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Halton Borough Council

Southern Widnes

Draft Supplementary Planning Document

Statement of Consultation

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 Under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 it is a requirement to prepare and publish a Consultation Statement for a range of planning policy documents, including Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). This is a reflection of Government's desire to "strengthen community and stakeholder involvement in the development of local communities".
- 1.2 This Consultation Statement is being made available during the formal period of public consultation, alongside the draft SPD and the Sustainability Appraisal Report, in accordance with Regulation 17 (1) of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004.

2 Stakeholder Consultation

- 2.1 Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report consultation
Waterman Environmental were appointed by Halton Borough Council to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy. As Southern Widnes was recognised as one of the key focal points for regeneration and development within the Regeneration Strategy, it was considered that the SA Framework developed for the Regeneration Strategy remains applicable to the SA of the Southern Widnes SPD.
- 2.2 Consultation on the key issues and SA objectives that emerged from both the existing context of the Southern Widnes area and the proposals of the Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy were undertaken in July 2007 with English Heritage, Natural England, and the Environment Agency to confirm that they were in agreement with the findings of the initial stages, and to provide an opportunity to suggest changes to the assessment. Consultation with these bodies is a legal requirement, however, a wider group of stakeholders were also included in the SA Scoping Report consultation. The comments and responses can be found in Appendix C of the Southern Widnes SA.
- 2.3 Stakeholder consultation
The stakeholder consultation took place between 17th December 2008 and 12th January 2009. During this time key stakeholders in the purpose of the Southern Widnes SPD were asked to comment on the appropriateness of the document's content prior to the formal consultation process. A summary list of consultees can be found at the end of this report.

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- 2.5 Comments received and the resulting responses and amendments to the draft SPD are contained in the following table:

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Consultee	Date of response	Reference	Comments	Response
Cllr Hodgkinson Deputy Leader Liberal Democrat Group	07/01/09	Para's 2.7 - 2.9	Reference is made to unnecessary /redundant pieces of highway structures. The link between Watkinson Way and the Silver Jubilee Bridge and the existing Ditton flyover will clearly need to be removed. However other roads are described as redundant without any evidence being provided to support this view. A traffic model is available to test different scenarios and should be used. This should give guidance on journey times and distances. We are concerned that benefits to through traffic seem to be at the expense of local people wishing to travel between West Runcorn and the A562 to Liverpool, for example. The traffic model needs to provide information to alleviate these concerns and test the impact of proposals to build 4,000 dwellings in the Runcorn Dock area for example.	The de-linking proposals in the draft SPD are based on the current Mersey Gateway Scheme, which were in turn considered by the Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy agreed by the Executive Board in June 2008.
Cllr Hodgkinson Deputy Leader Liberal Democrat Group	07/01/09	Para 2.15 Objective 1	West Bank already has excellent access to the region's principal conurbations and infrastructure north of the River Mersey. The opening of a direct link from Waterloo Road to the SJB will provide this excellent access in a southerly direction. The removal of the Ditton Flyover is an integral part of the Mersey Gateway project but further downgrading of Queensway will worsen the northerly links for both West Bank and West Runcorn.	The de-linking proposals in the draft SPD are based on the current Mersey Gateway Scheme, which were in turn considered by the Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy agreed by the Executive Board in June 2008.
Cllr Hodgkinson Deputy Leader Liberal Democrat Group	07/01/09	Para 4.6	Local links across the SJB are only frustrated at peak hours by congestion and not by traffic speed	Accepted - text amended.

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Consultee	Date of response	Reference	Comments	Response
Cllr Hodgkinson Deputy Leader Liberal Democrat Group	07/01/09	Para 5.24 HS7, 5.31 and 6.9.	Queensway should be downgraded to its 1975 form. Any further downgrading will be extremely expensive and disruptive to this important local route. The estimated cost of highway works is £57 million excluding contingencies and fees and the disruption has not been quantified. The grade separated link between the SJB and Waterloo Road is safer than an at grade junction for cyclists and pedestrians. The local people who currently cross the SJB to use the services in Widnes West Bank area and Runcorn Town Centre will use other centres which do not involve crossing the River Mersey after years of disruption and the need to pay toll charges.	The de-linking proposals in the draft Supplementary Planning Document are based on the current Mersey Gateway Scheme, which were in turn considered by the Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy agreed by the Executive Board in June 2008.
Cllr Hodgkinson Deputy Leader Liberal Democrat Group	07/01/09	Para 6.1	The estimated cost of the favoured option for West Bank is £347 million. Even at the estimated land values at the beginning of 2008, we consider these proposals are unrealistic.	Noted
Cllr Hodgkinson Deputy Leader Liberal Democrat Group	07/01/09	Para 6.5	It is unclear how the changes on Victoria Road will improve linkages for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists.	This is an aspiration at this stage. This would be a matter for detailed design
Cllr Hodgkinson Deputy Leader Liberal Democrat Group	07/01/09	Para 6.11	Queensway in West Bank has never been a residential road (para. 6.11) and should not be converted into one. It was purpose built to provide a good link between Runcorn and both Widnes and the Speke Road to Liverpool, which was opened 5 years after the SJB. The objective of the proposals should be to bring the older areas of Runcorn and Widnes closer together. This link needs to be a reasonable standard to provide that function.	Text amended

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Consultee	Date of response	Reference	Comments	Response
Cheshire County Council	09/01/09	General	<p>This document would benefit from an introductory section on the history and context of Southern Widnes, as included in the Runcorn Town Centre draft SPD.</p> <p>We suggest that the Widnes and Farnworth Archaeological Assessment in the Cheshire Historic Towns Survey is used as an information source for this section and is referenced in the document. This document provides a detailed history of Widnes and the surrounding area, and can be found on Cheshire County Council's website at: http://www.cheshire.gov.uk/Planning/Regenerationresources/Historic/NHE_Historic_Halton.htm</p>	Accepted - introductory historic section added in section 2.
Cheshire County Council	09/01/09	Planning Policy Context	This section outlines the relevant policies in the UDP. It includes some built historic environment policies but omits those relevant to archaeology (BE5 and BE6). These are especially relevant as the West Bank area of Widnes is included in the Area of Archaeological Potential identified in the town in the Cheshire Historic Towns Survey.	Accepted - additional policy references included.
Cheshire County Council	09/01/09	Development Principles	The development proposals for the Catalyst Centre and West Bank Existing Residential sub areas are appropriate as they recognise the historical elements of the area and seek to preserve and enhance these features.	No further action required.
Cheshire County Council	09/01/09	Development Principles	The boundaries of the character areas as shown on Fig 5.1 do not correspond to the boundaries of the regeneration action areas shown on figures 1.1 and 4.1, as they stretch south to the bank of the Mersey.	Boundaries amended as discussed on plans - note that there is a difference between the Policy RG1 Regeneration Action Area boundary and the SPD boundary.
Cheshire County Council	09/01/09	Development Principles	The inclusion of a map after the description of each area, as in the Runcorn Town Centre SPD, would help to identify which areas are under discussion.	Site references included as appropriate - maps provided in chapter 6

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Consultee	Date of response	Reference	Comments	Response
Cheshire County Council	09/01/09	Delivery & Development Control Matters	The Area of Archaeological Potential defined by the Cheshire Historic Towns Survey covers the West Bank Area of Widnes. This designation is based on the fact that the area includes sites that were occupied before the industrialisation of the area during the 19 th century. In addition, the area contains a variety of industrial remains, evidence for which survives both above and below ground. Any such remains could be damaged or destroyed by new development	Accepted - additional reference included.
Cheshire County Council	09/01/09	Delivery & Development Control Matters - 6.31	The requirement in paragraph 6.31 for the preparation of an archaeological assessment to accompany planning applications that affect areas of archaeological interest and the implementation of appropriate mitigation strategies, where required, prior to the start of development work, represents an appropriate strategy.	No further action required.
Cheshire County Council	09/01/09	Delivery & Development Control Matters	The completion of an archaeological assessment and, if appropriate, a programme of field evaluation prior to the determination of a planning application is important as it allows the need, if any, for further archaeological mitigation to be established at any early stage. Any further archaeological mitigation (excavation, watching brief, etc) may then be secured by an appropriately-worded condition. It is, of course, possible that pre-determination assessment and evaluation will demonstrate that further archaeological mitigation would not be appropriate, in which case this will have been established at an early stage in the development process and no further work will be required.	Accepted - additional detail to be included in section 8.
Environment Agency	12/01/09	Planning Policy Context	We note that there is no reference to National and Regional Planning Policy within the SPD. To be a robust document reference should be made to all levels of planning policy. Nationally, we would recommend reference be made to PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development, PPS 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation, PPS23: Planning and Pollution Control and PPS25: Development and Flood Risk.	Accepted- additional national and regional policy details included in section 4.

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Consultee	Date of response	Reference	Comments	Response
Environment Agency	12/01/09	Planning Policy Context	Areas of the SPD are located within flood zones 2 and 3 on the Environment Agency Flood Maps and within the Halton Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (Map 1). We therefore recommend that reference is made to Policy PR16 - Development And Flood Risk, of the Halton UDP within Planning Policy Context. The SPD should also make reference the Halton Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, which was adopted October 2007.	Accepted - policy reference to be added.
Environment Agency	12/01/09	Planning Policy Context	We would recommend that due to areas of historic landfill (notably at Ditton Road, ICI Coal Stockyard, Spike Island) and possible historic contaminative land-use of the SPD area that reference is made to Policy PR14 Contaminated Land, of the Halton UDP.	Accepted - policy reference to be added.
Environment Agency	12/01/09	Flood Risk	There is little mention of flood risk as a constraint within the document. Our Flood Maps show much of the area within Flood Zone 2 and 3 (medium and high probability of flooding). PPS25 requires flood risk to be taken into account at all stages in the planning process and ensure inappropriate development is directed away from areas at high risk of flooding. We would recommend that flood risk be discussed in more detail within the SPD.	Additional details and requirements included.
Environment Agency	12/01/09	Flood Risk	While the SPD states on page 2 that ' <i>... these policies do not allocate individual sites for specific land-uses...</i> ', we note that the document discusses potential residential development in areas that could fall within Flood Zone 3. Table D.2 of PPS25 states that residential developments are classified as more vulnerable to flood risk. Therefore, in accordance with Table D.3 of PPS25, the exception test will need to be demonstrated and passed for residential proposals. For mixed use development a sequential approach should be made where only part of the site is located within flood zone 2 & 3, ensuring more vulnerable classes of development are steered away from areas of higher risk of flooding. We would object to any planning applications proposing inappropriate development within flood zone 2 & 3.	Accepted - further details included.

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Consultee	Date of response	Reference	Comments	Response
Environment Agency	12/01/09	Flood Risk	We welcome the inclusion within paragraph 6.28 that Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems can be used to ' <i>...restrict surface water run-off to existing rates or better...</i> '. This should be expanded to explain that surface water run-off rates from greenfield sites should be restricted to greenfield rates (including making allowances for climate change).	Accepted - further details included.
Environment Agency	12/01/09	Objectives	We welcome the inclusion of bringing back contaminated land in the West Bank of South Widnes (Priority Regeneration Objective 3 – Development and Economic Prosperity). However, in light of the constraints noted within the document (paragraph 6.18, pg 47) and within this letter we would advise an objective that aims to ' <i>... provide appropriate development that fully mitigates all environmental constraints including landscaping, contamination, noise, air quality, water quality, flooding, and visual impacts...</i> ' be included within the document.	Accepted - additional objective added.
Environment Agency	12/01/09	Objectives	We would also welcome greater emphasis to be placed on greenspace and the ecological and recreational benefits that appropriate landscaping can achieve (such as the creation green networks and the expansion and improvement of existing green spaces).	Reference made

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- 2.6 A summary list of those consulted as part of the Stakeholder Consultation for the draft Southern Widnes SPD is given below.

Southern Widnes SPD Consultees
Arriva North West & Wales
Bridgewater Canal
British Waterways
C/O St Modwens Developments Ltd
Cheshire Area Health Authority
Cheshire Police
Cheshire Wildlife Trust
Chester & Halton Community NHS Trust
DLA Piper
English Partnerships
English Partnerships Regional Office
Environment Agency
Fire Officer (Warrington)
Giffords
Government Office North West
Groundwork Mersey Valley
Halton & St Helens Primary Care Trust
Halton Borough Council Councillors
Halton Borough Transport
Halton Chamber of Commerce
Halton Community Transport
Halton General Hospital Trust
Halton Housing Trust
Halton LSP
Health & Safety Executive
Home Builders Federation
M Farrow - Conservation Officer (CCC)
M Leah - Archaeological Officer (CCC)
Merseytravel
Natural England
Network Rail
North West Water Ltd
Peel Holdings Ltd
Sankey Canal Restoration Society
Taylor Woodrow Developments Ltd
Taylor Young
The Inland Waterways Association
Urban Splash

- 2.7 In addition to the above stakeholders, relevant Halton Borough Council Officers were also consulted. These comments have been taken into consideration in the drafting of the Southern Widnes SPD. Officer's comments and responses are available upon request.