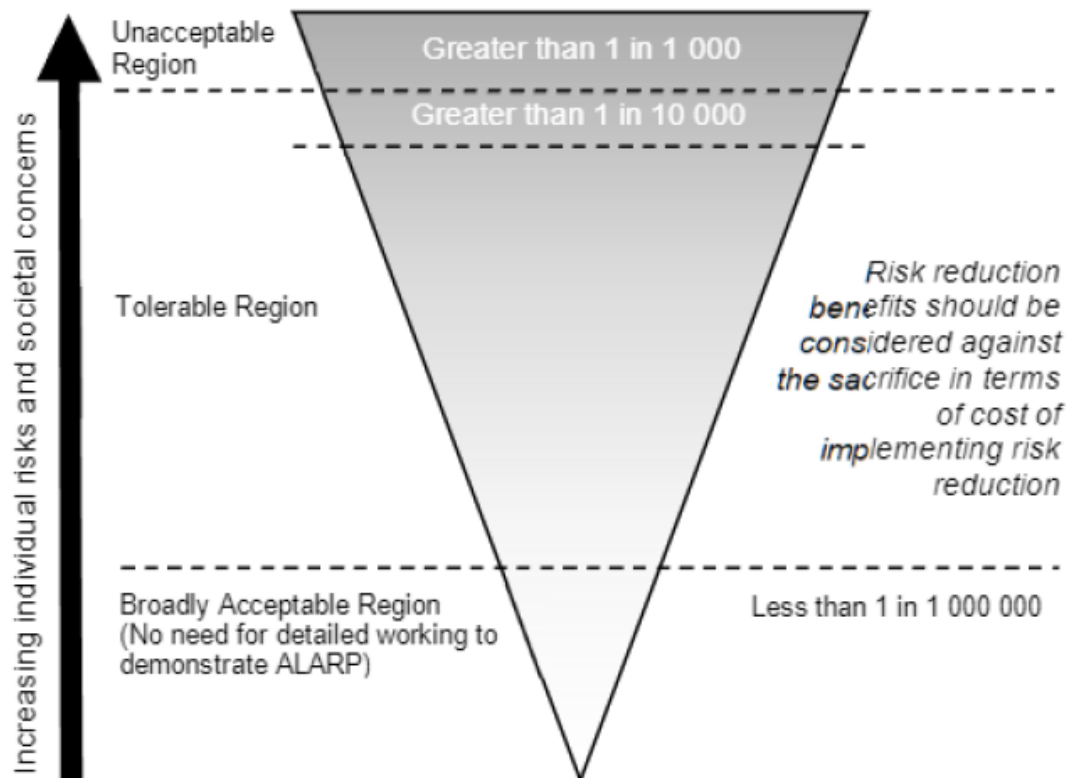
Enable damage to property to be compared with the loss of life, allowing the comparison of risks to people and property. Secondly, the proportionate allocation of financial resources to risk reduction can be informed by VOSL. "A value of statistical life of £1 000 000 is just another way of saying that a reduction in risk of death of 1/100 000 per year has a value of £10 per year" (HSE 1996).

Internationally, there is variation in VOSL, but to provide consistency in QTRA outputs, it is suggested that VOSL of £2 000 000 should be applied internationally. This is ultimately a decision for the tree manager.

2. OWNERSHIP OF RISK

Where many people are exposed to a risk, it is shared between them. Where only one person is exposed, that individual is the recipient of all of the risk and if they have control over it, they are also the owner of the risk. An individual may choose to accept or reject any particular risk to themselves when that risk is under their control. When risks that are imposed upon others become elevated, societal concern will usually require risk controls, which ultimately are imposed by the courts or government regulators.

Figure1: Adapted from U1e Tolerability of Risk framework (HSE 2001).



Value of Statistical Life

The Value of Statistical Life (VOSL) is a widely applied risk management device, which uses the value of a hypothetical life to guide the proportionate allocation of resources to risk reduction. In the UK, this value is currently in the region of £2 000 000, and this is the value adopted in the QTRA method.

In QTRA, placing a statistical value on a human life has two particular uses. Firstly, QTRA uses VOSL enable damage to property to be compared with the loss of life, allowing the comparison of risks to people and property. Secondly, the proportionate allocation of financial resources to risk reduction can be informed by VOSL. "A value of statistical life of £1 000 000 is just another way of saying that a reduction in risk of death of 1/100 000 per year has a value of £10 per year" (HSE 1996).

Internationally, there is variation in VOSL, **but** to provide consistency in QTRA outputs, it is suggested that VOSL of £2 000 000 should be applied internationally. This is ultimately a decision for the tree manager.

Although QTRA outputs might occasionally relate to an individual recipient, this is seldom the case. More often, calculation of the Risk of Harm is based on a cumulative occupation - i.e. the number of people per hour or vehicles per day, without attempting to identify the individuals who share the risk. Where the risk of harm relates to a specific individual or a known group of people, the risk manager might consider the views of those who are exposed to the risk when making management decisions. Where a risk is imposed on the wider community, the principles set out in the ToR framework can be used as a reasonable approach to determine whether the risk is ALARP.

3. THE QTRA METHOD - VERSION 5

The input values for three components of the QTRA calculation are set out in broad ranges of Target, Size, and Probability of Failure. The assessor estimates values for these three components and inputs them on either the manual calculator or software application to calculate the Risk of Harm.

Assessing Land-use (Targets)

The nature of the land-use beneath or adjacent to a tree will usually inform the level and extent of risk assessment to be carried out. In the assessment of Targets, six ranges of value are available. Table 2 sets out these ranges for vehicular frequency, human occupation, and the monetary value of damage to property.

Human Occupation

The probability of pedestrian occupation at a particular location is calculated on the basis that an average pedestrian will spend five seconds walking beneath an average tree. For example, an average occupation of ten pedestrians per day, each occupying the Target for five seconds is a daily occupation of fifty seconds, giving a likelihood of occupation $1/1,728$. Where a longer occupation is likely, as with a habitable building, outdoor café, or park bench, the period of occupation can be measured, or estimated as a proportion of a given unit of time, e.g. six hours per day ($1/4$). The Target is recorded as a range (Table 2).

Weather Affected Targets

Often the nature of a structural weakness in a tree is such that the probability of failure is greatest during windy weather, while the probability of the site being occupied by people during such weather is often low. This applies particularly to outdoor recreational areas. When estimating human Targets, the risk assessor must answer the question 'in the weather conditions that I expect the likelihood of failure of the tree to be initiated, what is my estimate of human occupation?' Taking this approach, rather than using the average occupation, ensures that the assessor considers the relationship between weather, people, and trees, along with the nature of the average person with their ability to recognise and avoid unnecessary risks.

Vehicles on the Highway

In the case of vehicles, likelihood of occupation may relate to either the falling tree or branch striking the vehicle or the vehicle striking the fallen tree. Both types of impact are influenced by vehicle speed; the faster the vehicle travels the less likely it is to be struck by the falling tree, but the more likely it is to strike a fallen tree. The probability of a vehicle occupying any particular point in the road is the ratio of the time it is occupied - including a safe stopping distance - to the total time. The average vehicle on a UK road is occupied by 1.6 people (DfT 2010). To account for the substantial protection that the average vehicle provides against most tree impacts and in particular, frontal collisions, QTRA values the substantially protected 1.6 occupants in addition to the value of the vehicle as equivalent to one exposed human life.

Property

Table 1. Size

Size Range	Size of tree or branch	Range of Probability
1	> 450mm (>18") dia.	1/1 - >1/2
2	260mm (10 ¹ / ₂ ") dia. - 450mm (18") dia.	1/2 - >1/8.6
3	110mm (4 ¹ / ₂ ") dia. - 250mm (10") dia.	1/8.6 - >1/82
4	25mm (1") dia. - 100mm (4") dia.	1/82 - 1/2 500

* Range 1 is based on a diameter of 600mm.

Property can be anything that could be damaged by a falling tree, from a dwelling, to livestock, parked car, or fence. When evaluating the exposure of property to tree failure, the QTRA assessment considers the cost of repair or replacement that might result from failure of the tree. Ranges of value are presented in Table 2 and the assessor's estimate need only be sufficient to determine which of the six ranges the cost to select.

In Table 2, the ranges of property value are based on a VOSL of £2 000 000, e.g. where a building with a replacement cost of £20 000 would be valued at 0.01 (1/100) of a life (Target Range 2).

When assessing risks in relation to buildings, the Target to be considered might be the building, the occupants, or both. Occupants of a building could be protected from harm by the structure or substantially exposed to the impact from a falling tree if the structure is not sufficiently robust, and this will determine how the assessor categorises the Target.

Multiple Targets

A Target might be constantly occupied by more than one person and QTRA can account for this. For example, if it is projected that the average occupation will be constant by 10 people, the Risk of Harm is calculated in relation to one person constantly occupying the Target before going on to identify that the average occupation is 10 people. This is expressed as Target 1(10T)/1, where 10T represents the Multiple Targets. In respect of property, a Risk of Harm 1(10T)/1 would be equivalent to a risk of losing £20 000 000 as opposed to £2 000 000.

Tree or Branch Size

A small dead branch of less than 25mm diameter is not likely to cause significant harm even in the case of direct contact with a Target, while a falling branch with a diameter greater than 450mm is likely to cause some harm in the event of contact with all but the most robust Target. The QTRA method categorises Size by the diameter of tree stems and branches (measured beyond any basal taper). An equation derived from weight measurements of trees of different stem diameters is used to produce a data set of comparative weights of trees and branches ranging from 25mm to 600mm diameter, from which Table 1 is compiled. The size of dead branches might be discounted where they have undergone a significant reduction in weight because of degradation and shedding of subordinate branches. This discounting, referred to as 'Reduced Mass', reflects an estimated reduction in the mass of a dead branch

Table 2. Targets

Target Range	Property (repair or replacement cost)	Human (not in vehicles)	Vehicle Traffic (number per day)	Ranges of Value (probability of occupation or fraction of £2 000 000)
1	£2 000 000 – >£200 000	Occupation: Constant – 2.5 hours/day Pedestrians 720/hour – 73/hour & cyclists:	26 000 – 2 700 @ 110kph (68mph) 32 000 – 3 300 @ 80kph (50mph) 47 000 – 4 800 @ 50kph (32mph)	1/1 – >1/10
2	£200 000 – >£20 000	Occupation: 2.4 hours/day – 15 min/day Pedestrians 72/hour – 8/hour & cyclists:	2 600 – 270 @ 110kph (68mph) 3 200 – 330 @ 80kph (50mph) 4 700 – 480 @ 50kph (32mph)	1/10 – >1/100
3	£20 000 – >£2 000	Occupation: 14 min/day – 2 min/day Pedestrians 7/hour – 2/hour & cyclists:	260 – 27 @ 110kph (68mph) 320 – 33 @ 80kph (50mph) 470 – 48 @ 50kph (32mph)	1/100 – >1/1 000
4	£2 000 – >£200	Occupation: 1 min/day – 2 min/week Pedestrians 1/hour – 3/day & cyclists:	26 – 4 @ 110kph (68mph) 32 – 4 @ 80kph (50mph) 47 – 6 @ 50kph (32mph)	1/1 000 – >1/10 000
5	£200 – >£20	Occupation: 1 min/week – 1 min/month Pedestrians 2/day – 2/week & cyclists:	3 – 1 @ 110kph (68mph) 3 – 1 @ 80kph (50mph) 5 – 1 @ 50kph (32mph)	1/10 000 – >1/100 000
6	£20 – £2	Occupation: <1 min/month – 0.5 min/year Pedestrians 1/week – 6/year & cyclists:	None	1/100 000 – 1/1 000 000

Vehicle, pedestrian, and property Targets are categorised by their frequency of use or their monetary value. The probability of a vehicle or pedestrian occupying a Target area in Target Range 4 is between the upper and lower limits of 1/1 000 and >1/10 000 (column 5). Using the VOSL £2 000 000, the property repair or replacement value for Target Range 4 is £2 000 - >200.

Probability of Failure

In the QTRA assessment, the probability of tree or branch failure within the coming year is estimated and recorded as a range of value (Ranges 1 – 7, Table 3).

Selecting a Probability of Failure (PoF) Range requires the assessor to compare their assessment of the tree or branch against a benchmark of either a non-compromised tree at Probability of Failure Range 7, or a tree or branch that we expect to fail within the year, which can be described as having a 1/1 probability of failure.

During QTRA training, Registered Users go through a number of field exercises in order to calibrate their estimates of Probability of Failure.

Table 3. Probability of Failure

Probability of Failure Range Probability

1	1/1 - >1/10
2	1/10 - >1/100
3	1/100 - >1/1 000
4	1/1 000 - >1/10 000
5	1/10 000 - >1/100 000
6	1/100 000 - >1/1 000 000
7	1/1 000 000 - 1/10 000 000

The QTRA Calculation

The assessor selects a Range of values for each of the three input components of Target, Size and Probability of Failure. The Ranges are entered on either the manual calculator or software application to calculate a Risk of Harm.

The Risk of Harm is expressed as a probability and is rounded, to one significant figure. Any Risk of Harm that is lower than 1/1 000 000 is represented as <1/1 000 000. As a visual aid, the Risk of Harm is colour coded using the traffic light system illustrated in Table 4 (page 7).

Risk of Harm - Monte Carlo Simulations

The Risk of Harm for all combinations of Target, Size and Probability of Failure Ranges has been calculated using Monte Carlo simulations⁴. The QTRA Risk of Harm is the mean value from each set of Monte Carlo results.

In QTRA Version 5, the Risk of Harm should not be calculated without the manual calculator or software application.

Assessing Groups and Populations of Trees

When assessing populations or groups of trees, the highest risk in the group is quantified and if that risk is tolerable, it follows that risks from the remaining trees will also be tolerable, and further calculations are unnecessary. Where the risk is intolerable, the next highest risk will be quantified, and so on until a tolerable risk is established. This process requires prior knowledge of the tree manager's risk tolerance.

Accuracy of Outputs

The purpose of QTRA is not necessarily to provide high degrees of accuracy, but to provide for the quantification of risks from falling trees in a way that risks are categorised within broad ranges (Table 4).

4. INFORMING MANAGEMENT DECISIONS

Balancing Costs and Benefits of Risk Control

When controlling risks from falling trees, the benefit of reduced risk is obvious, but the costs of risk control are all too often neglected. For every risk reduced there will be costs, and the most obvious of these is the financial cost of implementing the control measure. Frequently overlooked is the transfer of risks to workers and the public who might be directly affected by the removal or pruning of trees. Perhaps more importantly, most trees confer benefits, the loss of which should be considered as a cost when balancing the costs and benefits of risk control.

When balancing risk management decisions using QTRA, consideration of the benefits from trees will usually be of a very general nature and not require detailed consideration. The tree manager can consider, in simple terms, whether the overall cost of risk control is a proportionate one. Where risks are approaching 1/10 000, this may be a straightforward balancing of cost and benefits. Where risks are 1/10 000 or greater, it will usually be appropriate to implement risk controls unless the costs are grossly disproportionate to the benefits rather than simply disproportionate. In other words, the balance being weighted more on the side of risk control with higher associated costs.

Considering the Value of Trees

It is necessary to consider the benefits provided by trees, but they cannot easily be monetised, and it is often difficult to place a value on those attributes such as habitat, shading and visual amenity that might be lost to risk control.

A simple approach to considering the value of a tree asset is suggested here, using the concept of “average benefits”. When considered against other similar trees, a tree providing “average benefit” will usually present a range of benefits that are typical for the species, age, and situation. Viewed in this way, a tree providing “average benefits” might appear to be low when compared with particularly important trees – such as in Figure 2 but should nonetheless be sufficient to offset a Risk of Harm of less than 1/10 000. Without having to consider the benefits of risk controls, we might reasonably assume that below 1/10 000, the risk from a tree that provides ‘average benefits’ is ALARP.

In contrast, if it can be said that the tree provides lower than average benefits because, for example, it is declining and in poor physiological condition, it may be necessary to consider two further elements. Firstly, is the Risk of Harm in the upper part of the Tolerable Region, and secondly, is the Risk of Harm likely to increase before the next review because of an increased Probability of Failure. If both these conditions apply, then it might be appropriate to consider the balance of costs and benefits of risk reduction in order to determine whether the risk is ALARP. This balance requires the tree manager to take a view of both the reduction in risk and the costs of that reduction.



Lower Than Average Benefits from Trees

Usually, the benefits provided by a tree will only be significantly reduced below the 'average benefits' that are typical for the species, age, and situation, if the life of the benefits is likely to be shortened, perhaps because the tree is declining or dead. That is not to say that a disbenefit, such as undesirable shading, lifting of a footpath, or restricting the growth of other trees, should not also be considered in the balance of costs and benefits.

The horse chestnut tree in Figure 3 has recently died, and over the next few years, may provide valuable habitats. However, for this tree species and the relatively fast rate at which its wood decays, the lifetime of these benefits is likely to be limited to only a few years. This tree has an already reduced value that will continue to reduce rapidly over the coming five to ten years at the same time as the Risk of Harm is expected to increase. There will be changes in the benefits provided by the tree as it degrades. Visual qualities are likely to reduce while the decaying wood provides habitats for a range of species, for a short while at least. There are no hard and fast measures of these benefits, and it is for the tree manager to decide what is locally important and how it might be balanced with the risks.

Where a risk is within the Tolerable Region and the tree confers lower than average benefits, it might be appropriate to consider implementing risk control while taking account of the financial cost. Here, VOSL can be used to inform a decision on whether the cost of risk control is proportionate. Example 3 below puts this evaluation into a tree management context. There will be occasions when a tree is of such minimal value and the monetary cost of risk reduction so low that it might be reasonable to further reduce an already relatively low risk. Conversely, a tree might be of such considerable value that an annual risk of death greater than 1/10 000 would be deemed tolerable.

Occasionally, decisions will be made to retain elevated risks because the benefits from the tree are particularly high or important to stakeholders, and in these situations, it might be appropriate to assess and document the benefits in some detail. If detailed assessment of benefits is required, there are several methodologies and sources of information (Forest Research 2010).

Delegating Risk Management Decisions



Understanding of the costs with which risk reduction is balanced can be informed by the risk assessor’s knowledge, experience, and on-site observations, but the risk management decisions should be made by the tree manager. That is not to say that the tree manager should review and agree every risk control measure, but when delegating decisions to surveyors and other staff or advisors, tree managers should set out in a policy, statement or contract, the principles and perhaps thresholds to which trees and their associated risks will ordinarily be managed.

Based on the tree manager accepting the principles set out in the QTRA Practice Note and or any other specific instructions, the risk assessor can take account of the cost/benefit balance and for most situations will be able to determine whether the risk is ALARP when providing management recommendations.

Table 4. QTRA Advisory Risk Thresholds

Thresholds	Description	Action
1/1,000	Unacceptable Risks will not ordinarily be tolerated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Control the risk
	Unacceptable (where imposed on others) Risks will not ordinarily be tolerated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Control the risk Review the risk
1/10 000	Tolerable (by agreement) Risks may be tolerated if those exposed to the risk accept it, or the tree has exceptional value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Control the risk unless there is broad stakeholder agreement to tolerate it, or the tree has exceptional value Review the risk
	Tolerable (where imposed on others) Risks are tolerable if ALARP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess costs and benefits of risk control Control the risk only where a significant benefit might be achieved at reasonable cost Review the risk
1/1 000 000	Broadly Acceptable Risk is already ALARP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action currently required Review the risk

QTRA Informative Risk Thresholds

The QTRA advisory thresholds in Table 4 are proposed as a reasonable approach to balancing safety from falling trees with the costs of risk reduction. This approach takes account of the widely applied principles of ALARP and ToR, but does not dictate how these principles should be applied. While the thresholds can be the foundation of a robust policy for tree risk management, tree managers should make decisions based on their own situation, values, and resources. Importantly, to enable tree assessors to provide appropriate management guidance, it is helpful for them to have some understanding of the tree owner’s management preferences prior to assessing the trees.

A Risk of Harm that is less than 1/1 000 000 is Broadly Acceptable and is already ALARP. A Risk of Harm 1/1 000 or greater is unacceptable and will not ordinarily be tolerated. Between these two values, the Risk of Harm is in the Tolerable Region of ToR and will be tolerable if it is ALARP. In the Tolerable Region, management decisions are informed by consideration of the costs and benefits of risk control, including the nature and extent of those benefits provided by trees, which would be lost to risk control measures.

For the purpose of managing risks from falling trees, the Tolerable Region can be further broken down into two sections. From 1/1 000 000 to less than 1/10 000, the Risk of Harm will usually be tolerable providing that the tree confers ‘average benefits’ as discussed above.

As the Risk of Harm approaches 1/10 000 it will be necessary for the tree manager to consider in more detail the benefits provided by the tree and the overall cost of mitigating the risk.

A Risk of Harm in the Tolerable Region but 1/10 000 or greater will not usually be tolerable where it is imposed on others, such as the public, and if retained, will require a more detailed consideration of ALARP. In exceptional circumstances a tree owner might choose to retain a Risk of Harm that is 1/10 000 or greater. Such a decision might be based on the agreement of those who are exposed to the risk, or perhaps that the tree is of great importance. In these circumstances, the prudent tree manager will consult with the appropriate stakeholders whenever possible.

4. EXAMPLE QTRA CALCULATIONS AND RISK MANAGEMENT DECISIONS

Below are three examples of QTRA calculations and application of the QTRA Advisory Thresholds.

Example 1

	Target		Size		Probability of Failure		Risk of Harm
Range	6	x	1	x	3	=	<1/1 000 000

Example 1 is the assessment of a large (Size 1), unstable tree with a probability of failure of between 1/100 and >1/1 000 (PoF 3). The Target is a footpath with less than one pedestrian passing the tree each week (Target 6). The Risk of Harm is calculated as less than 1/1 000 000 (green). This is an example of where the Target is so low consideration of the structural condition of even a large tree would not usually be necessary.

Example 2

	Target		Size		Probability of Failure		Risk of Harm
Range	1	×	4	×	3	=	1(2T)/50 000

In Example 2, a recently dead branch (Size 4) overhangs a busy urban high street that is on average occupied constantly by two people, and here Multiple Target occupation is considered.

Having an average occupancy of two people, the Risk of Harm 1(2T)/50 000 (yellow) represents a twofold increase in the magnitude of the consequence and is therefore equivalent to a Risk of Harm 1/20 000 (yellow). This risk does not exceed 1/10 000 but being a dead branch at the upper end of the Tolerable Region it is appropriate to consider the balance of costs and benefits of risk control. Dead branches can be expected to degrade over time with the probability of failure increasing as a result. Because it is dead, some of the usual benefits from the branch have been lost and it will be appropriate to consider whether the financial cost of risk control would be proportionate.

Example 3

	Target		Size		Probability of Failure		Risk of Harm
Range	3	×	3	×	3	=	1/500 000

In Example 3, a 200mm diameter defective branch overhangs a country road along which travel between 470 and 48 vehicles each day at an average speed of 50kph (32mph) (Target Range 3). The branch is split and is assessed as having a probability of failure for the coming year of between 1/100 and 1/1 000 (PoF Range 3). The Risk of Harm is calculated as 1/500 000 (yellow), and it needs to be considered whether the risk is ALARP. The cost of removing the branch and reducing the risk to Broadly Acceptable (1/1 000 000) is estimated at £350. To establish whether this is a proportionate cost of risk control, the following equation is applied. £2 000 000 (VOSL) x 1/500 000 = £4 indicating that the projected cost of £350 would be disproportionate to the benefit. Taking account of the financial cost, risk transfer to arborists and passers-by, the cost could be described as grossly disproportionate, even if accrued benefits over say ten years were considered.

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REPORT TO:	Executive Board
DATE:	24th October 2024
REPORTING OFFICER:	Director – Legal & Democratic Services
PORTFOLIO:	Environment and Urban Renewal
SUBJECT:	Mersey Gateway
WARD(S)	Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 Mersey Gateway Bridge opened to traffic on the 14th October 2017. The Silver Jubilee Bridge reopened to traffic in February 2020.
- 1.2 Since the opening of the Mersey Gateway Bridge, as at the 30th September 2024 there have been approximately 160m crossings of the bridges.
- 1.3 Both bridges are often described as being operated as tolled crossings, but strictly speaking motorists pay in the form of a road user charge under the Transport Act 2000. The charges are anticipated to remain on the crossing until the Mersey Gateway Bridge, improvements to the Silver Jubilee Bridge and other associated highway network improvements are paid for.
- 1.4 Since tolls were introduced in 2017, they have remained unchanged and there is now a need to increase the tolls by 20% to ensure that in line with the original proposals the project remains financially robust without the need for additional local or central funding beyond that already agreed.
- 1.5 To achieve this, there is a requirement to replace the existing Road User Charging Scheme Order (RUCSO) with a new RUCSO, to reflect the increased toll charges.
- 1.6 There is a statutory requirement under the Transport Act 2000 to carry out consultation before making a RUCSO.
- 1.7 The new RUCSO and associated consultation also presents the opportunity to introduce other changes, either in the drafting of the RUCSO or in the day to day operation of the charging scheme.

1.8 This report asks the Executive Board to agree to a process of consultation –

1.6.1 To make a RUCSO, revoking the current RUCSO and replacing it with an updated RUCSO.

1.6.2 To consider several other associated matters, as detailed in this report.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That the Board should**

- 1) consult on making an updated RUCSO based on the working draft enclosed at Appendix 1 on the basis prescribed in this report.¹**
- 2) after giving full and proper consideration to any responses received, and having taken them into account, recommend the Council to make the updated RUCSO based on the working draft enclosed at Appendix 1 and delegate to the Director, Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, the authority to make any non-material or consequential amendments as are necessary to give it effect.**
- 3) authorise the Director, Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, to take all necessary steps to bring the RUCSO into effect, provided that any material amendments or considerations shall be considered by the Council and subject to its determination before the RUCSO is brought into effect.**

3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 In line with the original financial projections, the Mersey Gateway Project continues to operate with a financial loss, hence the requirement for Central Government grants as outlined in the Funding Letter of February 2016. Details of the income and expenditure of the scheme from Oct 2017 to March 2024 can be found at Appendix 2 to this report.

In agreeing this financial assistance package, it was envisaged that the tolls would increase annually by Retail Price Index. However, the

¹ The Board should note that the consultation process in respect of the revised RUCSO is ongoing. This will inform the completion of drafting of the RUCSO that will have been presented as part of the consultation.

Funding Letter provides the option for the tolls not to be so increased, with the agreement of Central Government. To date, tolls have not been increased as there has not been a requirement to do so. However, if the Council does not increase tolls when required then the Council must 'make good' on the difference between the actual income and the expected income if the tolls had increased.

The Funding Letter provides details of the maximum amount of grant that Central Government is willing to provide to Halton to support the Project. However, to continue to operate within this financial envelope it is now necessary to increase the tolls for the first time since the Mersey Gateway Bridge opened in 2017.

Having carefully considered all relevant factors; it is proposed that tolls are increased by 20% from the 1st April 2025. Further details as to how this increase has been calculated can be found in Appendix 3 to this report. The reasoning for a 20% increase will also be presented as part of the proposed consultation in relation to a replacement RUCSO.

The below sections list ancillary matters that are being considered for inclusion in the proposed consultation. However, it should be noted that the option development process is ongoing, such that this is not an exhaustive list. Not all of these ancillary matters require to be addressed in the replacement RUCSO, but properly can be considered alongside that proposal.

3.2 Blue Badges

As part of the consultation process there is the opportunity to consider if the current scheme of users with Blue Badges having to apply for their vehicle to be added to the register of exempt vehicles should be changed to a scheme whereby those vehicles which are exempt from Vehicle Exercise Duty (VED) due to being used by a disabled person, are automatically detected and exempt from the toll.

This would mean that those who are eligible will no longer need to apply to be entered onto the register of exempt vehicles.

The rationale for this is that the exemption from VED is capable of being established from DVLA databases, meaning that establishing the exemption is much more straightforward in relation to each vehicle. This is advantageous both to users and the Project. This would require an amendment to the existing RUCSO.

3.3 Encouraging Accounts

It is proposed that the consultation will ask unregistered users, those that pay via the Quick Pay App or website etc, what would encourage them to open an account.

3.4 Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs)

At present the PCN rate for the Mersey Gateway at £40, reduced to £20 if paid within 14 days is set at the lowest rate possible, and significantly lower than other schemes. The purpose of the PCN is to deter non-compliance, encourage people to pay on time for their crossings and ensure fairness for those that pay for their crossings

The consultation will ask for commentary on a proposed increase in the PCN rate from £40 to £50, having regard to the fact that user charges are increasing. It will propose an increase in the PCN rate to enable respondents to comment.

3.5 Local User Discount Scheme (LUDS)

With the introduction of Auto Renewal for the LUDS making it easier for eligible Halton residents to renew their accounts, the consultation will ask whether there should be a discount for those that sign up for Auto Renewal via Direct Debit.

3.6 RUCSO

The proposed amendments to the 2020 Order will be achieved by the revocation of the 2020 Order and making of an updated RUCSO to replace that order.

The following process will be applied when considering, making and bringing into effect the RUCSO.

Following this meeting a consultation will be commenced, which will be advertised in the local newspapers and on the Council and Mersey Gateway websites. The consultation will run for six weeks in November and December 2024.

After the close of consultation, the output will be reported to the Council at a meeting to be scheduled but expected to take place in February 2025. The Council is required to take conscientious account of the responses to the consultation.

If the Council is satisfied that it is appropriate to do so, it will resolve to make the updated RUCSO, taking the output of the consultation into account, which will then be sealed.

Once the updated RUCSO has been made, it is intended that it will come into effect from the 1st April 2025, and this will be advertised.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The Orders regulate the toll/charge regime and enforcement arrangements.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The consequence of not increasing tolls on the Council is identified within the Grant Funding Letter. The impact on the Council's finances would be negative as set out in the Funding Letter.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

None

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

None

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

None

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

None

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

None

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

None

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 Removing the risk of the project becoming financially unsustainable through a combination of decreasing or withdrawn Central Government grant support and increasing costs, and the Council being exposed to its consequences has been carefully considered in arriving at the recommendations of this report.

The controls and processes of the Board's regular financial reporting to Central Government and Council will mitigate as far as possible

any future risk of financial unsustainability developing.

A project risk register covering financial, contractual, operational and other risks is maintained by the Board.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 Other than the matters identified in the report there are no implications for equality and diversity.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None.

10.0 REASON FOR DECISION

Without increase the toll charges the Council would not be able to meet its contractual finance obligations from the Project Account and need to use its general funding to meet any shortfall.

11.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

None, as there are no alternative funding streams to meet the anticipated shortfall. The detailed options in the context of a new RUCSO and toll increase will be presented as part of the proposed consultation.

12.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE

It is intended that the new RUCSO will come into effect from the 1st April 2025, while the proposed consultation would take place in November and December 2024.

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

All existing Orders and the Funding Letter referred to in this report are public documents, hence there are no Background Papers as described in the Act.

TRANSPORT ACT 2000

The A533 (Mersey Gateway Bridge) and the A557 (Silver Jubilee Bridge) Road User Charging Scheme Order [2025]

Made - - - - - [**]

Coming into force - - - [**]

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Halton Borough Council makes the following Order, which contains a road user charging scheme, in exercise of the powers conferred by sections 163(3)(a), 164, 168(1) and (2), 170, 171(1) and 172(2) of the Transport Act 2000⁽²⁾ and by regulations 4, 5, 22, 23, 24, 25 and 27 of the Road User Charging Schemes (Penalty Charges, Adjudication and Enforcement) (England) Regulations 2013⁽³⁾.

Appropriate persons have been consulted in accordance with section 170(1A) and (1C) of the Transport Act 2000.

Preliminary

Citation and commencement

1.—(1) This Order may be cited as The A533 (Mersey Gateway Bridge) and the A557 (Silver Jubilee Bridge) Road User Charging Scheme Order [2025].

(2) The scheme set out in this Order shall have effect.

(3) The Council shall publish notice of the making of this Order in the London Gazette and in at least one newspaper circulating in the Borough of Halton.

*Scheme for imposing charges in respect of the use of The Mersey Gateway Bridge
and The Silver Jubilee Bridge*

Interpretation

2.—(1) In this Order—

“the 2000 Act” means the Transport Act 2000;

“the 2020 Order” means The A533 (Mersey Gateway Bridge) and the A557 (Silver Jubilee Bridge) Roads User Charging Scheme Order 2020;

“appointed day” means the date of this Order;

"authorised person" means the Council or any person so authorised by the Council under article 14(1) to exercise any one or more of the powers in articles 15 to 19;

“concession agreement” means a legally binding arrangement which may be comprised within one or more documents that makes provision for the design, construction, financing, refinancing, operation and maintenance of either the Silver Jubilee Bridge and the scheme roads or a new road crossing over the River Mersey or any of them;

“concessionaire” means any person with whom the Council enters into a concession agreement from time to time together with the successors and assigns of any such person;

“Council” means the Council of the Borough of Halton;

⁽²⁾ 2000 c.38. There are amendments to section 167, 168, 171 and 172 which are not relevant to this Order.

⁽³⁾ S.I. 2013/1783.

“custodian” means a person authorised in writing by the Council to perform the functions of a custodian described in Part 6 of the Enforcement Regulations;

“deposited plans” means the plans numbered 61034234/RUCO/01 (Rev B), 61034234/RUCO/02 (Rev B), 61034234/RUCO/03 (Rev A), 61034234/RUCO/04 and 61034234/RUCO/05 deposited at the offices of the Council at Municipal Building, Kingsway, Widnes WA8 7QF signed by the Chief Executive of the Council;

“Enforcement Regulations” means the Road User Charging Schemes (Penalty Charges, Adjudication and Enforcement) (England Regulations) 2013;

“new crossing” means the bridge and other roads and structures built pursuant to the River Mersey (Mersey Gateway Bridge) Order 2011⁽⁴⁾;

“register” means the register of vehicles being exempt from charges pursuant to the scheme maintained by the Council under article 9;

“scheme” means the scheme for imposing charges for the use or keeping of a vehicle on the scheme roads pursuant to this Order;

“scheme roads” means those parts of:

- (i) the road that approaches and crosses the new crossing; and
 - (ii) the road that approaches and crosses the Silver Jubilee Bridge,
- as are shown on the deposited plans.

“website” means the website maintained by the Mersey Gateway Crossings Board Ltd containing information about the operation of the scheme⁽⁵⁾.

Revocation

3. The 2020 Order is hereby revoked.

Duration of the Order

4. This Order shall remain in force indefinitely.

Designation of scheme roads, vehicles and charges

The scheme roads

5. The roads in respect of which this Order applies are the scheme roads.

Imposition of charges

- 6.—(1) A charge is to be imposed in respect of a vehicle where—

- (a) the vehicle has been used or kept on the scheme roads; and
- (b) the vehicle falls within a class of vehicles in respect of which a charge is imposed by this Order.

(2) The charge imposed is determined by reference to Part 1 of Schedule 1.

(3) The class of vehicles or classes of vehicles in respect of which charges may be levied under this Order shall be those set out in Part 3 of Schedule 1.

(4) Where any vehicle would fall within the description of more than one classification of vehicles or class of vehicles it shall be deemed to fall in the class of vehicles bearing the highest number in Part 3 of Schedule 1.

⁽⁴⁾ S.I. 2011/41.

⁽⁵⁾ www.merseyflow.co.uk

Payment of charges

7.—(1) Subject to paragraph **Error! Reference source not found.** a charge imposed by this scheme, the amount of which is specified in article 6 paragraph (2) (imposition of charges), shall be paid no later than 23:59 hours on the day immediately following the day upon which the charge has been incurred by a means and by such method as may be specified by the Council on the website or in a document available on application from the Council or such other means or method as the Council may in the particular circumstances of the case accept.

(2) Subject to such regulations as the Secretary of State may make pursuant to section 172(1) of the 2000 Act, the Council may waive charges (or any part of such charges) and may suspend the charging of charges in whole or in part.

(3) The Council or its agent may enter into an agreement (“composition agreement”) under which persons contract for the payment of charges in respect of the use of the scheme roads by them, by other persons or by any vehicles on such terms as may be provided by the agreement.

(4) A composition agreement may relate to use of the scheme roads on such number of occasions or during such period as may be provided for by the agreement.

(5) Any composition agreement entered into prior to the appointed day and whether or not in respect of this Order shall have effect from that day and from the appointed day this scheme shall apply to that composition agreement and nothing in this scheme shall render a composition agreement entered into other than during the currency of this scheme invalid.

(6) Without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (3), a composition agreement may be entered into for such of the following periods as the Council may agree:

- (a) the duration of a single journey;
- (b) a number of single journeys specified in the composition agreement;
- (c) a single day or any number of single days;
- (d) a period of 5 or 7 consecutive days;
- (e) a period of a single month; or
- (f) a period of one year.

(7) The following provisions shall apply to composition agreements—

- (a) a composition agreement shall be specific to a particular vehicle;
- (b) that vehicle shall be identified by its registration mark; and
- (c) a person entering into a composition agreement with the Council shall specify to the Council or its agent the registration mark of the vehicle to which the composition agreement relates.

(8) Where a composition agreement is entered into or purported to be entered into, and payment is to be made to the Council otherwise than in cash, and payment is not received by the Council or its agent (whether because a cheque is dishonoured or otherwise), the charge or charges to which the composition agreement relates shall be treated as not paid and the composition agreement may be voided by the Council.

(9) The Council may require a vehicle that is subject to a composition agreement to display a document in that vehicle or to carry in or fix equipment to that vehicle.

(10) Where a composition agreement provides for a discount or waiver of any charge or part of any charge and is calculated solely by reference to the use of the scheme roads—

- (a) for a number of journeys; or
- (b) for any period

a user or prospective user of the scheme roads shall not be prevented from entering into such a composition agreement by reason of their place of residence or business.

(11) Where any scheme of discount or waiver is proposed in respect of charges payable or prospectively payable under this scheme the Council shall have regard to the most appropriate

means of providing the benefit of such a scheme to those socio-economic groups within the Borough of Halton least able to afford the full price of charges in deciding to apply any such scheme.

(12) The Council may impose such reasonable conditions upon the making of a composition agreement as it considers appropriate including in relation to the transfer of the benefit of composition agreements or the refund of payments.

Classification of vehicles and charges payable

8. Schedule 1 to this Order, which sets out the classification of vehicles in respect of which a charge is imposed by this scheme together with the specification of the charges and penalty charges payable by reference to those classes, shall have effect.

Vehicles exempt from charges

9.—(1) Subject to, and to the extent not inconsistent with, such regulations as the Secretary of State may make pursuant to section 172(1) of the 2000 Act, Part 1 of Schedule 2 to this Order, which sets out the vehicles exempt from charges, shall have effect.

(2) The exemptions from the charges set out in this scheme shall have effect subject to the particulars of the vehicle in respect of which an exemption is claimed being entered upon the register.

(3) The Council may require a vehicle exempt from charges to display a document in that vehicle or to carry in or fix equipment to that vehicle.

(4) The provisions of Part 2 of Schedule 2 shall apply.

10 year plan for net proceeds

10. Schedule 3 to this Order constitutes the general plan of the Council under paragraph 10(1)(a) of Schedule 12 to the 2000 Act for applying the net proceeds of this scheme during the period which begins with the date on which this Order comes into force and ends with the tenth financial year that commences on or after that date.

Detailed programme for net proceeds

11. Schedule 4 to this Order constitutes the detailed programme of the Council under paragraph 10(1)(b) of Schedule 12 to the 2000 Act for applying the net proceeds of this scheme during the period which begins with the date on which this Order comes into force and ends at the time by which the Council's local transport plan is next required to be replaced.

Penalty charges

Penalty charges

12.—(1) A penalty charge is payable in respect of a vehicle upon which a charge has been imposed under this Order and where such charge has not been paid in full at or before 23:59 hours on the day immediately following the day upon which the charge was incurred.

(2) Where a penalty charge has become payable in respect of a vehicle under paragraph (1), the penalty charge rate applicable is determined by reference to Part 2 of Schedule 1.

(3) A penalty charge payable under paragraph (1) is—

- (a) payable in addition to the charge imposed under article 6;
- (b) to be paid in full within the period of 28 days beginning with the date on which a penalty charge notice relating to the charge that has not been paid in full is served;
- (c) reduced by one half provided it is paid in full prior to the end of the fourteenth day of the period referred to in sub-paragraph (3)(b);

- (d) increased by one half if not paid in full before a charge certificate to which it relates is served by or on behalf of the Council (as the charging authority) in accordance with regulation 17 of the Enforcement Regulations.

Additional penalty charges where powers exercised in respect of vehicles

13.—(1) An additional penalty charge in accordance with the table of penalty charge rates displayed on the website will be payable under the charging scheme for the—

- (a) release of a motor vehicle immobilised in accordance with article 18;
- (b) removal of a motor vehicle in accordance with article 19(1);
- (c) storage and release from storage of a vehicle so removed; and
- (d) disposal of a vehicle in accordance with article 19(2).

(2) Any penalty charge payable under paragraph (1) is payable in addition to the charge imposed under article 6.

Powers in respect of motor vehicles

Powers in respect of motor vehicles

14.—(1) The Council may authorise in writing a person to exercise any one or more of the powers in articles 15 to 19.

(2) An authorised person under this Order is an authorised person within the meaning of regulation 21 of the Enforcement Regulations.

Examination of vehicles

15. An authorised person may examine a motor vehicle whilst it is on a road to ascertain if any of the circumstances described in regulation 22 of the Enforcement Regulations exists.

Entering vehicles

16. An authorised person may enter a vehicle whilst it is on a road where the authorised person has reasonable grounds for suspecting that any of the circumstances described in regulation 23(1) of the Enforcement Regulations exists provided that the condition referred to in regulation 23(2) of those Regulations is met.

Seizure

17. An authorised person may seize anything (if necessary by detaching it from a vehicle) as provided for in regulation 24 of the Enforcement Regulations provided that the condition referred to in regulation 24(2) of those Regulations is met.

Immobilisation of vehicles

18. Provided—

- (a) none of the circumstances in paragraph (2) of regulation 25 of the Enforcement Regulations apply; and
- (b) the conditions in paragraph (3) of that regulation do apply,

an authorised person may immobilise a vehicle in accordance with paragraphs (4) and (5) of that regulation.

Removal, storage and disposal of vehicles

19.—(1) Provided regulation 27(1) (a) or (b) of the Enforcement Regulations is satisfied, an authorised person may remove a vehicle and deliver it to a custodian for storage.

(2) The custodian may dispose of the vehicle and its contents in the circumstances described in regulation 28 of the Enforcement Regulations.

THE COMMON SEAL of the **COUNCIL**
OF

THE BOROUGH OF HALTON was
hereunto

affixed the **[**]** day of **[April 2025]** in the
presence of

Authorised Signatory

SCHEDULES

SCHEDULE 1

Articles 6 and 12

PART 1

Road User Charges Payable

1. The charge payable under article 6 in respect of a vehicle falling within a class specified in column 1 of the table below shall be determined by reference to the corresponding entry in column 2 of the table.

<i>Column 1</i>	<i>Column 2</i>
<i>Class of vehicle</i>	<i>Charge for each vehicle each time it is used or kept on the scheme roads</i>
Class 1 vehicles	Nil
Class 2 vehicles	£2.40
Class 3 vehicles	£7.20
Class 4 vehicles	£9.60

PART 2

Penalty Charges Payable

2. The penalty charge payable under article 12 in respect of a vehicle falling within a class specified in column 1 of the table below shall be determined by reference to the corresponding entry in column 2 of the table.

<i>Column 1</i>	<i>Column 2</i>
<i>Class of vehicle</i>	<i>Penalty Charge rate applicable</i>
Class 1 vehicles	Nil
Class 2 vehicles	£50
Class 3 vehicles	£50
Class 4 vehicles	£50

PART 3

Classification of Vehicles for the Purposes of Charges

<i>Class of Vehicle</i>	<i>Classification</i>
“class 1 vehicle”	means a moped falling within classifications A(a) and A(b); motorcycles falling within classifications B(a) and B(b); motor tricycles falling within classifications C(a) and C(b); and quadricycles falling within classifications D(a), D(b), E(a) and E(b).
“class 2 vehicle”	means motor caravans falling within classifications L(a) and L(b); motor vehicles with at least four wheels, used for the carriage of passengers falling within classifications M ₁ (a) and M ₁ (b); and motor vehicles with

at least four wheels used for the carriage of goods falling within classifications N₁(a) and N₁(b).

“class 3 vehicle” means motor vehicles with at least four wheels used for the carriage of passengers falling within classifications M₂(a) and M₂(b); and motor vehicles with at least four wheels used for the carriage of goods falling within classifications N₂(a) and N₂(b).

“class 4 vehicle” means motor vehicles with at least four wheels used for the carriage of passengers falling within classifications M₃(a) and M₃(b); and motor vehicles with at least four wheels used for the carriage of goods falling within classifications N₃(a) and N₃(b).

Reference to “classifications” in this Schedule 1 are references to the classes of motor vehicles contained or referred to in Part II of the Schedule to the Road User Charging and Work Place Parking Levy (Classes of Motor Vehicles) (England) Regulations 2001⁽⁶⁾.

SCHEDULE 2

Article 9

PART 1

Vehicles Exempt from Charges

1. Charges may not be levied in respect of—

- (a) a vehicle whose details have been recorded on the register in accordance with Part 2 of this Schedule and, in the case of those listed in sub-paragraphs 3(a) to 3(e) of Part 2 of this Schedule, being used in the execution of duty; or
- (b) a vehicle being used in connection with—
 - (i) the collection of charges; or
 - (ii) the maintenance, improvement or renewal of, or other dealings with, the Silver Jubilee Bridge or the new crossing or any structure, works or apparatus in, on, under or over any part of the new crossing or Silver Jubilee Bridge; or
- (c) a vehicle which, having broken down on the Silver Jubilee Bridge or the new crossing while travelling in one direction, is travelling in the opposite direction otherwise than under its own power;
- (d) a military vehicle, that is, a vehicle used for army, naval or air force purposes, while being driven by persons for the time being subject to the orders of a member of the armed forces of the Crown;
- (e) invalid carriages as defined by paragraph 18 of Schedule 2 to the Vehicle Excise and Registration Act 1994;
- (f) vehicles used by or kept for use by or for the purpose of a disabled person as defined by paragraph 19 of Schedule 2 to the Vehicle Excise and Registration Act 1994; or
- (g) vehicles used for the carriage of disabled persons by recognised bodies in accordance with paragraph 20 of Schedule 2 to the Vehicle Excise and Registration Act 1994.

⁽⁶⁾ S.I. 2001/2793.

PART 2

The Register of Vehicles Exempt from Charges

2. The Council shall maintain the register in respect of exempt vehicles for the purposes of the provisions of this Schedule which requires particulars of a vehicle to be entered in the register.

3. Vehicles falling within the following descriptions of motor vehicles shall be eligible to be entered upon the register—

- (a) a police vehicle, identifiable as such by writing or markings on it or otherwise by its appearance, or being the property of the Service Authority for the Serious Organised Crime Agency or notified to the Council by reference to its registration mark;
- (b) a fire engine as defined by paragraph 4(2) of Schedule 2 to the Vehicle Excise and Registration Act 1994⁽⁷⁾;
- (c) a vehicle which is kept by a fire authority as defined by paragraph 5 of that Schedule;
- (d) an ambulance as defined by paragraph 6(2) or a vehicle falling within paragraph 7 of that Schedule and shall also include vehicles used for the transport of blood, plasma or human organs;
- (e) an emergency response vehicle being the property of Her Majesty's Coastguard notified to the Council by reference to its registration mark;
- (f) an omnibus being used for a local service as defined by section 2 of the Transport Act 1985 in respect of crossing the Silver Jubilee Bridge⁽⁸⁾; or
- (g) an agricultural tractor as defined by paragraph 20B of Schedule 2 to the Vehicle Excise Registration Act 1994 in respect of crossing the Silver Jubilee Bridge.

4. Registration of a vehicle upon the register, and the use to which that vehicle must be put to qualify as exempt from charges, shall be subject to the imposition of such further conditions as the Council may reasonably impose.

5. The Council may require that an application to enter particulars of a vehicle on the register or to renew the registration of a vehicle—

- (a) shall include all such information as the Council may reasonably require; and
- (b) shall be made by such means as the Council may accept.

6. Where the Council receives an application that complies with paragraph 4 to enter particulars of a vehicle on the register, or to renew the registration of a vehicle and the vehicle falls within the descriptions set out in paragraph 2 of this Part it shall enter the particulars of that vehicle upon the register within twenty working days of receiving such an application.

7. The Council shall remove particulars of a vehicle from the register—

- (a) in the case of a vehicle registered in relation to the holder of a disabled person's badge, when that person ceases to be an eligible person for the purposes of sub-paragraph **Error! Reference source not found.** of this Part;
- (b) in the case of any vehicle at the end of the period of 7 consecutive days beginning with the day on which a change in the keeper of the vehicle occurred, unless the Council renews the registration for a further period on application to it by or on behalf of the new keeper.

8. Where the registered keeper of a vehicle is aware that the vehicle has ceased or will cease to be a vehicle eligible to be entered on the register, the keeper shall notify the Council of the fact and the Council shall remove the particulars of the vehicle from the register as soon as reasonably practicable or from the date notified to the Council as the date on which it will cease to be a vehicle eligible to be entered on the register.

9. If the Council is no longer satisfied that a vehicle is an exempt vehicle it shall—

⁽⁷⁾ 1994 c.22.

⁽⁸⁾ 1985 c.67.

- (a) remove the particulars of a vehicle from the register; and
- (b) notify the registered keeper.

10. Nothing in this paragraph shall prevent the making of a fresh application under Schedule 2 for particulars of a vehicle to be entered in the register after they have been removed from it in accordance with any provision of this Part of this Schedule 2.

SCHEDULE 3

Article 10

Halton Borough Council's General Plan for Applying the Net Proceeds of this Scheme During the Opening 10 Year Period

1. Road user charging under this scheme is due to start in 2025. Paragraph 10(1)(a) of Schedule 12 to the Transport Act 2000 applies to the period that is covered partly by the current Local Transport Plan that fully supports the implementation of this scheme.

2. The net proceeds of the road user charging scheme in the ten year period following the start of this charging scheme will be applied, in such proportions to be decided, towards:

- (a) paying the costs and expenses incurred in designing, constructing, managing, operating and maintaining the new crossing and in managing, operating and maintaining the Silver Jubilee Bridge and the scheme roads or any costs associated with financing any or both;
- (b) providing such funds as are or are likely to be necessary to discharge the obligations of the Council or a concessionaire pursuant to a concession agreement;
- (c) paying the interest on, and repaying the principal of, monies borrowed in respect of the new crossing;
- (d) making payment into any maintenance or reserve fund provided in respect of the Silver Jubilee Bridge and the scheme roads or the new crossing;
- (e) making payments to the Council's general fund for the purpose of directly or indirectly facilitating the achievement of policies relating to public transport in its local transport plan; and
- (f) providing funds for, meeting expenses incurred in, or the cost of securing any necessary authority or consent for, constructing or securing the construction, maintenance and operation of the new crossing or securing the maintenance and operation of the Silver Jubilee Bridge and the scheme roads.

SCHEDULE 4

Article 11

Halton Borough Council's Detailed Programme for Applying the Net Proceeds of this Scheme

1. Road user charging on the Mersey Gateway Bridge began in 2017 to coincide with the opening of the Mersey Gateway Bridge for use by the public. The current third Local Transport Plan (LTP3) runs from 2011/12 to 2025/26. Therefore, paragraph 10(1)(b) of Schedule 12 to the Transport Act 2000 related to the second Local Transport Plan. The Mersey Gateway Bridge is a key element of the LTP3 as its construction and continued operation address—

- (a) the worst congestion in Halton - on the approaches to the Silver Jubilee Bridge and on the Weston Point Expressway approach to M56 Junction 12;
- (b) demand management to maintain free flow traffic conditions on the Mersey Gateway Bridge and the Silver Jubilee Bridge; and
- (c) transport resilience that enhances cross-Mersey linkages.

2. The expenditure plans for receipts from the scheme will complement the current LTP3 programme and contribute towards achieving the following LTP3 objectives—

- (a) tackling congestion;
- (b) delivering accessibility;
- (c) securing safer roads; and
- (d) achieving better air quality.

3. Priorities for the scheme revenue expenditure are—

- (a) paying the costs and expenses incurred in designing, constructing, managing, operating and maintaining the Mersey Gateway Bridge and the new crossing and in managing, operating and maintaining the Silver Jubilee Bridge and the scheme roads or any costs associated with financing any or both of them;
- (b) providing such funds as are or are likely to be necessary to discharge the obligations of the Council or a concessionaire pursuant to a concession agreement;
- (c) paying the interest on, and repaying the principal of, monies borrowed in respect of the new crossing;
- (d) making payment into any maintenance or reserve fund provided in respect of the Silver Jubilee Bridge and the scheme roads or the Mersey Gateway Bridge and the new crossing;
- (e) making payments to the Council's general fund for the purpose of directly or indirectly facilitating the achievement of policies relating to public transport in LTP3; and
- (f) providing funds for, meeting expenses incurred in, or the cost of securing any necessary authority or consent for, the constructing or securing the construction, maintenance and operation of the Mersey Gateway Bridge and the new crossing or securing the maintenance and operation of the Silver Jubilee Bridge and the scheme roads.

EXPLANATORY NOTE

(This note is not part of the Order)

Sections 163(3)(a) and 164 of the Transport Act 2000 authorise the Council of the Borough of Halton to make a charging scheme in respect of roads for which it is the traffic authority. The scheme roads described in article 2 of this Order comprise the Mersey Gateway Bridge and the Silver Jubilee Bridge. Charges are currently levied under the A533 (Mersey Gateway Bridge) and the A557 (Silver Jubilee Bridge) Roads User Charging Scheme Order 2020.

This Order revokes the 2020 Order. It imposes charges for use of either the Mersey Gateway Bridge or the Silver Jubilee Bridge, and contains enforcement provisions.

Article 1 (citation and commencement) deals with preliminary matters.

Article 2 (interpretation) contains interpretation provisions including definitions of the “scheme roads”. It also refers to the Road User Charging Schemes (Penalty Charges, Adjudication and Enforcement) (England) Regulations 2013 (SI 2013/1783) (the “Enforcement Regulations”) which make provision for or in connection with the imposition and payment of charging scheme penalty charges.

Article 3 (revocation) revokes the 2020 Order.

Article 4 (duration of the Order) provides that the Order remains in force indefinitely.

Article 5 (the scheme roads) provides that the scheme roads are the roads to which charges, penalty charges and enforcement provisions apply.

Article 6 (imposition of charges) describes the event by reference to the happening of which a charge is imposed, namely, a vehicle being used or kept on the scheme roads. The charges imposed are set out in Part 1 of Schedule 1.

Article 7 (payment of charges) provides that the Council may specify how a charge should be paid. It also provides that payments may be under an agreement relating to a number of journeys or a number of days. It also provides that displaying a permit may be required. Paragraph (11) of article 7 continues the existing arrangement relating to scheme discounts.

Article 8 (classification of vehicles) specifies classes of vehicles to which the scheme applies, set out in Part 3 of Schedule 1 of this Order.

Article 9 (vehicles exempt from charges) provides for the exemption of certain vehicles from paying the charge provided conditions are met, set out in Schedule 2.

Articles 10 and 11 explain to what purposes the charges recovered may be applied.

Article 12 deals with the civil enforcement of unpaid charges through the imposition of penalty charges. Paragraph 12(1) imposes a penalty charge where the charge for using the crossing is not paid in accordance with Article 7. The penalty charge rates are set out in Part 2 of Schedule 1. Paragraph 12(3)(a) explains that the penalty charge is payable in addition to the charge imposed. Paragraphs 12(3)(b) to (d) explain that the penalty charge is payable within 28 days of the penalty charge notice relating to it being served, that the amount of the charge is reduced by half if paid within 14 days or is increased by half if not paid before a charge certificate is served in accordance with regulation 17 of the Enforcement Regulations.

Article 13 imposes additional penalty charges of the amounts set out on the project website where the powers in respect of vehicles described in paragraphs 18 and 19 are exercised.

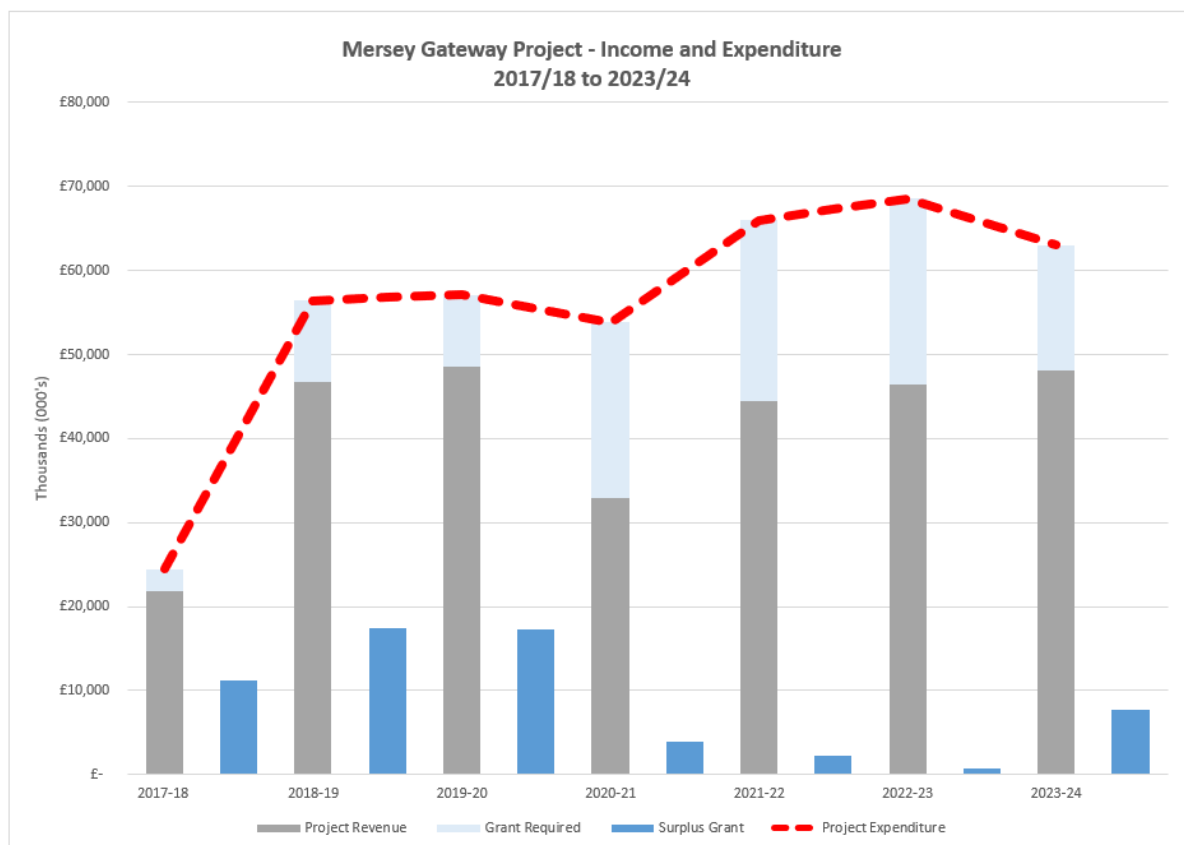
Articles 14 to 19 contain powers that can be exercised in respect of motor vehicles. These powers are to examine vehicles (article 15), enter vehicles (article 16), seize items (article 17), immobilise vehicles (article 18) and remove, store and dispose of vehicles (article 19). The exercise of those powers must be in accordance with the Enforcement Regulations. In particular the power to immobilise a vehicle or remove a vehicle that has not been immobilised can only be exercised where none of the circumstances in regulation 25(2) of the Enforcement Regulations apply and the conditions in paragraph 25(3) of those regulations do apply.

Appendix 2

Mersey Gateway Project Update

It was originally forecast that the project would run at a loss at the start of the scheme and would therefore require central government support to enable the Council to meet its financial obligations in relation to the project.

The graph below illustrates the revenues and expenditures for the project since opening in October 2017 to March 2024. There have been variations in actuals to forecasts particularly because initial traffic numbers were higher than forecast (until COVID-19), additional revenue from PCNs (projections assumes the objective of 100% compliance is achieved), and costs in certain areas (such as insurance costs and interest payments) lower than originally expected. However more recently costs have risen quicker than forecast due to unexpectedly high inflation.



Overall, the project has performed well in its initial years, and this financial robustness has been reflected in that toll charges have not been required to increase in the first seven years of operations, when originally it was envisaged that toll charges would increase on an annual basis (by a minimum of the Retail price index (RPI)). Further, the Council has been able to offer unlimited personal crossings for eligible Halton residents and not all central government grant monies have been required.

Return of grant monies to the DfT.

In April 2023, the project reached its second Review Point⁹, at which point the project was required to undertake a full financial review to compare the actual revenues and expenditure against forecasts.

Unlike many central government grants, the funding is received in advance and based upon forecasts. The Periodic Review Points are the point at which it is determined where any unused grant is returned to the Government. To encourage good financial management of the project the Council is allowed to retain 15% of unused grant to be used primarily for transport purposes.

The table below shows the summary of the results of the calculation to determine the level of excess grant received from central government and to be returned.

The key points from the table are that in the first five and a half years of operation the scheme required government grants of £82.325m to enable the Council to meet its obligations. The unused grant of £52.647m being split 85:15 between DfT and HBC.

	2017-18 (6 Ms)	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	Total
Revenue	£21,862	£46,783	£48,559	£32,979	£44,453	£46,360	£240,996
DfT Grant	£13,806	£26,998	£25,808	£24,702	£23,719	£22,940	£137,972
Total Project Income	£35,667	£73,781	£74,367	£57,681	£68,172	£69,300	£378,968
Total Project Costs	£24,434	£56,422	£57,100	£53,827	£65,979	£68,560	£326,321
Unused Grant	£11,233	£17,358	£17,267	£3,855	£2,193	£740	£52,647
DfT share @85%	£9,548	£14,754	£14,677	£3,277	£1,864	£629	£44,750
HBC share @15%	£1,685	£2,604	£2,590	£578	£329	£111	£7,897

⁹ The DfT The Funding Letter (FL) states "At the second Review Point and every subsequent Review Point during the life of the DBFO agreement, the Crossings Board shall calculate whether there is an Actual Excess (AE) by updating Table 2 of Annex B." (Clause (xviii)) and that "85% of any Actual Excess shall be payable by HBC or the Crossings Board to the Department..." (Clause (xx)).

Appendix 3

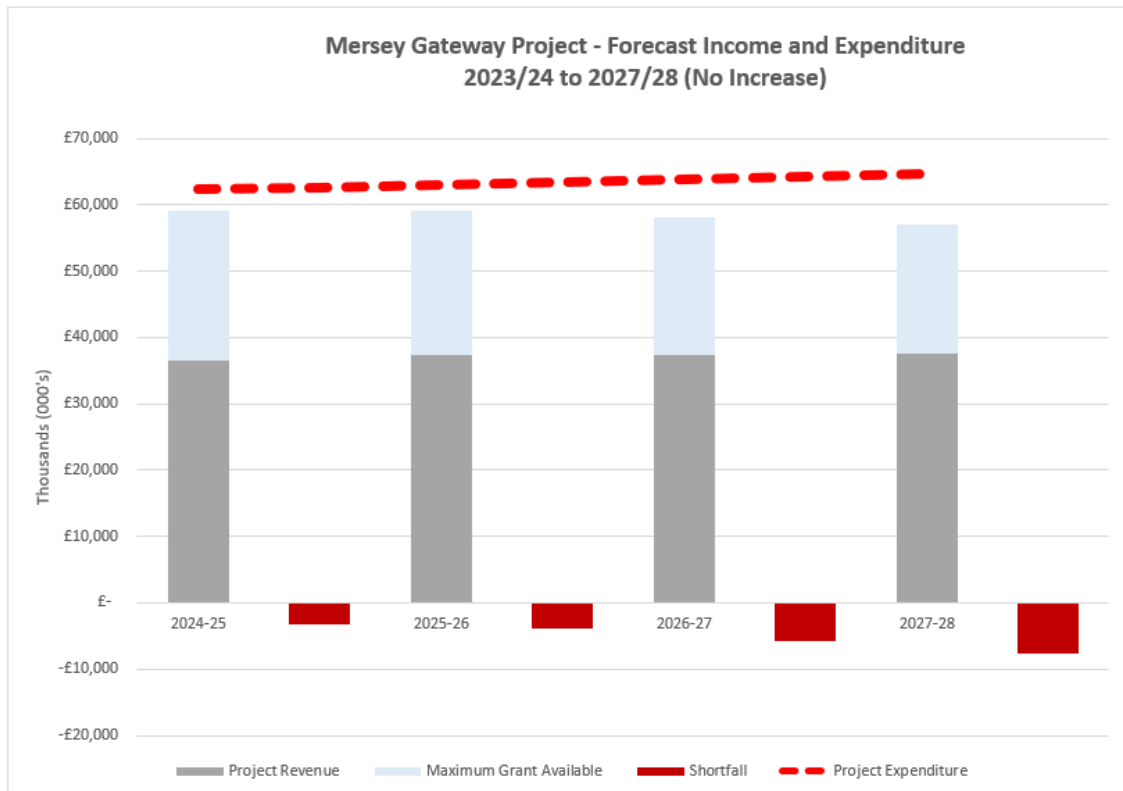
Mersey Gateway Project Projections

At each review point the Funding Letter requires the Mersey Gateway Crossings Board (MGCB) and the Department for Transport (DfT) to agree forecasts for revenues and costs, to assess the financial robustness of the Mersey Gateway Project (the Project) and analyse the impact of the Local User Discount Scheme (LUDS). The second Review Point (SRP) look forward runs for three years from 1 April 2023 and requires full details of the approach to be agreed prior to being initiated.

To forecast revenues, it was agreed with DfT that a combination of actual traffic data, national traffic growth data published by the DfT, and elasticity of demand data would be used to forecast traffic. This data would be used to generate the revenue forecasts for the "Look Forward" element of the review.

It was also agreed that expenditure forecasts would be based upon the actual expenditure that had been incurred up to March 2023, adjusted as appropriate and an annual indexation increase included.

The graph below illustrates the base position if toll charges do not increase; the level of expenditure, is greater than the combined revenue from road user charges (referred to as "toll charges" for ease) and government grants, leaving a shortfall that the Council would need to fund from its own resources. It can also be seen that the Government grant is slowly reducing as the scheme progresses.



Under the terms of the Funding Letter, the Council cannot request additional support from the Government until it has taken action to address the projected shortfall as set out above. Accordingly, the Council must increase the toll charges and if the project is still projected to be in a loss position, then the Council should consider reducing or removing the discounts to eligible local residents and finally make good any shortfall from the Council's main funding.

Given the projected shortfall (see above graph), MGCB must recommend to Council an increase in the toll charges as this would ensure the financial robustness of the project and protect its financial position.

Under the terms of the Funding Letter, it is envisaged that the toll charges would be increased annually in line with the Retail Price Index (RPI). This has not happened but if it had, toll charges would have increased by over 40% between 2017/18 and 2024/25¹⁰. The proposed increase of 20% is significantly below that mark.

Although traffic numbers have returned to levels seen before COVID-19, they are below those originally forecast and hence the revenue is below that forecast. Furthermore, the recent period of higher inflation has increased project costs above original forecasts, which enhances the gap between income (and forecast income) and expenditure.

As agreed with the DfT, the revenue forecasts do not take into consideration any PCN revenue, as the target is 100% compliance of people paying for their crossing on time. Also, since opening, additional payment methods have been introduced to encourage users to pay for their crossings on time – or ahead of time. This is reflected in PCN revenues falling as a percentage of overall scheme revenue (excluding grants).

The 20% increase in toll charges does not result in a 20% increase in projected revenues. It is expected that a price increase will cause customers to consider if their journey is necessary, or whether taking a different route or mode of transport is to be preferred. As a result, the number of crossings would be expected to fall slightly following the increase in toll charge – this phenomenon is known as the *elasticity of demand*.

As a result of demand elasticity, a 40% increase in toll charges, which would restore them to the 2017 level having taken account of RPI, would result in an even greater decrease in crossing numbers. Therefore, a higher increase in toll charges would cause there to be less revenue than if the increase in toll charges is restricted to 20%, and, importantly, have a significant impact on bridge users.

Even with a 20% increase in toll charges, there will be a slight negative gap between income and expenditure (therefore an increase of less than 20% would only exacerbate the shortfall). However, this would be capable of being covered from the Project's Liquidity Maintenance Reserve¹¹ if required.

¹⁰ Based upon Retail Price Index October 2017 to August 2024

¹¹ The Liquid Maintenance Reserve is a separate ring-fenced bank account required under the terms of Funding Letter which is to be used to manage any short-term financial shortfalls.

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 24th October 2024

REPORTING OFFICER: Executive Director Environment & Regeneration

PORTFOLIO: Employment, Learning and Skills and Community
Environment & Urban Renewal

SUBJECT: Playing Pitch Strategy Update report 2024

WARD(S) Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To present an assessment of the current provision of sports pitches within the Borough and identify what the anticipated future demand in terms of quality and quantity of pitches will be by 2037 to meet demand using Sport England methodology. The report identifies a long-term level of provision for the Council and others to work towards.
- 1.2 It should be noted that the actions in this strategy do not commit the Council or its partners to the funding, provision, or management of sites. The recommended actions will be used as a guide for investment.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS: That

- 1) the report be noted; and**
- 2) the Board approves the Playing Pitch Strategy Update Report 2024, including the updated site action plan. This is based upon consultation undertaken by sports provision consultants Knight Kavanagh Page in 2024.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Halton Playing Pitch Strategy was adopted by the Council in September 2021 (Exec Board item 31). Its purpose was to provide a strategic framework for the maintenance and improvement of outdoor sports pitches, and ancillary facilities.

- 3.2 The 2024 Playing Pitch Strategy update report presented was prepared by Knight Kavanagh & Page in consultation with partners including Halton Sports Partnership, Sport England, and the National Governing Bodies of relevant sports. It was prepared in accordance with relevant Sport England guidance.
- 3.3 Variation in demand will be experienced through 2021-2037 period with changing age and gender mixes playing requiring a different mix and number of pitch sizes. Through regular review and amendment of the provision of pitches demand will be accommodated, moving towards the long term identified provision.
- 3.4 The update report sets out the changes in the demand for and supply of playing pitches in Halton since the previous annual update was conducted by the Council in 2023. The baseline data is taken from the Halton Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) 2020. The 2024 update report covers the pitch sports of Cricket, Football, Hockey, Rugby League and Rugby Union; and Baseball and American Football.
- 3.5 The report provides an audit of the quality, quantity, and accessibility of playing pitches, establishes current levels of demand and whether pitches are being over/under-used.
- 3.6 The report is an enabling document and so does not commit the Council or any other body to funding any of the actions identified.
- 3.7 The site-by-site action plan identifies there is a need to either protect, provide, or enhance existing facilities to address projected deficiencies over the lifespan of the strategy (2021 - 2037). Most sites have recommendations to maximise use through improved pitch quality and maintenance. There is also a need to secure long-term community use at some sites, such as schools, to sustain and grow affiliated sport and informal play.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 This report provides an update on the key strategy findings, sport specific and strategic recommendations which apply across the outdoor sporting infrastructure. The evidence base created provides a robust and objective justification for future playing pitch provision that will be implemented into planning policy and other relevant corporate strategies to enable local policies, planning and sport development criteria to work efficiently and effectively.
- 4.2 PPS will be the key document used by the Halton Planning Authority when considering planning applications in consultation with Sport England as a statutory consultee, who in turn will consult with National Governing Bodies of Sport as appropriate.

4.3 The protection of sports facilities is a national priority.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Any on-going revenue costs, in respect of Council owned pitches, would need to be met from within approved budgets. The Environment Open Space Team budget has seen significant pressure, the Council lacks the resources to invest and make significant improvements to its playing pitch stock.

5.2 The financial commitments arising from the adoption of the updated report, including projects listed in the initial Action Plan, will need to be further assessed on a case by case basis and will be reported separately for approval as they arise.

5.3 The report will be used by the Council, by Sports Governing Bodies and by individual sports clubs and teams, to support applications to secure additional external funding that would not otherwise be available in the absence of an approved up-to-date strategy.

5.4 The report will also enable the Council to secure additional private investment through developer contributions when planning applications are being considered and legal agreements negotiated.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence.

The report notes that due to the pandemic there is increased importance on participation in physical activity for the prevention of ill-health and the need to break down barriers to accessing physical activity.

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

Place shaping to deliver desirable places to live includes spaces to be active where you live, playing fields are an integral part of the infrastructure that supports the delivery of sport which contributes to Halton's economy.

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

Playing fields are more than green spaces, they are places where people's lives can be improved physically, mentally and socially.

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

The borough has a number of deprived wards that are supported with access to playing fields, this supports the wider agenda of access to opportunities and improving life chances.

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

The Council's approach seeks environmentally sustainable

maintenance and development of playing pitches and facilities.

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

The report contains information to inform the Council and its partners that protects, provides, and enhances playing fields for community use.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 There is a risk associated with not having open spaces. Without clear evidence from the PPS, the Council would be susceptible to challenge from developers.

7.2 A failure to keep the PPS up to date could prevent both the Council and facility users from securing resources to provide and improve playing pitches, it would restrict the Council's ability to protect and improve these facilities or secure developer contributions through the statutory land use planning system.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 There will be a positive impact as the report promotes physical and mental wellbeing for all. Further assessments will need to be conducted in relation to recommended action.

8.2 Consultation was undertaken by KKP on behalf of the Council, with consultation taking place with National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGB's), local clubs and groups.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The report does not give specific recommendations for climate change and environment however, it identifies opportunities to prioritise and support the upgrade of ancillary facilities such as changing rooms, to accommodate improved utilities services and improved efficiency within any new or upgraded development.

9.2 There will be opportunities to encourage more sustainable approaches which have a positive carbon impact alongside other benefits to facility improvement schemes and community-led activities.

9.3 Delivery of priority projects identified in the Site Action Plan will contribute to achieving the zero-carbon target for Halton. All projects will be subject to individual business case and agreed funding strategy.

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

Halton Playing Pitch Strategy 2021 – 2037 (Executive Board
21.09.21 item 31)



HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

UPDATE REPORT AUGUST 2024

QUALITY, INTEGRITY, PROFESSIONALISM

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HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

GLOSSARY

3G	Third Generation (artificial turf)
AP	Active Partnership
AGP	Artificial Grass Pitch
ASC	All Stars Cricket
BARLA	British Amateur Rugby League Association
CAT	Community Asset Transfer
CASC	Community Amateur Sports Club
CC	Cricket Club
CCB	Cheshire Cricket Board
CFA	Cheshire Football Association
ECB	England and Wales Cricket Board
EH	England Hockey
FA	Football Association
FC	Football Club
FF	Football Foundation
FIFA	Fédération Internationale de Football Association
FIT	Fields in Trust
GIS	Geographical Information Systems
GMA	Grounds Management Association
HC	Hockey Club
KKP	Knight, Kavanagh and Page
LCF	Lancashire Cricket Foundation
LFA	Liverpool Football Association
LFFP	Local Football Facility Plans
LMS	Last Man Stands
LPR	Local Plan Review
MES	Match Equivalent Sessions
NGB	National Governing Body
NHS	National Health Service
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
NTP	Non Turf Pitch
PP	PitchPower
PPS	Playing Pitch Strategy
PQS	Performance Quality Standard
RFL	Rugby Football League
RFU	Rugby Football Union
RUFC	Rugby Union Football Club
S106	Section 106
SE	Sport England
TGR	Team Generation Rate
WR	World Rugby
U	Under

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

This update report sets out the changes in the demand for and supply of playing pitches in Halton since the previous annual update was carried out by the Council in 2023. The baseline data is taken from the Halton Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) 2020.

The document includes updates to the overall supply and demand analysis for each of the sports based on the original Assessment Report. It also renews relevant sections from the Strategy & Action Plan document including recommendations, housing scenarios and site by site action plan.

Information has been provided by the Council and the relevant national governing bodies of sport (NGBs) for each sport regarding alterations in supply, quality (including ancillary provision) and affiliation data since the 2023 update.

Conducting annual reviews will help to keep the PPS live and up to date. This includes an update of the supply and demand data which is within this document (known as the Stage E process within the PPS guidance). There will come a point where the Steering Group will conclude that there have been significant changes to a sport or Study Area/Sub Area that require a full refresh of the Playing Pitch Strategy, or when the core data has aged beyond five years since its original capture. The Steering Group should scope the extent of the work (Stage A of the PPS Guidance). The refresh will involve following all stages and steps of Sport England's Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance.

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

PART 2: FOOTBALL

2.1: Introduction

The organisations primarily responsible for the development of football in Halton are Liverpool and Cheshire FAs (LFA/CFA). It is also responsible for the administration, in terms of discipline, rules and regulations, cup competitions and representative matches, development of clubs and facilities, volunteers, referees, coaching courses and delivering national football schemes.

Consultation

In order to update the data in this section of the report, consultation has been carried out with Liverpool and Cheshire FAs, the Football Foundation and the Council, as well as the provision of updated affiliation data (2023/24) and PitchPower quality assessment reports and the Halton Sports Partnership.

2.2: Supply

As seen in the table below, there has been an increase in community available provision on an authority wide level with an increase in youth 11v11, youth 9v9, mini 7v7 and mini 5v5 pitches. Notable changes in provision have come at Arley Drive which was previously unused, however, now accommodates one youth 11v11 pitch. There has also been the creation of five mini pitches at FPA Sports Hub.

Table 2.1: Comparison of supply of community available grass football pitches from 2020 to 2024

Analysis area	Adult	Youth 11v11	Youth 9v9	Mini 7v7	Mini 5v5	Totals
2020						
Runcorn	12	9	5	9	10	45
Widnes	19	12	5	7	9	52
Total	31	21	10	16	19	97
2024						
Runcorn	12	11	6	11	9	49
Widnes	14	12	5	10	13	53
Total	26	23	11	21	22	102

The number of unavailable grass pitches has marginally reduced from 14 to 11 with the pitches at Moorfield Primary School, Pewithall Primary School and St Clement's Catholic Primary School now available for community use and used by football teams.

Disused provision

There is disused football provision at Hale Park, Birchfield Sports and Social Club, Moorfield Sports and Social Club, Prescott Road Playing Fields and Pavilions Club. Information surrounding these sites can be found in Part 9: Disused sites.

Future provision

Widnes FC is in the process of submitting plans to develop its current home ground King George V Playing Fields (Widnes). The Club has revised its plans based on Sport England comments from a previously submitted planning application (23/00008/FUL) which was withdrawn in March 2024.

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Its new plan (planning reference 24/00172/FUL) takes into consideration findings from the 2020 Halton PPS, and its identified grass pitch football shortfalls, with the proposed plan indicating the development of one stadia grass pitch (suitable for Step 4 football) one further adult grass pitch (training pitch), two youth 9v9, two mini 7v7 and three mini 5v5 grass pitches. It also includes the development of accompanying ancillary provision and a multi-use games area (MUGA) on a disused bowling green. The site would also be available for wider community use and not solely for Widnes FC and its multiple teams.

The Club would also require a long term agreement from the Council to secure its tenure and allow it to access relevant funds from NGBs such as the Premier League Stadium Fund.

Stakeholders (FF/CFAs/SE/the Council) indicate there are several issues regarding the application which need to be overcome before potential approval. These include, but are not limited to, the current planned location of hard standing which impedes the flexibility of future pitch reconfiguration and the upgrading of the current ancillary provision to meet relevant ground grading requirements. There is also a need to understand the cost implications of such a substantial development and where potential funding would be obtained.

Planning approval, 22/00004/FUL, has been obtained for the creation of a special education school called The Raise Academy off Naylor Road (WA8 0BS – Widnes Analysis Area). The application includes the creation of one mini 7v7 pitch and one small size 3G pitch with no sports lighting. There will be a community use agreement in situ once established with the hours of use being 18:00 – 21:00 Monday to Friday and 09:00 to 14:00 at the weekend.

2.3: Quality

The quality of football pitches across Halton in 2020 was assessed via a combination of site visits (using non-technical assessments as determined by the FA¹) and user consultation to reach and apply an agreed rating as follows:

- ◀ Good
- ◀ Standard
- ◀ Poor

The percentage parameters used for the non-technical assessments were as follows: Good (>80%), Standard (50-80%), Poor (<50%). The final quality ratings assigned to the sites also take into account the user quality ratings gathered from consultation.

Pitch quality was originally determined in 2020, with quality ratings reviewed as part of this 2024 update via consultation and through utilising more recent PitchPower reports.

Pitch quality primarily influences the carrying capacity of a site; often pitches lack the drainage and maintenance necessary to sustain levels of use. Pitches that receive little to no ongoing repair or post-season remedial work are likely to be assessed as poor, therefore limiting the number of games they are able to accommodate each week without it having a detrimental effect on quality. Conversely, well maintained pitches that are tended to regularly are likely to be of a higher standard and capable of taking a number of matches without a significant reduction in surface quality.

The table below compares the quality of pitches that are available for community use in Halton from the 2020 PPS and the update (2024).

¹ See Appendix 3 for the non-technical assessment for football pitches

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Table 2.2: Pitch quality assessments (community use pitches)

Analysis area	Adult pitches			Youth pitches			Mini pitches		
	Good	Standard	Poor	Good	Standard	Poor	Good	Standard	Poor
2020									
Runcorn	-	3	9	-	5	9	-	10	9
Widnes	1	12	6	-	15	2	1	9	6
Total	1	15	15	-	20	11	1	19	15
2024									
Runcorn	-	4	8	-	5	12	2	8	10
Widnes	4	8	2	3	12	2	4	12	7
Total	4	12	10	3	17	14	6	20	17

Since the previous study, the number of good quality pitches has increased by 11 with at least one good quality pitch now at the following sites: FPA Sports Hub, Halebank Recreation Ground, Jaguar Land Rover Sports and Social Club, APEC Taxis Stadium, St Micheals Primary School and Wilmere Lane Playing Fields.

Despite this most poor quality pitches are still located at Council sites such as Haddocks Wood Playing Fields, FPA Sports Hub, King George V Playing Fields, Prescott Road Playing Fields and Runcorn Heath Playing Fields.

The improvements in pitch quality have broadly come as a result as of Grass Pitch Maintenance Fund (GPMF) linked to PitchPower assessments.

Identified quality changes have been based upon information provided through the PitchPower reports (Cheshire and Liverpool FAs/Football Foundation) as non-technical assessments have not been carried out as part of this update report. Quality scores that have not changed were checked and challenged with relevant stakeholders to ensure their accuracy. The summary of these changes can be found in Table 2.4. The Council did not indicate any other pitch quality alterations above those provided in the PitchPower reports.

Pitch improvement

The FA has a Pitch Improvement Programme aimed at improving the standard of grass pitches across the Country. For provision included in the programme, clubs can utilise the services of the FF's PitchPower web app to carry out an on-site assessment of their pitches. This then provides the Grounds Management Association (GMA) with the detail needed to create a personalised, informative report to advise on how improvements can be made. Clubs then receive bespoke advice and support to help with any future actions, funding applications and equipment, with clubs getting access to discounted rates for machinery and consumables through local partnerships.

The web app is open to access by all providers, including clubs, schools and local authorities. Following a PitchPower report, organisations can work towards the recommended dedicated maintenance regime identified to improve the quality of their pitches. Applicants are also required to submit a PitchPower assessment for each of their pitches as a condition of any grant funding application for FF grass pitch investment, such as the Grass Pitch Maintenance Fund.

PitchPower is less restricted by the seasonal window of in-season play than the non-technical assessments within the PPS guidance, instead being able to be undertaken all year round, with assessments completed and submitted within one of three windows: September - October, November – March or April – June.

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Organisations receiving FF funding to improve their grass pitches must carry out two assessments a year, with at least one in the mandatory November – March window.

As well as the completion of other supporting information such as detail of volunteer training and what maintenance equipment is available, the assessment requires the taking of images and a single soil sample at each assessment site. There are three assessment sites for adult and youth pitches at each goal area and the centre circle, whilst for mini pitches there are two sites at the centre circle and one goal area.

The PitchPower assessments use a new five step Performance Quality Standard (PQS) rating system developed by the GMA, with the FF and Sport England agreeing alignment with the capacity guidance within the existing PPS Guidance. This alignment is shown in the table below.

Table 2.3: Agreed equivalent PPS quality rating for PQS ratings

PQS Rating	PPS Quality Rating
Poor	Poor
Basic	Standard
Good	Good
Advanced	Good
High	Good

In Halton, nine sites have received PitchPower assessments. The findings of these have resulted in the following overall quality changes.

Table 2.4: Summary of quality changes based on recent Pitch Power reports and FF consultation

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Comments
1	Arley Drive Playing Fields	Widnes	Site was previously unused and now contains two standard quality youth 9v9 pitches. Site has room for these pitches to be extended to youth 11v11 size if required.
19	Halebank Recreation Ground	Widnes	One adult pitch that has gone from standard to good quality based on PP reports.
30	APEC Taxis Stadium	Runcorn	One adult, three youth 11v11, one youth 9v9, two mini 7v7 and three mini 5v5 pitches. Two mini 5v5 pitches have changed from standard to good quality and one youth 11v11 has gone from standard to poor quality based on PP reports. All remaining pitch qualities have remained the same.
37	Ormiston Chadwick Academy	Widnes	One poor quality adult pitch that has improved to standard quality based on PP reports.
42	Runcorn Boys Club	Runcorn	One adult pitch that has gone from poor to standard quality based on PP reports.
45	Sandymoor School	Runcorn	One standard quality youth 11v11 pitch has gone from standard to poor quality based on PP reports.
49	St Clement's Catholic Primary School	Runcorn	One adult pitch that has gone from poor to standard quality based on PP reports.
65	Wilmere Lane Playing Fields	Widnes	One adult, two youth 11v11, one youth 9v9, one mini 7v7 and one mini 5v5 all of which have gone from a standard to a good quality based on PP reports.

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Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Comments
73	FPA Sports Hub	Widnes	Site was previously unused and now contains three mini 5v5 (one good, one standard and one poor quality) and two mini 7v7 pitches (one standard and one poor quality). Pitch qualities are based on PP reports.

In addition to PitchPower, the FA has a general pitch improvement strategy, in partnership with the GMA. As part of this, it has a Pitch Advisory Service that can be utilised by clubs with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and therefore the quality of pitches. The key principles behind the service are to provide clubs with advice and practical solutions in a range of areas, with the simple aim of improving playing surfaces. This is designed to help clubs on sites that they themselves manage and maintain but can also be used to advise local authority-maintained sites.

The FF and the FA have also recently developed a new Grass Pitch Maintenance Fund (GPMF) that allows eligible organisations to apply for funding for maintenance assistance, consumables and/or equipment. Whilst local authorities are currently ineligible applicants through this fund, eligible organisations using local authority sites, typically clubs and leagues can apply provided they have evidenced landlord permission via a service level agreement.

Funding is awarded over a six-year period, with this including up to 100% of the total cost for years one and two and 66% of the cost in years three and four, which furthers tapers down to 33% for years five and six. Although a six-year fund, the grant terms and conditions cover a 10-year period to instil commitment from the recipient clubs.

2.4: Demand

As seen in the table below there has been an overall increase in demand for football in Halton with growth in youth 11v11, youth 9v9 and mini 7v7 age groups. Comparatively there have been decreases in both adult and mini 5v5 formats, with the latter remaining approximately the same. Since 2020 there has been a total increase of 54 teams.

Table 2.5: Summary of competitive teams currently playing in Halton by age group

Analysis area	Adult Men's	Adult Women's	Youth 11v11 Boys	Youth 11v11 Girls	Youth 9v9 Boys	Youth 9v9 Girls	Mini 7v7	Mini 5v5	Total
2020									
Runcorn	12	3	29	2	17	2	25	30	120
Widnes	24	2	27	2	16	2	17	22	112
Total	36	5	56	4	33	4	42	52	232
2024									
Runcorn	11	2	42	7	22	2	27	21	134
Widnes	21	1	32	10	24	2	32	30	152
Total	32	3	74	17	46	4	59	51	286
% change	11%	40%	32%	325%	33%		40%	2%	23%

There has also been an increase in use of 11v11 size 3G pitches to meet competitive demand mainly due the conversion of the hockey suitable artificial grass pitch (AGP) to a 3G surface at Brookvale Recreation Centre. The total usage of 3G pitches for competitive matches has gone from 22 in 2020 to 33 teams.

Future demand from population increases

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The previous study (2020) used both population increases and club aspirational growth plans to quantify the future demand figures used in the overall supply and demand analysis. However, based on consultation with the respective CFAs and the FF, a different approach for future demand will be used for this update report.

As seen in the table above, a percentage change in the demand figures can be identified for each age group (male/female) based on current and historical affiliation data. Using this information together with strategic growth plans for football by the relevant NGBs (FF/LFA/CFA) an overall average growth of 23% will be applied to each format, excluding adult men's which has seen a decline in participation nationally.

For Halton this represents an increase of one adult women's team (0.5 match equivalent sessions), 21 youth 11v11 teams (10.5 match equivalent sessions), 12 youth 9v9 teams (six match equivalent sessions), 14 mini 7v7 teams (seven match equivalent sessions) and 12 mini 5v5 teams (six match equivalent sessions). This demand will be spread evenly across both the Runcorn and Widnes analysis areas where possible.

2.5: Supply and demand analysis

It should be noted that although not presented below a full review of site capacity has been carried out using the updated levels of supply and demand. This has been done as broadly speaking there have been marginally alterations on a site by site basis with most capacity remaining the same.

Spare capacity summary

In 2020 actual spare capacity totalled 15.5 match equivalent sessions per week. Upon the refresh of the supply and demand the levels of spare capacity has marginally decreased to a total of 11.5 match equivalent sessions per week.

Table 2.6: Summary of actual spare capacity in match equivalent sessions

Analysis area	Adult	Youth 11v11	Youth 9v9	Mini 7v7	Mini 5v5	Total
2020						
Runcorn	-	-	-	1	1	2
Widnes	6	4	0.5	1	2	13.5
Total	6	4	0.5	2	3	15.5
2024						
Runcorn	1.5	-	0.5	0.5	0.5	3
Widnes	3.5	1	1	1	2	8.5
Total	5	1	1.5	1.5	2.5	11.5

Most actual spare capacity is still identified on adult pitches, although some is also identified on the remaining pitch types. Spare capacity has reduced the most on youth 11v11 pitches which correlates with increase in demand for this pitch type.

Overplay

Overplay occurs when there is more play accommodated on a site than it is able to sustain, which can often be due to the low carrying capacity of pitches. In Halton, in the previous PPS, overplay totalled 13 match equivalent sessions per week.

Table 2.7: Summary of overplay in match equivalent sessions per week

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Analysis area	Adult	Youth 11v11	Youth 9v9	Mini 7v7	Mini 5v5	Total
2020						
Runcorn	1	4.5	4	-	-	9.5
Widnes	1	-	2.5	-	-	3.5
Total	2	4.5	6.5	-	-	13
2024						
Runcorn	3.5	8.5	3.5	2	-	17.5
Widnes	2.5	1	4	1.5	0.5	9.5
Total	6	9.5	7.5	3.5	0.5	27

As can be seen, Halton wide overplay has increased from 13 to 27 match equivalent sessions per week. It should be noted that shortfalls specifically on youth 9v9 pitches has increased. This is based on an increase in demand in conjunction with a decline in pitch quality. The sites listed below have at least one, or more, pitches that are overplayed:

- ✦ Frank Myler Pavilion
- ✦ Grange Academy
- ✦ Haddocks Wood Playing Fields
- ✦ King George V Playing Fields
- ✦ APEC Taxis Stadium
- ✦ Ormiston Bolingbroke Academy
- ✦ Pewithall Primary School
- ✦ Prescott Road Playing Fields
- ✦ Runcorn Heath Playing Fields
- ✦ Wade Deacon High School
- ✦ Sandymoor School
- ✦ St Micheals Primary School
- ✦ St Peter & St Paul Catholic College
- ✦ Westfield Primary School
- ✦ Weston County Primary School
- ✦ Holy Spirit RC Primary School
- ✦ Ormiston Bolingbroke Academy

Having considered supply and demand, the tables below identify current demand (i.e. spare capacity taking away overplay and any exported demand) in each of the analysis areas for each pitch type, based on match equivalent sessions. As mentioned above, future demand has been calculated to an average of 23% increase in demand for each age group apart from adult men's football based on increases evident within this document.

Adult pitch analysis

Table 2.8: Supply and demand balance of adult pitches in match equivalent sessions per week

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
2020					
Runcorn	-	1	1	0.5	1.5
Widnes	6	1	5	2	3
Total	6	2	4	2.5	1.5
2024					
Runcorn	1.5	3.5	2	-	2
Widnes	3.5	2.5	1	0.5	0.5

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Analysis area	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Total	5	6	1	0.5	1.5

Since the original collation of data spare capacity on adult pitches has decreased from having spare capacity of four match equivalent sessions to a shortfall of one match equivalent session per week with a future shortfall of 1.5 match equivalent session per week. Capacity shortfalls remain focused in the Runcorn Analysis Area.

Youth 11v11 pitch analysis

Table 2.9: Supply and demand balance of youth 11v11 pitches in match equivalent sessions per week

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
2020					
Runcorn	-	4.5	4.5	1	5.5
Widnes	4	-	4	2	2
Total	4	4.5	0.5	3	3.5
2024					
Runcorn	-	8.5	8.5	5	13.5
Widnes	1	1		5.5	5.5
Total	1	9.5	8.5	10.5	19

Shortfalls on youth 11v11 pitches across Halton have increased significantly from 0.5 match equivalent session per week in 2020 to 8.5 match equivalent sessions per week in 2024. The previous spare capacity in the Widnes Analysis Area has completely from spare capacity of four match equivalent sessions per week to being at capacity. It must also be noted that several youth 11v11 teams are playing on adult pitches, meaning shortfalls would greatly increase should these sides transfer to the correct pitch type.

When including anticipated future demand this shortfall increased to 19 match equivalent sessions.

Youth 9v9 pitch analysis

Table 2.10: Supply and demand balance of youth 9v9 pitches in match equivalent sessions per week

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
2020					
Runcorn	-	4	4	0.5	4.5
Widnes	0.5	2.5	2	0.5	2.5
Total	0.5	6.5	6	1	7
2024					
Runcorn	0.5	3.5	3	3	6
Widnes	1	4	3	3	6
Total	1.5	7.5	6	6	12

Comparatively to youth 11v11 provision the supply and demand analysis for youth 9v9 pitch types has remained the same with a shortfall of six match equivalent sessions per week. The

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

only change has been the future deficit which has gone from seven to 12 match equivalent sessions per week.

Mini 7v7 pitch analysis

Table 2.11: Supply and demand balance of mini 7v7 pitches in match equivalent sessions per week

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
2020					
Runcorn	1	-	1	-	1
Widnes	1	-	1	-	1
Total	2	-	2	-	2
2024					
Runcorn	0.5	2	1.5	3.5	5
Widnes	1	1.5	0.5	3.5	4
Total	1.5	3.5	2	7	9

There has been a decrease in capacity on mini 7v7 pitch types since the original collation of data which sees spare capacity of two match equivalent sessions per week turned into a shortfall of two match equivalent sessions per week. This shortfall increases to nine match equivalent sessions per week when factoring in future demand.

Mini 5v5 pitch analysis

Table 2.12: Supply and demand balance of mini 5v5 pitches in match equivalent sessions per week

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
2020					
Runcorn	1	-	1	3	2
Widnes	2	-	2	4.5	2.5
Total	3	-	3	7.5	4.5
2024					
Runcorn	0.5	-	0.5	3	2.5
Widnes	2	0.5	1.5	3	1.5
Total	2.5	0.5	2	6	4

Currently, mini 5v5 pitches have minimal spare capacity of two match equivalent sessions per week. This has marginally decreased by one match equivalent session. After future demand is included, this spare capacity is alleviated with an overall shortfall of four match equivalent sessions being established.

2.6: Conclusion

Using the supply and demand analysis tables, it is determined that there is current spare capacity mini 5v5 pitches, with shortfalls on all remaining pitch types. After factoring in future demand from anticipated growth, based on historical increases since 2020, shortfalls are evident on all pitch types with significant shortfalls being on youth 11v11 and youth 9v9 pitch types.

Table 2.13: Summary of supply and demand in match equivalent sessions per week

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

Pitch type	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
2020					
Adult	6	2	4	2.5	1.5
Youth 11v11	4	4.5	0.5	3	3.5
Youth 9v9	0.5	6.5	6	1	7
Mini 7v7	2	-	2	-	2
Mini 5v5	3	-	3	7.5	4.5
Total	15.5	13	2.5	14	11.5
2024					
Adult	5	6	1	0.5	1.5
Youth 11v11	1	9.5	8.5	10.5	19
Youth 9v9	1.5	7.5	6	6	12
Mini 7v7	1.5	3.5	2	7	9
Mini 5v5	2.5	0.5	2	6	4
Total	11.5	27	15.5	30	45.5

When compared to 2020, the overall supply and demand has worsened in Halton, as shortfalls are now evident on adult and mini 7v7 pitch types. For adult pitches this due to the reduction of community available grass pitches, whereas, for mini 7v7 pitch types this is due to an increase in demand.

Although there have been improvements in quality, this is only at specific sites, with most demand still actively using poor quality pitches at Council sites such as Haddocks Wood Playing Fields, FPA Sports Hub, King George V Playing Fields, Prescott Road Playing Fields and Runcorn Heath Playing Fields.

Shortfalls for youth 11v11 pitches have also worsened due to an increase in demand of 31 teams. This increase in youth 11v11 teams has also contributed to the overplay in adult provision as older youth teams, such as U16s, U17s and U18s, accessing adult pitches rather than dedicated youth 11v11 pitches to meet their demand requirements.

Future demand, which is based on an average historical growth in participation, identifies current shortfalls are to worsen particularly on youth pitches. In addition, the current spare capacity on mini 5v5 pitches is anticipated to be alleviated with a minor deficit arising.

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

Football – grass pitch summary

- ◀ **Using the supply and demand analysis tables, it is determined that there is current spare capacity on mini 5v5 pitches in Halton with shortfalls on all remaining pitch types.**
- ◀ **In comparison to 2020, the overall supply and demand position has worsened in Halton, as shortfalls are now evident on adult and mini 7v7 pitch types.**
- ◀ **When factoring in future demand the overall shortfall worsens significantly from 15.5 to 45.5 match equivalent sessions.**
- ◀ The audit identifies a total of 102 community available grass football pitches within Halton. An increase of 7% since the 2020 study from 97 pitches.
- ◀ Previously unused site, Arley Drive, is now actively used for football.
- ◀ There is disused football provision at Hale Park, Birchfield Sports and Social Club, Moorfield Sports and Social Club, Prescott Road Playing Fields and Pavilions Club.
- ◀ Widnes FC is in the process of submitting plans to develop its current home ground King George V Playing Fields (Widnes).
- ◀ Broadly pitch quality has increased since 2020 with more good quality pitches. With this being said the majority of poor quality provision is still located at Council sites.
- ◀ Halton with growth in youth 11v11, youth 9v9 and mini 7v7 age groups. Comparatively there have been decreases in both adult and mini 5v5 formats. Since 2020 there has been a total increase of 54 teams.
- ◀ In 2020 actual spare capacity totalled 15.5 match equivalent sessions. Upon the refresh of the supply and demand the levels of spare capacity has marginally decreased to a total of 11.5 match equivalent sessions.
- ◀ Halton wide overplay has increased from 13 to 27 match equivalent sessions per week. It should be noted that shortfalls specifically on youth 9v9 pitches has increased.

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

PART 3: THIRD GENERATION TURF (3G) ARTIFICIAL GRASS PITCHES (AGPS)

3.1: Introduction

Competitive football can take place on 3G surfaces that have been FIFA or International Matchball Standard tested and approved by the FA for inclusion on the FA 3G Pitch Register. As such, in addition to training demand, a growing number of 3G pitches are now used for competitive match play, providing that the performance standard meets FIFA quality requirements.

World Rugby produced the 'Performance Specification for artificial grass pitches for rugby union, more commonly known as 'Regulation 22', which provides the necessary technical detail to produce pitch systems that are appropriate for the sport. The artificial surface standards identified allows contact training and matches to be played on surfaces that meet the required standard, meaning full contact activity, including tackling, rucking, mauling and lineouts, can take place.

Competitive rugby league play and contact practice is permitted to take place on 3G pitches which are deemed by the Rugby Football League (RFL) to meet its Performance Standard. Pitches fall under two categories; community club pitches which require retesting every two years and elite stadia pitches which require an annual retest. Much of the criteria within the RFL performance standard test also forms part of the World Rugby test, meaning World Rugby certified 3G pitches are considered by the RFL to be able to meet rugby league requirements, subject to passing an additional RFL performance standard test.

Other sports that are suitable to be accommodated on 3G pitches for training and match play include American football and lacrosse. Many test contractors offer reduced rates through efficiency savings to carry out multiple performance tests in the same session, therefore providers seeking 3G pitch compliancy for a number of sports would be recommended to consider this opportunity.

EH's Artificial Grass Playing Surface Policy (June 2016) advises that 3G pitches should not be used for hockey matches or training and that they can only be used for lower level hockey (introductory level) as a last resort when no sand-based or water-based AGPs are available.

Consultation

In order to update this section consultation has been carried out with Liverpool and Cheshire FAs, the Football Foundation, the Halton Sports Partnership and the Council.

3.2: Supply

The recommended dimensions for a full size 3G pitch for football are 100 x 64 metres. This extends to an area of 106 x 70 metres with the recommended minimum three metre run off area included. These dimensions allow for all age group match play to take place including adults, youth 11v11 and younger age groups via overmarked pitches e.g., the marking out of two youth 9v9 pitches for under 11/12s.

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If a new pitch is proposed to measure below the recommended dimensions, then justification must be provided for this in relation to the identified needs it will provide for and/or site constraints. In doing so, the impacts of a reduced pitch size in meeting current and future needs must be considered e.g., a pitch not providing the recommended dimensions for adult match play and/or only being able to accommodate one rather than two overmarked 9v9 pitches. This justification needs to be included in the planning application details submitted to the relevant Local Planning Authority for the new pitch.

Unless otherwise stated and justified for an individual pitch, proposals in this PPS for any new 3G artificial grass pitches are based on providing them to the recommended dimensions.

For the purposes of this report, please note that 3G pitches are separated into two categories, with these being 11v11 pitches and smaller size pitches. The 11v11 pitches include all those considered to be full size as per the definition above, as well as some marginally undersized ones that can still accommodate 11v11 football (anything larger than 91 x 55 metres). Nationally, many are slightly smaller than full size due to being converted from sand-based provision. Smaller size pitches are all those that do not meet the required dimensions for any form of 11v11 football.

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

Table 3.1: 11v11 size 3G pitches in Halton

Analysis area	Site ID	Site name	Community use?	Post code	Size	Sports lighting?	Measurements ²	Certification	Expiry
Runcorn	7	Brookvale Recreation Centre	Yes	WA7 6EP	11v11	Yes	100x64	FIFA	31/05/26
Runcorn	15	Grange Academy	Yes	WA7 5DX	11v11	Yes	96x56	-	-
Runcorn	23	Heath Leisure	Yes	WA7 4QX	Small	Yes	25x15	-	-
Widnes	37	Ormiston Chadwick Academy	Yes	WA8 7HU	11v11	Yes	100x64	FA	31/05/26
Runcorn	45	Sandymoor School	Yes	WA7 1QU	Small	Yes	82x50	FA	31/05/25
Widnes	46	DCBL Stadium Halton	No	WA8 7DZ	11v11	Yes	112x68	FIFA, World Rugby RFL	31/05/26 24/10/25 Unknown
Widnes	56	Wade Deacon High School	Yes ³	WA8 7TD	11v11	Yes	100x64	-	-

In total across Halton there are five 11v11 size 3G pitches and two small size pitches with one each located at Sandymoor School and Heath Leisure. Since the original audit in 2020 there has been an overall increase of one 11v11 pitch, this being the conversion of the hockey suitable AGP at Brookvale Recreation Centre to a 3G surface in 2022. There has also been an increase of one small size pitch at Heath Leisure which was created circa 2019 shortly after the completion of the original PPS. The only other changes are the pitch at Sandymoor School now being considered community available, in comparison to the pitch at DCBL Stadium Halton which is now considered to be unavailable for community use. It should be noted that the usage of the pitch at Sandymoor School is through a licence agreement with the Sandymoor Parish Council rather than a formal community use agreement.

Information gathered as part of the 2024 refresh indicates that pitch has reduced accessibility for community clubs particularly midweek for training demand. Widnes Vikings RLFC now regularly use the pitch in evenings for training purposes rather than during the day. Similarly, Widnes FC use the facilities midweek to meet its training demand. Both clubs also use the pitch to meet competitive fixtures at the weekend.

Governing Body Certification

The 11v11 pitches at Brookvale Recreation Centre, Ormiston Chadwick Academy, Sandymoor School and DCBL Stadium Halton are all either FIFA or FA certified and on the FA Register to accommodate match play demand. The pitch at the latter site is also WR and RFL compliant. The pitch at Wade Deacon High School is known to be used to accommodate both training and competitive demand from Pex Hill FC despite not being official certified or registered for match play use.

² Size is in metres

³ This pitch is used by Pex Hill FC through a self management agreement and it not available for wider community access.

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

Future provision

The Local Football Facility Plan (LFFP) in 2019 identifies two potential 11v11 size 3G projects; one being at Frank Myler Pavilion (Widnes Analysis Area), and one being generalised to the Runcorn Analysis Area. Since the 2020 PPS there has been one 11v11 size 3G development in the Runcorn Analysis Area (Brookvale Recreation Centre) and no developments within the Widnes Analysis Area. The aforementioned development was an area wide project identified within the LFFP.

In addition to these developments identified in the Local Football Facility Plan, which is due to be updated with information from this document, there are two more potential projects identified through consultation with Halton Council, Liverpool and Cheshire FAs and the Football Foundation which could be considered as detailed below.

There are known aspirations to create a 11v11 size sports lit 3G pitch at St Peter & St Paul Catholic College (Widnes Analysis Area). Although no official plans have been submitted the potential project is believed to link to the current users of the grass pitches on the site, and the wider football community.

Runcorn Linnets FC also has ambitions to establish an 11v11 size sports lit 3G pitch at APEC Taxis Stadium (Runcorn Analysis Area) although again no official plans have been submitted. This is in addition the hybrid pitch which is already on site within the stadium.

It should be noted that both these clubs, Runcorn Linnets FC and Widnes FC, are National League System football clubs with multiple youth and mini teams (31 and 42 teams respectively). Any development of 3G pitch provision would mainly cater for training and competitive demand for each of the club's adult men's first teams, rather than providing a full community use programme for the full range of youth and mini teams. This being said, the development of 3G provision could provide the potential to free up availability on other football provision which would increase overall capacity across Halton.

As mentioned in Part 2: Football, there has been planning approved for the creation of a small size 3G pitch without sports lighting at The Raise Academy off Naylor Road (WA8 0BS – Widnes Analysis Area). There will be a community use agreement in situ once established with the hours of use being 18:00 – 21:00 Monday to Friday and 09:00 to 14:00 at the weekend.

3.3: Quality

Depending on use, it is considered that the carpet of an artificial grass pitch usually lasts for approximately ten years and it is the age of the surface, combined with maintenance levels, which most commonly affects quality. It is therefore recommended that pitch replacement funds be put into place by providers to enable long-term sustainability, ongoing repairs and future refurbishment beyond this period.

The table below examines the age and quality of all 11v11 size and small 3G pitches in Halton from the 2020 PPS and their current quality (2024).

Table 3.2: Age and quality of community available 11v11 size 3G pitches

Analysis area	Site ID	Site	Year installed/resurfaced	Size	Quality (2020)	Quality (2024)
Runcorn	7	Brookvale Recreation Centre	2022	11v11	N/A	Good

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Analysis area	Site ID	Site	Year installed/resurfaced	Size	Quality (2020)	Quality (2024)
Runcorn	15	Grange Academy	2013	11v11	Standard	Poor
Runcorn	23	Heath Leisure	2019	Small	N/A	Good
Widnes	37	Ormiston Chadwick Academy	2017	11v11	Good	Standard
Runcorn	45	Sandymoor School	2019	Small	Good	Good
Widnes	46	DCBL Stadium Halton	2019	11v11	Good	Good
Widnes	56	Wade Deacon High School	2013	11v11	Standard	Poor

Pitches at Sandymoor School, DCBL Stadium and Brookvale Recreation Centre are all considered to be good quality having all been refurbished within the previous five years, whereas the pitch at Ormiston Chadwick Academy has reduced from good to standard quality.

The provision at Grange Academy and Wade Deacon High School has also reduced in quality from standard to poor quality and is now beyond their recommended lifespan of ten years.

Management and security of tenure

The pitches at Brookvale Recreation Centre and DCBL Stadium Halton are managed by the Council. It should be noted the latter site has a tenant's agreement in place with Widnes Vikings RLFC which guarantees the Club secured access to the 3G pitch for a set number of hour a week.

Provision at Grange Academy and Wade Deacon High School is managed internally by the school whereas Ormiston Chadwick Academy use Edu Lettings which manages the bookings.

Availability and usage

Previous booking information was not made available meaning details on the pitch capacity was unknown. Due to the aforementioned change in contractors, a more detailed analysis of the availability of pitch can be obtained.

Sport England's Facilities Planning Model (FPM) applies an overall peak period for AGPs of 34 hours per week (Monday to Thursday 17:00-21:00; Friday 17:00-19:00; Saturday and Sunday 09:00-17:00).

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Table 3.3: Summary of 11v11 size 3G pitch availability

Site ID	Site	Size	Availability	Midweek capacity usage	Weekend capacity usage
7	Brookvale Recreation Centre	11v11	Reserved for school use 09:00–17:00 before opening to the community from 17:00–22:00 midweek. At weekends, the pitch is available to the community from 10:00-17:00. As such, it is also available for the full 30 hours per week.	94%	75%
15	Grange Academy	11v11	Unknown	-	-
37	Ormiston Chadwick Academy	11v11	Reserved for school use 09:00–16:00 before opening to the community from 16:00–21:30. At weekends, the pitch is available to the community from 08:00-20:00. As such, it is also available for the full 34 hours per week.	83%	69%
46	DCBL Stadium Halton	11v11	Considered unavailable for community use due to reduced accessibility amongst use by Widnes Vikings RLFC and Widnes FC.	-	-
56	Wade Deacon High School	11v11	Exact hours of usage are unknown however it is solely used by Pex Hill FC both midweek and at the weekend.	-	-

As mentioned above, the provision at DCBL Stadium Halton is no longer considered available for community use as there is limited access for community clubs. The pitch is not available for use at the weekend as it is used for Widnes FC, City of Liverpool FC and Widnes Vikings RLFC. It is also unavailable on Fridays to the community and has approximately only two hours free Monday to Thursday during peak time for community clubs. The pitch during the evenings is used by Widnes Vikings Foundation, Widnes Vikings RLFC (Women's Team), Widnes FC and Halton Farnworth (rugby and football teams).

It is worth noting that demand from City of Liverpool FC is imported into Halton to meet NLS ground grading requirement which are not currently met in the neighbouring authority of Knowsley. This is a two year agreement which will end in 2026.

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3.4: Supply and demand analysis

FA training scenario

The FA considers high quality third generation artificial grass pitches as an essential tool in promoting coach and player development. The FA can support intensive use and as such are great assets for both playing and training. Primarily such facilities have been installed for community use and training, however, are increasingly used for competition which The FA wholly supports.

The FA's long-term ambition is to provide every affiliated team in England the opportunity to train once per week on sports lit 3G surface, together with priority access for every Charter Standard Community Club through a partnership agreement. The FA standard is calculated by using the latest Sport England research "AGPs State of the Nation March 2012" assuming that 51% of AGP usage is by sports clubs when factoring in the number of training slots available per pitch at peak times. It is estimated that one 11v11 AGP can service 38 teams.

For the model, in addition to 11v11 pitches being included, some smaller sized pitches can also be incorporated as nationally many are suitable for accommodating training demand, especially larger ones.

To calculate their contribution, a pitch large enough to cater for youth matches (but not adult) is considered to be the equivalent of half a 11v11 size pitch (0.75 to 0.5 pitches⁴), whilst a pitch that is large enough for mini matches (but not youth or adult) is the equivalent of quarter of a 11v11 size pitch (0.25 pitches⁵). Any pitch smaller than this is discounted as they are too small to accommodate purposeful training activity (although it is recognised that they can meet wider community needs), as are any pitches that are unavailable for community use.

For the purposes of this report and based on it size the pitch at Sandymoor School equates to 0.75 equivalents, whereas the pitch at Heath Leisure is considered too small to accommodate any meaningful training demand (25mx15m).

The model assumes that all pitches are fully available for club use at peak time when in practice a number of pitches operate commercial small sided leagues which reduce capacity available. It also projects all football teams as training on 11v11 size 3G pitches when in practice a proportion of football training demand should be retained on sand based AGPs in order to maintain financial and commercial sustainability of these pitches.

When applying the above methodology in 2020 on an analysis area level there was a need for an additional two 11v11 size 3G pitch equivalents solely within the Runcorn Analysis Area.

Table 3.4: Current demand for 3G pitches in Halton for affiliated football team training (38 teams per pitch)

Analysis area	Current number of teams	Current requirement	Current number of 11v11 size 3G pitches	Current shortfall
2020	-	-	-	-
Runcorn	120	3.15 - 3	1	2
Widnes	112	2.94 - 3	3	-
2024	-	-	-	-

⁴ Between 73m x 46m and 82m x 50m

⁵ Between 37m x 27m and 55m x 37m

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

Analysis area	Current number of teams	Current requirement	Current number of 11v11 size 3G pitches	Current shortfall
Runcorn	134	3.52 – 3.5	2.75	0.75
Widnes	150	3.94 - 4	2	2

It should be noted that there has been a change in the current number of 11v11 size 3G pitches for the 2024 analysis. There has been an increase of 1.5 11v11 size 3G pitch equivalents in the Runcorn Analysis Area due to provision at Sandymoor School now being considered available for community use in addition to the refurbishment of the hockey suitable AGP at Brookvale Recreation Centre to a 3G surface.

In comparison, there has been a reduction of capacity equivalent to one 11v11 size 3G pitch in the Widnes Analysis Area. Based on findings within this document the pitch at DCBL Stadium Halton is no longer considered as accessible for wider community use (outside of usage from Widnes Vikings RLFC and Widnes FC).

Comparatively in 2024, there has been an increase in the overall shortfall of provision mainly due to the increase in demand figures. The shortfall in the Runcorn Analysis Area has decreased from two to one 11v11 size 3G pitches, despite an increase in demand, due to the aforementioned developments at Sandymoor School and Brookvale Recreation Centre.

In the Widnes Analysis Area, the deficit has increased from none to two 11v11 size 3G pitches. This is based upon an increase in demand and the fact DCBL Stadium Halton now considered not available for wider community use.

The table below explores what the requirement for 3G provision would be when factoring in the future demand referenced in Part 2: Football.

Table 3.5: Future demand for 3G pitches in Halton for affiliated football team training (38 teams per pitch)

Analysis area	Future number of teams	Future requirement	Current number of 11v11 size 3G pitches	Future shortfall
2020	-	-	-	-
Runcorn	130	3.42 – 3	1	2
Widnes	130	3.42 – 3	3	-
2024	-	-	-	-
Runcorn	159	4.18 – 4.25	2.75	1.5
Widnes	161	4.23 – 4.25	2	2.25

Overall, the shortfall would increase to 3.75 11v11 size pitch equivalents which is an increase of 0.25 in the Widnes Analysis Area and an increase of 0.75 in the Runcorn Analysis Area.

Rugby union and rugby league

There is one 11v11 size sports lit 3G pitch in Halton located at DCBL Stadium Halton. This currently meets training and competitive demand from Widnes Vikings RLFC and Widnes FC and offers little capacity for further external community users.

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Shortfalls exist for rugby union (Runcorn and Widnes analysis areas) and rugby league (Widnes Analysis Area) grass pitches with aspirations evident, particularly for rugby league, to access more artificial provision for training in order to alleviate overplay.

As a result, gaining greater access for community clubs for the provision at DCBL Stadium Halton should be explored. Alternatively, more WR and RFL compliant 11v11 size sports lit 3G pitch provision should be established. This can be achieved through refurbishing current provision when required or be implemented when creating new provision.

3.5: Conclusion

In conclusion, there is an insufficient supply of 11v11 size 3G pitches to meet current and anticipated future training demand based on the FA training model in Halton. As such, it is determined that an increase in provision is required. In addition, as most of the provision is either FA or FIFA registered there is a need to maximise pitches for competitive demand.

There are no formal sites currently identified for a potential 11v11 size sports lit 3G development within the Runcorn Analysis Area, however, solely based on size, aspirations, and current infrastructure the following sites could be explored; Haddocks Wood Playing Field, APEC Taxis Stadium, Runcorn Heath Playing Fields and Queen Elizabeth II Playing Fields. Similarly for the Widnes Analysis Area the subsequent sites could be explored: Frank Myler Pavilion, King George V Playing Fields, Leigh Recreation Playing Fields, Saints Peter & Paul Catholic High School and Wilmere Lane Playing Fields.

As mentioned above, Runcorn Linnets FC (APEC Taxis Stadium) and Widnes FC (Saints Peter & Paul Catholic High School/King George V playing fields) are National League System football clubs with multiple youth and mini teams (31 and 42 teams respectively).

When also taking into consideration shortfalls in grass rugby union and rugby league pitches any new 11v11 size 3G pitches should be examined for multi-sport use (WR/RFL compliance). Alternatively, there is a potential case to deliver and sustain more than the FA Training Scenario depending on levels of rugby league and rugby union requirements.

Furthermore, to ensure that current supply and any future supply are maintained to a good enough standard to accommodate demand, providers are encouraged to put pitch replacement funds in place to ensure long-term sustainability. This will allow for re-surfacing to take place when required and will ensure that FA Registration can be retained.

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3G summary

- ◀ **There is an insufficient supply of 11v11 size 3G pitches to meet current for football in Halton with a need for 0.75 in the Runcorn Analysis Area and two in the Widnes Analysis Area.**
- ◀ **In comparison to 2020, there has been an increase in the overall shortfall by an additional 0.75 11v11 size equivalents.**
- ◀ When factoring in anticipated future demand this shortfall increases by one 11v11 pitch equivalents.
- ◀ There are five 11v11 size 3G pitches in Halton with all but one available for community use (DCBL Stadium Halton). The community available pitches are spread evenly with two in both the Runcorn and Widnes analysis areas.
- ◀ The pitch at DCBL Stadium Halton was previously (2020) considered available, however, it is now mainly used by semi professional and professional clubs leaving limited capacity for wider community use.
- ◀ In addition, there is also two smaller size community available 3G pitch servicing Halton located at Sandymoor School and Heath Leisure, respectively.
- ◀ The pitches at Brookvale Recreation Centre, Ormiston Chadwick Academy, Sandymoor School and DCBL Stadium Halton are either FIFA or FA certified and, on the FA, 3G Pitch Register, with the latter also WR and RFL compliant.
- ◀ Pitches at Sandymoor School, DCBL Stadium and Brookvale Recreation Centre are all considered to be good quality having all been refurbished within the previous five years, whereas the pitch at Ormiston Chadwick Academy has reduced from good to standard quality.
- ◀ The provision at Grange Academy and Wade Deacon High School have also reduced in quality from standard to poor quality. Neither is on the FA 3G Pitch Register.
- ◀ There are aspirations to create 3G pitch provision at St Peter & St Paul Catholic School and APEC Taxis Stadium.
- ◀ As the only WR compliant 3G is not available for community use there is no WR compliant 3G available for the community game.

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PART 4: CRICKET

4.1: Introduction

The Cheshire Cricket Board (CCB) is the main governing and representative body for Cricket within Halton. Working closely with the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), it is responsible for the management and development of every form of recreational cricket for men, women and children within Halton. It is currently working with the ECB on delivering its Strategy, 'Inspiring Generations', which has been live since 2020.

County Facilities Strategy

The CCB has recently completed its County Facilities Strategy (CFS) in partnership with the ECB. The CFS is a ten-year plan which involves engagement with key stakeholders, including, leagues, active partnerships, county pitch advisors and Sport England.

To inform the strategies, the ECB has set out guidelines to ensure that the following facilities are considered throughout the development of the strategies:

- ✦ Traditional facilities (pitches, outfield, pavilions, practice areas)
- ✦ Non-traditional facilities (multi-use games areas, tapeball/softball spaces, courts/cages)
- ✦ Indoor facilities (multi use halls, cricket specific halls, match play venues)

The CFS is to be used to shape investment decisions and priorities for CCB moving forward.

Consultation

In order to update this section of the report, consultation has been carried out with CCB, ECB, Halton Sports Partnership and the Council.

4.2: Supply

As seen in the table below, there has been no change in number of community available grass cricket squares since the original PPS, with there still being one in each analysis area.

Table 4.1: Summary of number of grass wicket squares across Halton

Analysis area	No. of grass squares
Runcorn	1
Widnes	1
Total	2

The table below identifies the active cricket sites in Halton in addition to the number of senior grass, junior grass and artificial non-turf wickets (NTPs). For reference a junior wicket is less than 22 yards in length.

Table 4.2: Summary of cricket provision in Halton

Site ID	Site	Analysis area	Post code	No. of squares	No. of wickets		
					Senior grass	Junior grass	NTPs
44	Runcorn Sports Club	Runcorn	WA7 4SD	1	11	2	-
61	Widnes Cricket Club	Widnes	WA8 9LA	1	10	4	1

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The ECB highlights that NTPs which follow its TS6 guidance on performance standards are suitable for high level, senior play and are considered able to take 60 matches per season, although this may include training sessions via the use of mobile nets.

In Halton, there is just one NTP accompanying a grass wicket square. This is at Widnes Cricket Club. In addition, there is one standalone NTP located at Cronton Sixth Form College albeit this is poor quality and considered disused by the College.

Disused provision

There is disused cricket provision at Birchfield Sports and Social Club and Moorfield Sports and Social Club. Information surrounding these sites can be found in Part 9 Disused sites.

The main reason Moorfield CC folded was due to price increases from the former management company on the site, with players dispersing to other clubs in the locality and therefore increasing demand elsewhere.

Cricket (Birchfield Park CC) was played at the Birchfield Sports and Social Club until the site's closure in 2020. Widnes CC wish to open discussions to bring the cricket square back into use, but to date have been unable to establish contact with the landowner.

Future developments

Runcorn CC mentioned in the 2023 update for aspirations for a NTP and supplementary grass wickets in addition to upgrading maintenance machinery which was damaged during a flood in winter 2022.

4.3: Quality

As part of the PPS guidance, there are three levels to assessing the quality of cricket pitches: good, standard and poor. Maintaining high pitch quality is the most important aspect of cricket; if the wicket is poor, it can affect the quality of the game and can, in some instances, become dangerous.

The percentage parameters used for the non-technical assessments were as follows: Good (>80%), Standard (51-80%), Poor (50% and below). The final quality ratings assigned to the sites also take into account the user quality ratings gathered from consultation.

The quality of the squares at Runcorn Sports Club and Widnes Cricket Club are good quality which is the same as the both the PPS audit and PPS update. With this being said, the condition of the NTP accompanying the square at Widnes Cricket Club has worsened and requires improvements.

Widnes CC is exploring potential option to install new outfield drainage, however, at this stage it is considered purely aspirational.

PitchPower reports are anticipated to be available to ECB County Pitch Advisors in 2024 with the quality ratings referenced above being based upon historical data and current understanding.

Ancillary facilities

Runcorn Sports Club submitted a planning application (23/00130/FUL) in March 2023 for a proposed extension and remodel of its existing ancillary provision to ensure its long term

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viability and make it more accessible for all. A verdict on the application is anticipated in Spring 2024.

Based on evidence within the 2023 update Widnes CC secured grant funding to upgrade its changing rooms and showering facilities to make them more approachable for women and girl members.

Training facilities

Both clubs have access to non turf practice nets on their sites with each planning to either refurbish or replace their nets in the near future. Widnes CC current practice nets back onto the outfield meaning they cannot be used at the same time a fixture is being played. The Club is looking to relocate them however options are limited. It also is exploring options to put a roof over the nets so they can be used during the winter.

Runcorn CC would like to explore the idea of some additional grass practice wickets and are also considering installing an NTP to alleviate demand on the current grass pitches and increase capacity.

4.4: Demand

As seen in the table below, overall demand figures have remained reasonably static since the original study. Runcorn CC has reduced by one junior girls team whereas Widnes CC has reduced by two junior boys teams.

Table 4.3: Summary of number of competitive teams in Halton

Club name	Senior men's	Senior women's	Junior boys'	Junior girls'	Total
2020					
Runcorn CC	3	1	4	1	9
Widnes CC	3	-	6	-	9
Total	6	1	10	1	18
2024					
Runcorn CC	4	1	4	-	9
Widnes CC	3	1	4	-	8
Total	7	2	8	-	17

The women's softball teams at both Runcorn and Widnes Cricket League have dedicated grass wickets on the square, although for some matches (festivals) the outfield is used to enable multiple games to take place at once.

Both clubs will also be running the All Stars cricket development programme in 2024, however, neither will be operating Dynamos sessions.

Future demand from population increases

Based on the previous study, which used population growth to 2037 (in line with the current Local Plan) to determine future demand, there is not enough growth to create a whole team across any of the age groups.

4.5: Supply and demand analysis

Capacity analysis for cricket is measured on a seasonal rather than a weekly basis. This is due to playability (as only one match is generally played per pitch per day at weekends or weekday evening) and because wickets are rotated throughout the season to reduce wear and tear and to allow for repair.

The capacity of a square to accommodate matches is driven by the number and quality of wickets. This section of the report presents the current pitch stock available for cricket and illustrates the number of competitive matches per season per square.

For good quality squares, capacity is considered to be five matches per wicket per season, whilst for a standard quality square, capacity is four matches per wicket per season. For poor quality squares, no capacity is considered to exist as such provision is not safe for play.

The number of matches played by each team has been derived from consultation with the clubs. Where consultation was not possible, the assumption has been made that all senior teams play between ten and 12 home matches per year and all junior teams play between four and eight matches per year depending on their age and level of competition.

The above is used to allocate capacity ratings as follows:

Potential capacity	Play is below the level the site could sustain
At capacity	Play matches the level the site can sustain
Overused	Play exceeds the level the site can sustain

Please note that non-turf wickets have been discounted from the table below. No non-turf wicket squares are recorded as accommodating more than 60 matches per season; therefore, all non-turf wickets are considered to have spare capacity. This translates to actual spare capacity for junior cricket as peak time is midweek, whereby non-turf wickets are more commonly used and matches can be played on a variety of days.

The capacity analysis assumes that all clubs rotate their wickets evenly. However, this may not be the case at all sites, with central wickets potentially used more commonly than outer wickets that are closer to a boundary, especially for senior matches. The idea is to showcase what the capacity is or could be if best practice is followed for the whole square, rather than doing it on a wicket-by-wicket basis.

Table 4.4: Capacity of cricket squares in Halton 2024

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Com use?	Post code	Security of tenure	No. of squares	Pitch quality	No. of grass wickets	Type of wicket	Accumulative grass capacity (sessions per season)	Actual play (sessions per season)	Accumulative grass capacity rating (sessions per season)	Potential spare capacity for senior cricket? (Saturday PM)	Potential spare capacity for senior cricket? (Sunday PM)	Potential spare capacity for junior cricket?
44	Runcorn Sports Club	Runcorn	Yes	WA7 4SD	Secure	1	Good	11	Senior	55	48	7	No	No	Yes
44	Runcorn Sports Club	Runcorn	Yes	WA7 4SD	Secure	1	Good	2	Junior	10	16	6	No	No	No
61	Widnes Cricket Club	Widnes	Yes	WA8 9LA	Secure	1	Good	10	Senior	50	38	12	No	Yes	Yes
61	Widnes Cricket Club	Widnes	Yes	WA8 9LA	Secure	1	Good	4	Junior	20	16	4	No	No	No

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Saturday cricket capacity balance

The table below examines the 2020 supply and demand analysis against the most recent analysis which factors in pitch enhancements and changes in demand which have occurred for Saturday cricket.

Table 4.5: Capacity balance of grass cricket squares for Saturday cricket in match sessions per season

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity (match sessions per season)	Overplay (MES)	Current total (MES)
2020			
Runcorn	-	-	
Widnes	-	-	
Total	-	-	
2024			
Runcorn	-	-	
Widnes	-	-	
Total	-	-	

As seen the overall supply and demand analysis across Halton for Saturday cricket has not changed since the original assessment. Both clubs (Runcorn CC and Widnes CC) have two Saturday teams and have no additional capacity to accommodate any further teams at this peak period.

Sunday cricket capacity balance

The table below examines the 2020 supply and demand analysis against the most recent analysis which factors in pitch enhancements and changes in demand that have occurred for Sunday cricket.

Table 4.6: Capacity balance of grass cricket squares for Sunday cricket in match sessions per season

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity (match sessions per season)	Overplay (MES)	Current total (MES)
2020			
Runcorn	8	-	8
Widnes	8	-	8
Total	16	-	16
2024			
Runcorn	-	-	
Widnes	10	-	10
Total	10	-	10

Spare capacity still exists within the Widnes Analysis Area (Widnes Cricket Club) for an additional Sunday team, comparatively, the spare capacity that did exist in 2020 in the Runcorn Analysis Area (Runcorn Sports Club) has now gone as there are now two Sunday teams in operation.

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Midweek (Junior) cricket capacity balance

The table below examines the 2020 supply and demand analysis against the most recent analysis which factors in pitch enhancements and changes in demand for midweek (junior) cricket.

Table 4.7: Capacity balance of grass cricket squares for junior cricket in match sessions per season

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity (match sessions per season)	Overplay (MES)	Current total (MES)
2020			
Runcorn	-	-	
Widnes	-	-	
Total	-	-	
2024			
Runcorn	-	6	6
Widnes	12	-	12
Total	12	6	6

As seen the overall spare capacity of cricket provision for midweek (junior) cricket has increased this is due to the reduction of teams at Widnes CC in comparison to 2020. There is spare capacity at peak time (Sundays) to accommodate two Junior teams for Widnes CC, however, this would be on the senior wicket rather than dedicated junior provision. In comparison, the junior wicket at Runcorn CC is overplayed by six match equivalent sessions a season.

Future demand

Although there is no anticipated future demand from population growth, there are known aspirations at the clubs, ECB and Cheshire Cricket to continue to increase demand. For this to be actualised, particularly for Saturday and Midweek demand, there is need to reestablish more cricket provision in Halton as there are no alternative sites where cricket can be played.

There are two disused sites in Halton which previously provided cricket squares, Birchfield Sports and Social Club (Widnes Analysis Area – WA8 9ES) and Moorfield Sports and Social Club (Widnes Analysis Area – WA8 3HQ), which have been disused since 2020 and 2016, respectively. In order to provide more capacity for cricket one or both of these sites could be brought back into use or alternatively new provision would need to be created. More information can be found in Part 9 Disused sites.

4.6: Conclusion

The overall supply and demand for cricket in Halton has broadly remained the same since the 2020 PPS. There is still no capacity for additional Saturday senior cricket and limited spare capacity on Sundays and Midweek for further teams. There is also a minor shortfall of dedicated junior provision at Runcorn CC. Birchfield Sports and Social Club and Moorfield Sports and Social Club are still disused with emphasis on potentially reinstating one or more of the sites in order to provide additional capacity for cricket.

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Cricket summary

- ◀ **There is currently no spare capacity of cricket squares at peak times (Saturdays) in Halton and limited spare capacity on Sundays and in midweek when factoring future demand.**
- ◀ There are two grass wicket squares in Halton with one each at Runcorn Sports Club and Widnes Cricket Club.
- ◀ In Halton, there is just one NTP accompanying a grass wicket square. This is at Widnes Cricket Club. In addition, there is one standalone NTP located at Cronton Sixth Form College albeit this is poor quality and considered disused by the College.
- ◀ There is disused cricket provision at Birchfield Sports and Social Club and Moorfield Sports and Social Club.
- ◀ The quality of the squares at Runcorn Sports Club and Widnes Cricket Club are good quality which is the same as the both the PPS audit and PPS update.
- ◀ Runcorn CC mentioned in the 2023 update for aspirations for a NTP and supplementary grass wickets in addition to upgrading maintenance machinery.
- ◀ Runcorn Sports Club submitted a planning application (23/00130/FUL) in March 2023 for a proposed extension and remodel of its existing ancillary provision.
- ◀ Based on evidence within the 2023 update Widnes CC secured grant funding to upgrade its changing rooms and showering facilities.
- ◀ Both Runcorn CC and Widnes CC have aims to refurbish or replace current training facilities in the near future.

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PART 5: RUGBY UNION

5.1: Introduction

The Rugby Football Union (RFU) is the national governing body and is split into four areas across the country with a workforce team that covers development, coaching, governance and competitions. Club developers, coach developers, club volunteers and teachers deliver programmes in schools and clubs across Halton.

The RFU governs a variety of formats and programmes, including 15-a-side, 10-a-side, 7-a-side and Tag rugby as well as The Touch Union programme. Its aim is to increase and retain participation within the game, with facilities needing to be appropriate, affordable and accessible in order to enable this.

The rugby union playing season operates from September to May, with senior men's fixtures generally being held on Saturday afternoons whilst ladies, juniors and mini fixtures usually taking place on Sundays.

Consultation

In order to update this section of the report, consultation has been carried out with the RFU, Halton Sports Partnership and the Council.

5.2: Supply

It should be noted that since the PPS in 2020, the RFU has redefined its pitch sizes which are outlined in the table below.

Table 5.1: Rugby union pitch dimensions

Team reference	Age group	Team type	Pitch type
Senior men	Over 18 years old	Senior	Senior
Senior women	Over 18 years old	Senior	Senior
Colts	17-18 years old	Under 17 - Under 18	Senior
Age grade boys	13-16 years old	Under 13 - Under 16	Junior
Age grade girls	13-16 years old	Under 13 - Under 16	Junior
Age grade mixed	7-12 years old	Under 7 - Under 12	Mini

This change in pitch size has not directly affected the quantity of provision across Halton.

As seen in the table overleaf the overall number of senior pitches has remained the same, however, there has been a slight change in the sites where the provision is located. The senior pitch at Birchfield Sports and Social Club is no longer actively used as the site is now disused. This has been replaced by a senior pitch being established at Wilmere Lane Playing Fields. Both sites are located in the Widnes Analysis Area. The remaining provision is spread across Moore RUFC, Prescot Road Playing Fields and Widnes RUFC with each site accommodating two pitches.

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Table 5.2: Supply of all rugby union pitches across Halton

Analysis area	No. of senior pitches	No. of junior pitches	No. of mini pitches
2020			
Runcorn	2	-	-
Widnes	5	-	-
Total	7	-	-
2024			
Runcorn	2	-	-
Widnes	5	-	-
Total	7	-	-

There are no dedicated junior or mini pitches across Halton. It should also be noted that all senior pitched are available for community use and are actively used.

Disused provision

As mentioned, Birchfield Sports and Social Club, which was actively used for rugby union in the original PPS audit (2020) is now disused. The site contained one senior pitch. The former users of the pitch Birchfield RUFC now play at Wilmere Lane Playing Fields on a rugby league pitch which is overmarked for rugby union. Information surrounding Birchfield Sports and Social Club can be found in Part 9 Disused sites.

5.3: Quality

The quality of rugby pitches across Halton were assessed via a combination of site visits (using non-technical assessments as determined by RFU) and user consultation to reach and apply an agreed rating as follows:

- ◀ Good
- ◀ Standard
- ◀ Poor

These 2020 quality scores, for the purposes of this report, have been cross referenced with the RFU and any recent Pitch Advisory Reports to obtain the 2024 ratings.

The methodology for assessing rugby pitch quality looks at two key elements: the maintenance programme and the level of drainage on each pitch. An overall quality based on both drainage and maintenance can then be generated. The agreed rating for each pitch type also represents actions required to improve pitch quality. A breakdown of actions required based on the ratings can be seen below.

Table 5.3: Definition of maintenance categories

Category	Definition
M0	Action is significant improvements to maintenance programme
M1	Action is minor improvements to maintenance programme
M2	Action is no improvements to maintenance programme

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Table 5.4: Definition of drainage categories

Category	Definition
D0	Action is pipe drainage system is needed on pitch
D1	Action is pipe drainage is needed on pitch
D2	Action is slit drainage is needed on pitch
D3	No action is needed on pitch drainage

Table 5.5: Quality ratings based on maintenance and drainage scores

		Maintenance		
		Poor (M0)	Adequate (M1)	Good (M2)
Drainage	Natural Inadequate (D0)	Poor	Poor	Standard
	Natural Adequate (D1)	Poor	Standard	Good
	Pipe Drained (D2)	Standard	Standard	Good
	Pipe and Slit Drained (D3)	Standard	Good	Good

The figures are based upon a pipe drained system at 5m centres that has been installed in the last eight years and a slit drained system at 1m centres that has been installed in the last five years.

Please see table overleaf for the full quality breakdown.

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Table 5.6: Summary of rugby union grass pitch quality in Halton

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Post code	Community use?	Number of pitches	Pitch type	Sports lit?	Non-technical assessment score	Quality rating
32	Moore RUFC	Runcorn	WA4 6UU	Yes	1	Senior	Yes	M1/D1	Standard
32	Moore RUFC	Runcorn	WA4 6UU	Yes	1	Senior	No	M1/D2	Standard
41	Prescot Road Playing Fields	Widnes	WA8 7PD	Yes	1	Senior	Yes	M0/D0	Poor
41	Prescot Road Playing Fields	Widnes	WA8 7PD	Yes	1	Senior	No	M0/D0	Poor
63	Widnes RUFC	Widnes	WA8 7NU	Yes	1	Senior	Yes	M1/D2	Standard
63	Widnes RUFC	Widnes	WA8 7NU	Yes	1	Senior	No	M1/D1	Standard
65	Wilmere Lane Playing Fields	Widnes	WA8 5UW	Yes	1	Senior	No	M1/D1	Standard

There has been one change in the quality scores since the 2020 PPS. The poor quality pitch previously located at Birchfield Sports and Social Club (M0/D1) has been replaced with a standard quality pitch (M1/D1) at Wilmere Lane Playing Fields.

Consultation with the RFU indicates that the sports lit senior pitch at Widnes RUFC, despite having a M1/D2 quality score realistically only has the carrying capacity of a M1/D0 (poor quality) pitch. The pitch does have purpose built drainage, however, in practice the system is not working effectively making it redundant. As a result, moving forward for the supply and demand analysis this pitch will be given capacity rating of a poor quality M1/D0 pitch rather than a standard quality M1/D2 pitch. Furthermore, information provided by the Halton Sports Partnership indicates there is a need to improve the quality of the carparking at Widnes RUFC.

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As a guide, the RFU has set a standard number of matches that each pitch should be able to accommodate, based on quality, as set out below.

Table 5.7: Pitch capacity (matches per week) based on quality assessments

		Maintenance		
		Poor (M0)	Adequate (M1)	Good (M2)
Drainage	Natural Inadequate (D0)	0.5	1.5	2
	Natural Adequate or Pipe Drained (D1)	1.5	2	3
	Pipe Drained (D2)	1.75	2.5	3.25
	Pipe and Slit Drained (D3)	2	3	3.5

5.4: Demand

Competitive play

Since the 2020 PPS there has been an increase in the number of teams playing rugby union across Halton. Demand from Birchfield RUFC has remained the same with one senior men's team, whereas both Moore RUFC and Widnes RUFC have seen an increase in the number of teams they field. Moore RUFC has increased by one senior and one junior team and Widnes RUFC has increased by two junior and two mini teams.

Please note that the 2023 figures have been supplied by RFU from its affiliation data.

Table 5.8: Summary of number of rugby union teams in Halton

Club	Analysis area	Senior (19+)	Junior (13-18)	Mini (6-12)
2020				
Birchfield RUFC	Widnes	1	-	-
Moore RUFC	Runcorn	3	-	-
Widnes RUFC	Widnes	3	5	3
Total		7	5	3
2024				
Birchfield RUFC	Widnes	1	-	-
Moore RUFC	Runcorn	4	1	-
Widnes RUFC	Widnes	3	7	5
Total		8	8	5

It should also be noted that Moore RUFC operates a walking rugby section. The Club is also the only one in Halton to have any form of dedicated female team with one senior women's and one age grade girl team.

Future demand from population increases

Based on the previous study, team generation rates used to calculate the future number of teams likely were based on population growth to 2037 (in line with the Local Plan), however, there is not enough growth to indicate creation of future teams across any age group.

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5.5: Supply and demand analysis

The table below examines the 2020 supply and demand analysis against the most recent analysis which factors in changes to pitch quality and levels of demand.

Table 5.9: Summary of supply and demand balance on senior rugby union pitches in match equivalent sessions

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity ⁶	Overplay	Current total
2020			
Runcorn	-	1.75	1.75
Widnes	-	0.5	0.5
Total	-	2.25	2.25
2024			
Runcorn	-	3.25	3.25
Widnes	-	1.5	1.5
Total	-	4.75	4.75

As seen the overall shortfall of rugby union provision has increased from 2.25 to 4.75 match equivalent sessions per week. This is mainly due to the increases in competitive and training demand from both Moore RUFC and Widnes RUFC in cohesion with pitch quality remaining the same.

Future demand

Although there is no anticipated future demand from population growth, there are known aspirations at the clubs and RFU to continue to increase demand particularly for women and girls. For this to be actualised there is a need to generally improve pitch quality through maintenance and drainage enhancements, particularly at Moore RUFC, Widnes RUFC and Prescott Road Playing Fields.

5.6: Conclusion

Like 2020, given the abovementioned shortfalls, priority should be placed first and foremost on alleviating overplay. Given that the majority of overplay is a result of training demand on grass pitches, it is considered that there is a potential need for additional sports lighting, further pitch quality improvements and/or access to World Rugby compliant 3G pitches.

For reference the table below identifies where alterations to supply and demand have been applied.

Table 5.10: Summary of alteration in the supply and demand of senior rugby union pitches

Site ID	Site name	Comments
32	Moore RUFC	Shortfall of 0.5 match equivalent sessions increased to a total of 1.5 match equivalent sessions due to an increase in competitive and training demand (one senior and one junior team)
41	Prescot Road Playing Fields	Due to an increase in demand from users Widnes RUFC the pitches have gone from being played to capacity to having a shortfall of 0.75 match equivalent sessions.

⁶ In match equivalent sessions per week

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Site ID	Site name	Comments
63	Widnes RUFC	Due to an increase in demand from Widnes RUFC and reducing carrying capacity of the sports lit pitch overplay has increased from 1.75 to 2.5 match equivalent sessions.
65	Wilmere Lane Playing Fields	A dual use pitch with rugby league and rugby union which is considered to be played to capacity.

Rugby union summary

- ◀ **Overall, there is a current shortfall of 4.75 match equivalent sessions per week on senior rugby union pitches to meet current demand.**
- ◀ **Since the 2020 study, shortfalls have been exacerbated with higher levels of overplay present.**
- ◀ Within Halton there are seven senior pitches which is the same as 2020.
- ◀ The senior pitch formally located at Birchfield Sports and Social Club is now disused.
- ◀ There has been one change in quality scores since the 2020 PPS. The poor quality pitch previously located at Birchfield Sports and Social Club (M0/D1) has been replaced with a standard quality pitch (M1/D1) at Wilmere Lane Playing Fields.
- ◀ There are still drainage issues at Prescott Road Playing Fields and the sports lit senior pitch at Widnes RUFC. There are also drainage issues on the club's other pitches with both suffering from water retention.
- ◀ Widnes RUFC aspires to improve the quality of its carparking at its home site.
- ◀ Since the 2020 PPS there has been an increase in the number of teams playing rugby union across Halton.
- ◀ Demand from Birchfield RUFC has remained the same with one senior men's team, whereas both Moore RUFC and Widnes RUFC have seen an increase in the number of teams they field. Moore RUFC has increased by one senior and one junior team and Widnes RUFC has increased by two junior and two mini teams.
- ◀ As the only WR compliant 3G is not available for community use there is no WR compliant 3G available for the community game.

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PART 6: HOCKEY

6.1: Introduction

Hockey in England is governed by England Hockey (EH).

Competitive league hockey matches and training can only be played on sand filled, sand dressed or water based artificial grass pitches (AGPs). Although competitive, adult and junior club training cannot take place on third generation turf pitches (3G), 40mm pitches may be suitable for introductory level hockey, such as school curriculum low level hockey. EH's Artificial Grass Playing Surface Policy details suitability of surface type for varying levels of hockey, as shown below.

Table 6.1: England Hockey guidelines on artificial surface types suitable for hockey

Category	Surface	Playing Level	
		Essential	Desirable
1	Water surface approved within the FIH Global/National Parameters	International hockey (training and matches).	Domestic National Premier League competition; Higher levels of player pathway (performance centres and upwards).
2	Sand dressed surfaces within the FIH National Parameter	Domestic National Premier League competition; Higher levels of player pathway (academy centres and upwards).	All adult and junior league hockey; Intermediate or advanced school hockey; EH competitions for clubs and schools.
3	Sand filled surfaces within the FIH National Parameter	All adult and junior club training and league hockey; EH competitions for clubs and schools; Intermediate or advanced school hockey.	Lower level hockey (introductory level).
4	All 3G surfaces	No hockey.	Lower level hockey (introductory level) when no category 1-3 surface is available.

In addition to the above pitch types, EH is currently trialling a different multi-sport surface in order to better accommodate lower levels of hockey demand on a pitch that is also suitable for other sports such as netball and tennis. The surface type, known as Gen 2⁷, is a versatile surface that will ensure that the sports do not need to compromise on the playing experience; it is a sand dressed synthetic turf with a compatible shock pad. The concept is designed to provide facilities, including at schools, with a dynamic carpet which reduces the amount of space required and enables the provision to be utilised to its full potential.

For senior teams, a full-size pitch for matches must measure at least 91.4 x 55 metres excluding surrounding run off areas which must be a minimum of two metres at the sides and three metres at the ends. England Hockey preference is for four metre side and five metre end run offs, with a preferred overall area of 101.4 x 63 metres.

⁷ <http://www.englishockey.co.uk/page.asp?section=2596§ionTitle=Gen+2+Playing+Surface>

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It is considered that a hockey pitch can accommodate a maximum of four matches on one day, providing that it has sports lighting. Training is generally midweek for senior activity and requires access to a pitch and sports lights, whereas many junior teams train on a Sunday as well as during midweek.

Consultation

In order to update this section of the report, consultation has been carried out with England Hockey, Halton Sports Partnership (including Runcorn HC) and the Council.

6.2: Supply

The audit identifies one hockey suitable AGP in Halton with details surrounding this pitch in the table below.

Table 6.2: Full size hockey suitable pitches in Halton

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Post code	Community use?	Sports lit?	Size (metres)
55	The Heath School	Runcorn	WA7 4SY	Yes	Yes	100x60

There has been a loss of one full size hockey suitable AGP since the collation of the dataset for the 2020 PPS. The pitch at Brookvale Recreation Centre (Runcorn Analysis Area - WA7 6EP) has been converted to a 3G surface in 2022.

Management and security of tenure

The pitch at The Heath School is managed internally by the school and sub-let to Edu Lettings. This previously was previously contracted to School Lettings Solutions (2020) before the company went into administration. Runcorn HC rents the use of the pitch via Edu Lettings on a seasonal basis and is considered to have unsecure tenure, despite having a working relationship with the provider.

Availability and usage

Previous booking information was not made available meaning details on the pitch capacity was unknown. Due to the aforementioned change in contractors, a more detailed analysis of the availability of pitch can be obtained.

Sport England's Facilities Planning Model (FPM) applies an overall peak period for AGPs of 34 hours per week (Monday to Thursday 17:00-21:00; Friday 17:00-19:00; Saturday and Sunday 09:00-17:00). At the Heath School, the AGP is reserved for curricular use from 09:00-17:00 Monday to Friday, before opening to the community from 17:00 to 21:00. At weekends the pitch is available to the community from 09:00-18:00. Therefore, the pitch is available for the full 34 hours per week of peak period.

Although the exact users are unknown, the pitch is at approximately 67% capacity midweek with available full slots on Mondays and Fridays and partial pitch availability on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays. In comparison, on average, the pitch is only generally booked for four hours on a Saturday and one hour on a Sunday resulting in 32% usage at the weekend.

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6.3: Quality

The pitch at The Heath School has not changed quality since the 2020 assessment with it still being rated as poor quality, despite having a deep clean in during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Runcorn HC indicates during periods of heavy rain the pitch becomes unplayable with areas of standing water and inadequate grip.

The 2023 PPS update indicates that S106 monies had been allocated to the site for pitch refurbishments through a planning application (17/00468/FUL) to ensure long term sustainability, however, this did not come to fruition as the application was withdrawn in January 2022.

6.4: Demand

There is only one hockey club within Halton, Runcorn HC, which plays and trains at The Heath School. The table below summarises the Clubs demand throughout the different iterations of the PPS.

Table 6.5: Summary of number of hockey teams playing in Halton

Name of club	Men's teams	Women's teams	Junior / Mini teams	Total
2020 PPS				
Runcorn HC	3	2	2	7
2023 Update				
Runcorn HC	2	2	1	5
2024 Update				
Runcorn HC	2	2	1	5

As seen, there is an overall decrease in competitive teams since the 2020 study with a reduction of one men's team and one dedicated junior/mini team. Anecdotal evidence indicates that poor pitch quality at The Heath School is in part responsible to the decline in participation at the Club particular for the youth section.

6.5: Supply and demand analysis

The PPS Guidance suggests that a sports lit pitch is able to accommodate four match equivalent sessions (MES) on a Saturday with teams playing in a home and away format, as such this equates to one AGP being able to cater for eight 'home' teams. Teams play matches on a home and away basis and therefore one team requires 0.5 match sessions per week on its 'home' AGP.

Based on the above information there a total of four senior teams that are currently playing their competitive matches within Halton. This means there is a requirement for one full size hockey suitable AGPs, rounded up from 0.5 AGPs.

Therefore, in theory, there is enough hockey suitable provision across Borough to meet current and future levels of demand. However, there are issues that need to be taken into consideration that are affecting Runcorn HC particularly surrounding pitch quality and tenure.

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6.6: Conclusion

Although the AGP at The Heath School is sufficient to meet the current and future demand from Runcorn HC there is an immediate need to protect the longevity of the site. In particular the pitch surface needs an immediate refurbishment as further prolonged usage will result in it becoming useable. In addition to this, the Club also requires protected long term access to the pitch to secure its tenure and allow it to grow.

Hockey summary

- ◀ **There is a need for one full size hockey suitable AGPs to accommodate all current and future demand in Halton, however, there is a need to address quality, accessibility, and capacity issues. There has been no change since the 2020 study.**
- ◀ There is currently one full size hockey suitable AGP in Halton which is located at The Heath School.
- ◀ There has been a loss of one full size hockey suitable AGP since the collation of the dataset for the 2020 PPS. The pitch at Brookvale Recreation Centre (Runcorn Analysis Area - WA7 6EP) has been converted to a 3G surface in 2022.
- ◀ The quality of the pitch at The Heath School is still poor quality and has worsened since the 2020 PPS with multiple fixtures being postponed or cancelled.
- ◀ There is only one hockey club within Halton, Runcorn HC, which plays and trains at The Heath School. The number of teams it fields has slightly decreased from seven to five since the 2020 study.

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

PART 7: RUGBY LEAGUE

7.1: Introduction

The Rugby Football League (RFL) is the governing body for rugby league in England. It administers the England national rugby league team, the Challenge Cup, Super League and the championships which form the professional and semi-professional structure of the game in the UK. The RFL also administers the amateur and junior game across the country in association with the British Amateur Rugby League Association (BARLA).

Most community club rugby league is now played throughout the summer season (from February to October). However, rugby league is considered as a winter season sport within schools, colleges and universities and therefore pitch provision for matches and training is required throughout the winter months.

Senior rugby league is played on a field measuring 100 x 68 metres. The preferred pitch size for u7s, u8s and u9s is 60 x 40 metres, whereas for u10s and u11s it is 80 x 30 metres. U12s and above generally play on senior pitches. Teams from u7s to u11s are known as primary teams, with teams from u12s to u18s known as junior teams.

Consultation

In order to update this section of the report, consultation has been carried out with the RFL, Halton Sports Partnership and the Council.

7.2: Supply

Nationally, most rugby league pitches are classified as being senior sized, with cones used to mark out pitches for primary and junior teams. However, there may be instances (particularly on school sites and large club sites) where designated junior or primary pitches are provided.

In the 2020 PPS the audit identified a total of 21 grass rugby league pitches (13 senior and eight junior) across nine sites. All but one of these pitches (a senior pitch at Ormiston Chadwick Academy) are available for community use.

Table 7.1: Supply of all rugby league pitches across Halton

Analysis area	No. of senior pitches	No. of junior pitches	No. of primary pitches
2020			
Runcorn	1	-	-
Widnes	12	8	-
Total	13	8	-
2024			
Runcorn	1	-	-
Widnes	14	4	4
Total	16	4	4

The number of pitches in 2024 is similar to the original data with a total of 23 pitches. The main changes have been an increase of dedicated primary and senior pitches and a reduction of junior provision. The majority of these pitches are available for community use with one senior pitch at Ormiston Chadwick Academy and one primary pitch at Ditton Primary School being considered unavailable.

The below summarises the alterations in pitch provision since the 2020 audit:

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

- ◀ One primary pitch at Ditton Primary School
- ◀ Moorfield Sports and Social Club is now disused (previously two junior and two senior pitches)
- ◀ One senior and one junior pitch at Moorfield Primary School
- ◀ One senior pitch at Frank Myler Pavilion
- ◀ No provision at King George V Playing Field (previously one senior pitch)
- ◀ Wilmere Lane Playing Field has gone from having one senior and five junior pitches to three senior, two junior and three mini pitches. One of the senior pitches is also used for rugby union demand.

Disused sites and provision

As mentioned, Moorfield Sports and Social Club, which was actively used for rugby league in the original PPS audit (2020) is now disused. The site contained two senior and two junior rugby league pitches. The former users of the site, Widnes Moorfield Tigers ARLFC, now play at Moorfield Primary School.

Pavilions Club has been disused since circa 2016, historically the site has been used for football and rugby league, the latter last actively marked in 2012.

Information surrounding these disused sites can be found in Part 9: Disused sites.

In addition to disused sites there are number of sites which are still actively used for sport which previously accommodated rugby league provision. Further to Leigh Recreation Playing Fields and Widnes RUFC, which were identified in 2020, the senior pitch at King George V Playing Fields is no longer marked following the former users, Halton Simms Cross ARLFC, folding in 2022/23.

Ownership/management

Site ownership is varied between clubs renting a site from a wider sports club (or a sports and social club) and clubs which rent or lease pitches from the Council. Tenure of sites in Halton is considered secure if a club has a long-term lease or there is a guarantee that pitches will continue to be provided over the next three years. The below table examines the previous tenure in 2020 against the current arrangements known in 2024.

Table 7.2: Summary of security of tenure of rugby league clubs in Halton

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Club	Tenure	Comments
	2020				
27	King George V Playing Fields (Widnes)	Widnes	Halton Simms Cross ARLFC	Unsecure	Rent from Halton Borough Council
34	Moorfield Sports and Social Club	Widnes	Widnes Moorfield Tigers ARLFC	Unsecure	Rented from Sports and Social Club
34	Moorfield Sports and Social Club	Widnes	Widnes St Maries ARLFC	Unsecure	Rented from Sports and Social Club
43	Runcorn Heath Playing Fields	Runcorn	Runcorn ARLFC	Unsecure	Rent from Halton Borough Council
65	Wilmere Lane Playing Fields	Widnes	Halton Farnworth Hornets ARLFC	Secure	Leased from Halton Borough Council

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Club	Tenure	Comments
70	Ted Gleave Sports Ground	Widnes	West Bank Bears ARLFC	Secure	Leased from Halton Borough Council
	2024				
13	Frank Myler Pavilion	Widnes	Widnes Moorfield Tigers ARLFC	Unsecure	Rent from the Council
33	Moorfield Primary School	Widnes	Widnes Moorfield Tigers ARLFC	Unsecure	Rent from the School
43	Runcorn Heath Playing Fields	Runcorn	Runcorn ARLFC	Unsecure	Rent from Halton Borough Council
65	Wilmere Lane Playing Fields	Widnes	Halton Farnworth Hornets ARLFC	Secure	Leased from Halton Borough Council
70	Ted Gleave Sports Ground	Widnes	West Bank Bears ARLFC	Secure	Leased from Halton Borough Council
70	Ted Gleave Sports Ground	Widnes	Widnes St Maries ARLFC	Unsecure	Rent from Sports Club

There have been a number of changes in sites used across Halton since 2020 due to the folding of Halton Simms Cross ARLFC and the closure of Moorfield Sports and Social Club. As mentioned, the site used by the former club, King George V Playing Fields, is no longer in active use for rugby league and is now solely used for football (Widnes FC).

In comparison both Widnes Moorfield Tigers ARLFC and Widnes St Maries ARLFC have had to relocate following the closure of Moorfield Sports and Social Club. The former club now rents the use of pitches at Moorfield Primary School and Frank Myler Pavilion and the latter rents the use of pitches at Ted Gleave Sports Ground from lease holders West Bank Bears ARLFC. Neither of these clubs are considered to have long term security of tenure.

Due to the lack of Council operated rugby league pitches across Halton, once the clubs were displaced from the Sports and Social Club site, they had limited options available for relocation. This left both clubs renting facilities with unsecure tenure meaning they could be displaced again in the immediate future at short notice.

The Council indicates pitch configurations have now taken place (2024) at Frank Myler Pavilion and Runcorn Heath Playing Fields to permanently create a dedicated rugby league pitch, however, both sites require pitch improvements.

Ancillary provision

Evidence provided by the RFL and Halton Sports Partnership indicates that Widnes Moorfield Tigers ARLFC struggles to gain access to changing rooms and carparking at Moorfield Primary School which leads it to occasionally use both pitch and ancillary provision at Frank Myler Pavilion.

West Bank Bears ARLFC aspires to expand its current clubhouse and upgrade its storage facilities at Ted Gleave Sports Ground where it keeps its training equipment and maintenance machinery.

Halton Farnworth Hornets ARLFC is not only the largest club in Halton but also the biggest community club nationally. As such it is consistently challenged by the lack of ancillary facilities particularly to accommodate growth in women and girls demand. It therefore requires further investment for additional changing rooms to sustain participation.

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

7.3: Quality

Non-technical site assessments were carried out for all rugby league pitches in the Borough and assessed as one of three categories, 'good', 'standard' or 'poor'. Carrying capacity of a pitch is dependent upon the quality of a pitch which is outlined below:

Table 7.3: Summary of quality and carrying capacity for rugby league pitches

Category	Capacity
Good	3 matches per week
Standard	2 matches per week
Poor	1 match per week

The table below summarises pitch quality at all community accessible rugby league pitch across Halton from 2020 and compares it to current ratings (2024).

Table 7.4: Comparison of community available rugby league pitch quality

Site Id	Site name	Analysis area	Number of pitches	Pitch size	2020 Quality	2024 Quality
9	Cronton Sixth Form College	Widnes	1	Senior	Standard	Standard
13	Frank Myler Pavilion	Widnes	1	Senior	-	Poor
27	King George V Playing Fields (Widnes)	Widnes	1	Senior	Standard	-
33	Moorfield Primary School	Widnes	1	Senior	-	Poor
33	Moorfield Primary School	Widnes	1	Junior	-	Poor
34	Moorfield Sports and Social Club	Widnes	2	Senior	Poor	-
34	Moorfield Sports and Social Club	Widnes	2	Junior	Poor	-
43	Runcorn Heath Playing Fields	Runcorn	1	Senior	Poor	Good
53	St Peter & St Paul Catholic College	Widnes	2	Senior	Standard	Standard
56	Wade Deacon High School	Widnes	3	Senior	Poor	Poor
65	Wilmere Lane Playing Fields	Widnes	3	Senior	Standard	Good
65	Wilmere Lane Playing Fields	Widnes	2	Senior	Standard	Good
65	Wilmere Lane Playing Fields	Widnes	3	Senior	Standard	Good
70	Ted Gleave Sports Ground	Widnes	1	Senior	Standard	Standard
70	Ted Gleave Sports Ground	Widnes	1	Senior	Standard	Standard

PitchPower reports carried out in 2023 on behalf of the RLF has led to the changes in quality at Runcorn Heath Playing Fields and Wilmere Lane Playing Fields. For more information surrounding PitchPower reports please review Part 2: Football.

Broadly speaking the overall quality of grass rugby league pitches has improved since 2020 with more good quality provision and less standard and poor quality pitches. This is mainly due to the aforementioned improvements at Runcorn Heath Playing Fields and Wilmere Lane Playing Fields. The reduction of poor provision is also a result, in part, the closure of Moorfield Sports and Social Club which previously accommodated two senior and two junior pitches all of which were poor quality.

West Bank Bears ARLFC plans to complete spotlighting on its grass pitch to enable training throughout the year. This could leave to the deterioration of quality, however, creating access for the Club to use 3G provision could alleviate this issue.

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

7.4: Demand

Demand for rugby league pitches in Borough tends to fall within the categories of organised competitive play and organised training.

Competitive play

In 2020 there were a total of 42 competitive rugby league teams playing in Borough, including the three teams from semi-professional club Widnes Vikings RLFC. The table overleaf examines the changes since the original data to current demand figures (2024).

Table 7.5: Summary of rugby league demand in Halton by analysis area

Club name	Senior	Junior	Primary	Total
2020				
Halton Farnworth Hornets ARLFC	1	7	11	19
Halton Simms Cross ARLFC	1	-	-	1
Runcorn ARLFC	1	-	-	1
West Bank Bears ARLFC	2	2	5	9
Widnes Moorfield Tigers ARLFC	1	3	4	8
Widnes St Maries ARLFC	-	1	-	1
Widnes Vikings RLFC	2	1	-	3
Total	8	14	20	42
2024				
Halton Farnworth Hornets ARLFC	3	8	12	23
Halton Simms Cross ARLFC	-	-	-	-
Runcorn ARLFC	1	-	-	1
West Bank Bears ARLFC	2	3	4	9
Widnes Moorfield Tigers ARLFC	1	2	4	7
Widnes St Maries ARLFC	2	-	-	2
Widnes Vikings RLFC	2	-	-	2
Total	11	13	20	44

Demand in 2024 indicates rugby league has seen a marginal increase of senior teams and a small reduction of junior teams since 2020 with primary teams remaining the same.

On a club level, Halton Farnworth Hornets ARLFC has seen the largest growth in demand with an additional four teams. The Club is by far the largest in Halton and has received significant levels of investment from the RFL in recent years including Grass Pitch Maintenance Funding.

Comparatively, the RFL indicates three 'at risk' clubs in the Authority namely, Halton Simms Cross ARLFC, Widnes Moorfield Tigers ARLFC and Widnes St Maries ARLFC. The former club (Halton Simms Cross ARLFC) has not formed a team so far for the 2024 season with online information indicating it may have folded.

It should be noted that the RFL reports concerns with the long term impacts on demand at Widnes Moorfield Tigers ARLFC if it is unable to access appropriate changing and toilet facilities at Moorfield Primary School. The Club requires secured access to the provision as soon as possible, whether or not a wider development takes place involving Moorfield Sports & Social Club.

Training

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

Evidence in the 2020 study, and current information, indicates that clubs across Halton primarily train on grass rugby league pitches. This is contributing to levels of overplay particularly at those sites with few and/or poor quality pitches such as Moorfield Primary School and Ted Gleave Sports Ground. With this being said, Halton Farnworth Hornets ARLFC junior teams are known to access the sports lit Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) at Frank Myler Pavilion for seven hours a week from January to March.

A potential option to assist in reducing levels of overplay from training demand would be for clubs to access relevant RFL certified artificial provision (3Gs). There is currently one RFL compliant 11v11 size 3G pitch in Halton located at DCBL Stadium, however, access for community clubs is limited due to evening usage from Widnes Vikings RLFC and Widnes FC.

Greater access to this pitch for community rugby league clubs would be beneficial to alleviate shortfall, alternatively to potential to install or create more community available RFL complaint 3G pitches should be examined.

Future demand from population increases

Based on the previous study, team generation rates used to calculate the future number of teams likely were based on population growth to 2037 (in line with the Local Plan), however, there is not enough growth to indicate creation of future teams across any age group.

7.5: Supply and demand analysis

The table below examines the 2020 supply and demand analysis against the most recent analysis which factors in changed to pitch quantity and quality and levels of demand.

Table 7.6: Supply/demand balance of senior rugby league pitches at senior peak time in match equivalent sessions

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total
2020			
Runcorn	-	-	
Widnes	-	0.5	0.5
Total	-	0.5	0.5
2024			
Runcorn	0.5	-	0.5
Widnes	1.5	5.75	4.25
Total	2	5.75	3.75

The table above shows that levels of spare capacity and overplay have increased across Halton. The spare capacity is generated from Runcorn Heath Playing Fields (improvement in quality based on PP reports) and Wilmere Lane Playing Fields (increase in senior provision and pitch improvements based on PP reports).

Comparatively, overplay has also increased with increases in both competitive and training demand accessing limited pitch stock (Ted Gleave Sports Ground) or limited poor quality pitches (Moorfield Primary School).

In comparison, the table below examines the supply and demand analysis of junior rugby league pitches within Halton. As seen the shortfall of pitches has greatly reduced since 2020 going from 5.25 to just one match equivalent session per week.

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

Table 7.7: Supply/demand balance of junior rugby league pitches at junior peak time in match equivalent sessions

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total
2020			
Runcorn	-	-	
Widnes	-	5.25	5.25
Total	-	5.25	5.25
2024			
Runcorn	-	-	
Widnes	-	1	1
Total	-	1	1

The rationale behind why they have been a reduction is due to more junior teams accessing the increased number of senior pitches in the Authority. Additionally, the junior pitches which are still used at Wilmere Lane Playing Fields have improved in quality.

Primary pitches are considered to be played to capacity at peak time with no evidence of spare capacity or overplay.

Future demand

Although there is no anticipated future demand from population growth, there are known aspirations at the clubs and RFL to continue to increase demand particularly for women and girls. In order for future demand come to fruition there is a need to alleviate overplay and provide additional capacity through pitch enhancement, transferal of training demand to artificial provision or reinstating/creation new pitches.

7.6: Conclusion

Compared to 2020, the shortfalls of rugby league provision have altered due primarily to a change in the quantity of certain pitch types. The reduction in dedicated junior pitches has resulted in greater utilisation of senior pitches for this age group. As a result, there has been an increase in the shortfall of senior provision and the reduction of overplay on junior pitches.

There is also a need to find permanent long term secure home venues for Widnes St Maries ARLFC and Widnes Moorfield Tigers ARLFC whether this is at their current sites or reinstatement of disused provision (Moorfield Sports & Social Club).

For reference the table below identifies where alterations to supply and demand have been applied.

Table 7.8: Summary of alteration in the supply and demand of senior rugby league pitches

Site ID	Site name	Comments
13	Frank Myler Pavilion	One poor quality senior pitch occasionally used by Widnes Moorfield Tigers ARLFC. No spare capacity due to quality and it is not overplayed.
33	Moorfield Primary School	One junior and one senior pitch both of which are poor quality. Junior pitch is overplayed by one match equivalent session whereas the senior pitch is overplayed by two match equivalent sessions per week.

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Site ID	Site name	Comments
43	Runcorn Heath Playing Fields	One good quality senior pitch with actual spare capacity of 0.5 match equivalent sessions per week at senior peak time (Saturday PM).
65	Wilmere Lane Playing Fields	Senior pitches have spare capacity of 1.5 match equivalent sessions at senior peak time (Saturday PM). Junior and primary pitches have no spare capacity at peak time.
70	Ted Gleave Sports Ground	One junior and one senior pitch both of which are standard quality. The junior pitch is played to capacity whereas the senior pitch is overplayed by 3.75 match equivalent sessions per week.

Rugby league summary

- ◀ **Overall, there is a current shortfall of 3.75 match equivalent sessions per week on senior rugby league pitches and a shortfall of one match equivalent session on junior pitches.**
- ◀ **Since the 2020 study, shortfalls have increased on senior pitches and reduced on junior pitches.**
- ◀ The number of pitches in 2024 is similar to the original data with a total of 23 pitches. In comparison to 21 in 2020.
- ◀ The two senior and two junior pitches formally located at Moorfield Sports and Social Club are now disused.
- ◀ Widnes Moorfield Tigers ARLFC struggles to gain access to changing rooms and carparking at Moorfield Primary School.
- ◀ West Bank Bears ARLFC aspires to expand its current clubhouse and upgrade its storage facilities at Ted Gleave Sports Ground.
- ◀ Broadly speaking the overall quality of grass rugby league pitches has improved since 2020 with more good quality provision and less standard and poor quality pitches.
- ◀ Demand in 2024 indicates rugby league has seen a marginal increase of senior teams and a small reduction of junior teams since 2020 with primary teams remaining the same.

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

PART 8: OTHER SPORTS

8.1: American football

The British American Football Association (BAFA) is the National Governing Body for the sport of American football in Great Britain and is responsible for all regulatory, competition, performance and development aspects of the game.

Halton Spartans is the only known club based in Halton. Consultation attempts were made; however, the Club was non-responsive. Therefore, information to inform this study was gathered from online research, where possible.

In the original PPS the Club had one team that participated in the BAFA NFL NFC 1 South and played out of the DCBL Stadium Halton (Widnes). Recent online information provided by the Club (2023) indicates, that due to unforeseen circumstances, it has dropped out of the NFC down to associate status for 2024 season. It has also relocated its demand from DCBL Stadium Halton and now exports to a 3G pitch at Rainhill High School (St Helens).

It is unknown if the Club aspires to return into Halton, however, as its demand has been exported since circa 2020 it is anticipated to remain outside of the Authority for the foreseeable future.

8.2: Baseball

Baseball Softball UK (BSUK) is the development agency for baseball and softball in the United Kingdom. Since 2000, BSUK has provided services to the sports' governing bodies, the British Baseball Federation (BBF) and British Softball Federation (BSF) with the aim of developing and increasing the levels of participation, skill and achievement in baseball and softball. This occurs at both junior and adult levels, from school and grassroots through to domestic adult clubs up to the Great Britain national teams. A baseball season typically operates between April to September in England.

In November 2019, Halton Baseball Club merged with Trojans Baseball Club, after years of declining membership. Halton Trojans now functions as one of Trojans Baseball Clubs three teams offering an entry level playing opportunity for those wanting to get into the sport. Similar to 2020, the team is still based out of John Mills Ballpark, which was used by Halton Baseball Club prior to the merger.

Since the merger, Trojans Baseball Club took on the previous lease of the site, which was previously between Halton Baseball Club and the Council. The Club reported in 2020 that the diamond was poor quality and indicated that it will need to invest in the site to improve its quality. Attempts were made to consult with the Club for this document however it was non responsive. Therefore, the current quality and levels of demand are unknown.

With the above taken into consideration, it is considered that Trojans Baseball Club can accommodate all demand for the sport across the Borough although there maybe some investment required at the site to ensure that quality is suitable.

Other sports summary

- ❖ There is considered to be suitable amounts of provision to meet current and future levels of demand Baseball demand in Halton.
- ❖ As demand for American Football is now exported to St Helens there is no immediate requirement to provide suitable supply for the support unless the Halton Spartans aspires to return.

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

PART 9: DISUSED SITES

Sites that have previously been used for sport but that are not currently being used at all by any users and are not available for community hire either (often being unmarked). Once sites are disused for five or more years, these fall outside of Sport England's statutory remit but still have to be assessed using the criteria in paragraph 103 of the NPPF, with Sport England still likely to challenge a proposed loss which fails to meet such criteria. It should be emphasised that the lawful planning use of a such a site is still that of a playing field until such time as its use is formally changed or it is developed for a non-sport use.

If disused playing field sites are allocated as playing field land in the Local Plan, then Sport England remains a statutory consultee even if they have not been used for the previous five years.

The following table below identifies currently disused sites within Halton and any changes from previously identified disused sites from the previous study.

It should be noted that Arley Drive Playing Fields, which was identified as unused site in 2020, is now an active football site.

Table 9.1: Summary of disused sites within Halton

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Post code	Comments
4	Birchfield Sports and Social Club	Widnes	WA8 9ES	Site previously accommodated a six wicket grass square, one senior grass rugby union pitch and one adult football pitch (on cricket outfield). The provision was used by Birchfield Park CC and Birchfield RUFC until the sites closure in 2020. The football pitch was last actively marked circa 2017. In 2023 the accompanying ancillary provision were left derelict after an arson attack.
18	Hale Park	Widnes	L24 4AF	Site previously accommodated one adult and one youth 11v11 pitch and is now used as open green space.
34	Moorfield Sports and Social Club	Widnes	WA8 3HQ	Site closed in 2021 previously accommodating two adult football pitches, a six wicket grass cricket square, two senior and two junior rugby league pitches in addition to a bowling green and relevant ancillary provision. Previously used by Moorfield U16s FC, Widnes Moorfield Tigers RLFC and Moorfield CC. The former Club has relocated to Frank Myler Pavilion. Moorfield CC has folded and Widnes Moorfield Tigers RLFC now plays at Moorfield Primary School with some occasional use of Frank Myler Pavilion. Comparatively Moorfield CC ceased playing on the site following price increases from the former management company, with players dispersing to other

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Post code	Comments
				clubs in the locality and therefore increasing demand elsewhere. In November 2023 a planning application was submitted (23/00459/FUL) for the development of the site. More information surrounding this can be found below the table.
39	Pavilions Club	Runcorn	WA7 4EX	Former ICI Recreation Club site which accommodated one adult pitch (Step football), two adult and one senior rugby league pitch. The aforementioned provision was last marked circa 2012, however, the site has more recently (2016) had five mini 7v7 pitches marked on part of the playing field land. In 2017 a planning application (17/00468/FUL) was submitted to develop the site. This was eventually withdrawn after an appeal in January 2022.
41	Prescot Road Playing Fields	Widnes	WA8 7PD	Prescot Road Playing Field currently is separated into three parcels of land which are under three separate tenures: the Council, Widnes RUFC and private ownership. The parcel of land which is owned by the Council, currently accommodates four mini pitches that are used by Pex Hill FC. The Club reports that it previously had access to an additional three youth 11v11 pitches at the site, before these were sold in 2013 from a private ownership to another to private owner. These are now considered disused. In January 2024 a planning application was submitted (24/00021/OUT) for the development of the disused area of the site. More information surrounding this can be found below the table.

For reference paragraph 103 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets three criterion that ensures existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

- a) An assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or
- b) The loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
- c) The development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.

Paragraphs 101, 102, and 103 set the parameters for the designation of Local Green Space. Such spaces may include playing fields and outdoor sport facilities.

As mentioned, there is more information below surrounding the planning proposals for Moorfield Sports and Social Club and Prescott Road Playing Fields. Sport England have objected to both proposals (linked below) as the proposed mitigation is not considered

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

acceptable to compensate for the substantial amount of playing field that could be used to accommodate a variety of pitch sports.



20230110 Moorfield
SE Response 66239.p



20240205 Prescott Rd
SE Reponse 66675.pd

Moorfield Sports and Social Club

As discussed, there is currently a planning application (23/00459/FUL) for the development of Moorfield Sports and Social Club from Bellway Homes. For reference an arial imaginary of the site has been provided below.

The main body of the site is located north of a pathway which included the ancillary provision, bowling green, cricket square and nets, one dedicated adult football pitch, one junior rugby league pitch and one senior rugby league pitch which has also been used for adult football. The playing field land to the south of the pathway accommodated one junior and one senior rugby league pitch.

Figure 9.1: Arial imaginary of Moorfield Sports and Social Club from 2016



The proposal indicates the entire development of the northern section of the site and the creation of a FIFA and WR compliant sports lit 3G pitch (approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ size) and a full size grass sports pitch and ancillary provision to the south. It also includes the improvement and development of a senior rugby league pitch and Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) on playing field land located at Moorfield Primary School which is adjacent to Moorfield Sports and Social Club.

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The mitigation strategy, which has been included within the planning application, indicates sufficient capacity will be provided to meet current and future demand from former users Moorfield U16s FC and Widnes Moorfield Tigers RLFC. It could also provide additional capacity for wider community access. It also indicates the provision to be developed at the Moorfield Sports and Social Club will ultimately be gifted to the clubs.

Although it is agreed that proposed mitigation would provide suitable capacity to meet demand from Moorfield U16s FC and Widnes Moorfield Tigers RLFC, there are still wider shortfalls of playing field provision across Halton (football, rugby union and rugby league) which could be alleviated through the reinstatement of Moorfield Sports and Social Club. The mitigation also does not include any form of compensation for the loss of the former cricket square.

It should be noted that the RLF indicates that it has recently funded pitch improvements and goalpost at Moorfield Primary School to help meet the demand from Widnes Moorfield Tigers ARLFC.

With there being current and future shortfalls evident for football, rugby league and rugby union in addition to future shortfalls for cricket there is a clear need to retain all current and disused playing field land with Halton. This is in line with both NPPF and Sport England guidance.

Prescot Road Playing Fields

The planning application (24/00021/OUT) submitted on behalf of Miller Homes indicates plans to build on the disused piece of playing field land which previously accommodated three youth 11v11 pitches. The parcels of land which are Council and Widnes RUFC owned would remain the same, with a small increase to the former to allow for the creation of a youth pitch for Pex Hill FC. The only other mitigation suggested is the improvements to drainage to the remaining playing field land to enhance quality and to provide maintenance equipment for football.

There is no acknowledgment of the Authority wide current and future shortfall of youth 11v11 and youth 9v9 pitches, no evidence of wider consultation with Widnes RUFC, Sport England, FA, FF or RFU to understand their views and no attempts made to indicate whether or not it is possible to provide or create new paying field land. It instead focuses on a localised assessment of surrounding sites and their capacity to justify an oversupply of provision which is inaccurate.

With there being current and future shortfalls evident for football, rugby league and rugby union in addition to future shortfalls for cricket there is a clear need to retain all current and disused playing field land with Halton. This is in line with both NPPF and Sport England guidance.

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

PART 10: STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS

It should be noted that even though there have been some alterations in the overall supply and demand analysis for some sports, with an increase in shortfalls particular on grass football, rugby league and rugby union pitches, these are considered marginal. Therefore, broadly speaking the strategic recommendations made in the Halton PPS Strategy & Action Plan (2020) within Part 4 Sport Specific Issues Scenarios and Recommendations and Part 5 Strategic Recommendations are still applicable. Any specific alterations to the sports by sports recommendations have been highlighted below in yellow.

Individual site-specific alterations to recommendations have been highlighted within the updated Action Plan within this document.

Grass football pitch recommendations

- ◀ Protect existing quantity of pitches, including disused provision, in line with national (i.e. the NPPF and Sport England's Playing Fields Policy) and local planning policy.
- ◀ As there are current identified shortfalls for football, rugby union and rugby league, in addition to future cricket shortfalls, ensure disused provision at Hale Park, Birchfield Sports and Social Club, Moorfield Sports and Social Club, Pavilions Club and Prescot Road Playing Fields are protected with options explored to bring them back into use to alleviate identified overplay.
- ◀ Utilise the Football Foundation's PitchPower app to assist in the improvement and ongoing maintenance of provision.
- ◀ Support eligible organisations to access funding to improve pitches at their sites, such as through the Football Foundation's Grass Pitch Maintenance Fund (GPMF).
- ◀ Convert pitches to a more appropriate pitch type where such demand is already being received and where no teams will be adversely affected (i.e., adult to youth 11v11).
- ◀ Where pitches are overplayed and assessed as poor or standard quality, prioritise investment and review maintenance regimes to ensure it is of an appropriate standard to sustain use and improve quality.
- ◀ Transfer play from sites which remain overplayed to alternative sites with spare capacity or to sites which are not currently available for community use.
- ◀ Explore opportunities to gain long-term access to sites not currently offering secured use or where community use is not currently offered.
- ◀ Explore opportunities to provide clubs with long term tenure on sites if it is logistically feasible, sustainable and beneficial for all stakeholders.
- ◀ Work to accommodate future demand at sites which are not operating at capacity or at sites not currently available for community use that could be moving forward.
- ◀ Improve ancillary facilities where this is a clear need to do so.
- ◀ Ensure clubs playing within, or with aspirations to play within, the National League System have access to the required extent and quality of facilities to progress.
- ◀ Explore opportunities for club-led management and maintenance models at sites where appropriate.
- ◀ Ensure provision of toilets as a minimum requirement to service football pitch sites.
- ◀ Focus on the development of good quality pavilion provision at key strategic multi-pitch sites, club/league managed sites and those with a focus on growth of women and girls participation.
- ◀ Where sports lighting is provided, encourage conversion of halogen systems to LED in order to improve energy efficiency and reduce environmental impact.
- ◀ Assess the need for new football provision linked to any large housing development (i.e., over 300 dwellings) and assess this through the production of a sport needs assessment to determine on or off site requirements.

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

- ◀ Where a housing development is not of a size to justify on-site football provision, consider using contributions to improve existing sites within the locality, with priority placed on priorities and needs identified in the PPS Action Plan and the LFFP.
- ◀ Where a development is of a size to justify on-site football provision, focus on the creation of multi-pitch sites that reduce existing shortfalls.

3G pitch recommendations

- ◀ Protect current stock of 3G pitches in line with national (i.e. the NPPF and Sport England's Playing Fields Policy) and local planning policy.
- ◀ Create three additional 11v11 size 3G pitches to alleviate football shortfalls with one each in the Runcorn Analysis Area and two in the Widnes Analysis Area.
- ◀ Explore the potential of gaining greater access to the pitch at DCBL Stadium Halton, particularly for rugby league and rugby union training, in order to alleviate identified shortfalls.
- ◀ If greater access cannot be obtained at DCBL Stadium Halton explore the possibility of any new 3G provision being RFL/WR compliant with secured access for clubs in order to reduce shortfalls.
- ◀ Ensure that any new 3G pitches are priced competitively against the cost of hiring a grass pitches and are aimed at local grassroots clubs, with associated pitch replacement funds established.
- ◀ Ensure discussions take place between the Council, EH, SE, County FAs and FF before any conversion or creation of new provision in order to understand the potential effect on the sustainability of existing AGP stock.
- ◀ Carry out further feasibility work to identify suitable locations for new 3G pitches and ensure this is done in consultation with the relevant stakeholders including Sport England and the appropriate NGBs.
- ◀ Ensure that any new 3G pitches are constructed to meet NGB compliant specifications based on proposed users and formats of use, including football, rugby union and rugby league.
- ◀ Ensure all current and future 3G providers have a pitch replacement fund in place for long-term sustainability and seek to resurface provision when it is required.
- ◀ Encourage more football match play demand to transfer to 3G pitches, where possible, particularly from council sites and for mini demand.
- ◀ Seek FIFA/FA testing of all existing and new 3G pitches and ensure they are on the FA 3G Pitch Register so that they can be used for competitive football matches and ensure re-testing is carried out when it is required.
- ◀ For any pitches built to RFU/RFL specifications, seek World Rugby compliancy so that they can be used for full contact activity and ensure re-testing when it is required (every two years).
- ◀ Ensure that any new 3G pitches with external funding have community use agreements in place and seek to use this to also tie in access to grass pitch and other sporting provision, where relevant.
- ◀ Ensure appropriate continued and future access to 3G provision for other sports where it is desired e.g., American football.
- ◀ Encourage conversion of halogen floodlighting systems to LED to improve energy efficiency and reduce environmental impact.

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

Cricket recommendations

- ◀ Protect all cricket squares in current use, and disused provision, in line with national (i.e. the NPPF and Sport England's Playing Fields Policy) and local planning policy.
- ◀ As there are current identified shortfalls for football, rugby union and rugby league, in addition to future cricket shortfalls, ensure disused provision at Birchfield Sports and Social Club, Moorfield Sports and Social Club, Pavilions Club and Prescott Road Playing Fields are protected with options explored to bring them back into use to alleviate identified overplay.
- ◀ Work with both Runcorn CC and Widnes CC and their grounds staff to review quality issues on squares and to ensure quality is sustained as good.
- ◀ Examine potential options to create additional capacity for cricket within Halton in order to provide the ability for Runcorn CC and Widnes CC to grow. This primarily would be through the reinstatement of disused provision Moorfield Sports and Social Club or Birchfield Sports and Social Club.
- ◀ Explore the feasibility of assisting Runcorn CC within its plans to develop its ancillary provision.
- ◀ Explore options to accommodate expressed future demand through the installation of NTP at Runcorn Cricket Club.
- ◀ Explore options to provide both clubs with suitable training provision at their home ground/s.
- ◀ Where new housing or building developments are under consideration adjacent to existing cricket facilities, ensure a ball strike risk assessment is undertaken and ensure any clubs which could be affected are signposted to the ECB.
- ◀ Continue to deliver the Dynamos and All Stars cricket as well as women & girls programmes and seek to increase junior and female participation as a result.
- ◀ Work to increase women and girls' participation in line with the emerging Inspiring Generations ECB Strategy and protect existing provision so that women and girls have a suitable place to practise and play.

Grass rugby union recommendations

- ◀ Protect existing quantity of rugby union pitches, including disused provision, in line with national (i.e. the NPPF and Sport England's Playing Fields Policy) and local planning policy.
- ◀ As there are current identified shortfalls for football, rugby union and rugby league, in addition to future cricket shortfalls, ensure disused provision at Birchfield Sports and Social Club, Moorfield Sports and Social Club, Pavilions Club and Prescott Road Playing Fields are protected with options explored to bring them back into use to alleviate identified overplay.
- ◀ Utilise the Football Foundation's PitchPower app to assist in the improvement and ongoing maintenance of provision.
- ◀ Explore options to improve the drainage of both pitches at Widnes RUFC.
- ◀ Improve pitch quality at Moore RUFC, Widnes RUFC and Prescott Road Playing Fields to alleviate overplay and create actual spare capacity for increased demand.
- ◀ Work with Moore RUFC to explore the feasibility of installing additional Sports lighting on the second pitch.
- ◀ Support ancillary facility developments at Moore RUFC.
- ◀ Continue to develop strong relationships between rugby union clubs and schools through curricular and extracurricular programmes in order to increase levels of mini and junior participation.
- ◀ Explore the potential of gaining greater access to the pitch at DCBL Stadium Halton, particularly for rugby union training, in order to alleviate identified shortfalls.

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

- ◀ If greater access cannot be obtained at DCBL Stadium Halton explore the possibility of any new 3G provision being RFL/WR compliant with secured access for clubs in order to reduce shortfalls.
- ◀ Assess the need for new rugby union provision linked to any large housing development (i.e., over 300 dwellings) and assess this through the production of a sport needs assessment to determine on or off site requirements.
- ◀ Where a development is of a size to justify on-site rugby union provision, ensure that any proposals for new pitches will attract adequate demand.
- ◀ Where a development is not of a size to justify on-site rugby union provision, or if sufficient demand cannot be attracted, consider using contributions to improve existing sites within the locality.

Hockey recommendations

- ◀ As priority, seek to refurbish the pitch at The Heath School with a hockey suitable surface and ensure a sinking fund is in place for long-term sustainability in cohesion with securing long term security of tenure for Runcorn HC.
- ◀ Explore potential options with the schools PFI regarding refurbishment.
- ◀ Ensure The Heath School is protected as the main hockey site within Halton in line with national (i.e. the NPPF and Sport England Playing Fields Policy) and local planning policy.
- ◀ Ensure that future demand from EH's initiative, Hockey Heroes (aimed at growing participation for under 10s), can be accommodated.
- ◀ When 3G pitch stock increases, encourage the transfer of football demand from the sand-based AGPs in order to free up increased capacity for hockey activity, whilst ensuring enough football demand is retained for long-term financial sustainability.

Grass rugby league recommendations

- ◀ Protect existing quantity of rugby league pitches, including disused provision, in line with national (i.e. the NPPF and Sport England's Playing Fields Policy) and local planning policy.
- ◀ As there are current identified shortfalls for football, rugby union and rugby league, in addition to future cricket shortfalls, ensure disused provision at Birchfield Sports and Social Club, Moorfield Sports and Social Club, Pavilions Club and Prescott Road Playing Fields are protected with options explored to bring them back into use to alleviate identified overplay.
- ◀ Utilise the Football Foundation's PitchPower app to assist in the improvement and ongoing maintenance of provision.
- ◀ Assist in finding a secure permanent home venue for Widnes Moorfield Tigers ARLFC and Widnes St Maries ARLFC which has suitable quality and quality of provision to meet current and future levels of demand.
- ◀ Explore securing access to all community used sites through long term tenure agreements.
- ◀ Assist clubs in improving ancillary provision where deemed necessary, particularly for Halton Farnworth Hornets ARLFC at Wilmere Lane Playing Fields
- ◀ Improve poor and standard quality pitches to reduce overplay and create future spare capacity through work with the Ground Maintenance Association and volunteer workforce.
- ◀ Explore the best suited option to create additional provision at Ted Gleave Sports Ground to fully eradicate overplay.
- ◀ Continue to develop strong relationships between rugby clubs and schools through curricular and extracurricular programmes in order to increase levels of mini and junior participation.

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

- ◀ Explore the potential of gaining greater access to the pitch at DCBL Stadium Halton, particularly for rugby league training, in order to alleviate identified shortfalls.
- ◀ If greater access cannot be obtained at DCBL Stadium Halton explore the possibility of any new 3G provision being RFL compliant with secured access for clubs in order to reduce shortfalls.

Other sports (Baseball/softball and American football) recommendations

- ◀ Existing quantity of Baseball provision to be protected.
- ◀ Assist Trojans Baseball Club in improving the quality of the diamond at John Mills Ballpark.
- ◀ Explore if Halton Spartans aspires to return back into Halton and if it does ensure it has secured access to relevant supply (grass or 3G) to meet its demand requirements.

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

PART 11: ACTION PLAN

Based on the findings from the above update report the Action Plan has been updated as seen in the tables overleaf.

Please note that any alterations made to the Action Plan since its adoption in 2020 has been highlighted in yellow.

For more details surrounding the terminology within this section please review the adopted Halton Council Strategy & Action Plan (2020).

RUCORN ANALYSIS AREA

Key recommendations

- ✦ To meet the future shortfalls, improve poor quality football pitches through enhanced levels of maintenance.
- ✦ Convert pitches to a more suitable pitch type to meet increases in demand such as adult to youth 11v11.
- ✦ Protect disused provision in accordance with NPPF and Sport England guidelines and examine the potential of reinstating provision to alleviate identified shortfalls.
- ✦ As a priority refurbish the hockey suitable AGP at The Heath School and look to secure long term access for Runcorn HC.
- ✦ Assist clubs in ancillary provision improvements where required.
- ✦ Examine securing tenure for clubs where not already apparent.
- ✦ Explore options to create at least one 11v11 size sports lit 3G pitch to alleviate identified current shortfalls, examining the potential to make in WR compliant to alleviate grass pitch rugby union shortfalls (Moore RUFC).
- ✦ Explore options to create capacity to allow for future growth for Runcorn CC.
- ✦ Look to improve the quality of pitches at Moore RUFC and install additional sports lighting in order to assist in reducing shortfalls.

Site ID	Site	Post code	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales ⁸	Cost ⁹	Aim
3	Beechwood County Primary School	WA7 2TT	Football	Education	One poor quality mini 7v7 pitch that is played to capacity at peak time.	Improve pitch quality as appropriate to meet curricular and extracurricular demand.	Education FF CFA	Local	L	L	L	Enhance Protect
5	Bridgewater Park Primary School	WA7 2LW	Football	Education	One poor quality mini 7v7 pitch that is not available for community use.	Improve pitch quality as required to meet curricular and extra curricular demand.	Education FF CFA	Local	L	L	L	Enhance
7	Brookvale Recreation Centre	WA7 6EP	3G	Council	One good quality 11v11 size sports lit 3G pitch which is FIFA certified. This has been converted from a hockey suitable AGP since the 2020 PPS audit.	Sustain quality as appropriate to meet levels of demand. Ensure a pitch replacement fund is in situ. Ensure it is retested for FIFA certification when required.	Council FF CFA	Key centre	L	L	L	Protect
11	Daresbury County Primary School	WA4 4AJ	Football	Education	One poor quality mini 5v5 pitch that has spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.	Improve pitch quality as required to meet curricular and extra curricular demand.	Education FF CFA	Local	L	L	L	Enhance
15	Grange Academy	WA7 5DX	Football	Education	One youth 11v11 and one youth 9v9, both of which are poor quality and mini 7v7 and one mini 5v5 pitch which are standard quality. The youth 11v11 pitch is overplayed by 1.5 match equivalent sessions and the youth 9v9 pitch is overplayed by two match equivalent sessions. The mini pitches have spare capacity discounted due to quality and unsecure tenure. Pitches are used by Heath Rangers FC.	Improve pitch quality with an enhanced maintenance regime. Explore securing community access for Heath Rangers FC through a CUA.	Education FF CFA	Key centre	L	S - M	L - M	Protect Enhance
15	Grange Academy	WA7 5DX	3G	Education	One poor quality 11v11 size sports lit 3G pitch built in 2013. Pitch is not on the FA pitch register.	Look to refurbish the pitch as the surface is beyond its recommended lifespan. Ensure a pitch replacement fund is in situ. Once refurbished look to put it on the FA register and open up for full community access (weekend).	Education FF CFA	Key centre	H	S	H	Protect Enhance

⁸ (S) -Short (1-2 years); (M) - Medium (3-5 years); (L) - Long (6+ years)

⁹ (L) -Low - less than £50k; (M) -Medium - £50k-£250k; (H) -High £250k and above

**HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY**

Site ID	Site	Post code	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales ⁸	Cost ⁹	Aim
17	Haddocks Wood Playing Fields	WA7 1QH	Football (3G)	Council	Two adult, two youth 11v11, one youth 9v9, three mini 7v7 and two mini 5v5 pitches all of which are poor quality. The youth 11v11 pitches are overplayed by 1.5 match equivalent sessions with the adult pitches overplayed by 0.5 match equivalent sessions. The remaining pitches have spare capacity discounted due to quality and unsecure tenure. Due to its size the site has the potential to accommodate a 11v11 size 3G pitch.	Improve pitch quality with a continual enhanced maintenance regime. Explore potential options to improve the quality and access to onsite ancillary provision. Explore potential options to reduce levels of dog fouling. In order to alleviate identified shortfalls, explore the feasibility of the site for 3G development.	Council FF CFA	Key centre	H	S	M	Enhance Protect
21	Halton Lodge School	WA7 5LU	Football	Education	One standard quality youth 9v9 pitch that is not available for community use.	Sustain quality through appropriate maintenance and retain as current use.	Education FF CFA	Local	L	L	L	Protect
24	Holy Spirit RC Primary School	WA7 2NL	Football	Education	One poor quality youth 9v9 pitch overplayed by one match equivalent session through community, curricular and extracurricular usage.	Improve pitch quality with enhanced levels of maintenance to better meet community, curricular and extracurricular demand.	Education FF CFA	Local	M	S	L-M	Protect Enhance
30	APEC Taxis Stadium	WA7 6GJ	Football (3G)	Sports club (leased from Council)	One sport lit adult (Step hybrid pitch), three youth 11v11, one youth 9v9 two mini 7v7 and three mini 5v5 pitches. The adult pitch is standard quality, there are two standard and one poor quality youth 11v11 pitch overplayed accumulatively by 1.5 match equivalent sessions, one standard quality youth 9v9 played to capacity, two standard quality mini 7v7 pitches played to capacity at peak time and two good and one standard quality mini 5v5 pitch with actual spare capacity of 0.5 match equivalent sessions. Its main clubhouse for its senior teams is good quality, however, the ancillary facilities for its youth and mini teams is poor quality. There are aspirations to create a 3G pitch on the site.	Sustain good pitch quality with appropriate levels of maintenance. Monitor the utilisation and impact/success of the hybrid pitch. Improve standard and poor quality pitches with enhanced levels of maintenance. Explore the feasibility of improving the quality of ancillary provision for youth and mini teams. Ensure pitch and ancillary provision continues to meet the relevant requirement for the level of Step football being played on the site. In order to alleviate identified shortfalls, explore the feasibility of the site for 3G development.	Sports club FF CFA Council	Key centre	M	S - M	M - H	Protect Provide Enhance
32	Moore RUFC	WA4 6UU	Rugby union	Sports club	Two senior pitches one which is fully sports lit. The sports lit pitch has the quality rating of M1/D1 with the other pitch being M1/D2 quality. Pitches are accumulatively overplayed by 1.5 match equivalent sessions. Site is owned by Moore RUFC; the Club indicates ancillary facilities are of good quality but its clubhouse needs expanding in order to accommodate planned establishment of mini, junior and female sections. The Club also hopes to improve showers and boiler.	Improve levels of pitch maintenance in order to reduce identified overplay. Explore installing sports lights on the other pitch in order for competitive and training demand to be evenly dispersed. Explore the feasibility of enhancing changing provision in order to better	Sports club RFU	Local	M	M	L - M	Protect Enhance

**HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY**

Site ID	Site	Post code	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales ⁸	Cost ⁹	Aim
						accommodate mini, junior and female demand. Assist the Club in improving the quality of its boiler and showering facilities.						
36	Ormiston Bolingbroke Academy	WA7 6EP	Football	Academy	Three poor quality adult pitches which are overplayed by three match equivalent sessions through community, curricular and extracurricular demand. Pitches are used by Runcorn Sports FC and Beechwood JFC.	Improve pitch quality with an enhanced maintenance regime. Explore securing tenure for community users through a CUA.	Academy FF CFA	Local	M	S	L-M	Enhance Protect
38	Palace Fields Primary Academy	WA7 2QW	Football	Academy	One poor quality mini 7v7 pitch that is not available for community use.	Improve pitch quality as required to meet curricular and extra curricular demand.	Academy FF CFA	Local	L	L	L	Enhance
39	Pavilions Club	WA7 4EX	Disused (Football Rugby league)	Commercial	Former ICI Recreation Club site which accommodated one adult pitch (Step football), two adult and one senior rugby league pitch. The aforementioned provision was last marked circa 2012, however, the site has more recently (2016) had five mini 7v7 pitches marked on part of the playing field land. In 2017 a planning application (17/00468/FUL) was submitted to develop the site. This was eventually withdrawn after an appeal in January 2022.	Explore feasibility of bringing the playing field back into use given local shortfalls and ensure replacement provision is provided in line with national planning policy should a proposal come forward that will result in permanent loss.	Commercial FF CFA RFL Council SE	Local	M	S	M	Protect Provide
40	Pewithall Primary School	WA7 4XQ	Football	Education	One poor quality youth 11v11 pitch overmarked by one mini 7v7 and one mini 5v5 pitch. Youth 11v11 pitch is overplayed by 2.5 match equivalent sessions and the mini 7v7 pitch is overplayed by 1.5 match equivalent sessions. The mini 5v5 pitch is played to capacity.	Improve pitch quality as required to meet community, curricular and extra curricular demand.	Education FF CFA	Local	M	S-M	L	Enhance Protect
42	Runcorn Boys Club	WA7 5WN	Football	Sports club	One standard quality adult pitch that has actual spare capacity of 0.5 match equivalent sessions at peak time.	Sustain pitch quality with appropriate levels of maintenance. Utilise spare capacity to alleviate shortfalls and/or accommodate future demand.	Education FF CFA	Local	M	S	L	Protect
43	Runcorn Heath Playing Fields	WA7 4QR	Football (3G)	Council	Three adult and two youth 11v11 pitches that are all poor quality. The youth 11v11 pitches are overplayed by 0.5 match equivalent sessions whereas the adult pitches have actual spare capacity discounted due to quality issues. Due to its size the site has the potential to accommodate a 11v11 size 3G pitch.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced levels of maintenance. In order to alleviate identified shortfalls, explore the feasibility of the site for 3G development.	Council FF CFA	Local	M	S	L – M	Enhance Protect

**HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY**

Site ID	Site	Post code	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales ⁸	Cost ⁹	Aim
43	Runcorn Heath Playing Fields	WA7 4QR	Rugby league	Council	One good quality senior pitch has actual spare capacity at peak time amounting to 0.5 match equivalent sessions.	Sustain pitch quality with appropriate levels of maintenance. Utilise actual spare capacity to alleviate shortfalls and/or accommodate future demand.	Council RFL	Local	L	L	L	Protect
44	Runcorn Sports Club	WA7 4SD	Cricket	Sports club	One good quality square with 13 grass wickets. Spare capacity to accommodate additional Sunday fixtures and a small amount of capacity for Junior demand midweek. The Club reports aspirations for a NTP on its main square for both competitive and training purposes and refurbishment of existing NTP training facility. It has submitted a plan to extend and remodel its ancillary provision (23/00130/FUL)	Sustain square quality with appropriate levels of maintenance. Explore the feasibility of installing a NTP onsite. Assist the Club where possible with its ancillary and training provision plans.	Sports club ECB CCB	Local	M	S-M	M-H	Protect Provide Enhance
45	Sandymoor School	WA7 1QU	Football	Academy	One poor quality youth 11v11 pitch that is overplayed by one match equivalent session. Used by Beechwood JFC and Sandymoor JFC.	Improve pitch quality through an enhanced maintenance regime. Look to secure access for Sandymoor and Beechwood junior football clubs through a CUA.	Academy FF CFA Parish Council	Key centre	L	S - M	L	Protect Enhance
45	Sandymoor School	WA7 1QU	3G	Academy	One good quality small size floodlit 3G pitch (85x55) that is FA registered. The pitch is fully available for community use through a licence agreement with Sandymoor Parish Council.	Sustain pitch quality through appropriate levels of maintenance and ensure it remains on the FA register. Ensure the pitch is utilised as much as possible for both training and competitive demand. Ensure a pitch replacement fund is in place and where possible guarantee pricing keeps the provision accessible.	Academy FF CFA Parish Council	Key centre	L	S - M	L	Protect Enhance
48	St Chad's Catholic and Church Of England High School	WA7 5YH	Football	Education	Two poor quality youth 11v11 pitches that are played to capacity through curricular and extra curricular activity. Pitches are not available for community use.	Improve pitch quality as required to meet curricular and extra curricular demand.	Education FF CFA	Local	L	L	L	Enhance
49	St Clement's Catholic Primary School	WA7 4NX	Football	Education	One poor quality adult pitch that is played to capacity through community, curricular and extra curricular activity.	Improve pitch quality as required to meet curricular and extra curricular demand.	Education FF CFA	Local	L	S	L	Enhance
50	St Martin's Catholic Primary School	WA7 6HZ	Football	Education	One poor quality youth 9v9 pitch that is played to capacity through curricular and extra curricular activity. Pitch is not available for community use.	Improve pitch quality as required to meet curricular and extra curricular demand.	Education FF CFA	Local	L	L	L	Enhance

**HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY**

Site ID	Site	Post code	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales ⁸	Cost ⁹	Aim
51	St Mary's Church Of England Primary School	WA7 2NR	Football	Education	One poor quality mini 7v7 pitch that is not available for community use.	Improve pitch quality as required to meet curricular and extra curricular demand.	Education FF CFA	Local	L	L	L	Enhance
54	The Brow Community Primary School	WA7 2HB	Football	Education	One poor quality mini 5v5 pitch that is not available for community use.	Improve pitch quality as required to meet curricular and extra curricular demand.	Education FF CFA	Local	L	L	L	Enhance
55	The Heath School	WA7 4SY	Football	Academy	Two poor quality youth 11v11 pitches that are played to capacity through curricular and extra curricular activity. Pitches are not available for community use.	Improve pitch quality as required to meet curricular and extra curricular demand.	Education FF CFA EH	Key centre	L	L	L	Enhance
55	The Heath School	WA7 4SY	Hockey suitable AGP	Academy	One full size sports lit hockey suitable AGP that is available for community use. Runcorn HC currently rents the use of the pitch on an annual basis. It is considered to be poor quality as it has not been refurbished since installation in 2005, despite being deep cleaned 2019. Multiple fixtures a season are having to be postponed or cancelled due to the poor quality of the pitch and its issues of holding water.	As a priority, protect and refurbish the pitch as a hockey suitable surface. Look to secure tenure for Runcorn HC on the site. Ensure a sinking fund is in situ once refurbished.	Academy EH Sports club SE	Local	H	S	H	Enhance Protect
58	Westfield Primary School	WA7 4TR	Football	Education	One youth 9v9 and one mini 7v7 pitch both of which are poor quality. Spare capacity on the mini 7v7 is discounted due to quality and unsecure tenure. The youth 9v9 pitch is overplayed by 0.5 match equivalent sessions.	Improve pitch quality through an enhanced maintenance regime to better accommodate community, curricular and extracurricular.	Education FF CFA	Local	M	S	L	Enhance Protect
59	Weston County Primary School	WA7 4RA	Football	Education	One poor quality mini 7v7 pitch that is overplayed by 0.5 match equivalent sessions.	Improve pitch quality through an enhanced maintenance regime to better accommodate community, curricular and extracurricular.	Education FF CFA	Local	M	S	L	Enhance Protect
60	Weston Point Community Primary School	WA7 4EQ	Football	Education	One standard quality mini 7v7 pitch that has spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.	Improve pitch quality through an enhanced maintenance regime to better accommodate community, curricular and extracurricular.	Education FF CFA	Local	M	S	L	Enhance Protect
68	Queen Elizabeth II Playing Fields	WA7 2PG	Football (3G)	Council	One youth 11v11, one youth 9v9, one mini 7v7 and one mini 5v5 pitch all of which are standard quality. The youth 11v11 and mini 7v7 pitch are played to capacity at peak time. The youth 9v9 and mini 5v5 pitch both have spare capacity of 0.5 match equivalent sessions at peak time. All of the pitches suffer from waterlogging. Brookvale United FC has requested a lease for the site from the Council, reporting that if it is successful it would explore potential funding options to improve quality.	Sustain pitch quality through appropriate levels of maintenance. Utilise spare capacity to alleviate overplayed sites or to accommodate future demand. Explore the feasibility of giving long term tenure to Brookvale United FC as long as the agreement is agreeable for all stakeholders. Explore the feasibility of improving onsite ancillary provision.	Council FF CFA Sports club	Local	M	S - M	L - M	Protect Enhance

**HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY**

Site ID	Site	Post code	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales ⁸	Cost ⁹	Aim
					Onsite ancillary provision is standard quality albeit modernisation is required. Due to its size the site has the potential to accommodate a 11v11 size 3G pitch.	In order to alleviate identified shortfalls, explore the feasibility of the site for 3G development.						
71	Halton Baseball and Softball Club (John Mills Ballpark)	WA7 6GJ	Baseball / Softball	Sports club	One poor quality baseball diamond leased to Trojans Baseball Club. The Club aspires to have long term tenure of the site.	Assist the Club in securing long term tenure and improve the quality of the baseball diamond.	Council Sports club BSUK	Local	M	S	L-M	Protect Enhance
72	Runcorn Town FC (Pavilions Club)	WA7 4EX	Football	Commercial	One standard quality adult pitch with actual spare capacity at peak time of 0.5 match equivalent sessions. Used by Runcorn Town FC who play regional feeder league football which is one step below the non league pyramid.	Improve pitch quality with enhanced levels of maintenance. Ensure the site meets relevant ground grading requirements if the club were to be promoted.	Commercial FF CFA Sports club	Local	M	L	L	Enhance

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

WIDNES ANALYSIS AREA

Key recommendations

- ◆ To meet the future shortfalls, improve poor quality football pitches through enhanced levels of maintenance.
- ◆ Convert pitches to a more suitable pitch type to meet increases in demand such as adult to youth 11v11.
- ◆ Protect disused provision in accordance with NPPF and Sport England guidelines and examine the potential of reinstating provision to alleviate identified shortfalls.
- ◆ Look to secure permanent home venues with sufficient pitch and ancillary requirements to meet the demand for Widnes Moorfield Tigers ARLFC and Widnes St Maries Vikings ARLFC.
- ◆ Assist clubs in ancillary provision improvements where required.
- ◆ Examine securing tenure for clubs where not already apparent.
- ◆ Explore options to create at least two 11v11 size sports lit 3G pitches to alleviate identified shortfalls, examining the potential to make in WR compliant to alleviate grass pitch rugby union shortfalls.
- ◆ Explore options to create capacity to allow for future growth for Widnes CC.
- ◆ Look to improve the quality of pitches at Widnes RUFC and Prescot Road Playing Fields and install additional sports lighting in order to assist in reducing shortfalls.

Site ID	Site	Post code	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales ¹⁰	Cost ¹¹	Aim
1	Arley Drive Playing Fields	WA8 4XS	Football	Council	Two standard quality youth 9v9 pitches which are played to capacity at peak time.	Improve pitch quality with enhanced levels of maintenance.	Council FF LFA	Local	M	S	L	Protect Enhance
4	Birchfield Sports and Social Club	WA8 9ES	Disused (Rugby union Cricket)	Sports club	Site previously accommodated a six wicket grass square, one senior grass rugby union pitch and one adult football pitch (on cricket outfield). The provision was used by Birchfield Park CC and Birchfield RUFC until the sites closure in 2020. The football pitch was last actively marked circa 2017. In 2023 the accompanying ancillary provision were left derelict after an arson attack.	Explore feasibility of bringing the playing field back into use given local shortfalls and ensure replacement provision is provided in line with national planning policy should a proposal come forward that will result in permanent loss.	Sports club RFU Council	Local	H	L	L-H	Protect Enhance Provide
9	Cronton Sixth Form College	WA8 5WA	Football	Education	Two standard quality adult pitches that have spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.	Sustain quality with appropriate levels of maintenance and retain as current use.	Education FF LFA	Local	L	L	L	Protect
9	Cronton Sixth Form College	WA8 5WA	Cricket	Education	One standalone NTP that is poor quality and considered disused by the College.	Look to improve and retain as current use.	Education ECB CCB	Local	L	L	L	Protect
9	Cronton Sixth Form College	WA8 5WA	Rugby league	Education	One standard quality senior pitch that has spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure. Pitch is available for community use but is currently unused.	Sustain quality with appropriate levels of maintenance and retain as current use.	Education RFL	Local	L	L	L	Protect
10	Crow Wood Park	WA8 3LL	Football	Council	One poor quality adult pitch that is available for community use but currently unused. Spare capacity discounted due to pitch quality.	Improve pitch quality with enhanced levels of maintenance. Once pitch has improved in quality look to maximise community use.	Council FF LFA	Local	L	L	L	Protect Enhance
12	Ditton Primary School	WA8 7HD	Rugby league	Education	One poor quality primary rugby league pitch not available for community use.	Improve pitch quality as required to meet curricular and extracurricular demand.	Education RFL	Local	L	L	L	Protect Enhance

¹⁰ (S) -Short (1-2 years); (M) - Medium (3-5 years); (L) - Long (6+ years)

¹¹ (L) -Low - less than £50k; (M) -Medium - £50k-£250k; (H) -High £250k and above

**HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
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Site ID	Site	Post code	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales ¹⁰	Cost ¹¹	Aim
13	Frank Myler Pavilion	WA8 7EZ	Football	Council	Three adult, two youth 9v9, two mini 7v7 and three mini 5v5 pitches all of which are standard quality. The adult pitches have actual spare capacity of one match equivalent session, the mini 7v7 pitches have spare capacity of 0.5 match equivalent sessions and the mini 5v5 pitches have spare capacity of one match equivalent session. The youth 9v9 pitches are overplayed by one match equivalent session. There are aspirations to create a 11v11 size sports lit 3G pitch on the site.	Sustain pitch quality with appropriate levels of maintenance. Look to improve the quality of the youth 9v9 pitches to alleviate overplay. Utilise spare capacity to alleviate shortfalls and/or accommodate future demand. Explore the feasibility of creating a 11v11 size sports lit pitch on the site.	Council FF LFA	Key centre	H	S - M	H	Protect Provide Enhance
13	Frank Myler Pavilion	WA8 7EZ	Rugby league	Council	A poor quality senior rugby league pitch used occasionally by Widnes Moorfield Tigers ARLFC. Spare capacity discounted due to poor quality.	Improve pitch quality as required based on levels of demand using the provision. Ensure the pitch is retained as required to meet demand.	Council RFL	Key centre	M	S - M	L	Protect Enhance
18	Hale Park	L24 4AF	Disused (Football)	Council	The site previously accommodated one adult and one youth 11v11 pitch however it is now used as open green space.	Explore feasibility of bringing the playing field back into use given local shortfalls and ensure replacement provision is provided in line with national planning policy should a proposal come forward that will result in permanent loss.	FF LFA SE Council	Local	L	L	L	Protect
19	Halebank Recreation Ground	WA8 8UX	Football	Sports club (leased from Council)	One good quality adult pitch that has actual spare capacity of 0.5 match equivalent sessions at peak time.	Sustain pitch quality as appropriate to meet demand. Utilise spare capacity to alleviate shortfalls and/or accommodate future demand.	Sports club FF LFA	Local	L	L	L	Protect
26	Jaguar Land Rover Sports and Social Club	WA8 5AJ	Football	Commercial	One adult and one mini 5v5 pitch both of which are good quality. The adult pitch is played to capacity at peak time whereas the mini 5v5 pitch has actual spare capacity of 0.5 MES.	Sustain pitch quality with appropriate levels of maintenance. Look to utilise spare capacity for future demand and transfer of demand off overplayed sites.	Commercial FF LFA	Local	L	L	L	Protect
27	King George V Playing Fields (Widnes)	WA8 8DB	Football	Council	Two adult pitches, one youth 9v9, one mini 7v7 and one mini 5v5 pitches. All pitches are poor quality apart from the mini 5v5 pitch which is standard quality. The adult pitches are overplayed by two match equivalent session the youth 9v9 pitch is overplayed by two match equivalent sessions and the mini 7v7 pitch is overplayed by one match equivalent session. The mini 5v5 pitch is played to capacity at peak time. Pitches suffer from poor drainage and dog fouling. Widnes FC (Step club) has plans to obtain a long-term lease/freehold at the site in order to	Assist the Club with its plans to secure long term tenure and develop the site ensuring it benefits the wider community and addresses identified shortfalls. Ensure the site meets relevant requirements for Step football. Explore the feasibility of creating a 11v11 size sports lit pitch on the site, factoring in its availability for wider community use and not solely for Widnes FC.	Council FF LFA SE	Local	H	M	H	Protect Provide Enhance

**HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY**

Site ID	Site	Post code	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales ¹⁰	Cost ¹¹	Aim
					create its own home ground. It is in the process of resubmitting a planning application, after taking into consideration recommendations made from stakeholders. This includes creating two adult pitches, one of which would be a stadia pitch, two youth 9v9, two mini 7v7 and three mini 5v5 pitches to alleviate PPS shortfalls. The site would be accessible for the wider community. Due to its size the site has the potential to accommodate a 11v11 size 3G pitch.							
28	Leigh Recreation Playing Fields	WA8 7BG	Football	Council	Three adult and three youth 11v11 all of which are standard quality. The adult pitches have actual spare capacity at peak time of 0.5 match equivalent sessions whereas the youth 11v11 pitches are played to capacity at peak time. Due to its size the site has the potential to accommodate a 11v11 size 3G pitch.	Sustain pitch quality with appropriate levels of maintenance. Look to utilise spare capacity for future demand and transferal of demand off overplayed sites. Explore the feasibility of creating a 11v11 size sports lit pitch on the site.	Council FF LFA	Local	M	S - M	L - M	Protect Enhance Provide
33	Moorfield Primary School	WA8 3HJ	Rugby league	Education	One junior and one senior pitch both of which are poor quality. Pitches have been created to accommodate the demand from Widnes Moorfield Tigers ARLFC. Junior pitch is overplayed by one match equivalent sessions whereas the senior pitch is overplayed by two match equivalent sessions. The RFL has invested some monies to improve pitch quality. The Club does not have formal tenure and struggles to access relevant ancillary provision.	Improve pitch quality with enhanced levels of maintenance. Look to secure long term tenure on the site for the club in order to access relevant funding to improve access and quality of ancillary provision. Ensure access to relevant ancillary provision as soon as possible no matter if a wider development takes place.	Education RFL	Local	H	S	L - M	Protect Provide Enhance
34	Moorfield Sports and Social Club	WA8 3HQ	Disused (Football Rugby league Cricket)	Sports club	Site closed in 2021 previously accommodating two adult football pitches, a six wicket grass cricket square, two senior and two junior rugby league pitches in addition to a bowling green and relevant ancillary provision. Previously used by Moorfield U16s FC, Widnes Moorfield Tigers RLFC and Moorfield CC. The former Club has relocated to Frank Myler Pavilion. Moorfield CC has folded and Widnes Moorfield Tigers ARLFC now plays at Moorfield Primary School with some occasional use of Frank Myler Pavilion. In November 2023 a planning application was submitted (23/00459/FUL) for the development of the site.	Explore feasibility of bringing the playing field back into use given local shortfalls and ensure replacement provision is provided in line with national planning policy should a proposal come forward that will result in permanent loss.	Sports club FF LFA RLF ECB CCB SE Council	Local	H	L	L-H	Protect Enhance Provide

**HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY**

Site ID	Site	Post code	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales ¹⁰	Cost ¹¹	Aim
37	Ormiston Chadwick Academy	WA8 7HU	Football	Academy	One standard quality adult pitch that has spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.	Sustain pitch quality to better meet curricular and extra curricular demand.	Academy FF LFA	Local	L	L	L	Protect
37	Ormiston Chadwick Academy	WA8 7HU	3G	Academy	One 11v11 size sports lit 3G pitch that is standard quality having been built in 2017. Pitch is available for community use and is FA certified.	Sustain quality with appropriate levels of maintenance. Ensure there is a pitch replacement fund in place for the eventual refurbishment. Ensure the pitch remains community available and on the FA register.	Academy FF LFA	Local	L	L	L	Protect
37	Ormiston Chadwick Academy	WA8 7HU	Rugby league	Academy	One poor quality senior pitch that is played to capacity through curricular and extra curricular demand.	Improve pitch quality to better meet curricular and extra curricular demand.	Academy RFL	Local	L	L	L	Protect
41	Prescot Road Playing Fields	WA8 7PD	Football	Council	Two mini 7v7 and two mini 5v5 pitches all of which are poor quality. The mini 7v7 and mini 5v5 pitches are each overplayed by 0.5 match equivalent sessions. Pitches suffer from poor drainage, waterlogging and dog fouling.	Improve poor quality football and rugby union pitches with enhanced levels of maintenance. In the longer term, explore the feasibility of improving onsite drainage for both football and rugby union pitches.	Council Sports clubs FF LFA	Key centre	M - H	S - M	L- M	Protect Provide
41	Prescot Road Playing Fields	WA8 7PD	Rugby union	Sports club	Two poor quality senior pitches (M0/D0), one of which is sports lit. Widnes RUFC has a freehold of the pitches, which are overplayed by 0.75 match equivalent sessions. The pitches are only maintained to a basic level as the Club cannot fully access the site with its maintenance equipment.	Improve poor quality football and rugby union pitches with enhanced levels of maintenance. In the longer term, explore the feasibility of improving onsite drainage for both football and rugby union pitches. Explore options to improve access for maintenance equipment.	Council Sports clubs RFU	Key centre	M - H	S - M	L- M	Protect Provide
41	Prescot Road Playing Fields	WA8 7PD	Disused (Football)	Private	Prescot Road Playing Field currently is separated into three parcels of land which are under three separate tenures: the Council, Widnes RUFC and private ownership. The parcel of land which is owned by the Council, currently accommodates four mini pitches that are used by Pex Hill FC. The Club reports that it previously had access to an additional three youth 11v11 pitches at the site, before these were sold in 2013 from a private ownership to another to private owner. These are now considered disused. In January 2024 a planning application was submitted (24/00021/OUT) for the development of the disused area of the site.	An adult rugby pitch has been marked out and used during 2024 season, on the privately owned land, the owner is aware of this use. Explore feasibility of bringing the playing field back into use given local shortfalls and ensure replacement provision is provided in line with national planning policy should a proposal come forward that will result in permanent loss.	Sports club FF LFA RFU SE Council Private	Local	H	L	L-H	Protect Enhance Provide

**HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY**

Site ID	Site	Post code	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales ¹⁰	Cost ¹¹	Aim
46	DCBL Stadium Halton	WA8 7DZ	3G	Council	A good quality 11v11 size sports lit 3G pitch which FIFA/WR and RFL complaint. The pitch is primarily used by larger, semi professional or professional clubs, such as Widnes Vikings RLFC, Widnes FC and City of Liverpool FC, leaving availability limited for other community clubs. It is therefore considered unavailable.	Sustain pitch quality with appropriate levels of maintenance. Ensure a pitch replacement fund is in place for long-term sustainability. Explore options to open up the pitch for wider community access particularly for football and rugby league.	Council Sports club FF LFA RFL RFU	Key centre	H	S	L	Protect
52	St Michaels Catholic Primary School	WA8 8TD	Football	Education	One good quality adult pitch that is played to capacity. There is no actual spare capacity at peak time.	Sustain pitch quality with appropriate maintenance. Look to secure tenure for community users.	Education FF LFA	Local	L	S	L	Protect
53	St Peter & St Paul Catholic College	WA8 7DW	Football (3G)	Education	Two youth 11v11, one youth 9v9, two mini 7v7 and two mini 5v5 pitches all of which are standard quality. Pitches are used by Widnes FC. Due to its size the site has the potential to accommodate a 11v11 size 3G pitch.	Sustain pitch quality with an appropriate maintenance regime. Ensure Widnes FC has security of tenure on the sites pitches. Explore the feasibility of creating a 11v11 size sports lit pitch on the site for community use, not solely Widnes FC.	Education FF LFA	Local	L	L	L	Protect
53	St Peter & St Paul Catholic College	WA8 7DW	Rugby league	Education	Two standard quality senior pitches that have spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.	Sustain pitch quality and retain as current use.	Education RFL	Local	L	L	L	Protect
56	Wade Deacon High School	WA8 7TD	Football	Education	One youth 11v11 and one youth 9v9 pitch both of which are standard quality. Spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure. Issues with unauthorised access.	Sustain pitch quality with appropriate levels of maintenance. Council and FF/LFA need to engage with the School to ensure the existing CUA is being implemented.	Education FF LFA	Local	M	S	L	Protect Provide Enhance
56	Wade Deacon High School	WA8 7TD	3G	Education	One poor quality 11v11 size floodlit 3G pitch which was built in 2013. Pitch is not FA/FIFA certified. Pitch is unavailable at the weekend for community use which is a breach of an agreement made when it was constructed.	Improve through refurbishment. Ensure the pitch is retested FA/FIFA compliancy when appropriate. Ensure there is a pitch replacement fund in place. Examine why the pitch is unavailable at the weekend and look to re-establish community use within this time period.	Education FF LFA	Local	H	S	H	Protect Enhance
56	Wade Deacon High School	WA8 7TD	Rugby league	Education	Two poor quality senior pitches that are played to capacity through curricular and extra curricular usage.	Improve pitch quality to better sustain curricular and extra curricular usage.	Education RFL	Local	L	S	L	Protect Enhance
61	Widnes Cricket Club	WA8 9LA	Cricket	Sports club	One good quality square with 14 grass wickets accompanied by an NTP. Site is owned by Widnes CC, with the Club exploring options to improve outfield drainage, upgrade its practice facilities and enhance its clubhouse provision. It needs access to additional provision for future demand.	Sustain square quality with appropriate levels of maintenance. Explore greater utilisation of onsite NTP to create more capacity. Assist the Club in providing improving the quality of training	Sports club ECB CCB	Local	M	S	L - M	Protect Enhance

**HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY**

Site ID	Site	Post code	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales ¹⁰	Cost ¹¹	Aim
						provision, outfield drainage and ancillary facilities.						
63	Widnes RUFC	WA8 7NU	Rugby union	Sports club	Two senior rugby union pitches, one of which is sports lit. The pitches are accumulatively overplayed by 2.5 match equivalent sessions. Both onsite pitches have ineffective drainage systems, causing significant waterlogging issues. Ancillary facilities on site are good quality although the car park needs refurbishment.	Improve pitch quality with enhanced levels of maintenance. Ensure issues with waterlogging are resolved. Once pitches at Prescott Road Playing Fields have improved in quality, look at dispersing demand equally across all pitches to minimise overplay. Assist the Club in improving the surface of its carpark.	Sports club RFU	Local	M	M	M - H	Protect Provide Enhance
65	Wilmere Lane Playing Fields	WA8 5UW	Football (3G)	Sports club (leased from the Council)	One adult, two youth 11v11, one youth 9v9, one mini 7v7, one mini 5v5 pitch all of which are good quality. The adult, mini 5v5, youth 11v11 pitches each have spare capacity of one match equivalent sessions whereas the mini 7v7 pitch has spare capacity of 0.5 match equivalent sessions. The youth 9v9 pitch has not spare capacity at peak time. Due to its size the site has the potential to accommodate a 11v11 size 3G pitch.	Sustain pitch quality with appropriate levels of maintenance. Look to utilise spare capacity to alleviate shortfalls and/or accommodate future demand. Ensure ancillary provision is readily available for all community users. Explore the feasibility of creating a 11v11 size sports lit pitch on the site.	Sports club FF LFA	Key centre	M	L	L	Protect Provide
65	Wilmere Lane Playing Fields	WA8 5UW	Rugby league (3G)	Sports club (leased from the Council)	Three senior, two junior and three primary pitches all of which are good quality. The senior pitches have an actual spare capacity of 1.5 match equivalent sessions, whereas the other pitch types are played to capacity at peak time. Site is leased to Halton Farnworth Hornets ARLFC. One of the senior pitches is also used for rugby union (Birchfield RUFC). Due to its size the site has the potential to accommodate a 11v11 size 3G pitch.	Sustain pitch quality with appropriate levels of maintenance. Look to utilise spare capacity to alleviate shortfalls and/or accommodate future demand. Ensure ancillary provision is readily available for all community users. Explore options to increase the number of changing rooms to better accommodate women and girls demand. Continue to support the requirements for Birchfield RUFC until it a long term home site can be found. Explore the feasibility of creating a 11v11 size sports lit pitch on the site.	Sports club RL RFU	Key centre	M	L	L	Protect Provide
65	Wilmere Lane Playing Fields	WA8 5UW	Rugby union	Sports club (leased from the Council)	One rugby union pitch which is overmarked onto a senior rugby league pitch. Use by Birchfield RUFC.	Continue to support the requirements for Birchfield RUFC until it a long term home site can be found.	Sports club RFU RL	Key centre	M	L	L	Protect Provide

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Site ID	Site	Post code	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales ¹⁰	Cost ¹¹	Aim
70	Ted Gleave Sports Ground	WA8 0PZ	Rugby league	Sports club (leased from the Council)	One senior and one junior pitch both of which are standard quality with the former pitch fully sports lit. The senior pitch is played to capacity whereas the junior pitch is overplayed by 3.75 match equivalent sessions. Site is leased to West Bank Bears ARLFC which has plans to expand its current clubhouse and storage. The Club has plans to complete sport lighting on its pitch to allow all year use which could lead to quality deterioration.	Assist the Club in improving pitch quality through enhanced levels of maintenance. Assist the Club in creating additional pitches or facilitate access to alternative provision in order to alleviate overplay. Assist the Club with its ancillary provision plans. Explore utilising RFL compliant 3G provision, such as DCBL Stadium, to negate increased pitch usage.	Sports club RFL	Local	H	S - M	L - M	Enhance Provide
73	FPA Sports Hub	L24 4AF	Football	Council	Two mini 7v7 pitches, one of which is standard and the other is poor quality, and three mini 5v5 pitches with one food, one standard and one poor quality. There is no spare capacity at peak time. Used by FGS and FPA football clubs.	Improve pitch quality with enhanced levels of maintenance. Ensure ancillary provision is of suitable quantity/quality to meet demand.	Council FF LFA	Local	M	S - M	L - M	Protect Enhance

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

PART 12: HOUSING SCENARIOS

The original PPS provided an estimate of demand for pitch sport based on population forecasts and club consultation to 2037 (in line with the emerging Delivery and Allocation Local Plan period). This future demand was translated into teams likely to be generated, rather than actual pitch provision required. The Sport England Playing Pitch Calculator (PPC) adds to this, updating the likely demand generated for pitch sports based on housing increases and converts the demand into MES and the number of pitches required. It also gives the associated costs of supplying the increased pitch provision. The PPC splits the total pitch requirement into natural turf pitches to meet peak period demand, artificial grass pitches to meet training demand, and the additional number of changing rooms required to support the new demand.

The scenarios below are examples of how the PPC can be used in order to understand the potential additional demand for pitch sports from housing growth in addition to potential associated costs. It is recommended that the Council work with Sport England to develop a process and guidance to obtain developer contributions from single or cumulative housing developments.

Scenarios one and two are based on a specific number of dwellings where the additional population is not known. These use an occupancy rate of 2.4 people per dwelling to estimate what the likely resident population will be:

- ◀ **Scenario One** - additional demand for pitch sports generated from housing growth from 350 dwellings (the yearly requirement identified in the Local Plan but only applied to a single year for this scenario).
- ◀ **Scenario Two** - additional demand for pitch sports generated from housing growth from 484 dwellings (a “real world” example linked to the development of West of Hale Gate Rd).
- ◀ **Scenario Three** - additional demand for pitch sports generated from housing growth covering the entire Local Plan period (2021-2037). Total an additional population of 6,018.

It should be noted that these are the same scenarios in the original PPS, however, updates in costings and participation have been made to provide revised figures. The figures from 2020 have been included in the relevant tables for comparison.

Scenario One

The estimated additional population derived from housing growth from 350 dwellings with an occupancy rate of 2.4 per household is 840 people. Based on 2024 demand figures population increases equates to accumulated one MES of demand per week for football, rugby union and rugby league. This is an increase from the original figure of 0.87 MES, with the growth mainly coming from youth and mini football demand.

In comparison demand for AGPs for hockey and cricket have marginally decreased from 0.03 to 0.02 MES and 1.02 to 0.88 a season, respectively.

Training demand equates to 1.72 hours of use per week for football on 3G pitches which has risen from 1.5 hours. The remaining training demand requirements are broadly the same with some minor decreases for hockey (AGP) and rugby union (sports lit grass pitch).

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

Table 12.1: Likely demand for grass pitch sports generated from 350 dwellings

Pitch sport	Estimated demand by sport for 350 dwellings	
	Match demand (MES) per week ¹²	Training demand ¹³
2020		
Adult football	0.13	1.50 hours
Youth football	0.31	As above
Mini soccer	0.30	As above
Rugby union	0.04	0.04 MES
Rugby league	0.09	0.10 MES
Adult hockey	0.02	0.05 hours
Junior & mixed hockey	0.01	0.01 hours
Cricket	1.02	-
2024		
Adult football	0.10	1.72 hours
Youth football	0.44	As above
Mini soccer	0.32	As above
Rugby union	0.05	0.05 MES
Rugby league	0.09	0.10 MES
Adult hockey	0.01	0.04 hours
Junior & mixed hockey	0.01	0.01 hours
Cricket	0.88	-

The table below translates estimated demand into new pitch provision with associated capital and lifestyle costs. These are based on Sport England Facilities Costs (Third Quarter 2023).

Table 12.2: Estimated demand and costs for new pitch provision

Pitch type	Estimated demand and costs for new pitches			Changing rooms	
	Number of pitches to meet demand	Capital cost	Lifecycle Cost (per annum)	Number	Capital cost
2020					
Adult football	0.13	£13,029	£2,749	0.27	£44,950
Youth football	0.31	£24,660	£5,179	0.39	£65,781
Mini soccer	0.30	£7,468	£1,568	0	£0
Rugby union	0.04	£5,672	£1,214	0.08	£13,978
Rugby league	0.09	£9,867	£2,181	0.18	£29,601
Cricket	0.02	£6,227	£1,258	0.04	£7,283
Sand based AGPs	0	£3,297	£102	0.01	£1,370
3G	0.04	£38,609	£1,458	0.08	£13,387
Total	0.89 / 0.04	£108,829	£15,709	1.05	£176,350
2024					
Adult football	0.10	£10,789	£2,126	0.20	£38,499
Youth football	0.44	£39,470	£7,973	0.57	£110,824
Mini soccer	0.32	£9,490	£1,879	0.00	£0

¹² As per the PPS Guidance, demand for cricket is considered in terms of match equivalent sessions per season rather than per week.

¹³ Hours equate to access to a 11v11 size sports lit 3G pitch or hockey suitable AGP

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

Pitch type	Estimated demand and costs for new pitches			Changing rooms	
	Number of pitches to meet demand	Capital cost	Lifecycle Cost (per annum)	Number	Capital cost
Rugby union	0.05	£8,209	£1,519	0.10	£19,527
Rugby league	0.09	£12,203	£2,258	0.17	£33,033
Cricket	0.02	£6,695	£1,232	0.04	£7,617
Sand based AGPs	0	£2,813	£73	0.01	£1,162
3G	0.05	£51,178	£1,551	0.09	£17,620
Total	1.06¹⁴ / 0.05	£140,847	£18,847	1.17	£228,283

As seen in the table above there have been increases in all aspects using 2024 demand data, particularly surrounding costs, with this being said the small amount of additional demand generated suggests improvements to existing sites within the locality may be required rather than new provision.

Scenario Two

The estimated additional population derived from housing growth from 484 dwellings with an occupancy rate of 2.4 per household is 1,162 people. Similar to the previous scenario, using up to date figures there overall increase for football, rugby union and rugby league match demand (1.22 MES to 1.38 MES). In comparison match demand for AGPs for hockey (0.03 MES) has remained the same whereas cricket has marginally decreased from 1.42 to 1.22.02 MES a season.

Training demand equates to 2.38 hours of use per week for football on 3G pitches which has risen from 2.08 hours. The remaining training demand requirements are broadly the same with some minor decreases for hockey (AGP) and rugby union (sports lit grass pitch).

Table 12.3: Likely demand for grass pitch sports generated from 484 dwellings

Pitch sport	Estimated demand by sport for 484 dwellings	
	Match demand (MES) per week ¹⁵	Training demand ¹⁶
2020		
Adult football	0.18	2.08 hours
Youth football	0.44	As above
Mini soccer	0.42	As above
Rugby union	0.06	0.06 MES
Rugby league	0.12	0.14 MES
Adult hockey	0.02	0.07 hours
Junior & mixed hockey	0.01	0.01 hours
Cricket	1.42	-
2024		
Adult football	0.14	2.38 hours
Youth football	0.61	As above
Mini soccer	0.44	As above

¹⁴ Grass pitches / Artificial provision

¹⁵ As per the PPS Guidance, demand for cricket is considered in terms of match equivalent sessions per season rather than per week.

¹⁶ Hours equate to access to a 11v11 size sports lit 3G pitch or hockey suitable AGP

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

Pitch sport	Estimated demand by sport for 484 dwellings	
	Match demand (MES) per week ¹⁵	Training demand ¹⁶
Rugby union	0.07	0.07 MES
Rugby league	0.12	0.14 MES
Adult hockey	0.02	0.05 hours
Junior & mixed hockey	0.01	0.01 hours
Cricket	1.22	-

The table below translates estimated demand into new pitch provision with associated capital and lifestyle costs. These are based on Sport England Facilities Costs (Third Quarter 2023).

Table 12.4: Estimated demand and costs for new pitch provision

Pitch type	Estimated demand and costs for new pitches			Changing rooms	
	Number of pitches to meet demand	Capital cost	Lifecycle Cost (per annum)	Number	Capital cost
2020					
Adult football	0.18	£18,024	£3,803	0.37	£62,181
Youth football	0.44	£34,113	£7,164	0.54	£90,997
Mini soccer	0.42	£10,331	£2,169	0	£0
Rugby union	0.06	£7,847	£1,679	0.11	£19,337
Rugby league	0.12	£13,650	£3,017	0.24	£40,949
Cricket	0.03	£8,615	£1,740	0.06	£10,075
Sand based AGPs	0.01	£4,561	£141	0.01	£1,896
3G	0.05	£53,409	£2,016	0.11	£18,519
Total	1.25 / 0.06	£150,550	£21,729	1.44	£243,954
2024					
Adult football	0.14	£14,920	£2,939	0.27	£53,238
Youth football	0.61	£54,592	£11,028	0.79	£153,305
Mini soccer	0.44	£13,125	£2,599	0.00	£0
Rugby union	0.07	£11,353	£2,100	0.14	£27,006
Rugby league	0.12	£16,877	£3,122	0.24	£45,685
Cricket	0.03	£9,260	£1,704	0.05	£10,535
Sand based AGPs	0	£3,890	£101	0.01	£1,607
3G	0.07	£70,783	£2,145	0.13	£24,370
Total	1.41¹⁷ / 0.07	£194,800	£25,738	1.63	£315,747

Again, as seen in the table above there have been increases in all aspects using 2024 demand data, particularly surrounding costs, with this being said the small amount of additional demand generated suggests improvements to existing sites within the locality may be required rather than new provision.

¹⁷ Grass pitches / Artificial provision

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

Scenario Three

The estimated additional demand derived from an increase of 6,018 in the population equates to 7.14 MES of demand per week for football, rugby union and rugby league an increase from 6.13 in 2020. Similar to the previous two scenarios match demand for AGPs for hockey and cricket has marginally decreased.

Training demand equates to 12.34 hours of use per week for football on 3G pitches which has risen from 10.78 hours. The remaining training demand requirements are broadly the same with some minor decreases for hockey (AGP) and rugby union (sports lit grass pitch).

Table 12.5: Likely demand for grass pitch sports generated from 6,018 population increase

Pitch sport	Estimated demand by sport for 6,018 population increase	
	Match demand (MES) per week ¹⁸	Training demand ¹⁹
2020		
Adult football	0.95	10.78 hours
Youth football	2.25	As above
Mini soccer	2.18	As above
Rugby union	0.30	0.31 MES
Rugby league	0.63	0.74 MES
Adult hockey	0.12	0.35 hours
Junior & mixed hockey	0.05	0.06 hours
Cricket	7.34	-
2024		
Adult football	0.71	12.34 hours
Youth football	3.17	As above
Mini soccer	2.29	As above
Rugby union	0.36	0.39 MES
Rugby league	0.61	0.72 MES
Adult hockey	0.09	0.26 hours
Junior & mixed hockey	0.02	0.04 hours
Cricket	6.31	-

The table below translates estimated demand into new pitch provision with associated capital and lifestyle costs.

Table 12.6: Estimated demand and costs for new pitch provision

Pitch type	Estimated demand and costs for new pitches			Changing rooms	
	Number of pitches to meet demand	Capital cost	Lifecycle Cost (per annum)	Number	Capital cost
2020					
Adult football	0.95	£93,344	£19,696	1.9	£322,036
Youth football	2.25	£176,670	£37,101	2.79	£471,272
Mini soccer	2.18	£53,502	£11,235	0	£0

¹⁸ As per the PPS Guidance, demand for cricket is considered in terms of match equivalent sessions per season rather than per week.

¹⁹ Hours equate to access to a 11v11 sports lit 3G pitch or hockey suitable AGP

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

Pitch type	Estimated demand and costs for new pitches			Changing rooms	
	Number of pitches to meet demand	Capital cost	Lifecycle Cost (per annum)	Number	Capital cost
Rugby union	0.3	£40,639	£8,697	0.59	£100,145
Rugby league	0.63	£70,691	£15,623	1.25	£212,072
Cricket	0.15	£44,615	£9,012	0.31	£52,177
Sand based AGPs	0.03	£23,621	£732	0.06	£9,818
3G	0.28	£276,604	£10,443	0.57	£95,908
Total	6.78 / 0.33	£779,685	£112,539	7.47	£1,263,428
2024					
Adult football	0.71	£77,290	£15,226	1.42	£275,785
Youth football	3.17	£282,758	£57,117	4.09	£794,079
Mini soccer	2.29	£67,974	£13,459	0.00	£0
Rugby union	0.36	£58,810	£10,880	0.72	£139,897
Rugby league	0.61	£87,427	£16,174	1.22	£236,655
Cricket	0.14	£47,965	£8,826	0.28	£54,569
Sand based AGPs	0.02	£20,148	£524	0.04	£8,324
3G	0.32	£366,612	£11,109	0.65	£126,224
Total	7.28²⁰ / 0.35	£1,008,984	£133,315	8.42	£1,635,532

Comparable to the other scenarios there has been a small increase in the number of grass pitches and artificial provision required to meet the potential increase of 6,018 people, however, the costs have significantly increase within the same timeframe.

Conclusions

For scenarios One and Two, the tables above show that through housing growth, demand will be generated for each pitch sport to a lesser or greater extent. It is unlikely there will be a requirement for new provision. Instead, as the demand generated from the housing growth does not equate to a whole pitch for any of the sports, contributions would be better focused on improving existing sites to increase capacity to an appropriate level. The PPS and in particular the Action Plan, as well as future consultation with NGBs, should be used to inform this (e.g. to select suitable sites).

Scenario Three indicates that, over the course of the Local Plan period, housing growth will result in increased demand equating to the need for three youth and two mini football pitches. In addition, there is demand generated for other pitch sport types which indicate improvements to existing pitches are required. Whilst this initially seems substantial, it must be noted that these figures are based upon the whole of Halton and account for the entire period of the local plan development. In reality, the requirements will be staggered, with existing provision able to meet some if not all of the needs when developments are considered on a case-by-case basis. This would be achieved through contributions being directed towards improvements rather than new provision.

²⁰ Grass pitches / Artificial provision

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

Experience shows that only significantly large housing sites are likely to generate demand for new provision to be created in their own right, however, the scenarios above do show the progression and that the cumulative impact of development on existing pitch provision needs to be taken into account. Where new pitches are required, consideration should be given to providing multi-pitch sites with suitable ancillary provision, including appropriate clubhouse/changing facilities and car parking. Single pitch sites which have been provided traditionally by developers are not considered to offer long-term sustainability. As such, if numerous developments in an area warrant new pitch provision, consideration should be given to pooling resources to create one larger site, rather than numerous smaller sites.

It is strongly recommended the Council work with Sport England to develop a process and guidance to calculate and obtain developer contributions.

REPORT TO:	Executive Board
DATE:	24 October 2024
REPORTING OFFICER:	Chief Executive – Halton Housing
PORTFOLIO:	Climate Change
SUBJECT:	Halton Housing Annual Report
WARD(S)	Borough wide

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 This report provides an update on Halton Housing’s activities since the last report to Executive Board on the 19th October 2023.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION:**

That the report be noted.

3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 Sam Scott, Group Chief Executive, will attend the meeting to present the report. He will be accompanied by other members of the Halton Housing Executive Team and Board.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no policy implications arising from this report.

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 None identified.

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

6.1 **Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence**

A quality, affordable, and safe home plays a key part in the health of individuals.

6.2 **Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy**

Halton Housing is an active developer of new homes within the Borough. It is also a member of the Runcorn Town Board and is actively involved in the regeneration of Runcorn town centre.

6.3 **Supporting Children, Young People and Families**

Halton Housing homes are allocated to people who cannot purchase their own home or rent from the private sector.

6.4 **Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need**

Halton Housing works in partnership with others to address inequality continue including working with charities, community groups and partners to support initiatives such as the school uniform campaign and local food banks.

6.5 **Working Towards a Greener Future**

Halton Housing successfully delivered its first on site retro fit project on time to budget which has improved the EPC rating of the homes D to A.

6.6 **Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community**

Halton Housing supports the Council to create thriving neighbourhoods, and tackle issues that matter such as anti-social behaviour.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 Regular meetings between the Halton Housing and the Council take place to discuss a range of issues and to explore risks.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 None identified.

9.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 None identified.

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

10.1 None under the meaning of the Act.



Annual Report to HBC Executive Board

October 2024

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The operating environment in which we are working is increasingly challenging. The Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 is a new law aimed at improving services to customers. It is the most significant change to social housing regulation in a decade.
- 1.2 Our three-year Corporate Plan outlines our commitment to our customers and the wider borough. Our purpose at HH is “improving people’s lives.” We want to provide customers with a safe place to call home, and the opportunity to lead happier, healthier, and more fulfilled lives.
- 1.3 Our key achievements for 2023/24 include.
- We designed, developed, and implemented a new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, customer portal and a Customer Support Hub.
 - As a part of the new Customer Support Hub structure, we have introduced a central complaint handling team.
 - The Listen, Learn, Act tracker has been implemented, capturing learning from complaints and customer feedback surveys.
 - Repairs service delivery is improving, the number of jobs completed in target time has increased and average repair wait times have reduced. Initiatives to improve repairs service delivery and overall satisfaction continue remain our key focus in 2024/25.
 - As members of the Safer Halton Partnership group and alongside, Halton Borough Council, Cheshire Police, and other key stakeholders, we have attended a series of workshops to develop the Safer Halton Partnership strategy 2024 – 2027.
 - We had our third In Depth Assessment (IDA) and maintained our G1/V2 rating from the Regulator.
 - We continue to deliver the development programme that we set out for the three-year plan. In total, 309 homes (44% of the programme) have been delivered and 66 homes (9% of the programme) are currently on site.

- 1.4 Our Tenant Satisfaction Measures results for 2023/24 are telling us that most of our customers are satisfied with the overall service that we provide to them, feel safe in their homes and feel that they are treated fairly and with respect. We need to continue to improve repairs and maintenance of our homes, how well we handle complaints and reports of anti-social behaviour.

- 1.5 We cannot deliver on our objectives alone and will need rely on the support of key partners. Likewise key partners will need to rely on us to deliver their objectives. We need to be clear on what our strategic partnerships are, their purpose, expected outcomes and who is taking the lead role in developing each relationship.

2. Introduction

- 1.6 The operating environment in which we are working is increasingly challenging. The Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 is a new law aimed at improving services to customers. It is the most significant change to social housing regulation in a decade.
- 1.7 The Act aims to improve the regulation of social housing by introducing new consumer standards and giving the government power to require landlords to investigate and rectify serious health hazards. It also removes the 'serious detriment' test, allowing the Regulator of Social Housing to take action against landlords before people are at risk. The Act emphasizes tenants' rights and sets clear expectations for landlords to deliver quality housing services.
- 1.8 The Act brings forward the following ground-breaking changes:
- Strengthening the Regulator of Social Housing to carry out regular inspections of the largest social housing providers and the power to issue unlimited fines to social landlords
 - Additional Housing Ombudsman powers to publish best practice guidance to landlords following investigations into tenant complaints
 - Powers to set strict time limits for social landlords to address hazards such as damp and mould
 - New qualification requirements for social housing managers
 - Introducing stronger economic powers to follow inappropriate money transactions outside of the sector.

3. Corporate Plan 2022 to 2025

- 3.1 Our three-year Corporate Plan outlines our commitment to our customers and the wider borough. Our purpose at HH is “improving people’s lives.” We want to provide customers with a safe place to call home, and the opportunity to lead happier, healthier, and more fulfilled lives.

3.2 Our five themes are summarised below:

1. **Customer:** Customers are our priority. By listening and being easy to deal with, we will support them to make a success of living in their home.
2. **Homes:** Our homes will be safe, warm, and secure, supported by a reliable repairs service. Using innovation, we will make homes as efficient as possible and minimise our carbon footprint.
3. **Place:** Working with customers we will create thriving neighbourhoods, and tackle issues that matter. Working with partners, we will create opportunities that improve our customers' health and wellbeing.
4. **Business:** We will run our business well, providing best value for money for customers. Our social purpose remains at our heart. Our services will be delivered by engaged and empowered colleagues.
5. **Development:** As a key developer in the borough, working with partners, we will build homes across the whole range of tenures, to meet the needs of people at all stages of life.

3.3 For more information about our Corporate Plan 2022 to 2025 use the link in Appendix 1.1: <https://www.haltonhousing.co.uk/about-us/corporate-plan>.

4. Key Achievements 2023/24

4.1 Customer

- We designed, developed, and implemented a new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system & customer portal.
- We designed and developed a Customer Support Hub to provide all inbound and outbound customer contact services to support the delivery of a more holistic, customer focussed, effective and efficient repairs and maintenance service.
- As a part of the new Customer Support Hub structure, we have introduced a central complaint handling team. The purpose of this new team is to improve the quality and consistency of complaint handling.
- The Listen, Learn, Act tracker has been implemented, capturing learning from complaints and customer feedback surveys. The key themes and area

of focus are improved repairs service delivery and improved communication around repairs.

- A dedicated learning from complaints page has been created on the website and was also featured in the Autumn REACH magazine.
- The Welfare Benefits and Money Advice team have secured over £1.6m of additional income for customers which will help them to maintain their tenancies.

4.2 Homes

- Repairs service delivery is improving, the number of jobs completed in target time has increased and average repair wait times have reduced. Initiatives to improve repairs service delivery and overall satisfaction continue remain our key focus in 2024/25.
- We successfully completed a large capital programme at The Common, improving pathways, fencing and green spaces.
- Work has commenced on our property 'MOT' to target 'outlier' customers and properties (customers who report repairs frequently, and those who we have little engagement with us).
- Successful delivery of our first on site retro fit project on time to budget which has improved the EPC rating of the homes D to A.

4.3 Place

- As part of our 'Spruce up your Streets' campaign we delivered 19 local events
- As members of the Safer Halton Partnership group and alongside, Halton Borough Council, Cheshire Police, and other key stakeholders, we have attended a series of workshops to develop the Safer Halton Partnership strategy 2024 – 2027. The strategy identifies nine areas of priority for the borough with Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) the top priority identified.
- We are working on a more targeted ASB communications plan that is insight led and targets areas where there are both higher and lower than average levels of ASB reported.

- The 'Big Halton Forest' initiative has commenced with the first tree planted and a pledge to plant 2500 trees in Halton in 2024.
- The newly relaunched 'HH Connect' newsletter reaffirmed our commitment to partnership working providing an update on key development projects and community initiatives as well as a dedicated feature on Property Pool Plus, Liverpool City Region's (LCR) common housing allocations scheme that HBC operates, and we are contracted to administer on its behalf.
- We used £45k of our hardship fund during the year to support vulnerable customers with food and fuel poverty or sudden financial shocks.
- Several initiatives where we are working in partnership with others to address inequality continue including working with charities, community groups and partners to support initiatives such as the school uniform campaign and local food banks.
- Represented on the One Halton and Health and Wellbeing boards; Working with HBC's health improvement team on affordable warmth and fall prevention initiatives specifically targeted at over 65's in the borough; Working with several organisations to support the "Healthy Homes" initiative with resource, data and insight; Partnered with HBC as part of our Destination Upton programme delivering a range of initiatives from sporting sessions to digital skills workshops.
- We lead the Halton Housing Partnership.
- We partnered with HBC's Halton People into Jobs.
- The helping hands budget has supported eight community projects with £10k of funding.

4.4 Business

- We continue to offer channels to hear the voice of our employees including undertaking a wellbeing survey. The survey has resulted in HBC providing health checks and trainings based on employee demand.
- We retained IIP Gold status following a successful review with no further recommendations.
- We celebrated National Apprenticeship week with our 12 Apprentices.

- We had our third In Depth Assessment (IDA) and maintained our G1/V2 rating from the Regulator.

4.5 Development

- We continue to deliver the programme that we set out for the three-year plan. In total, 309 homes (44% of the programme) have been delivered and 66 homes (9% of the programme) are currently on site.
- Our pipeline remains active with 270 homes (38% of the programme) across eight potential schemes. In the year 95 homes were delivered against a target of 70.
- Sales of shared ownership properties continues to be buoyant, and values are more than values budgeted.
- We secured and contracted our first social rent allocation on a new build scheme at High Street, Runcorn

5. Tenant Satisfaction Measures

5.1 Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM's) are a new way for social housing tenants to understand how their landlord is performing against key service areas.

5.2 The TSM's were introduced by the Regulator of Social Housing in April 2023 for all social housing providers. There are 22 measures covering areas like repairs, safety and complaints. 12 of these measures come directly from customer feedback surveys.

5.3 Our TSM results for 2023/24, published on our website here [Tenant Satisfaction Measures | Halton Housing](#), are telling us that most of our customers are satisfied with the overall service that we provide to them, feel safe in their homes and feel that they are treated fairly and with respect.

5.4 We know from our TSM results and our own internal performance metrics that we need to continue to improve repairs and maintenance of our homes, how well we handle complaints and reports of anti-social behaviour.

6. Main Challenges

6.1 Our main challenges include:

- Increasing number of customer complaints
- Increased media spotlight and general negative sentiment around the sector
- Changing consumer regulatory framework
- Increasing legislation
- Continued budget pressures across repairs and maintenance, asset management and customer safety.
- Increased focus on property condition and understanding our homes.
- Systems and processes being fit for purpose to support colleagues.
- Impact of the cost of living and the increasing demand for crisis support.
- Low levels of customer engagement with community initiatives.
- Increased need for partnership working to develop a more joined up approach to tackling neighbourhood issues.
- Identifying a solid pipeline of development schemes at an affordable cost
- Construction market and contractor solvency
- Talent retention in competitive markets both inside and outside of sector
- Continuing data quality focus across all areas of the business to increase data confidence.

7. Key Priorities

7.1 Our key priorities over the 2024/25 include:

- Improve our customers' experience by building on our strengths and tackling recurring and consistent themes driving dissatisfaction e.g., Repairs, Communication, ASB.
- Improve the level of customer engagement to set the foundations for a more impactful, representative, and diverse approach. Our aim is to be able to measure and evidence the difference that our engagement activity is making to the decisions we make and the services we deliver. A move towards a more contemporary customer engagement model is proposed.

- Improve the standard of our homes. To do this we will adopt a fresh approach to asset investment and planning and create additional financial capacity to enable us to invest more.
- Improve the standard of our existing neighbourhoods as places to live. To do this we will develop a prioritised Regeneration and Placemaking Plan to deliver physical improvements across our neighbourhoods and schemes.
- Maintain the G1 / V2 status, remain financially strong and comply with all legal and regulatory standards. We will strive to achieve our lifeblood measure targets whilst continuing to effectively deliver business as usual activity.
- Increase our profile, reputation, and influence in our unique and core areas of activity and expertise. Re-positioning Halton's profile will help secure existing partnerships and attract new ones by developing an authentic reputation around our core purpose activities.
- Be an exemplary employer by developing a competitive employee offer and engendering a positive and proactive workplace culture.
- Develop (or confirm) a longer-term ambition for Halton Housing

7.2 The delivery of a number of these objectives will require additional investment of some kind. We need to create additional financial capacity to meet this requirement and to ensure we have the financial resilience in the event of future economic shocks.

7.3 We cannot deliver on our objectives alone and will need rely on the support of key partners. Likewise key partners will need to rely on HH to deliver their objectives. We need to be clear on what our strategic partnerships are, their purpose, expected outcomes and who is taking the lead role in developing each relationship.

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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