

Halton Local Plan 2014- 2037; Revised Delivery and Allocations Local Plan Habitats Regulations Assessment, incorporating Main Modifications

Halton Borough Council

November 2021

Quality information

Prepared by

Isla Hoffmann Heap
Consultant Ecologist

Damiano Weitowitz
Consultant Ecologist

Checked by

James Riley
Technical Director

Approved by

James Riley
Technical Director

Revision History

Revision	Revision date	Details	Authorized	Name	Position
0	04/12/2017	Draft for MEAS JR Review		James Riley	Associate Director
1	09/07/2019	Draft revision in response to policy and site allocation updates to the Halton Local Plan	JR	James Riley	Technical Director
2	24/07/2020	Draft revision in response to Natural England consultation and client comments	JR	James Riley	Technical Director

Prepared for:

Halton Borough Council

Prepared by:

AECOM Limited
Midpoint, Alencon Link
Basingstoke
Hampshire RG21 7PP
United Kingdom

T: +44(0)1256 310200
aecom.com

Limitations

AECOM Limited ("AECOM") has prepared this Report for the sole use of Halton Borough Council ("Client") in accordance with the terms and conditions of appointment. No other warranty, expressed or implied, is made as to the professional advice included in this Report or any other services provided by AECOM. This Report may not be relied upon by any other party without the prior and express written agreement of AECOM.

Where any conclusions and recommendations contained in this Report are based upon information provided by others, it has been assumed that all relevant information has been provided by those parties and that such information is accurate. Any such information obtained by AECOM has not been independently verified by AECOM, unless otherwise stated in the Report. AECOM accepts no liability for any inaccurate conclusions, assumptions or actions taken resulting from any inaccurate information supplied to AECOM from others.

The methodology adopted and the sources of information used by AECOM in providing its services are outlined in this Report. The work described in this Report was undertaken between August 2017 and December 2017 and is based on the conditions encountered and the information available during the said period of time. The scope of this Report and the services are accordingly factually limited by these circumstances. AECOM disclaim any undertaking or obligation to advise any person of any change in any matter affecting the Report, which may come or be brought to AECOM's attention after the date of the Report.

Copyright

© 2021 AECOM Limited. All Rights Reserved.

This document has been prepared by AECOM Limited ("AECOM") for sole use of our client (the "Client") in accordance with generally accepted consultancy principles, the budget for fees and the terms of reference agreed between AECOM and the Client. Any information provided by third parties and referred to herein has not been checked or verified by AECOM, unless otherwise expressly stated in the document. No third party may rely upon this document without the prior and express written agreement of AECOM.

Table of Contents

1.	Background	7
	Introduction.....	7
	Halton's Delivery and Allocations Local Plan (incorporating Partial Review of the Core Strategy)	7
	Legislative Context.....	7
	This Report.....	8
	Quality Assurance	8
2.	Methodology.....	9
	Introduction.....	9
	A Proportionate Assessment.....	9
	The Process of HRA	10
	HRA Task 1 – Test of Likely Significant Effect (TOLSE)	10
	HRA Task 2 – Appropriate Assessment (AA)	11
	HRA Task 3 – Avoidance and Mitigation	12
	Geographic Scope of the HRA.....	12
	The 'in combination' Scope	14
	Projects	14
	Plans	14
3.	Pathways of Impact.....	17
	Introduction.....	17
	Loss of Functionally Linked Land.....	17
	Visual and Noise Disturbance	17
	Recreational Pressure.....	19
	Breeding Birds.....	19
	Non-Breeding Birds.....	19
	Mechanical/Abrasive Damage and Nutrient Enrichment	20
	Water Quality and Resources	21
	Atmospheric Pollution	24
4.	Test of Likely Significant Effects (TOLSE) Summary	28
	Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar.....	28
	Loss of Functionally Linked Land.....	28
	Visual and noise disturbance	29
	Recreational pressure	30
	Water Quality.....	31
	Atmospheric Pollution	32
	Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar.....	33
	Recreational Pressure.....	33
	Water Quality.....	33
	Manchester Mosses SAC.....	33
	Atmospheric Pollution	33
	Oak Mere SAC	34
	Atmospheric Pollution	34
	River Dee and Bala Lake SAC.....	34
	Water Resources.....	34
	Sefton Coast SAC	35
	Recreational Pressure.....	35
	Atmospheric Pollution	35
	Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar and SAC	36
	Recreational Pressure.....	36
	Atmospheric Pollution	36
	Water Quality and Resources	37

Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar	37
Recreational Pressure.....	37
Water Quality.....	38
Liverpool Bay SPA	38
Water Quality.....	38
Recreational Pressure.....	39
River Eden SAC	39
Water Resources.....	39
5. Appropriate Assessment	40
Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar.....	40
Recap of Likely Significant Effects	41
Loss of Functionally Linked Land.....	41
Visual and noise disturbance	47
Recreational Pressure.....	50
In-combination Assessment	51
Water Quality.....	56
Atmospheric Pollution	57
Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar.....	58
Recap of Likely Significant Effects	59
Recreational Pressure.....	59
Water Quality.....	60
Conclusion.....	61
Manchester Mosses SAC.....	61
Recap of Likely Significant Effects	61
Atmospheric Pollution	62
Sefton Coast SAC	65
Recap of Likely Significant Effects	65
Recreational Pressure.....	65
Atmospheric Pollution	68
Conclusion.....	69
Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar and SAC	70
Recap of Likely Significant Effects	70
Recreational Pressure.....	70
Atmospheric Pollution	71
Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar	71
Recap of Likely Significant Effects	72
Recreational Pressure.....	72
Water Quality.....	74
Conclusion.....	75
Liverpool Bay SPA	75
Recap of Likely Significant Effects	76
Water Quality.....	76
Recreational Pressure.....	78
Conclusion.....	79
6. Key Conclusions and Recommendations	80
Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar.....	80
Loss of functionally linked land	80
Visual and noise disturbance	81
Recreational pressure	82
Water quality and resources	83
Manchester Mosses SAC.....	84

Atmospheric Pollution	84
Dee Estuary SPA / Ramsar / SAC.....	85
Recreational Pressure.....	85
Appendix A Figures	86
Appendix B Relevant European Sites	88
Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar	88
Mersey Narrows & North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar	89
Manchester Mosses SAC.....	91
Oak Mere SAC	92
River Dee & Bala Lake SAC	93
Sefton Coast SAC	93
Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar and SAC	95
Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar	98
Liverpool Bay SPA	101
River Eden SAC	104
Appendix C Test of Likely Significant Effects for Halton's Revised Core Strategy Policies	106
Appendix D Test of Likely Significant Effects of Halton's Delivery and Allocations Local Plan.....	127
Appendix E Test of Likely Significant Effects of Halton's Site Allocations.....	195

Figures

Figure 1. The legislative basis for Appropriate Assessment	8
Figure 2: Areas of water stress within England.	24
Figure 3: Traffic contribution to concentrations of pollutants at different distances from a road (Source: DfT)	27

Tables

Table 1: Geographic scope of the HRA.....	12
Table 2: Housing to be delivered within Merseyside under most recent published proposals (housing numbers are subject to change)	16
Table 3: Main sources and effects of air pollutants on habitats and species	25

Appendix Figures

Appendix A1: Halton Borough in relation to the relevant European Sites in the Merseyside region. ...	86
Appendix A2: Residential and employment site allocations in Halton Borough detailed in the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan.	86
Appendix A3: Zoomed view of the residential and employment site allocations in the western part of Halton Borough near the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar.	86

1. Background

Introduction

- 1.1 Halton's Local Plan Core Strategy was developed in 2012 and 2013 and AECOM undertook an HRA, including an Appropriate Assessment, of that Core Strategy. That document was consulted upon with Natural England and Countryside Council for Wales (now Natural Resources Wales). Halton's Core Strategy was then formally adopted in 2013.
- 1.2 Considering changes to government policies and spatial strategies (detailed below), Halton Borough Council (hereafter referred to as "the Council") is now updating their strategy. AECOM has been appointed by the Council to assist in undertaking a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the potential effects of the Halton Local Plan 2014-2037: Delivery Allocations Local Plan, incorporating a partial review of the Core Strategy (hereafter referred to as the "Plan"), on the Natura 2000 network and Ramsar sites.

Halton's Delivery and Allocations Local Plan (incorporating Partial Review of the Core Strategy)

- 1.3 Halton's Core Strategy Local Plan was adopted in April 2013. It sets out the spatial vision for the Borough of Halton to 2028. However, given the passage of time the Council are updating the Plan to ensure the Council can continue to supply land for development appropriately. Additionally, the Plan will consider how development issues are covered by existing Halton planning documents, how these fit in with the Government's national policy and guidance, and where there are opportunities to update existing planning policies to help achieve sustainable development.

Legislative Context

- 1.4 The need for an assessment of impacts on European sites is set out within Article 6 of the Habitats Directive, and transposed into UK law by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). The ultimate aim of the Habitats Directive is to "*maintain or restore, at favourable conservation status, natural habitats and species of wild fauna and flora of Community interest*" (Article 2(2)). This aim relates to habitats and species, not the European Sites themselves, although the European Sites have a significant role in delivering favourable conservation status.
- 1.5 The Habitats Directive applies the precautionary principle¹ to European Sites. Consent should only be granted for plans and projects once the relevant competent authority has ascertained that there will either be no likelihood of significant effects, or no adverse effect on the integrity of the European Site(s) in question. Where an Appropriate Assessment has been carried out and results in a negative impact, or if uncertainty remains over the significant effect, consent will only be granted if there are no alternative solutions and there are Imperative Reasons of Over-riding Public Interest (IROPI) for the development and compensatory measures have been secured.
- 1.6 To ascertain whether or not site integrity will be affected, an Appropriate Assessment should be undertaken of the plan or project in question. The competent authority is entitled to request the applicant to produce such information as the competent authority may reasonably require for the purposes of the assessment, or to enable it to determine whether an appropriate assessment is required. Figure 1 provides the legislative basis for an Appropriate Assessment.

¹ The Precautionary Principle, which is referenced in Article 191 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, has been defined by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2005) as: "*When human activities may lead to morally unacceptable harm [to the environment] that is scientifically plausible but uncertain, actions shall be taken to avoid or diminish that harm. The judgement of plausibility should be grounded in scientific analysis*".

Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)

The Regulations state that:

“A competent authority, before deciding to ... give any consent for a plan or project which is likely to have a significant effect on a European site ... must make an appropriate assessment of the implications for the plan or project in view of that site’s conservation objectives... The competent authority may agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site.”

Figure 1. The legislative basis for Appropriate Assessment

This Report

- 1.7 Chapter 2 of this report explains the methodology by which this HRA has been carried out, including the stages of Test of Likely Significant Effects (TOLSE) and Appropriate Assessment. In chapter 3 the relevant impact pathways are explored. Chapter 4 undertakes the Test of Likely Significant Effects, identifying the policies and allocations that are screened in for Appropriate Assessment. Chapter 5 undertakes Appropriate Assessment in relation to each identified European site. A summary of the main conclusions and recommendations is provided in chapter 6. Appendix B identifies and provides background on the relevant European sites that might be impacted by the Halton Local Plan.

Quality Assurance

- 1.8 This report was undertaken in line with AECOM's Integrated Management System (IMS). Our IMS places great emphasis on professionalism, technical excellence, quality, environmental and Health and Safety management. All staff members are committed to establishing and maintaining our certification to the international standards BS EN ISO 9001:2008 and 14001:2004 and BS OHSAS 18001:2007. In addition, our IMS requires careful selection and monitoring of the performance of all sub-consultants and contractors.
- 1.9 All AECOM Ecologists working on this project are members (at the appropriate level) of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) and follow their code of professional conduct (CIEEM, 2017).

2. Methodology

Introduction

- 2.1 This section sets out the approach and methodology for undertaking the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). HRA itself operates independently from the Planning Policy system, being a legal requirement of a discrete Statutory Instrument. Therefore, there is no direct relationship to the National Planning Policy Framework and the 'Tests of Soundness'.

A Proportionate Assessment

- 2.2 Project-related HRA often requires bespoke survey work and novel data generation in order to accurately determine the significance of effects. However, the draft Communities and Local Government (CLG) guidance makes it clear that when implementing HRA of land-use plans, the Appropriate Assessment (AA) should be undertaken at a level of detail that is appropriate and proportional to the level of detail provided within the plan itself:
- “The comprehensiveness of the [Appropriate] assessment work undertaken should be proportionate to the geographical scope of the option and the nature and extent of any effects identified. An AA need not be done in any more detail, or using more resources, than is useful for its purpose. It would be inappropriate and impracticable to assess the effects [of a strategic land use plan] in the degree of detail that would normally be required for the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of a project.”
 - More recently, the Court of Appeal² ruled that providing the Council (competent authority) was duly satisfied that proposed mitigation could be ‘achieved in practice’ to satisfy that the proposed development would have no adverse effect, then this would suffice. This ruling has since been applied to a planning permission (rather than a Local Plan)³. In this case the High Court ruled that for ‘a multistage process, so long as there is sufficient information at any particular stage to enable the authority to be satisfied that the proposed mitigation can be achieved in practice it is not necessary for all matters concerning mitigation to be fully resolved before a decision maker is able to conclude that a development will satisfy the requirements of Regulation 102 of the Habitats Regulations’.
- 2.3 In other words, there is a tacit acceptance that AA can be tiered and that all impacts are not necessarily appropriate for consideration to the same degree of detail at all tiers (Figure 1).
- 2.4 For a Local Plan the level of detail concerning the developments that will be delivered is usually insufficient to make a highly detailed assessment of significance of effects. For example, precise and full determination of the impacts and significant effects of a new settlement will require extensive details concerning the design of the new housing sites, including layout of greenspace and type of development to be delivered in particular locations, yet these data will not be decided until subsequent stages.
- 2.5 The most robust and defensible approach to the absence of fine grain detail at this level is to make use of the precautionary principle. In other words, the plan is never given the benefit of the doubt (within the limits of reasonableness); it must be assumed that a policy/measure is likely to have an impact leading to a significant adverse effect upon a European site unless it can be clearly established otherwise (such as through use of the source-pathway-receptor model to demonstrate no Likely Significant Effect).

² No Adastral New Town Ltd (NANT) v Suffolk Coastal District Council Court of Appeal, 17th February 2015

³ High Court case of R (Devon Wildlife Trust) v Teignbridge District Council, 28 July 2015

The Process of HRA

- 2.6 The HRA is being carried out in the continuing absence of formal central Government guidance. CLG released a consultation paper on AA of Plans in 2006. As yet, no further formal guidance has emerged from CLG. However, Natural England (NE) has produced its own informal internal guidance and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) has produced guidance for Welsh authorities on 'the appraisal of plans under the Habitats Regulations' as a separate guidance document aimed at complementing and supplementing the guidance/advice provided within Technical Advice Note 5: Nature Conservation and Planning (2009). Although there is no requirement for an HRA to follow either guidance, both have been referred to in producing this HRA.
- 2.7 There is essentially a four staged approach to HRA which constitutes a basic progression from step to step. However, it is quite usual for the process to be more iterative and cyclical, with each stage being fed back to the local authority to inform further amendments to the plan which are then re-assessed for implications on European sites. The following process has been adopted for carrying out the subsequent stages of the HRA.

HRA Task 1 – Test of Likely Significant Effect (TOLSE)

- 2.8 Following evidence gathering, the first stage of any Habitats Regulations Assessment is a Test of Likely Significant Effects (TOLSE) test. The essential question is:
- “Is the Plan, either alone or in combination with other relevant projects and plans, likely to result in a significant effect upon European sites?”*
- 2.9 The TOLSE is based on identification of the Source of impact, the Pathway of that impact that exists to Receptors and then confirmation of the specific European Site receptors. These are normally designated features but also include habitats and species fundamental to those designated features achieving favourable conservation status (notably functionally linked land outside the European site boundary). This consideration of functionally-linked land is in accordance with a 2018 ruling of the European Court of Justice⁴ which confirmed that an appropriate assessment must consider the interest features of European sites even where those features may be found outside the strict boundaries of those sites. The objective is to identify those plans, policies and projects that can, without any mitigation be said to result in no Likely Significant Effects upon European sites. This is usually because there is no pathway for an adverse interaction with European sites. This stage is undertaken in Appendix 1 and Chapter 4 of this report and is called the TOLSE.
- 2.10 In the Waddenzee case⁵, the European Court of Justice ruled on the interpretation of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, including that:
- An effect should be considered 'likely', *“if it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that it will have a significant effect on the site”* (para 44);
 - An effect should be considered 'significant', *“if it undermines the conservation objectives”* (para 48); and
 - Where a plan or project has an effect on a site *“but is not likely to undermine its conservation objectives, it cannot be considered likely to have a significant effect on the site concerned”* (para 47).
- 2.11 In evaluating significance, AECOM have relied on professional judgement as well as the results of previous stakeholder consultation (such as consultation responses from Natural England and the opinion of Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service) regarding development impacts on the European sites considered within this assessment.

⁴ Holohan et al vs. An Bord Pleanála (C-461/17)

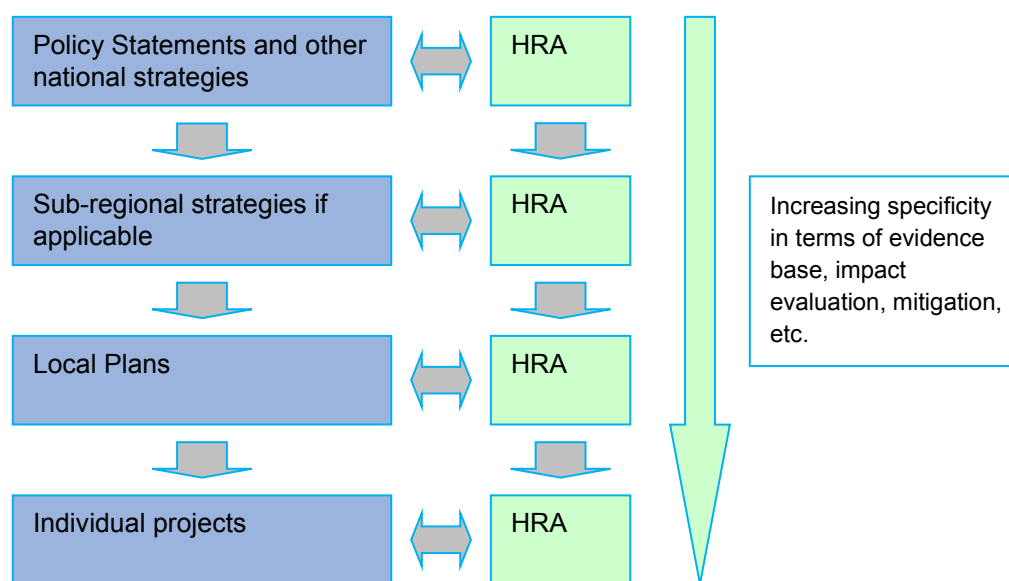
⁵ Case C-127/02

HRA Task 2 – Appropriate Assessment (AA)

- 2.12 Where it is determined that a conclusion of 'No Likely Significant Effect' cannot be drawn, the analysis has proceeded to the next stage of HRA known as Appropriate Assessment (Chapters 5 onwards). Case law has clarified that 'appropriate assessment' is not a technical term. In other words, there are no particular technical analyses, or level of technical analysis, that are classified by law as belonging to appropriate assessment.
- 2.13 In any Local Plan, there are numerous policies for which there is a limit to the degree of assessment that is possible at this plan level. This is because either:
- The policy in question does not contain any specifics as to what will be delivered or where so literally cannot be assessed in detail at the plan level. In these cases the appropriate assessment focusses on precautionary mitigation that can be included in the plan to ensure that whatever proposals come forward will not result in adverse effects on integrity; or
 - The nature of the potential impacts (notably lighting, noise and visual disturbance during construction, or loss of functionally-linked land) are very closely related to exactly how the development will be designed and constructed, or detailed development site-specific bird survey data, and therefore cannot be assessed in detail at the plan level. In these instances, the appropriate assessment focusses on the available mitigation measures, the extent to which such measures would be achievable and effective and whether an adequate protective framework exists to ensure that the policy would not lead to an adverse effect on the integrity of any internationally designated sites.
- 2.14 On these occasions the advice of Advocate-General Kokott⁶ is worth considering. She commented that: *'It would ...hardly be proper to require a greater level of detail in preceding plans [rather than planning applications] or the abolition of multi-stage planning and approval procedures so that the assessment of implications can be concentrated on one point in the procedure. Rather, adverse effects on areas of conservation must be assessed at every relevant stage of the procedure to the extent possible on the basis of the precision of the plan. This assessment is to be updated with increasing specificity in subsequent stages of the procedure'* [emphasis added]. This is the approach taken in the HRA and is in line with the Department of Communities and Local Government guidance and Court rulings that the level of detail of the assessment. This 'tiering' of assessment is summarised in Box 1.

⁶ Opinion of Advocate General Kokott, 9th June 2005, Case C-6/04. Commission of the European Communities v United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, paragraph 49
<http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?docid=58359&doclang=EN>

Box 1: Tiering in HRA of Land Use Plans



- 2.15 A 2018 decision by the European Court of Justice⁷, which concludes that measures intended to avoid or reduce the harmful effects of a proposed project on a European site, but which are not an integral part of the project or plan, may not be taken into account by competent authorities at the test of Likely Significant Effects. This revised HRA report takes that ruling into account.

HRA Task 3 – Avoidance and Mitigation

- 2.16 Following the appropriate assessment this report has, where necessary, recommended measures for incorporation into the Plan in order to avoid or mitigate adverse effects on European sites.
- 2.17 There is considerable precedent concerning the level of detail that a Local Plan document needs to contain regarding mitigation for recreational impacts on European sites. The implication of this precedent is that it is not necessary for all measures that will be deployed to be fully developed prior to adoption of the Plan, but the Plan must provide an adequate policy framework within which these measures can be delivered.

Geographic Scope of the HRA

- 2.18 The geographic scope of the HRA is as shown in Table 1. The location of these European Sites is illustrated in Appendix A. Note that the allocated sites and their boundaries shown in Appendix A are as they stood when the Submission Local Plan HRA was written.

Table 1: Geographic scope of the HRA

European site		Reason for inclusion
Mersey Estuary SPA & Ramsar Site		Located partly within Halton Borough.
Manchester Mosses SAC		Located adjacent to the M62 in Warrington and therefore potentially linked to growth in Halton through traffic movements
Oak Mere SAC		Located in Cheshire West & Chester immediately adjacent to the A54 and A49 and therefore potentially linked to growth in Halton through traffic movements.
River Dee & Bala Lake SAC		Identified as a source of potable water for Merseyside.

⁷ People Over Wind and Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta (C-323/17)

Sefton Coast SAC	Located within Merseyside, known to be subject to recreational pressures and with a Recreation Mitigation and Avoidance Strategy currently being developed.
Dee Estuary SAC SPA & Ramsar site	Downstream of the River Dee which is identified as a source of potable water for Merseyside.
Mersey Narrows & North Wirral Foreshore Ramsar and SPA	Located within Merseyside, with hydraulic connections to the River Mersey (within the Halton Borough Local Plan Area) and currently subject to recreational pressures.
Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar site	Located within Merseyside with hydraulic connections to the River Mersey (within the Halton Borough Local Plan Area) and currently subject to recreational pressures (coincident with Sefton Coast SAC in Merseyside and thus covered by the same emerging Recreation Mitigation and Avoidance Strategy).
Liverpool Bay SPA	Located immediately adjacent to Merseyside and is therefore a potential water quality pathway through sewage effluent discharges as well as disturbance.
River Eden SAC	Haweswater Lake (to which the River is hydrologically connected) is likely to form part of the future water supply for Merseyside.

2.19 The scoping process also evaluated whether pathways existed to the following European sites but it was concluded that they could be scoped out of consideration:

- **Rixton Clay Pits SAC** – This site is designated for its populations of great crested newts. The pits are not fed by ground water but by surface water. As such there is no realistic pathway present;
- **Midland Meres and Mosses Phase 1 & Phase 2 Ramsar site** - Located within 10km of Halton. Due to the distance of these sites from the borough, there are no realistic linking impact pathways to the environmental vulnerabilities of these sites (invasive non-native species and hydrological changes as a result of runoff.).
- **West Midlands Mosses SAC** – The site is potentially vulnerable to changes in air quality and is located close to the A49 and lies within 10km of Halton. However, the A49 is not a direct link between Halton and Cheshire and the site lies more than 200m from the A49 which is outside the core impact zone with regard to local air quality (see Chapter 3 for further discussion of this zone).
- **Rostherne Mere Ramsar site** – Located approximately 14km from the borough. The site is vulnerable to changes in hydrology as a result of agricultural runoff. Due to the distance involved, it is considered that there are no realistic impact pathways present.
- **Martin Mere SPA** - Located approximately 20km north of Halton. It is specifically geared towards attracting visitors and during discussion with Natural England it was agreed that recreation was sufficiently well managed on that site that an unmanageable increase in recreational pressure was not an issue. Any increases in use from the Halton Local Plan will therefore not lead to likely significant effects due to the low vulnerability of this site. The only potential linking impact pathway to the Plan would relate to renewable energy policies (e.g. provision of wind turbines), alone or in combination, which have the potential to affect flight paths of qualifying bird species. However, the Plan polices do not provide for renewable energy development, merely a development management policy relating to this type of development. As such there are no realistic linking impact pathways present.

2.20 Further details regarding the interest features and vulnerabilities of the European sites included within the scope of the HRA are given in the chapters for each European site.

2.21 All baseline data relating to these European Sites presented in subsequent Chapters of this Report is taken from Joint Nature Conservancy Council websites (JNCC) and Natural England conservation advice packages for the European sites, unless otherwise stated.

The 'in combination' Scope

- 2.22 It is a requirement of the Regulations that the impacts and effects of any land use plan being assessed are not considered in isolation but in combination with other plans and projects that may also be affecting the European site(s) in question. In practice, 'in combination assessment' is of greatest importance when the policy would otherwise be screened out because the individual contribution is inconsequential. It is neither practical nor necessary to assess the 'in combination' effects of the policy within the context of all other plans and projects within the region. It is important to avoid double-counting since projects that deliver housing and employment in Halton are part of the Halton Local Plan. In these instances, the development of a planning application essentially provides further detail on those aspects of Local Plan growth rather than presenting a new project.
- 2.23 Similarly, where housing and employment is being delivered in surrounding authorities this is captured in the in combination assessment through consideration of the relevant Local Plan that sets out the total amount of housing and employment growth that will be delivered across that authority during its plan period. Therefore, only projects other than those which deliver conventional housing or employment are identified in the 'projects' section below. The remainder (e.g. Liverpool Waters and Wirral Waters) are covered by the consideration of the relevant Local Plan listed in the 'plans' section below.

Projects

- Horizon Nuclear Power (proposed nuclear power site at Wylfa Newydd Project on Anglesey; application submitted April 2017, at Pre Examination in September 2018. In January 2019 it was confirmed that this project will be suspended indefinitely. Therefore, it is not assessed further in this report);
- Mersey Tidal Power - Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) approved £650,000 of funding to complete work on a business case for the proposed Mersey tidal energy project at a meeting held on July 27 2018;
- Keuper Gas Storage Project - underground Gas Storage Facility - up to 19 underground caverns, gas processing plant and associated development with capacity to store up to 500 standard million cubic meters (mcm) of natural gas, having an import and export capability of up to 34 mcm per day. It was granted development consent in 2017;
- A556 Knutsford to Bowden Scheme - Highway improvements including junction works and new road. To the northern end of the A556 are the communities of Altrincham, Bowdon and Hale, the latter being located in Halton Borough;
- Hydrodec Oil Re-Refinery Eastham - The construction of a new hazardous waste recovery facility at Power House Road, Eastham, Port Wirral, Merseyside comprising the construction and operation of a waste oil re-refining plant together with associated and ancillary development; and
- Alexandra Dock Biomass Project - New Biomass energy project (output of between 100 and 150MW)

Plans

- Liverpool John Lennon Airport Masterplan to 2050 (March 2018). This project constitutes part of the Halton Local Plan but the Masterplan provides considerably more detail on some issues than the Local Plan policy and it is therefore discussed in detail in the later chapters of this document;
- Mersey Ports Masterplan (Consultation draft; June 2011), including the Port expansion into Seaforth Nature Reserve and the Seaforth River Terminal (a deepwater container port expansion in Sefton is currently under construction and due for completion imminently), new opportunities for renewable energy, development of single and multi-user port centric warehousing and of new processing facilities for imported commodities, potentially leading to the Liverpool SuperPort – An integrated port, airport, intermodal terminal, freight and

commercial network based upon the Port of Liverpool, the Manchester Ship Canal, Liverpool John Lennon Airport and the Mersey Multimodal Gateway (Liverpool City Region);

- The Wales Spatial Plan (updated 2008);
- North West England & North Wales Shoreline Management Plan 2 (SMP 22 Great Ormes Head to Scotland) (2011), incorporating: Great Ormes Head to Formby Point Shoreline Management Plan, and Formby Point to River Wyre Shoreline Management Plan;
- Sefton Local Plan. Adopted April 2017;
- Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy. Adopted January 2016;
- Wirral Local Plan – emerging (this plan will include the strategic mixed used development known as Wirral Waters - a mixed use redevelopment of the area surrounding both West Float and East Float docks in Birkenhead, which obtained outline planning permission in 2012. The first stage in housing delivery, Wirral Waters One (500 dwellings), was granted detailed planning permission in 2018);
- St. Helens Local Plan Proposed Submission Version (currently going through Main Modifications);
- Flintshire Unitary Development Plan (adopted 2011) and Flintshire Local Development Plan (emerging);
- Denbighshire Local Development Plan (adopted 2013);
- Wrexham Local Plan (submission stage);
- Conwy Local Development Plan 2013;
- Joint Merseyside & Halton Waste Local Plan Adopted 2013;
- The Trafford Core Strategy (adopted 2012);
- Warrington Local Plan (in development);
- Greater Manchester Joint Waste Plan updated 2015;
- West Lancashire Local Plan Adopted 2013;
- Submitted Liverpool Local Plan 2018;
- Adopted Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan;
- Warrington Local Plan Core Strategy (adopted 2014);
- Part 1 North West River Basin District River Basin Management Plan (updated 2015);
- Alt / Crossens Catchment Flood Management Plan (adopted 2009); and
- United Utilities Water Resources Management Plan 2015.

2.24 The Liverpool City Region now has a combined authority and that authority has published a number of plans of its own. These include a Construction Action Plan (2018-2020), a Skills & Investment Statement (2018/19), a Skills Strategy (2018-2030), an Apprenticeship Growth Plan (2018-20), an Employability Action Plan, a Low Carbon Action Plan, an Advanced Manufacturing Action Plan, a Visitor Economy Action Plan, a Visitor Economy Strategy and Destination Management Plan, a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (2018-2028), a Long-Term Rail Strategy, a Local Journeys Strategy, a Transport Plan for Growth, a Road Safety Strategy and a Single Growth Strategy. It must also be noted that the various Liverpool City Region Local Plans are part of the mechanism by which the Mayor's strategic objectives will be delivered and therefore it is important not to double-count impacts.

2.25 In practice, in combination assessment is of greatest relevance when the plan would otherwise be screened out because its individual contribution is inconsequential. For the purposes of this assessment, we have determined that, due to the nature of the identified impacts, the key other plans and projects relate to the additional housing and commercial / industrial allocations proposed for other Merseyside authorities over the lifetime of Halton's Local Plan (Table 2).

Table 2: Housing to be delivered within Merseyside under most recent published proposals (housing numbers are subject to change)

Local Authority	Annual housing average	Total housing
Liverpool	1,480	34,780 (2013-2033) ⁸
Knowsley	450	8,100 (2010-2028)
<i>Halton</i>	<i>565</i>	<i>8,050 (2014-2037)⁹</i>
St Helens	570	13,680 (2014-2033) ¹⁰
Wirral	500	12,500 (2012-2030) ¹¹
Sefton	2012-2017: 500 dpa 2017-2030: 694 dpa	11,520 (2012-2030) ¹²

2.26 With regard to the specific issue of water resources, the long distance transfer pathways that exist for the supply of water to the Merseyside area and the fact that these same pathways or water sources also supply parts of North Wales, the West Midlands, Manchester, Cumbria and Cheshire, means that development across a much broader area is required for the consideration of water resource impacts ‘in combination’, as follows:

- North East Wales – specific housing levels to be delivered are not mentioned in the Wales Spatial Plan or its 2008 update but a significant increase is likely;
- Greater Manchester area¹³ – 227,200 homes to be delivered across Manchester, Salford, Oldham, Rochdale, Tameside, Stockport, Trafford, Congleton, Macclesfield, Bolton, Bury and Wigan between 2015 and 2035;
- West Midlands – potentially up to 445,600 additional homes across the region until 2026;
- West Cumbria – 11,640 homes to be delivered across Alderdale, Barrow-in-Furness and Copeland between 2003 and 2021;
- Cheshire – 31,800 homes to be delivered across Crewe & Nantwich, Chester, Ellesmere Port & Neston and Vale Royal between 2003 and 2021, over half (17,955) within Cheshire West and Chester.

2.27 It should be noted that, while the broad potential impacts of these other projects and plans will be considered, we do not propose carrying out HRA on each of these plans – we will however draw upon existing HRA that have been carried out for surrounding regions and plans.

⁸ Submitted Liverpool Local Plan

⁹ Revised Core Strategy Policies and Delivery and Allocations Publication Document (2019)

¹⁰ St. Helens Local Plan Preferred Options, December (2016)

¹¹ Wirral Core Strategy Local Plan Proposed Submission Draft (2012)

¹² Adopted Sefton Local Plan April 2017

¹³ Draft for Consultation Greater Manchester Spatial framework (2016)

3. Pathways of Impact

Introduction

- 3.1 The following pathways of impact are considered relevant to the Habitat Regulations Assessment of Halton's Delivery and Allocations Local Plan.

Loss of Functionally Linked Land

- 3.2 While most European sites have been geographically defined in order to encompass the key features that are necessary for coherence of their structure and function, this is not the case for all such sites. Due to the highly mobile nature of waterfowl, it is inevitable that areas of habitat of crucial importance to the maintenance of their populations are outside the physical limits of the European site for which they are an interest feature. However, this area will still be essential for maintenance of the structure and function of the interest feature for which the site was designated and land use plans that may affect this land should still therefore be subject to further assessment.
- 3.3 The Birds of Cheshire and Wirral: A Breeding and Wintering Atlas (2008)¹⁴ identifies areas of sensitivity for non-breeding bird species including those for which the European designated sites are designated. For the purpose of this assessment, it is the areas used by curlew, redshank, great crested grebe and lapwing combined that are used, as these species are the most widespread and abundant within Halton. Additionally, SSSI Impact Risk Zones were referenced when undertaking the assessment.
- 3.4 The following reports have also been referred to regarding this HRA:
- Natural England Commissioned Report NECR172. 2015. Waterbird population trend analysis of the Mersey Estuary SPA, Mersey Narrows & North Wirral Foreshore pSPA and Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA;
 - Natural England Commissioned Report NECR173. 2015. Review and Analysis of Changes in Waterbird Use of the Mersey Estuary SPA, Mersey Narrows & North Wirral Foreshore pSPA and Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA;
 - Assessment of Supporting Habitat (Docks) for Use by Qualifying Features of Natura 2000 Sites in the Liverpool City Region, Ornithology Report, TEP Version 3.0, Ref 4157 005. August 2015; and
 - Wintering Bird Survey, Wirral Waters, May 2008, TEP;
 - Non-breeding bird survey work undertaken by Peel Airports in support of the Liverpool John Lennon Airport.
- 3.5 The areas of sensitivity for designated bird species are located adjacent to the current urban areas of Halton, along the River Mersey corridor and within the wider rural areas. A number of bird species for which the European sites are designated utilise arable and grassland fields to graze and roost in during the autumn and winter months. As such, any loss of these habitats could have a likely significant effect upon the features of the designated sites within functionally linked land.
- 3.6 The following European Sites are considered susceptible to the impact pathway loss of functionally linked land relating to the Halton Local Plan:
- Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar.

Visual and Noise Disturbance

- 3.7 Human activity can affect birds either directly (e.g. through causing them to flee) or indirectly (e.g. through damaging their habitat). The most obvious direct effect is that of immediate mortality such as death by shooting, but human activity can also lead to behavioural changes (e.g.

¹⁴ <http://www.cheshireandwirralbirdatlas.org/> [accessed 09/07/2019]

- alterations in feeding behaviour, avoidance of certain areas *etc.*) and physiological changes (e.g. an increase in heart rate) that, although less noticeable, may ultimately result in major population-level effects by altering the balance between immigration/birth and emigration/death¹⁵.
- 3.8 The degree of impact that varying levels of noise will have on different species of bird is poorly understood except that a number of studies have found that an increase in traffic levels on roads does lead to a reduction in the bird abundance within adjacent hedgerows - Reijnen et al (1995) examined the distribution of 43 passerine species (i.e. 'songbirds'), of which 60% had a lower density closer to the roadside than further away. By controlling vehicle usage they also found that the density generally was lower along busier roads than quieter roads¹⁶.
 - 3.9 A recent study on recreational disturbance on the Humber¹⁷ assesses different types of noise disturbance on waterfowl referring to studies relating to aircraft (see Drewitt 1999¹⁸), traffic (Reijnen, Foppen, & Veenbaas 1997)¹⁹, dogs (Lord, Waas, & Innes 1997²⁰; Banks & Bryant 2007²¹) and machinery (Delaney et al. 1999; Tempel & Gutierrez 2003). These studies identified that there is still relatively little work on the effects of different types of water based craft and the impacts from jet skis, kite surfers, windsurfers *etc.* (see Kirby et al. 2004²² for a review). Some types of disturbance are clearly likely to invoke different responses. In very general terms, both distance from the source of disturbance and the scale of the disturbance (noise level, group size) will both influence the response (Delaney et al. 1999²³; Beale & Monaghan 2005²⁴). On UK estuaries and coastal sites, a review of WeBS data showed that, among the volunteer WeBS surveyors, driving of motor vehicles and shooting were the two activities most perceived to cause disturbance (Robinson & Pollitt 2002)²⁵.
 - 3.10 Large structures (e.g. new bridges, offshore and onshore wind turbines), have the potential to alter bird flight paths (e.g. hunting flight paths for raptors, bird migratory paths, regular flight paths between roosting and feeding sites, and foraging routes for bats *etc.*) This may result in a collision risk barrier effect or displacement which could make birds either vulnerable to predation or loss of vital energy stores.
 - 3.11 Animals can also be disturbed by the movement of ships. For instance, a DTI study of birds of the North West coast noted that: *"Divers and scoters were absent from the mouths of some busier estuaries, notably the Mersey... Both species are known to be susceptible to disturbance from boats, and their relative scarcity in these areas... may in part reflect the volume of boat traffic in these areas"*²⁶.
 - 3.12 Disturbing activities are on a continuum. The most disturbing activities are likely to be those that involve irregular, infrequent, unpredictable loud noise events, movement or vibration of long duration. Birds are least likely to be disturbed by activities that involve regular, frequent, predictable, quiet patterns of sound or movement or minimal vibration. The further any activity is from the birds, the less likely it is to result in disturbance.

¹⁵ Riley, J. 2003. Review of Recreational Disturbance Research on Selected Wildlife in Scotland. Scottish Natural Heritage.

¹⁶ Reijnen, R. et al. 1995. The effects of car traffic on breeding bird populations in woodland. III. Reduction of density in relation to the proximity of main roads. *Journal of Applied Ecology* 32: 187-202

¹⁷ Helen Fearnley Durwyn Liley and Katie Cruickshanks (2012) Results of Recreational Visitor Survey across the Humber Estuary produced by Footprint Ecology

¹⁸ Drewitt, A. (1999) Disturbance effects of aircraft on birds. English Nature, Peterborough.

¹⁹ Reijnen, R., Foppen, R. & Veenbaas, G. (1997) Disturbance by traffic of breeding birds: evaluation of the effect and considerations in planning and managing road corridors. *Biodiversity and Conservation*, 6, 567-581.

²⁰ Lord, A., Waas, J.R. & Innes, J. (1997) Effects of human activity on the behaviour of northern New Zealand dotterel *Charadrius obscurus aquilonius* chicks. *Biological Conservation*, 82,15-20.

²¹ Banks, P.B. & Bryant, J.V. (2007) Four-legged friend of foe? Dog-walking displaces native birds from natural areas. *Biology Letters*, 3, 611-613.

²² Kirby, J.S., Clee, C. & Seager, V. (1993) Impact and extent of recreational disturbance to wader roosts on the Dee estuary: some preliminary results. *Wader Study Group Bulletin*, 68, 53-58.

²³ Delaney, D.K., Grubb, T.G., Beier, P., Pater, L.L.M. & Reiser, H. (1999) Effects of Helicopter Noise on Mexican Spotted Owls. *The Journal of Wildlife Management*, 63, 60-76.

²⁴ Beale, C.M. & Monaghan, P. (2005) Modeling the Effects of Limiting the Number of Visitors on Failure Rates of Seabird Nests. *Conservation Biology*, 19, 2015-2019.

²⁵ Robinson, J.A. & Pollitt, M.S. (2002) Sources and extent of human disturbance to waterbirds in the UK: an analysis of Wetland Bird Survey data, 1995/96 to 1998/99: Less than 32% of counters record disturbance at their site, with differences in causes between coastal and inland sites. *Bird Study*, 49, 205.

²⁶ DTI (2006). Aerial Surveys of Waterbirds in Strategic Wind Farm Areas: 2004/05 Final Report

- 3.13 The factors that influence a species response to a disturbance are numerous, but the three key factors are species sensitivity, proximity of disturbance sources and timing/duration of the potentially disturbing activity.
- 3.14 The following European Sites are considered susceptible to visual and noise disturbance within the context of the Halton Local Plan:
- Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar

Recreational Pressure

- 3.15 Habitat Regulation Assessments of Planning Policy Documents tend to focus on recreational sources of disturbance because of new residents as a consequence of the quantum of housing during the plan period, or an increasingly aging population with more leisure time available²⁷. While this is a key factor, and has been identified by Natural England as an source of pressure for European Sites via the conservation advice packages and via HRAs of other Local Plan HRAs within the Liverpool City Region, other sources of disturbance associated with an increase in commercial development, road transport adjacent to sensitive sites or increases in shipping and aircraft movement also require consideration.

Breeding Birds

- 3.16 Concern regarding the effects of disturbance on birds stems from the fact that they are expending energy unnecessarily and the time they spend responding to disturbance is time that is not spent feeding²⁸. Disturbance therefore risks increasing energetic output while reducing energetic input, which can adversely affect the 'condition' and ultimately survival of the birds. In addition, displacement of birds from one feeding site to others can increase the pressure on the resources available within the remaining sites, as they must sustain a greater number of birds²⁹. Moreover, the more time a breeding bird spends disturbed from its nest, the more its eggs are likely to cool and the more vulnerable they, or any nestlings, are to predators.

Non-Breeding Birds

- 3.17 The potential for disturbance may be less in winter than in summer, in that there are often a smaller number of recreational users. In addition, the consequences of disturbance at a population level may be reduced because birds are not breeding. However, winter and passage activity can still cause important disturbance, especially as birds are particularly vulnerable at this time of year due to food shortages, such that disturbance which results in abandonment of suitable feeding areas through disturbance can have severe consequences. Several empirical studies have, through correlative analysis, demonstrated that out-of-season (October-March) recreational activity can result in quantifiable disturbance:
- Tuite et al³⁰ found that during periods of high recreational activity, bird numbers at Llangorse Lake decreased by 30% as the morning progressed, matching the increase in recreational activity towards midday. During periods of low recreational activity, however, no change in numbers was observed as the morning progressed. In addition, all species were found to spend less time in their 'preferred zones' (the areas of the lake used most in the absence of recreational activity) as recreational intensity increased.

²⁷ The RTPI report 'Planning for an Ageing Population'(2004) which states that 'From being a marginalised group in society, the elderly are now a force to be reckoned with and increasingly seen as a market to be wooed by the leisure and tourist industries. There are more of them and generally they have more time and more money.' It also states that 'Participation in most physical activities shows a significant decline after the age of 50. The exceptions to this are walking, golf, bowls and sailing, where participation rates hold up well into the 70s'.

²⁸ Riddington, R. et al. 1996. The impact of disturbance on the behaviour and energy budgets of Brent geese. *Bird Study* 43:269-279

²⁹ Gill, J.A., Sutherland, W.J. & Norris, K. 1998. The consequences of human disturbance for estuarine birds. *RSPB Conservation Review* 12: 67-72

³⁰ Tuite, C. H., Owen, M. & Paynter, D. 1983. Interaction between wildfowl and recreation at Llangorse Lake and Talybont Reservoir, South Wales. *Wildfowl* 34: 48-63

- Underhill et al³¹ counted waterfowl and all disturbance events on 54 water bodies within the South West London Water Bodies Special Protection Area and clearly correlated disturbance with a decrease in bird numbers at weekends in smaller sites and with the movement of birds within larger sites from disturbed to less disturbed areas.
 - Evans & Warrington³² found that on Sundays total water bird numbers (including shoveler and gadwall) were 19% higher on Stocker's Lake LNR in Hertfordshire and attributed this to observed greater recreational activity on surrounding water bodies at weekends relative to week days. However, in this study, recreational activity was not quantified in detail, nor were individual recreational activities evaluated separately.
 - Tuite et al³³ used a large (379 site), long-term (10-year) dataset (September – March species counts) to correlate seasonal changes in wildfowl abundance with the presence of various recreational activities. They found that shoveler was one of the most sensitive species to disturbance. The greatest impact on winter wildfowl numbers was associated with sailing/windsurfing and rowing.
- 3.18 More recent research has established that human activity including recreational activity can be linked to disturbance of non-breeding waterfowl populations^{34 35}.
- 3.19 A study on recreational disturbance of the Humber Estuary SPA and Ramsar³⁶ was commissioned following a decline in numbers of some bird species from the Humber. This was considered necessary within the context of a likely future increase in residential development and an identification of the requirement for improved coastal access to inform future policies/management plans. The study collated on-site visitor survey data, targeted interviews with user groups, driving transects, car park counts and vantage point counts to identify the most visited areas of the SPA and Ramsar. These data were correlated with bird data (i.e. key locations for particular qualifying bird species within the SPA and Ramsar and therefore those areas likely to be considered particularly sensitive). This information was used to identify potentially key areas where conflicts were considered likely to arise between key recreational activities and bird interest. Key activities which were found to likely cause disturbance to qualifying bird species (as already mentioned in this section) included: airborne activities; bait digging; beach activities; dog walking; fishing; horse riding; kite surfing; walking; wildfowling; and wildlife watching. This study serves to support the case of likely recreational disturbance on qualifying bird species through data collected on a relatively local and similar European Site, subject to similar pressures as the Sefton Coast.

Mechanical/Abrasive Damage and Nutrient Enrichment

- 3.20 Most types of aquatic or terrestrial wildlife site can be affected by trampling, which in turn causes soil compaction and erosion:
- Wilson & Seney (1994)³⁷ examined the degree of track erosion caused by hikers, motorcycles, horses and cyclists from 108 plots along tracks in the Gallatin National Forest, Montana. Although the results proved difficult to interpret, it was concluded that horses and hikers disturbed more sediment on wet tracks, and therefore caused more erosion, than motorcycles and bicycles.

³¹ Underhill, M.C. et al. 1993. *Use of Waterbodies in South West London by Waterfowl. An Investigation of the Factors Affecting Distribution, Abundance and Community Structure.* Report to Thames Water Utilities Ltd. and English Nature. Wetlands Advisory Service, Slimbridge

³² Evans, D.M. & Warrington, S. 1997. The effects of recreational disturbance on wintering waterbirds on a mature gravel pitlake near London. *International Journal of Environmental Studies* 53: 167-182

³³ Tuite, C.H., Hanson, P.R. & Owen, M. 1984. Some ecological factors affecting winter wildfowl distribution on inland waters in England and Wales and the influence of water-based recreation. *Journal of Applied Ecology* 21: 41-62

³⁴ Footprint Ecology. 2010. *Recreational Disturbance to Birds on the Humber Estuary*

³⁵ Footprint Ecology, Jonathan Cox Associates & Bournemouth University. 2010. *Solent disturbance and mitigation project – various reports.*

³⁶ Helen Fearnley Durwyn Liley and Katie Cruickshanks (2012) *Results of Recreational Visitor Survey across the Humber Estuary* produced by Footprint Ecology

<http://humberems.co.uk/downloads/Footprint%20Ecology%20Humber%20Visitor%20Report%206th%20July%202012.pdf>

³⁷ Wilson, J.P. & J.P. Seney. 1994. *Erosional impact of hikers, horses, motorcycles and off road bicycles on mountain trails in Montana.* *Mountain Research and Development* 14:77-88

- Cole et al (1995a, b)³⁸ conducted experimental off-track trampling in 18 closed forest, dwarf scrub and meadow & grassland communities (each tramped between 0 – 500 times) over five mountain regions in the US. Vegetation cover was assessed two weeks and one year after trampling, and an inverse relationship with trampling intensity was discovered, although this relationship was weaker after one year than two weeks indicating some recovery of the vegetation. Differences in plant morphological characteristics were found to explain more variation in response between different vegetation types than soil and topographic factors. Low-growing, mat-forming grasses regained their cover best after two weeks and were considered most resistant to trampling, while tall forbs (non-woody vascular plants other than grasses, sedges, rushes and ferns) were considered least resistant. Cover of hemicryptophytes and geophytes (plants with buds below the soil surface) was heavily reduced after two weeks, but had recovered well after one year and as such these were considered most resilient to trampling. Chamaephytes (plants with buds above the soil surface) were least resilient to trampling. It was concluded that these would be the least tolerant of a regular cycle of disturbance.
 - Cole (1995c)³⁹ conducted a follow-up study (in 4 vegetation types) in which shoe type (trainers or walking boots) and trampler weight were varied. Although immediate damage was greater with walking boots, there was no significant difference after one year. Heavier trampers caused a greater reduction in vegetation height than lighter trampers, but there was no difference in effect on cover.
 - Cole & Spildie (1998)⁴⁰ experimentally compared the effects of off-track trampling by hiker and horse (at two intensities – 25 and 150 passes) in two woodland vegetation types (one with an erect forb understorey and one with a low shrub understorey). Horse traffic was found to cause the largest reduction in vegetation cover. The forb-dominated vegetation suffered greatest disturbance, but recovered rapidly. Higher trampling intensities caused more disturbance.
- 3.21 Walkers with dogs contribute to pressure on sites through nutrient enrichment via dog fouling and have potential to cause greater disturbance to fauna as dogs are less likely to keep to marked footpaths and also tend to move in a more erratic manner. Motorcycle scrambling and off-road vehicle use can cause more serious erosion, as well as disturbance to sensitive species. Boats can also cause some mechanical damage to intertidal habitats through grounding.
- 3.22 The following European Sites are considered susceptible to the impact pathway recreational pressure arising from growth in Halton:
- Mersey Estuary
 - Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar
 - Sefton Coast SAC
 - Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar and SAC
 - Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar
 - Liverpool Bay SPA

Water Quality and Resources

- 3.23 The borough of Halton is located along the north and south shores of the River Mersey, including immediately adjacent to the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. The Wastewater Treatment Works (WwTWs) that serve Halton all discharge into the Mersey either within or slightly upstream of the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar and 23km upstream of Liverpool Bay SPA and Mersey Narrows & North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar.

³⁸ Cole, D.N. 1995a. Experimental trampling of vegetation. I. Relationship between trampling intensity and vegetation response. *Journal of Applied Ecology* 32: 203-214

Cole, D.N. 1995b. Experimental trampling of vegetation. II. Predictors of resistance and resilience. *Journal of Applied Ecology* 32: 215-224

³⁹ Cole, D.N. 1995c. Recreational trampling experiments: effects of trampler weight and shoe type. Research Note INT-RN-425. U.S. Forest Service, Intermountain Research Station, Utah.

⁴⁰ Cole, D.N., Spildie, D.R. 1998. Hiker, horse and llama trampling effects on native vegetation in Montana, USA. *Journal of Environmental Management* 53: 61-71

- 3.24 Increased amounts of housing or business development can lead to reduced water quality of rivers and estuarine environments. Sewage and industrial effluent discharge can contribute to increased nutrient levels in European sites, ultimately leading to unfavourable conditions. In addition, diffuse pollution, partly from urban run-off, has been identified during an Environment Agency Review of Consents process as being a major factor in causing unfavourable condition of European sites.
- 3.25 The quality of the water that feeds European sites is an important determinant of the nature of their habitats and the species they support. Poor water quality can have a range of environmental impacts:
- At high levels, toxic chemicals and metals can result in immediate death of aquatic life, and can have detrimental effects even at lower levels, including increased vulnerability to disease and changes in wildlife behaviour. Eutrophication, the enrichment of plant nutrients in water, increases plant growth and consequently results in oxygen depletion. Algal blooms, which commonly result from eutrophication, increase turbidity and decrease light penetration. The decomposition of organic wastes that often accompanies eutrophication deoxygenates water further, augmenting the oxygen depleting effects of eutrophication. In the marine environment, nitrogen is the limiting plant nutrient and so eutrophication is associated with discharges containing available nitrogen; in the freshwater environment, phosphorus is usually a principal cause of eutrophication.
 - Some pesticides, industrial chemicals, and components of sewage effluent are suspected to interfere with the functioning of the endocrine system, possibly having negative effects on the reproduction and development of aquatic life, and subsequently bird life.
 - Increased discharge of treated sewage effluent can result both in greater scour (as a result of greater flow volumes) and in high levels of macroalgal growth, which can smother the mudflats of value to SPA birds.
- 3.26 For sewage treatment works close to capacity, further development may increase the risk of effluent escape into aquatic environments. In many urban areas, sewage treatment and surface water drainage systems are combined, and therefore a predicted increase in flood and storm events could increase pollution risk.
- 3.27 However, it is also important to note that the situation is not always simple – for sites designated for waterfowl, treated sewage effluent can be beneficial as this can increase the available prey. For example, it has been observed that waterfowl will often congregate around the outfall such effluent⁴¹. In addition, while nutrient enrichment causes considerable problems on the south coast (particularly in the Solent) due to increases in the abundance of macroalgae, it is not necessarily a problem in other areas where such algae are broken up by tidal wave action, and where colder and more turbid water limit the build-up in the first place. For example, although The Wash in the East of England is hypernitrified, the Environment Agency Review of Consents process has identified that this is not leading to adverse effects on the internationally important interest features of the site.
- 3.28 A Water Cycle Study (WCS) for the Mid-Mersey Growth Point (Halton, St Helens and Warrington) was delivered in 2011⁴², accounting for planned development at that time (the WCS assumed 500 new dwellings per annum) to 2025. This identified that within the study area the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar could be impacted upon by changes to water quality. However, the WCS identified that for the Mersey Estuary: *'Abstractions in Lower Mersey are subject to flows into the Estuary. Tidal influence in Mersey reduces potential impact on discharges (Widnes WwTW, Warrington North WwTW, Runcorn WwTW and Warrington South WwTW).'* For Manchester Mosses the WCS stated that: *'Could limit abstractions in WRMU14*. Downstream of Glazebury WwTW in the Glaze Brook catchment. Could limit discharges.'* The 2014 Halton Borough Council Infrastructure Plan 2014 Review⁴³ states that:

⁴¹ Anecdotal observation from the author's work on numerous sewage treatment works around the county (particularly London) and bird surveys undertaken by the author and colleagues on such sites

⁴² Entec (2011) Mid Mersey Water Cycle Study (Outline Phase). On Behalf of Warrington Borough Council, St Helens Borough Council and Halton Borough Council Final Report

⁴³ <https://www3.halton.gov.uk/Pages/planning/policyguidance/pdf/Infrastructure/InfrastructurePlan.pdf> [accessed 09/07/2019]

'There are two wastewater treatment works in the Borough, one in Runcorn (dealing solely with wastewater from Runcorn) and one in Widnes (dealing with wastewater from Widnes and south west St Helens) (Figure 13). The Widnes Wastewater Treatment Works discharges into the River Mersey, which is designated as a Special Protection Area, Ramsar and Site of Special Scientific Interest. There is uncertainty around the ability of the Environment Agency to grant further discharge consents into the River Mersey beyond 2015. Runcorn Wastewater Treatment Works discharges into the Manchester Ship Canal, into which discharges are strictly regulated.

The study concludes that there are no major constraints to growth in MidMersey, however there are issues surrounding capacity at wastewater treatment works after 2015, notably in Runcorn given the anticipated levels of development included in the Core Strategy. United Utilities indicated through ongoing discussions during the course of the study that there is capacity to deal with wastewater from planned developments until 2015, but a reassessment will be required after 2015. Limited space in Runcorn for a wastewater treatment works is identified by the study as a potential constraint, to which alternative options may need to be considered. Sewerage and surface water drainage were not found to pose significant risks.

Water quality in the River Mersey is influenced by land and water use further upstream in the wider Mersey catchment. Tributaries of the River Mersey include the Irwell, Roch, Irk, Medlock, Bollin, Tame, Etherow and Goyt. The North West River Basin Management Plan⁴⁴ confirms that 30% of surface waters in the North West have "Good Ecological Status/Potential", however most of the rivers and brooks within the Mid-Mersey area have only "Moderate Ecological Status" or worse. Stewards and Bowers Brooks both have "Poor Ecological Status" based on biology, which is associated with combined sewer overflows and other sources of pollution. United Utilities state that significant investment has been undertaken on many of the combined sewer overflows in the area in the last five years. Smaller watercourses such as the Sankey, Ditton, Bowers and Keckwick Brooks are all highly sensitive to water quality impacts because of their small size.

- 3.29 Regarding the availability of water resources, Figure 2 shows that Halton is in an area that is classified as being water stressed (coded red). However, the North West (including the wider geographic area surrounding Halton⁴⁵) is generally an area of low water stress (coded green), as is North Wales, which is a major source of potable water for north-west England.
- 3.30 Initial investigation indicates that Halton lies within United Utilities' Integrated Resource Zone which serves approximately 6.7 million people in south Cumbria, Lancashire, Greater Manchester, Merseyside, most of Cheshire and a small part of Derbyshire. The Integrated Zone can supply around 1,803 Ml/d of potable water, which includes water imports from Wales, Cumbria, and other parts of North West England. It constitutes a large integrated supply network that enables substantial flexibility in distributing supplies within the zone with the 'west to east link' further aiding this flexibility and thus breaking the traditional division in which Greater Manchester received water from Cumbria and Merseyside received water from the River Dee (which lies partly in England and partly in Wales) and from purely Welsh sources (e.g. Lake Vyrnwy).
- 3.31 In exploring water resource issues relating to Welsh European sites for St Helens Council, we determined from United Utilities that approximately 75% of St. Helens potable water supply is currently abstracted from the River Dee, 20% is abstracted from Lake Vyrnwy and only 5% is abstracted from sites in Cumbria. It is likely that similar proportions relate to Halton although this is likely to change in the future as a result of the greater flexibility provided by the west-east link. In any case, Cumbrian and Welsh sources will still be involved in one ratio or another in water supply to Halton.
- 3.32 The most recent United Utilities Water Resource Management Plan (WRMP)⁴⁶ indicates that without the reductions in demand from a free meter option programme and water efficiency programmes there would be a supply demand deficit in the Integrated Resource Zone of 107 Ml/d by 2040. However, from reading the WRMP it appears that increased abstraction from the Dee or any other European sites beyond the current licensed volumes is not part of United

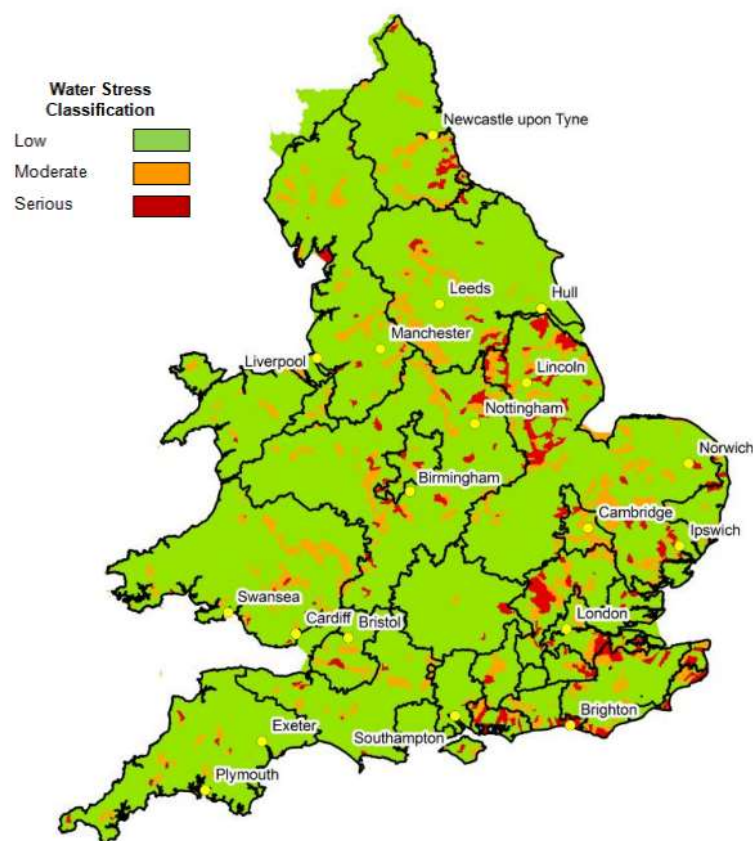
⁴⁴ Environment Agency (2009) River Basin Management Plan – North West River Basin District

⁴⁵ Figure adapted from Environment Agency. 2007. Identifying Areas of Water Stress. <http://publications.environment-agency.gov.uk/pdf/GEHO0107BLUT-e-e.pdf>

⁴⁶ United Utilities (2015) Final Water Resource Management Plan

Utilities' intended future supply strategy, which depends on a mixture of demand management and increased abstraction from groundwater. Furthermore, the HRA of the WRMP: Assessment of Feasibility and Preferred Options (2013)⁴⁷ identified that no likely significant effect would result from the WRMP. Nevertheless,

Figure 2: Areas of water stress within England. ⁴⁸



3.33 The following European Sites are considered susceptible to the impact pathway water quality and resources:

- Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar
- Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar
- River Dee and Bala Lake SAC
- Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar and SAC
- Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar
- Liverpool Bay SPA
- River Eden SAC

Atmospheric Pollution

3.34 None of the allocations in the Halton Local Plan are of an industrial nature. Industrial developments that would constitute significant 'point source' emitters (e.g. pig farms, Energy from Waste facilities, smelting works, power stations etc.) are not allocated via the Local Plan process. Such facilities would need to obtain a permit from the Environment Agency before they were allowed to operate and could not obtain that permit if they posed a risk of an adverse effect on a European site. The Local Plan HRA thus focusses on vehicle exhaust emissions as this is the

⁴⁷ AMEC (2013). United Utilities Habitats Regulations Assessment of the Water Resource Management Plan: Assessment of Feasibility and Preferred Options

⁴⁸ Figure adapted from Environment Agency. 2013. Water stressed areas – final classification
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/244333/water-stressed-classification-2013.pdf

only potentially significant source of emissions from the type of development allocated in the Local Plan.

- 3.35 Table 3 summarises the main pollutants relevant to European Sites, their sources and the potential effects on habitats and / or species. The main pollutants of concern for European sites are oxides of nitrogen (NO_x), ammonia (NH₃) and sulphur dioxide (SO₂). NO_x can have a directly toxic effect upon vegetation. In addition, greater NO_x or ammonia concentrations within the atmosphere will lead to greater rates of nitrogen deposition to soils. An increase in the deposition of nitrogen from the atmosphere to soils is generally regarded to lead to an increase in soil fertility, which can have a serious deleterious effect on the quality of semi-natural, nitrogen-limited terrestrial habitats.

Table 3: Main sources and effects of air pollutants on habitats and species⁴⁹

Pollutant	Source	Effects on habitats and species
Sulphur Dioxide (SO ₂)	The main sources of SO₂ are electricity generation, and industrial and domestic fuel combustion. However, total SO₂ emissions in the UK have decreased substantially since the 1980's. Another origin of sulphur dioxide is the shipping industry and high atmospheric concentrations of SO₂ have been documented in busy ports. In future years shipping is likely to become one of the most important contributors to SO₂ emissions in the UK.	Wet and dry deposition of SO₂ acidifies soils and freshwater, and may alter the composition of plant and animal communities. The magnitude of effects depends on levels of deposition, the buffering capacity of soils and the sensitivity of impacted species. However, SO₂ background levels have fallen considerably since the 1970's and are now not regarded a threat to plant communities. For example, decreases in Sulphur dioxide concentrations have been linked to returning lichen species and improved tree health in London.
Acid deposition	Leads to acidification of soils and freshwater via atmospheric deposition of SO₂, NO_x, ammonia and hydrochloric acid. Acid deposition from rain has declined by 85% in the last 20 years, which most of this contributed by lower sulphate levels. Although future trends in S emissions and subsequent deposition to terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems will continue to decline, increased N emissions may cancel out any gains produced by reduced S levels.	Gaseous precursors (e.g. SO₂) can cause direct damage to sensitive vegetation, such as lichen, upon deposition. Can affect habitats and species through both wet (acid rain) and dry deposition. The effects of acidification include lowering of soil pH, leaf chlorosis, reduced decomposition rates, and compromised reproduction in birds / plants. Not all sites are equally susceptible to acidification. This varies depending on soil type, bed rock geology, weathering rate and buffering capacity. For example, sites with an underlying geology of granite, gneiss and quartz rich rocks tend to be more susceptible.
Ammonia (NH ₃)	Ammonia is a reactive, soluble alkaline gas that is released following decomposition and volatilisation of animal wastes. It is a naturally occurring trace gas, but ammonia concentrations are directly related to the distribution of livestock. Ammonia reacts with acid pollutants such as the products of SO₂ and NO_x emissions to produce fine ammonium (NH₄⁺) - containing aerosol. Due to its significantly longer lifetime, NH₄⁺ may be transferred much longer distances (and can therefore be a significant trans-boundary issue).	The negative effect of NH₄⁺ may occur via direct toxicity, when uptake exceeds detoxification capacity and via N accumulation. Its main adverse effect is eutrophication, leading to species assemblages that are dominated by fast-growing and tall species. For example, a shift in dominance from heath species (lichens, mosses) to grasses is often seen. As emissions mostly occur at ground level in the rural environment and NH₃ is rapidly deposited, some of the most acute problems of NH₃ deposition are for

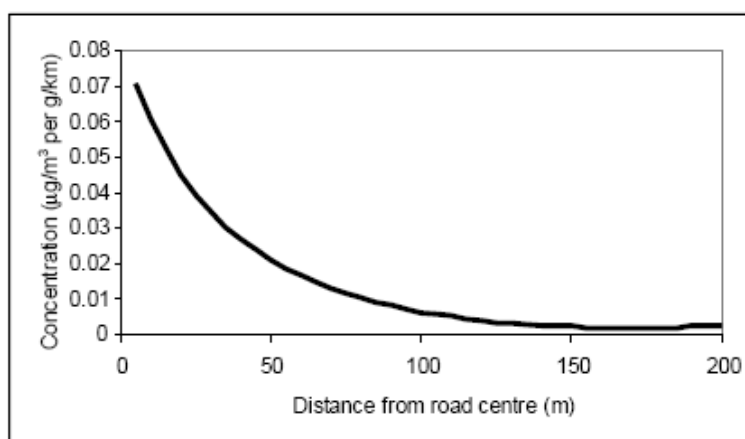
⁴⁹ Information summarised from the Air Pollution Information System (<http://www.apis.ac.uk/>)

Pollutant	Source	Effects on habitats and species
	While ammonia deposition may be estimated from its atmospheric concentration, the deposition rates are strongly influenced by meteorology and ecosystem type.	small relict nature reserves located in intensive agricultural landscapes.
Nitrogen oxides (NO _x)	Nitrogen oxides are mostly produced in combustion processes. Half of NO_x emissions in the UK derive from motor vehicles, one quarter from power stations and the rest from other industrial and domestic combustion processes. In contrast to the steep decline in Sulphur dioxide emissions, nitrogen oxides are falling slowly due to control strategies being offset by increasing numbers of vehicles.	Direct toxicity effects of gaseous nitrates are likely to be important in areas close to the source (e.g. roadside verges). A critical level of NO_x for all vegetation types has been set to 30 ug/m3. Deposition of nitrogen compounds (nitrates (NO₃), nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and nitric acid (HNO₃)) contributes to the total nitrogen deposition and may lead to both soil and freshwater acidification. In addition, NO_x contributes to the eutrophication of soils and water, altering the species composition of plant communities at the expense of sensitive species.
Nitrogen deposition	The pollutants that contribute to the total nitrogen deposition derive mainly from oxidized (e.g. NO_x) or reduced (e.g. NH₃) nitrogen emissions (described separately above). While oxidized nitrogen mainly originates from major conurbations or highways, reduced nitrogen mostly derives from farming practices. The N pollutants together are a large contributor to acidification (see above).	All plants require nitrogen compounds to grow, but too much overall N is regarded as the major driver of biodiversity change globally. Species-rich plant communities with high proportions of slow-growing perennial species and bryophytes are most at risk from N eutrophication. This is because many semi-natural plants cannot assimilate the surplus N as well as many graminoid (grass) species. N deposition can also increase the risk of damage from abiotic factors, e.g. drought and frost.
Ozone (O ₃)	A secondary pollutant generated by photochemical reactions involving NO_x, volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and sunlight. These precursors are mainly released by the combustion of fossil fuels (as discussed above). Increasing anthropogenic emissions of ozone precursors in the UK have led to an increased number of days when ozone levels rise above 40ppb ('episodes' or 'smog'). Reducing ozone pollution is believed to require action at international level to reduce levels of the precursors that form ozone.	Concentrations of O₃ above 40 ppb can be toxic to both humans and wildlife, and can affect buildings. High O₃ concentrations are widely documented to cause damage to vegetation, including visible leaf damage, reduction in floral biomass, reduction in crop yield (e.g. cereal grains, tomato, potato), reduction in the number of flowers, decrease in forest production and altered species composition in semi-natural plant communities.

3.36 According to the Department of Transport's Transport Analysis Guidance, "Beyond 200m, the contribution of vehicle emissions from the roadside to local pollution levels is not significant"⁵⁰ (Figure 3).

⁵⁰ www.webtag.org.uk/archive/feb04/pdf/feb04-333.pdf

Figure 3: Traffic contribution to concentrations of pollutants at different distances from a road
(Source: DfT)



3.37 This is therefore the distance that has been used throughout this HRA in order to determine whether European sites are likely to be significantly affected by traffic generated by development under Halton's Delivery and Allocations Local Plan.

3.38 The following European Sites are considered susceptible to atmospheric pollution:

- Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar
- Manchester Mosses SAC
- Oak Mere SAC
- Sefton Coast SAC
- Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar and SAC

4. Test of Likely Significant Effects (TOLSE) Summary

- 4.1 The full TOLSE for Halton's Local Plan can be found in the Appendix. Appendix C summarises the TOLSE for Halton's Revised Core Strategy Policies, Appendix D provides the TOLSE of Halton's Delivery and Allocations Local Plan and Appendix E contains the TOLSE of Halton's Residential and Employment Site Allocations.

Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar

Loss of Functionally Linked Land

- 4.2 The Halton Borough Local Plan details the provision of 8,050 new residential dwellings as well as approx. 180ha of employment space. This growth is focussed in five key areas of change, including Halebank and Ditton Corridor (Widnes), South Widnes, West Runcorn, East Runcorn, and North East and North West Widnes. This development could result in the loss of functionally linked land given the widespread presence of such land around Halton and therefore Likely Significant Effects on the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar site cannot be dismissed.
- 4.3 Without further examination, the following Plan policies will deliver development that has the potential to result in the loss of functionally linked land located outside of the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar site boundary and are thus screened in for Appropriate Assessment:
- Policy CS(R)1: Halton's Spatial Strategy
 - Policy CS(R)3: Housing Supply and Locational Priorities
 - Policy CS 4: Employment Land Supply
 - Policy CS 14: Gypsy & Travellers
 - Policy CS 17: Liverpool John Lennon Airport
 - Policy ED1: Employment Allocations
 - Policy RD1: Residential Development Allocations
 - Policy RD2: Gypsy and Traveller Sites Allocations
 - Policy C1: Transport Network and Accessibility
- 4.4 Loss of functionally-linked land is a key issue requiring consideration in combination because of the potential for losses in the Liverpool boundary, also through the expansion of Liverpool Airport (Policy CS(R)17), and the potential for delivery of several large developments in the western extent of Warrington (located immediately east of Halton) that are in locations identified as potential supporting habitat for the SPA and Ramsar site. Consultation of the Cheshire Bird Atlas allowed for the identification of historical bird records near the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. Furthermore, freely available online imagery was used to identify suitable habitat in land parcels relating to the Plan and Halton Council has commissioned a suite of non-breeding bird surveys on land parcels they were considering allocating.
- 4.5 The following Plan allocations require investigation before it can be determined whether they will result in the loss of functionally linked land. They have therefore been screened in for Appropriate Assessment:

Policy ED1: Employment Allocations

- E8: Land adjacent to the Office Village
- E9: Land between Daresbury Park and Bridgewater Canal
- E21: St Michaels, Widnes and Hale
- E24: Land north of Six Acre Lane, Runcorn
- E25: Moss Lane Nursery, Runcorn
- E28: Land off Six Acre Lane, Runcorn

- SEL2: 3MG, Widnes

Policy RD1: Residential Development Allocations

- SRL1: Delph Lane West, Daresbury, Runcorn
 - R36: Land between Keckwick Lane and Delph Lane
- SRL2: Central Housing Area, Daresbury, Runcorn
 - R84: Land between The Office Village, Daresbury Park and Bridgewater Canal
- SRL3: Wharford Farm, Runcorn
- SRL4: Sandymoor, Runcorn
 - R29: Land to the south of Walsingham Drive
 - R30: Land between Keckwick Brook and WCML
 - R31: Sandymoor 17A
 - R37: Land to the east of Village Street
- SRL6: Moore, Runcorn
 - M8: Land to the east of Runcorn Road, Moore
- SLR8: North West Widnes
 - W4: Chapel Lane to Old Upton Lane
 - W5: Sandy Lane to Queensbury Way
- SLR9: Halebank
 - W13: Land at Hale Gate Road (now safeguarded land as SG11)
 - W24: West of Hale Gate Road (including education site EDU3)
 - W48: Lunts Heath Road (East)

Visual and noise disturbance

- 4.6 This section considers disturbance effects on qualifying bird species through pathways other than recreational pressure, such as construction and vehicular noise, construction lighting, operational lighting and other visual disturbance. Professional experience suggests that these impacts are unlikely to arise on sites located more than 200m from the qualifying bird species. For example, the noisiest construction activity is generally impact piling, where a hammer is dropped on the pile. This has a typical maximum noise level of 100-110dB at 1m from source; however, it typically results in noise levels below the typical waterfowl disturbance threshold (70 dB) at distances of more than 100m from source because atmospheric noise attenuates by 6dB for every doubling of distance. This precautionary 200m distance has therefore been used to flag development sites of particular relevance. Note that this is not intended to mean that sites situated more than 200m from European sites or significant parcels of functionally linked land can be dismissed entirely without further examination at the application level, it is only intended to flag those sites where the risk is clearly greatest.
- 4.7 It is considered that there are various pathways whereby new or altered policies within the revised Halton Plan have the potential to deliver development that could result in visual and noise disturbance to qualifying bird species of the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar, both within the designated site itself and on functionally linked land outside the designated site boundary.
- 4.8 The following policies and allocations have been identified to potentially result in visual and noise disturbance prior to further investigation, and have been screened in for Appropriate Assessment:
- 4.9 Policies:
- Policy CS(R)1: Halton's Spatial Strategy
 - Policy CS(R)3: Housing Supply and Locational Priorities

- Policy CS(R)4: Employment Land Supply
- Policy CS(R)14: Gypsy & Travellers
- Policy CS(R)17: Liverpool John Lennon Airport
- Policy ED1: Employment Allocations
- Policy RD1: Residential Development Allocations
- Policy RD2: Gypsy and Traveller Sites Allocations
- Policy C1: Transport Network and Accessibility

4.10 Allocations which might result in visual and noise disturbance (directly on the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar or on functionally linked land outside the designated site boundary (i.e. within 200m) are:

Policy ED1: Employment Allocations

- SEL2: 3MG, Widnes
- SEL4: West Runcorn / Inovyn, Runcorn (26ha)
- E21: St Michaels, Widnes and Hale

Policy RD1: Residential Development Allocations

- SRL1: Delph Lane West, Daresbury, Runcorn
 - R36: Land between Keckwick Lane and Delph Lane
- SRL2: Central Housing Area, Daresbury, Runcorn
- SRL3: Wharford Farm, Runcorn
- SRL4: Sandymoor, Runcorn
 - R29: Land to the south of Walsingham Drive
 - R30: Land between Keckwick Brook and WCML
 - R31: Sandymoor 17A
 - R37: Land to the east of Village Street
- SRL6: Moore, Runcorn
 - M8: Land to the east of Runcorn Road, Moore
- SLR8: North West Widnes
 - W4: Chapel Lane to Old Upton Lane
 - W5: Sandy Lane to Queensbury Way
- SRL9: Halebank
 - W13: Land at Hale Gate Road (now safeguarded land as W13)
 - W24: West of Hale Gate Road (including educational site EDU3)
 - W45: Parcels on Hale Bank Road
 - W48: Land to south of Hale Bank Road
- R8: Remainder of The Deck
- R61: Land to the south of Old Quay Street and Mason St

Recreational pressure

4.11 It is now widely accepted that an increase in residential housing, particularly in close proximity to European Sites, is likely to lead to an increase in the number of recreational visits to natural areas. Given this and the sensitivity to recreational pressure of wildfowl on passage or overwintering in the SPA, several policies in the revised Halton Local Plan are likely to deliver

development that would lead to LSEs on the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar without mitigation, and have thus been screened in for Appropriate Assessment. While this is unlikely to be material from Halton alone it requires further consideration 'in combination' with growth in the other Liverpool City Region Local Plans:

- Policy CS(R)1: Halton's Spatial Strategy
- Policy CS(R)3: Housing Supply and Locational Priorities
- Policy CS(R)14: Gypsy & Travellers
- Policy CS(R)17: Liverpool John Lennon Airport
- Policy RD1: Residential Development Allocations
- Policy RD2: Gypsy and Traveller Sites Allocations
- Policy C1: Transport Network and Accessibility
- Policy HC2: Retail and Town Centre Allocations
- Policy HC7: Visitor attractions
- Policy HC9: Mixed Use Areas
- Policy HE3: Halton's Waterways and Waterfronts

4.12 Due to their proximity, most residential site allocations have the potential to result in increased recreational pressure on the SPA and Ramsar. However, several sites within policy RD1 (Residential Development Allocations) provide for a particularly large quantum of residential housing and thus might have larger implications for recreational pressure. These following large residential site allocations are screened in for Appropriate Assessment:

- W9: Land at Mill Green Farm (433 dwellings)
- W24: West of Hale Gate Road (484 dwellings)
- W49: Lunts Heath Road (East) (381 dwellings)

4.13 Furthermore, within policy RD1 (Residential Development Allocations) the Plan includes allocations that, from review of freely available online mapping, appear to be existing areas of publicly used recreational greenspace. The loss of this greenspace could further increase recreational pressure on the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar and the following residential site allocations have therefore been screened in for Appropriate Assessment:

- SRL4: Sandymoor, Runcorn
- SRL5: Halton Lea, Runcorn
- SRL6: Moore, Runcorn
- R37: Land to the east of Village Street (104 dwellings)
- R22: Land off Birch Road (21 dwellings)
- R37: land to the east of Village Street (104 dwellings)
- R49: Land surrounding Hanover Court (15 dwellings)
- R81: Land south of hospital (61 dwellings)
- R82: Land East Of Castlefields Area (45 dwellings)
- R83: Heath Road South / Highlands Road

4.14 Publicly accessible recreational space has the potential to divert recreational pressure away from sensitive European designated sites. This loss of publicly accessible recreational space has the potential to increase recreational pressure within sensitive designated sites.

Water Quality

4.15 Given that the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar is susceptible to changes in water quality, the Halton Local Plan, through the provision of housing, employment and other mixed-use

development (and associated waste water discharge), has the potential to result in a deterioration of water quality in the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar.

- 4.16 The following policies have been screened in for Appropriate Assessment, as they will result in the delivery of development that could have Likely Significant Effects on the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar in relation to the water quality impact pathway. While this is unlikely to be material from Halton alone it requires further consideration 'in combination' with growth in the other Liverpool City Region Local Plans:

- Policy CS(R)1: Halton's Spatial Strategy
- Policy CS(R)3: Housing Supply and Locational Priorities
- Policy CS(R)4: Employment Land Supply
- Policy CS(R)14: Gypsy & Travellers
- Policy CS(R)17: Liverpool John Lennon Airport
- Policy ED1: Employment Allocations
- Policy RD1: Residential Development Allocations
- Policy RD2: Gypsy and Traveller Sites Allocations
- Policy HC2: Retail and Town Centre Allocations
- Policy HC9: Mixed Use Areas

Atmospheric Pollution

- 4.17 The Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar is susceptible to atmospheric pollution in the form of nitrogen and sulphur deposition. The most notable source of nitrogen related to the Halton Local Plan is an increase in the number of car journeys as a consequence of housing and business development. The level of sulphur deposition will mainly be determined by shipping and air-based travel.

- 4.18 Several Plan policies have the potential to contribute to an increase in atmospheric pollution affecting the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar by facilitating the delivery of net new housing and employment and have been screened in for Appropriate Assessment. This includes policies that are likely to increase car usage, particularly within 200m of the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar, and the number of flights traversing the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. While this is unlikely to be material from Halton alone it requires further consideration 'in combination' with growth in the other Liverpool City Region Local Plans:

- Policy CS(R)1: Halton's Spatial Strategy
- Policy CS(R)3: Housing Supply and Locational Priorities
- Policy CS(R)4: Employment Land Supply
- Policy CS(R)14: Gypsy & Travellers
- Policy CS(R)17: Liverpool John Lennon Airport
- Policy ED1: Employment Allocations
- Policy RD1: Residential Development Allocations
- Policy RD2: Gypsy and Traveller Sites Allocations
- Policy C1: Transport Network and Accessibility
- Policy HC2: Retail and Town Centre Allocations
- Policy HC7: Visitor Attractions
- Policy HC9: Mixed Use Areas

Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar

Recreational Pressure

- 4.19 For the reasons already discussed for the Mersey Estuary, several policies in the revised Halton Local Plan are likely to lead to LSEs on the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar:
- Policy CS(R)1: Halton's Spatial Strategy
 - Policy CS(R)3: Housing Supply and Locational Priorities
 - Policy CS(R)14: Gypsy & Travellers
 - Policy CS(R)17: Liverpool John Lennon Airport
 - Policy RD1: Residential Development Allocations
 - Policy RD2: Gypsy and Traveller Sites Allocations
 - Policy C1: Transport Network and Accessibility
 - Policy HC2: Retail and Town Centre Allocations
- 4.20 Due to the distance of the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar to the residential development allocated in the Halton Local Plan, it is considered that a likely significant effect through recreational pressure on this site will only arise in-combination with the plans of surrounding authorities, notably those in the Liverpool City Region.

Water Quality

- 4.21 Similarly to the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar, the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar are susceptible to changes in water quality. The Halton Local Plan, through the provision of housing, employment and other mixed-use development (and associated waste water discharge), has the potential to result in a deterioration of water quality in this European Site. While this is unlikely to be material from Halton alone it requires further consideration 'in combination' with growth in the other Liverpool City Region Local Plans.
- 4.22 The following policies have been screened in for Appropriate Assessment, as they will result in Likely Significant Effects on the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar in relation to the impact pathway water quality:
- Policy CS(R)1: Halton's Spatial Strategy
 - Policy CS(R)3: Housing Supply and Locational Priorities
 - Policy CS(R)4: Employment Land Supply
 - Policy ED1: Employment Allocations
 - Policy RD1: Residential Development Allocations
 - Policy RD2: Gypsy and Traveller Sites Allocations
 - Policy HC2: Retail and Town Centre Allocations
 - Policy HC9: Mixed Use Areas

Manchester Mosses SAC

Atmospheric Pollution

- 4.23 Under Local Plans as they stand (2019), approximately 85,545 new dwellings and at least 1,500ha of commercial development will be delivered across the Liverpool City Region over the next 20 years (including the 8,050 dwellings to be delivered in Halton).
- 4.24 Several Plan policies have the potential to contribute to an increase in atmospheric pollution by facilitating the delivery of net new housing and employment and have been screened in for

Appropriate Assessment. While this is unlikely to be material from Halton alone it requires further consideration 'in combination' with growth in the other Liverpool City Region Local Plans:

- Policy CS(R)1: Halton's Spatial Strategy
- Policy CS(R)3: Housing Supply and Locational Priorities
- Policy CS(R)4: Employment Land Supply
- Policy CS(R)14: Gypsy & Travellers
- Policy CS(R)17: Liverpool John Lennon Airport
- Policy ED1: Employment Allocations
- Policy RD1: Residential Development Allocations
- Policy RD2: Gypsy and Traveller Sites Allocations
- Policy C1: Transport Network and Accessibility
- Policy HC2: Retail and Town Centre Allocations
- Policy HC7: Visitor Attractions
- Policy HC9: Mixed Use Areas

Oak Mere SAC

Atmospheric Pollution

- 4.25 Due to the cumulative growth in surrounding authorities, particularly the 22,000 homes to be provided in Cheshire West and Chester, it is possible that an in combination atmospheric pollution effect exists. The growth allocated in Cheshire West and Chester up to 2030 is directly served by the major roads A54 and A556, which lead directly past the Oak Mere SAC. The development allocations provided in the Halton Local Plan might contribute to the overall atmospheric pollution.
- 4.26 Looking at the available journey-to-work traffic data, approximately 18% of journeys to work by car arising from Halton are into Cheshire West & Chester. While it is likely that some car journeys arising in Halton will contribute to traffic flows on the A54, A556 and A49, none of these are key routes for traffic movements between Halton and Cheshire West & Chester. Most Halton residents, and especially those in the large urban centres, are likely to use the M56 to reach the main employment areas in Ellesmere and Chester, while the A533 provides a more suitable commuting corridor to the employment areas in Northwich. Therefore, and given the distance between Halton and Oak Mere SAC (10km at its closest), it is concluded that Halton Borough's contribution to traffic movements along the Oak Mere SAC is effectively inconsequential, especially when compared to that arising from Cheshire West & Chester and parts of north Wales.
- 4.27 The HRA for the adopted Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan Part One (2015) investigated a potential in-combination effect of atmospheric pollution, accounting for the growth in surrounding districts. It concluded that no Likely Significant Effects on Oak Mere SAC would arise due to increasing traffic either alone or in-combination with other Plans.
- 4.28 It is therefore concluded that the Halton Local Plan will not lead to Likely Significant Effects on the Oak Mere SAC regarding the impact pathway atmospheric pollution, neither alone nor in-combination. This impact pathway is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

River Dee and Bala Lake SAC

Water Resources

- 4.29 The provision of 8,050 new residential dwellings, 180ha of employment space, and retail and warehousing development in the Halton Local Plan has the potential to affect the River Dee and Bala Lake SAC regarding the impact pathway of water resources. Due to the integrated nature of water supply across Greater Manchester and Merseyside it is not possible or necessary to

consider the impacts of the Plan in isolation. This impact pathway inherently needs to be considered 'in combination' with all other planned growth across the United Utilities supply area.

- 4.30 Halton Borough is located within United Utilities Integrated Water Resource Zone. The HRA⁵¹ for the adopted United Utilities Water Resource Management Plan (2015) does not rely on any schemes that are hydrologically linked to the River Dee and Bala Lake SAC. As such it is considered that the Halton's Plan will not result in Likely Significant Effects regarding the impact pathways water quality and resources, alone or in-combination. This impact pathway is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

Sefton Coast SAC

Recreational Pressure

- 4.31 As for the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar, the increase in residential housing is likely to lead to an increase in the number of recreational visits to the Sefton Coast SAC. The sand dunes and their specialised plant communities, which are the qualifying feature of this site, are very susceptible to recreational trampling. Given this, several policies in the Halton Local Plan are likely to lead to LSEs on the Sefton Coast SAC by permitting net new housing development associated with a net increase in the population or a change in the population demographic (for example, retirees have more recreational time available):

- Policy CS(R)1: Halton's Spatial Strategy
- Policy CS(R)3: Housing Supply and Locational Priorities
- Policy CS(R)14: Gypsy & Travellers
- Policy CS(R)17: Liverpool John Lennon Airport
- Policy RD1: Residential Development Allocations
- Policy RD2: Gypsy and Traveller Sites Allocations
- Policy C1: Transport Network and Accessibility
- Policy HC2: Retail and Town Centre Allocations

- 4.32 Due to the distance of the Sefton Coast SAC to the residential development allocated in the Halton Local Plan, it is considered that recreational pressure issues on this site will only arise in-combination with plans of surrounding authorities, particularly the other Local Plans of the Liverpool City Region.

Atmospheric Pollution

- 4.33 The Sefton Coast SAC, particularly the sand dune procession and petalwort population, is susceptible to atmospheric pollution in the form of nitrogen deposition. The most notable source of nitrogen related to the Halton Local Plan is an increase in the number of car journeys as a consequence of housing and business development. The level of sulphur deposition will mainly be determined by shipping and air-based travel.

- 4.34 Several Plan policies have the potential to contribute to an increase in atmospheric pollution affecting the Sefton Coast SAC which needs further consideration. This includes policies that could increase car usage, particularly within 200m of the Sefton Coast SAC, and the number of flights traversing the Sefton Coast SAC:

- Policy CS(R)1: Halton's Spatial Strategy
- Policy CS(R)3: Housing Supply and Locational Priorities
- Policy CS(R)4: Employment Land Supply
- Policy CS(R)17: Liverpool John Lennon Airport

⁵¹ https://www.unitedutilities.com/globalassets/z_corporate-site/about-us-pdfs/water-resources/hra-addendum-revised-draft-wrmp.pdf [accessed 09/07/2019]

- Policy ED1: Employment Allocations
- Policy RD1: Residential Development Allocations
- Policy RD2: Gypsy and Traveller Sites Allocations
- Policy C1: Transport Network and Accessibility
- Policy HC2: Retail and Town Centre Allocations
- Policy HC7: Visitor Attractions
- Policy HC9: Mixed Use Areas

Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar and SAC

Recreational Pressure

4.35 The increase in residential development is likely to lead to an increase in the number of recreational visits to the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar and SAC. The waterfowl and tern species for which this site is designated are susceptible to the impacts of recreational disturbance. Given this, several policies in the Halton Local Plan are likely to lead to LSEs on the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar and SAC:

- Policy CS(R)1: Halton's Spatial Strategy
- Policy CS(R)3: Housing Supply and Locational Priorities
- Policy CS(R)14: Gypsy & Travellers
- Policy CS(R)17: Liverpool John Lennon Airport
- Policy RD1: Residential Development Allocations
- Policy RD2: Gypsy and Traveller Sites Allocations
- Policy C1: Transport Network and Accessibility
- Policy HC2: Retail and Town Centre Allocations

4.36 Due to the distance of the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar and SAC to the residential development allocated in the Plan, it is considered that recreational pressure issues on this site will only arise in-combination with plans of surrounding authorities, notably the Liverpool City Region and Cheshire West & Chester.

Atmospheric Pollution

4.37 The Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar and SAC are susceptible to atmospheric pollution in the form of nitrogen and sulphur deposition. The most notable source of nitrogen related to the Halton Local Plan is an increase in the number of car journeys as a consequence of housing and business development. The level of sulphur deposition will mainly be determined by shipping and air-based travel.

4.38 Several Plan policies have the potential to contribute to an increase in atmospheric pollution affecting the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar and SAC. This includes policies that could increase car usage on roads within 200m of the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar and SAC, and the number of flights passing over the site. While this is unlikely to be material from Halton alone it requires further consideration 'in combination' with growth in the other Liverpool City Region Local Plans:

- Policy CS(R)1: Halton's Spatial Strategy
- Policy CS(R)3: Housing Supply and Locational Priorities
- Policy CS(R)4: Employment Land Supply
- Policy CS(R)17: Liverpool John Lennon Airport
- Policy ED1: Employment Allocations
- Policy RD1: Residential Development Allocations

- Policy RD2: Gypsy and Traveller Sites Allocations
- Policy C1: Transport Network and Accessibility
- Policy HC2: Retail and Town Centre Allocations
- Policy HC7: Visitor Attractions
- Policy HC9: Mixed Use Areas

Water Quality and Resources

- 4.39 The Dee Estuary SAC designation covers the actual Dee Estuary and the North Wirral Foreshore. There are therefore similar potential water quality issues present as there are on the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar (see earlier TOLSE).
- 4.40 The Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar and SAC is susceptible to changes in water quality. The Halton Local Plan, through the provision of housing, employment and other mixed-use development (and associated waste water discharge), has the potential to result in a deterioration of water quality in this European Site. While this is unlikely to be material from Halton alone it requires further consideration 'in combination' with growth in the other Liverpool City Region Local Plans.
- 4.41 The following policies have been screened in for Appropriate Assessment, as they will result in Likely Significant Effects on the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar in relation to the impact pathway water quality:
- Policy CS(R)1: Halton's Spatial Strategy
 - Policy CS(R)3: Housing Supply and Locational Priorities
 - Policy CS(R)4: Employment Land Supply
 - Policy ED1: Employment Allocations
 - Policy RD1: Residential Development Allocations
 - Policy RD2: Gypsy and Traveller Sites Allocations
 - Policy HC2: Retail and Town Centre Allocations
 - Policy HC9: Mixed Use Areas
- 4.42 Regarding the water resources impact pathway, it is concluded that no increased abstraction from European sites will be required to service new development in Halton (or elsewhere within the Integrated Supply Zone). The risk of abstraction at inappropriate times of the year (such as periods of low flow) will be prevented by the Environment Agency's licensing regime and Review of Consents process.
- 4.43 As such it is considered that the Plan will not result in Likely Significant Effects on the SPA and Ramsar and SAC regarding the impact pathway water resources, alone and in-combination with other Plans. This component of the impact pathway is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar

Recreational Pressure

- 4.44 As for the other estuaries relevant to the Revised Halton Local Plan, the increase in residential housing is likely to lead to an increase in the number of recreational visits to the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar, particularly its southern part that is contiguous with the Sefton Coast SAC. The passage and overwintering waterfowl, which is the qualifying feature of this site, is potentially susceptible to recreational disturbance. Given this, several policies in the revised Halton Local Plan are likely to lead to LSEs on the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar:
- Policy CS(R)1: Halton's Spatial Strategy
 - Policy CS(R)3: Housing Supply and Locational Priorities

- Policy CS(R)14: Gypsy & Travellers
- Policy CS(R)17: Liverpool John Lennon Airport
- Policy RD1: Residential Development Allocations
- Policy RD2: Gypsy and Traveller Sites Allocations
- Policy C1: Transport Network and Accessibility
- Policy HC2: Retail and Town Centre Allocations

4.45 Due to the distance of the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar to Halton Core Borough of approx. 20km, it is considered that recreational pressure issues on this site will only arise in combination with plans of surrounding authorities, notably those of the Liverpool City Region.

Water Quality

4.46 The Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar is likely to be susceptible to changes in water quality mainly through the impact of nitrogen deposition on the prey communities of the qualifying waterfowl. Furthermore, an initial TOLSE of these impact pathways indicates that the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar is in hydrological connection with the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar in Halton, where the development is proposed. As such, it is expected that similar issues in relation to the Revised Halton Local Plan would arise. The Halton Local Plan, through the provision of housing, employment and other mixed-use development (and associated waste water discharge), has the potential to result in a deterioration of water quality in the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar.

4.47 The following policies have been screened in for Appropriate Assessment, as they will result in Likely Significant Effects on the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar in relation to the impact pathway water quality and resources. While this is unlikely to be material from Halton alone it requires further consideration 'in combination' with growth in the other Liverpool City Region Local Plans:

- Policy CS(R)1: Halton's Spatial Strategy
- Policy CS(R)3: Housing Supply and Locational Priorities
- Policy CS(R)4: Employment Land Supply
- Policy ED1: Employment Allocations
- Policy RD1: Residential Development Allocations
- Policy RD2: Gypsy and Traveller Sites Allocations
- Policy HC2: Retail and Town Centre Allocations
- Policy HC9: Mixed Use Areas

Liverpool Bay SPA

Water Quality

4.48 The Liverpool Bay SPA is likely to be susceptible to changes in water quality through the impact of nitrogen from treated sewage effluent (resulting in changes in the prey communities) and potential direct toxicity of industrial pollutants. The Halton Local Plan, through the provision of housing, employment and other mixed-use development (and associated waste water discharge), has the potential to result in a deterioration of water quality in the Liverpool Bay SPA.

4.49 The following policies have been screened in for Appropriate Assessment, as they will result in Likely Significant Effects on the Liverpool Bay SPA in relation to the impact pathway water quality. While this is unlikely to be material from Halton alone it requires further consideration 'in combination' with growth in the other Liverpool City Region Local Plans

- Policy CS(R)1: Halton's Spatial Strategy
- Policy CS(R)3: Housing Supply and Locational Priorities

- Policy CS(R)4: Employment Land Supply
- Policy ED1: Employment Allocations
- Policy RD1: Residential Development Allocations
- Policy RD2: Gypsy and Traveller Sites Allocations
- Policy HC2: Retail and Town Centre Allocations
- Policy HC9: Mixed Use Areas

Recreational Pressure

4.50 The increase in residential housing in Halton Borough is likely to lead to an increase in the number of recreational visits to the Liverpool Bay SPA. The overwintering waterfowl, which is the qualifying feature of this site, is potentially susceptible to recreational disturbance and particularly the level of water-based activities. Given this, several policies in the revised Halton Local Plan are likely to lead to LSEs on the Liverpool Bay SPA:

- Policy CS(R)1: Halton's Spatial Strategy
- Policy CS(R)3: Housing Supply and Locational Priorities
- Policy CS(R)14: Gypsy & Travellers
- Policy CS(R)17: Liverpool John Lennon Airport
- Policy RD1: Residential Development Allocations
- Policy RD2: Gypsy and Traveller Sites Allocations
- Policy C1: Transport Network and Accessibility
- Policy HC2: Retail and Town Centre Allocations

4.51 Due to the distance of the Liverpool Bay SPA to Halton Borough and other coastal destinations being considerably closer, it is considered that recreational pressure issues on this site will only arise in-combination with plans of surrounding authorities, notably those of the Liverpool City Region.

River Eden SAC

Water Resources

4.52 The provision of 8,050 new residential dwellings and 180ha of employment space outlined in the Halton Local Plan has the potential to result in negative impacts on abstraction since the River Eden is a key part of the overall water supply network for United Utilities in this area. Due to the integrated nature of water supply across Greater Manchester and Merseyside it is not possible, or indeed warranted, to consider the impacts of the Halton Local Plan alone. Instead, the impact pathway of water level needs to be considered in-combination with Plans of surrounding authorities.

4.53 Halton is located within United Utilities Integrated Water Resource Zone. The HRA⁵² of the adopted United Utilities Water Resource Management Plan (2015) does not provide for any scheme that is hydrologically connected with the River Eden SAC. As such it is determined that the Plan will not result in Likely Significant Effects on the River Eden SAC regarding the impact pathway of water quality and resources, both alone and in-combination with other Plans. This impact pathway is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

⁵² https://www.unitedutilities.com/globalassets/z_corporate-site/about-us-pdfs/water-resources/hra-addendum-revised-draft-wrmp.pdf [accessed 09/07/2019]

5. Appropriate Assessment

Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar

Roles of Other Projects and Plans

The other projects and plans considered as part of the in combination assessment for this European site are below.

Projects (not otherwise covered by Plans)

- Sandon Dock Waste Water Treatment Works outfall extension - to reduce adverse effects on estuary marshes the work to extend the outfall will take place on the opposite bank to the Egremont Shore section of the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore Ramsar and SPA site (containing Mersey Narrows SSSI) but may still have an impact on the designated features of the SPA through the construction of the extended pipe. There may be issues relating to changes in sedimentation patterns altering the position of sand banks;
- Mersey Tidal Power - Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) approved £650,000 of funding to complete work on a business case for the proposed Mersey tidal energy project at a meeting held on July 27 2018. The implications of this project cannot be assessed in detail since, although three options are being considered, each has very different characteristics and potential implications for European sites. However, such a scheme could affect coastal processes within the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar site, Liverpool Bay SPA and potentially the Mersey Narrows & North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar site.

Plans

- Mersey Ports Masterplan, including the Port expansion into Seaforth Nature Reserve and the Seaforth River Terminal (a deepwater container port expansion in Sefton is currently under construction and due for completion imminently), new opportunities for renewable energy, development of single and multi-user port centric warehousing and of new processing facilities for imported commodities. potentially leading to the Liverpool SuperPort – An integrated port, airport, intermodal terminal, freight and commercial network based upon the Port of Liverpool, the Manchester Ship Canal, Liverpool John Lennon Airport and the Mersey Multimodal Gateway (Liverpool City Region).
- Liverpool John Lennon Airport Masterplan – potential impacts due to increased sulphur and nitrogen deposition from aircraft, loss of supporting foraging/high-tide roost habitat and possible disturbance of waterfowl from noise. This also forms part of the Halton Local Plan (and Liverpool Local Plan) so is discussed alongside policy CS(R)17;
- North West England & North Wales Shoreline Management Plan 2 – possible impacts due to the maintenance or enhancement of flood defences could lead to coastal squeeze, changes in sediment release (if previously undefended areas become defended) and direct loss of habitat to flood defence footprint;
- Local Plans or Core Strategies for Liverpool, Cheshire West and Chester, Cheshire East, Trafford, Warrington, Knowsley, Sefton, Wirral and St Helens and Liverpool and Wirral Waters Development masterplans – possible water quality, air quality and wildfowl disturbance impacts as a result of delivery of 110,000 dwellings and associated commercial development over the next 20 years. The Warrington and Liverpool Local Plans in particular could both involve landtake of functionally-linked land around the Mersey Estuary SPA. For the Liverpool Local Plan this would be via the expansion of Liverpool John Lennon Airport, which proposes the release of greenbelt for the airport; this includes functionally linked habitat on land in close proximity to Halton's administrative boundary. For Warrington Local Plan site (MD1 Warrington Waterfront) lies close to the River Mersey south-west of Warrington and partially within Moore Nature Reserve which is known to be a significant area for wintering gulls, waterfowl and waders. However, the layout of the development avoids the key areas for these species as indicated by the Cheshire Bird Atlas which are mostly further west or associated

with the waterbodies of the reserve, preserving those areas as greenspace or a 160ha country park; and

- Joint Waste Local Plan for Merseyside and Halton – possible impacts due to water quality, air quality and wildfowl disturbance or chick predation. However, since this DPD is itself subject a recent HRA it will address its own contribution to any ‘in combination’ effect that may otherwise arise.

Recap of Likely Significant Effects

5.1 The TOLSE of Halton’s revised Core Strategy policies and the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan undertaken in Appendices C, D and E identified the following linking impact pathways requiring further consideration:

- Loss of functionally linked land;
- Visual and noise disturbance;
- Recreational pressure;
- Water quality;
- Water flows; and
- Atmospheric pollution.

Loss of Functionally Linked Land

5.2 TOLSE of the Plan policies identified several policies and site allocations, which may result in the loss of functionally linked land. This section details the Appropriate Assessment of these policies / site allocations in relation to the impact pathway loss of functionally linked land.

5.3 As background, some initial work was undertaken to establish the location of several key supporting habitat sites for qualifying bird species within Merseyside⁵³, which has been supplemented by more recent local work in Halton to support the Mersey Gateway Bridge planning applications. This included an assessment of sites both within and adjacent to the SPA and Ramsar. It established that The Weaver Bend (south-west Runcorn) supports nationally important numbers of roosting golden plover and locally important numbers of feeding dunlin. Additionally, Hale and its associated mudflats and sand bars have been identified as the most important site surveyed on the north shore of the Mersey. Locally important numbers of feeding, roosting and loafing common shelduck and dunlin were recorded at this site.

5.4 According to the Mersey Gateway Bridge Environmental Statement Widnes Warth on the north of the River Mersey (outside the designated site boundary) is of significance for teal (dozens to approximately 100 were recorded), but also supports small numbers of shelduck, redshank and curlew. Astmoor saltmarsh to the south of the River Mersey (also outside the site boundary) supports a similar assemblage. Widnes Warth also had occasional records of cormorants and flocks of up to 150-200 herring gulls and lesser black-backed gulls, but these were of rare occurrence. While Widnes Warth is already fairly disturbed by human presence, disturbance at Astmoor marsh is lower because the saltmarsh is relatively remote from the central parts of Widnes and Runcorn. Access to the central and eastern parts of the saltmarsh is restricted by fencing around the eastern landfill site, and discouraged in the west, with no public footpaths alongside the edge of the saltmarsh. Hides with views over the saltmarsh are provided as part of the visitor centre facilities.

5.5 North of the River Mersey, the farmland around the Hale Marsh section of the SPA and Ramsar site, and the Local Nature Reserve Pickering's Pasture are located to the east of Hale Village between Hale and Widnes and at least some of this land is likely to constitute functionally linked habitat for the birds of Hale Marsh and the SPA and Ramsar site.

5.6 To inform the TOLSE stage of this HRA (Appendix E) the Cheshire Bird Atlas (2008)⁵⁴ was initially used to assess if other land parcels could potentially act as functionally linked land for SPA/

⁵³ RSK (2010) Mersey Feasibility Study Winter Bird Report

⁵⁴ <http://www.cheshireandwirralbirdatlas.org/> [accessed 09/07/2019]

Ramsar birds. While the Cheshire Bird Atlas (surveys undertaken between 2004 and 2007) shows birds that were recorded in a given 4km² tetrad, it does not identify the abundance of that species (i.e. it does not identify if a tetrad supports significant populations of a species). Interrogation of these data suggests that the Hale area could be a key area for pink footed goose⁵⁵.

- 5.7 Having screened in a long list of sites requiring more detailed desk study and site walkovers to inform this appropriate assessment (see Appendix E), Halton Borough Council then commissioned Avian Ecology to undertake an initial scoping exercise for all allocated housing and employment sites that were identified as being potentially suitable for wintering or passage birds. This exercise involved a formal records search using the following resources: Cheshire rECOrd, Merseyside Biobank, BTO Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS), Cheshire and Wirral Ornithological Society (CAWOS), review of online migration recording services (BTO 'birdtrack', and 'Trekellen') and review of exiting planning applications and consents where these relate to study areas. Each study area was then subject to a walk-over survey in order to verify the suitability or otherwise for wetland bird species. That exercise reduced the list of suitable areas to three sites: W13, W24 (including educational site EDU3) and H1.
- 5.8 Detailed bird surveys^{56 57 58} were then undertaken of these three sites in order to determine whether they constitute significant functionally linked land for the SPA and Ramsar. These bird surveys were carried out in the autumn and winter of 2018 and in spring 2019, to capture the relevant passage and overwintering periods of the wildfowl. The data indicate that, while SPA birds use some other land parcels nearby (discussed in the AA section for visual and noise disturbance), none of the qualifying species were found to directly use any of the allocated sites for feeding and / or roosting. It is recognised that these are data from a single autumn to spring period. However, according to the best available evidence referred to above, there is no indication that these site allocations are functionally linked to the Mersey Estuary SPA / Ramsar and other European Sites.
- 5.9 The assessment above, and the work undertaken by Avian Ecology, addresses the sites allocated in the Halton Plan. **It is recommended that Halton Borough Council take the following approach to protection of functionally-linked land:**
- **Add more specific wording to Policy HE1 (Natural Environment) to ensure stricter policy requirements are in place which require future development proposals both on allocated and non-allocated sites to adequately assess and mitigate loss of supporting habitat, including the provision of compensatory habitat. This has now been added to Policy HE1.**
 - **To reaffirm that no allocated sites constitute functionally-linked land, it is recommended that a second season of survey is undertaken to support planning applications where potentially suitable habitat exists, as two years of survey data will typically be required to confirm that a site is not functionally-linked land. This can then inform an ecological constraints and opportunities plan (in line with Policy HE1) to identify (as necessary) any mitigation areas or possibilities to retain the functionally-linked areas as part of the development.**
 - **Require project-level investigations for any unallocated development sites as they come forward. The applicant will be required to provide evidence that the development will not result in adverse effects on site integrity. To prove this, surveys will be required to determine habitats and current use of the site to verify if it is in fact suitable to support a significant population⁵⁹ of qualifying species. Where habitats are suitable, non-breeding bird surveys will be required to determine if the site and neighbouring land constitute a significant area of supporting habitat. In line with other Merseyside**

⁵⁵ This is not a designated feature of the Mersey Estuary designated sites, but is a designated feature of the Ribble and Alt Estuaries designated sites, so still relevant.

⁵⁶ Avian Ecology. 2018. Halton HRA Bird Surveys on behalf of Halton Borough Council – Non-breeding Bird Survey Interim Report 1 Autumn. 22pp.

⁵⁷ Avian Ecology. 2018. Halton HRA Bird Surveys on behalf of Halton Borough Council – Non-breeding Bird Survey Interim Report 2 Winter. 21pp.

⁵⁸ Avian Ecology. 2019. Halton HRA Bird Surveys on behalf of Halton Borough Council – Non-breeding Bird Survey Interim Report 3 Spring. 22pp.

⁵⁹ A significant population is classified as a site that regularly used by more than 1% of the population of qualifying bird species

Authorities, surveys should be required to be undertaken during autumn, winter and spring. Typically, two years of bird data would be required to establish whether a parcel of land represents functionally linked habitat. The scope of survey to collect bird data and the scope of the subsequent project-level HRA should be agreed with the Council, its environmental advisors and where appropriate Natural England. If habitat within the site or adjacent land is identified to support significant populations of designated bird features, mitigation and / or avoidance measures will be required and the planning application will likely need to be supported by a project-specific Habitats Regulations Assessment to ensure that the development does not result in adverse effects on site integrity. It is recognised that this text is too long to be included in a policy, it should be inserted into the supporting text of a relevant policy, such as Policy HE1 (Natural Environment). Wording to address this recommendation has now been added to the supporting text of this policy.

- 5.10 With the above mitigation recommendations incorporated into the plan, it is concluded that the Plan would not result in adverse effects on the site integrity of the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar regarding the impact pathway loss of functionally linked land.

Liverpool John Lennon Airport

- 5.11 The proposals for the expansion of the Liverpool John Lennon Airport present a range of possible impact pathways to the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar, including the loss of functionally linked supporting habitat, visual and noise disturbance, and increases in water and atmospheric pollution. Details regarding the Liverpool John Lennon Airport (LJLA) expansion are set out in the Masterplan and a recent Shadow Habitat Regulations Assessment was also prepared. This evidence base is discussed in the sections, but it is necessary to take into account the advice of Advocate-General Kokott⁶⁰ with regard to the level of detail that is necessary for appropriate assessment at the Local Plan level. Specifically, she commented that: *'It would ...hardly be proper to require a greater level of detail in preceding plans [rather than planning applications] or the abolition of multi-stage planning and approval procedures so that the assessment of implications can be concentrated on one point in the procedure. Rather, adverse effects on areas of conservation must be assessed at every relevant stage of the procedure to the extent possible on the basis of the precision of the plan. This assessment is to be updated with increasing specificity in subsequent stages of the procedure'* [emphasis added].
- 5.12 This is particularly relevant because the masterplan for the airport involves a series of potential impact pathways, many of which require further data collation and detailed impact assessment before they can be entirely resolved and the fullest examination of the effects of both proposals depends on the precise details of the specific projects and planning applications that will fall out of the Masterplans. The approach taken in this HRA regarding the airport expansion therefore follows Advocate-General Kokott's advice, given the high-level nature of the relevant Local Plan policies, and concentrates on whether there is any 'in principle' reason to conclude that the expansion of the airport would prove inherently undeliverable due to conflict with the ecological interests of the European sites.
- 5.13 The expansion of the Liverpool John Lennon Airport is an explicit element of national government policy as set out in the White Paper 'The Future of Air Transport' (2003). The 'Liverpool John Lennon Airport Masterplan to 2050' (March 2018)⁶¹ details the construction of new terminal facilities, with additional car-parking, as well as new cargo handling and aircraft maintenance facilities, a mixed-use development and hotel. Clearly therefore there is an 'in combination' linkage to the broader objectives of the Liverpool City Region Mayoral Combined Authority (and individual Local Plans such as that for Halton Borough) to cater to an increased population and expand employment and economic development across the region. The airport operator also envisages an extension to the runway, extension of the northern parallel taxiway and additional apron areas and the Eastern Access Transport Corridor (EATC). There would also be a requirement for an expanded fuel farm facility and a wastewater treatment plant to serve the new cargo facilities. Although planning permission exists for a terminal extension at the western end

⁶⁰ Opinion of Advocate General Kokott, 9th June 2005, Case C-6/04. Commission of the European Communities v United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, paragraph 49.
<http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?docid=58359&doclang=EN>

⁶¹ John Lennon Liverpool Airport Masterplan March 2018. <https://www.liverpoolairport.com/media/2957/liverpool-john-lennon-airport-master-plan-to-2050.pdf> [accessed 04/10/2018]

of the existing building, the majority of the masterplan is still to be consented and not all the expansion proposals fall within the boundary of Liverpool (with some lying in neighbouring Halton). There is therefore a potential 'in combination' effect with the proposals of surrounding authorities to deliver increased housing and employment which may in turn result in the loss of functionally-linked land for birds in the Hale area associated with the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar and the Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar.

5.14 Regarding the LJLA expansion it should be noted that the vast majority of expansion proposals lie within the City of Liverpool; the only aspect within Halton is a relatively small section of runway extension. Thus, most Masterplan proposals lie outside the control of Halton Borough Council. . However, the entire proposals (in both Liverpool and Halton) are discussed below to provide an accurate picture of the entire project.

5.15 For the 2007 version of the Masterplan a suite of ecological surveys were undertaken in connection with this Masterplan on land within and adjacent to JLA and on areas required for expansion⁶². Importantly, these findings represent the interpretation of the consultants only, and would be assessed by MEAS and Natural England at the project-level stage. These data are considered here only to provide the fullest assessment possible at this broad Local Plan level stage. The following was identified by Liverpool John Lennon Airport⁶³:

- the majority of waterfowl feeding on the shore at low water use the area between Garston and the western end of the runway. On most tides many of these birds remain to roost, moving up the shore with the tide. A relatively high level of disturbance to both feeding and roosting birds occurs here due to the use of the shore by walkers, dogs, quad bikes and four-wheel drive vehicles;
- no disturbance to the feeding behaviour of birds due to aircraft was observed in any month except on abnormally high tides when roosting flocks are pushed right up to the toe of the cliff. At such times they are at their most susceptible to disturbance from all sources. During all other tide states, including more regular high tide heights, no disturbance effects from aircraft were observed;
- most feeding birds move a relatively short distance along the shore before pitching again, but roosting birds may move directly to the cliff top and small flocks of waders have been observed feeding over the high tide period on remaining amenity grassland in the Liverpool International Business Park. Towards the end of winter 2005/06 small flocks of waders were observed on the new Coastal Reserve grassland areas. No displaced birds (either off or along the shore by disturbance from any source) were observed passing through the flightpath of aircraft approaching or taking off from JLA;
- sporadic disturbance of roosting waterfowl by aircraft was observed at the eastern (Hale) end of the survey area. Most waterfowl movements recorded are flocks travelling along the shoreline at all tide states, with occasional inshore movement being observed. Inshore movement is primarily by individuals and small flocks of curlews that feed on the farmland between Hale Heath and Rabbit Hey at all tide states;
- movements were low and local, between the shore and adjacent land. No birds were seen crossing the airport flightpath during any survey visit, although single birds or small flocks of curlew have occasionally been recorded feeding on the fields north of Hale Heath. Curlew is not a qualifying species for the SPA and Ramsar, other than as part of the total assemblage, and at most, tens of birds have been recorded feeding in this area; and
- since the number of disturbed birds was very low and displaced birds moved only short distances, it was considered that there would be no significant impact on feeding or roosting birds, and thus no adverse effects on the site integrity of the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar.

⁶² John Lennon Liverpool Airport Masterplan November 2007

http://www.liverpoolairport.com/assets/files/documents/oct_08/peel_1224146206_12_Master_Plan_Chapter_11.pdf

⁶³ It should be noted that neither MEAS or Natural England necessarily concur with the full analysis presented in these bullet points

- 5.16 Since that time, further bird surveys have been carried out. The most recent (March 2018) Masterplan⁶⁴, it is to be noted that the plan is a non-statutory document, states that '*extensive surveys were carried out*' and that '*High and low water surveys for waterfowl and waders, covering the same areas together with the adjacent Mersey shore have been carried out for six consecutive winters since 2005/06... With the benefit of six full winters of surveys, particular importance was placed [in devising the Masterplan] on ensuring that there would be no adverse effect on the integrity of the internationally important Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar Site.*' However, it is noted that these surveys were undertaken 6 or 7 years ago and as such are no longer considered to provide up-to-date information of the use of site by designated bird features. Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service (MEAS) was not involved in scoping the 2005-2011 surveys.
- 5.17 It is understood that these surveys were updated in winter 2017/2018 to support future planning applications. The 2017/2018 surveys were undertaken between August 2017 and mid-April 2018 within the area of the Oglet. The findings are presented in detail within the Shadow HRA to support the Liverpool John Lennon Airport development⁶⁵. Importantly, it is to be recognised here that the Shadow HRA has no formal status within the Liverpool Local Plan process and has not been consulted on by Natural England. Notwithstanding this, it provides additional evidence on the presence of qualifying bird species in the Oglet (which is in any event in Liverpool rather than Halton) and is discussed here for completeness. The Masterplan details the provision of '*Employment and aviation-related uses*' within the Oglet, which could result in the loss of significant areas of functionally linked land. The Shadow HRA details the bird surveys that were undertaken in the Oglet between August 2017 and mid-April 2018. It identified that the Oglet provides suitable habitats to support European species, such as small farmland fields of arable and other vegetable crops and grassland, divided by hedgerows. The Shadow HRA found that the Oglet was used by three bird species that were either qualifying features of the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar or which constituted part of the assemblage for which the European site is designated. The following are notable results:
- Redshank is a qualifying species of the SPA and Ramsar. It was recorded on two occasions during the 32 counts indicating that the Oglet is infrequently used by this species. A peak count of 18 individuals represents considerably less than 1% of the population for which the SPA and Ramsar is designated (4,513 individual redshank on passage and 4,993 wintering individuals). Based on these data the Oglet provides some functionally linked supporting habitat for redshank but the level of use indicates it does not play a significant role in enabling the SPA and Ramsar to meet its conservation objectives for this species.
 - Curlew comprises part of the assemblage for which the SPA is designated. Curlew was recorded on 17 occasions during the 32 counts indicating that the Oglet is used regularly by this species. A peak count of 85 individuals was recorded during high tide in November 2017. Since they form part of the SPA assemblage, the site is not designated for a specific population size of curlew. However, based on the most recent WeBS counts of 1,994 individuals⁶⁶, a peak count of 85 is more than 1% of the SPA population. Curlew numbers exceeded this 1% threshold on six occasions which indicates that the Oglet does play a significant role in enabling the SPA and Ramsar to meet its conservation objectives for this species. As such, mitigation would be needed to ensure that development of the Oglet did not result in an adverse effect on the integrity of the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar.
 - Lapwing also comprises part of the assemblage for which the SPA is designated. Lapwing was recorded on 20 occasions during the 32 counts, indicating that the Oglet is used regularly by this species. A peak count of 189 individuals was recorded. As with curlew, population numbers for lapwing associated with the SPA assemblage is not identified; however, based on the most recent WeBS counts of 8,586 individuals⁶⁷, a peak count of 189 birds is more than 1% of the SPA population. This 1% threshold for lapwing was only observed on one occasion (October 2017). However, the Oglet is used regularly and the surveys reported above covered a single year. In the absence of further years of survey, it is considered that

⁶⁴ John Lennon Liverpool Airport Masterplan March 2018. <https://www.liverpoolairport.com/media/2957/liverpool-john-lennon-airport-master-plan-to-2050.pdf> [accessed 04/10/2018]

⁶⁵ Atmos Consulting (December 2018). Shadow HRA. Land south of Liverpool John Lennon Airport (unpublished).

⁶⁶ Ibid

⁶⁷ Ibid

the Oglet does play a significant role in enabling the SPA and Ramsar to meet its conservation objectives for this species. As such, mitigation would be needed to ensure that development of the Oglet did not result in an adverse effect on the integrity of the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar.

- 5.18 While the 2018 Masterplan does not present detailed mitigation proposals, it provides outline ideas for how habitat loss might be mitigated. It identifies increasing the scale, and diversifying the ecological value, of Speke Garston Coastal Reserve south of the airport as a measure. According to recent (2016 and 2017) surveys the current reserve provides little ecological value⁶⁸. The Masterplan states that: *'Expansion of LJLA presents an opportunity to establish an extension to the Speke Garston Coastal Reserve over a 3.5km (2.2mile) stretch of coast. This would more than double the extent of the existing Reserve, and create a nature conservation, heritage and recreational resource of regional significance that would be retained in perpetuity'*. The Masterplan also states that *'The Mersey Way footpath would be properly surfaced to increase the enjoyment of its use by walkers and cyclists and the route carefully laid out to minimise disturbance to wading birds resting on the shore from people on the cliff- top. Vehicular access to the area would be controlled to reduce the problem of fly tipping and environmentally damaging motor sports that currently affect the area'*.
- 5.19 It is clear that any proposals will require more detailed investigations at the project-specific level, including HRA, consultation with Natural England, detailed bird survey (i.e. to establish that any land proposed for development as part of the LJLA expansion is not functionally linked to the Mersey Estuary SPA / Ramsar) and – if the data show there is functional linkage – specific details on the nature and delivery of mitigation proposals, such as site works and implementations of an agreed Coastal Reserve Management Plan.
- 5.20 The recently produced LJLA Shadow HRA also provides some detail regarding the potential for mitigation, specifically in the form of at least 14ha of habitat within the Coastal Reserve area which could be managed for curlew and lapwing. Management measures proposed in the Shadow HRA include:
- Maintenance of the area as short grass (to be maintained either by grazing or mowing;
 - Removal and continued management of bushes or other barriers to line of site removed, including near ponds within the area;
 - Introduction of screening from the coastal path; and
 - Identification of the area as being sensitive for birds through signage, setting out for dogs to be on a lead at all times.
- 5.21 The Shadow HRA acknowledges that the 14ha area to be provided as mitigation is substantially smaller than the Oglet but argues that it would be available at full capacity all season whereas the suitability of the Oglet to SPA and Ramsar birds is dependent on recreational activities in the area.
- 5.22 Although these measures provide a useful start in ensuring an appropriate mitigation delivery, they have not yet been agreed with stakeholders such as MEAS or Natural England. The shadow HRA, in its current form, does not provide like-for-like mitigation for the loss of functionally linked land for SPA and Ramsar birds. Fuller detail will be required for these mitigation proposals to support any future planning application for the expansion, including confirmation that the management to keep the reserve suitable for SPA birds would not conflict with airport operations.
- 5.23 The location of development identified in Revised Policy CS(R)17: Liverpool John Lennon Airport (i.e. within the airport boundary and falling within Halton Borough boundary) has the potential to displace birds from functionally linked supporting habitat at Hale. The Liverpool John Lennon Airport Masterplan document⁶⁹ details that wintering bird surveys identified that birds which were using mudflat habitats were not disturbed by over-flying aircraft. However, the Masterplan did identify that sporadic disturbance of roosting waterfowl by aircraft at the eastern end (i.e. Hale in Halton Borough) of the survey area was observed. From review in google maps, the land parcels within Halton Borough that are allocated for the Liverpool John Lennon Airport are a mix of scrub

⁶⁸ MEAS, personal communication, December 2017

⁶⁹ Liverpool John Lennon Airport Masterplan to 2050. Consultation Draft June 2017
<https://www.liverpoolairport.com/media/2566/ljla-master-plan-to-2050-full-document-1.pdf> [accessed 09/07/2019]

with tall tussocky grassland, which is likely to be less suitable for SPA and Ramsar birds than other areas, such as the Oglet discussed above. Therefore, the land parcels identified by the Liverpool John Lennon Airport Masterplan in Halton Borough, may be less likely to constitute functionally linked land to the SPA and Ramsar.

- 5.24 Since planning permissions have not yet been granted (or even applied for) for most of the proposals, it cannot be assumed that they will pass the stringent tests set by the Habitats Directive⁷⁰. This is reflected in the Masterplan itself which does not presume permission for all its proposals. The Masterplan document states that this *'Master Plan is not an application for planning permission and will not of itself grant approval for any works. Development at LJLA will remain subject to the normal requirements for planning permission. This Master Plan provides a framework for setting out the Airport's longer term aspirations within which proposals can be considered and planning applications made as and when necessary, including informing the emerging Liverpool Local Plan. It is the intention of the Airport, to submit a planning application(s) to the relevant councils when the commercial circumstances are right. This will be subject to full and detailed assessments having regard to (among other things) the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017'*. Any planning application will need to be supported by up-to-date ecological evidence to enable the planning authorities to make an informed decision.
- 5.25 Having considered the potential effects of the Liverpool John Lennon Airport in some detail, it is also important to examine the wording of the Halton Local Plan policy, since it is ultimately the Local Plan for which this HRA is assessing legal compliance, rather than any particular detail of Peel Airports' expansion proposals. The relevant policy in the Liverpool Local Plan (EC7) also needs to be taken into consideration since the expansion proposals span Liverpool and Halton. Within this context it is noted that text within Revised Policy CS(R)17 (Liverpool John Lennon Airport) explicitly states that any expansion will only be permitted if environmental impacts associated with the operation and expansion of LJLA are addressed and that for European sites these measures must be sufficiently extensive to *'enable a conclusion of no adverse effect on integrity unless it can be demonstrated that there are both no alternatives and Imperative Reasons of Over-riding Public Interest'* (i.e. a project-level Appropriate Assessment will be required along with robust mitigation proposals).
- 5.26 Moreover, Policy EC7 of the Liverpool Local Plan (amended following Inspector's early comments) does not commit to a specific masterplan or proposal but simply expresses qualified support for the sustainable expansion of Liverpool Airport. The policy also makes Council support contingent on *'appropriate assessment of the potential environmental impacts referenced in criteria a) to c) below where such assessment has shown it necessary, the implementation of appropriate and proportionate mitigation measures to address potential environmental impacts associated with this growth ... With respect to internationally important sites (particularly the Mersey Estuary Special Protection Area and Ramsar site) proposals will need to incorporate measures that are acceptable to the appropriate statutory body and sufficiently extensive to enable a conclusion of no adverse effect on their integrity unless it can be demonstrated that there are both no alternatives and Imperative Reasons of Over-riding Public Interest'*. Moreover, Policy GI5 of the Liverpool Local Plan will apply to the airport expansion as much as any other developments and specifically states that development would not be permitted if it has an adverse effect on integrity without demonstrating IROPI and No Alternatives.
- 5.27 Given this, and taking into account that the vast majority of the expansion of LJLA is in Liverpool rather than Halton, it is considered that the policy in the Halton Local Plan coupled with policies EC7 and GI5 in the Liverpool Local Plan will adequately protect European sites.

Visual and noise disturbance

- 5.28 TOLSE of the Plan policies identified several policies and site allocations, which were screened in for effects relating to visual and noise disturbance. This section details the Appropriate

⁷⁰ In other words, if adverse effects on integrity cannot be avoided or otherwise removed, the applicant would need to demonstrate that there are a) No Alternatives to meeting the identified need, b) Imperative Reasons of Over-Riding Public Interest as to why the scheme should proceed despite the harm it causes to European sites and c) adequate compensatory habitat provision to ensure no net harm to the Natura 2000 network of sites

Assessment of these policies / site allocations and the impact pathway visual and noise disturbance in relation to the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar.

- 5.29 In meeting the needs of gypsies, travellers and travelling show people (the amended Policy CS(R)14: Gypsies & Travellers), HRA TOLSE identified a pathway for direct visual / noise disturbance on the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar depending on the location of allocated sites (this impact would not of course be unique to gypsy and traveller sites). This policy states that the Council will allocate '10 additional pitches in Halton over the GTAA period 2017'. However, it also states that in allocating sites a range of criteria will have to be met, including that *'the site would not lead to adverse effects on the integrity of the Mersey Estuary SPA and/or Ramsar site.'*
- 5.30 In addition, development at 'SEL2: 3MG, Widnes' (provided within Policy ED1: Employment Allocations) and 'SLR9: Halebank' (provided within policy RD1: Residential Development Allocations) may involve some disturbance impacts given the proximity to the SPA and Ramsar and the fact that land around Ditton has been identified from ad hoc sources as providing supporting habitat for SPA and Ramsar waterfowl⁷¹. However, Policy KA1: Halebank and Ditton Corridor provides explicit text to provide protection to Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar site: *'2. Development within the Halebank and Ditton Corridor Key Area of Change will be expected to comply with the following principles of development:... Avoid adverse effects on the integrity of the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar site thereby ensuring that there will be no net loss in supporting habitat for SPA and Ramsar waterfowl.'* With this policy framework in place it is concluded that there would not be adverse effects on the integrity of the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar through direct disturbance as a result of any of the policies proposed within the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan.
- 5.31 To provide an ornithological evidence base for the Halton Local Plan HRA, Halton Borough Council commissioned Avian Ecology to undertake bird surveys in order to determine whether significant populations of qualifying species of the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar are present on sites allocated for development. These bird surveys were carried out in the autumn and winter of 2018 and in spring 2019, to capture the relevant passage and overwintering periods of the wildfowl. Particular regard was given to residential allocations W13 and W24/EDU3 (referred to as Northern Allocations), and H1 (referred to as the Southern Allocation), as these were deemed to be the sites at highest risk of being significant functionally-linked land. The results of the surveys are discussed in the following:
- The surveys across all seasons (autumn, winter, spring) showed no evidence that SPA and Ramsar bird species used any of the allocated sites directly for feeding and / or roosting. None of these allocations is therefore functionally linked land (discussed in a later section). However, some fields near allocated sites are used by >1% of the SPA population estimate for given species, which is discussed in the following points.
 - The results of the autumn 2018 bird survey show that >1% of the SPA populations of golden plover and redshank use fields 24 and 34 in proximity to the Northern Allocations, and these therefore represent functionally linked land to the SPA and Ramsar. Field 24 lies adjacent to the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar but is buffered from residential allocations W13 and W24/EDU3 by a sewage treatment works and the Pickering Pasture Nature Reserve. However, field 34 lies directly adjacent to W24, with little buffer in between. Regarding the Southern Allocation, field 39 (a grazing marsh) was found to support >1% of the SPA population of teal, but it was determined that there was substantial spatial segregation to site allocation H1.
 - The winter 2018 / 2019 survey confirmed the importance of field 24 as functionally linked land, with >1% of the SPA populations of dunlin, golden plover, redshank and shelduck being present. No SPA birds were sighted on field 34 (identified as functionally linked land in the autumn survey). Regarding the Southern Allocation, field 39 supported >1% of the SPA populations of teal and pintail.

⁷¹Halton Borough Council (July 2007) Provision of Open Space SPD Habitat Regulations Assessment (Appropriate Assessment Stage)
<http://councillors.halton.gov.uk/Published/C00000292/M00002968/AI00005602/AppendixDOpenSpaceSPDfinalHRAAA.pdf>

- The most recent bird survey available, spring 2019, recorded >1% of the SPA population of golden plover in field 24. In field 10, just south to field 24, a significant population of redshank was documented.
- 5.32 Previous research on noise disturbance provides some guidance on whether development sites might require mitigation measures. Studies indicate that noise levels in excess of 84 dB(A) typically elicit a flight response in birds⁷² and it is recommended that construction noise levels are kept below 70 dB to avoid excessive disturbance of birds⁷³. Impact piling is known to be one of the noisiest forms of construction, emitting atmospheric noise of 100-110 dB at 1m from source. Since noise attenuates at a rate of 6 dB with every doubling distance, it follows that noise pollution from impact piling will have dropped to under 70 dB at 100m from the source. Note that as per paragraph 4.6 this does not mean that sites situated more distant from European sites or significant parcels of functionally linked land can be dismissed entirely without further examination at the application level; it is only intended to flag those sites where the risk is clearly greatest.
- 5.33 The use of a 200m screening distance indicates that construction work on site allocations W13 and W24 (incorporating educational site EDU3) pose the greatest risk of leading to noise disturbance of SPA birds on some of the fields depending on when and how they are undertaken. For example, field 34 lies directly adjacent to allocation W24 and field 24 lies within 100m of the boundary of allocation W13.
- 5.34 The magnitude of disturbance arising from noise is also highly species dependent. Redshank (found on field 24), are known to be highly sensitive to noise and might be flushed at noise levels of 72dB⁷⁴. For other species (e.g. dunlin and golden plover) present on field 24, while likely to be disturbed by excessive levels of noise, a noise level of 72 dB measured at the birds is likely to be acceptable, as birds will habituate to such noise levels⁷⁵. Given the close proximity of some of the surveyed fields to the proposed site allocations and the high sensitivity of some of the supported bird species, it is recommended that mitigation measures are incorporated into the relevant policies in order to avoid adverse effects on the integrity of the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar regarding the impact pathway visual and noise disturbance.
- 5.35 Regarding the noise disturbance resulting from the LJLA expansion, Appendix 6 of the Masterplan compares the predicted operational daytime and night-time noise contours for 2030 with noise contours from 2016. The comparison shows that noise contours will be similar in 2030 to 2016, with some areas experiencing reduced noise disturbance. However, at the western end, approaching Bebington, a small area of mudflat will be exposed to daytime noise above 54dB, and therefore more noise pollution than was the case in 2016. Given that the airport expansion will not result in operational noise disturbance beyond the current disturbance level, it is concluded that the expansion would not have adverse effects on the integrity of the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar regarding noise disturbance. Not only is noise disturbance an issue but visual disturbance can also cause significant flushing if the visual stimulus is exposed and if nocturnal high tide roosts or feeding grounds are incidentally illuminated.
- 5.36 Specific regard should also be given to visual disturbance, as visual stimuli in most instances create a disturbance effect before any associated noise becomes influential. Similar to noise disturbance, high level visual disturbance might result in birds responding by major flight or, if they remain in the area, in the temporary cessation of foraging. Either of these responses might negatively affect the survival rates or breeding success of individual birds. Visual disturbance can be exacerbated by workers operating outside of equipment, moving fast, using large machinery and encroaching on mudflats. Curlew (taking flight at 275m distance to a stimulus) and redshank (taking flight at a distance of 250m) are the wildfowl that are most sensitive to visual stimuli⁷⁶.

⁷² Cutts N & Allan J. 1999. Avifaunal Disturbance Assessment. Flood Defence Works: Saltend. Report to Environment Agency).

⁷³ Cutts, N., Phelps, A. and Burdon, D. (2009) Construction and waterfowl: Defining Sensitivity, Response, Impacts and Guidance. Report to Humber INCA, Institute of Estuarine and Coastal Studies, University of Hull

⁷⁴ Waterbird Disturbance Mitigation Toolkit Informing Estuarine Planning & Construction Projects. Institute of Estuarine Coastal Studies, University of Hull. 2013. Available at: <http://bailey.persona-pi.com/Public-Inquiries/M4%20-%20Revised/11.3.67.pdf> [Accessed on 18/07/2019]

⁷⁵ Cutts, N., Phelps, A. and Burdon, D. (2009) Construction and waterfowl: Defining Sensitivity, Response, Impacts and Guidance. Report to Humber INCA, Institute of Estuarine and Coastal Studies, University of Hull.

⁷⁶ Waterbird Disturbance Mitigation Toolkit. Available at: <http://bailey.persona-pi.com/Public-Inquiries/M4%20-%20Revised/11.3.67.pdf> [Accessed 18/07/2019]

Generally, little effect of visual disturbance on birds has been demonstrated at distances of 300m and above⁷⁷.

- 5.37 The LJLA expansion (specifically the runway extension proposed in Halton) may also result in increased light spillage on to a section of the Mersey Estuary SPA / Ramsar. However, at this broad plan-level no detailed information on proposed lighting changes (if any) are available and any lighting changes are most likely to occur in the Liverpool area rather than Halton. Therefore, this impact pathway will have to be investigated at the lower-tier project-level. However, it is to be noted that there is an existing lighting gantry at LJLA which extends some distance into the Mersey Estuary, and this means that the SPA / Ramsar is already subject to a degree of light pollution.
- 5.38 **As a general rule for all development sites, to minimise the effect of visual and noise disturbance, it is recommended that any construction work (and associated road infrastructure) is located more than 200m away from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar, or is undertaken during periods when bird populations of the SPA and Ramsar site are low (i.e. summer) and that this is informed by recent bird surveys. Furthermore, given the presence of highly sensitive bird species on functionally linked land near development allocations, it is advisable that such a distance is also maintained regarding functionally linked land. Construction within 100-200m of the SPA and Ramsar, or functionally linked land parcels, is most likely to result in disturbance and should be carried out between April and September, when most qualifying species will not be present in the SPA. This particularly applies to construction processes associated with high noise levels (e.g. impact piling). If construction cannot be timed to avoid the winter and passage periods then an impact assessment will need to be undertaken to confirm that noise levels will remain acceptable, and that there will be no visual disturbance. Mitigation may be required in order to achieve this such as screening, selection of less noisy equipment or techniques, damping and noise shielding of equipment or avoidance of lighting in sensitive locations. In such situations it would be advisable for mitigation to be agreed through early dialogue with Natural England.**
- 5.39 Note that the distances discussed here, particularly the 200m distance zone, are intended as a rule-of-thumb for the purposes of identifying sites of greatest risk regarding visual and noise disturbance during construction. More detailed assessments regarding disturbance may need to be undertaken at the project-level for proposed developments that lie further from the Mersey Estuary SPA / Ramsar (or parcels of functionally linked land).

Recreational Pressure

- 5.40 TOLSE of the Plan policies identified several policies and site allocations, which were screened in for effects relating to recreational pressure. The specific residential site allocations were screened in due to a combination of the large number of dwellings proposed, their proximity to the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar or the loss of currently use recreational greenspace. However, in practice all housing growth across Halton and the Liverpool City Region will operate in combination on the SPA and Ramsar site This section details the Appropriate Assessment of these policies / site allocations and the impact pathway recreational pressure in relation to the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar.
- 5.41 It is noted that the Halton Local Plan allocates considerable growth in Runcorn (major allocated sites are SRL3 and SRL4); however, these allocations are not considered to pose an individual risk to the SPA and Ramsar site despite their proximity to the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. This is due to there being limited access to the SPA from Runcorn as a result of the Manchester Ship Canal and its separating wall between the River Mersey and the Canal. Residents of Widnes have better access via the Trans-Pennine Trail, which follows the European site for 5.5km from the Runcorn Bridge westwards to Hale Bank; from there, the Mersey Way lies adjacent to the European site from Hale Head for 7km downstream to Liverpool John Lennon Airport, where the path ceases. However, the main mudflats of value to SPA birds are either on the less accessible south side of the river (e.g. Ince Banks and Stanlow Banks) or otherwise separated from the path by the main channel of the River Mersey (e.g. Dungeon Banks).

⁷⁷ Ibid.

- 5.42 In Policy CS(R)3: Housing Supply and Locational Priorities the Halton Plan allocates for the delivery of 8,050 new dwellings between 2014 and 2037, at an average delivery rate of 350 dwellings per year. Although several of the dwellings that will count towards this total have planning permission, many have not yet come forward. Halton is located within the Mid-Mersey Housing Market Area which has been identified to require 1,512 dwellings per annum (2014-2037) across the three authority areas (Halton, St Helens and Warrington).
- 5.43 The three largest residential sites at Hale Bank (W9, W24 and W48) are all relatively close to the SPA and therefore pose the greatest risk of an effect on recreational pressure, both alone and 'in combination' with growth elsewhere in Halton and the Liverpool City Region. These allocations are within a few hundred metres of Hale Marsh and Decoy Marsh. Hale Marsh itself is part of the SPA, covering an area of 345ha and the marsh is flooded on high tides which reach up to the road on such occasions. There is no public access on to the marsh itself, which can be viewed from Withins Way in Hale Village, from the road between Hale and Halebank and from the hide at Pickerings Pasture LNR in Halebank. According to local knowledge⁷⁸, good numbers of teal feed along the creeks on the marsh and flocks of golden plover, lapwing, avocet, curlew, redshank, greenshank and dunlin may be seen roosting on the marsh. Flocks of up to several hundred Canada geese roost on the marsh during high tides with black-tailed godwit & little egrets an increasing sight. In recent years a small number of Bewick's swans and whooper swans have stayed on the marsh during the winter.
- 5.44 There does not appear to be current access to either marsh from these housing sites⁷⁹. The nearest official access point to the SPA and Ramsar from a footpath is 1.5km to the south-west (measured as a straight-line distance) and over 3km in net travel distance by road/footpaths and requires traversing Hale⁸⁰. Furthermore, there is no parking at this entry point and neither marsh appears particularly safe for recreation. Recreational visitors from Hale and Halebank are more likely to use Pickerings Pasture LNR rather than directly accessing the saltmarsh and mudflats of the SPA and Ramsar. Therefore, the recreational risk posed to the SPA from these particular allocations is smaller than it may appear when considering their closeness to the SPA and Ramsar site. However, with a significant increase in the number of nearby residential dwellings the nature reserve might reach its carrying capacity, leading residents to seek out alternative destinations.

In-combination Assessment

- 5.45 Despite the limited access to the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar, recreational disturbance impacts from Halton cannot be ruled out, particularly when considered in-combination with the other Liverpool City Region boroughs.
- 5.46 In recent years several visitor surveys of coastal European sites in other parts of England have been undertaken. These cover a range of European sites in various contexts and may serve as a broad indicator for European sites around Merseyside, provided they are used with care:
- Exe Estuary SPA and Ramsar - visitor surveys were undertaken by Footprint Ecology⁸¹. Most visitors (around 60%) had travelled by car and at least a further 29% travelled on foot. Foot visitors tended to be very local, whereas car-borne visitors were travelling considerable distances: 51% of those interviewed (taking only those visiting from home on a short visit/day trip rather than holidaymakers) had come from within a 10km radius of the interview location and 75% with 20km.

⁷⁸ <http://www.rspb.org.uk/groups/Liverpool/places/353268/>

<http://www.thefriendsofpickeringspasture.org.uk/winter-2015-16-pickerings-pasture.html>

⁷⁹ This could change in the occupants of the new housing create new informal accesses, although the risk of this could be reduced through the provision of suitable semi-natural parkland on the sites themselves as part of the developments.

⁸⁰ Various investigations into the habits of recreational visitors to nationally and internationally important wildlife sites have found that the majority of dog walkers and casual walkers are generally disinclined to walk very far to visit sites for recreation. For example, in one of the most thorough studies visitor surveys were conducted at the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area. The study found that the average distance between the visitor's home postcode and Thames Basin Heaths SPA when arriving by foot was 0.8 km, with 75% of foot-based visitors living within a 0.9 km straight line distance from the visitor survey point. Other surveys show a similar broad pattern (e.g. Humber Estuary), since there is a natural limit as to how far a majority of people are prepared to walk to visit a particular site, even when it is large and appealing.

⁸¹ Liley, D. & Cruickshanks, K. (2010). Exe Visitor Survey, 2010. Teignbridge District Council / Footprint Ecology

- Humber Estuary SPA and Ramsar and SAC - Visitor survey work on the Humber Estuary has now been completed by Footprint Ecology⁸². Eighty-eight percent of visitors interviewed were local residents visiting on a short trip or day trip from home. Most (70%) of interviewees arrived at sites by car. Home postcodes indicated people travelling from their home lived a median distance of 4.4km from the survey point. 50% of interviewed visitors on foot lived within 0.95km and 50% of visitors who travelled by car lived within 8.4km, after which points of origin became more dispersed.
 - North Kent Estuaries – Surveys of the North Kent European sites (Medway Estuary & Marshes SPA and Ramsar, the Swale SPA and Ramsar and the Thames Estuary & Marshes SPA and Ramsar site) by Footprint Ecology⁸³ identified that the majority of regular visitors to the sites live within 6km, after which points of origin became more dispersed.
 - Solent Maritime SAC and overlapping Special Protection Areas – Data on visitor activity in the Solent complex was obtained through the Solent Disturbance and Mitigation Project⁸⁴. Terrestrial (rather than water-based) visitors undertook a wide range of activities, with walking (without a dog) and dog walking the two most frequently recorded activities. Taking the data for non-holiday makers only, visitors were roughly evenly divided between those who arrived by car and those who arrived on foot. Ninety percent of all visitors arriving on foot lived within 2km. Almost eighty percent of all visitors arriving by car (excluding holiday makers) lived within 10km.
- 5.47 These examples illustrate that, while there is variability from site to site, estuarine habitats have fairly large core recreational catchment of up to c. 10km and potentially up to 20km. This is in agreement with a recent meta-analysis relating visitor numbers to the number of residential dwellings surrounding protected sites across the UK. This study showed that the number of visitors correlated most strongly with housing numbers over 15km in estuaries than in any of the other habitats that were investigated, thereby confirming the large recreational catchments⁸⁵.
- 5.48 According to survey work undertaken on behalf of Natural England⁸⁶ 97% of recreational visitors to the north-west coastal European sites and SSSIs were on a short visit directly from home and interviewees visiting directly from home typically lived within a short radius of the survey point (a mean distance of 5.3 km). Half of these interviewees lived within 1.9 km (median value) and three quarters within 5.2km. For the Mersey Estuary SPA specifically, 75% of people visiting the site from home lived within 8.3km of the survey point, although this was only based on a single survey location (Hale Head). Most of these lived along the coast, within easy access of the coast (e.g. clear line along the A595) or within highly populated areas (e.g. Liverpool).
- 5.49 Avoiding recreational impacts on European sites usually involves locating new residential development beyond the core catchment zones of European Sites. In the case of Halton this is clearly not possible and therefore alternative measures are needed to avoid adverse recreational effects on the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. One possible approach is to manage tourism and recreation in conjunction with relevant neighbouring authorities, thereby providing a framework for sustainable recreation. To achieve this, Halton Borough Council needs to work with the other Merseyside Authorities (such as Liverpool and St Helens), MEAS, Natural England, Natural Resources Wales and other partners to devise a framework for the delivery of enhanced access management of the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. The 2018 Liverpool Local Plan HRA also highlighted that the recreational pressure arising from the cumulative growth throughout the Liverpool City Region (LCR) would require a unified mitigation approach.
- 5.50 The LCR Districts have now commissioned the LCR Recreation Mitigation and Avoidance Strategy for all European sites in the City Region in partnership with Natural England and the National Trust. The Strategy is currently under development and has been revised as a draft

⁸² Fearnley, H., Liley, D. & Cruickshanks, K. (2012). Humber Management Scheme Visitor Survey. Footprint Ecology, unpublished report for Humber Management Scheme

⁸³ Fearnley, H. & Liley, D. (2011). North Kent Visitor Survey Results. Footprint Ecology.

⁸⁴ Stillman, R. A., West, A. D., Clarke, R. T. & Liley, D. (2012) Solent Disturbance and Mitigation Project Phase II: Predicting the impact of human disturbance on overwintering birds in the Solent. Report to the Solent Forum

⁸⁵ Weitowitz D.C., Panter C., Hoskin R. & Liley D. The effect of urban development on visitor numbers to nearby protected nature conservation sites. Manuscript in review with the Journal of Urban Ecology.

⁸⁶ Data taken from page 4 of Liley, D., Panter, C., Marsh, P. & Roberts, J. (2017) Recreational activity and interactions with birds within the SSSIs on the North-West coast of England. Available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5473987963650048>

Liverpool City Region European Sites Recreation Mitigation and Avoidance Strategy. The Strategy is being developed by a team that has expertise in mitigation design and delivery.

- 5.51 Currently, the intention is that gaps in the evidence base are to be updated, particularly regarding the spatial and seasonal dimensions to recreation patterns although this work has yet to be commissioned. It remains the intention of the LCR Districts to complete the Strategy by the end of 2022, which is then to act as a joint and strategic response to the on-going issue of recreation pressure. The draft Strategy will then require consultation and approvals prior to being implemented.
- 5.52 It is envisaged that the approach for Mersey Estuary would firstly involve individual housing sites seeking to avoid a net increase in recreational activity within the SPA and Ramsar site by either provision of accessible natural greenspace on the allocation itself, or else exploring opportunities for enhancing existing nearby areas of accessible natural greenspace to deliver improved capacity and functionality. This would be particularly relevant for sites W9, W24 and W48, which are large and close enough to the SPA and / or functionally linked land that it is appropriate for them to be required to maximise the amount of semi-natural recreational greenspace provided on-site. This is likely to reduce visitor pressure both in the SPA and in other nature reserves in the area, such as Pickerings Pasture LNR. This is a requirement to be explored further as each planning application comes forward.
- 5.53 In addition to these measures outside the European sites, it would then involve direct access management initiatives within the European site. These would be tailored to the specific circumstances of that site but would in broad terms involve the enhanced access management to the SPA and Ramsar, to be informed by visitor survey data. The avoidance and / or mitigation measures will be designed as an integrated package that is effective, yet affordable.
- 5.54 Any package of measures in the emerging Strategy will include site-specific considerations, such as the designation features themselves and the relative accessibility of the sensitive receptors and designation features, for each of the European sites. For the Mersey Estuary for example it is important to take into consideration the accessibility of the designation features because large areas are inaccessible due to commercial and land-ownership considerations (e.g. no public access) or inaccessible due to physical barriers and health and safety considerations (e.g. high dock walls and unsafe mud and saltmarsh). Examples of measures that may be deployable include:
- temporary footpath/access closures during sensitive periods (e.g. the winter, when non-breeding birds are a key feature);
 - rerouting of footpaths away from key hotspots for waterfowl;
 - introducing enhanced wardening;
 - introducing improved signage to encourage dogs to be kept on a lead or walked in areas that are away from key waterfowl hotspots; and
 - screening of key locations for recreational activity.

- 5.55 The Plan already contains the following policy text that establishes its commitment to the provision of greenspace:

Policy HE4: Green Infrastructure

'1. All development will be expected to incorporate high quality green infrastructure that:

a. Creates and/or enhances green infrastructure networks and provides links to green infrastructure assets;

b. Addresses climate change and reduces the risk of flooding through the provision of sustainable urban drainage systems in accordance with policy HE9 where appropriate and measures to address surface water run off;

c. Protects and enhances biodiversity and heritage assets;

d. Encourages physical activity, enjoyment, education and social interaction;

e. Improves access for pedestrians, cyclists and horse-riders;

f. Encourages local food production; and

g. Increases investors and visitors by enhancing the quality of the landscape and townscape..

2. Development within a designated, or proposed, Green Infrastructure asset (including Nature Conservation Sites, Greenspaces, the Greenway Network and LCR Ecological Networks), as defined on the Policies Map, will be permitted where:

a. it is ancillary to the enjoyment of the asset and does not compromise the integrity or potential value of the asset; or

b. the development does not compromise the integrity or potential value of the asset and it is of a scale, form, layout and design which respects the character of the Borough's green infrastructure network and it would maintain the linkages without compromising the integrity or potential value of the asset; or

c. the loss of the asset is appropriately compensated for.

4. The Council will normally support opportunities to add to the green infrastructure network, particularly through partnership and cross boundary working.'

5.56 Additionally retained Policy CS21: Green Infrastructure (GI) states with regarding to protecting and enhancing the green infrastructure network in the Borough that *'Halton Borough Council working alongside other partners and agencies responsible for the delivery and maintenance of green infrastructure will achieve this through ... sustaining the protection afforded to internationally important sites for biodiversity by managing recreational impacts and encouraging the use of the wider green infrastructure network which is less sensitive to recreational pressure'*. This specifically places management of the GI network within the context of sustaining the protection of European sites by directing recreational activity to less sensitive areas. Paragraph 24.7 of the adopted and retained Halton Core Strategy 2013 goes on to state that *'As identified in the HRA, this [balancing and managing recreational usage in a way that does not adversely impact conservation interest] is particularly relevant for European sites, specifically the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar site. Recreational impacts should be managed for these sites through access and habitat management and through prioritising other assets within the Borough's green infrastructure network for their recreational potential'*.

5.57 In addition, the text of retained Policy CS20 (Natural & Historic Environment) states that *'A hierarchical approach will be given to the protection, nature conservation and enhancement of biodiversity and geodiversity including: Sites of international importance including the Mersey Estuary Special Protection Area (SPA) and 'Ramsar' site'*. This clearly identifies that the Council will protect the SPA and won't permit any development that is likely to threaten its integrity.

5.58 However, it is essential that the following text (or similar) is inserted into the Local Plan to ensure that recreational pressure is adequately mitigated: ***'Commencing early in the plan period Halton Council will work with work with partners, including the other Merseyside authorities, to devise and implement a Recreation Mitigation and Avoidance Strategy to protect all European sites in the Liverpool City Region from increased recreational pressure as a result of the quantum of housing development proposed within the Local Plan periods.'*** The Council have dealt with this recommendation by adding the following text to Policy CS(R)1: *'The Liverpool City Region (LCR) Recreation Mitigation Strategy has been developed to meet the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). Residential development within 5 km of protected accessible coasts, resulting in a net increase of 10 or more dwellings and major tourism developments, will be able to discharge their HRA requirements in relation to recreational disturbance by making a financial contribution towards avoidance and mitigation schemes in the LCR area in accordance with policy CS(R)20 and HE1'*. They have also added the following supporting text: *'The Liverpool City Region (LCR) Recreation Mitigation Strategy has been developed to meet the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). The Strategy addresses the potential effects on the internationally recognised Special Protection Areas (SPAs) of major housing developments on or near to the LCR coastline. Residential development within 5 km of protected coasts, resulting in a net increase of 10 or more dwellings and certain major tourism developments, will be required to make a financial contribution towards avoidance and mitigation schemes in the LCR area'* and added the following text to CS(R)20: *'All major*

development proposals should avoid and/or mitigate negative impacts on European habitat sites within and beyond the Halton's boundary such that a conclusion of "No Adverse Effects" on integrity can be drawn', with the following in the supporting text for that policy 'Recreational impacts should be managed for SPA's through access and habitat management and prioritising other assets demonstrating recreational potential that are identified in the Borough's green infrastructure network (Policy CS(R)21) HE1 and HE4 and the DALP's HRA (August 2020). This will allow for the balancing and managing of recreational usage in a way that does not adversely impact conservation interest, this is particularly relevant for internationally important sites (the Mersey Estuary SPA, Dee Estuary SAC, Dee Estuary SPA and Dee Estuary Ramsar site, Liverpool Bay SPA and Ramsar site and Mersey Narrows & North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar site) and specifically the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar site'. Extensive text has also been added on this issue to Policy HE1.

- 5.59 With the inclusion of this commitment to implementing the outcomes of the Recreation Mitigation and Avoidance Strategy (now Liverpool City Region European Sites Recreation Mitigation and Avoidance Strategy) incorporated within the Plan and adopted and implemented by 2022 it can be considered that recreational pressure from the Plan area will not result in an adverse effect on integrity on the Mersey Estuary as a result of increased recreational pressure both alone and in combination.
- 5.60 When determining planning applications, and liaising with developers over those application at an early stage, the Council should ensure that the sites that are large and situated in close proximity to the SPA and Ramsar (notably W13, W24 and W48), should be required to maximise the amount of semi-natural recreational greenspace provided on-site in order to reduce visitor pressure on the SPA. There are large areas of farmland in the vicinity of these sites that could be adapted to meet these requirements. Policy CS20 would provide an adequate policy mechanism for this requirement.
- 5.61 As noted in paragraph 5.28, the Plan provides for several site allocations in greenfield land parcels that are openly accessible greenspace, which (depending on the masterplans for these developments) could result in the loss of this recreational space and a potential increase in recreational pressure in the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. Whilst the retained Core Strategy Policy CS20 ensures the protection of European designated sites, **the Council will need to demonstrate that where publicly accessible recreational space is lost, this does not detract from the Borough's ability to divert recreational pressure away from sensitive European designated sites and it does not result in an effective increase in recreational pressure within the European designated sites.**
- 5.62 In a consultation letter dated 9th of September 2019, Natural England set out that a more strategic commitment by the Council to mitigate recreational pressure may be required. This would take the form of an interim Information Note (IN) or a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and would demonstrate a clearer commitment to reduce impacts arising from housing development coming forward ahead of establishment of the RMA. AECOM considers that this would be a suitable approach, which could include setting out the existing commitments (e.g. provision of accessible natural greenspace on large housing sites) and potential access management measures (set out above) more clearly. Several other authorities (e.g. in relation to the Thames Basin Heaths SPA) have adopted SPDs that seek to protect European sites from recreational pressure. An IN (or SPD) developed by Halton Borough Council could also set out the delivery and / or funding mechanism of any proposals in more details, which could include developer contributions based on the number of bedrooms per dwelling or S106 agreements, whereby planning consent comes with the obligation to provide funding that is directed towards a specific mitigation measure.
- 5.63 Provided that a suitable interim approach is adopted and is implemented alongside the first residential planning application that comes forward under this Local Plan, the commitment to a Recreation Mitigation and Avoidance Strategy is made and that a requirement for large planning applications to maximise the provision of greenspace is incorporated into the Plan, it is considered that recreational pressure will not result in adverse effects upon the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar.

Water Quality

- 5.64 TOLSE of the Plan policies identified several policies and site allocations, which were screened in for effects relating to water quality. This section details the Appropriate Assessment of these policies / site allocations and the impact pathway water quality in relation to the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar.
- 5.65 Historical studies⁸⁷ identified that combined pollution pressure from run-off and wastewater discharges throughout the Mersey catchment (including the upper reaches outside of Merseyside) has been a significant historic pressure. Whilst this situation has improved significantly, the potential still exists for surface water runoff and waste discharges to adversely affect the qualifying features of the Mersey SPA and Ramsar. A Mid-Mersey Water Cycle Study (WCS) was undertaken in 2011 to support the development of planning policy for the Boroughs of Warrington, St Helens and Halton. It identified that tidal influences within the Mersey Estuary reduce potential impacts from WwTWs discharges (for example from WwTW in Widnes, Warrington North, Warrington South and Runcorn) in the Mersey Estuary.
- 5.66 Given the growth allocated in the Halton Local Plan compared to that in all surrounding authorities, it would be disproportionate to suggest that the Plan has the potential to significantly deteriorate the water quality of the Mersey Estuary alone. However, it is reasonable to suggest that there might be an *in-combination* effect of the Halton's Local Plan with development plans of surrounding authorities on the water quality in the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar.
- 5.67 There are several new and retained Plan policies that provide a protective framework for the water quality in the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar:
- New Policy HE3: Halton's Waterways and Waterfronts states '*the Council will expect all development to take into consideration the objectives of the Water Framework Directive and the relevant River Basin Management Plan*'; and '*8. Waterside development will not be permitted should it have an unacceptable effect on water quality or cause significant run-off*'.
 - New Policy HE7: Pollution and Nuisance states: '*1. Applications for development that risks negatively impacting on the quality of the environment through: ...f. water pollution; ... must be accompanied by an appropriate impact assessment and, where necessary, demonstrate that mitigation measures have been incorporated through a mitigation scheme.*'
 - New Policy HE9: Water Management and Flood Risk: states '*7. Water resources and supplies will be protected by resisting development proposals that would pose an unacceptable threat to surface water and groundwater quantity and quality*'; and that '*8. New development will need to ensure that there is adequate water supply, surface water, foul drainage and sewerage or wastewater treatment capacity to serve the development.*'
 - Retained Policy CS7: Infrastructure Provision identifies that where development creates or exacerbates infrastructure deficiencies it ensures '*deficiencies or losses are compensated for, adequately mitigated or substituted before development is begun or occupied*'. It also identifies that the Council will work with infrastructure and service providers.
- 5.68 Ultimately, it is the duty of United Utilities to provide sufficient infrastructure for wastewater treatment and the Environment Agency to provide consents for specific discharge volumes of WwTWs. The water company is obliged to service development once that development is consented within its catchment area. Therefore, local authorities have a key role in ensuring that the pace of delivery of new development is in line with the provision of any necessary infrastructure enhancements, such as wastewater treatment capacities. This is alluded to in retained Policy CS7 Infrastructure Provision: '*On larger developments that will be completed in phases or over a number of years, an agreed delivery schedule of infrastructure works may be appropriate.*'
- 5.69 The expansion of LJLA might also have effects on the water quality in the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. Currently, surface water drainage from LJLA passes through various interceptor tanks before discharging into the River Mersey at five discharge points. Construction work is likely to result in a net increase of impermeable surface areas, resulting in more surface water

⁸⁷ Langston, W.J., Chesman, B.S. and Burt, G.R. (2006). *Characterisation of European Marine Site: the Mersey Estuary Special Protection Area*, Marine Biological Association Occasional Publication No18.

flows from new car parks, highways and access roads, extended runway and aprons. There will also be an increase in roof drainage from the terminal extension, including new hangars and cargo developments. The existing drainage infrastructure will be used where appropriate with new infrastructure being added on as necessary to accommodate the increased flows from the proposed developments. Interceptors will be located upstream of all outfalls where the surface water could be contaminated. The surface water from the additional pavement and hard standing areas for the Master Plan proposals for 2030 and 2050 will be drained via new main carrier drains installed for the 2030 proposals.

- 5.70 Foul water effluent from the site passes through the Mersey Estuary Pollution Alleviation Scheme (MEPAS) interceptor and is pumped to the wastewater treatment works (WwTW) on Ramsbrook Lane. In adverse weather conditions the interceptors may overflow, resulting in the combined wastewater outflowing into the River Mersey. However, United Utilities has confirmed that this now only occurs in very extreme events. Further drainage infrastructure is likely to be required to accommodate the additional effluent resulting from the airport expansion. With appropriate infrastructure in place to accommodate wastewater effluent from the airport, it is concluded that the Airport Masterplan would not have adverse effects on the site integrity of the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar regarding the impact pathway water quality.
- 5.71 A lower per-capita consumption of water will mean that more developments can be catered for within existing discharge consents. **However, it is strongly recommended that the Council liaise with United Utilities to confirm that there is sufficient headroom in the existing discharge consent (or any changes to the consent that are already planned), in order to accommodate the growth planned for Halton over the entire Plan period. It is recommended to introduce a more explicit statement into Policy CS7 to ensure that the water quality in the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar is protected: ‘Development proposals will need to demonstrate that there is sufficient headroom in the wastewater treatment infrastructure. If necessary, development will have to be phased to keep in line with the consented headroom. Furthermore, all developments will be required to deliver green infrastructure approaches, such as Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS), to maximise in-situ pollutant attenuation.**
- 5.72 **The Council have addressed this by adding the following wording: ‘Development proposals will be supported where there is sufficient wastewater treatment capacity. If localised deficiencies arise, development will have to be phased to so as not to exceed available capacity. Furthermore, all developments will be required to deliver green infrastructure approaches, such as Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS), to maximise in-situ pollutant attenuation in accordance with policy CS21 and HE9’.**
- 5.73 Pending on there being sufficient headroom in the discharge consents, this recommendation included, it is concluded that the Halton Local Plan is unlikely to result in significant adverse impacts on qualifying features of the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar through wastewater discharge.

Atmospheric Pollution

- 5.74 Several Plan policies were screened in for effects relating to atmospheric pollution. This section details the Appropriate Assessment of these policies / site allocations and the impact pathway atmospheric pollution in relation to the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar.
- 5.75 Regarding the impacts of sulphur deposition, reference to the Site Relevant Critical Loads for the SPA on APIS⁸⁸ indicates that 15% of sulphur currently deposited in the SPA arises from 'other transport' (i.e. not road or shipping), which is most likely to be air traffic. The Site Relevant Critical Load for each qualifying SPA bird species indicates that they are not considered likely to be affected by high sulphur deposition. Moreover, while the proportional contribution of the airport to sulphur deposition is high, the SO₂ concentration in the SPA is only 3.44 µg m⁻³, which is well below the critical threshold of 20 µg m⁻³ (as indicated on APIS). Therefore, no further mitigation is required at policy level to mitigate the effects of sulphur deposition from air transport.
- 5.76 Atmospheric pollution relating to nitrogen deposition might lead to eutrophication in the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. However, the only significant road within 200m of the mudflats of the

⁸⁸ Air Pollution Information System <http://www.apis.ac.uk/> [Accessed 09/07/2019].

SPA and Ramsar is the Runcorn-Widnes Bridge. The Site Relevant Critical Load on APIS for nitrogen deposition relating to each of the qualifying bird species indicates that nitrogen deposition is currently up to 17,5 kgN/ha/yr⁸⁹, compared to a critical load (for littoral sediment) of 20-30 kgN/ha/yr. It is highly unlikely that increases in traffic on Runcorn Widnes Bridge would increase the nitrogen deposition by the required 13 kgN/ha/yr, to exceed the critical load of 30 kgN/ha/yr. Furthermore, APIS concludes the effects of additional nitrogen deposition may be positive for many SPA birds, because such nitrogen enrichment potentially means an increase in prey abundance.

- 5.77 The Masterplan⁹⁰ acknowledges that the expansion plans for the airport could impact air quality within the locality from increases in airside vehicles, airborne and ground level aircraft activity and vehicles travelling to and from the airport, which are associated with atmospheric nitrogen deposition. However, the Masterplan states that *'the increase in air and ground movements would be offset by improvements in vehicle and aircraft technologies that reduce the emissions per movement. It is unlikely that the proposals would lead to exceedances of the objectives in future years.* No more detailed analysis of potential air quality impacts is possible at this point as these depend greatly on the proposed capacity of the new expansion, the proposed number/frequency of new flights, their flightpaths and the emissions profile of the aircraft, all of which can be modelled for the planning application as necessary but are not available at this stage. Based on this evidence it is concluded that the Halton Local Plan will not result in adverse effects on the integrity of the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar regarding the impact pathway atmospheric pollution.

Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar

Roles of Other Plans

- 5.78 The following plans are considered to have the potential to act upon the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar site 'in combination':
- Mersey Ports Masterplan, including the Port expansion into Seaforth Nature Reserve and the Seaforth River Terminal (a deepwater container port expansion in Sefton is currently under construction and due for completion imminently), new opportunities for renewable energy, development of single and multi-user port centric warehousing and of new processing facilities for imported commodities. potentially leading to the Liverpool SuperPort – An integrated port, airport, intermodal terminal, freight and commercial network based upon the Port of Liverpool, the Manchester Ship Canal, Liverpool John Lennon Airport and the Mersey Multimodal Gateway (Liverpool City Region).
 - Liverpool John Lennon Airport Masterplan – potential impacts due to increased sulphur and nitrogen deposition from aircraft, loss of supporting foraging/high-tide roost habitat and possible disturbance of waterfowl from noise. This also forms part of the Liverpool Local Plan so is discussed alongside policy CS(R)17;
 - North West England & North Wales Shoreline Management Plan 2 – possible impacts due to the maintenance or enhancement of flood defences could lead to coastal squeeze, changes in sediment release (if previously undefended areas become defended) and direct loss of habitat to flood defence footprint;
 - Local Plans or Core Strategies for Liverpool, Cheshire West and Chester, Cheshire East, Trafford, Warrington, Knowsley, Sefton, Wirral and St Helens and Liverpool and Wirral Waters Development masterplans – possible water quality, air quality and wildfowl disturbance impacts as a result of delivery of 110,000 dwellings and associated commercial development over the next 20 years. The Warrington and Liverpool Local Plans in particular could both involve landtake of functionally-linked land around the Mersey Estuary SPA. For the Liverpool Local Plan this would be via the Liverpool John Lennon Airport. For Warrington Local Plan site (MD1 Warrington Waterfront) lies close to the River Mersey south-west of Warrington and partially within Moore Nature Reserve which is known to be a significant area for wintering gulls, waterfowl and waders. However, the layout of the development avoids the key areas for

⁸⁹ APIS last accessed 09/07/2019

⁹⁰ John Lennon Liverpool Airport Masterplan March 2018. <https://www.liverpoolairport.com/media/2957/liverpool-john-lennon-airport-master-plan-to-2050.pdf> [Accessed 09/07/2019]

these species as indicated by the Cheshire Bird Atlas which are mostly further west or associated with the waterbodies of the reserve, preserving those areas as greenspace or a 160ha country park; and

- Joint Waste Local Plan for Merseyside and Halton – possible impacts due to water quality, air quality and wildfowl disturbance or chick predation. However, since this DPD is itself subject a recent HRA it will address its own contribution to any ‘in combination’ effect that may otherwise arise.

Recap of Likely Significant Effects

5.79 The TOLSE of Halton’s revised Core Strategy policies and the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan undertaken in Appendices C, D and E identified the following linking impact pathways requiring further consideration:

- Recreational pressure; and
- Water quality

Recreational Pressure

5.80 Several Local Plan policies were screened in for effects relating to recreational pressure. This section details the Appropriate Assessment of these policies / site allocations and the impact pathway recreational pressure in relation to the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar.

5.81 Natural England’s Site Improvement Plan⁹¹ identifies that the SPA and Ramsar is vulnerable to recreational disturbance from several activities, including dog walking, bait digging, kite surfing, sand yachting, parascending, recreational fishing, hovercrafts and inappropriate vehicle use⁹². The recreational pressures highlighted in the TOLSE process are therefore a legitimate concern.

5.82 An increase in the number of housing within Halton, coupled with policies seeking to enhance connectivity and accessibility between Halton and other Liverpool City Region Boroughs is likely to increase dispersal of recreational visitors. From a sustainability perspective, such policies are beneficial, and it would be inappropriate for the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan to reduce connectivity and accessibility between the LCR Boroughs in an attempt to reduce visitors to these sites.

5.83 However, the only part of the SPA and Ramsar on the north bank of the River Mersey is Seaforth Nature Reserve, which is 20-21km from the nearest allocated sites to the west of Widnes. Moreover, access to the nature reserve is controlled such that recreational pressure can be managed. The North Wirral Foreshore is approximately 22km in Euclidean straight-line distance and 30km by road from the nearest urban area in Halton (Runcorn). Furthermore, the policies for improving the connectivity between Merseyside Boroughs are unlikely to change this significantly. The travel distance from Halton is well beyond the 10km core catchment zones that have been observed for other estuarine habitats with data from visitor surveys. It is therefore concluded that the Halton Local Plan is unlikely to materially increase the recreational pressure in the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar, alone or in-combination.

5.84 Given that aircraft taking off from Liverpool John Lennon Airport routinely have flight trajectories leading over the SPA and Ramsar, it is conceivable that an increase in aerial traffic from the airport may result in increased disturbance to SPA waterfowl (both from aircraft noise and lighting). Redshank, a qualifying species of the SPA and Ramsar are generally considered to be tolerant of visual stimuli, but are highly disturbed by overflying aircraft most probably because of their resemblance to raptors⁹³. The redshank were seen to react with a ‘heads-up’ to overhead aircraft at 72dB and flushed at aircraft noise of 88dB.

5.85 The revised Policy CS(R)17 Liverpool John Lennon Airport acknowledges the potential for airport expansion to affect the SPA and Ramsar: ‘*With respect to internationally important sites*

⁹¹ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/5140799320752128> [Accessed 09/07/2019]

⁹² Natural England, Countryside Council for Wales and Welsh Assembly Government (January 2010) ‘The Dee Estuary European Marine Site’

⁹³ <http://bailey.persona-pi.com/Public-Inquiries/M4%20-%20Revised/11.3.67.pdf> [Accessed 02/07/2019]

(particularly the Mersey Estuary Special Protection Area and Ramsar site) proposals will need to incorporate measures that are acceptable to the appropriate statutory body and sufficiently extensive to enable a conclusion of no adverse effect on their integrity unless it can be demonstrated that there are both no alternatives and Imperative Reasons of Over-riding Public Interest’.

- 5.86 This illustrates the high standards that would need to be achieved for mitigation to be deemed acceptable. It is concluded that the Halton Local Plan does contain an adequate policy framework to ensure that there will be no adverse effects on the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar through the impact pathway disturbance.

Water Quality

- 5.87 Several Plan policies were screened in for effects relating to the impact pathway water quality. This section details the Appropriate Assessment of these policies / site allocations and the impact pathway water quality in relation to the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar.
- 5.88 The Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar includes the mouth of the Mersey Estuary (principally Egremont Foreshore on the south bank, and Seaforth on the north bank) as well as the North Wirral Foreshore itself. Egremont Foreshore and Seaforth are separated by approximately 2km, but are considered to be a functional unit on the basis of the constant interchange of bird populations. The Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar is susceptible to changes in water quality in the Mersey Estuary arising from:
- wastewater discharge (domestic and industrial); and
 - shipping and dredging.
- 5.89 The previous section has already undertaken an Appropriate Assessment of this impact pathway in relation to the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. These potential adverse effects are clearly also relevant to Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar, and particularly to the Egremont Foreshore and Seaforth nature reserve at its mouth. This is mainly due to the hydraulic connections with the Mersey Estuary.
- 5.90 In 2010 a study was undertaken to establish the ecological value of key land compartments along the Mersey Estuary, which included the two sites referred to above⁹⁴. The area around Seaforth Nature reserve was identified as important as a high-tide roost site for wildfowl, especially during high spring tides when rocky shores and man-made structures closer to the feeding areas are submerged and unavailable. The Marine Lake, in close proximity to Seaforth LNR, is a sheltered roosting location that regularly supported a diverse assemblage of duck species; notably diving ducks. There were also high numbers of dabbling ducks, including Eurasian teal and common shelduck. Black-tailed godwits regularly used this site and were recorded primarily on the Seaforth site. The foreshore areas were used as feeding grounds by locally significant numbers of Eurasian oystercatcher, sanderling and ringed plover.
- 5.91 The area around Egremont Foreshore (North Wirral Foreshore and New Brighton) is widely recognised as being of conservation importance for many species of wading bird, which feed on the barnacle beds and groynes at low tide. The foreshore area consists of large expanses of exposed sandy beach at low tide, which sustain high activity of Eurasian oystercatcher. This species occurred in locally significant numbers roosting on the breakwaters and surrounding structures at high tide. Egremont Foreshore is known as a regular wintering site for purple sandpipers. These birds use rocky areas, groynes and shore defences for feeding and roosting, and were closely associated with larger flocks (several thousands).
- 5.92 Any changes in water quality and the resultant effects on the birds' prey items, including crustaceans and worms, have the potential to affect the qualifying bird species within the Egremont Foreshore and Seaforth Nature Reserve areas. However, it should be noted that any deterioration in water quality arising from the Halton Local Plan, would only occur as an *in-combination* effect with plans of surrounding authorities such as the Liverpool, Wirral and Warrington Core Strategies.

⁹⁴ RSK (2010) Mersey Feasibility Study Winter Bird Report

- 5.93 The Halton Local Plan includes a general, protective framework within Policy HE1 Natural Environment and Nature Conservation: *‘Development which may adversely affect the integrity of internationally important sites will only be permitted where there are no alternative solutions and there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest.’* As for the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar, It is recommended to introduce a more explicit statement into Policy CS7 to ensure that the water quality in the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar is protected: *‘Development proposals will need to demonstrate that there is sufficient headroom in the wastewater treatment infrastructure. If necessary, development will have to be phased to keep in line with the consented headroom. Furthermore, all developments will be required to deliver green infrastructure approaches, such as Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS), to maximise in-situ pollutant attenuation.’*
- 5.94 The Council have addressed this by adding the following wording: *‘Development proposals will be supported where there is sufficient wastewater treatment capacity. If localised deficiencies arise, development will have to be phased to so as not to exceed available capacity. Furthermore, all developments will be required to deliver green infrastructure approaches, such as Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS), to maximise in-situ pollutant attenuation in accordance with policy CS21 and HE9’.*
- 5.95 With this mitigation measure implemented, it is concluded that the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan will not result in adverse effects on the integrity of the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar regarding the impact pathway water quality.

Conclusion

- 5.96 With the recommendation regarding water quality in place, it is concluded that the Plan policies will not result in adverse effects on the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar.

Manchester Mosses SAC

Role of Other Plans

- 5.97 The following plans are considered to have the potential to act upon the Sefton Coast SAC site ‘in combination’:
- Local Plans or Core Strategies for Liverpool, Cheshire West and Chester, Cheshire East, Trafford, Warrington, Knowsley, Sefton, Wirral and St Helens and Liverpool and Wirral Waters Development masterplans – possible water quality, air quality and wildfowl disturbance impacts as a result of delivery of 110,000 dwellings and associated commercial development over the next 20 years. The Warrington and Liverpool Local Plans in particular could both involve landtake of functionally-linked land around the Mersey Estuary SPA. For the Liverpool Local Plan this would be via the Liverpool John Lennon Airport. For Warrington Local Plan site (MD1 Warrington Waterfront) lies close to the River Mersey south-west of Warrington and partially within Moore Nature Reserve which is known to be a significant area for wintering gulls, waterfowl and waders. However, the layout of the development avoids the key areas for these species as indicated by the Cheshire Bird Atlas which are mostly further west or associated with the waterbodies of the reserve, preserving those areas as greenspace or a 160ha country park;

Recap of Likely Significant Effects

- 5.98 The TOLSE of Halton’s revised Core Strategy policies and the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan undertaken in Appendices C, D and E identified the following linking impact pathways requiring further consideration:
- Atmospheric pollution

Atmospheric Pollution

- 5.99 According to 2011 Census data, half (48%) of Halton residents have a daily commute of less than 5km to work, 65% travel less than 10km and 75% travel less than 20km⁹⁵. Of those who travel to work by car, 71% work in Warrington, Liverpool, Cheshire West & Chester, Knowsley or St. Helens⁹⁶, none of which would require use of the M62 leading past the SAC. Only 6% of Halton residents travel to the authorities of Trafford, Salford and Manchester, and thus might pass the SAC by using the M62 motorway as it leaves Warrington and heads towards Greater Manchester. This is consistent with the distance of the relevant part of the SAC (Holcroft Moss) from Halton Borough boundary (12.7km at its closest and at least 16km from the main population centres). In comparison the Department for Transport reported in the National Travel Survey that the average trip length undertaken by car (irrespective of purpose) is 10.6km⁹⁷.
- 5.100 Given this, and the very small number of journeys to work that might involve passing the SAC, it is unlikely that the Plan will result in adverse effects on the Manchester Mosses SAC alone even without mitigation.
- 5.101 Under Local Plans as they stand (2019), approximately 85,545 new dwellings and at least 1,500ha of commercial development will be delivered across the Liverpool City Region over the next 20 years (including the 8,050 dwellings to be delivered in Halton). It is therefore important to consider the potential for effects 'in combination' with other plans and projects.
- 5.102 One part of the Manchester Mosses SAC is located adjacent to the M62 (to the east of Junction 11 at Houghton Green). The M62 passes through the following authorities (west to east): Liverpool, Knowsley, St. Helens, Warrington, and Salford towards Greater Manchester. As such, it is feasible that increased employment and residential development in any of these authorities leading to an increased use of M62 has the potential to act 'in-combination' with those Halton Local Plan employment and residential allocations which may also result in an increased use of the M62. An increased use of the M62 could increase atmospheric pollution which may, in turn, affect the habitats within the SAC. As detailed above, Halton residents are unlikely to contribute significantly to the use of the M62. However, given that the SAC already receives nitrogen deposition in excess of the critical load, the relatively small contribution of Halton residents to the in-combination atmospheric pollution could be significant.
- 5.103 There is no doubt Halton will be a minor contributor to such an effect and that should be reflected in the mitigation approach that is required for Halton borough. In reaching this conclusion we are mindful of paragraph 48 of Advocate-General Sharpston's Opinion in European Court of Justice Case C-258/11 where she stated that: *'the requirement for an effect to be 'significant' exists in order to lay down a de minimis threshold. Plans and projects that have no appreciable effect on the site can therefore be excluded. If all plans and projects capable of having any effect whatsoever on the site were to be caught by Article 6(3), activities on or near the site would risk being impossible by reason of legislative overkill'*. While Advocate-General Sharpston's Opinion was regarding whether every contributor to an 'in combination' effect, no matter how small, actually needs to be subject to Appropriate Assessment in order to be legally compliant, logically it also suggests that minor contributors to an effect should be required to deliver proportionate mitigation.
- 5.104 Since the effect is 'in combination' rather than due to the Halton Local Plan (or any particular development site in Halton) alone, it is considered that a two-tier approach to improving air quality and reducing the need for journey to work traffic movements eastward to Greater Manchester is required.
- 5.105 The first tier would be strategic and would be intended to address all growth in Halton. 'Halton must take a strategic borough-wide approach to reducing reliance on the private car and promoting and delivering improved public transport and low emission vehicles. It is noted that **Policy CS(R)15 (Sustainable Transport)** of the Local Plan sets out such a framework. The policy states that *'the Council and its partners will support a reduction in the need to travel by car,*

⁹⁵ https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/QS702EW/view/1946157073?rows=rural_urban&cols=cell

⁹⁶ <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/WU03UK/chart/1132462387>

⁹⁷ GOV.UK (2019). *Average number of trips made and distance travelled*.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/nts01-average-number-of-trips-made-and-distance-travelled>, accessed 13/03/2020

encourage a choice of sustainable transport modes and ensure new developments are highly accessible by sustainable modes'. In addition, the policy states that the Council will encourage the introduction of new sustainable routes and facilities and promote the use of green technology to reduce transport emissions. This strategic initiative will operate with the spatial strategy to further reduce Halton's contribution to daily traffic flows on the M62 east to Greater Manchester and to improve the emissions of those vehicles that make that journey. These strategic initiatives associated with Policies CS(R)15 will apply to *all* new housing and employment in Halton.

- 5.106 A second part of the overarching strategy is **Policy C1 (Transport Network and Accessibility Walking and Cycling)**, which includes a requirement for development to give priority to walking, cycling and public transport within its design and promote the use of Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEV) and is located within 400 metres (i.e. easy walking distance) of a bus stop or railway station with a suitable level of service. The policy also identifies several key locations for safeguarding as these are intended to enhance the rail network connectivity including park and ride at Ditton, new railway stations and the creation of a multi modal public transport interchange at Runcorn Train Station. Finally, Policy C2 (Parking Standards) requires electric vehicle infrastructure according to the standards set out in Appendix D of the Local Plan.
- 5.107 The initiatives in Policy CS(R)15 in particular are to be expanded upon (as noted in the Local Plan supporting text) in a Transport and Accessibility SPD. The SPD will provide further guidance on accessibility, outline the requirements for Transport Assessments and Travel Plans and set car and cycle parking standards for various types of development. It is recommended that it also set out proactive measures that the Council will take to reduce reliance on the private car and improve use of public transport or low-emission vehicles at a borough-wide scale.
- 5.108 While not explicitly targeted at the M62 (which lies outside Halton and thus outside the control of the Borough Council) strategic borough-wide initiatives to reduce reliance on the private car specifically, and internal combustion engine generally, will serve to improve air quality wherever Halton residents drive, compared to a situation with no such measures, particularly when considered alongside the government's Clean Air Strategy⁹⁸ and government proposals to cease the sale of all new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2035.
- 5.109 Since the strategic measures do inevitably have some uncertainty regarding their degree of effectiveness, a second tier of mitigation is required in order to capture larger developments and require them to deliver their own bespoke mitigation packages in line with the requirements of Policy HE7(a), above and beyond (**but not instead of**) what is required for the borough as a whole: Therefore, it is also important that larger developments (those which are able to design and deliver their own mitigation package) are required to do so.
- 5.110 This will enable projects that are likely to result in a substantial increase in traffic flows to devise project-specific mitigation beyond the strategic 'in combination' air quality improvement measures being included in the Local Plan. **It is therefore recommended that large developments (i.e. those that would exceed Warrington Council's thresholds for Transport Assessments) should be required to provide a scheme-specific range of mitigation measures.** These are discussed further below, after a summary of the policy that would facilitate this.
- 5.111 **Policy HE7 (Pollution and Nuisance)** already specifies that '*Applications for development that risks negatively impacting on the quality of the environment through: a. air pollution... must be accompanied by an appropriate impact assessment and, where necessary, demonstrate that mitigation measures have been incorporated through a mitigation scheme.*' While this implies that large development schemes are likely to have to be accompanied by a project-level assessment, there is the need to ensure that project-level mitigation is provided for through policy.
- 5.112 There are various examples of effective measures available to larger developments to address air quality impacts (depending on the type of development). **We consider that these are too detailed to be included in policy text and therefore should be included in the relevant supporting text.** However, it is advised that additional wording is added to paragraph 12.65 in the supporting text of the Local Plan, would also link the requirements to the HRA evidence. Suggested text is '*Developments likely to exceed the Councils thresholds for Transport Assessments will need to mitigate the effects on internationally designated sites (Manchester*

⁹⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/clean-air-strategy-2019>

Mosses SAC) as set out in policy HE1 through consideration of additional pollution reduction measures outlined in paragraph 5.112 of Local Plan Habitats Regulations Assessment'.

5.113 Potential mitigation measures include:

- Electric vehicle charging points at parking spaces. The government has committed to ceasing the sale of all new petrol and diesel cars and vans from 2040. In the latter part of the plan period therefore people can be expected to show particular interest in electric vehicles;
- Provision of a communal minibus (particularly if electric), and car club space. This will be effective for housing developments but particularly for employment developments;
- Cycle parking and shower facilities for staff;
- On-site services (e.g. GP surgery's and shops) to reduce need for off-site movements;
- Personalised Journey Planning services for residents. If employment premises the company could provide incentives for car-sharing and minimising car journeys for work;
- Production of sustainable travel information for residents e.g. accurate and easily understandable bus timetables;
- Implementation of a Staff Management Plan to place restrictions on car use by Staff; and
- For vehicles generating HGV movements, restrictions to keep movements below 200 HDV per day, or a commitment to ensuring all HGVs used will be Euro6 compliant

5.114 It is not possible to precisely forecast the effect of this strategy on NO₂ emissions, or nitrogen deposition rates; the necessary predictive tools and data do not yet exist. However, retrospective data regarding the measured effectiveness of a broadly comparable package of measures elsewhere gives a reasonable broad indication of likely minimum effectiveness. A report published by the DfT in 2004⁹⁹ reviewed the evidence for the impact of various 'soft' measures¹⁰⁰ such as workplace and school travel plans, personalised travel planning, travel awareness campaigns, public transport information and marketing, car clubs and car sharing schemes, teleworking, teleconferencing and home shopping on resident behaviour. The authors of the report concluded that a package of 'low intensity' interventions¹⁰¹ could be expected to reduce traffic by 2-3%, whilst a package of 'high intensity' interventions¹⁰² could be expected to lead to an 11% reduction.

5.115 The conclusions of the 2004 DfT report were used to inform large-scale Smarter Choice Programmes that were carried out in three designated Sustainable Travel Towns: Darlington, Peterborough and Worcester. This project involved implementing a limited package of soft measures in each town: workplace travel planning, school travel planning, personal travel planning, public transport information and marketing, cycling and walking promotion and travel awareness raising. Post-project appraisal of these schemes¹⁰³ confirmed an average 9% reduction in car-based trips by residents. This compared very well with a fall of approximately 1% in medium-sized urban areas that did not have such a package of measures.

5.116 Modelling for the Warrington Local Plan (within which the relevant section of the Manchester Mosses SAC is situated) concluded that growth in that borough would result in a 2.5% increase in vehicle trips past the SAC. It also concluded that the recorded trip reductions of 2% to 9% from implementation of soft measures in Peterborough, Darlington and Worcester compare very well with the 2.5% reduction that would be the target for Warrington. Since Halton is much further from the SAC than Warrington its contribution to any change in flows even from large

⁹⁹ DfT, 2004. Smarter Choices - Changing the Way We Travel

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/smarter-choices-main-report-about-changing-the-way-we-travel>

¹⁰⁰ Soft transport policy measures seek to give better information and opportunities, aimed at helping people to choose to reduce their car use while enhancing the attractiveness of alternatives.

¹⁰¹ The 'low intensity' scenario was broadly defined as a simple projection of the 2003-4 levels of local and national activity on soft measures.

¹⁰² The 'high intensity' scenario identified the potential provided by a significant expansion of activity to a much more widespread implementation of present good practice, albeit to a realistic level which still recognised the constraints of money and other resources, and variation in the suitability and effectiveness of soft factors according to local circumstances.

¹⁰³ DfT, 2010. The Effects of Smarter Choice Programmes <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-effects-of-smarter-choice-programmes-in-the-sustainable-travel-towns-full-report>

development sites is very likely to be considerably less than 1%. Therefore, a similar mitigation package as that applied to Warrington, as identified in the above text, is even more likely to adequately address the contribution of Halton to changes in vehicle flows on the M62.

5.117 With the above policy text incorporated, it is considered that the Halton Local Plan would not result in adverse effects on the integrity of the Manchester Mosses SAC alone or in combination with other Plans.

Sefton Coast SAC

Role of Other Plans

5.118 The following plans are considered to have the potential to act upon the Sefton Coast SAC site 'in combination':

- Liverpool John Lennon Airport Masterplan – potential impacts due to increased sulphur and nitrogen deposition from aircraft, loss of supporting foraging/high-tide roost habitat and possible disturbance of waterfowl from noise. This also forms part of the Liverpool Local Plan so is discussed alongside policy CS(R)17;
- North West England & North Wales Shoreline Management Plan 2 – possible impacts due to the maintenance or enhancement of flood defences could lead to coastal squeeze, changes in sediment release (if previously undefended areas become defended) and direct loss of habitat to flood defence footprint;
- Local Plans or Core Strategies for Liverpool, Cheshire West and Chester, Cheshire East, Trafford, Warrington, Knowsley, Sefton, Wirral and St Helens and Liverpool and Wirral Waters Development masterplans – possible water quality, air quality and wildfowl disturbance impacts as a result of delivery of 110,000 dwellings and associated commercial development over the next 20 years. The Warrington and Liverpool Local Plans in particular could both involve landtake of functionally-linked land around the Mersey Estuary SPA. For the Liverpool Local Plan this would be via the Liverpool John Lennon Airport. For Warrington Local Plan site (MD1 Warrington Waterfront) lies close to the River Mersey south-west of Warrington and partially within Moore Nature Reserve which is known to be a significant area for wintering gulls, waterfowl and waders. However, the layout of the development avoids the key areas for these species as indicated by the Cheshire Bird Atlas which are mostly further west or associated with the waterbodies of the reserve, preserving those areas as greenspace or a 160ha country park; and
- Joint Waste Local Plan for Merseyside and Halton – possible impacts due to water quality, air quality and wildfowl disturbance or chick predation. However, since this DPD is itself subject a recent HRA it will address its own contribution to any 'in combination' effect that may otherwise arise.

Recap of Likely Significant Effects

5.119 The TOLSE of Halton's revised Core Strategy policies and the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan undertaken in Appendices C, D and E identified the following linking impact pathways requiring further consideration:

- Recreational pressure
- Atmospheric pollution

Recreational Pressure

5.120 Sand dunes are vulnerable to recreational trampling in that excessive physical disturbance can retard or reverse the dune development process, leading to a reduction in habitat diversity. However, conversely a limited amount of recreational trampling is beneficial for diversity as this ensures that the dune vegetation does not all succeed to late stages of development.

- 5.121 A study on recreation use of Sefton's Natural Coast¹⁰⁴ estimated that half of the recreational users were locals (i.e. residents within the Borough of Sefton). Regarding the reasons for visiting the coast, the main reason of over 50% of respondents was dog walking, walking, fresh air or visiting the coast. Nature-related reasons such as visiting the squirrels, bird-watching and fishing were given by only 20% of interviewees. Most visits focused on Formby and Crosby as their destinations.
- 5.122 Unfortunately, the study did not explore where the remaining 50% of visitors (i.e. those visitors coming from further afield; possibly from Halton) came from. The visitor surveys undertaken for other estuaries suggest that core visitor catchments are often up to 10km, but on occasion can be greater. At its closest, the Sefton Coast SAC is located a minimum of 26km from the main urban areas of Halton if one follows transport routes (or 20km in Euclidean straight-line distance). Halton and its urban areas therefore lie outside the typical catchment zone that visitors would be expected to derive from. While it is likely that some Halton residents do visit the Sefton Coast SAC, it is probable that they constitute a very small proportion of visitors. It is far more likely that a significant proportion of visitors come from the Borough of Liverpool and other adjacent Boroughs (for example in Lancashire), which are much closer to the SAC.
- 5.123 However, consultation with Natural England has identified that the Sefton Coast SAC is the nearest beach-side destination to Halton¹⁰⁵ and the contribution of Halton, despite likely being small, should not be ruled out without more conclusive data. This is mainly because the Sefton Coast probably has the strongest recreational draw of any European Sites in the Liverpool City Region. Therefore, it is concluded that adverse in-combination effects may occur, particularly considering the ageing population across Merseyside with more leisure time at hand.
- 5.124 Several policies contained within the Halton Local Plan relate to a greater connectivity and accessibility from Halton to other Merseyside Boroughs as well as the delivery of 8,050 new dwellings. However, the delivery of these measures across Merseyside authorities is unlikely to materially decrease the distance needed to travel from Halton to the Sefton Coast SAC.
- 5.125 Some protective policy wording regarding the importance of green infrastructure is already contained within the Local Plan. This is important as it might reduce recreational pressure on European Sites sensitive to recreational pressure. For example, new policy HE4 (Green Infrastructure) provides for the protection and enhancement of green infrastructure. This policy requires all development to incorporate '*high quality green infrastructure...*' that '*protects and enhances biodiversity*'. Where green infrastructure is to be lost, '*compensatory measures would be expected to be delivered as part of the proposed development, financial contributions would need to be justified*'. Additionally, paragraph 7.111 of the supporting text of retained policy CS 21 (Green Infrastructure) states: '*... Impacts on neighbouring authorities' European sites, including the Sefton Coast Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and the Sefton section of the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar Site, will also be managed through the Council working in partnership with neighbouring authorities on appropriate Management Plans.*'
- 5.126 Further, paragraph 7.112 states: '*It is recognised that Halton's green infrastructure network cannot be delivered in isolation from other partners and agencies and neighbouring Local Authorities. As such the evolution of localised and cross boundary frameworks and studies over the Core Strategy period are supported where these contribute to the aims of protecting, enhancing and expanding the Borough's green infrastructure network. This includes site specific masterplans and studies, and sub-regional green infrastructure and ecological frameworks. Programmes of delivery and initiatives concerning Regional Parks and assets that are relevant to the Borough will also be supported.*'
- 5.127 The Sefton Coast SAC, and also the Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar (discussed later) are the most vulnerable European Sites to recreational pressure in the Merseyside region. They have therefore been prioritised in development of an enhanced Recreation Mitigation and Avoidance Strategy (RMAS), which will ensure that population growth in the region will not result in adverse effects on European Sites. The RMAS is being developed by the Sefton Coast Landscape Partnership through policies and actions set out in the Sefton Coast Plan (not a statutory obligation). However, it is nonetheless a commitment by the Partnership and the RMAS

¹⁰⁴ England's North West Research Service for Economic Development and Tourism (May 2009) Sefton's Natural Coast Local Users of the Coast (Version 2)

¹⁰⁵ Letter from Karen Gribben (Natural England) to James Riley (URS Scott Wilson) and Rosalind King (MEAS) of 25/01/11

is recognised in the Sefton Local Plan (and will be in the amended St Helens Local Plan) as the mechanism by which adverse effects on the SAC will be avoided. Thus, the RMAS will effectively become mandatory because the conclusions of the Local Plan HRAs will rely upon it.

5.128 Actions AR1 and AR2 of the Sefton Coast Plan commit to production of the RMAS. The Sefton Coast Plan includes an outline of the contents of the RMAS, a timetable for its production and proposals for monitoring its delivery and effectiveness. The Sefton Coast Plan therefore provides a framework of mitigation measures for increases in recreational pressure due to Local Plan growth. While this framework is currently focussed on Sefton, it could be expanded to also cover Halton Borough.

5.129 AR1 and AR2 provide a commitment to the RMAS but also make it clear that there will be a timetable with milestones, including:

- Beach management;
- Visitor facility investment and management e.g. refreshments, toilets, provision of information;
- 'Responsible Visitor' code;
- Events management e.g. access plan; location, timing, asset management; and
- Include a commitment to evidence gathering and monitoring.

5.130 Therefore, the commitment is not simply a reference to producing a document but includes a description of the purpose of the RMAS and its contents. The Sefton Coast Plan considers the needs of enabling visitor access and the protection of the environment by developing 'gateways' at key access points to manage visitor pressure and to control parking on the dunes. The need for investment in and maintenance of visitor facilities is recognised.

5.131 The Delivery Plan associated with the Sefton Coast Plan provides target dates for the RMAS, which includes a public consultation on the draft RMAS in autumn 2017. It is therefore probable that the RMAS will be in a position to at least commence delivery of its initiatives from 2018. As such, if the Councils took a decision to expand the framework to cover St Helens, it would be placed on a similar timeline to the expected adoption of the St Helens Local Plan (currently expected to be adopted no earlier than late 2018).

5.132 Page 5 of the Access and Recreation Topic Paper that constitutes part of the Sefton Coast Plan states that: *'Partly as a result of recreational damage to the Sefton Coast habitats and species, the Sefton Coast Management Scheme was established in 1978. Much excellent work was delivered through that particular scheme to redress the issues of recreational damage and pressure'*. This highlights that recreation can be managed such that European sites are protected and enhanced. It therefore provides reassurance that the Partnership can deliver on their commitments.

5.133 Importantly, page 26 of the Sefton Coast Plan also makes it clear that the successful delivery of the commitments made in Actions AR1 and AR2 will be monitored: *'It is essential that on-going monitoring takes place¹⁰⁶, and that management or other policies and practices are reviewed if this monitoring shows that the desired aims and outcomes are not being achieved. To aid this monitoring and review of progress the strategic actions will be set out in a separate Delivery Plan that includes key milestone dates and more details on the activities required to achieve the strategic actions.'*

5.134 **There is now an explicit commitment from all the Liverpool City Region local authorities to collaborate towards delivering a Recreation Mitigation and Avoidance Strategy (RMAS) for Sefton Coast, which is a commitment of the adopted Sefton Coast Management Plan.** The Liverpool City Region RMAS contract is in process of being awarded and will take forward all the SPA and Ramsar sites and the Sefton Coast SAC within the City Region, early in the plan period. Any package of measures in the emerging RMAS will include site-specific considerations, such as the designation features themselves and the relative accessibility of the sensitive receptors and designation features, for each of the European sites. For example, in contrast to the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar, the Sefton Coast is relatively easily accessible and an integrated set of measures to address alone and in-combination recreation pressures might be addressed through provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace' (i.e. additional and

¹⁰⁶ The Sefton Coast Partnership (of which Natural England is a member) are corporately responsible for monitoring delivery

increased functionality of existing greenspace–) and ‘Strategic Access Management and Monitoring measures.

- 5.135 However, it is essential that the following text (or similar) is inserted into the Local Plan to ensure that recreational pressure is adequately mitigated: ***‘Commencing early in the plan period Halton Council will work with work with partners, including the other Merseyside authorities, to devise and implement a Liverpool City Region European Sites Recreation Mitigation and Avoidance Strategy (RMS) Recreation Mitigation and Avoidance Strategy to protect all European sites in the Liverpool City Region from increased recreational pressure as a result of the quantum of housing development proposed within the Local Plan periods..’*** The Council have dealt with this recommendation by adding the following text to Policy CS(R)1: *‘The Liverpool City Region (LCR) Recreation Mitigation Strategy has been developed to meet the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). Residential development within 5 km of protected accessible coasts, resulting in a net increase of 10 or more dwellings and major tourism developments, will be able to discharge their HRA requirements in relation to recreational disturbance by making a financial contribution towards avoidance and mitigation schemes in the LCR area in accordance with policy CS(R)20 and HE1.. They have also added the following supporting text: ‘The Liverpool City Region (LCR) Recreation Mitigation Strategy has been developed to meet the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). The Strategy addresses the potential effects on the internationally recognised Special Protection Areas (SPAs) of major housing developments on or near to the LCR coastline. Residential development within 5 km of protected coasts, resulting in a net increase of 10 or more dwellings and certain major tourism developments, will be required to make a financial contribution towards avoidance and mitigation schemes in the LCR area’ and added the following text to CS(R)20: ‘All major development proposals should avoid and/or mitigate negative impacts on European habitat sites within and beyond the Halton’s boundary such that a conclusion of “No Adverse Effects” on integrity can be drawn’, with the following in the supporting text for that policy ‘Recreational impacts should be managed for SPA’s through access and habitat management and prioritising other assets demonstrating recreational potential that are identified in the Borough’s green infrastructure network (Policy CS(R)21) HE1 and HE4 and the DALP’s HRA (August 2020). This will allow for the balancing and managing of recreational usage in a way that does not adversely impact conservation interest, this is particularly relevant for internationally important sites (the Mersey Estuary SPA, Dee Estuary SAC, Dee Estuary SPA and Dee Estuary Ramsar site, Liverpool Bay SPA and Ramsar site and Mersey Narrows & North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar site) and specifically the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar site’. Extensive text has also been added on this issue to Policy HE1.*
- 5.136 Similar to the approach regarding the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar, an interim IN or SPD could be developed to set out a clearer strategic approach to the mitigation of recreational pressure in the Sefton Coast SAC, until such time that the RMAS is operational. This could set setting out mitigation measures (e.g. provision of accessible natural greenspace on large housing sites, access management) more formally. Mitigation measures relating to housing in the core recreational catchment of the Sefton Coast SAC would have to be developed with the qualifying features and conservation objectives of the site in mind.
- 5.137 With the development of a suitable interim approach, that can be implemented alongside the first residential planning application that comes forward under this Local Plan, and the inclusion of this commitment to implementing the outcomes of the RMAS within the Plan, it can be considered that recreational pressure from Halton Borough will not result in an adverse effect on integrity on the Sefton Coast SAC as a result of increased recreational pressure, both alone and in combination.

Atmospheric Pollution

- 5.138 The atmospheric deposition of sulphur will largely be determined by shipping and airport expansion. The Site Relevant Critical Load on APIS indicates that 34% of sulphur deposition within the SAC is due to shipping and ‘other transport’ (the latter category excludes road transport but does include air travel). However, reference to APIS¹⁰⁷ indicates that the actual SO₂

¹⁰⁷ Air Pollution Information System <http://www.apis.ac.uk/>

concentration in the SAC (approx. $1.05 \mu\text{gm}^{-3}$) is well below the critical annual mean level of $10 \mu\text{gm}^{-3}$.

- 5.139 Sand dune succession and petalwort are both vulnerable to eutrophication resulting from the excessive atmospheric deposition of nitrogen. High nitrogen concentrations can accelerate the growth of some plant species, which are likely to out-compete petalwort. This might rapidly advance sand dune succession to a point of excessive scrub development. The Site Relevant Critical Load on APIS for nitrogen deposition indicates that actual maximum nitrogen deposition is 14.84 kgN/ha/yr compared to a critical load (for fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation ("grey dunes")) of $8\text{-}10 \text{ kgN/ha/yr}$. The site is therefore already exceeding its critical load. Road transport, 'other transport' (aircraft take-off and landing, shipping and railway) are currently responsible for 35% of nitrogen deposition in the SPA. Since the site is already exceeding its critical load any source of NO_x will require project-level HRA TOLSE and could lead to an adverse in-combination impact.
- 5.140 As the Sefton Coast SAC does not lie within 200m of any major traffic routes linking Halton to Sefton, it is primarily the airport expansion that will contribute to the increase in nitrogen deposition.
- 5.141 The Liverpool John Lennon Airport Masterplan to 2050 (2018)¹⁰⁸ acknowledges that the expansion plans for the airport could impact air quality within the locality from increases in airside vehicles, airborne and ground level aircraft activity and vehicles travelling to and from the airport. However, the masterplan states that *'the increase in air and ground movements would be offset by improvements in vehicle and aircraft technologies that reduce the emissions per movement. It is unlikely that the proposals would lead to exceedances of the objectives in future years.'*
- 5.142 Based on the precautionary approach, the extension of Liverpool John Lennon Airport may increase sulphur dioxide emissions in the vicinity of the SAC. No more detailed analysis of potential air quality impacts is possible at this point, because this will depend greatly on the proposed capacity of the new expansion, the proposed number/frequency of new flights, their flightpaths and the emission profiles of the aircraft. These can be modelled for individual planning application as necessary but are not available at this level.
- 5.143 Moreover, Revised Policy CS(R)17: Liverpool John Lennon Airport states: 'With respect to internationally important sites (particularly the Mersey Estuary Special Protection Area and Ramsar site) proposals will need to incorporate measures that are acceptable to the appropriate statutory body and sufficiently extensive to enable a conclusion of no adverse effect on their integrity unless it can be demonstrated that there are both no alternatives and Imperative Reasons of Over-riding Public Interest'. However, in line with Natural England's advice, it is recommended the policy wording for LJLA has been enhanced to include the following text: ***'Further assessment of air quality impacts will be made at the project level, to ensure that there will be no adverse effects of atmospheric pollution on the integrity of European sites, especially the Sefton Coast SAC'***.
- 5.144 It is concluded that the Halton Local Plan contains a sufficient policy framework to ensure that development provided in Halton does not have adverse effects on the integrity of the Sefton Coast SAC regarding the impact pathway atmospheric pollution.

Conclusion

- 5.145 The Appropriate Assessment has concluded that the Halton Local Plan will not have adverse effects the integrity of the Sefton Coast SAC regarding the impact pathway recreational pressure and atmospheric pollution.

¹⁰⁸ John Lennon Liverpool Airport Masterplan March 2018. <https://www.liverpoolairport.com/media/2957/liverpool-john-lennon-airport-master-plan-to-2050.pdf> [Accessed 09/07/2019]

Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar and SAC

Recap of Likely Significant Effects

5.146 The TOLSE of Halton's revised Core Strategy policies and the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan undertaken in Appendices C, D and E identified the following linking impact pathways requiring further consideration:

- Recreational pressure;
- Water quality and resources; and
- Atmospheric pollution

Recreational Pressure

5.147 The Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar and SAC is located 24km in actual road distance and 17.8km in Euclidean straight-line distance from Halton Borough. As discussed earlier in the document, visitor surveys undertaken for other estuaries have established core visitor catchments of up to 10km, and sometimes larger. However, there are other estuaries closer to Halton (most notably the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar) that are likely to be the destination of any Halton residents wishing to visit the coast. While likely to be used by some Halton residents, the Dee Estuary has fewer of the beaches and dunes that make the Sefton Coast such a regional draw. Due to this and the distance between the SPA and Ramsar and SAC, and Halton, it is concluded that the Halton Local Plan is likely to play a much smaller role in adverse effects on the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar and SAC regarding the impact pathway recreational pressure than it does for other European sites. While there is an in-combination scope for this effect to occur, the vast majority of on-site recreational activities will be undertaken by residents of Wirral, Cheshire West & Chester and Flintshire in North Wales, with Halton having a negligible effect.

5.148 This in-combination recreational pressure in the site was assessed through Footprint Ecology's visitor survey work in 2017, which covered four survey points in component SSSIs. The data indicated that 75% of visitors to the SPA and Ramsar and SAC derive from a 4.4km core catchment¹⁰⁹. This is a relatively small recreational catchment even compared to some inland sites and places the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar and SAC well beyond the reach of the 'typical' Halton resident. Overall, it is considered that Halton does not materially contribute to the in-combination visitor pressure in this European site. Notwithstanding this, it is noted that the emerging RMAS for the Liverpool City Region is intending to cover all European sites in the area, including the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar and SAC, which will ensure that any residual recreational pressure impacts are appropriately mitigated.

5.149 Additional disturbance both from aircraft noise and lighting to SPA and Ramsar waterfowl might also be caused by more aeroplane traffic to and from Liverpool John Lennon Airport. Flights taking off from the airport routinely cross both the Dee Estuary and the Mersey. Revised Policy CS(R)17: Liverpool John Lennon Airport provides for development within the airport boundary, although no quantum and type of such development is specified. It is therefore unclear how this development will influence the airport's daily flight traffic capacity.

5.150 While it is not possible to currently evaluate these impacts in detail, the risk for aeroplane-related disturbance is considerably lower than that for the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar site. This is because the Dee Estuary is further away from the airport, flights will have a higher altitude, and the resulting noise and visual disturbance will therefore be lower. Current noise contours reported within the Masterplan indicate that noise levels will be similar to background levels at distances closer to the airport than the Dee Estuary SPA. However, there may be displacement of species from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar that also use the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar, and this is discussed in the Appropriate Assessment for the Mersey Estuary.

5.151 To counter adverse effects on European Sites such as through waterfowl disturbance, Revised Policy CS(R)17 Liverpool John Lennon Airport provides the following protective policy wording: *'With respect to internationally important sites (particularly the Mersey Estuary Special Protection*

¹⁰⁹ Data taken from page 4 of Liley, D., Panter, C., Marsh, P. & Roberts, J. (2017) Recreational activity and interactions with birds within the SSSIs on the North-West coast of England. Unpublished report for Natural England.

Area and Ramsar site) proposals will need to incorporate measures that are acceptable to the appropriate statutory body and sufficiently extensive to enable a conclusion of no adverse effect on their integrity unless it can be demonstrated that there are both no alternatives and Imperative Reasons of Over-riding Public Interest. This clarifies the high standards that would need to be achieved for mitigation measures to be deemed acceptable. Its inclusion in the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan ensures that there is an adequate policy framework to avoid adverse effects on the integrity of the River Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar.

- 5.152 Moreover, Policy EC7 of the Liverpool Local Plan (amended following Inspector's early comments) does not commit to a specific masterplan or proposal but simply expresses qualified support for the sustainable expansion of Liverpool Airport. The policy also makes Council support contingent on *'appropriate assessment of the potential environmental impacts referenced in criteria a) to c) below where such assessment has shown it necessary, the implementation of appropriate and proportionate mitigation measures to address potential environmental impacts associated with this growth ... With respect to internationally important sites (particularly the Mersey Estuary Special Protection Area and Ramsar site) proposals will need to incorporate measures that are acceptable to the appropriate statutory body and sufficiently extensive to enable a conclusion of no adverse effect on their integrity unless it can be demonstrated that there are both no alternatives and Imperative Reasons of Over-riding Public Interest.* Moreover, Policy GI5 of the Liverpool Local Plan will apply to the airport expansion as much as any other developments and specifically states that development would not be permitted if it has an adverse effect on integrity without demonstrating IROPI and No Alternatives.
- 5.153 Given this, it is considered that the policy in the Halton Local Plan coupled with policies EC7 and GI5 in the Liverpool Local Plan will adequately protect European sites.

Atmospheric Pollution

- 5.154 The Liverpool John Lennon Airport Masterplan to 2050 (2018)¹¹⁰ acknowledges that the expansion plans for the airport could impact air quality within the locality from increases in airside vehicles, airborne and ground-level aircraft activity and vehicles travelling to and from the airport. However, the masterplan states that *'the increase in air and ground movements would be offset by improvements in vehicle and aircraft technologies that reduce the emissions per movement. It is unlikely that the proposals would lead to exceedances of the objectives in future years.'* Based on the precautionary approach, the extension of Liverpool John Lennon Airport could increase sulphur dioxide emissions in the vicinity of the SPA and Ramsar and SAC. However, reference to APIS¹¹¹ indicates that the actual SO₂ concentration in the Dee Estuary SPA is currently 2.03 µgm⁻³ and thus well below the annual critical mean of 10 µgm⁻³.
- 5.155 Moreover, Revised Policy CS(R)17 Liverpool John Lennon Airport states: *'With respect to internationally important sites (particularly the Mersey Estuary Special Protection Area and Ramsar site) proposals will need to incorporate measures that are acceptable to the appropriate statutory body and sufficiently extensive to enable a conclusion of no adverse effect on their integrity unless it can be demonstrated that there are both no alternatives and Imperative Reasons of Over-riding Public Interest.'*
- 5.156 Therefore, the Halton Local Plan contains a sufficient protective policy framework to ensure that there will be no adverse effects on the integrity of the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar and SAC in regarding the impact pathway atmospheric pollution.

Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar

Role of Other Plans

- 5.157 The other plans considered as part of the in combination assessment for this European site are below.

¹¹⁰ John Lennon Liverpool Airport Masterplan March 2018. <https://www.liverpoolairport.com/media/2957/liverpool-john-lennon-airport-master-plan-to-2050.pdf> [Accessed 09/07/2019]

¹¹¹ Air Pollution Information System <http://www.apis.ac.uk/>

- Liverpool John Lennon Airport Masterplan – potential impacts due to increased sulphur and nitrogen deposition from aircraft, loss of supporting foraging/high-tide roost habitat and possible disturbance of waterfowl from noise. This also forms part of the Liverpool Local Plan so is discussed alongside policy CS(R)17;
- North West England & North Wales Shoreline Management Plan 2 – possible impacts due to the maintenance or enhancement of flood defences could lead to coastal squeeze, changes in sediment release (if previously undefended areas become defended) and direct loss of habitat to flood defence footprint;
- Local Plans or Core Strategies for Liverpool, Cheshire West and Chester, Cheshire East, Trafford, Warrington, Knowsley, Sefton, Wirral and St Helens and Liverpool and Wirral Waters Development masterplans – possible water quality, air quality and wildfowl disturbance impacts as a result of delivery of 110,000 dwellings and associated commercial development over the next 20 years. The Warrington and Liverpool Local Plans in particular could both involve landtake of functionally-linked land around the Mersey Estuary SPA. For the Liverpool Local Plan this would be via the Liverpool John Lennon Airport. For Warrington Local Plan site (MD1 Warrington Waterfront) lies close to the River Mersey south-west of Warrington and partially within Moore Nature Reserve which is known to be a significant area for wintering gulls, waterfowl and waders. However, the layout of the development avoids the key areas for these species as indicated by the Cheshire Bird Atlas which are mostly further west or associated with the waterbodies of the reserve, preserving those areas as greenspace or a 160ha country park; and
- Joint Waste Local Plan for Merseyside and Halton – possible impacts due to water quality, air quality and wildfowl disturbance or chick predation. However, since this DPD is itself subject a recent HRA it will address its own contribution to any ‘in combination’ effect that may otherwise arise.

Recap of Likely Significant Effects

5.158 The TOLSE of Halton’s revised Core Strategy policies and the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan undertaken in Appendices C, D and E identified the following linking impact pathways requiring further consideration:

- Recreational pressure; and
- Water quality and resources

Recreational Pressure

5.159 Although the coast that lies adjacent to the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar draws tourists from across the county, particularly due to its proximity to Blackpool, recreational use focusses in the Ribble Estuary, the furthest part of the SPA and Ramsar from Halton. Regarding visitors from Merseyside, the southern part of the SPA and Ramsar (i.e. that largely contiguous with the Sefton Coast SAC) is of greater relevance.

5.160 As the southern part of the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar largely falls within the same geographical area as Sefton Coast SAC, similar recreational pressures apply to these sites (see Appropriate Assessment for that site). One key difference is that recreational pressure in the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar relates to the qualifying bird species of this site (e.g. nesting terns). These terns depend on different habitat features than those present in the Sefton Coast SAC, namely sandflats and intertidal mudflats rather than coastal dunes.

5.161 Another important difference is that this sensitivity is seasonal. While recreational pressure in the Sefton Coast SAC is relevant all year around, the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar is generally vulnerable in winter, when the waterfowl is present on site. The risk of recreational disturbance is likely to be lower in winter, because people are less likely to engage in outdoor activities. However, natterjack toads are qualifying Ramsar species and are more sensitive to disturbance during in the spring and summer months, when toadlets leave their protected breeding ponds.

5.162 Several policies contained within the Halton Local Plan provide for a greater connectivity between Halton and other Merseyside authorities and the delivery of 8,050 new residential dwellings.

While this provides for a potential increase in recreational pressure, the measures to improve the connectivity between boroughs are unlikely to materially decrease the distance and time required to travel between Halton and the SPA and Ramsar.

- 5.163 The Plan contains protective wording in policies and their supporting text, relating specifically to the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar. New policy HE4 (Green Infrastructure) provides for the protection and enhancement of green infrastructure. This policy requires all development to incorporate ‘*high quality green infrastructure...*’ that ‘*protects and enhances biodiversity*’. Where green infrastructure is to be lost, ‘*compensatory measures would be expected to be delivered as part of the proposed development, financial contributions would need to be justified*’.
- 5.164 Paragraph 7.112 of the supporting text of retained policy CS 21 (Green Infrastructure) states: ‘*... Impacts on neighbouring authorities’ European sites, including the Sefton Coast Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and the Sefton section of the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar Site, will also be managed through the Council working in partnership with neighbouring authorities on appropriate Management Plans.*’ Further, paragraph 7.113 states: ‘*It is recognised that Halton’s green infrastructure network cannot be delivered in isolation from other partners and agencies and neighbouring Local Authorities. As such the evolution of localised and cross boundary frameworks and studies over the Core Strategy period are supported where these contribute to the aims of protecting, enhancing and expanding the Borough’s green infrastructure network. This includes site specific masterplans and studies, and sub-regional green infrastructure and ecological frameworks. Programmes of delivery and initiatives concerning Regional Parks and assets that are relevant to the Borough will also be supported.*’
- 5.165 **There is now an explicit commitment from all the Liverpool City Region local authorities to collaborate towards delivering a Recreation Mitigation and Avoidance Strategy (RMAS) that protects nearby European sites from recreational pressure.** The Liverpool City Region RMAS contract is in process of being awarded and will take forward all the SPA and Ramsar sites and the Sefton Coast SAC within the City Region, early in the plan period. Any package of measures in the emerging RMAS will include site-specific considerations, such as the designation features themselves and the relative accessibility of the sensitive receptors and designation features, for each of the European sites. For example, an integrated set of measures to address alone and in-combination recreation pressures might involve the provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace’ (i.e. additional and increased functionality of existing greenspace–) and ‘Strategic Access Management and Monitoring measures.
- 5.166 However, it is essential that the following text (or similar) is inserted into the Local Plan to ensure that recreational pressure is adequately mitigated: ‘**Commencing early in the plan period Halton Council will work with work with partners, including the other Merseyside authorities, to devise and implement a Recreation Mitigation and Avoidance Strategy to protect all European sites in the Liverpool City Region from increased recreational pressure as a result of the quantum of housing development proposed within the Local Plan periods.**’ The Council have dealt with this recommendation by adding the following text to Policy CS(R)1: ‘*The Liverpool City Region (LCR) Recreation Mitigation Strategy has been developed to meet the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). Residential development within 5 km of protected accessible coasts, resulting in a net increase of 10 or more dwellings and major tourism developments, will be able to discharge their HRA requirements in relation to recreational disturbance by making a financial contribution towards avoidance and mitigation schemes in the LCR area in accordance with policy CS(R)20 and HE1.. They have also added the following supporting text: ‘The Liverpool City Region (LCR) Recreation Mitigation Strategy has been developed to meet the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). The Strategy addresses the potential effects on the internationally recognised Special Protection Areas (SPAs) of major housing developments on or near to the LCR coastline. Residential development within 5 km of protected coasts, resulting in a net increase of 10 or more dwellings and certain major tourism developments, will be required to make a financial contribution towards avoidance and mitigation schemes in the LCR area’ and added the following text to CS(R)20: ‘All major development proposals should avoid and/or mitigate negative impacts on European habitat sites within and beyond the Halton’s boundary such that a conclusion of “No Adverse Effects” on integrity can be drawn’, with the following in the supporting text for that policy ‘Recreational impacts should be managed for SPA’s through access and habitat management and prioritising other assets demonstrating recreational potential that are identified in the Borough’s green*

infrastructure network (Policy CS(R)21) HE1 and HE4 and the DALP's HRA (August 2020). This will allow for the balancing and managing of recreational usage in a way that does not adversely impact conservation interest, this is particularly relevant for internationally important sites (the Mersey Estuary SPA, Dee Estuary SAC, Dee Estuary SPA and Dee Estuary Ramsar site, Liverpool Bay SPA and Ramsar site and Mersey Narrows & North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar site) and specifically the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar site'. Extensive text has also been added on this issue to Policy HE1.

- 5.167 In line with the approach to other European sites within the wider Liverpool City Region, an interim IN or SPD could be developed to set out a clearer strategic approach to the mitigation of recreational pressure in the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar, until such time that the RMAS is operational. This could set setting out mitigation measures (e.g. provision of accessible natural greenspace on large housing sites, access management) more formally. Mitigation measures relating to housing in the core recreational catchment of the SPA and Ramsar would have to be developed with the qualifying features and conservation objectives of the site in mind. With the development of an appropriate interim approach to recreational pressure, the inclusion of a commitment to implementing the RMAS within the Plan, it can be considered that increased recreational pressure due to the Plan will not result in an adverse effect on the integrity of the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar, both alone and in combination.

Water Quality

- 5.168 The Halton Local Plan, through the provision of housing, employment and mixed-use development has the potential to result in a deterioration of water quality through the process of wastewater discharge. A deterioration in water quality is one of the key environmental pressures being experienced by the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar. The water quality might be adversely affected by heavy metals, sediment disturbance, agricultural fertilisers, treated sewage effluent and untreated run-off containing compounds from everyday domestic products.

- 5.169 A screening process identified hydrological connectivity between the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar and the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar located in Halton. As such any deterioration in water quality is likely to arise as a combined effect of the conditions in the River Ribble, the River Alt and the River Mersey. The water quality impacts in relation to the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar were discussed in an earlier Appropriate Assessment section. Similar processes could be relevant for the Ribble and Alt SPA and Ramsar, and adverse effects on water quality could arise from:

- wastewater discharge (domestic and industrial) and surface water run-off;
- shipping, port / dock expansion and associated navigational dredging / ship wash.

- 5.170 It is worth considering that the sections of the Mersey immediately adjacent to the Liverpool and Wirral Boroughs are much closer the SPA and Ramsar (within 5km) than the section of Mersey within Halton (over 20km). With this in mind, and considering the attenuation of water pollutants with increasing distance from the source of pollution, policies contained within the Plan are unlikely to result in a significant adverse effect on the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar. Nevertheless, the in-combination contribution of Halton to the water quality in the Mersey and thus the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar needs to be considered and appropriately mitigated.

- 5.171 The Halton Local Plan contains policies that provide a framework for the protection of water quality.

- New Policy HE3 Halton's Waterways and Waterfronts: states that *'the Council will expect all development to take into consideration the objectives of the Water Framework Directive and the relevant River Basin Management Plan'; and '8. Waterside development will not be permitted should it have an unacceptable effect on water quality or cause significant run-off'. The policy ensures that Halton Borough abides by current Environment Agency water quality standards, which by definition means that there will be no adverse effects on European Sites.*
- New Policy HE7 Pollution and Nuisance states that: *'1. Applications for development that risks negatively impacting on the quality of the environment through:...f. water pollution; ... must be accompanied by an appropriate impact assessment and, where necessary, demonstrate that mitigation measures have been incorporated through a mitigation scheme.'* This

effectively sets a requirement for all individual planning projects to undergo a strict environmental assessment.

- New Policy HE9 Water Management and Flood Risk stipulates that: *'7. Water resources and supplies will be protected by resisting development proposals that would pose an unacceptable threat to surface water and groundwater quantity and quality';* and that *'8. New development will need to ensure that there is adequate water supply, surface water, foul drainage and sewerage or wastewater treatment capacity to serve the development.'* The implementation of this policy will ensure that development will only go ahead if it can be processed by a treatment plant. The headroom of wastewater treatment works (WwTWs) is regulated by the Environment Agency Consents Process and as such remaining within the permitted headroom, would by definition imply that there can be no adverse effects on site integrity.
- Retained Policy CS7 Infrastructure Provision identifies that where development creates or exacerbates infrastructure deficiencies it ensures that *'deficiencies or losses are compensated for, adequately mitigated or substituted before development is begun or occupied'*. It also identifies that the Council will collaborate with infrastructure and service providers.

5.172 Avoiding adverse effects relating to water quality is largely the responsibility of water companies (through their investment in future sewage treatment infrastructure) and Environment Agency (through their role in consenting effluent discharges). Local authorities need to contribute to this process by ensuring that sufficient wastewater treatment infrastructure is in place **prior** to development being delivered. This is alluded to in retained Policy CS7 Infrastructure Provision: *'On larger developments that will be completed in phases or over a number of years, an agreed delivery schedule of infrastructure works may be appropriate.'*

5.173 **Notwithstanding this, it is recommended to introduce a more explicit statement into Policy CS7 to ensure that the water quality in the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar is protected: *'Development proposals will need to demonstrate that there is sufficient headroom in the wastewater treatment infrastructure. If necessary, development will have to be phased to keep in line with the consented headroom. Furthermore, all developments will be required to deliver green infrastructure approaches, such as Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS), to maximise in-situ pollutant attenuation.'***

5.174 **The Council have addressed this by adding the following wording: *'Development proposals will be supported where there is sufficient wastewater treatment capacity. If localised deficiencies arise, development will have to be phased to so as not to exceed available capacity. Furthermore, all developments will be required to deliver green infrastructure approaches, such as Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS), to maximise in-situ pollutant attenuation in accordance with policy CS21 and HE9'*.**

5.175 Given the above mitigation policy wording is inserted in the Halton Local Plan, it is concluded that its delivery will not result in adverse effects on the integrity of the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar regarding the impact pathway water quality, alone and in-combination with other Plans.

Conclusion

5.176 Overall, it is concluded that the Halton Local Plan includes an adequate policy framework to avoid adverse effects on the integrity of the Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar.

Liverpool Bay SPA

Role of Other Projects and Plans

5.177 The other projects and plans considered as part of the in combination assessment for this European site are below.

Projects (not otherwise covered by plans)

- Alexandra Dock Biomass Project – this project is currently at the pre-application stage. A scoping report was undertaken in 2012, but did not contain reference to the proposed extension of the Liverpool Bay SPA, this not being formally identified until July 2015. The biomass site is close to the boundary of the Proposed Extension and the area identified as 'cooling water infrastructure' is partially located within the SPA extension boundary. This project has the potential to result in LSEs on the Liverpool Bay SPA, mainly resulting from bird disturbance during construction activities. As this project is still at the pre-application stage, it is not possible to assess its in-combination impact with the Plan document. The Biomass Project will need to be investigated further within a project-specific HRA as part of the planning application.

Plans

- North West England & North Wales Shoreline Management Plan 2 – possible impacts due to the maintenance or enhancement of flood defences could lead to coastal squeeze, changes in sediment release (if previously undefended areas become defended) and direct loss of habitat to flood defence footprint;
- Local Plans or Core Strategies for Liverpool, Cheshire West and Chester, Cheshire East, Trafford, Warrington, Knowsley, Sefton, Wirral and St Helens and Liverpool and Wirral Waters Development masterplans – possible water quality, air quality and wildfowl disturbance impacts as a result of delivery of 110,000 dwellings and associated commercial development over the next 20 years. The Warrington and Liverpool Local Plans in particular could both involve landtake of functionally-linked land around the Mersey Estuary SPA. For the Liverpool Local Plan this would be via the Liverpool John Lennon Airport. For Warrington Local Plan site (MD1 Warrington Waterfront) lies close to the River Mersey south-west of Warrington and partially within Moore Nature Reserve which is known to be a significant area for wintering gulls, waterfowl and waders. However, the layout of the development avoids the key areas for these species as indicated by the Cheshire Bird Atlas which are mostly further west or associated with the waterbodies of the reserve, preserving those areas as greenspace or a 160ha country park; and
- Joint Waste Local Plan for Merseyside and Halton – possible impacts due to water quality, air quality and wildfowl disturbance or chick predation. However, since this DPD is itself subject a recent HRA it will address its own contribution to any 'in combination' effect that may otherwise arise.

Recap of Likely Significant Effects

5.178 The TOLSE of Halton's revised Core Strategy policies and the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan undertaken in Appendices C, D and E identified the following linking impact pathways requiring further consideration:

- Water quality; and
- Recreational pressure

Water Quality

5.179 The Liverpool SPA extends into the River Mersey approximately to Rock Ferry. It is therefore susceptible to changes in water quality within Mersey Estuary arising from:

- wastewater discharge (domestic and industrial) and surface water run-off; and
- shipping, port / dock expansion and associated navigational dredging / ship wash.

5.180 An earlier Appropriate Assessment section discusses this impact pathway in relation to the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. Due to the hydrological connectivity with the Mersey Estuary, the same effects could also be relevant for the Liverpool Bay SPA.

- 5.181 The Natural England Draft Conservation Objectives and Advice on Operation¹¹² provide more detail on the risk that aquatic pollutants pose to the qualifying features of the Liverpool Bay SPA. Regarding wastewater discharge, non-toxic contamination through nutrient loading, organic loading and changes to the thermal regime could impact on prey species and distribution. The sensitivity of the prey species of the red-throated diver and the common scoter to non-toxic contaminants is moderate. Common scoter are benthic feeders that are closely associated with the availability and condition of their shallow sandbank habitat. They are considered highly sensitive to its physical loss, smothering and changes to its benthic communities.
- 5.182 PCBs are persistent and toxic organic pollutants used in industry as dielectric fluids in transformers, capacitors and coolants. They can bioaccumulate in the sublittoral prey species of the common scoter and biomagnify in the fish species preyed upon by the red-throated diver. Hotspots of PCBs include industrial estuaries and sandy offshore environments, but given the ban on PCBs additional future input of this pollutant is anticipated to be non-existent. However, disturbance of sediments through shipping, dock / port expansion and navigational dredging may release old depositional hotspots of PCBs.
- 5.183 Oil and chemical spills affecting shallow sandbank habitats can have a detrimental effect on bird populations indirectly through effects on their food sources and directly by impacting the health of birds, particularly during their moulting times. Oil on the feathers of birds can lead to the loss of insulation, reduced buoyancy and possible drowning. The sensitivity of the SPA to non-synthetic compounds is therefore considered to be high. Overall, the possibility of a pollution event and the assessment of likely exposure is considered to be low. This is a combination of the basal level of contamination in the SPA and, while the potential for a catastrophic collision of vessels exist, the relatively low risk of such an event.
- 5.184 The Halton Local Plan contains Plan policies that provide a framework for the protection of water quality. These are the same as the ones discussed in relation to the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar, which are:
- New Policy HE3 Halton's Waterways and Waterfronts: states that *'the Council will expect all development to take into consideration the objectives of the Water Framework Directive and the relevant River Basin Management Plan'*; and *'8. Waterside development will not be permitted should it have an unacceptable effect on water quality or cause significant run-off'*. The policy ensures that Halton Borough abides by current Environment Agency water quality standards, which by definition means that there will be no adverse effects on European Sites.
 - New Policy HE7 Pollution and Nuisance states that: *'1. Applications for development that risks negatively impacting on the quality of the environment through:...f. water pollution; ... must be accompanied by an appropriate impact assessment and, where necessary, demonstrate that mitigation measures have been incorporated through a mitigation scheme.'* This effectively sets a requirement for all individual planning projects to undergo a strict environmental assessment.
 - New Policy HE9 Water Management and Flood Risk stipulates that: *'7. Water resources and supplies will be protected by resisting development proposals that would pose an unacceptable threat to surface water and groundwater quantity and quality'*; and that *'8. New development will need to ensure that there is adequate water supply, surface water, foul drainage and sewerage or wastewater treatment capacity to serve the development.'* The implementation of this policy will ensure that development will only go ahead if it can be processed by a treatment plant. The headroom of wastewater treatment works (WwTWs) is regulated by the Environment Agency Consents Process and as such remaining within the permitted headroom, would by definition imply that there can be no adverse effects on site integrity.
 - Retained Policy CS7 Infrastructure Provision identifies that where development creates or exacerbates infrastructure deficiencies it ensures that *'deficiencies or losses are compensated for, adequately mitigated or substituted before development is begun or*

¹¹²Natural England and Countryside Council for Wales (September 2009) *Liverpool Bay / Bae Lerpwl pSPA Conservation Objectives from Natural England and CCW, September 2009* http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/LivBay-consobj_tcm6-15189.pdf

occupied'. It also identifies that the Council will collaborate with infrastructure and service providers.

- 5.185 Avoiding an adverse effect on the integrity of European Sites is mainly the responsibility of the water companies (through their investment in future sewage treatment infrastructure) and the Environment Agency (through their role in consenting effluent discharges). However, local authorities need support this process by ensuring that sufficient wastewater treatment infrastructure is in place prior to development being delivered. This is alluded to in retained Policy CS7 Infrastructure Provision: *'On larger developments that will be completed in phases or over a number of years, an agreed delivery schedule of infrastructure works may be appropriate.'*
- 5.186 **Notwithstanding this, it is recommended to introduce a more explicit statement into Policy CS7 to ensure that the water quality in the Liverpool Bay SPA is protected: *'Development proposals will need to demonstrate that there is sufficient headroom in the wastewater treatment infrastructure. If necessary, development will have to be phased to keep in line with the consented headroom. Furthermore, all developments will be required to deliver green infrastructure approaches, such as Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS), to maximise in-situ pollutant attenuation.***
- 5.187 **The Council have addressed this by adding the following wording: *'Development proposals will be supported where there is sufficient wastewater treatment capacity. If localised deficiencies arise, development will have to be phased to so as not to exceed available capacity. Furthermore, all developments will be required to deliver green infrastructure approaches, such as Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS), to maximise in-situ pollutant attenuation in accordance with policy CS21 and HE9'.***
- 5.188 Given the protective policy framework in the Halton Local Plan, it is concluded that its implementation will not result in adverse effects on the integrity of the Liverpool Bay SPA, alone and in-combination with other Plans.

Recreational Pressure

- 5.189 Recreational disturbance arising from activities such as fishing, boating, visual impacts and noise are highlighted as pressures in the Site Improvement Plan for the Liverpool Bay SPA¹¹³. The North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar, the Sefton Coast SAC and the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar are all subject to recreational pressure, and due to their close proximity to the Liverpool Bay SPA, the same impact pathway will be relevant here.
- 5.190 For example, red-throated diver winter inshore in water 0-20m deep (having one of their key concentrations off the North Wirral foreshore) and as such are likely to be vulnerable to the impacts of water-borne recreation, which largely takes place close to the shore.
- 5.191 Most of the Liverpool Bay SPA is sufficiently far from the coast that coastal water-borne recreation (e.g. windsurfing, personal watercraft, water-skiing etc.) will constitute a small source of disturbance in comparison to conventional shipping. However, a margin of the SPA abuts and is integrally linked with the North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar, and the Sefton Coast SAC. Water-borne recreation around either coast will thus potentially also affect the interest features of the Liverpool Bay SPA. However, there are bases for water-based recreational activities within Halton and nearby Cheshire, which are much closer than facilities accessing the Liverpool Bay SPA. Overall, it is considered that the impact from Halton residents on recreational disturbance in Liverpool Bay SPA would be minimal.
- 5.192 The Recreation Mitigation and Avoidance Strategy for the Sefton Coast SAC is intended to also cover the interest features of the Liverpool SPA, as they are partly associated with the Sefton Coast. Therefore, once the RMA is implemented, any small residual in-combination recreational pressure effect on the Liverpool Bay SPA will be mitigated. Overall, it is concluded that the Halton Local Plan will not result in adverse effects on the site integrity of the Liverpool SPA regarding the impact pathway recreational pressure, both alone and in-combination.

¹¹³ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/5321001921413120> [accessed 23/11/2017]

Conclusion

5.193 Overall, the HRA concludes that, given the protective policy wording, the Halton Local Plan will not result in adverse effects on the integrity of the Liverpool SPA, both alone and in-combination with other Plans.

6. Key Conclusions and Recommendations

- 6.1 Overall, it is concluded that the policies and site allocations within the Halton Local Plan will not result in adverse effects on European Sites. This is because sufficient protective mechanisms within the policies exist.
- 6.2 However, some impact pathways relating to specific European Sites, namely the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar and the Manchester Mosses SAC require the incorporation of further mitigation wording into the relevant policies to avoid adverse effects on site integrity. In the case of the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar this is due to the proximity of the designated site to development allocated in the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan.
- 6.3 These further mitigation requirements for the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar are recommended to buffer the negative impacts of:
- Loss of functionally linked land
 - Visual and noise disturbance
 - Recreational pressure
 - Water quality and resources
- 6.4 It is to be noted (and reiterated below) that the mitigation relating to recreational pressure in the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar will also address recreational pressure in the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar, the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar, the Sefton Coast SAC and the Liverpool Bay SPA. Equally, the policy wording protecting the water quality in the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar will extend protection to the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar, and the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar. However, the recommendations are not reiterated separately for these sites to avoid duplication of text.
- 6.5 For the Manchester Mosses SAC measures are recommended to mitigate possible in-combination effects of:
- Atmospheric pollution

Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar

Loss of functionally linked land

- 6.6 Some of the Plan policies provide for Key Urban Regeneration Areas that are located within areas that potentially provide functionally linked land to SPA and Ramsar birds. It is therefore considered possible that development in these areas could result in the loss of functionally linked land for SPA birds.
- 6.7 Recently bird surveys have been conducted across multiple seasons (spring, autumn and winter) on some of the land parcels that likely provide functionally linked land to the SPA and Ramsar. The data show that none of the residential site allocations supported significant proportions of the SPA bird populations. However, several fields close to the allocated sites did contain significant populations of SPA birds (see recommendations regarding the visual and noise disturbance impact pathway). While such bird surveys have been conducted **for allocated sites, sites that come forward outside allocations will need to be surveyed before planning permission is granted, to ensure that such development will not result in the loss of functionally linked land.**
- 6.8 Regarding the Liverpool John Lennon Airport, several commissioned bird surveys on land parcels surrounding the airport boundary, such as the Oglet, indicate that at least some of this land is used by significant populations of SPA birds. **While this is the case, the land currently allocated for the airport expansion within Halton Borough is unlikely to be suitable for SPA and Ramsar birds.**
- 6.9 It is clear that any proposals will require more detailed investigations at the project-specific level, including HRA, consultation with Natural England, detailed bird survey (i.e. to establish that any land proposed for development as part of the LJLA expansion is not functionally linked to the

Mersey Estuary SPA / Ramsar) and – if the data show there is functional linkage – specific details on the nature and delivery of mitigation proposals, such as site works and implementations of an agreed Coastal Reserve Management Plan .

- 6.10 It is understood that wintering bird surveys will continue and that any planning application will be supported by up-to-date ecological evidence to enable the planning authority to make an informed decision. With the existing provision of text within Revised Policy CS(R)17 (Liverpool John Lennon Airport) identifying the need for measures that will be sufficiently extensive to *‘enable a conclusion of no adverse effect on integrity unless it can be demonstrated that there are both no alternatives and Imperative Reasons of Over-riding Public Interest’* (i.e. a project-level Appropriate Assessment will be required), it is considered that Policy CS(R)17 is appropriately mitigated.
- 6.11 More generally, for non-allocated sites that come forward (i.e. windfall), it is recommended that Halton Borough Council take a tiered approach to protection of functionally-linked land:
- **Require project-level investigations for each of the sites. The applicant will be required to provide evidence that the development will not result in a Likely Significant Effect. To prove this, surveys will be required to determine habitats and current use of the site to determine if it does support a significant population¹¹⁴ of qualifying species. Where habitats are suitable, non-breeding bird surveys will be required to determine if the site and neighbouring land constitute a significant area of supporting habitat. In line with other Merseyside Authorities, surveys should be required to be undertaken during autumn, winter and spring. If habitat within the site or adjacent land are identified to support significant populations of designated bird features avoidance measures and mitigation will be required and the planning application will likely need to be supported by a project specific Habitats Regulations Assessment to ensure that the development does not result in likely significant effects.**
 - **To reaffirm that no allocated sites constitute functionally-linked land, it is recommended that a second season of survey is undertaken to support planning applications where potentially suitable habitat exists, as two years of survey data will typically be required to confirm that a site is not functionally-linked land. This can then inform an ecological constraints and opportunities plan (in line with Policy HE1) to identify (as necessary) any mitigation areas or possibilities to retain the functionally-linked areas as part of the development.**
 - **Add more specific wording to Policy HE1 (Natural Environment) to ensure stricter policy requirements are in place which require future development proposals both on allocated and non-allocated sites to adequately assess and mitigate loss of supporting habitat, including the provision of compensatory habitat. This recommendation has now been added to Policy HE1.**

Visual and noise disturbance

- 6.12 Bird surveys that were carried out in autumn, winter and spring of 2018 / 2019, confirmed that various land parcels in relative proximity to the SPA and Ramsar or its functionally linked land support significant populations of SPA birds. For example, the autumn 2018 bird survey shows that >1% of the SPA populations of golden plover and redshank use fields 24 and 34 in proximity to residential allocations W13 and W24 (incorporating educational site EDU3). Field 24 lies adjacent to the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar, but is buffered from residential allocations W13 and W24 by sewage treatment works and the Pickering Pasture Nature Reserve. However, field 34 lies directly adjacent to W24, with little buffer in between. Field 39 (a grazing marsh) was found to support >1% of the SPA population of teal, but it was determined that there was substantial spatial segregation to site allocation H1.
- 6.13 **To minimise the effect of visual and noise disturbance, it is generally recommended that any construction work (and associated road infrastructure) is located more than 200m away from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. Furthermore, given the presence of highly sensitive bird species on functionally linked land near development allocations, it is advisable that such a distance is also maintained regarding functionally linked land.**

¹¹⁴ A significant population is classified as a site that regularly used by more than 1% of the population of qualifying bird species

Depending on the noise profile of the planning application, construction within 100-200m of the SPA and Ramsar or functionally linked land parcels should be carried out between April and September, when most qualifying species will not be present. This particularly applies to construction processes associated with high noise levels (e.g. impact piling). It is advised that construction sites within 300m of bird roosts in the SPA or on functionally linked land, have appropriate screening in place to minimise visual disturbance. Finally, specific regard should also be given to the particular species assemblage on an affected land parcel. As highlighted in novel research¹¹⁵, the sensitivity to visual and noise disturbance events varies considerably between species. Therefore, as a precautionary measure, highly sensitive species (e.g. redshank) might require greater distances.

- 6.14 It is to be noted that all threshold distances in this HRA are used to flag those allocations that are likely to represent the highest risk regarding visual and noise disturbance. They are not intended to mean that sites beyond these distances can be dismissed entirely without further examination at the application level.

Recreational pressure

- 6.15 It is understood that the Liverpool City Region Recreation Mitigation and Avoidance Strategy contract is in process of being awarded and will address recreational pressure in all the SPA and Ramsar sites and the Sefton Coast SAC within the City Region, early in the plan period. It is essential that the following text (or similar) is added to the Local Plan to ensure that the additional recreational pressure resulting from the Halton Local Plan will not result in adverse effects on nearby European sites: ***'Commencing early in the plan period Halton Council will work with work with partners, including the other Merseyside authorities, to devise and implement a Recreation Mitigation and Avoidance Strategy to protect all European sites in the Liverpool City Region from increased recreational pressure as a result of the quantum of housing development proposed within the Local Plan periods.'*** The Council have dealt with this recommendation by adding the following text to Policy CS(R)1: *'The Liverpool City Region (LCR) Recreation Mitigation Strategy has been developed to meet the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). Residential development within 5 km of protected accessible coasts, resulting in a net increase of 10 or more dwellings and major tourism developments, will be able to discharge their HRA requirements in relation to recreational disturbance by making a financial contribution towards avoidance and mitigation schemes in the LCR area in accordance with policy CS(R)20 and HE1.. They have also added the following supporting text: 'The Liverpool City Region (LCR) Recreation Mitigation Strategy has been developed to meet the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). The Strategy addresses the potential effects on the internationally recognised Special Protection Areas (SPAs) of major housing developments on or near to the LCR coastline. Residential development within 5 km of protected coasts, resulting in a net increase of 10 or more dwellings and certain major tourism developments, will be required to make a financial contribution towards avoidance and mitigation schemes in the LCR area' and added the following text to CS(R)20: 'All major development proposals should avoid and/or mitigate negative impacts on European habitat sites within and beyond the Halton's boundary such that a conclusion of "No Adverse Effects" on integrity can be drawn', with the following in the supporting text for that policy 'Recreational impacts should be managed for SPA's through access and habitat management and prioritising other assets demonstrating recreational potential that are identified in the Borough's green infrastructure network (Policy CS(R)21) HE1 and HE4 and the DALP's HRA (August 2020). This will allow for the balancing and managing of recreational usage in a way that does not adversely impact conservation interest, this is particularly relevant for internationally important sites (the Mersey Estuary SPA, Dee Estuary SAC, Dee Estuary SPA and Dee Estuary Ramsar site, Liverpool Bay SPA and Ramsar site and Mersey Narrows & North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar site) and specifically the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar site'. Extensive text has also been added on this issue to Policy HE1.*
- 6.16 Any package of measures in the emerging Strategy will include site-specific considerations, such as the designation features themselves and the relative accessibility of the sensitive receptors and designation features, for each of the European sites. For the Mersey Estuary for example it is important to take into consideration the accessibility of the designation features because large

¹¹⁵ <http://bailey.persona-pi.com/Public-Inquiries/M4%20-%20Revised/11.3.67.pdf> [Accessed 09/07/2019]

areas are inaccessible due to commercial and land-ownership considerations (e.g. no public access) or inaccessible due to physical barriers and health and safety considerations (e.g. high dock walls and unsafe mud and saltmarsh). (ii) an integrated set of measures to address alone and in-combination recreation pressures from developments through provision of 'Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace' (i.e. additional and increased functionality of existing greenspace-) and Strategic Access Management and Monitoring measures (i.e. to be deployed and delivered on the European sites across the LCR).

6.17 Note that while the HRA references the Recreation Mitigation and Avoidance Strategy here specifically in the context of the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar, this will also provide a suitable mechanism for addressing visitor pressure and recreational disturbance / trampling effects in the following other European sites:

- Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar
- Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar
- Liverpool Bay SPA
- Sefton Coast SAC (this site will be identified as a priority in the RMA because it is particularly sensitive to recreational trampling effects; this is a commitment of the adopted Sefton Coast Management Plan)

6.18 Given that the evidence base for the RMA is not yet complete and its implementation is likely to be delayed, Natural England advises that a more strategic commitment to the mitigation of recreational pressure by Halton Borough Council is required in the intervening period. This could be in the form of an Information Note or a Supplementary Planning Document. A list of potential access management measures to be included in this strategic note is provided in the main body of text. The document could also set out a funding mechanism for these interventions, including through S106 agreements or a tariff based on the number of bedrooms per dwelling. Furthermore, the revised Core Strategy includes development allocations that currently provide publicly accessible recreational greenspace. This might result in the loss of recreational resources and a subsequent increase in recreational pressure on the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. **Whilst retained Core Strategy Policy CS20: Natural and Historic Environment provides a policy framework to ensure protection of European designated sites, the Council will need to demonstrate that where publicly accessible recreational space is lost, this does not result in an effective increase in recreational pressure within the European designated sites.**

6.19 **When determining planning applications, and liaising with developers over those application at an early stage, the Council should ensure that those sites (notably W13, W24 incorporating educational site EDU3 and W48) that are large and situated in close proximity to the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar (or any other designated site susceptible to recreational pressure), should be required to maximise the amount of semi-natural recreational greenspace provided on-site in order to both reduce visitor pressure on the SPA and functionally linked land, but also to reduce pressure on other parks in the area such as Pickerings Pasture LNR. Policy CS20 would provide the policy mechanism for this requirement.**

Water quality and resources

6.20 **Regarding the impact pathway water quality and resources, it is strongly recommended that the Council liaise with United Utilities to confirm that there is sufficient headroom in the existing discharge consent (or any changes to the consent that are already planned), in order to accommodate the growth planned for Halton over the entire Plan period. Due to the sensitivity of the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar to changes in water quality, it is necessary to introduce a more explicit statement into Policy CS7, which specifies that the housing trajectory needs to keep in line with the wastewater treatment infrastructure. If necessary, this will require a phased delivery of the development. The following text (or similar) should be inserted: *'Development proposals will need to demonstrate that there is sufficient headroom in the wastewater treatment infrastructure. If necessary, development will have to be phased to keep in line with the consented headroom.'***

Furthermore, all developments will be required to deliver green infrastructure approaches, such as Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS), to maximise in-situ pollutant attenuation.'

- 6.21 The Council have addressed this by adding the following wording: ***'Development proposals will be supported where there is sufficient wastewater treatment capacity. If localised deficiencies arise, development will have to be phased to so as not to exceed available capacity. Furthermore, all developments will be required to deliver green infrastructure approaches, such as Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS), to maximise in-situ pollutant attenuation in accordance with policy CS21 and HE9'.***
- 6.22 This will ensure that the revised Halton Core Strategy will have no adverse effects on the site integrity of the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar regarding water quality. Furthermore, this policy framework will also protect the other European sites that are hydrologically linked to the River Mersey (and which may be affected by treated sewage effluent emanating from WWTWs covering the Borough of Halton, including the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar, and the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar.

Manchester Mosses SAC

Atmospheric Pollution

- 6.23 Despite the relatively low usage by Halton residents of the M62, the closest major road to the Manchester Mosses SAC, there is a potential atmospheric pollution effect in combination with development expected in adjacent authorities. This is mostly due to the Manchester Mosses already receiving nitrogen deposition above the critical load, and therefore being highly sensitive to any further increases in pollution.
- 6.24 Modelling for the Warrington Local Plan indicated that growth in the borough would result in a 2.5% increase in vehicle trips past the SAC. Halton lies much further from the SAC and it is very likely that its contribution to vehicle flows will therefore be considerably less than 1%. Notwithstanding this, it is recommended that a two-tier mitigation framework regarding atmospheric pollution in the Manchester Mosses SAC is adopted, consisting of the following:
- A strategic borough-wide mitigation approach to reduce reliance on private car travel (largely already contained in the Core Strategy's revised policies)
 - Bespoke mitigation packages delivered by larger developments, beyond the interventions delivered in the strategic approach (a list of possible measures are included in the main body of text and should be referenced in the supporting text to Policy HE7 or another appropriate policy)
- 6.25 It is advised that additional wording is added to paragraph 12.65 in the supporting text of the Local Plan, would also link the requirements to the HRA evidence. Suggested text is ***'Developments likely to exceed the Councils thresholds for Transport Assessments will need to mitigate the effects on internationally designated sites (Manchester Mosses SAC) as set out in policy HE1 through consideration of additional pollution reduction measures outlined in paragraph 5.112 of Local Plan Habitats Regulations Assessment'.***
- 6.26 This two-tier mitigation approach will ensure that the burden of mitigation is apportioned according to the relative likely contribution of developments to any additional nitrogen deposition along the M62. It will enable larger projects that are likely to result in a more substantial increase in traffic flows to devise project-specific mitigation beyond the strategic 'in combination' air quality improvement measures being included in the Local Plan. If the above recommendations, particularly further detail on the mitigation measures required for the larger developments, are included into the revised Halton Core Strategy, it is concluded that there will be no adverse effects on the site integrity of the Manchester Mosses SAC in relation to atmospheric pollution.

Dee Estuary SPA / Ramsar / SAC

Recreational Pressure

- 6.27 The Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar and SAC is sensitive to recreational pressure due to its overwintering waterbirds as well as its SAC habitats. However, the Appropriate Assessment showed that Halton is unlikely to contribute materially to the recreational footprint in the Dee Estuary. The in-combination recreational pressure in the site was assessed through Footprint Ecology's visitor survey work in 2017, which covered four survey points in component SSSIs. The data indicated that 75% of visitors to the SPA and Ramsar and SAC derive from a 4.4km core catchment¹¹⁶. This is a relatively small recreational catchment even compared to some inland sites and places the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar and SAC well beyond the reach of the 'typical' Halton resident. Overall, it is considered that Halton does not materially contribute to the in-combination visitor pressure in this European site. Notwithstanding this, it is noted that the emerging RMA for the Liverpool City Region is intending to cover all European sites in the area, including the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar and SAC, which will ensure that any residual recreational pressure impacts are appropriately mitigated.
- 6.28 Overall, it is concluded that the revised Halton Core Strategy will not result in adverse effects on the site integrity of the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar and SAC regarding recreational pressure, both alone and 'in-combination'.

¹¹⁶ Data taken from page 4 of Liley, D., Panter, C., Marsh, P. & Roberts, J. (2017) Recreational activity and interactions with birds within the SSSIs on the North-West coast of England. Unpublished report for Natural England.

Appendix A **Figures**

Note that the allocated sites and their boundaries shown in Appendix A are as they stood when the Submission Local Plan HRA was written.

Appendix A1: Halton Borough in relation to the relevant European Sites in the Merseyside region.

Appendix A2: Residential and employment site allocations in Halton Borough detailed in the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan.

Appendix A3: Zoomed view of the residential and employment site allocations in the western part of Halton Borough near the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar.

Appendix B Relevant European Sites

Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar

Introduction

6.29 Appendix A, Figure A1 shows the location of the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar site, and its extent within Halton. The Mersey Estuary is a large sheltered estuary that receives drainage from a catchment area of c.5,000km² encompassing the conurbations of Liverpool and Manchester, and including the River Mersey and the River Bollin and their tributaries in Cheshire and Merseyside. The Estuary covers 5,023.35ha of saltmarsh and inter-tidal sand and mudflats, with limited areas of brackish marsh, rocky shoreline and boulder clay cliffs, within a rural and industrial environment. The intertidal flats and saltmarshes provide feeding and roosting sites for large and internationally important populations of waterbirds, and during the winter, the site is of major importance for duck and waders. The site is also important during the spring and autumn migration periods, particularly for wader populations moving along the west coast of Britain.

SPA Qualifying Features¹¹⁷

6.30 The Mersey Estuary is designated as a **SPA** for its:

Wintering:

- Common shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*
- Eurasian teal *Ana crecca*
- Northern pintail *Anas acuta*
- European golden plover *Pluvialis apricaria*
- Dunlin *Calidris alpina alpina*
- Black-tailed godwit *Limosa limosa islandica*
- Common redshank *Tringa totanus*

Overwinter bird assemblages:

The area regularly supports 99,467 individual waterfowl (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6) including: curlew *Numenius arquata*, black-tailed godwit *Limosa limosa islandica*, lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, grey plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, wigeon *Anas penelope*, great crested grebe *Podiceps cristatus*, redshank *Tringa totanus*, dunlin *Calidris alpina alpina*, pintail *Anas acuta*, teal *Anas crecca*, shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*, golden plover *Pluvialis apricaria*.

Ramsar Qualifying Features¹¹⁸

6.31 The Mersey Estuary is designated a **Ramsar** site under the following criteria:

Ramsar Criterion 5: Assemblages of international importance:

89,576 waterfowl (5-year peak mean 1998/99-2002/03)

Ramsar Criterion 6: Species/populations occurring at levels of international importance.

Spring / autumn peak counts:

¹¹⁷ <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-1986> [Accessed 26/06/2019]

¹¹⁸ <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/RIS/UK11041.pdf> [Accessed 26/06/2019]

- Shelduck
- Black-tailed godwit
- Redshank

Winter peak counts:

- Eurasian teal
- Pintail
- Dunlin

SPA Conservation Objectives¹¹⁹

- 6.32 With regard to the SPA and the individual species and/or assemblage of species for which the site has been classified (the 'Qualifying Features' listed below), and subject to natural change;
- 6.33 Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring;
- The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features
 - The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features
 - The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely
 - The population of each of the qualifying features, and,
 - The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.

Threats / Pressures to Site Integrity¹²⁰

- Changes in species distributions
- Invasive species
- Public access / disturbance

Mersey Narrows & North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar

Introduction

- 6.34 Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore is located on the northwest coast of England at the mouths of the Mersey and Dee estuaries. The site comprises intertidal habitats at Egremont foreshore, man-made lagoons at Seaforth and the extensive intertidal flats at North Wirral Foreshore. Egremont is most important as a feeding habitat for waders at low tide whilst Seaforth is primarily a high tide roost site, as well as a nesting site for terns. North Wirral Foreshore supports large numbers of feeding waders at low tide and also includes important high tide roost sites.

SPA Qualifying Features¹²¹

- 6.35 It is designated as a **SPA** for its:
- Bar-tailed godwit *Limosa lapponica*
 - Little gull *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

¹¹⁹ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5790848037945344> [Accessed 26/06/2019]

¹²⁰ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6273450410770432> [Accessed 26/06/2019]

¹²¹ <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-2085> [Accessed 26/06/2019]

- Knot *Calidris canutus islandica*
- Common tern *Sterna hirundo* (breeding and non-breeding)

Overwinter bird assemblages

In the non-breeding season, the area regularly supports 32,366 individual waterbirds (5 year peak mean 2004/05 - 2008/09), comprised of 2,414 wildfowl and 29,952 waders including: cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*, oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*, grey plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, sanderling *Calidris alba*, knot *Calidris canutus*, dunlin *Calidris alpina alpina*, bar-tailed godwit *Limosa lapponica*, redshank *Tringa totanus*.

Ramsar Qualifying Features¹²²

6.36 The Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore is designated a **Ramsar** site under the following criteria:

Criterion 4:

- Regularly supports plant and/or animal species at a critical stage in their life cycles, or provides refuge during adverse conditions. During 2004/05 - 2008/09 the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore Ramsar site supported important numbers of non-breeding little gulls and common terns.

Criterion 5:

- Regularly supports 20,000 or more waterbirds: During the winters 2004/05 - 2008/09, the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore Ramsar site supported an average peak of 32,402 individual waterbirds.

Criterion 6:

- During winter the site regularly supports 1% of the individuals in the populations of the following species or subspecies of waterbird in any season:
 - Bar-tailed godwit *Limosa lapponica*;
 - Black-tailed godwit *Limosa limosa islandica*;
 - Knot *Calidris canutus*;

Conservation Objectives¹²³

6.37 With regard to the SPA and the individual species and/or assemblage of species for which the site has been classified (the 'Qualifying Features' listed below), and subject to natural change;

6.38 Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring;

- The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features;
- The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features;
- The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely;
- The population of each of the qualifying features; and,
- The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.

Threats / Pressures to Site Integrity¹²⁴

- Public access / disturbance

¹²² <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/UK11042.pdf> [Accessed 26/06/2019]

¹²³ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6521906232557568> [Accessed 26/06/2019]

¹²⁴ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6579320399069184> [Accessed 26/06/2019]

- Changes in species distributions
- Invasive species
- Climate change
- Coastal squeeze
- Inappropriate scrub control
- Water pollution
- Fisheries: Commercial marine and estuarine
- Inappropriate coastal management
- Overgrazing
- Direct impact from third party
- Marine litter
- Predation
- Planning permission: General
- Marine consents and permits
- Wildfire / arson
- Air pollution: Impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition
- Transportation and service corridors
- Physical modification

Manchester Mosses SAC

Introduction

6.39 Manchester Mosses SAC is at its closest located 10.9km from Halton's western boundary. Manchester Mosses SAC comprises Astley and Bedford Mosses, Holcroft Moss and Risley Moss, totalling approximately 173ha. The site is significant for mossland that *'formerly covered a very large part of low-lying Greater Manchester, Merseyside and southern Lancashire, and provided a severe obstacle to industrial and agricultural expansion'*. These sites are examples that have survived as degraded raised bog on the Mersey floodplain, with their surfaces elevated above surrounding land due to shrinkage of the surrounding tilled land, and *'all except Holcroft Moss have been cut for peat at some time in the past'*.

Qualifying Features¹²⁵

6.40 The site is designated as a SAC for the presence of the following Annex I habitats:

- Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration

Conservation Objectives¹²⁶

6.41 With regard to the SAC and the natural habitats and/or species for which the site has been designated (the 'Qualifying Features' listed below), and subject to natural change;

6.42 Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;

- The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats

¹²⁵ <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/ProtectedSites/SACselection/sac.asp?EUCode=UK0030200> [Accessed 26/06/2019]

¹²⁶ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5283870555504640> [Accessed 26/06/2019]

- The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats, and,
- The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats rely

Threats / Pressure to Site Integrity¹²⁷

- Hydrological changes
- Air pollution: Impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition

Oak Mere SAC

Introduction

- 6.43 Oak Mere SAC in Cheshire is located approximately 12km south of Halton and which is also part of the Midland Meres & Mosses Phase 2 Ramsar site.
- 6.44 Oak Mere covers an area of 68.82ha. This site consists of a large water body formed in a kettle-hole in the fluvio-glacial sands of the Cheshire Plain. The lake has low nutrient levels typical of oligotrophic waters containing few minerals of sandy plains *Littorelletalia uniflorae* and has a marginal zone of shoreweed *Littorella uniflora*. The lake also has floating rafts of bog-moss *Sphagnum* spp. and narrow small-reed *Calamagrostis stricta* which are now rare in the lowlands of England. There are also transition areas at the waters edge which contain, soft rush *Juncus effusus*, spike-rush *Eleocharis palustris*, marsh pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris* and water horsetail *Equisetum fluviatile*. The small depressions in the peat contain bottle sedge *Carex rostrata*, cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix* and round-leaved sundew *Drosera rotundifolia*.

Qualifying Features¹²⁸

- 6.45 The site is designated as a SAC for the presence of the following Annex I habitats:
- Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (*Littorelletalia uniflorae*)
 - Transition mires and quaking bogs

Conservation Objectives¹²⁹

- 6.46 With regard to the SAC and the natural habitats and/or species for which the site has been designated (the 'Qualifying Features' listed below), and subject to natural change;
- 6.47 Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;
- The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats
 - The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats, and
 - The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats rely

Threats / Pressures to Site Integrity¹³⁰

- Water pollution
- Invasive species
- Hydrological changes
- Air pollution: Impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition

¹²⁷ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6676598321315840> [Accessed 26/06/2019]

¹²⁸ <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/ProtectedSites/SACselection/sac.asp?EUCODE=UK0012970> [Accessed 26/06/2019]

¹²⁹ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4577218189590528> [Accessed 26/06/2019]

¹³⁰ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5056911862923264> [Accessed 26/06/2019]

River Dee & Bala Lake SAC

Introduction

6.48 The River Dee and Bala Lake SAC is at its closest located 14.5 km from the borough in Chester.

Reason for Designation¹³¹

6.49 The site is designated as a SAC for the presence of the following Annex I habitats:

- Water courses of plain to montane levels with the *Ranunculus fluitantis* and *Callitriche-Batrachion* vegetation

6.50 The site is designated as a SAC for the presence of the following Annex II species:

- Atlantic salmon *Salmo salar*
- Floating water-plantain *Luronium natans*

6.51 Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection:

- Sea lamprey *Petromyzon marinus*
- Brook lamprey *Lampetra planeri*
- River lamprey *Lampetra fluviatilis*
- Bullhead *Cottus gobio*
- Otter *Lutra lutra*

Conservation Objectives¹³²

6.52 With regard to the SAC and the natural habitats and/or species for which the site has been designated (the 'Qualifying Features' listed below), and subject to natural change;

6.53 Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;

- The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species
- The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats
- The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species
- The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely
- The populations of qualifying species, and,
- The distribution of qualifying species within the site.

Threats / Pressures to Site Integrity¹³³

- At the time of writing, no issues were identified in the Natural England Site Improvement Plan.

Sefton Coast SAC

Introduction

6.54 The Sefton Coast is located to the north of Liverpool approximately 20 km from Halton. The SAC (approximately 4,560ha) consists of a mosaic of sand dune communities comprising a range of

¹³¹ <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/ProtectedSites/SACselection/sac.asp?EUCODE=UK0030252> [Accessed 26/06/2019]

¹³² <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4660149109129216> [Accessed 26/06/2019]

¹³³ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5069340692971520> [Accessed 26/06/2019]

ages from embryonic (i.e. dune formation) to more established communities. A number of other habitats are also present, including lagoons, estuaries and riverine environments, but also scrub, heath and coniferous woodland.

Qualifying Features¹³⁴

6.55 The site is designated as a SAC for the presence of the following Annex I habitats:

- embryonic shifting sand dunes
- shifting dunes along the shoreline with marram *Ammophila arenaria* ("white dunes")
- fixed dunes with herbaceous vegetation ("grey dunes")
- dunes with creeping willow *Salix repens* ssp. *argentea* (*Salicion arenariae*)
- humid dune slacks

6.56 Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection:

- Atlantic decalcified fixed dunes (*Calluno-Ulicetea*)

6.57 Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site:

- Petalwort *Petalophyllum ralfsii*,

6.58 Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection

- Great-crested newt *Triturus cristatus*

Conservation Objectives¹³⁵

6.59 With regard to the SAC and the natural habitats and/or species for which the site has been designated (the 'Qualifying Features' listed below), and subject to natural change;

6.60 Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;

- The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species
- The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats
- The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species
- The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely
- The populations of qualifying species, and,
- The distribution of qualifying species within the site.

Threats / Pressures to Site Integrity¹³⁶

- Coastal squeeze
- Air pollution: Impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition
- Inappropriate scrub control
- Invasive species
- Hydrological changes
- Public access / disturbance
- Inappropriate coastal management

¹³⁴ <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/protectedsites/sacselection/sac.asp?EUCode=UK0013076> [Accessed 27/06/2019]

¹³⁵ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6588974160150528> [Accessed 27/06/2019]

¹³⁶ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6274126599684096> [Accessed 27/06/2019]

- Fisheries: Commercial marine and estuarine
- Change to site conditions
- Inappropriate coastal management
- Shooting / scaring

Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar and SAC

Introduction

6.61 The Dee Estuary lies on the border between England and Wales on the north-west coast of Britain. The Dee Estuary is the sixth largest in the UK and a funnel-shaped, sheltered estuary, which supports extensive areas of intertidal sand and mudflats on the north-west coast of Wirral and the north east coast of Wales. The Dee Estuary SAC contains the Gronant Dunes and Talacre Warren which form on the largest remaining areas of extensive dune systems. The SAC is designated due to its size and habitats including saltmarshes, intertidal mudflats and sandflats, sand dunes, drift line vegetation and sea cliffs. Sea lamprey (*Petromyzon marinus*) and river lamprey (*Lampetra fluviatilis*) are also known to migrate through the area. The saltmarshes are comprised of Atlantic salt meadows which show a range of stages of development, from young, recently formed communities to old, well-established communities. The dunes support a rich variety of plants, including the rare petalwort (*Petalophyllum ralfsii*) and several species of orchid. The site is of major importance for waterbirds with the intertidal flats, saltmarshes and fringing habitats providing feeding and roosting sites for internationally important numbers of ducks and waders. In the summer the site supports nationally important breeding colonies of two species of tern. The site is also important during migration periods, particularly for wader populations moving along the west coast of Britain and for Sandwich terns post-breeding.

SPA Qualifying Features¹³⁷

6.62 It is designated as a **SPA** for its:

Breeding season:

- Common tern *Sterna hirundo*;
- Little tern *Sterna albifrons*.

Wintering:

- Bar-tailed godwit *Limosa lapponica*;
- Black-tailed godwit *Limosa limosa islandica*
- Eurasian curlew *Numenius arquata*;
- Dunlin *Calidris alpina alpina*;
- Grey plover *Pluvialis squatarola*;
- Red knot *Calidris canutus*;
- Eurasian oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*;
- Northern pintail *Anas acuta*;
- Common redshank *Tringa totanus*;
- Common shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*;
- Eurasian teal *Anas crecca*;

¹³⁷ <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-2053> [Accessed 27/06/2019]

- Sandwich tern *Sterna sandvicensis*

Overwinter waterbird assemblages

Over winter, the area regularly supports 130,408 individual waterfowl (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6) including: black-tailed godwit *Limosa limosa islandica*, shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*, teal *Anas crecca*, pintail *Anas acuta*, oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*, grey plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, bar-tailed godwit *Limosa lapponica*, dunlin *Calidris alpina alpina*, sanderling *Calidris alba*, curlew *Numenius arquata*, redshank *Tringa totanus*, cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*, wigeon *Anas penelope*, mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*, lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, knot *Calidris canutus*.

Ramsar Qualifying Features¹³⁸

6.63 The Dee Estuary is designated a **Ramsar** site under the following criteria:

Criterion 1:

- Contains extensive intertidal mud and sand flats (20 km by 9 km) with large expanses of saltmarsh towards the head of the estuary.

Criterion 2:

- Supports breeding colonies of the vulnerable Natterjack Toad, *Epidalea calamita*.

Criterion 5: Assemblages of international importance.

- 120,726 individual waterbirds (5 year peak mean 1994/5 – 1998/9).

Criterion 6: Species/populations occurring at levels of international importance.

Spring/ autumn peak counts:

- Redshank *Tringa totanus*.

Winter peak counts:

- Redshank *Tringa totanus*;
- Bar-tailed godwit *Limosa lapponica*;
- Black-tailed godwit *Limosa limosa islandica*;
- Curlew *Numenius arquata*;
- Dunlin *Calidris alpina alpina*;
- Grey plover *Pluvialis squatarola*;
- Knot *Calidris canutus*;
- Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*;
- Pintail *Anas acuta*;
- Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*;
- Teal *Anas crecca*.

SAC Qualifying Features¹³⁹

6.64 The site is designated as a SAC for the presence of the following Annex I habitats:

¹³⁸ <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/RISold/7UK020.pdf> [Accessed 27/06/2019]

¹³⁹ <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/ProtectedSites/SACselection/sac.asp?EUCode=UK0030131> [Accessed 27/06/2019]

- Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide
- *Salicornia* and other annuals colonising mud and sand
- Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*)

6.65 Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site:

- Estuaries
- Annual vegetation of drift lines
- Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts
- Embryonic shifting dunes
- Shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria* ('white dunes')
- Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation ('grey dunes')
- Humid dune slacks

6.66 Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection:

- Petalwort *Petalophyllum ralfsii*;
- River lamprey *Lampetra fluviatilis*;
- Sea lamprey *Petromyzon marinus*

SPA Conservation Objectives¹⁴⁰

6.67 With regard to the SPA and the individual species and/or assemblage of species for which the site has been classified (the 'Qualifying Features' listed below), and subject to natural change;

6.68 Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring;

- The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features
- The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features
- The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely
- The population of each of the qualifying features, and,
- The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.

SAC Conservation Objectives¹⁴¹

6.69 With regard to the SAC and the natural habitats and/or species for which the site has been designated (the 'Qualifying Features' listed below), and subject to natural change;

6.70 Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;

- The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species
- The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats
- The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species
- The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely
- The populations of qualifying species, and,
- The distribution of qualifying species within the site.

¹⁴⁰ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6557770283220992> [Accessed 27/06/2019]

¹⁴¹ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6124489284780032> [Accessed 27/06/2019]

Threats / Pressures to Site Integrity¹⁴²

- Public access / disturbance
- Changes in species distributions
- Invasive species
- Climate change
- Coastal squeeze
- Inappropriate scrub control
- Water pollution
- Fisheries: Commercial marine and estuarine
- Inappropriate coastal management
- Overgrazing
- Direct impact from 3rd party
- Marine litter
- Predation
- Planning permission: General
- Marine consents and permits
- Wildfire / arson
- Air pollution: Impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition
- Transportation and service corridors
- Physical modification

Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar

Introduction

- 6.71 The Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar site is approximately 12,360ha, and consists of extensive sand- and mud-flats and, particularly in the Ribble Estuary, large areas of saltmarsh. There are also areas of coastal grazing marsh located behind the sea embankments. The saltmarshes, coastal grazing marshes intertidal sand- and mud-flats all support high densities of grazing wildfowl and are used as high-tide roosts. Important populations of waterbirds occur in winter, including swans, geese, ducks and waders. The highest densities of feeding birds are on the muddier substrates of the Ribble.
- 6.72 The SPA is also of major importance during the spring and autumn migration periods, especially for wader populations moving along the west coast of Britain. The larger expanses of saltmarsh and areas of coastal grazing marsh support breeding birds during the summer, including large concentrations of gulls and terns. These seabirds feed both offshore and inland, outside of the SPA. Several species of waterbird (notably pink-footed goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*) utilise feeding areas on agricultural land outside of the SPA boundary. There is considerable interchange in the movements of wintering birds between this site and Morecambe Bay, the Mersey Estuary, the Dee Estuary and Martin Mere.

SPA Qualifying Features¹⁴³

- 6.73 It is designated as a **SPA** for its:

During the breeding season;

¹⁴² <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6579320399069184> [Accessed 27/06/2019]

¹⁴³ <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-1984> [Accessed 27/06/2019]

- Common tern *Sterna hirundo*;
- Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*;
- Lesser black-backed gull *Larus fuscus*.

Over winter;

- Bewick's Swan *Cygnus columbianus bewickii*;
- Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*;
- Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*;
- Common shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*;
- Eurasian wigeon *Anas penelope*.
- Eurasian teal *Anas crecca*;
- Northern pintail *Anas acuta*;
- Eurasian oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*;
- Ringed plover *Charadrius hiaticula*
- European golden plover *Pluvialis apricaria*;
- Grey plover *Pluvialis squatarola*;
- Red knot *Calidris canutus*;
- Sanderling *Calidris alba*;
- Dunlin *Calidris alpina alpina*;
- Black-tailed godwit *Limosa limosa islandica*;
- Common redshank *Tringa totanus*;

Overwinter waterbird and seabird assemblage

Over winter, the area regularly supports 301,449 individual waterfowl (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6) including: Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*, Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*, Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*, Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*, Wigeon *Anas penelope*, Teal *Anas crecca*, Bewick's Swan *Cygnus columbianus bewickii*, Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*, Curlew *Numenius arquata*, Knot *Calidris canutus*, Sanderling *Calidris alba*, Dunlin *Calidris alpina alpina*, Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa islandica*, Redshank *Tringa totanus*, Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*, Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*, Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, Pintail *Anas acuta*.

Ramsar Qualifying Features¹⁴⁴

6.74 The Ribble & Alt Estuaries is designated as a **Ramsar** site under the following criteria:

Criterion 2:

- The site supports up to 40% of the Great Britain population of natterjack toads *Epidalea calamita*.

Criterion 5: Assemblages of international importance.

¹⁴⁴ <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/RIS/UK11057.pdf> [Accessed 27/06/2019]

- 222,038 waterfowl (5 year peak mean 1998/99-2002/2003).

Criterion 6: species/populations occurring at levels of international importance.

Breeding season:

- Lesser black-backed gull *Larus fuscus graellsii*;

Spring/autumn peak counts:

- Ringed plover *Charadrius hiaticula*;
- Grey plover *Pluvialis squatarola*;
- Red knot *Calidris canutus islandica*;
- Sanderling *Calidris alba*;
- Dunlin *Calidris alpina alpina*;
- Black-tailed godwit *Limosa limosa islandica*;
- Common redshank *Tringa totanus totanus*;
- Lesser black-backed gull *Larus fuscus graellsii*

Winter peak counts:

- Whooper swan *Cygnus cygnus*;
- Pink-footed goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*;
- Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*;
- Eurasian wigeon *Anas penelope*;
- Eurasian teal *Anas crecca*;
- Northern pintail *Anas acuta*;
- Eurasian oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus ostralegus*;
- Bar-tailed godwit *Limosa lapponica lapponica*.

SPA Conservation Objectives¹⁴⁵

- 6.75 With regard to the SPA and the individual species and/or assemblage of species for which the site has been classified (the 'Qualifying Features' listed below), and subject to natural change;
- 6.76 Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring;
- The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features;
 - The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features;
 - The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely;
 - The population of each of the qualifying features; and,
 - The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.

¹⁴⁵ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4868920422957056> [Accessed 27/06/2019]

Threats / Pressure to Site Integrity¹⁴⁶

- Coastal squeeze
- Air pollution: Risk of atmospheric nitrogen deposition
- Inappropriate scrub control
- Invasive species
- Hydrological changes
- Public access / disturbance
- Inappropriate coastal management
- Fisheries: Commercial marine and estuarine
- Change to site conditions
- Inappropriate coastal management
- Shooting / scaring

Liverpool Bay SPA

Introduction

6.77 The Liverpool Bay SPA site is an approximately 198,000ha maritime site located in the Irish Sea, straddling the English and Welsh borders. The site has exposed mudflats and sandbanks in places, although the site extends up to approximately 20km from the shoreline and thus most of the area of the SPA site is relatively shallow water up to 20m deep. It is contiguous with a number of other European sites, including the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar site, Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar site, and Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar site. The proposal for the Liverpool Bay SPA Extension is to extend the SPA to support internationally important populations of common tern, little tern and little gull. This area is particularly important for the terns as much of the sea around their breeding colonies is the ideal habitat for plunge diving for food. The proposal is also to add cormorant and red-breasted merganser to the waterbird assemblage as named species.

Qualifying Features

6.78 Designated as a **SPA** for its:

Non-breeding:

- Red-throated diver *Gavia stellata*
- Little gull *Larus minutus*
- Common scoter *Melanitta nigra*

Foraging areas for breeding colonies:

- Common tern *Sterna hirundo*
- Little tern *Sterna albifrons*

Waterbird assemblages:

- Red-breasted merganser *Mergus serrator*
- Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

¹⁴⁶ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6274126599684096> [Accessed 27/06/2019]

In the non-breeding season, the site regularly supports at least 555,597 individual waterbirds (2001/02 – 002/03), including red-throated diver and common scoter.

Conservation Objectives¹⁴⁷

- 6.79 With regard to the SPA and the individual species and/or assemblage of species for which the site has been classified (the 'Qualifying Features' listed below), and subject to natural change;
- 6.80 Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring;
- The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features
 - The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features
 - The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely
 - The population of each of the qualifying features, and,
 - The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.

Conservation Objectives for new interest features

6.81 *Feature 1: Non-breeding population of common scoter *Melanitta nigra**

- The size of the non-breeding population should be stable or increasing, allowing for natural variability, and sustainable in the long term. The non-breeding population of common scoter should be stable or increasing. If approved the site would be classified for a mean of peaks of 56,679 individuals (2004/05 – 2010/11).
- There should be sufficient habitat, of sufficient quality, to support the non-breeding population in the long term. The marine foraging habitat of this species should not decrease significantly, and its quality should remain unaffected by anthropogenic factors.
- Factors affecting the population or its foraging habitat should be under appropriate control. Actions or events likely to impinge on the sustainability of the non-breeding population are under control.

6.82 *Feature 2: Non-breeding population of red-throated diver *Gavia stellata**

- The size of the non-breeding population should be stable or increasing, allowing for natural variability, and sustainable in the long term. The non-breeding population of red-throated diver should be stable or increasing. If approved the site would be classified for a mean of peaks of 1,171 individuals (2004/05 – 2010/11).
- There should be sufficient habitat, of sufficient quality, to support the non-breeding population in the long term. The marine foraging habitat of this species should not decrease significantly, and its quality should remain unaffected by anthropogenic factors.
- Factors affecting the population or its foraging habitat should be under appropriate control. Actions or events likely to impinge on the sustainability of the non-breeding population are under control.

6.83 *Feature 3: Non-breeding waterbird assemblage¹⁴⁸*

- The size of the waterbird assemblage should be stable or increasing, allowing for natural variability, and sustainable in the long term. The non-breeding population of component species should be stable or increasing. If approved the site would be designated for a mean of peaks of 69,687 individuals (2004/05 – 2010/11).

¹⁴⁷ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5089733892898816> [Accessed 27/06/2019]

¹⁴⁸ The main components of the waterbird assemblage (i.e. a species exceeding 1% of the GB total or 2,000 individuals) include all of the non-breeding qualifying features (common scoter, red-throated diver and little gull) as well as red-breasted merganser and great cormorant. Other species contributing to the assemblage total in numbers less than 1% of their respective GB populations or less than 2,000 individuals include: black-headed gull, common gull, common eider, fulmar, great black-backed gull, great crested grebe, common guillemot, northern gannet, herring gull, black-legged kittiwake, lesser black-backed gull, great northern diver, Atlantic puffin, razorbill, shag and velvet scoter.

- There should be sufficient habitat, of sufficient quality, to support the non-breeding population in the long term. The marine foraging habitat for component species should not decrease significantly, and its quality should remain unaffected by anthropogenic factors.
- Factors affecting the waterbird population or its foraging habitat should be under appropriate control Actions or events likely to impinge on the sustainability of the non-breeding population are under control.

6.84 *Feature 4: Non-breeding population of little gull *Hydrocoleus minutus**

- The size of the non-breeding population should be stable or increasing, allowing for natural variability, and sustainable in the long term. The non-breeding population of Little gull should be stable or increasing. If approved the site would be designated for a mean of peaks of 319 individuals (2004/05 – 2010/11).
- There should be sufficient habitat, of sufficient quality, to support the non-breeding population in the long term. The marine foraging habitat of this species should not decrease significantly, and its quality should remain unaffected by anthropogenic factors.
- Factors affecting the population or its foraging habitat should be under appropriate control Actions or events likely to impinge on the sustainability of the non-breeding population are under control.

6.85 *Feature 5: Breeding population of little tern *Sternula albifrons**

- The size of the population should be stable or increasing, allowing for natural variability, and sustainable in the long term. The breeding population of little tern should be stable or increasing. If approved the site would be designated for 69 pairs (1995 – 1999).
- The distribution of the population should be being maintained, or where appropriate increasing. The range and distribution of terns within the SPA and beyond is not constrained or hindered.
- There should be sufficient habitat, of sufficient quality, to support the population in the long term. The extent of functionally linked land used by terns is stable or increasing. Functionally linked land is of sufficient quality to support the ecological requirements of breeding terns. There are appropriate and sufficient food sources for terns within access of the SPA.
- Factors affecting the population or its foraging habitat should be under appropriate control Actions or events likely to impinge on the sustainability of the breeding population are under control.

6.86 *Feature 6: Breeding population of common tern *Sterna hirundo**

- The size of the population should be stable or increasing, allowing for natural variability, and sustainable in the long term. The breeding population of Common tern should be stable or increasing. If approved the site would be designated for 180 pairs (2011 – 2015).
- The distribution of the population should be being maintained, or where appropriate increasing. The range and distribution of terns within the SPA and beyond is not constrained or hindered.
- There should be sufficient habitat, of sufficient quality, to support the population in the long term. The extent of functionally linked land used by terns is stable or increasing. Functionally linked land is of sufficient quality to support the ecological requirements of breeding terns. There are appropriate and sufficient food sources for terns within access of the SPA.
- Factors affecting the population or its foraging habitat should be under appropriate control Actions or events likely to impinge on the sustainability of the breeding population are under control.

Threats / Pressure to Site Integrity¹⁴⁹

- Fisheries: Commercial marine and estuarine

¹⁴⁹ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5296526586806272> [Accessed 27/06/2019]

- Transportation and service corridors
- Fisheries: Recreational marine and estuarine
- Extraction: Non-living resources
- Siltation
- Water pollution

River Eden SAC

Introduction

6.87 The Eden is a river on sandstone and hard limestone. The catchment includes headwaters running off the Yorkshire Dales, the North Pennines and the eastern fells of the Lake District and the major standing water body of Ullswater. Ullswater is a relatively deep lake with both oligotrophic (nutrient poor) and mesotrophic (moderate levels of nutrients) elements in its fauna and flora. Streams flowing from limestone are calcareous, whilst those flowing off the Pennines and the Lake District fells are more acidic. The nutrient status gradually changes along the Eden's length as nutrient loadings naturally increase in the lower reaches. The River is rich in aquatic flora.

Qualifying Features¹⁵⁰

6.88 The site is designated as a SAC for the presence of the following Annex I habitats:

- Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the *Littorelletea uniflorae* and/or of the *Isoëto-Nanojuncetea*
- Water courses of plain to montane levels with the *Ranunculon fluitantis* and *Callitricho-Batrachion* vegetation
- Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (*Alno-Padion*, *Alnion incanae*, *Salicion albae*)

6.89 Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site:

- White-clawed crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes*
- Sea lamprey *Petromyzon marinus*
- Brook lamprey *Lampetra planeri*
- River lamprey *Lampetra fluviatilis*
- Atlantic salmon *Salmo salar*
- Bullhead *Cottus gobio*
- Otter *Lutra lutra*

Conservation Objectives¹⁵¹

6.90 With regard to the SAC and the natural habitats and/or species for which the site has been designated (the 'Qualifying Features' listed below), and subject to natural change; Environmental Vulnerabilities Relevant to the Plan;

6.91 Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;

- The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species;

¹⁵⁰ <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/ProtectedSites/SACselection/sac.asp?EUCode=UK0012643> [Accessed 27/06/2019]

¹⁵¹ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5935614042046464> [Accessed 27/06/2019]

- The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats;
- The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species
- The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely
- The populations of qualifying species, and,
- The distribution of qualifying species within the site.

Threats / pressures to Site Integrity¹⁵²

- Water pollution
- Agricultural management practices
- Physical modification
- Invasive species
- Changes in species distributions
- Forestry and woodland management
- Hydrological changes
- Disease
- Air pollution: Risk of atmospheric nitrogen deposition

¹⁵² <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5920746052255744> [Accessed 27/06/2019]

Appendix C Test of Likely Significant Effects for Halton's Revised Core Strategy Policies

Where a policy is identified in orange in the 'TOLSE Outcome' column, this policy has been identified to contain potential linking impact pathways to European sites. These policies cannot be 'screened out' at the initial screening stage and are discussed further within the HRA. Where a policy is identified in green in the 'TOLSE Outcome' column, this policy does not contain any linking impact pathways to European sites so can be 'screened out' from further consideration and are not discussed further within the HRA.

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
Policy CS(R)1: Halton's Spatial Strategy	1. To achieve the Vision for Halton to 2037, new development should deliver: • at least 8,050 (net) additional dwellings (2014-2037) • approximately 180 ha (gross) of land for employment purposes • up to 9,293 sqm of town centre convenience/comparison goods retailing • up to 5,112 sqm of retail warehousing <i>Specific principles to guide the location, timing and delivery of the above development are set out in policies CS(R)3, CS(R)4 and CS(R)5.</i> Key Urban Regeneration The Spatial Strategy for Halton is focused around a balanced mix of prioritised urban regeneration, supported by appropriate levels of greenfield expansion. The strategy will largely be realised by the delivery of five Key Urban Regeneration Areas across the Borough where the majority of new development will be located. The five areas are: a) Halebank and Ditton Corridor, Widnes To continue to build on the success of this area. By supporting and expanding the employment opportunities around the multi-modal freight facility and balancing this with growth to the local community. b) South Widnes Incorporating the town centre, West Bank and the waterfront area, supporting the revitalisation and regeneration of the area.	Policy CS(R)1 is likely to result in LSEs on European Sites. This policy provides the spatial strategy for Halton. It provides for 8,050 net additional dwellings, 180ha employment land, 9,293 m² of town centre convenience/ comparison retail and 5,112 m² of retail warehousing. It also identifies five Key Urban Regeneration areas. Due to the broad nature of this policy, i.e. it does not identify any site allocations or type of development, it can be screened out from impacting upon European designated sites alone, but in combination effects mean that appropriate assessment will be required. Potential impact pathways present include: • Loss of functionally linked land; • Visual and noise disturbance; • Recreational pressure; • Water quality and Resources; and • Atmospheric pollution. The policy is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	c) West Runcorn Involving the regeneration of previously developed (brownfield) land within the existing urban area. d) East Runcorn Delivering greenfield expansion including the completion of the proposals for Runcorn New Town and further extension to the east of Runcorn. e) North Widnes Delivering greenfield expansion and further extension to the urban area to the north of Widnes. 2. Brownfield Focus (beneficial and efficient use of existing sites) Outside of the Key Urban Regeneration Areas, the re-use of previously developed land will be supported, notably where regenerating or bringing sites back into use will bring wider benefits to the Borough. Important green infrastructure within the urban area will be protected from detrimental development to ensure its value, both individually and as part of a network, is retained. The Liverpool City Region (LCR) Recreation Mitigation Strategy has been developed to meet the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). Residential development within 5 km of protected accessible coasts, resulting in a net increase of 10 or more dwellings and major tourism developments, will be able to discharge their HRA requirements in relation to recreational disturbance by making a financial contribution towards avoidance and mitigation schemes in the LCR area in accordance with policy CS(R)20 and HE1.	
Policy CS(R)3: Housing Supply and Locational Priorities	1. During the period 2014 to 2037 provision will be made for the development of at least 8,050 (net) additional dwellings a. At an average of 350 dwellings each year.	Policy CS(R)3 is likely to result in LSEs on European Sites. This is a strategic policy that identifies the quantum and broad location of residential development to be delivered to 2037. Due to the broad nature of this

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	b. After 2037 provision for development will be identified in accordance with the most up to date housing needs assessment.. 2. On sites of 10 or more dwellings, the mix of new property types delivered should contribute to addressing identified needs as quantified in the most up to date Strategic Housing Market Assessment, unless precluded by site specific constraints, economic viability or prevailing neighbourhood characteristics. 3. New homes will be delivered from a variety of sources: i. Housing sites completed since 2014; ii. Housing sites with planning permission, or currently under construction, for housing development; iii. Strategic Residential Locations, as identified on the Policies Map,: • SRL1*: Delph Lane West, Daresbury, Runcorn (17ha) (295 dwellings) • SRL2*: Central Housing Area, Daresbury, Runcorn (15ha) (555 dwellings) • SRL3*: Wharford Farm, Runcorn (17ha) (300 dwellings) • SRL4: Sandymoor, Runcorn (42ha) (808 dwellings) • SRL5: Halton Lea, Runcorn (3ha) (84 dwellings) • SRL6: Moore, Runcorn (7ha) (166 dwellings) • SLR7: North East Widnes (30ha) (761 dwellings) • SLR8: North West Widnes (21ha) (440 dwellings) • SLR9: Halebank (25ha) (614 dwellings) iv. Housing Allocations (identified in Policy RD1); v. Mixed Use Allocations; vi. Small sites; and	policy, i.e. it does not identify any site allocations it can be screened out from impacting upon European designated sites alone, but in combination effects mean that appropriate assessment will be required. Potential impact pathways present include: • Loss of functionally linked land; • Visual and noise disturbance • Recreational pressure; • Water quality and Resources; and • Atmospheric pollution. The policy is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	vii. Appropriate windfall development.. Maintaining a Five Year Supply 4. The Council will seek to maintain a 5 year supply of deliverable housing land across the Borough in accordance with Government guidance. Brownfield Land 5. An average of at least 40% of new residential development should be delivered on previously developed (brownfield) land over the plan period. Density 6. To ensure the efficient use of land, a minimum density on individual sites of 30 dwellings per hectare (dph) will be sought. In more accessible locations such as those close to town, district or local centres or transport interchanges the presumption will be for developments achieving densities of 40 dph or greater. 7. Where it can be demonstrated that development at such densities would be detrimental to local character or amenity, or site constraints would prevent these densities from being achieved, then development may be permitted at a lower density.	
Policy CS(R)4: Employment Land Supply	1. To provide approximately 180 ha of land for employment purposes over the period 2014 to 2037. a. With an appropriate mix of sites provided to support: i. The local economy, with a particular emphasis on logistics and distribution; science; advanced manufacturing and high tech industries; and ii. The Liverpool City Region Economy.	Policy CS(R)4 is likely to result in LSEs on European Sites. This policy provides for 180ha of employment land to be delivered to 2037. Due to the broad nature of this policy, i.e. it does not identify any site allocations it can be screened out from impacting upon European designated sites

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	b. New employment development will be provided on the following types of land: i. Employment sites completed since 2014; ii. Employment sites with planning permission, or currently under construction, for employment uses; iii. Strategic Employment Locations; • SEL1: Daresbury Sci Tech, Runcorn (20ha) • SEL2: 3MG, Widnes (57ha) • SEL3: Widnes Waterfront, Widnes (27ha) i. • SEL4: West Runcorn / Inovyn, Runcorn (26ha) Employment Allocations (identified in Policy ED1); ii. Land within Primarily Employment Areas and Employment Renewal Areas (identified on Policies Map); iii. Identified employment opportunities within Mixed Use Allocations; iv. Regeneration and remodelling opportunities within existing employment areas; v. Sites with planning permission, or sites that are currently under construction, for employment uses; and vi. Other suitable sites. 2. In order to secure Halton's economic future sites in existing employment use, sites in Primarily Employment Areas and Employment Renewal Areas, and sites identified in this Local Plan as Strategic Employment Locations or Employment Allocations will be retained for employment uses unless an alternative use can be proven to be of greater benefit to the Borough than retaining the land for employment purposes. a. Any proposals for non-employment uses should be accompanied by an examination of the wider employment land situation in the Borough, or in the case of strategic employment sites the City Region. Including:	alone, but in combination effects mean that appropriate assessment will be required. Potential impact pathways present include: • Loss of functionally linked land; • Visual and noise disturbance • Water quality and Resources; and • Atmospheric pollution. The policy is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome												
	i. Consideration of the overall supply of employment land in the Borough (amount type, quality, availability, size), and how the proposal would not limit the range available; ii. The relative suitability and sustainability of the site for employment uses and evidence of the attempts made to let or sell the premises for a reasonable rate with no tenant or purchaser being found; iii. The relative suitability and sustainability of the site for the proposed alternate use; iv. The benefits and /or improvements that the alternative use would bring to the area; v. The location of the site and its relationship to and compatibility with other uses; and vi. The need for the proposed use.													
Policy CS(R)5: Halton's Centres	1. The following hierarchy of centres will be maintained for retail and other main town centre uses (as defined in the NPPF) in order to provide access to a wide range of shops, employment and associated services for all sections of the community. The Council will also support the improvement and enhancement of town and local centres within the defined boundaries. <table border="1"> <tr> <th colspan="3">Table CS(R)5.1: Halton Retail Hierarchy</th></tr> <tr> <th>Designation</th><th>Role and Function</th><th>Location</th></tr> <tr> <td>Town Centres</td><td>Principal focus for new and enhanced retail and other town centre activity within Halton</td><td>Widnes Halton Lea (including Runcorn Shopping Centre, Trident Retail Park, Asda and Lidl)</td></tr> <tr> <td>District Centres</td><td>A focus for convenience, local and niche comparison and service retail and leisure uses</td><td>Runcorn Old Town</td></tr> </table>	Table CS(R)5.1: Halton Retail Hierarchy			Designation	Role and Function	Location	Town Centres	Principal focus for new and enhanced retail and other town centre activity within Halton	Widnes Halton Lea (including Runcorn Shopping Centre, Trident Retail Park, Asda and Lidl)	District Centres	A focus for convenience, local and niche comparison and service retail and leisure uses	Runcorn Old Town	The policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites. This policy provides the hierarchy by which centres will be maintained and enhanced to provide access to shops, employment and community services. Whilst it identifies broad locations for maintenance and enhancement, it does not in itself contain a quantum of development. There are no linking impact pathways present and the policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
Table CS(R)5.1: Halton Retail Hierarchy														
Designation	Role and Function	Location												
Town Centres	Principal focus for new and enhanced retail and other town centre activity within Halton	Widnes Halton Lea (including Runcorn Shopping Centre, Trident Retail Park, Asda and Lidl)												
District Centres	A focus for convenience, local and niche comparison and service retail and leisure uses	Runcorn Old Town												

Policy	Description				TOLSE outcome
	Local Centres	Focus for local convenience and service retail and complementary community facilities.	Runcorn • Ascot Avenue • Beechwood • Brookvale • Castlefields • Grangeway • Greenway Road • Halton Brook • Halton Road • Halton Village • Langdale Road • Murdishaw • Palacefields • Picton Avenue • Preston Brook • Russell Road • Sandymoor • Sutton Park • Windmill Hill	Widnes • Alexander Drive • Bechers • Cronton Lane • Farnworth • Halebank • Hale Road • Halton View Road • Hough Green • Liverpool Road • Moorfield Road • Queens Avenue • Upton Rocks • Warrington Road • West Bank Hale • Ivy Farm Court	
	1. The development of new centres will be expected to consolidate and enhance the network and hierarchy of centres and not harm the vitality and viability of existing centres. New retail development of an appropriate scale to meet local need will be required in the following locations to serve the new residential and business populations at: a. Daresbury b. Moore Village				

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
Policy CS(R)6: Halton's Green Belt	1. A Green Belt is designated around the urban areas and new allocations of both Runcorn and Widnes. 2. The Green Belt boundary is defined on the Policies Map. Within the Green Belt, planning permission will not be granted for inappropriate development, except in very special circumstances, in accordance with national policy. Development proposals for the sites removed from the Green Belt and allocated or safeguarded in this plan should include compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of remaining Green Belt land to offset the impact of the removal of the land from the Green Belt.	The policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites. This is a positive policy providing for a Green Belt surrounding Halton. There are no linking impact pathways present and the policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
Policy CS(R)7: Infrastructure Provision	Development should be located to maximise the benefit of existing infrastructure and to minimise the need for new provision. Where new development creates or exacerbates deficiencies in infrastructure it will be required to ensure those deficiencies or losses are compensated for, adequately mitigated, or substituted in a timely manner. On larger developments that will be completed in phases or over a number of years, an agreed delivery schedule of infrastructure works may be appropriate. Where infrastructure provision is not made directly by the developer, contributions may be secured by an agreement under Section 106 of the Act including where appropriate via a phased payment schedule. Development proposals will be supported where there is sufficient wastewater treatment capacity. If localised deficiencies arise, development will have to be phased to so as not to exceed available capacity. Furthermore, all developments will be required to deliver green infrastructure approaches, such as Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS), to maximise in-situ pollutant attenuation in accordance with policy CS21 and HE9. Applications for the provision of new infrastructure will be supported where they are required to help deliver national priorities and locally identified requirements and where their contribution to agreed objectives outweigh the potential for adverse impacts.	The policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites. This is a policy detailing the provision of infrastructure in Halton. There are no linking impact pathways present and the policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
Policy CS12: Housing Mix	1. On sites of 10 or more dwellings, the mix of new property types delivered are encouraged to contribute to addressing identified needs as quantified in the most up to	The policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites.

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	date Strategic Housing Market Assessment, unless precluded by site specific constraints, economic viability or prevailing neighbourhood characteristics. 2. Proposals for new specialist housing for the elderly, including extra-care and supported accommodation, will be encouraged in suitable locations, particularly those providing easy access to local services and community facilities. 5. In order to reduce reliance on specialist housing in the future and to allow residents to live within their own homes for as long as they are able, the Council will encourage designs of dwellings that can be adapted should they be required.	This policy outlines the mix of property types to be delivered during the duration of the Local Plan. It does not detail a specific quantum or location of development. There are no linking impact pathways present and the policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
Policy CS(R)H13: Affordable Homes	1. All residential schemes including ten or more dwellings (net gain), or 0.5 ha or more in size, with the exception of brownfield sites are to provide affordable housing at the following rates: a. Strategic Housing Sites: Those identified on the Policies Map as Strategic Housing Locations, are required to deliver a 20% affordable housing requirement. b. Greenfield Development: Will be required to deliver 25% affordable housing requirement 2. The overall number of affordable housing units should be provided as approximately 74% affordable or social rent and 26% intermediate where practicable and unless evidence* justifies a departure from this requirement. Homes for affordable home ownership (shared ownership or starter homes) can be provided within the intermediate proportion of affordable housing provision. 3. Affordable housing will be required to be delivered in perpetuity, where feasible. Affordable Homes 4. In relation to the provision of affordable homes the Council will: a. Require the affordable housing to be fully integrated into the development site so as to avoid the over concentration of affordable homes in any particular location and in order to achieve a seamless design. b. Only reduce the affordable housing contribution or vary the tenure mix where robust and credible evidence is provided to demonstrate that the affordable housing target would make	This policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites. A development management policy outlining the requirement for affordable housing and starter homes. This policy does not identify any location or quantum of development. There are no linking impact pathways present and the policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	the development unviable. This appraisal may then be reviewed by independent economic viability consultants. The applicant will be required to meet the full cost of this work. c. Only accept off site provision or financial contributions in lieu of on-site provision, where it can be proven to be that on site provision is unachievable or localised need does not necessitate affordable housing provision and the agreed approach contributes to the objective of creating mixed and balanced communities. 5. Planning permission will be refused on development sites which are sub-divided into separate development parcels below the affordable housing or Starter Homes thresholds unless the affordable housing provision is proportionate to that which would have been required on the site as a whole. 6. Custom and Self-Build plots provided in accordance with Policy RD6 can be either delivered as market or affordable housing. However, developers wishing to provide affordable custom and self-build plots will still be obliged to meet their affordable housing requirement for the development of the site should the plots not be fulfilled.	
Policy CS(R)14: Gypsy & Travellers	1. Provision will be made for 10 additional pitches in Halton over the GTAA period 2017-2032, this will meet the require need for 4 additional pitches and provision for up to 6 additional pitches for Gypsy and Traveller households that may not meet the planning definition 2. There is no identified need for plots for Travelling Showpeople. 3. In allocating sites and for the purposes of considering planning applications, all of the following criteria will need to be satisfied: a. The site is not affected by pollution, contamination, flooding or other environmental factors that would result in unacceptable living conditions. b. The site is well designed and landscaped to give privacy between pitches/plots and, where appropriate, between the site and adjacent uses. c. The site is well located in relation to the highway network with adequate vehicular and pedestrian access, and provision for parking and circulation.	Policy CS(R)14 is likely to result in LSEs on European Sites. This policy identifies the provision of 10 additional pitches between 2017 and 2032. Due to the broad nature of this policy, i.e. it does not identify any site allocations it can be screened out from impacting upon European designated sites alone, but in combination effects mean that appropriate assessment will be required. Potential impact pathways present include: • Loss of functionally linked land; • Visual and noise disturbance; • Recreational pressure; • Water quality and Resources; and

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	d. The site is accessible to local services and facilities by walking and/or public transport. e. The site can be supplied with essential services such as water, sewerage, drainage, and waste disposal. f. With particular regard to sites for Travelling Showpeople, the development includes appropriate provision for the storage, maintenance and testing of equipment, where required, without creating unacceptable nuisance, or presenting a risk to the health and safety of those living on or near the site. g. The proposal is not unacceptably detrimental to the amenity or character of the surrounding area. Proposals would conserve and enhance affected heritage assets and maintain the enjoyment of the historic environment. h. The site would not lead to adverse effects on the integrity of the Mersey Estuary SPA and/or Ramsar site. i. The site is not located within the Green Belt. j. The site is preferably on brownfield land. k. The potential occupants are recognised as gypsies, travellers or travelling showpeople . l. The proposal helps meet the identified need. 4. The Council will continue to work with its partners to ensure appropriate provision for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople's accommodation needs.	Atmospheric pollution. However, this policy provides explicit text to provide protection to the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar, and therefore is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
Policy CS(R)15: Sustainable Transport	1. In order to encourage journeys to be made by sustainable modes of travel including walking, cycling and public transport, the Council and its partners will: a. support a reduction in the need to travel by car; b. encourage a choice of sustainable transport modes; and c. ensure new developments are highly accessible by sustainable modes.	This policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites. Sustainable transport would by definition not result in likely significant effects upon a European designated site. This is a positive policy that supports sustainable modes of transport such as walking, cycling and public transportation. This policy does not identify any type or location of development.

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	2. To support sustainable transport across the Borough: - Halton's existing Sustainable Transport Network will be protected; - Improvements to the existing Sustainable Transport Network will be supported - The introduction of new sustainable routes and facilities will be encouraged and; - Promote the use of green technology to reduce transport emissions 3. High trip generating developments will be expected to minimise the need to travel, particularly by private car and maximise the opportunities for the use of walking, cycling and public transport. The Council will expect them to be located where there is high public transport accessibility and good walking and cycling links. 4. Development proposals must be consistent with and contribute to the implementation of the transport strategies and priorities.	There are no linking impact pathways present and the policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
CS(R)17: Liverpool John Lennon Airport	Airport Operational Land within Halton Borough - Development within the airport boundary falling within Halton Borough Council, as defined on the Policies Map, will only be permitted where it is directly related to: - a runway extension, including relocation of physical infrastructure including the perimeter access road, - aircraft and operational site safety requirements - extension or enhancement of the Speke Garston Coastal Reserve - The proposed extension to the runway at LJLA should incorporate localised screening and structural landscaping to the northern and eastern boundary to minimise any visual impacts on Speke and Hale Village, and must not adversely affect the operational integrity or safety of the airport. Airport Expansion	Policy CS(R)17 is likely to result in LSEs on European Sites. The area allocates for development in proximity to LJLA. It covers is an area that has potential to be functionally linked supporting habitat located outside of the European designated site. Additionally, the locality is at its closest adjacent to Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar site. Potential impact pathways present include: • Loss of functionally linked land; • Visual and noise disturbance; • Recreational pressure • Water quality and Resources; and • Atmospheric pollution.

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	3. Development proposals to significantly increase the passenger or freight handling capacity of the airport will be assessed with regard to their impact on Halton, particularly any environmental and social impacts on: a. residents and other users, of any increases in noise, road traffic, air pollution or public safety risk; b. the historic environment of the surrounding area including setting and local character; c. the natural and built environment, including areas of international, national or local conservation, ecological and landscape value; d. the risks associated with climate change; and, e. the local and regional transport network Further assessment of air quality impacts will be made at the project level, to ensure that there will be no adverse effects of atmospheric pollution on the integrity of European sites, especially the Sefton Coast SAC. With respect to internationally important sites (particularly the Mersey Estuary Special Protection Area and Ramsar site) proposals will need to incorporate measures that are acceptable to the appropriate statutory body and sufficiently extensive to enable a conclusion of no adverse effect on their integrity unless it can be demonstrated that there are both no alternatives and Imperative Reasons of Over-riding Public Interest. Eastern Access Transport Corridor (Road) 4. The Council supports the principal of improving accessibility to the airport through the provision of a new road (the Eastern Access Corridor) through the Halton Green Belt located to the east of Speke, along the indicative alignment shown on the Policies Map (see policy C1).	While the policy wording explicitly requires no adverse effects on the integrity of European designated sites this policy is nonetheless screened in for further discussion in the Appropriate Assessment since 'mitigation' cannot be taken into account in reaching decisions over likely significant effects.
Policy CS18: High Quality Design	Achieving and raising the quality of design is a priority for all development in Halton. All development design should be consistent with the following design principles and in particular respond positively to the context and identity of Halton, including waterfront areas, the historic and natural environment and the identified Key Areas of Change. Development proposals, where applicable, will be expected to:	This policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites. It outlines the quality of design that will need to be achieved by new development in Halton. The policy

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	• provide beautiful and well-designed residential, commercial and industrial developments appropriate to their setting; • enhance and reinforce positive elements of an area's character contributing to a 'sense of place', including the incorporation of public art where appropriate; • respect and respond positively to their setting, including important views and vistas, landmark buildings, features and focal points that have been identified in a proper context appraisal; • be flexible and adaptable to respond to future social, technological, economic, environmental and the health needs of the Borough; • promote safe and secure environments through the inclusion of measures to address crime, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour; • create public spaces which are attractive, promote active lifestyles and work effectively for all members of society; • incorporate appropriate landscape schemes into development designs, integrating local habitats and biodiversity; • provide safe, secure and accessible routes for all members of society, with particular emphasis on walking, cycling and public transport; • be well integrated and connected with existing development; and, • be designed sustainably with future management and maintenance in mind.	contains the positive provision of integrating local habitats and biodiversity. There are no linking impact pathways present and the policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
CS19: Sustainable Development and Climate Change	All new development should be sustainable and be designed to have regard to the predicted effects of climate change including reducing carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions and adapting to climatic conditions. The following principles will be used to guide future development: 1. Consider the guidance as laid out within the National Design Guide, the National Model Design Code and any subsequent document, in order to ensure development is sustainable and appropriate to the location. The BREEAM 'Very Good' standard will be encouraged as a minimum standard for new non-residential development, and while there are no nationally described standards for residential development, the Council will be supportive of schemes that see to utilise standards such as the BRE's Home Quality	This policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites. It details the use of sustainable development to reduce the impacts of climate change. Particularly, it enforces a BREEAM standard of 'very good' for all new residential development.

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	Mark. The development of bespoke standards for new housing and non-residential development would also be supported. 2. •Development should incorporate appropriate climate change resilience and carbon management measures, including passive design features, water efficiency and conservation measures, and the management of surface water run-off. 3. •Reductions in CO2 emissions will be sought through the incorporation of well-designed places and buildings by reducing the need for energy in line with the energy hierarchy set out in the National Design Guide. 4. •Development proposals should maximise, where appropriate, the use of available local opportunities for district heating, particularly in association with the Key Areas of Change and Energy Priority Zones. 5. •Proposals for decentralised renewable and low carbon energy schemes will be supported provided that they do not result in unacceptable harm to the local environment which cannot be successfully mitigated. 6. •Proposals in appropriate locations for large scale grid-connected renewable energy infrastructure and equipment, including, but not limited to wind, solar photovoltaics, and Combined Heating and Power schemes will be supported.	There are no linking impact pathways present and the policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
Policy CS20: Natural and Historic Environment	Halton's natural and heritage assets, and landscape character will contribute to the Borough's sense of place and local distinctiveness in accordance with the following: • A hierarchical approach will be given to the protection, nature conservation and enhancement of biodiversity and geodiversity including: 1. 1. Sites of international importance including the Mersey Estuary Special Protection Area (SPA) and 'Ramsar' site; a) Sites of national importance including Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) namely; The Mersey Estuary, Flood Brook Clough and Red Brow Cutting; and, b) Sites of local importance including Local Nature Reserves (LNRs), Local Geological Sites, Local Wildlife Sites, Ancient Woodland, and habitats and species identified in Halton's Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). c) All major development proposals should avoid and/or mitigate negative impacts on European habitat sites within and beyond the Halton's boundary such that a conclusion of "No Adverse Effects" on integrity can be drawn.	This policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites. It acknowledges the natural and historic environment present in Halton. Positively, it makes particular reference to the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. There are no linking impact pathways present and the policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	d) Development requiring Appropriate Assessment will only be allowed whereas a last resort, Appropriate Assessment proves that there are no alternatives and that the development is of overriding public interest and appropriate compensatory measures are provided. 2. Opportunities to enhance the value of Halton's natural assets should be taken including restoring or adding to natural habitats and other landscape features, and the creation of habitats where appropriate. 3. The Borough's historic environment, heritage assets and their setting will be conserved and enhanced and opportunities to enhance them or increase understanding through interpretation and investigation will be encouraged, especially those assets at risk. 4. The landscape character and condition as informed through the Halton Landscape Character Assessment will be promoted and sustained. 5. The management of natural and heritage assets, and landscape character through the development and implementation of Management Plans, Action Plans and area appraisals will be encouraged, particularly in association with local communities. 6. •Replacement or compensatory measures will be required where appropriate, to ensure that there is no net loss of functionally linked supporting habitat to the Mersey Estuary SPA.	
Policy CS21: Green Infrastructure	Halton's green infrastructure network will be protected, enhanced and expanded, where appropriate. Halton Borough Council working alongside other partners and agencies responsible for the delivery and maintenance of green infrastructure will achieve this through: 1. Ensuring that new development maximises opportunities to make provision for high quality and multifunctional green infrastructure taking account of deficiencies and the standards for green space provision. 2. Resisting the loss of green infrastructure where there are identified deficiencies in provision. 3. Protecting, enhancing and where possible creating linkages and connections between natural habitats and other landscape features which contribute towards a network of greenspaces and corridors of value for biodiversity, recreation and the amenity needs of the community. 4. Improving accessibility, where appropriate, to the green infrastructure network particularly where this encourages walking and cycling.	This policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites. It details the protection and expansion of Halton's green infrastructure, emphasising the need for enhancing the connectivity between and improving the accessibility to greenspaces. There are no linking impact pathways present and the policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	5. Maximising the contribution of Halton's green infrastructure to broader sustainability objectives including health, climate change adaptation, and maintaining and improving biodiversity. 6. Sustaining the protection afforded to internationally important sites for biodiversity by managing recreational impacts and encouraging the use of the wider green infrastructure network which is less sensitive to recreational pressure. 7. Using developer contributions to facilitate improvements to the quality, connectivity and multifunctionality of the Borough's green infrastructure network. 8. •Supporting the delivery of programmes and strategies to protect, enhance and expand green infrastructure across the Borough including local and sub-regional strategies and Regional Park initiatives.	
Policy CS22: Health and Well-being	Healthy environments will be supported and healthy lifestyles encouraged across the Borough by ensuring: I. proposals for new and relocated health and community services and facilities are located in accessible locations with adequate access by walking, cycling and public transport; II. applications for large scale major developments are supported by a Health Impact Assessment to enhance potential positive impacts of development and mitigate against any negative impacts III. the proliferation of Hot Food Take-Away outlets is managed; and, IV. • opportunities to widen the Borough's cultural, sport, recreation and leisure offer are supported.	This policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites. It details the provision of services associated with health and well-being. It does not provide a quantum or location of development. There are no linking impact pathways present and the policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
Policy CS23: Managing Pollution and Risk	a) Pollution To control development which may give rise to pollution: • Development proposals should not exacerbate and where possible, should minimise, all forms of emissions and odour, water, noise and light pollution. • Proposals for development within or close to identified Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) in the Borough should have specific regard to how the exceedance in air pollutants can be addressed and how the impact on receptors can be reduced.	This policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites. It details Halton's approach to managing pollution, reducing risk from hazards and managing flood risk. The policy positively details that any pollution should be minimised.

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	- Prior to development on potentially contaminated land or unstable land, sites should be investigated to ascertain the extent of any contamination and possible risks to future uses. Development will only be permitted where the land has, or will be made suitable for the proposed use. Where it is not possible to achieve the full remediation of a site, the Council may seek soft-end or green uses. b) Reducing Risk from Hazards To prevent and minimise the risk from potential accidents at hazardous installations and facilities, the following principles will apply: - Minimisation of risk to public safety and property wherever practicable. - Controlling inappropriate development within identified areas of risk surrounding existing hazardous installations or facilities, to ensure that the maximum level of acceptable individual risk does not exceed 10 chances per million and that the population exposed to risk is not increased. - Ensuring that any proposals for new or expanded hazardous installations are carefully considered in terms of environmental, social and economic factors. c) Managing Flood Risk Development should not exacerbate existing levels of flood risk nor place residents or property at risk from inundation from flood waters. This will be achieved by: - Directing development to areas where the use is compatible with the predicted level of flood risk, both at present and taking into consideration the likely effects of climate change. - Using Halton's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment to inform the application of the sequential approach/test and exception test in accordance with national planning policy. - Requiring site-specific Flood Risk Assessments for proposals in areas at risk from flooding as identified in the Halton SFRA. - Supporting proposals for sustainable flood risk management (e.g. defence / alleviation work) so long as they do not have a detrimental impact on the landscape of the Borough.	There are no linking impact pathways present and the policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
Policy CS24: Waste	The Council will promote sustainable waste management in accordance with the waste hierarchy, to: • identify and safeguard (where appropriate) waste management sites in appropriate locations suitable for new and enhanced waste management facilities for the identified waste management needs of the Liverpool City Region (Merseyside and Halton). The allocation of sites and detailed development management policies will be provided in the Joint Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan; • ensure that the Borough can meet the identified waste management needs as determined through the Joint Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan or equivalent; • encourage good design in new development in order to minimise waste, promote the use of recycled materials and, to facilitate the collection and recycling of waste; • encourage the sustainable transport of waste and promote use of site specific waste management plans; and, • ensure that waste management facilities are developed whilst minimising the impacts on the environment and communities of the Borough.	This policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites. It outlines that the council will promote sustainable waste management in accordance with the Joint Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan. That plan is already in existence. There are thus no linking impact pathways present and the policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
Policy CS25: Minerals	To minimise the need for minerals extraction, the use of recycled and secondary aggregates across the Borough will be encouraged. Although there are limited mineral resources in the Borough, Minerals Safeguarding Areas and Minerals Areas of Search for sand and gravel resources will be identified and protected to prevent their sterilisation. The policies map identifies areas of minerals resources and policies HE10 identifies Mineral Safeguarding areas (MSA) and Mineral Areas of Search (MAS) policy HE11 sets out the criteria for their exploration and potential extraction. Oil and Gas Whilst the proposals map does not identify and areas for onshore Oil and Gas, proposals for such developments will only be supported where: <u>Exploration stage</u> The proposal is sited in the least sensitive location from which the target formation can be accessed;	This policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites. This is a positive policy outlining the focus on recycling and the use of secondary aggregates. It also stipulates that onshore oil / gas exploration will only be permitted in locations of low sensitivity and does not allocate or identify any areas for such exploitation. Minerals Safeguarding Areas and Areas of Search are referenced and identified. However, such areas carry no presumption that minerals exploitation will occur; their purpose is to prevent potential future minerals resources from being 'sterilised' through alternative conflicting development

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	II. The proposal is either directly accessible from, or located in close proximity to the primary route network; III. The proposal is sited, designed and operated to minimise environmental amenity impacts; IV. The cumulative impacts of the proposal, considered in combination with any other plan, project or programme are acceptable; V. It can be demonstrated that the proposal will not lead to unacceptable adverse impacts on the integrity or geological structure; VI. It can be demonstrated that greenhouse gases associated with fugitive emissions from the proposal will not lead to unacceptable adverse environmental impacts; VII. Operations are for an agreed, temporary length of time; VIII. The well site and associated infrastructure are restored at the earliest practical opportunity. <u>Appraisal Stage</u> I. An indicative framework of the resource is submitted to the Council (the Minerals Authority) setting out the extent of the reservoir and the extent of the area of search with the reservoir, informed by the earlier exploration work. II. Where any gas is collected it is utilised rather than flared. <u>Production stage</u> A framework for the full development of the resource is submitted to the Council (Minerals Authority) detailing the number and location of well sites and associated infrastructure, justifying then in number, extent and location. The Council (Minerals Authority) will also require a community benefit package and no existing facilities could be used for the exploitation of the target information.	that would make such minerals resources un-exploitable. There are no linking impact pathways present and the policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
Policy CS26: Unallocated Land in Urban Areas	On land not coloured on the proposals map which is currently in urban use, it is assumed that present uses will continue as this land is not subject to any site specific policies which propose a change of use. Any proposals for changes of use will be judged in accordance with the relevant policies of the Plan.	This policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites. This policy details that unallocated land in urban areas is expected to continue with their present use.

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
		There are no linking impact pathways present and the policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

Appendix D Test of Likely Significant Effects of Halton's Delivery and Allocations Local Plan

Where a policy is identified in orange in the 'TOLSE Outcome' column, this policy has been identified to contain potential linking impact pathways to European sites. These policies cannot be 'screened out' at the initial TOLSE stage and are discussed further within the HRA. Where a policy is identified in green in the 'TOLSE Outcome' column, this policy does not contain any linking impact pathways to European sites so can be 'screened out' from further consideration and are not discussed further within the HRA.

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome																																				
Policy ED1: Employment Allocations	1. The following Employment Allocations, as identified on the Policies Map, will be allocated for employment purposes to deliver the employment land requirements set out in Policy CS(R)4. Table E2.1: Runcorn (Sci-Tech Daresbury Enterprise Zone) <table><tr><th>Ref</th><th>Site</th><th>Status</th><th>Brownfield/ Greenfield</th><th>Size (Ha)</th><th>Uses</th></tr><tr><td></td><td colspan="5">Sci-Tech Daresbury</td></tr><tr><td>E4</td><td>Daresbury Sci Tech</td><td></td><td>Greenfield</td><td>3.97</td><td>Office, Research and development, and light industry.</td></tr><tr><td>E5</td><td>Land between rail line, Bridgewater Canal and Keckwick Lane</td><td></td><td>Brownfield</td><td>1.97</td><td>Office, Research and development, and light industry.</td></tr><tr><td>E6</td><td>Land between rail line, Bridgewater Canal and Delph Lane</td><td></td><td>Greenfield</td><td>8.6</td><td>Office, Research and development, and light industry.</td></tr><tr><td>E10</td><td>Land between rail line, Bridgewater Canal and Keckwick Lane</td><td></td><td>Greenfield</td><td>1.31</td><td>Office, Research and development, and light industry.</td></tr></table>	Ref	Site	Status	Brownfield/ Greenfield	Size (Ha)	Uses		Sci-Tech Daresbury					E4	Daresbury Sci Tech		Greenfield	3.97	Office, Research and development, and light industry.	E5	Land between rail line, Bridgewater Canal and Keckwick Lane		Brownfield	1.97	Office, Research and development, and light industry.	E6	Land between rail line, Bridgewater Canal and Delph Lane		Greenfield	8.6	Office, Research and development, and light industry.	E10	Land between rail line, Bridgewater Canal and Keckwick Lane		Greenfield	1.31	Office, Research and development, and light industry.	Policy ED1 is likely to result in LSEs on European Sites. This policy provides Strategic Employment Location allocations throughout Halton. Potential impact pathways present include: • Loss of functionally linked land; • Visual and noise disturbance • Water quality and Resources; and • Atmospheric pollution. Please see Appendix C for screening of site allocations. The policy is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
Ref	Site	Status	Brownfield/ Greenfield	Size (Ha)	Uses																																	
	Sci-Tech Daresbury																																					
E4	Daresbury Sci Tech		Greenfield	3.97	Office, Research and development, and light industry.																																	
E5	Land between rail line, Bridgewater Canal and Keckwick Lane		Brownfield	1.97	Office, Research and development, and light industry.																																	
E6	Land between rail line, Bridgewater Canal and Delph Lane		Greenfield	8.6	Office, Research and development, and light industry.																																	
E10	Land between rail line, Bridgewater Canal and Keckwick Lane		Greenfield	1.31	Office, Research and development, and light industry.																																	

Policy	Description						TOLSE outcome
	E11	Land between Delph Lane and Sci Tech Daresbury		Greenfield	2.27	Office, Research and development, and light industry.	
	Table E2.2: Runcorn						
	Ref	Site	Status	Brownfield/ Greenfield	Size (Ha)	Uses	
	E3	Land between Rail line and Expressway off Runcorn		Brownfield	2.01	Office, Research and development, and light industry, General Industrial and Storage and Distribution.	
	E8	Land adjacent to the Office Village	Outline	Greenfield	2.12	Office, Research and development, and light industry.	
	E9	Land between Daresbury Park and Bridgewater Canal	Outline	Greenfield	4.75	Office, Research and development, and light industry.	
	E12	Land to north of Manor Farm Road		Greenfield	1.11	Office, Research and development, and light industry, General Industrial and Storage and Distribution.	

Policy	Description						TOLSE outcome
	E13	Land between Astmoor Road and the busway (West)		Greenfield	1.20	Office, Research and development, and light industry, General Industrial and Storage and Distribution.	
	E14	Land west of Edison Rd and between Astmoor Rd		Greenfield	0.47	Office, Research and development, and light industry, General Industrial and Storage and Distribution.	
	E15	Land east of Edison Rd between Astmoor Road		Greenfield	0.37	Office, Research and development, and light industry, General Industrial and Storage and Distribution.	
	E16	Land to the south of Rivington Road		Brownfield	1.62	Office, Research and development, and light industry, General Industrial and Storage and Distribution.	
	E17	Land between Chester Road and the Rail Line		Greenfield	2.55	Office, Research and development, and light industry, General Industrial and Storage and Distribution.	
	E18	Land to the north of Teva Pharmaceuticals		Brownfield	2.31	Office, Research and development, and light	

Policy	Description						TOLSE outcome
						industry, General Industrial and Storage and Distribution.	
	E19	Land between Warrington Rd and Oxmoor Wood		Greenfield	2.57	Office, Research and development, and light industry, General Industrial and Storage and Distribution.	
	E20	Land off Blackheath Lane		Greenfield	4.47	Office, Research and development, and light industry, General Industrial and Storage and Distribution.	
	E24	Land north of Six Acre Lane		Greenfield	35.23	Office, Research and development, and light industry, General Industrial and Storage and Distribution.	
	E25	Moss Lane Nursery		Greenfield	9.26	Office, Research and development, and light industry, General Industrial and Storage and Distribution.	
	E28	Land off Six Acre Lane		Greenfield	5.72	Office, Research and development, and light industry, General Industrial	

Policy	Description						TOLSE outcome
						and Storage and Distribution.	
	E29	Land west of Moore Meadows		Greenfield	0.97	Office, Research and development, and light industry, General Industrial and Storage and Distribution.	
	E30	Land at junction 12 M56		Greenfield	1.34	Office, Research and development, and light industry, General Industrial and Storage and Distribution.	
	Table E2.3: Widnes and Hale						
	Ref	Site	Status	Brownfield/ Greenfield	Size (Ha)	Uses	
	E1	Shell Green, land to the east of Gorsey Lane	Widnes	Brownfield	3.24	General Industrial and Storage and Distribution.	
	E2	Land to the south of Dans Road	Widnes	Greenfield	3.80	General Industrial and Storage and Distribution.	
	E21	St Michaels	Widnes	Brownfield	20.20	General Industrial and Storage and Distribution.	

Policy	Description						TOLSE outcome
	E22	Land north of Ditton Junction	Widnes	Greenfield	9.99	Office, Research and development, and light industry, General Industrial and Storage and Distribution	
	E23	HBC Field	Widens	Greenfield	12.07	Office, Research and development, and light industry, General Industrial and Storage and Distribution	
	E26	Eastern most section of 3MG (East) Foundry Lane	Widnes	Brownfield	35.23	Office, Research and development, and light industry, General Industrial and Storage and Distribution	
	E27	Tesco Distribution Centre	Widnes	Brownfield	1.94	Office, Research and development, and light industry, General Industrial and Storage and Distribution	
	E31	Gorse Point	Widnes	Brownfield	15.98	Office, Research and development, and light industry, General Industrial and Storage and Distribution	
	E32	Former Thermphos site	Widnes	Brownfield	5.07	Office, Research and development, and light	

Policy	Description						TOLSE outcome
						industry, General Industrial and Storage and Distribution	
	E33	Former Muspratt site	Widnes	Brownfield	4.44	Office, Research and development, and light industry, General Industrial and Storage and Distribution	
Policy ED2: Employment Development	1. Within Primarily Employment Areas development for office, research and development, light industrial, factory or storage and distribution uses will normally be acceptable. 2. Redevelopment and regeneration within existing employment areas and Employment Renewal Areas will generally be supported where they make a demonstrable improvement in the use of the site employment purpose, having regard to: a. The quality and type of employment floorspace provided; b. The quality, type, number and density of jobs to be accommodated; and c. The environmental quality of the site. 3. Employment uses outside of Primarily Employment Areas, Employment Allocations or Strategic Employment Sites will be supported where they meet all of the requirements of Policy GR2: Amenity and they are considered to be of an appropriate scale and character for the area. 4. All proposals for new employment development, including extensions to existing properties, must where appropriate: a. Be compatible with existing and proposed surrounding uses; b. Not have a significant adverse effect on the character and appearance of the locality in terms of its size, scale, materials, design and siting; c. Be designed to allow for future flexibility for a range of uses, including future subdivision and/or amalgamation for a range of business accommodation;						This policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites. This is a development management policy relating to the type and quality of employment areas. This policy contains the positive provision of promoting public transport cycle and pedestrian links, thus potentially reducing atmospheric pollution contributions from private motorised transport. This policy does not identify exact locations or quanta of development. There are no linking impact pathways and the policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	d. Have an adequate access that would not create a traffic hazard or have an undue environmental impact; e. Be served by public transport and provide pedestrian and cycle links to adjacent residential areas; f. Design open storage areas to minimise visual intrusion; g. Make adequate provision of space for on-site servicing and, where appropriate, waiting goods vehicles; h. Provide adequate screening, if the layout and design cannot be amended in other way, to obscure or conceal any unsightly feature of the development; i. Locate security fencing, where required, to the internal edge of any perimeter landscaping; and j. Provide substantial peripheral landscaping where sites adjoin residential areas, open countryside or Green Belt areas. 5. The intensification of existing business floorspace within Town/District centres and employment areas will generally be supported. 6. Where development proposals come forward for employment generating uses obligations for training and recruitment of local people for both the end use and the supply chain will be negotiated. 7. The Council will seek to retain existing commercial/industrial (Office, Research and development, and light industry, factory or storage and distribution uses), unless it can be demonstrated that, the continued use of the site/premise for its existing use is no longer viable in terms of its operation of the existing use, building age and format and that it is not commercially viable to redevelop the land or refurbish the premises for its existing use. Marketing of the land/property will be required to indicate that there is no demand for the land/property in its existing use. Details if the current occupation of the buildings, and where this function would be relocated, will also be required. Where an application relies upon a marketing exercise to demonstrate that there is no demand for the land/premises in its current use, the applicant will be expected to submit evidence to demonstrate that the marketing was adequate and that no reasonable offers were refused. This will include evidence demonstrating that:	

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	- The marketing has been undertaken by an appropriate agent or surveyor at a price which reflects the current market or rental value of the land/premises for its current use and that no reasonable offer has been refused. - The land/premises has been marketed for an appropriate period of time which will usually be for 12 months. - The land/premises has been regularly advertised and targeted at the appropriate audience. Consideration will be given to the nature and frequency of advertisements in the press or specialist trade networks etc. and contact with local property agents. In certain cases, for example where a significant departure from policy is proposed, the Council may seek to independently verify the submitted evidence, and the applicant will be required to bear the costs of independent verification.	
Policy ED3: Complementary Services and Facilities within Employment Areas	1. Within Primarily Employment Areas, Strategic Employment Locations, Employment Renewal Areas and Employment Allocations, appropriate small scale ancillary complementary services and facilities, which can be demonstrated to meet the needs of employees and complement existing businesses, will be supported provided that they do not impact on local employment or the local economy.	This policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites. This is a development management policy relating to ancillary complementary services and facilities for existing businesses. There are no linking impact pathways and the policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
Policy RD1: Residential Development Allocations	1. For the avoidance of doubt, the housing sites allocated in this plan are not granted Permission in Principle. 2. The following Strategic Housing Locations and the Residential Allocations, as identified on the Policies Map, will assist in the delivery of the requirements set out in Policy CS(R)3: 3. Residential development on Green Belt sites, or former Green Belt sites allocated in this Plan, (GBM notation) will need to provide appropriate mitigation for the loss of green belt land in line with NPPF requirements	Policy RD1 is likely to result in LSEs on European Sites. This policy details individual residential site allocations,

Policy	Description						TOLSE outcome
	Runcorn						including their size, location and capacity. Potential impact pathways include: • Loss of functionally linked land; • Visual and noise disturbance; • Recreational pressure; • Water quality and Resources; and • Atmospheric pollution. Please see Appendix C for TOLSE of site allocations. The policy is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
	Ref	Site	Greenfield / Brownfield ¹⁵³	Site Size	Potential Capacity	Notes	
	M8	Land to the east of Runcorn Road, Moore	Greenfield	0.73	20	GBM	
	P1	E-Scape, Preston-on-the-Hill	Greenfield	4.89	117	GBM	
	P2	Land between Chester Rd and M56 at Preston-on-the-Hill	Greenfield	6.96	146	GBM	
	R1	Land at Gaunts Way	Greenfield	0.23	7	SRL5	
	R2	Land to the east of Kestrel's Way	Greenfield	1.61	43	SRL5	
	R5	Land north of Beechwood Ave., east of Wood Lane	Greenfield	1.09	29		
	R7	Former Showroom for The Deck	PDL	0.54	15		
	R8	Remainder of The Deck	PDL	0.44	12		
	R10	Land off Bridge Street and busway	PDL	1.03	28		
	R11	Land to the rear of Pure Gym	PDL	0.15	5		
	R12	Former Riverside College	Mixed	4	120		
	R14	Land to south of Percival Lane	PDL	0.16	16		
	R15	Former Polar Ford and surrounds	PDL	1.14	31		
	R17	Picow Farm Road Playing Fields	Mixed	1.92	62		

¹⁵³ Brownfield or Previously Developed Land (PDL) as defined in Annex 2, National Planning Policy Framework

Policy	Description							TOLSE outcome
	R20	Paramount Foods and Surrounds	PDL	3.70	89			
	R22	Land off Birch Road	Greenfield	0.78	21			
	R24	Land to the west of Grangeway	Greenfield	0.5	14			
	R25	Thorn Road Garages	PDL	0.19	6			
	R26	St Chads High School Playing Fields	Greenfield	3.42	82			
	R28	Land off Coronation Road	Greenfield	1.65	44			
	R29	Land to the south of Walsingham Drive	Greenfield	16.63	250	SRL4		
	R30	Land between Keckwick Brook and WCML	Greenfield	13.93	337	SRL4		
	R31	Sandymoor 17A	Greenfield	0.68	18	SRL4		
	R32	Central Housing Area (between Canal and railway)	Greenfield	20.77	255	SRL2*		
	R33, R35, R36	Delph Lane West	Greenfield	19.08	295	SRL1*		
	R37	Land to the east of Village Street	Greenfield	4.35	104	SRL4		
	R38, R67	Wharford Farm (North and Central)	Greenfield	21.51	600	SRL3*		
	R39	Wharford Farm (South)	Greenfield	2.38	57			
	R40, R41	Central Housing Area (between A56 and canal)	Greenfield	16.19	339	SRL2		
	R44	Highways Agency Depot	PDL	0.88	24			
	R45	Land adjacent to Castle Road (Panorama Hotel)	PDL	0.22	7			
	R46	Land to the north of Brookvale Avenue North	Greenfield	0.75	20			
	R47	Adj. to Woodfalls Farm	Mixed	0.36	11			

Policy	Description						TOLSE outcome
	R48	Land Adj. to Woodfalls Farm	Greenfield	0.23	7		
	R49	Land surrounding Hanover Court	Greenfield	1.09	29		
	R50	The Lord Taverners & land adjacent	Mixed	1.3	35		
	R52	Land off Southland Mews	Mixed	0.42	11		
	R54	Land off Astmoor Bridge Lane	Greenfield	0.19	6		
	R55	Former Express Dairies Site, Sewell St / Perry St	PDL	0.54	15		
	R60	Paddock adjacent to 38 Clifton Road	Greenfield	0.38	11		
	R61	Land to the south of Old Quay Street and Mason St	PDL	1.46	39		
	R62	Former Gym and Surrey Street Garage	PDL	0.36	11		
	R66	Former Egerton Library and Rathbone Institute	PDL	0.66	18		
	R69/ 463	Former Job Centre and La Scala ¹⁵⁴	PDL	0.89	24		
	R72	Land to the north of Towers Lane	Greenfield	0.39	12		
	R73	Land between Daresbury Expressway and Manor Park Ave	Greenfield	0.86	23		
	R74	Land between the expressway and the Bridgewater Canal	Greenfield	7.54	158		
	R78	Land to the south of Stockham Lane	Greenfield	1.18	32		
	R79	Land between Stalbridge Drive and WCML	Greenfield	2.42	58	SLR4	
	R80	Land Off Eagles Way (Incl. the Raven), Hallwood Park	Mixed	1.81	51	SRL5	

¹⁵⁴ Site R69 Allocated for potential Mixed Uses (including Residential) in Policy HC2 (Ref.463)

Policy	Description						TOLSE outcome
	R81	Land south of hospital	Greenfield	1.67	45	SRL5	
	R82	Land East Of Castlefields Area	Greenfield	1.62	44		
	R84	Land between The Office Village, Daresbury Park and Bridgewater Canal	Greenfield	19.84	417	SRL2	
	Widnes and Hale						
	Ref	Site	Greenfield / Brownfield ¹⁵⁵	Site Size	Potential Capacity	Notes	
	H1	Land adjacent to 1 Church End, Hale Village	Greenfield	0.45	12		
	W1	BPI Widnes Films	PDL	4.26	38	Part u/c 2019	
	W2	Former Eternit site, Derby Road	PDL	5.21	116	u/c 2019	
	W4	Chapel Lane to Old Upton Lane	Greenfield	14.26	299	SRL8/GBM	
	W5	Sandy Lane to Queensbury Way	Greenfield	6.33	133	SRL8/GBM	
	W9	Land at Mill Green Farm	Greenfield	22.63	433	SRL7/GBM	
	W10	South Lane	Greenfield	1.45	39	SRL7/GBM	
	W11	Boundary Farm and Abbey Farm, South Lane	Greenfield	13.23	278	SRL7/GBM	
	W17	Land east of The Eight Towers Public House	Greenfield	0.72	20		

¹⁵⁵ Brownfield or Previously Developed Land (PDL) as defined in Annex 2, National Planning Policy Framework

Policy	Description						TOLSE outcome																																																																																										
	<table><tr><td>W24</td><td>West of Hale Gate Rd</td><td>Greenfield</td><td>23.06</td><td>484</td><td>SRL9/GBM</td></tr><tr><td>W28</td><td>Broseley House</td><td>PDL</td><td>0.33</td><td>10</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W30</td><td>Opposite Beaconsfield Surgery Site</td><td>PDL</td><td>0.4</td><td>11</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W31</td><td>Greenoaks Farm Industrial Estate, Warrington Road</td><td>PDL</td><td>0.32</td><td>10</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W32</td><td>Land At Terrace Road (RMC House), West Bank</td><td>PDL</td><td>0.51</td><td>14</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W34</td><td>Widnes Timber Centre, Foundry Lane</td><td>PDL</td><td>0.96</td><td>26</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W38</td><td>Land to the rear of Appleton Village Pharmacy</td><td>PDL</td><td>0.29</td><td>9</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W39</td><td>The Albert Hotel, 160 Albert Road</td><td>PDL</td><td>0.05</td><td>2</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W40</td><td>Watkinson Way Loop</td><td>PDL</td><td>0.89</td><td>24</td><td>SRL7</td></tr><tr><td>W42</td><td>Land off Vine Street</td><td>Greenfield</td><td>0.06</td><td>5</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W44</td><td>Land Adjacent to 20 Rock Lane</td><td>Greenfield</td><td>0.41</td><td>111</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W45</td><td>Parcels on Halebank Road</td><td>Mixed</td><td>2.26</td><td>54</td><td>SRL9</td></tr><tr><td>W47</td><td>Land to the rear of Harrison Street Pumping Station</td><td>Brownfield</td><td>5.96</td><td>125</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W49</td><td>Lunts Heath Road (East)</td><td>Greenfield</td><td>18.13</td><td>381</td><td>SRL7/GBM</td></tr><tr><td>W50</td><td>(former Stobarts site) Foundry Lane</td><td>PDL</td><td>0.71</td><td>19</td><td></td></tr></table>						W24	West of Hale Gate Rd	Greenfield	23.06	484	SRL9/GBM	W28	Broseley House	PDL	0.33	10		W30	Opposite Beaconsfield Surgery Site	PDL	0.4	11		W31	Greenoaks Farm Industrial Estate, Warrington Road	PDL	0.32	10		W32	Land At Terrace Road (RMC House), West Bank	PDL	0.51	14		W34	Widnes Timber Centre, Foundry Lane	PDL	0.96	26		W38	Land to the rear of Appleton Village Pharmacy	PDL	0.29	9		W39	The Albert Hotel, 160 Albert Road	PDL	0.05	2		W40	Watkinson Way Loop	PDL	0.89	24	SRL7	W42	Land off Vine Street	Greenfield	0.06	5		W44	Land Adjacent to 20 Rock Lane	Greenfield	0.41	111		W45	Parcels on Halebank Road	Mixed	2.26	54	SRL9	W47	Land to the rear of Harrison Street Pumping Station	Brownfield	5.96	125		W49	Lunts Heath Road (East)	Greenfield	18.13	381	SRL7/GBM	W50	(former Stobarts site) Foundry Lane	PDL	0.71	19		
W24	West of Hale Gate Rd	Greenfield	23.06	484	SRL9/GBM																																																																																												
W28	Broseley House	PDL	0.33	10																																																																																													
W30	Opposite Beaconsfield Surgery Site	PDL	0.4	11																																																																																													
W31	Greenoaks Farm Industrial Estate, Warrington Road	PDL	0.32	10																																																																																													
W32	Land At Terrace Road (RMC House), West Bank	PDL	0.51	14																																																																																													
W34	Widnes Timber Centre, Foundry Lane	PDL	0.96	26																																																																																													
W38	Land to the rear of Appleton Village Pharmacy	PDL	0.29	9																																																																																													
W39	The Albert Hotel, 160 Albert Road	PDL	0.05	2																																																																																													
W40	Watkinson Way Loop	PDL	0.89	24	SRL7																																																																																												
W42	Land off Vine Street	Greenfield	0.06	5																																																																																													
W44	Land Adjacent to 20 Rock Lane	Greenfield	0.41	111																																																																																													
W45	Parcels on Halebank Road	Mixed	2.26	54	SRL9																																																																																												
W47	Land to the rear of Harrison Street Pumping Station	Brownfield	5.96	125																																																																																													
W49	Lunts Heath Road (East)	Greenfield	18.13	381	SRL7/GBM																																																																																												
W50	(former Stobarts site) Foundry Lane	PDL	0.71	19																																																																																													
Policy RD2: Gypsy and Traveller Sites Allocations	1. The following sites will be allocated for Gypsies and Travellers Pitches to deliver the GTAA requirements of 10 pitches and between 2017 and 2032. <table><tr><th colspan="6">Table RD2.1: Permanent Gypsy and Traveller Site Allocations</th></tr><tr><th>Ref</th><th>Site</th><th>Status</th><th>Pitches</th><th>Transit</th><th>Private / Council</th></tr><tr><td>GT5*</td><td>Bigfield Lodge, Runcorn</td><td>Residential Consent</td><td>8</td><td>0</td><td>Private</td></tr><tr><td>GT6</td><td>Warrington Road (extension)</td><td>Allocation</td><td>9</td><td>0</td><td>Council</td></tr></table>						Table RD2.1: Permanent Gypsy and Traveller Site Allocations						Ref	Site	Status	Pitches	Transit	Private / Council	GT5*	Bigfield Lodge, Runcorn	Residential Consent	8	0	Private	GT6	Warrington Road (extension)	Allocation	9	0	Council	Policy RD2 is likely to result in LSEs on European Sites. The policy outlines the number and location of gypsy and traveller pitches in Halton.																																																																		
Table RD2.1: Permanent Gypsy and Traveller Site Allocations																																																																																																	
Ref	Site	Status	Pitches	Transit	Private / Council																																																																																												
GT5*	Bigfield Lodge, Runcorn	Residential Consent	8	0	Private																																																																																												
GT6	Warrington Road (extension)	Allocation	9	0	Council																																																																																												

Policy	Description						TOLSE outcome																																																
	<table><tr><td>GT7*</td><td>Windmill Street, Runcorn</td><td>Residential Consent</td><td>6</td><td>0</td><td>Private</td></tr></table> 2. There will be a presumption against the loss of existing established, lawful residential sites for Gypsy and Traveller or Travelling Showpeople sites unless suitable replacement provision of equal or enhanced value are provided. Therefore the following sites will be retained for use as Gypsies and Travellers Pitches. Runcorn <table><tr><th colspan="6">Table RD2.3: Gypsy and Traveller Sites in Runcorn</th></tr><tr><th>Ref</th><th>Site</th><th>Status</th><th>Permanent</th><th>Transit</th><th>Private / Council</th></tr><tr><td>GT1</td><td>Canalside, Warrington Road</td><td>Authorised</td><td>12</td><td>0</td><td>Council</td></tr><tr><td>GT2</td><td>Runcorn Transit Site</td><td>Authorised</td><td>2</td><td>12</td><td>Council</td></tr></table> Widnes and Hale <table><tr><th colspan="6">Table RD2.4: Gypsy and Traveller Sites in Widnes</th></tr><tr><th>Ref</th><th>Site</th><th>Status</th><th>Permanent</th><th>Transit</th><th>Private / Council</th></tr><tr><td>GT4</td><td>Riverview, Widnes</td><td>Authorised</td><td>23</td><td>0</td><td>Council</td></tr></table> 3. Should any further applications for Gypsy and Traveller or Travelling Showpeople accommodation come forward in the plan period they will be determined in accordance with Policy CS(R)14. 4. Any application for the development of Gypsy and Traveller or Travelling Showpeople sites must be accompanied by substantial evidence that the intended occupiers meet the relevant definition set out in national policy, demonstrating that their livelihood is solely or primarily reliant on nomadic travelling to sustain it (for example, comprehensive business records, bank statements, tax returns etc.).						GT7*	Windmill Street, Runcorn	Residential Consent	6	0	Private	Table RD2.3: Gypsy and Traveller Sites in Runcorn						Ref	Site	Status	Permanent	Transit	Private / Council	GT1	Canalside, Warrington Road	Authorised	12	0	Council	GT2	Runcorn Transit Site	Authorised	2	12	Council	Table RD2.4: Gypsy and Traveller Sites in Widnes						Ref	Site	Status	Permanent	Transit	Private / Council	GT4	Riverview, Widnes	Authorised	23	0	Council	Potential impact pathways present include: • Loss of functionally linked land; • Visual and noise disturbance; • Recreational pressure; • Water quality and Resources; and • Atmospheric pollution. Please see Appendix C for TOLSE of Gypsy and Traveller Sites allocations. The policy is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
GT7*	Windmill Street, Runcorn	Residential Consent	6	0	Private																																																		
Table RD2.3: Gypsy and Traveller Sites in Runcorn																																																							
Ref	Site	Status	Permanent	Transit	Private / Council																																																		
GT1	Canalside, Warrington Road	Authorised	12	0	Council																																																		
GT2	Runcorn Transit Site	Authorised	2	12	Council																																																		
Table RD2.4: Gypsy and Traveller Sites in Widnes																																																							
Ref	Site	Status	Permanent	Transit	Private / Council																																																		
GT4	Riverview, Widnes	Authorised	23	0	Council																																																		
Policy RD3: Dwelling Alterations, Extensions,	1. Proposals for dwelling alterations, extensions, conversion and replacement dwellings outside the Green Belt will be supported where they:						Policy RD3 might result in LSEs on European Sites.																																																

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
Conversions and Replacement Dwellings	a. Retain the character of the existing property, its setting and the surrounding residential area; i. This will include consideration of the siting, scale, design, and materials to be used; b. Will not have a significant adverse impact on the amenity and living conditions of occupants of neighbouring properties; this will include consideration of i. The potential for overlooking and the preservation of appropriate privacy distances; and ii. The loss of sunlight or daylight to neighbouring properties; and iii. The dominance or overbearing nature of the extension. c. Enhance, provide or maintain safe highway conditions for pedestrians, cyclists and motor vehicles; d. Will not result in isolated residential development; e. Provide, or retain, sufficient parking within the curtilage of the property, where applicable; f. Provide, or retain, adequate storage for recycling, refuse and cycles; g. Retain outside access to the rear of the property; and they h. Provide, or retain, a reasonable amenity space. Conversion 2. Residential conversions of existing residential buildings will be permitted where they meet all of the above criteria (1. a-h) and where it is demonstrated that the building to be converted is of a permanent and substantial construction; capable of being converted; and in the case of sub-division or intensification of the existing residential use: i. they would not create or contribute to a harmful concentration of such uses with regards to amenity or highways; and ii. it would not result in a loss of character. Replacement Dwellings 3. Replacement dwellings will be supported where they meet all of the above criteria (1. a-h) and they will not result in unsustainable conditions as a result of over-development of the site, or the curtilage. Change of Use	This is a development management policy relating to alterations of existing properties. Whilst no location is identified this policy could result in new dwellings or an increase in the number of people a dwelling can accommodate. Potential impact pathways include: • Recreational pressure; and • Water quality and Resources. However, this type of development would by its nature only result in very small changes to the number of occupants and any new housing provision would be small. The policy is therefore screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome																												
	4. The conversion of buildings from non-residential to residential use will be supported where they meet all of the above criteria (1. a-h) and where it is demonstrated that: a. The building is of a permanent and substantial construction capable of being converted; and that b. It will provide a satisfactory residential environment.																													
Policy RD4: Greenspace Provision for Residential Development	1. All residential development that create or exacerbate a projected quantitative shortfall of greenspace or are not served by existing accessible greenspace will be expected to make appropriate provision for the needs arising from the development, having regard to the standards detailed in table RD4.1 below. <table><tr><th colspan="4">Table RD4.1: Greenspace for Residential Developments Standards</th></tr><tr><th>Typology</th><th>Description</th><th>Quantitative Standard (m²/person)</th><th>Accessibility Standard (m)</th></tr><tr><td>Amenity Greenspace</td><td>Opportunities for informal activities close to home or work or the enhancement of residential areas</td><td>10</td><td>400</td></tr><tr><td>Provision for Children and Young People</td><td>Areas designed for play and social interaction involving children and young people e.g. equipped play areas, skateboard areas / teenage shelters</td><td>2</td><td>800</td></tr><tr><td>Parks & Gardens</td><td>Accessible, high quality opportunities for informal recreation and community events</td><td>12.5</td><td>1,200</td></tr><tr><td>Natural & Semi Natural</td><td>Wildlife conservation, biodiversity & environmental education & awareness</td><td>27.5</td><td>1,200</td></tr><tr><td>Allotments & Community Gardens</td><td>Opportunities for people to grow their own produce as part of sustainable, healthy and socially inclusive living</td><td>0.9</td><td>1,600</td></tr></table>	Table RD4.1: Greenspace for Residential Developments Standards				Typology	Description	Quantitative Standard (m²/person)	Accessibility Standard (m)	Amenity Greenspace	Opportunities for informal activities close to home or work or the enhancement of residential areas	10	400	Provision for Children and Young People	Areas designed for play and social interaction involving children and young people e.g. equipped play areas, skateboard areas / teenage shelters	2	800	Parks & Gardens	Accessible, high quality opportunities for informal recreation and community events	12.5	1,200	Natural & Semi Natural	Wildlife conservation, biodiversity & environmental education & awareness	27.5	1,200	Allotments & Community Gardens	Opportunities for people to grow their own produce as part of sustainable, healthy and socially inclusive living	0.9	1,600	This policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites. This is a development policy outlining the greenspace provision standards for Halton. It contains the positive provision of enhancing greenspace accessibility. There are no linking impact pathways and the policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
Table RD4.1: Greenspace for Residential Developments Standards																														
Typology	Description	Quantitative Standard (m²/person)	Accessibility Standard (m)																											
Amenity Greenspace	Opportunities for informal activities close to home or work or the enhancement of residential areas	10	400																											
Provision for Children and Young People	Areas designed for play and social interaction involving children and young people e.g. equipped play areas, skateboard areas / teenage shelters	2	800																											
Parks & Gardens	Accessible, high quality opportunities for informal recreation and community events	12.5	1,200																											
Natural & Semi Natural	Wildlife conservation, biodiversity & environmental education & awareness	27.5	1,200																											
Allotments & Community Gardens	Opportunities for people to grow their own produce as part of sustainable, healthy and socially inclusive living	0.9	1,600																											

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	2. The greenspace provided should: a. Be easily accessible from all dwellings within the development; b. Form an integral part of the layout of the development; c. Be of a high standard, where the siting, orientation, size and layout make for a secure and usable space; and d. Incorporate any natural features of the site, where appropriate. 3. Where greenspace is provided on-site the developer will be expected to provide an appropriate long term management scheme and to fund the maintenance of the open space through a service charge payable by the homeowners/ residents of the site. 4. Off-site provision or financial contributions will only be agreed where it can be demonstrated that there is no practical alternative unless a viability appraisal demonstrates otherwise. The provision of greenspace off site can be made either in kind or through financial contributions. If the developer provides enough greenspace to meet the full requirement on site or in kind then no financial contribution is required. 5. Standards for Outdoor Sports Facilities and Playing Pitches will be set out in the latest Playing Pitch Strategy, and will be taken into consideration when assessing development proposals for sport and recreation facilities. Developer contributions for Outdoor Sports Facilities and Playing Pitches will be informed by the most up to date Playing Pitch Strategy as detailed in policy HE6.	
Policy RD5: Primarily Residential Areas	The Council will actively support proposals for self-build homes in locations consistent with the spatial strategy (Policy CS(R)1). The Council's self-build register will be used as a source of evidence of the demand for self-build and custom build locally, and the level of demand will be considered in determining proposals. In areas where the Council has evidence of strong local demand for self-build and custom build housing it will encourage developers to consider whether an element of self-build plots can be incorporated into development schemes as part of the housing mix. 1. Within the Primarily Residential Areas, as shown on the Policies Map, residential development of an appropriate design, scale, type, location and nature; that recognises, reinforces and / or improves the distinctiveness and character of the area; and that is in line with other relevant local plan policies and SPDs; will be supported. 2. Housing renewal and redevelopment will generally be supported in areas identified as requiring regeneration; to replace unpopular housing stock and to address any imbalances in the housing offer.	This policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites. This is a development management policy relating to Primary Residential Areas. Whilst it supports residential development, it does not allocate any quantum or specific locations. There are no linking impact pathways present and the

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	3. Within the Primarily Residential Areas, proposals for non-residential uses will be considered with regard to their effect on amenity and the concentration of non-residential development.	policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
Policy RD6: Custom and Self Build Housing	<u>1.</u> The Council will actively support proposals for self-build homes in locations consistent with the spatial strategy (Policy CS(R)1). The Council's self-build register will be used as a source of evidence of the demand for self-build and custom build locally, and the level of demand will be considered in determining proposals. In areas where the Council has evidence of strong local demand for self-build and custom build housing it will encourage developers to consider whether an element of self-build plots can be incorporated into development schemes as part of the housing mix.	This policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites. This is a development management policy relating to supporting custom and self build housing. It does not allocate any location or quantum of development. There are no linking impact pathways present and the policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
Policy C1: Transport Network and Accessibility	Walking and Cycling 1. Development will only be permitted where: a. It does not prejudice the access on to or through the walking and cycling network or it provides a suitable alternative link of equal quality and convenience; and b. It does not affect the enjoyment of the walking and cycling network (e.g. through noise, smells or other forms of pollution). The walking and cycling network is taken to include but not be limited to: the Greenway Network; The Bridgewater Way; Mersey Way; Mersey Timberland Trail, The Trans-Pennine Trail, the Cycle Network and Public Rights of Way. 2. The Council will normally support development provided that: a. The internal layout, access and highway network is safe, attractive, in character, functional and accessible for all users and does not discourage existing and proposed users; b. It does not have an	Policy C1 is likely to result in LSEs on European Sites. Point 1 is positive in that it includes provision for walking and cycling. This has the potential to reduce contributions to atmospheric pollution from car traffic. However some of the routes identified, such as the Trans-Pennine Trail and Mersey Way follow the River Mersey and pass within proximity to the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar site. Increased

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe; c. Appropriate provision for car and cycle parking is made; d. Road designs are well laid out and where appropriate incorporate highway safety measures, such as traffic management and traffic calming schemes, where appropriate. Sustainable Transport and Accessibility 2. The Council will support development provided that: a. It gives priority to walking, cycling and public transport within its design where appropriate; b. There is inclusive walking and cycling provision to local facilities and sustainable networks; c. Promotes the use of Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEV) d. Appropriate provision for car and cycle parking is made; e. Road designs are well laid out and where appropriate incorporate highway safety measures, such as traffic management and traffic calming schemes, where appropriate; f. It is located within 400 metres walking distance of a bus stop or railway station with a suitable level of service wherever possible; and, i. It is accessible to all Where development does not meet all of these criteria or may be expected to have negative impacts, appropriate mitigation measures will be required at the developer's expense. 3. Development associated with the relinking of the Silver Jubilee Bridge to the pedestrian and cycle network will be supported, including the realignment of pedestrian and cycle links from Widnes Town Centre and Runcorn Old Town and the reconfiguration of the existing Bridge deck. 4. The Council will normally support work to improve canal towpaths and Public Rights of Way where they can provide key linkages from developments to local facilities. Public Transport 5. Development will only be permitted where it does not prejudice:	recreational activity along these routes could result in increased disturbance events to SPA/ Ramsar bird features. Point 4 states: '<i>The Council will normally support work to improve canal towpaths and Public Rights of Way where they can provide key linkages from developments to local facilities.</i>' Provision of improvements to existing PRow that are located within or lead to European designated sites or land parcels that act as functionally linked supporting habitats could result in increased disturbance to avian features and thus result in a likely significant effect.

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	a. the integrity and function of the Runcorn Busway. b. the use of Ditton Station as part of the public transport network, c. the use of the Halton Curve rail line as part of the rail network, d. the Shell Green Route rail line in Widnes as part of the rail network, e. the provision of additional rail tracks immediately to the north of the existing rail line between Hough Green Station and Widnes Station and, f. the safeguarding of the Ditton – Fiddlers Ferry – Warrington rail line The re-opening, or provision, of these transport facilities will generally be supported. 6. Development will only be permitted where it retains the opportunity for new railway stations at: a. Beechwood b. South Widnes New stations and other associated public transport facilities at these locations will be supported. 7. Development to support the creation of a multi modal public transport interchange at Runcorn Train Station will be supported, as part of a wider regeneration scheme for the area. 8. The Council will support provision of a rail based commuter Park and Ride scheme at: a. Ditton b. Locations where the scheme would demonstrably reduce congestion, alleviate parking issues, or increase accessibility to employment for those in the most deprived areas. Transport Hubs The Council will seek to protect and enhance transport hubs where possible. Transport hubs have been identified at: Existing Transport Hubs: a) Runcorn Station Quarter b) Beechwood Bus Depot	This policy also provides for the safekeeping of sites for potential new railway stations, however it does not specifically allocate these sites. It also provides for a park and ride site at Ditton. This policy supports other public transport initiatives that are not yet identified which has the potential to reduce atmospheric pollution contributions by reducing the use of private transport modes. Point 9 encourages <i>'waterborne leisure activities in appropriate locations, boosting the tourism economy...'</i>. Whilst it is acknowledged that the River Mersey and Manchester Ship Canal are already subject to levels of disturbance increased waterborne activities within the River Mersey could impact upon designated features.

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	c) Hough Green Train Station d) Widnes Train Station e) Runcorn East Train Station Proposed Transport Hubs: f) Shaw Street/Station Road, Runcorn Station g) Ditton Station h) Victoria Road, Widnes i) Daresbury Train Station allocation Waterways 9. The Council will expect development to: a. Maintain waterside transport infrastructure where appropriate b. Encourage physical waterborne leisure activities, boosting the tourism economy and promoting health improvements in appropriate locations c. Enhance watercourses and related infrastructure where appropriate. Road schemes 10. The Council will continue to work with partners to support appropriate road schemes including: a. Liverpool John Lennon Airport Eastern Access Transport Corridor 11. Improvements to the following parts of the road network are proposed during the Plan period. a. A558 Daresbury Expressway; b. Watkinson Way / Ashley Way Gyratory; c. A562 Speke Road;	The Road Schemes section identifies the Mersey Gateway (opened in late 2017), J11A Highways England (at the option exploring stage), Eastern Access Transport Corridor (EATC), and road improvements in Point 13. None of these are located where adverse effects on European sites are likely to arise but scheme specific HRA's may be required to ensure that no likely significant effects result. The Freight and logistics section identifies freight and logistics hubs at Port Runcorn, Port Weston and 3MG. Increased vehicular freight movement has the potential to increase atmospheric pollution contributions.

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	d. A557 Access improvements; and e. Reconfiguration / improvement of infrastructure to the south of the SJB. Where necessary the routes of these improvements will be protected. Freight and Logistics 12. Any development which generates significant movement of freight will be expected to locate where they are, or can be, served by water, air or rail infrastructure in addition to having good road access. 13. The following sites have been identified as Freight and Logistics hubs: a. Port Runcorn b. Port Weston c. 3MG Development that could have a detrimental impact on the access to these hubs will be resisted. Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) 14. Halton as part of the LCR welcomes the use of new technologies including those that: a. Manage the flow of traffic around the Borough. b. Reduce transport emissions through the use of SMART vehicle technology. c. Provide smart transport solutions, enabling transport and journeys in general to become quicker and more efficient for residents and visitors to the borough. Travel Plans and Transport Assessments 15. The Council will require the submission of a Transport Assessment or Transport Statement for Development proposals that are likely to generate significant numbers of trips, HGV movements and/or have location specific issues or traffic sensitivities. The level and content of supporting Transport Assessments/ Statements should be scoped with the Highway Authority prior to application. 16. A travel plan will be required as part of a new development in all of the following circumstances:	This policy provides for ITS which has the potential to reduce atmospheric emissions from traffic by actively managing flows, thus improving air quality and having a positive impact upon sensitive European designated sites. Potential linking impact pathways include: • Loss of functionally linked land; • Visual and noise disturbance; • Recreational pressure; and • Atmospheric pollution. The policy is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	a. Major development proposals comprising jobs, shopping, leisure and services b. Smaller development proposals comprising jobs, shopping, leisure and services which would generate significant amounts of travel in or near to air quality management areas. c. Where the green travel plan will help to address a particular traffic problem associated with the proposal, which might otherwise have to be refused on local traffic grounds d. Proposals for new and expanded school facilities (school travel plan). Where a green travel plan is not required, developers will be encouraged to prepare one where appropriate in the interests of sustainability.	
Policy C2: Parking Standards	1. All development must provide an appropriate level of safe, secure, accessible and viable parking, taking into account: a. The accessibility of the site, including the availability of public transport; b. The type, mix and use of development; c. The availability of on-street parking or shared parking facilities; and d. An overall need to encourage the use of low emissions vehicles. 2. The design and layout of the proposed parking must enable and encourage the maximum use of sustainable modes of transport, including provision for cyclists and low emission vehicles. 3. The Council will require parking provision, cycle parking and electric vehicle infrastructure according to the standards set out in Appendix D. Any significant variation (+/- 10%) from these standards must be justified on a case-by-case basis, and would need to demonstrate there are no harmful impacts on the street scene or the availability of on-street parking. 4. Where opportunities arise Halton would welcome car club facilities within commercial and high density areas.	This policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites. This is a development management policy relating to parking standards. There are no linking impact pathways present and the policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
Policy C3: Delivery of Telecommunications Infrastructure	1. The Council encourages and supports proposals for the provision, upgrading and enhancement of wireless and fixed data transfer and telecommunications networks and their associated infrastructure. 2. Proposals for the delivery of communications infrastructure will normally be granted permission where they: a. Have no significant adverse effect on the external appearance of the building on which, or space in which, they are located;	This policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites. Telecommunications systems can reduce the need to travel and thus reducing atmospheric

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	b. Preserve or enhance the natural and historic environment; c. Have fully explored and utilised, as appropriate, technologies to miniaturise and camouflage any telecommunications apparatus; d. Are appropriately designed, coloured and landscaped to take account of their setting; e. Have no significant adverse impact on the visual amenities of neighbouring occupiers; f. Have no detrimental impact on the safe and satisfactory functioning of the highways; g. Demonstrate there is no reasonable possibility of sharing existing facilities within the locality. 3. Development proposals for communication infrastructure should demonstrate that there will be no significant and irremediable interference with electrical equipment, air traffic service or instrumentation operating in the national interest. 4. Development proposals for communication infrastructure will only be accepted where they are certified to be in conformity with the latest national guidelines on radiation protection. This will include consideration of both individual and cumulative effects of the apparatus having regard to any other significant electromagnetic field generation in the locality. 5. Developers will be required to work with appropriate providers to deliver the necessary physical infrastructure to accommodate information and digital communications networks as an integral part of all appropriate new developments.	pollution from transport. As such this policy has the potential to have a positive impact upon sensitive European designated sites. This policy does not identify any quantum or location of assets to be delivered. There are no linking impact pathways present and the policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
Policy C4: Operation of Liverpool John Lennon Airport	Public Safety Zone 1. In accordance with national policy, development, including change of use, which is likely to lead to an increase in the number of people living, working or congregating on land within the LJLA Public Safety Zone, as identified on the policies map, will not be permitted. 2. Any amendments to the Public Safety Zone associated with the expansion of the airport and the runway extension will supersede the adopted Policies Map. Applicants should consult the Council to ensure they are aware of any amendments. Runway End Safety Area (RESA)	This policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites. This is effectively a development management policy relating to the operation of LJLA. It does not specify any location, or type of development. There are no linking impact pathways present and the

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	3. The Council will support proposals, where appropriate, that seek to address airport safety issues, including those relating to the Runway End Safety Area (RESA). Height Restriction Zone (HRZ) 4. Development within the LJLA Height Restriction Zone (HRZ) will only be permitted if it is below the height notified to the Council by the relevant authority and would not cause a hazard to air travellers. 5. Development within the HRZ will not be permitted if it would otherwise cause a hazard to air travellers. Airport Development 6. All airport development should seek the maximum possible reductions in noise through compliance with the latest Airport Noise Action Plan. New Development in the Vicinity of LJLA 7. New developments in the vicinity of LJLA will be required to be designed to comply with airport safety requirements and should not impede the operational requirements of the Airport. Developments which increase risk to airport safety or impede operational requirements will be resisted.. Airport Parking 8. The provision of offsite airport parking within Halton Borough will generally not be supported.	policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
Policy HC1: Vital and Viable Centres	Town and District Centres 1. Retail and other main town centre uses should be located within the centres identified in strategic Policy CSR5 and Table HC1.1 and as identified on the Policies Map. 2. Within Halton's centres, development proposals for retail and other main town centres uses will be supported where they: a. Are of a size, scale and intensity appropriate to the position of the centre in the identified hierarchy	This policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites. A development management policy relating to Centres. Whilst economic activity can result in an increase in atmospheric pollution and

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	b. Retain or enhance the centre's character, appearance, vitality and viability; c. Sustain or enhance diverse town centre uses and customer choice; d. Do not detrimentally effect local amenity; e. Capitalise on the Borough's natural assets and greenspaces; and f. Are readily accessible by public transport, walking and cycling. 3. Within Halton's centres, the use of upper floors for non-retail uses will be supported, subject to the use being suitable to the function of the centre and other policies in this plan. 4. Within town / district centres outside of the Primary Shopping Area, change of use to residential may be appropriate (subject to the provisions of other policies in this Plan, particularly policies GR1 and GR2). 5. Proposals for retail uses at edge of centre locations will be permitted where: a. It is demonstrated through the sequential approach that there are no appropriate town centre sites available in the Primary Shopping Area and that the proposed location is the most preferable in light of the alternatives considered; b. The site is located within a well-connected area, within 300m of the primary shopping area; and c. The proposal complied with the criteria set out in section 2 above. 6. Proposals for retail uses in out-of-centre locations will only be permitted where: a. It is demonstrated through the sequential approach that there are no appropriate sites in the Primary Shopping Area or edge of centre sites available in the Primary Shopping Area and that the proposed location is the most preferable in light of the alternatives considered; b. The proposal has been subject to impact assessment as set out in accordance with Table HC1.1 below, and will not demonstrably harm centres within its catchment Proposals for non-retail town centre uses in edge of centre locations will only be permitted where: a. It is demonstrated through the sequential approach that there are no appropriate town centre sites available and that the proposed location is the most preferable in light of the alternatives considered.	water use, this policy does not identify any specific type, location or quantum of development. There are no linking impact pathways present and the policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome																	
	b. The proposal for non-retail use is location within 300 metres of a town centre boundary. For office development, this includes locations outside the town centre but within 500 metres of a public transport interchange. 7. Retail and leisure proposals outside of the Primary Shopping Area, above the following thresholds will be subject to an impact assessment; <table border="1"> <tr> <th colspan="3">Table HC1.1 Local Impact Thresholds</th></tr> <tr> <th rowspan="2">Centre</th><th colspan="2">Floorspace Threshold (sq m gross)</th></tr> <tr> <th>Convenience Goods</th><th>Comparison Goods</th></tr> <tr> <td>Widnes Town Centre</td><td>1,500 m²</td><td>1,500 m²</td></tr> <tr> <td>Halton Lea Town Centre</td><td>1,000 m²</td><td>1,000 m²</td></tr> <tr> <td>Runcorn Old Town</td><td>500 m²</td><td>500 m²</td></tr> </table> 8. The retention and enhancement of the Borough's markets will be encouraged. Local Centres 9. Within the Local Centres identified in policy CS5 the primary retail role of the centre will be safeguarded. Other uses will be supported where they complement the existing role of these centres, provided that the proposal: a. meets the needs of residents within the local neighbourhood; and b. would not reduce the number of A1 retail units in any local centre to below 50% of the units used for commercial purposes. 10. Additional or replacement convenience retail units (up to 280 sqm net) within or immediately adjacent to a defined Local Centre will be supported.	Table HC1.1 Local Impact Thresholds			Centre	Floorspace Threshold (sq m gross)		Convenience Goods	Comparison Goods	Widnes Town Centre	1,500 m ²	1,500 m ²	Halton Lea Town Centre	1,000 m ²	1,000 m ²	Runcorn Old Town	500 m ²	500 m ²	
Table HC1.1 Local Impact Thresholds																			
Centre	Floorspace Threshold (sq m gross)																		
	Convenience Goods	Comparison Goods																	
Widnes Town Centre	1,500 m ²	1,500 m ²																	
Halton Lea Town Centre	1,000 m ²	1,000 m ²																	
Runcorn Old Town	500 m ²	500 m ²																	

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome																														
	Individual Shops 11. Individual shops, not specifically defined on the Policies Map, will be safeguarded for retail purposes, unless it is demonstrated that the existing use and/or any other retail use is no longer viable within that specific location.																															
Policy HC2: Retail and Town Centre Allocations	1. The following sites, as identified on the Policies Map, will be allocated for appropriate Town Centre Uses to deliver the Core Strategy requirements. Runcorn <table><tr><th>Ref</th><th>Site</th><th>Brownfield/ Greenfield</th><th>Size</th><th>Proposed Use</th></tr><tr><td>TC1</td><td>Land to the north of the Brindley (former Brindley Mound), Runcorn Old Town</td><td>Brownfield</td><td>0.42ha</td><td>Retail & Leisure</td></tr><tr><td>TC2</td><td>Bus Interchange, Car Park and Former HDL, Runcorn Old Town</td><td>Brownfield</td><td>0.54ha</td><td>Retail</td></tr><tr><td>TC5</td><td>East Lane House</td><td>Brownfield</td><td>1.14ha</td><td>Mixed (Retail, Leisure & Residential)</td></tr><tr><td>TC6</td><td>Sandymoor Local Centre</td><td>Greenfield</td><td>1.35</td><td>Retail</td></tr><tr><td>TC7</td><td>TA Centre</td><td>Brownfield</td><td>1.44Ha</td><td>Mixed (Retail & Residential)</td></tr></table>	Ref	Site	Brownfield/ Greenfield	Size	Proposed Use	TC1	Land to the north of the Brindley (former Brindley Mound), Runcorn Old Town	Brownfield	0.42ha	Retail & Leisure	TC2	Bus Interchange, Car Park and Former HDL, Runcorn Old Town	Brownfield	0.54ha	Retail	TC5	East Lane House	Brownfield	1.14ha	Mixed (Retail, Leisure & Residential)	TC6	Sandymoor Local Centre	Greenfield	1.35	Retail	TC7	TA Centre	Brownfield	1.44Ha	Mixed (Retail & Residential)	Policy HC2 is likely to result in LSEs on European Sites. This policy allocates retail, leisure and tourism development in the town centre. Potential linking impact pathways include: • Recreational pressure; • Water quality and Resources; and • Atmospheric pollution. Please see Appendix C for TOLSE of site allocations. The policy is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
Ref	Site	Brownfield/ Greenfield	Size	Proposed Use																												
TC1	Land to the north of the Brindley (former Brindley Mound), Runcorn Old Town	Brownfield	0.42ha	Retail & Leisure																												
TC2	Bus Interchange, Car Park and Former HDL, Runcorn Old Town	Brownfield	0.54ha	Retail																												
TC5	East Lane House	Brownfield	1.14ha	Mixed (Retail, Leisure & Residential)																												
TC6	Sandymoor Local Centre	Greenfield	1.35	Retail																												
TC7	TA Centre	Brownfield	1.44Ha	Mixed (Retail & Residential)																												

Policy	Description					TOLSE outcome	
	TC8	Library, Grosvenor House, Former Magistrates Court, Police Station et al, Halton Lea	Brownfield	2.32ha	Mixed (Office, Retail, Leisure and Residential)		
	TC10	Daresbury Local Centre	Greenfield	0.39	Retail		
	Runcorn – Daresbury Strategic Site						
	Ref	Site	Status	Brownfield/ Greenfield	Size		Proposed Use
		Daresbury Local Centre			tbc		Retail
	Widnes and Hale						
	Ref	Site	Status	Brownfield/ Greenfield	Size		Proposed Use
	TC3	Widnes Retail Park (Phase 2)	Extant Permission	Brownfield			Retail
	TC9	Albert Square Car Park		Brownfield	tbc		Retail
	TC11	South Widnes (West Bank)		Brownfield			Retail
Policy HC3: Primary Shopping Areas	Primary Shopping Areas					This policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites.	

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	1. Within the defined Primary Shopping Areas, the use of ground floor units retail, Professional Services or food & drink uses will generally be supported where they provide an active daytime frontage. 2. Within the defined Primary Shopping Areas, the use of ground floor units for no Shops, Financial / Professional Services, Restaurants, Cafe uses will be permitted where: a. The overall proportion of retail uses will not fall below 60% of units, unless the unit has been shown to not be viable for Shops, Financial / Professional Services, Restaurants, Cafe use after sufficient effective marketing, and is currently vacant; b. The continuity of the retail frontage is maintained, normally with no more than two adjacent no retail Shops, Financial / Professional Services, Restaurants, Cafe frontages; c. It can be demonstrated that the proposal would not reduce the pedestrian footfall; and d. An active frontage is provided.	A development management policy relating to the provision of shopping areas. There are no linking impact pathways present and the policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
Policy HC4: Shop Fronts, Signage and Advertising	1. Proposals to alter an existing shop front or to create a new shop front, including the installation of external security measures, will only be permitted where they: a. Be appropriate to the building in which they are set in terms of proportions, detailing and materials. b. Respect the context of the street or space in which they are set; and c. Accommodate the shop signage in a way that contributes to the overall design. 2. Proposals for shop front security measures will be permitted provided that they are accommodated in an unobtrusive manner and do not include any of the following: a. The blanking out of windows. b. Projecting shutter boxes. c. Unperforated roller shutters. d. Galvanised finishes. 3. In considering applications for advertisement consents or enforcing the discontinuance of a display after the specific period, if considered reasonable, all of the following criteria will be considered:	This policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites. A development management policy relating to shop fronts, signage and advertisement. There are no linking impact pathways present and the policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	a. Advertisements should be compatible with the character of their surroundings, including the scale and detailing of any building against which they are seen, by reason of their size, siting, height above ground level, materials, colour and design. b. Free-standing displays should be integrated with their surroundings by appropriate design and landscaping. c. Advertisements on buildings should appear as an integral and not a dominant feature of the building. d. Advertisements should conserve and enhance those features which contribute to the significance of heritage assets and their setting, including where relevant character, appearance, architecture and setting. e. The advertisement should not lead to intrusive visual clutter. f. The advertisement should not prejudice the amenity of the occupiers of nearby dwellings or other buildings, either by reason of inappropriate design or means of illumination. g. In the right locations, (and in particular in relation to free-standing poster displays) whether advertisements can offer the opportunity to secure vitality and environmental benefits, by screening eyesores and redevelopment sites or providing a solution of the use of marginal land left by road works, albeit on a temporary basis where appropriate. h. The effect of the advertisement upon the highway safety, the safe use and operation of any form of traffic or transport safety of pedestrians. i. An advertisement should not impede the visibility of road users in the vicinity of junctions, access, bus stops and crossing points.	
Policy HC5: Community Facilities and Services	1. The Council in partnership with service providers will plan for the following community facilities up to 2037: • Education • Health and Social Care Facilities • Sport and Leisure Facilities • Youth Facilities • Community Facilities • Cultural Facilities	This policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites. This policy details the retention and enhancement of existing Community Facilities, and the provision of new Community Facilities.

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	2. The Council will support the retention and enhancement of existing community facilities. 3. The Council will support the development of new Community facilities, within or adjacent to the town centres, district and local centres identified in policy CS(R)5 and on sites allocated in policy HC2 , or the enhancement , extension or refurbishment of an existing Community Facility, provided that: a) The facility is accessible by walking, cycling and public transport. b) The proposal would not give rise to significant traffic congestion or road safety problems. c) Any new buildings, extensions and structures are well designed, of an appropriate scale, in keeping with the character of the area and appropriately landscaped. 4. Outside of the town and district and local centres the Council will support the development of new Community Facilities, provided that: a) The proposal is accompanied by a supporting statement which demonstrates the sustainability of the proposed location. b) A sequential approach has been applied in selecting the location of the site in accordance with policy HC1. c) The facility is accessible by walking, cycling and public transport. d) The proposal would not give rise to significant traffic congestion or road safety problems. e) Any new buildings or structures are well designed and appropriately landscaped. f) The proposal is of a design, character, type, size, scale and appearance appropriate to the location. Loss of Community Facilities 5. Proposals involving the loss of community facilities land or buildings will only be permitted where it is demonstrated that: a. The loss of the existing community use would not create, or add to, a shortfall in the provision or quality of such uses within the locality; or b. The building or site is no longer suitable or viable to accommodate the current community use, or the use has already ceased, and the building or site cannot viably be retained or sensitively adapted to accommodate other community facilities; or c. In the case of commercial community facilities, whether the use is no longer viable (applicants will need to submit evidence to demonstrate that the site is no longer viable for that use).	However, no quantum, type or location of development is identified. There are no linking impact pathways present and the policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	d. marketing Marketing of the land/property will be required to indicate that there is no demand for the land/property in its existing use. e. Details if the current occupation of the buildings, and where this function would be relocated, will also be required. f. Where an application relies upon a marketing exercise to demonstrate that there is no demand for the land/premises in its current use, the applicant will be expected to submit evidence to g- Demonstrate that the marketing was adequate and that no reasonable offers were refused. This will include evidence demonstrating that: • The marketing has been undertaken by an appropriate agent or surveyor at a price which reflects the current market or rental value of the land/premises for its current use and that no reasonable offer has been refused. • The land/premises has been marketed for an appropriate period of time which will usually be for 12 months. • The land/premises has been regularly advertised and targeted at the appropriate audience. Consideration will be given to the nature and frequency of advertisements in the press or specialist trade networks etc. and contact with local property agents. • The community facility can be fully retained, enhanced or reinstated as part of any redevelopment of the building or site; or • Alternative replacement community facilities are provided in a suitable alternative location. <u>Halton Hospital Campus</u> 6. Proposals involving enhancement or redevelopment within the Halton Hospital campus for health and wellbeing uses will be supported. The following uses may also be acceptable on surplus land within the site where they do not compromise the principal use of the site for health care provision; a. Residential Institutions b. Residential c. Non-residential institutions (Clinics, health centres, crèches, day nurseries, day centres, schools, art galleries (other than for sale or hire), museums, libraries, halls, places of worship, church halls, law court. Non-residential education and training centres) d. Leisure uses ;	

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	e. Hotel ; and f. Office	
Policy HC7: Visitor Attractions	1. The Council will protect and enhance the assets and attractions of Halton that attract visitors and investors to Halton. This will be achieved through: a. The protection of visitor attractions and assets which are displayed within Appendix E; b. Promoting the enhancement and expansion of existing visitor attractions and tourist accommodation; c. Encouraging sustainable transport to visitor attractions, tourist and cultural sites; and d. Not permitting development that would affect an existing visitor attraction if it would be likely to detract from the function, appearance, significance or setting of the attraction. 2. All visitor attractions located within or adjacent to Widnes Town Centre, Runcorn Town Centre, Runcorn Old Town District Centre or on the Borough's waterfronts will be considered acceptable where they: a. Are accessible by a variety of modes of sustainable transport, including public transport, cycling and walking; and b. Would not lead to unsatisfactory traffic conditions or other nuisance; and c. Assist in delivering improvements to the green infrastructure within the local area; and d. Are appropriate in size and do not result in an adverse impact on the visual amenity of the area. 3. Where a visitor attraction is not to be located within or adjacent to Widnes Town Centre, Runcorn Town Centre, Runcorn Old Town District Centre or on the Borough's waterfronts it must: a. Be for the expansion of an existing visitor attraction or located within an existing building; and b. Be of an appropriate scale and character for its location; and c. Be accessible by a variety of modes of sustainable transport, including public transport, cycling and walking; and d. Not lead to unsatisfactory traffic conditions or other nuisance; and e. Assist in delivering improvements to the green infrastructure within the local area; and	Policy HC7 is likely to result in LSEs on European Sites. This policy contains the positive provision of encouraging sustainable transport. Point 6 also states: <i>'Developments which are likely to increase harm through visitor pressure within internationally designated sites will not be supported, unless it can be demonstrated that there are both no alternatives and imperative reasons of over-riding public interest.'</i> Whilst this is positive it is recommended that it wording is changes slightly to include the requirement of a project level HRA where appropriate. This policy does not identify any location, type or extent of visitor attraction. However, it does provide for the protection of existing visitor attractions and enhancement

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	f. Be visually unobtrusive and not result in an adverse impact on the visual amenity of the area. 4. The co-location of visitor attractions will be encouraged and where appropriate they should be used to create hubs. 5. Where appropriate the Council will generally support the development of small scale ancillary complementary services at existing or emerging visitor attractions within the Borough. 6. Developments which are likely to increase harm through visitor pressure within internationally designated sites will not be supported, unless it can be demonstrated that there are both no alternatives and imperative reasons of over-riding public interest.	and expansion of visitor accommodation. Potential impact pathways present: • Recreational pressure; and • Atmospheric pollution. Given the protective policy wording in Point 6, this policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
Policy HC8: Food and Drink	1. Development of food and drink uses including restaurants, late night bars or pubs and Hot Food Takeaways (subject to the additional criteria below), will be acceptable provided that they would not harm the character of the area, residential amenity and / or public safety, either individually or cumulatively. The following impacts will be taken into consideration: a. noise, fumes, smells, litter and late night activity; b. the availability of public transport and parking; c. highway safety; d. access for servicing; e. storage for refuse and recycling; f. the appearance of the building, frontage, flues and other installations; g. the number, distribution and proximity of other existing, or proposed, restaurants, hot food takeaways and late night bars or pubs; h. potential for crime and anti-social behaviour; i. impact on the promotion of healthy lifestyles. 2. Hot Food Takeaways will only be supported where:	This policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites. This is a development management policy relating to food and drink. There are no linking impact pathways present and the policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	a. it is located within a designated town or district centre primary shopping area and will not result in; i. 5% or more of the total ground floor commercial units within a primary shopping area being hot food takeaways. ii. 10% or more of the total ground floor commercial units within the remaining (non-primary shopping area) town centre areas being hot food takeaways, and iii. Less than two non-hot food takeaway commercial units on the same frontage, or a road, between hot food takeaways, b. It is located within a designated local centre and will not result in hot-food takeaways becoming the dominant use, or more than two units or 10% of the total ground floor commercial units (whichever is the greater) being a hot food takeaway, c. it is located more than 400m from primary or secondary schools, sixth form colleges, playing fields and children's play spaces.	
Policy HC9: Mixed Use Areas	1. Within a Mixed Use Area any proposed development will be expected to: a. Promote the vitality and viability of the area. b. Be of a quality of design that enhances the character and appearance of the local environment. c. Contribute to the: i. Creation of jobs for local people; or ii. Provision of housing to meet local needs; or iii. Provision of local facilities for the community; or iv. Quality of the visitor attraction of the Borough. 2. The Council may require a masterplan or development brief to be prepared demonstrating that the proposals will positively support and complement the comprehensive wider development of the area. The Council will encourage the use of workshops to engage the local community, design advice and review arrangements along with assessment frameworks such as Building for Life . 3. <u>MUA1 Widnes Civic Quarter</u>	Policy HC9 is likely to result in LSEs on European Sites. This policy identifies broad Mixed Use Areas and the types of development that are considered appropriate in these. While the broad locations of development are identified, no quantum is provided. Potential impact pathways present include: • Recreational pressure; • Water quality and Resources; and • Atmospheric pollution.

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	Within the Widnes Civic Quarter Mixed Use Area (MUA1) the following uses are considered appropriate: a. Leisure; b. Residential; c. Office, Research / Development, Light Industry; d. Restaurants; e. Hotel; f. Education; and g. Health. 4. <u>MUA2 Victoria Square and Victoria Road</u> Within the Victoria Square and Victoria Road Mixed Use Area (MUA2) the following uses are considered appropriate: a. Small Scale Retail (up to 280 sqm net); b. Restaurants and cafés; c. Residential and d. Drinking Establishments. 5. <u>MUA3 Earle Road Mixed Use Area</u> Within Earle Road Mixed Use Area (MUA3) the following uses are considered appropriate: a. Retail; b. Restaurants and cafés; c. Leisure uses; d. Clinics, health centres, crèches, day nurseries, day centres, schools, art galleries (other than for sale or hire), museums, libraries, halls, places of worship, church halls, law court. Non-residential education and training centres; e. Hotel;	The policy is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	f. Office, Research / Development, Light Industry; and g. Residential. 6. <u>MUA4 Lugsdale Road</u> Within the Lugsdale Road Mixed Use Area (MUA4) the following uses are considered appropriate: a. Residential; and b. Office, Research / Development, Light Industry . 7. <u>MUA5 Runcorn Station</u> Within the Runcorn Station Mixed Use Area (MUA5) the following uses are considered appropriate: a. Small Scale Retail (up to 280 sqm net); b. Restaurants and cafés; c. Leisure uses; d. Clinics, health centres, crèches, day nurseries, day centres, schools, art galleries (other than for sale or hire), museums, libraries, halls, places of worship, church halls, law court. Non-residential education and training centres; e. Hotel; and f. Office, Research / Development, Light Industry. 8. <u>MUA6 Halton Road</u> Within the Halton Road Mixed Use Area (MUA6) the following uses are considered appropriate: a. Small Scale Retail (up to 280 sqm net); b. Restaurants and cafés; c. Leisure uses; and d. Residential. 9. <u>MUA7 Bridge Retail</u> Within the Bridge Retail Mixed Use Area (MUA7) the following uses are considered appropriate:	

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	a. Retail Warehousing (non-food); b. Restaurants and cafés; c. Drinking establishments; and d. Leisure uses. 10. <u>MUA9 Moor Lane</u> Within Moor Lane Mixed Use Area (MUA9) the following uses are considered appropriate: a. Retail; b. Clinics, health centres, crèches, day nurseries, day centres, schools, art galleries (other than for sale or hire), museums, libraries, halls, places of worship, church halls, law court. Non-residential education and training centres; c. Hotel; d. Office, Research / Development, Light Industry and General Industrial; and e. Residential. 12. <u>MUA11 'Daresbury Park'</u> Within Mixed Use Area 12 the following uses are considered appropriate; a. Office, Research / Development, Light Industry; b. Residential; c. Small Scale Retail (up to 280 sqm net); d. Small scale ancillary complementary services and facilities (compliant with policy ED3) 13. Within each of these Mixed Use Areas development proposals for uses not listed will be decided on their individual merits.	
Policy HC10 : Education	The following Educational Allocations, as identified on the Policies Map, will be allocated for education purposes to meet the needs of the residents of Halton, should that need be identified over the plan period. • EDU1 – Land at Sandymoor (for a primary school)	LSEs on European Sites cannot be ruled out for this site allocation based on desk study, without further

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	- EDU2 – Land off Castle Street/Naylor Road (for an SEN School) - EDU3 – Land at Halebank (for a primary school)	consideration as part of an appropriate assessment. Site EDU3 is within the boundary of housing site W24. It is therefore screened in for the same reason as W24.
Policy HE1: Natural Environment	Designated Sites, Priority Habitats and Priority Species - Any development which may affect one of Halton’s natural assets will be considered in line with the mitigation hierarchy: - Avoidance - Minimisation - Mitigation - Compensation - Development which may adversely affect the integrity of internationally important sites will only be permitted where there are no alternative solutions and there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest. This also applies to sites and habitats outside the designated boundaries that provide supporting habitat for qualifying features or species listed as being important in the designations of the internationally important sites. - Development which may cause significant harm will only be permitted for: Sites of National Importance (including Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), National Nature Reserves (NNRs)): where the reasons for and the benefits of development clearly outweigh the impact on the nature conservation value of the site and its broader contribution to the national network; Sites of Local Importance (including Local Nature Reserves (LNRs), Local Wildlife Site (LWS) and Local Geological Sites (LGS)): where the reasons for and the benefits of development clearly outweigh the impact on the nature conservation value of the site and its broader contribution to the LCR Ecological Network; and Priority Habitats: where the reasons for and the benefits of development clearly outweigh the impact on the nature conservation value of the habitat and its broader contribution to the LCR Ecological Network.	This policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites. This is a positive hook policy that aims to provide protection for wildlife sites (including internationally designated sites). It sets out the mitigation hierarchy that each development is considered against. It is recommended that policy text of Point 3 is amended slightly to provide the requirement of a Habitats Regulations Assessment for relevant developments that could adversely impact upon a European designated site. There are no linking impact pathways present and the policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	d. Priority Species: where it is demonstrated that no significant harm will result. Protected Species: where development that may affect legally protected species will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that there is no significant harm 4. Where it has been demonstrated that significant harm cannot be avoided, appropriate mitigation, replacement or other compensatory measures will be required. For priority habitats, appropriate measures, informed by habitat type affected, will be required. The location of appropriate mitigation, replacement or other compensatory measures will be targeted as follows: • On site; • Immediate locality and / or within the Core Biodiversity Area; • LCR Nature Improvement Area within the Borough; and lastly • LCR Nature Improvement Area outside the Borough 5. Where significant harm resulting from development cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated or, as a last resort, compensated, then planning permission will be refused. Developments that are likely to have an adverse impact (either individually or in combination with other developments) on European Designated Sites must satisfy the requirements of the Habitats Regulations, determining site specific impacts and avoiding or mitigating against impacts where identified. Where appropriate, contributions from developments will be secured towards mitigation measures identified in the LCR Recreational Mitigation Strategy (RMS) which will be completed during the early part of the plan period. Prior to RMS completion, the authority will seek contributions as set out in the RMS Interim Arrangement document, where appropriate, from proposed major residential development to deliver all measures identified (including strategic measures) through project level HRAs, or otherwise, to mitigate any recreational disturbance impacts in compliance with the Habitats Regulations and Habitats Directive. 6. Development proposals which affect sites of nature conservation importance and / or priority habitats must be supported by an Ecological Appraisal including an Ecological Constraints and Opportunities plan showing details of avoidance, mitigation and /or compensation. Non-Designated Sites and Habitats 7. To ensure the protection, conservation and enhancement of Halton's natural environment in accordance with Core Strategy policy CS20, development will be permitted provided that:	

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	It does not have a detrimental impact on the non-designated sites and habitats of ecological value, because landscape character is not relevant to nature conservation in this context. Arrangements for the long term management and maintenance of any existing and proposed landscaping have been made include mitigation and compensatory measures/landscaping. It does not result in the loss of important features such as trees, woodlands, walls, hedgerows, ponds or watercourses Ecological Network 8. Priority should be given to improving the quality, linkages and habitat within the Liverpool City Region Ecological Network, including the Liverpool City Region Nature Improvement Area. 9. Development proposals within the Nature Improvement Area will be permitted where they complement the identified opportunities for habitat creation and / or habitat management, and are consistent with other policies in the Plan. High Quality Agricultural land 10. Additionally, the irreversible significant development of open agricultural land will not be permitted where it would result in the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land, where it can be demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality.	
Policy HE2: Heritage Assets and the Historic Environment	Designated Heritage Assets 1. Development of designated heritage assets and their settings must: - Be based on an analysis of their significance and the impact of proposals upon that significance; - Conserve, or where possible enhance, the asset or its setting; - Ensure that significance of the asset is not compromised; - Protect, or where appropriate, restore original or historic fabric; - Enhance or better reveal the significance of assets; - Take account of: - Topography, landscape, setting and natural features;	This policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites. This policy details that heritage assets and the historic environment in Halton will be conserved. There are no linking impact pathways present and the policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	ii. Existing townscapes, local landmarks, views and vistas; iii. The architecture of surrounding buildings; iv. The quality and nature of materials; v. Established layout and spatial character; vi. The scale, height, bulk and massing of adjacent townscape; vii. Architectural, historical and archaeological features and their settings; and g. Be accompanied by a Heritage Statement. 2. Where it has been demonstrated that potential harm to, or the loss of, a designated heritage asset, including its setting cannot be avoided, the Council will expect the development proposal to: a. Demonstrate that, firstly, all reasonable efforts have been made to sustain the heritage asset and secondly, to mitigate the extent of the harm to the significance of the asset; b. Provide a clear and convincing justification as to why that harm is considered acceptable. Where that case cannot be demonstrated, proposals will not be supported. c. Justify the level of harm in relation to the public benefits that may be gained by the proposal. d. Include appropriate legal agreements or planning obligations to secure the benefits arising from a development proposal where the loss, in whole or in part, of a heritage asset is accepted. e. Appropriately record the asset. Listed Buildings 3. Development proposals will be required to safeguard or enhance listed buildings. a. The demolition of any listed building will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances, which outweigh the case for retention. b. The Council will not permit uses, alterations or extensions that would be detrimental to the significance of the Listed Building including fabric, appearance, historic interest or setting. c. The rehabilitation, maintenance repair and enhancement of listed buildings will be encouraged.	

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	Historic Environment In accordance with policy CS(R)20 the Council will support proposals that conserve and, where appropriate, enhance the Borough's historic environment, heritage assets and their settings, especially those identified as being at risk. 4. Designated Heritage Assets Development proposals affecting designated heritage assets (or an archaeological site of national importance) should conserve, and where possible enhance, the significance of the asset and its setting. The more important the asset, the greater the weight that will be given to its conservation. Harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset will only be permitted where the application meets the criteria set out in Para 194 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021. Approval will be conditional upon the asset being fully recorded and the information submitted to the Local Planning Authority and the Historic Environment Record. 5. Heritage Statements and Heritage Impact Assessments All proposals affecting heritage assets should be accompanied by an analysis of the asset's significance, including the impact of proposals upon that significance, through a Heritage Statement or Heritage Impact Assessment. The level of detail should be proportionate to the asset's importance and sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. 6. Conservation Areas Proposals that conserve or enhance the character or appearance of a Conservation Area, especially those elements which have been identified in a Conservation Area Appraisal as making a positive contribution to its significance, will be supported, subject to a balance of all other material considerations.	

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	7. Archaeology Proposals affecting archaeological sites of less than national importance (or local significance) should conserve those elements which contribute to their significance in line with the importance of the remains. Where development affecting such sites is acceptable, any mitigation will be ensured through preservation of the remains in situ as the preferred solution. Where in situ is not justified, the developer will be required to make adequate provision for excavation and recording before and during development. The findings should be submitted to the Local Planning Authority and deposited with the Historic Environment Record. 8. Non-designated heritage assets Proposals that conserve and enhance the significance of non-designated heritage assets will be supported, subject to a balance of all other material planning considerations. Alterations and extensions should be based on an accurate understanding of the significance of the asset including the structure. Proposals should respect the architectural character and detailing of the original building including the use of appropriate materials and techniques. Partial or total loss of a non-designated heritage asset will only be permitted where the benefits are considered sufficient to outweigh the harm. Where harm would be acceptable the following will be required: i. An appropriate level of survey and recording which may also include an archaeological excavation. ii. Provision or replacement of buildings of comparable quality and design. iii. The salvage and reuse of special features within the replacement development. 9. Historic Environment In accordance with policy CS(R)20 the Council will support proposals that conserve and, where appropriate, enhance the Borough's historic environment, heritage assets and their settings, especially those identified as being at risk.	
Policy HE3: Halton's Waterways and Waterfronts	The natural habitat and setting of the waterways and associated banks will be protected and enhanced. Public access, continuous green infrastructure links, towpaths and heritage value along the waterfront shall be maintained, improved and extended for the purposes of nature conservation, leisure, recreation, tourism, education and economic activity. 1. To protect the benefits the water environment provides, it is essential to prevent it deteriorating. This will help to protect both wildlife and people's health and well-being. Therefore, the Council will expect all development to	Policy HE3 is likely to result in LSEs on European Sites. This policy provides for public access to be improved and extended for 'nature

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	take into consideration the objectives of the Water Framework Directive and the relevant River Basin Management Plan. Waterside Development 2. Development alongside Halton's waterfronts should ensure that: a. Public access to the waterway is improved, including those with impaired mobility; b. Natural habitats are protected and enhanced; c. Habitat creation is considered throughout the design stage; d. Opportunities to connect identified habitats, species or features are taken; e. Significant waterside buildings and their settings are retained and enhanced; f. New development presents a public face to the waterway and is in keeping with local character in terms of scale, design and materials; g. Proposals contribute to environmental enhancements including lighting, signage and landscaping; h. Proposals in the vicinity of Halton's waterfront take into account the potential for localised flooding; and i. Conflicts or issues relating to public safety would not be caused. 3. Proposals which reuse brownfield land and make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the waterfront area will generally be supported. 4. The unique natural habitats of Halton's waterways and their waterfronts should be considered at an early stage in the development process. Where loss of habitat is unavoidable, mitigation measures will be required in accordance with policy CS20 Natural and Historic Environment and policy HE1: Natural Environment and Nature Conservation. 5. Proposals (where appropriate) for recreation and tourism involving Halton's waterways and waterfronts will generally be supported, particularly where they enhance the character and accessibility of waterfront areas and do not prejudice operational requirements. 6. Proposals to develop the Manchester Ship Canal and its environs for recreation and tourism will be encouraged provided that they would not prejudice its operational requirements as a commercial waterway.	<i>conservation, leisure, recreation, education and economic activity.</i> This has the potential to result in the following potentially linking impact pathways: • Recreational pressure This policy does identify that waterside development should ensure that '<i>Natural habitats are protected and enhanced...</i>' It is recommended text of this policy is amended slightly to include reference to the need for HRA to ensure that the provision of new waterside activities do not result in likely significant effects upon European designated sites. The policy is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	7. Waterfront areas in Halton's Key Regeneration Areas should support planned development and regeneration opportunities in these areas. In the Key Regeneration Areas there will be a particular emphasis on enhancing the character and accessibility of waterfront areas. 8. Waterside development will not be permitted should it have an unacceptable effect on water quality or cause significant run-off. 9. Ecological assessments will be required for development along waterfronts where sensitive habitats, protected species or the function of waterways may be affected. 10. Developers (where appropriate) will be required to consult the owners of any waterways for any works that might affect the integrity of the waterway or linkages (for instance to towpaths). 11. The Council supports the reinstatement of the Runcorn Locks (as shown in the indicative alignment on the Policies Map) and as such will protect the alignment from inappropriate development. Coastal Change Management Areas 12. Proposals within or adjacent to Coastal Change Management Areas (as shown on the Policies Map) will be supported where the proposal requires a coastal location and: a. The proposal relates to the recreational use of the area and is of a scale and nature which will not adversely affect the landscape quality, nature conservation, and archaeological value of the coast; or b. The proposal is necessary for reasons of human health or public safety or for beneficial consequences of primary importance for nature conservation.	
Policy HE4: Greenspace and Green Infrastructure	1. All development will be expected to incorporate high quality green infrastructure that: a. Creates and/or enhances green infrastructure networks and provides links to green infrastructure assets; b. Addresses climate change and reduces the risk of flooding through the provision of sustainable urban drainage systems in accordance with policy HE9 where appropriate and measures to address surface water run off; c. Protects and enhances biodiversity and heritage assets in accordance with policy HE1 where appropriate; d. Encourages physical activity, enjoyment, education and social interaction; e. Improves access for pedestrians, cyclists and horse-riders;	This policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites. This is a positive policy detailing the commitment to green infrastructure, the use of SuDS, and the prevention of surface water run-off. Within the supporting text European designated sites are not included within the

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	f. Encourages local food production; and g. Increases investors and visitors by enhancing the quality of the landscape and townscape. 2. Proposals for the provision, enhancement and / or expansion of a green infrastructure asset (including amenity greenspace, provision for Children and Young People, Parks and Gardens, Allotments & Community Gardens and natural and semi natural open space) where there is an identified need in the local area will generally be supported. Development within a designated or Proposed Green Infrastructure asset will be permitted where: a) it is ancillary to the enjoyment of the asset and does not compromise the integrity or value of the asset; b) any ancillary facilities such as pavilions, car parking, fencing or lighting must be of a suitable layout, high standard of design, of an appropriate material; and c) the location of such ancillary facilities must be well related and sensitive to the topography, character, uses of the surrounding area and, where appropriate the openness of the Green Belt. 3. Development that would result in the loss of an existing green infrastructure asset will only be permitted where the following criteria can be met: a) It can be demonstrated that the green infrastructure asset is surplus to requirements against the Council's standards in accordance with policy RD4 and CS(R)21, and the proposed loss will not result in a likely shortfall during the plan period; or a b) Replacement green infrastructure asset is provided of equivalent or better provision in terms of quality and quantity, and in a suitable location to meet the needs of users of the existing Green infrastructure asset. c) It must be demonstrated that the loss of the Green Infrastructure asset under criteria 4a. or 4b. does not detract from the Borough's ability to divert recreational pressure away from sensitive European designated sites and does not result in an effective increase in recreational pressure within the European designated sites. 4. The Council will normally support opportunities to add to the green infrastructure network, particularly through partnership and cross boundary working. The requirements for formal indoor and outdoor sports provision are contained within policy HE6.	definition of GI. As such, GI has the potential to divert recreational activity away from sensitive European designated sites. There are no impact pathways present and the policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
Policy HE5: Trees and Landscaping	Woodlands, Trees and Hedgerows 1. Tree Survey information must be submitted with all planning applications where trees are present on site. The Survey should include information in relation to protection, mitigation and management measures. 2. Planning permission will not normally be permitted where the proposal adversely effects trees, woodlands and hedgerows which are: a. Protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO); b. Ancient woodlands or veteran trees; c. In a Conservation Area; or d. Within a recognised Nature Conservation Asset. 3. There will be a presumption in favour of the retention and enhancement of existing tree, woodland and hedgerow cover of arboricultural, landscape and/or visual amenity value on site. 4. Where development is likely to result in the unavoidable loss of, or threat to, the continued health and life expectancy of, woodlands, trees or hedgerows the Council will require the impacts to be satisfactorily addressed through appropriate mitigation, or where this can be demonstrated to be not feasible, compensation or offsetting in accordance with policy HE1. Landscaping 5. All development will be required to conserve the character and quality of the local landscape, and enhance and effectively manage the historic, natural and man-made landscape features that contribute to local distinctiveness of the landscapes. 6. Development proposals will be required, where appropriate to include hard and soft landscaping that: a. reflects the character of the area through appropriate design and management; b. is well laid out in terms of access, car parking and the living conditions of future occupiers and neighbours; c. achieves a suitable visual setting for the development; d. provides sufficient space for new, or existing, trees and planting to grow; e. supports biodiversity,	This policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites. This is a positive development management policy detailing the conservation of trees, woodland and hedgerows. There are no impact pathways present and the policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	f. where appropriate, provides suitable and appropriate mitigation for the restoration of damaged landscape areas; and g. considers what contribution the landscaping of a site can make to reducing surface water discharge. This can include hard and soft landscaping such as permeable surfaces. 7. Trees proposed to be planted in or adjacent to the highway or service strips should not include deep rooted or high-water demand species liable to cause damage to infrastructure through root invasion. In addition, species should be chosen to as not to shed fruit onto the highway	
Policy HE6: Outdoor and Indoor Sports Provision	1. To help meet identified needs for sport and recreation, as set out in the most up to date evidence base, development affecting indoor and outdoor sports facilities will be supported where it meets Local Plan policy CS(R)21 and RD4. Protection and Enhancement 2. The Council will not permit development likely to result in an unacceptable loss of existing sport or recreation facilities for non-recreation purposes unless it can be demonstrated: a. that the development is ancillary to the sport and recreation use and does not reduce the overall recreation function of the site. b. that replacement sport and recreation provision of at least the same or better quantity, quality and accessibility to its catchment population, community benefit and management level is made in a suitable location; or c. that the site/facility is surplus to recreational requirements and is not capable of helping to meet any of Halton's identified needs. 3. This policy applies to all existing sites and facilities that have a recreation use or value, irrespective of whether they are owned or managed by the public, private or voluntary sectors. All facilities shall be designed to serve other green infrastructure functions (in accordance with Policy CS(R)21 and HE4) wherever possible, linking into the wider green infrastructure network. 4. Developer contributions will be required to enhance existing provision of playing pitches, based on additional demand generated by the new residential development and the sufficiency of existing provision to meet current and projected need and new development in accordance with policy RD4. Where it is agreed by the Council that on-site pitch provision is appropriate to meet identified demand, the applicant is required to	This policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites. This is a positive policy that provides for the provision, enhancement and expansion of amenity and recreational greenspace. This type of green infrastructure has the potential to divert recreational activities away from sensitive European designated sites. There are no linking impact pathways present and the policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	provide the new pitch(es) and make provision for its management and maintenance in perpetuity and clarify these arrangements within a management plan to be agreed by the Council. New Development 5. Provision of new indoor and outdoor sport facilities will be supported in line with the priorities of the Council's up to date Playing Pitch Strategy and Indoor Sport facilities Strategy subject to relevant development plan policies. Lapsed and disused sites 6. Where the loss of a disused or lapsed playing field site is proposed the following priority order of options will be used in addition to the recommendations set out in Halton's up to date playing pitch strategy: a) Explore the feasibility of bringing the site back into use which may show either: i. The site can be brought back into sustainable use where funding is available, and use is secured by the council and the relevant sport national governing body and/or community groups; or ii. The site is not in a sustainable location and in which case no amount of money will make it desirable. In this case criteria 6b or 6c will be applicable. b) The site could become another type of recreation facility or greenspace to meet a need identified in Halton's latest open space evidence base; or c) Redevelop the site for an alternative use with an appropriate proportion of the capital receipt to be invested in existing recreation facilities in the locality.	
Policy HE7: Pollution and Nuisance	1. Applications for development that risks negatively impacting on the quality of the environment through: a. air pollution; b. noise nuisance; c. odour nuisance; d. light pollution and nuisance; e. land and soil contamination;	This policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites. This is a positive development management policy that requires mitigation measures for development, which might negatively

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	f. water pollution; and g. other forms of pollution and nuisance, must be accompanied by an appropriate impact assessment and, where necessary, demonstrate that mitigation measures have been incorporated through a mitigation scheme. 2. Where risks for pollution and nuisance are identified, planning permission will be granted for development providing: a. The level of air borne pollutants caused by the proposed development does not exceed statutory guidelines, unless appropriate mitigation measures are agreed. b. Noise nuisance is not likely to cause a significant increase in ambient noise levels for either day or night time conditions. c. Odour which can be detected beyond the boundary of the site and that is detrimental to neighbouring and / or local amenity is kept to a practical minimum. d. External lighting proposals avoid unnecessary light pollution beyond the specific area intended to be lit. e. Appropriate pollution control measures are incorporated where necessary to protect both ground and surface waters. 3. In addition to the above, development should ensure that the direct, indirect and cumulative effects of pollution and nuisance will not have an unacceptable negative impact on: a. health; b. public safety; c. quality standards; d. investment confidence; e. visual obtrusion; f. the natural environment; g. national and international designated nature conservation sites	impact upon air and water quality. Point 3 also states that <i>'development should ensure that the direct, indirect and cumulative effects of pollution and nuisance will not have an unacceptable negative impact on: ...f. the natural environment'</i> Point 5 also identifies that development should contribute to the reduction in air pollution. There are no linking impact pathways present and the policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	h. general amenity; and i. proposed land allocations shown on the Policies Map 4. Development near to existing sources of pollution or nuisance will not be permitted if it is likely that those existing sources of pollution will have an unacceptable impact on the proposed development and it is considered to be in the public interests that the existing sources of pollution should prevail over the proposed development. Exceptions may be permitted where the applicant submits satisfactory proposals to substantially mitigate the effects of existing sources of pollution on the development proposals. Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) 5. Development should contribute to the reduction in air pollutants as specified by an AQMA. 6. Development will not be permitted where: a. It could result in the designation of a new AQMA; or b. It would conflict with the proposals in the Plan or Strategy for the AQMA.	
Policy HE8: Contaminated Land	1. An applicant proposing development on, or near a site, where contamination may potentially exist, should carry out sufficient investigation, so as to establish the nature and extent of the contamination and should have regard to: a. Findings of a preliminary land contamination risk assessment (including a desk study, conceptual model and initial assessment of risk); b. Compatibility of the intended use with condition of land; c. The environment sensitivity of the site; and d. After-care measures where appropriate should include details of a programme of implementation. Results of this investigation should be submitted to the Council as part of the planning application.	This policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites. This is a positive policy detailing the avoidance of contaminated land. There are no linking impact pathways present and the policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	2. Development will not be permitted unless practicable and effective measures are taken to treat, contain or control any contamination so as not to: a. Cause contamination of the soil or sub-soil; b. Expose the occupiers of the development and neighbouring land uses, including in the case of housing, the users of gardens, to unacceptable risk; c. Threaten the structural integrity of any building built, or to be built on or adjoining the site; d. Lead to contamination of any watercourse, water body or aquifer; e. Cause the contamination of adjoining land, or allow such contamination to continue; f. Have an adverse effect upon natural habitats and ecosystems; g. Have an adverse effect upon National and international designated nature conservation sites; h. Have an adverse effect upon protection of heritage assets, above or below ground. 4. Where possible, contamination should be treated on site utilising sustainable remediation technologies. 5. Any permission for development will require that the remedial measures explain how and when they will be implemented and any arrangements for monitoring the effectiveness of the required actions. Requirement to undertake work associated with contaminated land will be controlled by either planning conditions or where necessary by planning obligations.	
Policy HE9: Water Management and Flood Risk	Flood Risk and Management 1. Development will only be permitted where it would not be subject to unacceptable risk of flooding from all sources; and would not unacceptably exacerbate risk of flooding elsewhere. Where it is practicable existing flood risks should be reduced. a. Within Flood Zone 3b i. New development will not be permitted, unless in exceptional circumstances such as for essential infrastructure or where development is water compatible. ii. Redevelopment of existing built development will only be permitted if the proposals are of a compatible use class and would not result in loss of flood plain or increase flood risk elsewhere.	This policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites. This is a positive policy providing for sustainable drainage systems and the protection of (ground)water quality. There are no linking impact pathways present and the policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	b. Within Flood Zone 2 and 3a i. Sites within these categories will be subject to the sequential test and if there are no alternative locations for the development the exception test must be applied. ii. If development is permitted within these zones, floor levels of development should be situated above the 1% (1 in 100yrs) event levels (adjusted for climate change) iii. A Flood Risk Assessment will be required. c. Within Flood Zone 1 i. A Flood Risk Assessment will be required for development proposals of 1ha or more ii. Less than 1 ha in flood zone 1, including a change of use in development type to a more vulnerable class (for example from commercial to residential), where they could be affected by sources of flooding other than rivers and the sea (for example surface water drains, reservoirs). iii. In an area within flood zone 1 which has critical drainage problems as notified by the Environment Agency. 2. Development in an area susceptible to flooding should include flood resistant and / or resilient measures to mitigate potential flood risks, including safe access and escape routes where required; and it should be demonstrated that residual risks can be safely managed. 3. Within sites at risk of flooding the most vulnerable parts of proposed development should be located in areas of lowest risk from all sources of flood risk unless there are overriding reasons to prefer different locations. 4. In locations where strategic flood defence or adaptation measures are necessary within the site itself, proposals will be required to demonstrate how measures have been incorporated as an intrinsic part of the scheme in a manner which meets the requirements flood risk. 5. All development, including that on open land that is not part of a defined floodplain, must ensure that it is not vulnerable to surface water, sewer and groundwater flooding. 6. All development proposals must take account of relevant Surface Water Management Plans, Catchment Flood Management Plans, related flood defence plans and strategies including the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy, the Strategic Flood Risk Assessments (SFRA) and the Halton Sustainable Urban Drainage Guidance.	

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	Flood Water Storage 7. The Council will work with appropriate stakeholders, landowners and developers to identify land to be safeguarded from development to provide for appropriate flood management measures. 8. Development within or adjacent to a flood water storage area or balancing pond which would have a negative impact on its function will not be permitted. Sustainable Drainage 1. All development proposals must demonstrate how they will manage surface water run-off as close to its source as possible. 2. Consideration will be given to the following drainage hierarchy: a. store rainwater for later use; b. maintain the sites natural discharge process; c. use infiltration techniques, such as porous surfaces in non-clay areas; d. attenuate rainwater in ponds or open water features for gradual release to a watercourse; e. attenuate rainwater by storing in tanks or sealed water features for gradual release to a watercourse; 3. Where detailed evidence demonstrates that the above measures are not feasible or would directly prejudice viability then surface water should be discharged in the following order of priority: 1. An adequate soakaway or some other form of infiltration system. 2. An attenuated discharge to watercourse. 3. An attenuated discharge to public surface water sewer. 4. An attenuated discharge to public combined sewer. Applicants wishing to discharge to public sewer will need to submit clear evidence demonstrating why alternative options are not available. 4. There is a general presumption against the use of treatments that do not take a sustainable approach to drainage in domestic gardens and Greenspace.	

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	5. The sustainable drainage system should treat any discharge at source to avoid pollutants being discharged into watercourses, surface drains or combined sewers. Protecting Water Resources 7. Water resources and supplies will be protected by resisting development proposals that would pose an unacceptable threat, identified by United Utilities for surface and ground water quality and quantity especially within Source Protection Zones identified by the environment agency and used for public water supply . Water Management 8. New development will need to ensure that there is adequate water supply, surface water, foul drainage and sewerage or waste water treatment capacity to serve the development. 9. The development or expansion of water supply or waste water facilities will normally be permitted, either where needed to serve existing or proposed development, or in the interests of long term water supply and waste water management, provided that the need for such facilities outweighs any adverse land-use or environmental impact.	
Policy HE10: Minerals Allocations	1. Mineral Safeguarding Areas and Minerals Areas of Search have been identified and are defined in the accompanying policies map in the following locations: Mineral Safeguarding Area Locations: a. Warrington Road and Haddocks Wood, Runcorn b. Cholmondeley Road, Clifton, Runcorn Minerals Areas of Search: c. Land adjacent to Little Manor Farm and north of the M56, Sumner Lane, Preston on the Hill, Runcorn. d. Bold Heath 2. Within Mineral Safeguarding Areas and Mineral Areas of Search, as shown on the Policies Map, planning permission will be protected from sterilisation by other forms of development, unless the applicant makes provision for the prior extraction of the mineral. Planning permission for other development that would result	Policy HE10 might result in LSEs on European Sites. This policy provides for mineral safeguarding areas. It does not provide for explicit allocations, merely the safeguarding of these sites for potential future development. This policy does prevent unacceptable environmental impacts. For robustness it is recommended that policy text is amended

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	in the direct or indirect sterilisation of the identified mineral resources in a defined MSA will not be permitted unless: - it is demonstrated by way of a minerals assessment (MA) that the resource is not of economic value; or - the mineral can be extracted without unacceptable community or environmental impacts prior to the development taking place; or - the development is of a temporary nature and can be completed and the site left in a condition that does not inhibit later mineral extraction or mineral extraction elsewhere within the MSA; or - there is an overriding need for the development that outweighs the need for the mineral. Sites for aggregates will be safeguarded from development that could adversely affect their operation. Planning permission will be resisted unless it can be clearly demonstrated that there will be no incompatibility between the two uses or that adequate controls can be implemented to ensure this to be the case.	slightly to provide for protection of European designated sites via the requirement of HRA if required. The policy is screened out for Appropriate Assessment.
Policy HE11: Subterranean Resource Extraction	- In line with Policy CS25, to minimise the need for the extraction of minerals and other earth bound resources, the use of recycled and secondary aggregates across the Borough will be encouraged. - In assessing proposals for the exploration, appraisal, and production of minerals and all other subterranean resources, particular consideration will be given to impacts on sensitive uses, water resources, seismicity, local air quality, landscape, noise and lighting impacts. Such development will not be supported within protected groundwater source protection zones or where it might adversely affect or be affected by flood risk or within Air Quality Management Areas or protected areas for the purposes of the Infrastructure Act 2015, section 50. - Proposals will be assessed with regard to the extent to which they meet all of the following criteria: - Sites and associated facilities being located to minimise impacts on the environment and communities. - Developments to be located outside Protected Groundwater Source Areas. - There being no unacceptable adverse impacts (in terms of quantity and quality) upon sensitive water receptors including groundwater, water bodies and wetland habitats. - All other environmental and amenity impacts being mitigated to ensure that there is no unacceptable adverse impact on the local environment or communities. - Exploration and appraisal operations being for an agreed, temporary length of time.	This policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites. This is a development management policy relating to the extraction of subterranean resources. It is a positive policy for development for the extraction of subterranean resources. This policy states: <i>'consideration will be given to impacts on sensitive uses, water resources, seismicity, local air quality, landscape, noise and lighting impacts'</i> and <i>'All other environmental and amenity impacts being mitigated to ensure that there is no unacceptable</i>

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	f) The immediate site and any associated land being restored to a high quality standard in accordance with an agreed restoration plan and appropriate after-use that reflects the local landscape character at the earliest practicable opportunity g) It being demonstrated that greenhouse gases associated with fugitive emissions from the exploration, testing and production activities will not lead to unacceptable adverse environmental impacts. 4. Development proposals for resource extraction will be required to provide details of community liaison measures to be put in place during the operation of the site, including, restoration and final land use. Aggregate Minerals 5. Development for the extraction of aggregate minerals, regard will be given to all of the following; a. The contribution the proposal may make toward maintaining the sub regional apportionment of the regional production of aggregates, as expressed in Government guidance; and b. The need to maintain a land bank of reserves with permissions within the sub-regional area. Restoration and Aftercare 6. All developments involving resource extraction will require a restoration plan for the reclamation of the site to an appropriate after use, or to a state capable of beneficial after use within a suitable and reasonable timeframe. The plan should include: a. Details of the final restoration scheme and the proposed future land use; b. Details of the timescales for completion of the restoration scheme; and c. Details of aftercare arrangements that are to be put in place to ensure the maintenance and management of the site once restoration is complete. 7. In defining the future land use for the site, the Council will expect the restoration to: a. Take into account the pre-working character of the site and its landscape; b. Provide where appropriate for the enhancement of the:	<i>adverse impact on the local environment or communities.'</i> Policy HE11 states that 'development will not have an unacceptable detrimental impact on... v. Sites of archaeological, ecological, geological or geomorphological interest; and vi. Conservation Areas'. It also encourages the use of recycled aggregates to reduce the need for new abstraction. This policy does not identify any location extent or type of development. There are no linking impact pathways present and the policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	i. quality of the landscape; ii. green infrastructure network; iii. biodiversity assets and habitats; iv. local environment; v. ecological value of the site; and/or vi. the setting of historic assets - vii to the benefit of the local or wider community; and c. Where land is to be restored for agricultural or forestry, use appropriate restoration techniques to ensure that the land is capable of securing such use in the long term. 8. Where appropriate, proposals for the exploration, appraisal, and production of minerals and all other subterranean resources will be required to be subject to a programme of aftercare management for a period of five years from restoration. An extension of the period of aftercare beyond 5 years should be considered where this is necessary to enable reclamation objectives to be met. Schemes will be required to provide for the highest practicable aftercare standards and the Council will require an outline scheme to be submitted as part of the initial planning application.	
Policy GR1: Design of Development	1. The design of all development must be of a high quality, and must demonstrate that it is based upon the following principles: a. A clear understanding of the characteristics of the site, its wider context and the surrounding area; b. Efficient and effective use of the site; c. Adaptability and flexibility; and d. The creation of visually attractive places that are well integrated with the surrounding buildings, streets and landscapes. 2. The Council will consider each of the following elements in determining whether the design is appropriate:	This policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites. This is a positive development management policy relating to design of new development within Halton. Point 5 states that '<i>All major development proposals involving the construction of new buildings must demonstrate how</i>

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	a. Local architecture and character; b. Siting, layout, scale, height, proportion, form, grouping and massing; c. Topography and site levels; d. Orientation, frontage design and fenestration; e. Materials, landscaping and green infrastructure; and f. The relationship to neighbouring properties, street scene and the wider neighbourhood. 3. New development must enhance and reinforce the established character of the locality; or where the character of a place has been compromised by previous change, the development must assist in re-establishing a strong character, taking references from positive character elements in the wider area and applying them. 4. Development proposals should make a positive contribution to their surroundings and ensure they contribute to the creation of a high quality public realm that enhances conditions for pedestrians and cyclists. Development must: a. Provide welcoming routes that are easy to use, well-lit and overlooked; b. Create a logical hierarchy of well-defined streets and spaces with local landmarks and features to aid way finding; c. Where buildings are located on corners, ensure that they present a strong and active frontage to both aspects of the corner, and that the corners of the buildings themselves clearly define the corner in the streetscape; d. Integrate car parking and servicing so as not to dominate the street scene; e. Avoid detrimental impacts on existing infrastructure and natural features; and f. Provide linkages to the wider neighbourhood. 5. All major development proposals involving the construction of new buildings must demonstrate how sustainable design and construction methods will be incorporated to achieve resource efficiency and	<i>sustainable design</i>'. By definition, sustainable development will not have a LSE upon Internationally designated sites. There are no linking impact pathways present and the policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	resilience to climate change in accordance with CS(R) 19 taking into account the site-specific viability of the development, where appropriate.	
Policy GR2: Amenity	1. All new development must be sited, designed and laid out: a. To avoid detriment to the living environment of existing or planned residential properties and to ensure a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; b. Ensure that existing or planned residential development achieve and maintain the expected levels of privacy and outlook; c. Retain the character of existing buildings and spaces creating places that are safe, inclusive and accessible, promoting health and wellbeing; d. Ensure that appropriate storage space is provided, in particular for waste and recycling; e. Maintain safe highway conditions for pedestrians, cyclists and motor vehicles, including ensuring there is appropriate parking and access; and f. Avoid unreasonably restricting the continued operation of established authorised uses and activities on adjacent sites. 2. In addition all new residential development must: a. Consider the orientation and design of buildings to maximise daylight and sunlight; and b. Ensure that adequate amenity space is provided. 3. Development must not prejudice the planned development of a larger site or area for which comprehensive proposals have been approved or are in preparation. A development proposal will generally be supported if, through its design and layout, it does not: a. preclude the development of adjoining land with longer term potential; b. lead to piecemeal forms of development; c. seek to avoid planning contributions by limiting the size of the development to avoid relevant thresholds.	This policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites. This is a development management policy relating to the amenity of new residential development. It does not state any type, quantum or location of any new development. There are no linking impact pathways present and the policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	4. The redevelopment of residential areas will be supported where it would improve amenity, quality and the local environment.	
Policy GR3: Boundary Fences and Walls	1. Boundary fences and walls that require planning permission will be required to be: a. visually attractive; b. constructed of high quality and durable materials; and c. appropriate to the character and appearance of the area in which they are located. 2. No fence or wall structures above 1 metre in height that require planning permission adjacent to a highway will be permitted, unless overriding security, highways safety or other such circumstances are satisfactorily demonstrated.	This policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites. This is a development management policy relating to the installation of boundary fences and walls. There are no linking impact pathways present and the policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
Policy GR4: Temporary Buildings	1. Planning permission will only be granted for temporary buildings to meet demonstrated essential short-term need provided that its location or appearance would not create an unacceptable impact on the visual amenities of the site or surrounding area. 2. In assessing the need for temporary buildings the Council will grant planning permission where it would not prejudice the long term after-use of the site. 3. Consent for a temporary building will be for a specified period commensurate with the quality and life-span of the building. 4. Where it is considered that temporary buildings would create an unacceptable impact on the visual amenities of the site or surrounding area, planning permission may be granted where all of the following criteria are satisfied: a. The applicant proves a case of overriding short-term need for the building; b. The permission is for a maximum temporary period of 3 years, and the building is thereafter removed; c. The building is of superior quality; and	This policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites. A policy providing for the development of temporary buildings. There are no linking impact pathways present and the policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	d. The site and buildings are adequately landscaped to mitigate the effects on visual amenity.	
Policy GR5: Renewable and Low Carbon Energy	1. Development proposals for renewable energy developments will need to take into account, and minimise where appropriate, the potential environmental effects of the development on: a. Residential / workplace amenity b. The visual amenity of the local area, including landscape character c. Local nature resources, including air and water quality d. The natural and built environments e. Any heritage assets and their settings f. Biodiversity g. The openness and visual amenity of the Green Belt h. The amenities of sensitive neighbouring uses (including by virtue of noise, dust, odour or traffic) i. Other site constraints 2. Applications for all major renewable and low carbon energy proposals will need to be accompanied by an Energy Statement (as part of the Design and Access Statement) which includes: a. The environmental effects of the development; b. A landscape and visual assessment; c. An ecological assessment; d. The proposals benefits in terms of the amount of energy it is expected to generate; and e. Any unavoidable damage that would be caused during installation, operation or decommissioning, and how this will be minimised and mitigated, or compensated for. 3. The Council will take into account the individual and cumulative impacts including any identified harm of proposals for renewable and low carbon energy developments on the above. Where adverse impacts and/or harm are identified, particularly through a landscape, visual , ecological assessment or heritage assessment, the Council will balance the impact against the wider benefits of delivering renewable and low carbon energy.	This policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites. This is a development management policy relating to renewable and low carbon energy. It contains the positive provision of minimising the environmental effects of development on biodiversity. It does not identify the location, quantum or type of development. There are no linking impact pathways present and the policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	4. The incorporation of renewable and low carbon energy into developments will be encouraged, particularly as part of major schemes. 5. The retrofit of renewable energy and use of micro-renewables will be supported in appropriate buildings and locations. 6. Proposals for decentralised energy networks will be supported, particularly those located in Energy Priority Zones in the Key Areas of Change. Within these areas, development proposals will be expected to connect to, or make provisions for future connections, to existing or proposed decentralised energy networks where feasible. 7. Other opportunities for renewable and low carbon energy within Energy Priority Zones will be supported. 8. The Council will support community based renewable energy schemes which can help to deliver cheap energy sources to local communities through a local supply network. 9. Developments for wind turbines must be located in areas with potential for wind generation as shown in Figure 12 Development will only be granted where it can be demonstrated that, following consultation, the planning impacts identified by the local community have been fully addressed and that the proposal has their backing. 10. When a wind turbine is decommissioned or no longer in use it is expected that the turbine will be removed and the area restored to an appropriate use at the earliest opportunity.	
Policy GB1: Control of Development in the Green Belt	1. The construction of new buildings is inappropriate in Green Belt. Exceptions to this are: a. buildings for agriculture and forestry; b. provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and for cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments, as long as it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it; c. the replacement, extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building and that it is of an appropriate scale, character and appearance; d. limited infilling in the villages, and limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the Local Plan; or	This policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites. This is a positive development management policy that prevents inappropriate development within Green Belts. There are no linking impact pathways present and the policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

Policy	Description	TOLSE outcome
	e. limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites (brownfield land), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development. Development proposals that do not qualify as exceptions are by definition inappropriate development. 2. Certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate in Green Belt provided they preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in Green Belt. These are: a. mineral extraction; b. engineering operations; c. local transport infrastructure that can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location; d. the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction; and e. development brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order. 3. Non-infill development of new detached dwellings within residential curtilages and / or gardens within the Green Belt is considered to be inappropriate development unless the proposal is a specified exception to Green Belt policy or is permitted development.	
Policy GB2: Safeguarded Land	1. Safeguarded Land is not allocated for development at the present time. Development will only be permitted where: a. it is essential for agriculture, forestry, outdoor recreation or for other purposes appropriate to a rural area; or b. necessary for the operation of an existing use(s); or c. where the proposal is for an extension to an existing development and is consistent with other policies in the Plan; or d. it is a temporary use that would retain the open nature of the land. 2. The following areas are identified as Safeguarded Land and are identified on the Policies Map	This policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites. This is a positive policy relating to development on safeguarded land. Although the policy states it will permit development on safeguarded land if it is '<i>essential for agriculture, forestry, outdoor recreation or for other purposes appropriate to a rural area</i>', it does not

Policy	Description			TOLSE outcome
	Ref	Site	Site Size	identify a type, quantum or location of development. There are no linking impact pathways present and the policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
	SG1	Land to the west of Barkers Hollow Road, Dutton	5.0	
	SG3	Land between Keckwick and the Tunnel Top, Daresbury Lane, Daresbury	9.0	
	SG5	Land between Canal and Barkers Hollow Road	27.9	
	SG7	land at Preston on the Hill	21.2	
	SG8	Field House, Summer Lane	9.6	
	SG10	(W6) Pex Hill	17.24	
	SG11)	(W13) Land at Hale Gate Road	27.1	
	SG12	(W41) Notcutts Garden Centre	10.73	
	SG13	(W48) Land to the south of Hale Bank Road	22.67	

Appendix E Test of Likely Significant Effects of Halton's Site Allocations

Where a policy is identified in orange in the 'TOLSE Outcome' column, this policy has been identified to contain potential linking impact pathways to European sites. These policies cannot be 'screened out' at the initial TOLSE stage and are discussed further within the HRA. Where a policy is identified in green in the 'TOLSE Outcome' column, this policy does not contain any linking impact pathways to European sites so can be 'screened out' from further consideration and are not discussed further within the HRA. The analysis of functionally linked land presented in these tables was based upon scrutiny of the Cheshire Bird Atlas and freely available online aerial imagery. Where sites are identified as requiring appropriate assessment for the issue of functionally linked land the appropriate assessment in the main body of this report then draws upon site investigations and surveys undertaken by Avian Ecology.

Note that since all residential allocations will make an in combination contribution to recreational pressure, it is not used as a metric to select sites in the below tables unless it is considered that a site-specific impact on European sites may arise.

Policy ED1: Employment Allocations

Site	TOLSE Outcome
SEL1: Daresbury Science and Innovations Campus, Runcorn (20ha)	No Likely Significant Effect. The parcels that make up this area are assessed in Table E2.1 below with an explanation of the reasoning.
SEL2: 3MG, Widnes (57ha)	LSEs on European Sites cannot be ruled out for this site allocation based on desk study, without further consideration as part of an appropriate assessment. At its closest located within 210m of the Mersey Estuary SPA/ Ramsar. The Cheshire Bird Atlas identifies that the land parcels associated with this site are located within an area that potentially supports bird species on functionally linked land outside the designated site boundary. Additionally, the site is located adjacent to Ditton Brook and Steward's Brook that discharge directly into the River Mersey. Potential impact pathways present include: • Loss of functionally linked land. • Visual and noise disturbance • Water quality and Resources This employment site allocation is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
SEL3: Widnes Waterfront, Widnes (27ha)	This employment site allocation will not result in LSEs on European Sites. Located 2.9km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar.

Site	TOLSE Outcome
	It is located near Shell Green which is known to potentially support populations of designated bird features located outside of the designated site. However, from freely available online mapping, the land parcels associated with this allocation consist of tussocky grassland, scrub and hardstanding. Additionally, these land parcels are surrounded by existing industrial activity and as such would not result in increased disturbance to designated bird features using fields in proximity to the allocation. The site is therefore screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
SEL4: West Runcorn / Inovyn, Runcorn (26ha)	LSEs on European Sites cannot be ruled out for this site allocation without appropriate assessment. Located 1.2km from the Mersey Estuary SPA/ Ramsar site and 360m from Weaver Bends which is known to provide functionally linked land to SPA/ Ramsar bird species. From review of freely available online imagery the site appears to be dominated by tussocky grassland and dense and scattered scrub, making it unsuitable to support designated bird features. However, due to its proximity to the Weaver Bends there is potential for construction and operational activities to disturb designated bird species located within the Weaver Bends. Potential impact pathways present include: • Visual and noise disturbance This employment site allocation is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.

Table E2.1: Runcorn (Sci-Tech Daresbury Enterprise Zone)

Ref	Site	Status	Brownfield/ Greenfield	Size (Ha)	Uses	TOLSE Outcome
E4	Daresbury Sci Tech		Greenfield	3.97	Office, Research and development, and light industry	Located 6.9km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar, directly adjacent to two roads (A558, A56). From review of freely available online imagery the site appears to comprise agricultural farmland with a nearby technology centre. Given its proximity to development and major roads, it is not considered likely to be functionally linked land. This employment site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
E5	Land between rail line, Bridgewater Canal and Keckwick Lane		Brownfield	1.97	Office, Research and development, and light industry	Located 6.4km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on a brownfield site within the Sci-Tech Daresbury Enterprise Zone. Given that there is existing development on site, this site is unlikely to be functionally linked land. This employment site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
E6	Land between rail line, Bridgewater Canal and Delph Lane		Greenfield	8.60	Office, Research and development, and light industry	Located 6.3km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing greenfield site adjacent to the Sci-Tech Daresbury Enterprise Zone. From review of freely available online imagery the site appears to comprise agricultural farmland with a nearby technology centre. Given the relatively disturbed setting this site is unlikely to be functionally linked land. This employment site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
E10	Land between rail line, Bridgewater Canal and Keckwick Lane		Greenfield	1.31	Office, Research and development, and light industry	Located 6.5km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing greenfield site adjacent to the Sci-Tech Daresbury Enterprise Zone. From review of freely available online imagery the site appears to comprise grassland with a few scattered trees. It is directly adjacent to two roads (A558 and Keckwick Lane).

						Given the relatively disturbed setting this site is unlikely to be functionally linked land. This employment site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
E11	Land between Delph Lane and Sci Tech Daresbury		Greenfield	2.27	Office, Research and development, and light industry	Located 6.5km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing greenfield site adjacent to the Sci-Tech Daresbury Enterprise Zone. From review of freely available online imagery the site appears to comprise agricultural farmland. It is directly adjacent to the Sci-Tech Daresbury Enterprise Zone. Given the relatively disturbed setting this site is unlikely to be functionally linked land. This employment site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

Table E2.2: Runcorn

Ref	Site	Status	Brownfield/ Greenfield	Size (Ha)	Uses	TOLSE Outcome
E3	Land between Rail line and Expressway off Runcorn		Brownfield	2.01	Office, Research and development, and light industry, General Industrial and Storage and Distribution	Located 533m from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing brownfield site. From review of freely available online imagery the site appears to comprise at least some grassland and scattered trees. It is in a heavily industrialised zone, adjacent to the A557 and The Docks. Given the highly disturbed setting this site is unlikely to be functionally linked land. This employment site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
E8	Land adjacent to the Office Village	Outline	Greenfield	2.12	Office, Research and development, and light industry	LSEs on European Sites cannot be ruled out for this site allocation based on desk study, without further consideration as part of an appropriate assessment.

						Located 6.4km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing greenfield site. From review of freely available online imagery the site appears to comprise agricultural farmland. It is situated between Bridgewater Canal and a Business Park. It is considered that this site might also provide functionally linked land. The following linking impact pathways are likely to be present: • Loss of functionally linked land. This employment site allocation is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
E9	Land between Daresbury Park and Bridgewater Canal	Outline	Greenfield	4.75	Office, Research and development, and light industry	LSEs on European Sites cannot be ruled out for this site allocation based on desk study, without further consideration as part of an appropriate assessment. Located 6.1km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing greenfield site. From review of freely available online imagery the site appears to comprise grassland and scattered trees. It is located next to Bridgewater Canal. Given the relatively undisturbed setting this site could potentially be functionally linked land. The following linking impact pathways are likely to be present: • Loss of functionally linked land. This employment site allocation is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
E12	Land to north of Manor Farm Road		Greenfield	1.11	Office, Research and development, and light industry, General Industrial	Located 4.6km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar and 620m from the River Mersey and Wigg Island, an area known to support significant populations of designated bird species.

					and Storage and Distribution	From review of freely available online imagery the site appears to comprise grazed grassland that appears to be located within an area of industrial activity and thus existing disturbance levels. As such the site is not considered to be suitable functionally linked supporting habitat. This employment site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
E13	Land between Astmoor Road and the busway (West)		Greenfield	1.20	Office, Research and development, and light industry, General Industrial and Storage and Distribution	Located 1.6km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing greenfield site. From review of freely available online imagery the site appears to comprise grassland with trees. It is located in highly developed area next to major roads and industrial units. Given the highly disturbed nature of the area, this site is not considered to be suitable as functionally linked land. This employment site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
E14	Land west of Edison Rd and between Astmoor Rd		Greenfield	0.47	Office, Research and development, and light industry, General Industrial and Storage and Distribution	Located 2km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing greenfield site. From review of freely available online imagery the site appears to comprise grassland with few scattered trees. It is located in highly developed area next to major roads and industrial units. Given the highly disturbed nature of the area, this site is not considered to be suitable as functionally linked land. Furthermore, it is smaller than 1ha, which is considered to be minimum size for functionally linked land. This employment site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
E15	Land east of Edison Rd between Astmoor Road		Greenfield	0.37	Office, Research and development, and light industry, General Industrial	Located 2.1km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing greenfield site. From review of freely available online imagery the site appears to be an existing parking lot, despite being classified as a greenfield site.

					and Storage and Distribution	Given the highly disturbed nature of the area, this site is not considered to be suitable as functionally linked land. Furthermore, it is smaller than 1ha, which is considered to be minimum size for functionally linked land. This employment site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
E16	Land to the south of Rivington Road		Brownfield	1.62	Office, Research and development, and light industry, General Industrial and Storage and Distribution	Located 6.5km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar site on an existing brownfield site. It is situated within the existing Whitehouse Industrial Estate and as such is located within an area of high disturbance making it unsuitable as functionally linked land. This employment site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
E17	Land between Chester Road and the Rail Line		Greenfield	2.55	Office, Research and development, and light industry, General Industrial and Storage and Distribution	Located 5.5km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar site on an existing greenfield site. Review of freely available online imagery indicates that the site is horse grazed grassland surrounded by tall trees and hedgerows. It is also located adjacent to Whitehouse Industrial Estate, the M56, the A56 and a railway line. The Cheshire Bird Atlas identifies that the fields within proximity to the site contain bird species which are associated with the SPA and Ramsar. However, due to the disturbed nature of the setting of the site it is not considered to be suitable as functionally linked land. This employment site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
E18	Land to the north of Teva Pharamaceuticals		Brownfield	2.31	Office, Research and development, and light industry, General Industrial and Storage and Distribution	Located 6.4km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing brownfield site. The site is located within the disturbed setting of Whitehouse Industrial Estate, surrounded by industrial buildings, residential property and the A56.

						Due to the highly disturbed nature of the site it is not considered to be suitable as functionally linked land. This employment site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
E19	Land between Warrington Rd and Oxmoor Wood		Greenfield	2.57	General Industrial and Storage and Distribution	Located 4.8km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing greenfield site. Review of freely available online imagery indicates that the site comprises grassland and is located within the disturbed setting of Manor Park Industrial Estate, surrounded by industrial buildings and roads. Due to the highly disturbed nature of the site it is not considered to be suitable as functionally linked land. This employment site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
E20	Land off Blackheath Lane		Greenfield	4.47	General Industrial and Storage and Distribution	Located 5.9km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing greenfield site. This site comprises grassland and some trees. It is located within the disturbed setting of the Runcorn Industrial Centre, surrounded by industrial buildings and roads. Due to the highly disturbed nature of the site it is not considered to be suitable as functionally linked land. This employment site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
E24	Land north of Six Acre Lane		Greenfield	35.23	Office, Research and development, and light industry, General Industrial and Storage and Distribution	Located 5.9km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on a greenfield site with some existing industrial development. This site comprises grassland, scattered trees and some denser tree clusters. It is located on the eastern edge of the Runcorn Industrial Centre. Part of the site comprises an industrial development that is unlikely to represent functionally linked land. Notwithstanding this, the grassland part of the site might support overwintering waterfowl. The following linking impact pathways are likely to be present: • Loss of functionally linked land.

						This employment site allocation is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
E25	Moss Lane Nursery		Greenfield	9.26	Office, Research and development, and light industry, General Industrial and Storage and Distribution	Located 6.4km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing greenfield site with some existing industrial development. This site comprises grassland, some dense clusters of trees and an existing nursery. It is located on the eastern edge of the Runcorn Industrial Centre. The grassland habitat in the allocation might support overwintering waterfowl. The following linking impact pathways are likely to be present: • Loss of functionally linked land. This employment site allocation is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
E28	Land off Six Acre Lane		Greenfield	5.72	Office, Research and development, and light industry, General Industrial and Storage and Distribution	Located 6.1km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing greenfield site. This site primarily comprises existing agricultural land with grassland around the field margins. While the allocations lies to the east of the Runcorn Industrial Estate, it might support overwintering waterfowl. The following linking impact pathways are likely to be present: • Loss of functionally linked land. This employment site allocation is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
E29	Land west of Moore Meadows		Greenfield	0.97	Office, Research and development, and light industry,	Located 6.5km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing greenfield site.

					General Industrial and Storage and Distribution	This site comprises semi-improved grassland to the east of the Runcorn Industrial Estate. While the grassland is considered to be suitable for supporting overwintering birds in principle, the site is too small to support 1% of the population of the SPA and Ramsar bird species. This employment site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
E30	Land at junction 12 M56		Greenfield	1.34	Office, Research and development, and light industry, General Industrial and Storage and Distribution	Located 2.8km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing greenfield site. This site comprises semi-improved grassland potentially used for grazing. The allocation lies adjacent to the A557 and the M56, two extremely busy roads. Due to the highly disturbed nature of the site it is not considered to be suitable as functionally linked land. This employment site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

Table E2.3: Widnes and Hale

Ref	Site	Status	Brownfield/ Greenfield	Size (Ha)	Uses	HRA implications
E1	Shell Green, land to the east of Gorsey Lane	Widnes	Brownfield	3.24	General Industrial and Storage and Distribution	Located 3.5km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing brownfield site. From freely available online imagery the site appears to comprise grassland, scrubland and some scattered trees, despite being classified as a brownfield site. It is located in a heavily disturbed area, adjacent to factories and major roads. Due to the highly disturbed nature of the site it is not considered to be suitable as functionally linked land. This employment site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

E2	Land to the south of Dans Road	Widnes	Greenfield	3.80	General Industrial and Storage and Distribution	Located 3.7km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing brownfield site. From freely available online imagery the site appears to comprise grassland, scrubland and some scattered trees. It is located in a heavily disturbed area, adjacent to factories and major roads, such as the A562. Due to the highly disturbed nature of the site it is not considered to be suitable as functionally linked land. This employment site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
E21	St Michaels	Widnes	Brownfield	20.20	General Industrial and Storage and Distribution	LSEs on European Sites cannot be ruled out for this site allocation based on desk study, without further consideration as part of an appropriate assessment. Located 1.2km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing brownfield site. The site is located to the north of an area that has previously been identified to act as functionally linked supporting habitat for SPA and Ramsar birds. The golf course is disused and as such is not subject to disturbance, thus making the site potentially suitable to provide functionally linked land. As such the following linking impact pathways are potentially present: • Loss of functionally linked land; and • Visual and noise disturbance This employment site allocation is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
E22	Land north of Ditton Junction	Widnes	Greenfield	9.99	Office, Research and development, and light industry, General Industrial and Storage and Distribution	Located 1.2km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing greenfield site. From freely available online imagery the site appears to comprise grassland, scrubland and some brooks running through. It is located in a disturbed area, adjacent to factories and major roads.

						Due to the disturbed nature of the site it is not considered to be suitable as functionally linked land. This employment site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
E23	HBC Field	Widens	Greenfield	12.07	Office, Research and development, and light industry, General Industrial and Storage and Distribution	Located 1.3km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing greenfield site. Planning permission for 1100269FULEIA granted in 2014. As such this site is not assessed further within this document. This employment site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
E26	Foundry Lane	Widnes	Brownfield	24.61	Office, Research and development, and light industry, General Industrial and Storage and Distribution	Located 235m from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing brownfield site. From freely available online imagery the site appears to comprise some development with fragments of grassland. It is located in a disturbed area, adjacent to factories and major roads. Due to the disturbed nature of the site it is not considered to be suitable as functionally linked land. This employment site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
E27	Tesco Distribution Centre	Widnes	Brownfield	1.94	Office, Research and development, and light industry, General Industrial and Storage and Distribution	Located 457m from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing brownfield site. The site is located within an existing industrial centre and is part of the Tesco Distribution Centre. It is adjacent to several major roads. Due to the disturbed nature of the site it is not considered to be suitable as functionally linked land. This employment site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
E31	Gorsey Point	Widnes	Brownfield	15.98	Office, Research and development, and light industry, General Industrial	Located 2.9km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar site on an existing brownfield site.

					and Storage and Distribution	As the allocation is within an area of existing development, it is not considered to be suitable as functionally linked land. This employment site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
E32	Former Thermphos site	Widnes	Brownfield	5.07	Office, Research and development, and light industry, General Industrial and Storage and Distribution	As the allocation is within an area of existing development, it is not considered to be suitable as functionally linked land. This employment site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
E33	Former Muspratt site	Widnes	Brownfield	4.44	Office, Research and development, and light industry, General Industrial and Storage and Distribution	As the allocation is within an area of existing development, it is not considered to be suitable as functionally linked land. This employment site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

Policy RD1: Residential Development Allocation Policies

Site Name	Area (hectares)	Total Capacity (dwellings)	TOLSE Outcome
SRL1: Delph Lane West, Daresbury, Runcorn	17	295	LSEs on European Sites cannot be ruled out for this site allocation based on desk study, without further consideration as part of an appropriate assessment. Located more than 6km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. However, the Cheshire Bird Atlas Distribution Maps identifies this area as potentially providing functionally linked land located outside of the SAP and Ramsar site.

			Potential impact pathways present include: • Loss of functionally linked land; and • Visual and noise disturbance. The residential site allocation policy is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
SRL2: Central Housing Area, Daresbury, Runcorn	15	555	LSEs on European Sites cannot be ruled out for this site allocation based on desk study, without further consideration as part of an appropriate assessment. Located more than 6km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. However, the Cheshire Bird Atlas Distribution Maps identifies this area as potentially providing functionally linked land located outside of the SAP and Ramsar site. Potential impact pathways present include: • Loss of functionally linked land; and • Visual and noise disturbance. The residential site allocation policy is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
SRL3: Wharford Farm, Runcorn	17	300	LSEs on European Sites cannot be ruled out for this site allocation based on desk study, without further consideration as part of an appropriate assessment. Located more than 5.4 km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. However, the Cheshire Bird Atlas Distribution Maps identifies this area as potentially providing functionally linked land located outside of the SAP and Ramsar site. Potential impact pathways present include: • Loss of functionally linked land; and • Visual and noise disturbance. The residential site allocation policy is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
SRL4: Sandymoor, Runcorn	42	808	LSEs on European Sites cannot be ruled out for this site allocation based on desk study, without further consideration as part of an appropriate assessment.

			Located more than 5km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. However, the Cheshire Bird Atlas Distribution Maps identifies this area as potentially providing functionally linked land located outside of the SPA and Ramsar site. Additionally site allocations include those that are located within existing areas of publicly accessible open space. Potential impact pathways present include: • Loss of functionally linked land; • Visual and noise disturbance; and • Recreational pressure (due to loss of existing accessible open green space). The residential site allocation policy is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
SRL5: Halton Lea, Runcorn	3	84	LSEs on European Sites cannot be ruled out for this site allocation without appropriate assessment. Located more than 3.3km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar in an disturbed urban setting so does not constitute functionally linked supporting habitat outside of the European designated site. From review of freely available online imagery some land parcels appear to be publicly accessible open green space associated with Town Park and Palace Fields Park used for recreational activities. Potential linking impact pathways include: • Recreational pressure (loss of existing accessible open green space). The residential site allocation policy is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
SRL6: Moore, Runcorn	7	166	LSEs on European Sites cannot be ruled out for this site allocation based on desk study, without further consideration as part of an appropriate assessment. Located more than 6km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. However, the Cheshire Bird Atlas Distribution Maps identifies this area as potentially providing functionally linked land located outside of the SPA and Ramsar site. Additionally, site allocations include those that are located within existing areas of publicly accessible open space. Potential impact pathways present include: • Loss of functionally linked land; • Visual and noise disturbance; and

				Recreational pressure (due to loss of existing accessible open green space). The residential site allocation policy is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
SLR7: North East Widnes	30	761		This residential site allocation policy will not result in LSEs on European Sites Located more than 4km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. The Cheshire Bird Atlas Distribution Maps does not identify this site to be located within an area used by SPA and Ramsar bird features. The residential site allocation policy is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
SLR8: North West Widnes	21	440		LSEs on European Sites cannot be ruled out for this site allocation based on desk study, without further consideration as part of an appropriate assessment. Located more than 4km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. The Cheshire Bird Atlas Distribution Maps identifies that the site is potentially located within an area that acts as functionally linked land. Potential linking impact pathways present: Loss of functionally linked land; and Visual and noise disturbance. The residential site allocation policy is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
SLR9: Halebank	25	614		LSEs on European Sites cannot be ruled out for this site allocation based on desk study, without further consideration as part of an appropriate assessment. Located 500m from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. The Cheshire Bird Atlas Distribution Maps identifies that the site is located within an area that potentially acts as functionally linked land. Potential linking impact pathways present: Loss of functionally linked land; Visual and noise disturbance; Recreational pressure; and Water quality.

			The residential site allocation policy is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
--	--	--	---

Table RD.1 Residential Development Allocations in Runcorn

Ref	Site	Greenfield / Brownfield ¹⁵⁶	Site Size	Potential Capacity	Notes	TOLSE Outcome
M8	Land to the east of Runcorn Road, Moore	Greenfield	0.73	20	GBM	LSEs on European Sites cannot be ruled out for this site allocation based on desk study, without further consideration as part of an appropriate assessment. Located more than 6km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. The Cheshire Bird Atlas Distribution Maps identifies that the site is potentially located within an area that acts as functionally linked supporting habitat. Potential linking impact pathways present: • Loss of functionally linked land • Visual and noise disturbance The residential site allocation is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
P1	E-Scape, Preston-on-the-Hill	Greenfield	4.89	117	GBM	Located more than 6km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. The Cheshire Bird Atlas Distribution Maps do not identify the site or its surroundings as supporting bird species associated with the SPA and Ramsar. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
P2	Land between Chester Rd and M56 at Preston-on-the-Hill	Greenfield	6.96	146	GBM	Located more than 6km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. The Cheshire Bird Atlas Distribution Maps do not identify the site or its surroundings as supporting bird species associated with the SPA/ Ramsar site. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
R1	Land at Gaunts Way	Greenfield	0.23	7	SRL5	Located 3.3km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. Freely available online imagery identifies that the site is located in a disturbed residential setting. The small site contains a small amount of amenity grassland

¹⁵⁶ Brownfield or Previously Developed Land (PDL) as defined in Annex 2, National Planning Policy Framework

						and scrub / trees. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
R2	Land to the east of Kestrel's Way	Greenfield	1.61	43	SRL5	Located more than 6km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. The Cheshire Bird Atlas Distribution Maps do not identify the site or its surroundings as supporting bird species associated with the SPA and Ramsar. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
R5	Land north of Beechwood Ave., east of Wood Lane	Greenfield	1.09	29		Located 4.0km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. Freely available online imagery identifies that the site is a livestock grazed field enclosed by tall hedgerows with trees and located in a disturbed area (surrounded by Beechwood Avenue, the A533 and the railway line). As such it is not considered suitable to support designated bird features. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
R7	Former Showroom for The Deck	PDL	0.54	15		Located 500m from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar to the east of the Queensway Bridge. The site is also located 160m from Runcorn Sands which is known to support significant populations of designated bird features. Freely available online imagery identifies that the site is an existing brownfield site. Whilst it is in proximity to a known location of functionally linked supporting habitat for designated bird species, the habitats present within the site are unlikely to be suitable to support significant designated bird populations. It is noted that the site is separated from the functionally linked supporting habitat by the Manchester Ship Canal. However, the following impact pathways are present: • Visual and noise disturbance However, the allocation has planning permission and therefore it is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
R8	Remainder of The Deck	PDL	0.44	12		LSEs on European Sites cannot be ruled out for this site allocation without appropriate assessment.

						Located 920m from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar site to the east of the Queensway Bridge. The site is also located 105m from Runcorn Sands which is known to support significant populations of designated bird features. Freely available online imagery identifies that the site is an existing brownfield site. Whilst it is in proximity to a known location of functionally linked supporting habitat for designated bird species, the habitats present within the site are unlikely to be suitable to support significant designated bird populations. It is noted that the site is separated from the functionally linked supporting habitat by the Manchester Ship Canal. However, the following impact pathways are present: • Visual and noise disturbance The residential site allocation is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
R10	Land off Bridge Street and busway	PDL	1.03	28		Located 900m from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. It is located in an urban setting. Freely available online aerial imagery indicates the site is dominated by woodland and as such not suitable to support designated bird features. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
R11	Land to the rear of Pure Gym	PDL	0.15	5		Located 1.1km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. It is located in an urban setting. Freely available online aerial imagery indicates the site is dominated by hardstanding trees and scrub and as such not suitable to support designated bird features. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
R12	Former Riverside College	Mixed	4.00	120		This site has outline planning permission and as such is not assessed further. It is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
R14	Land to south of Percival Lane	PDL	0.16	16		This site has full (REM) planning permission and as such is not assessed further. It is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

R15	Former Polar Ford and surrounds	PDL	1.14	31		Located 1.1km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. Located on a brownfield site so it is considered not to be suitable as functionally linked land. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
R17	Picow Farm Road Playing Fields	Mixed	1.92	62	Site has permission for 62 dwellings	This site has outline planning permission and as such is not assessed further. It is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
R20	Paramount Foods and Surrounds	PDL	3.70	89	Permission on part of the site for 53 dwellings	Located 1.7km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. The site is located in a disturbed urban setting and as such is not considered to be suitable as functionally linked land. Freely available online imagery indicates that this site is dominated by disused industrial buildings, hard standing and scrub, and as such is unsuitable to support designated bird species. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
R22	Land off Birch Road	Greenfield	0.78	21		LSEs on European Sites cannot be ruled out for this site allocation without appropriate assessment. Located 2.3km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing greenfield site. Freely available online imagery identifies that the site is located in a disturbed urban area and as such unsuitable to support designated bird features. From review of freely available online imagery the site appears to be publically accessible open green space used for recreational activities. Potential linking impact pathways present: Recreational pressure (through loss of publicly accessible greenspace) The residential site allocation is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.

R24	Land to the west of Grangeway	Greenfield	0.5	14		Located 2.9km from the SPA and Ramsar. The site is small and located in a disturbed urban setting and as such is not considered to suitable to provide functionally linked supporting habitat. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
R25	Thorn Road Garages	PDL	0.19	6		Located 2.9km from the SPA and Ramsar. The site is small and located in a disturbed urban setting and as such is not considered to suitable to provide functionally linked supporting habitat. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
R26	St Chads High School Playing Fields	Greenfield	3.42	82		Located 3.0km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. Freely available online imagery identifies that the site is a disused playing field consisting of tussocky grassland. The site is located in a disturbed urban setting. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
R28	Land off Coronation Road	Greenfield	1.65	44		Located 6.7km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. Freely available online imagery identifies that the site is livestock grazed, surrounded by tall trees with residential development to the south and west and the A56 to the north. Its disturbed nature makes it unsuitable to support designated bird features. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
R29	Land to the south of Walsingham Drive	Greenfield	16.63	349	SRL4	LSEs on European Sites cannot be ruled out for this site allocation based on desk study, without further consideration as part of an appropriate assessment. Located 5.1km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing greenfield site. The Cheshire Bird Atlas Distribution Maps identifies that the site is located within an area that potentially acts as functionally linked land. Potential linking impact pathways present:

						• Loss of functionally linked land; and • Visual and noise disturbance. The residential site allocation is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
R30	Land between Keckwick Brook and WCML	Greenfield	13.93	205	SRL4	LSEs on European Sites cannot be ruled out for this site allocation based on desk study, without further consideration as part of an appropriate assessment. Located 5.7km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing greenfield site. The Cheshire Bird Atlas Distribution Maps identifies that the site is potentially located within an area that acts as functionally linked supporting habitat. Potential linking impact pathways present: • Loss of functionally linked land; and • Visual and noise disturbance. The residential site allocation is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
R31	Sandymoor 17A	Greenfield	0.68	18	SRL4	LSEs on European Sites cannot be ruled out for this site allocation based on desk study, without further consideration as part of an appropriate assessment. Located 5.6km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing greenfield site. The Cheshire Bird Atlas Distribution Maps identifies that the site is potentially located within an area that acts as functionally linked supporting habitat. Potential linking impact pathways present: • Loss of functionally linked land; and • Visual and noise disturbance. The residential site allocation is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.

R32,	Central Housing Area (between canal and railway)	Greenfield	20.77	255	SRL2*	SRL2 was allocated in the Core Strategy Local Plan (2013) and assessed in its HRA. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
R33, R35, R36	Delph Lane West	Greenfield	19.08	295	SRL1*	SRL1 was allocated in the Core Strategy Local Plan (2013) and assessed in its HRA. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
R37	Land to the east of Village Street	Greenfield	4.35	104	SRL4	LSEs on European Sites cannot be ruled out for this site allocation based on desk study, without further consideration as part of an appropriate assessment. Located more than 5km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing greenfield site. The Cheshire Bird Atlas Distribution Maps identifies that the site is potentially located within an area that acts as functionally linked supporting habitat. Additionally, freely available online imagery identifies that the site appears to be used for informal recreational activities. Loss of this recreational space could increase recreational pressure on sensitive European designated sites. Potential linking impact pathways present: • Loss of functionally linked land; • Visual and noise disturbance; and • Recreational pressure (through the loss of publicly accessible greenspace). The residential site allocation is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
R38, R67	Wharford Farm (North and Central)	Greenfield	25.51	600	SRL3*	SRL3 was allocated in the Core Strategy Local Plan (2013) and assessed in its HRA. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
R39,	Wharford Farm (South)	Greenfield	2.38	57	SRL3*	SRL3 was allocated in the Core Strategy Local Plan (2013) and assessed in its HRA. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

R40 R41	Central Housing Area (between A56 and canal)	Greenfield	16.19	339	SRL2*	SRL2 was allocated in the Core Strategy Local Plan (2013) and assessed in its HRA. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
R44	Highways Agency Depot	PDL	0.88	24		Located 6.4km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing brownfield site. It is therefore not considered to be suitable as functionally linked land. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
R45	Land adjacent to Castle Road (Panorama Hotel)	PDL	0.22	7		Located 3.3km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. It is in an existing urban setting and subject to disturbance. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
R46	Land to the north of Brookvale Avenue North	Greenfield	0.75	20		Located 5.4km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing greenfield site. It is not within an area identified within the Cheshire Bird Atlas as supporting bird species associated with the SPA and Ramsar site so is not considered to provide functionally linked supporting habitat. Furthermore, the site is small and located in a fairly disturbed residential setting. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
R47	Adj. to Woodfalls Farm	Mixed	0.36	11		Located 5.5km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing greenfield site. Freely available online imagery indicates that the site is a very small enclosed field with grassland and an adjacent farm. It is in a relatively disturbed urban setting. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
R48	Land Adj. to Woodfalls Farm	Greenfield	0.23	7		Located 5.5km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing greenfield site. Freely available online imagery indicates that the site is a small enclosed field with grassland and an adjacent farm. It is in a relatively disturbed urban setting. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

R49	Land surrounding Hanover Court	Greenfield	1.09	29	LSEs on European Sites cannot be ruled out for this site allocation without appropriate assessment. Located 4.6km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing greenfield site. The site is set in a disturbed urban setting and as such is not considered to be suitable to support designated bird features. From review of freely available online imagery the site appears to be publicly accessible open green space used for recreational activities. Potential linking impact pathways present: Recreational pressure (through loss of publicly accessible greenspace) The residential site allocation is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
R50	The Lord Taverners & land adjacent	Mixed	1.3	35	Located 4.7km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on a mixed site. Freely available online imagery identifies that the site contains buildings, grassland and wooded areas associated with a Youth Centre. Due to the enclosed nature of the site it is not considered suitable as functionally linked land. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
R52	Land off Southland Mews	Mixed	0.42	11	Located 1.2km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing brownfield site. Located in an existing disturbed urban setting. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
R54	Land off Astmoor Bridge Lane	Greenfield	0.19	6	Located 3km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing greenfield site. Freely available online imagery indicates that this is a small enclosed field located in an existing disturbed urban setting. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

R55	Former Express Dairies Site, Sewell St / Perry St	PDL	0.54	15		Located 1.3km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing brownfield site. This allocation is under 1ha in size and located in an existing disturbed urban setting. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
R60	Paddock adjacent to 38 Clifton Road	Greenfield	0.38	11		Located 1.9km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing greenfield site. This is a site under 1ha in size located immediately adjacent to a golf course. Freely available online imagery indicates that the habitats within the site are dominated by woodland and as such are not considered to be suitable as functionally linked land. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
R61	Land to the south of Old Quay Street and Mason St	PDL	1.46	39		LSEs on European Sites cannot be ruled out for this site allocation without appropriate assessment. Located 1.1km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar, but located 90m from Wigg Island which is known to support significant populations of designated bird features. Freely available online imagery identifies that the site is dominated by tall tussocky grassland with scattered scrub and a small area of shorter grassland. The site is screened to the north (i.e. towards the Mersey River and Wigg Island), by scrub. Whilst it is in proximity to a known location of functionally linked supporting habitat for designated bird species, the habitats present within the site are unlikely to be suitable to support significant designated bird populations. It is noted that the site is separated from the functionally linked supporting habitat by the Manchester Ship Canal. However, the following impact pathways are present: • Visual and noise disturbance The residential site allocation is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.

R62	Former Gym and Surrey Street Garage	PDL	0.36	11		Located 1.2km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. Freely available online imagery indicates that the site is an existing garden in an urban setting and therefore not suitable as functionally linked land. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
R66	Former Egerton Library and Rathbone Institute	PDL	0.66	18		Located 360m from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. Freely available online imagery indicates that the site is a disused library and grounds located in an urban setting. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
R69	Former Job Centre and La Scala ¹⁵⁷	PDL	0.89	24		Located 520m from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. Freely available online imagery indicates that the site contains buildings and car parks and is located within an existing urban setting. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
R72	Land to the north of Towers Lane	Greenfield	0.39	12		Located 4.8km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar site on an existing greenfield site. Freely available online imagery indicates that the habitats within the site are dominated by grassland surrounded by residential development and Tower Road. Additionally, the Cheshire Bird Atlas does not identify this location as supporting bird species associated with the designated sites. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
R73	Land between Daresbury Expressway and Manor Park Ave	Greenfield	0.86	23		Located 4.7km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar and 1km from Wigg Island which is known to support significant populations of designated bird features. Freely available online imagery identifies that the site is grazed by livestock, enclosed by tall trees and located in a disturbed location immediately adjacent to the A558 and other busy roads. Due to the disturbed nature of the site it is considered to be unsuitable as functionally linked land. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

¹⁵⁷ Site R69 Allocated for potential Mixed Uses (including Residential) in Policy HC2 (Ref.463)

R74	Land between the expressway and the Bridgewater Canal	Greenfield	7.54	158		Located 3.6km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar site and 800m from Wigg Island which is known to support significant populations of designated bird features. Freely available online imagery identifies that the site is dominated by tussocky and managed grassland along with scattered scrub and tall trees. The site is bound to the north by the A558 and the south by Bridgewater Canal. Habitats within the site are considered to be unsuitable as functionally linked land. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
R78	Land to the south of Stockham Lane	Greenfield	1.18	32		Located more than 4km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. The Cheshire Bird Atlas Distribution Maps do not identify the site or its surroundings as supporting bird species associated with the SPA and Ramsar. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
R79	Land between Stalbridge Drive and WCML	Greenfield	2.42	58	SRL4	Located 6km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. The Cheshire Bird Atlas Distribution Maps do not identify the site or its surroundings as supporting bird species associated with the SPA and Ramsar. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
R80	Land Off Eagles Way (Incl. the Raven), Hallwood Park	Mixed	1.81	51	SRL5	Located 3.2km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. It is situated in a disturbed setting between residential areas and the A533. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
R81	Land south of hospital	Greenfield	1.67	45	SRL5	LSEs on European Sites cannot be ruled out for this site allocation without appropriate assessment. Located 3.6km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing greenfield site. It is situated within a disturbed urban setting. From review of freely available online imagery, a portion of this site includes publicly accessible open green space associated with Palace Fields Park, which is used for recreational activities. Potential linking impact pathways include

						Recreational pressure (through the loss of publicly accessible greenspace) The residential site allocation is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
R82	Land East Of Castlefields Area	Greenfield	1.62	44		LSEs on European Sites cannot be ruled out for this site allocation without appropriate assessment. Located 3.8km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing greenfield site. From review of freely available online imagery, this site includes publicly accessible open green space associated with Phoenix Park, which is used for recreational activities. Potential linking impact pathways include Recreational pressure (through the loss of publicly accessible greenspace) The residential site allocation is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
R84	Land between The Office Village, Daresbury Park and Bridgewater Canal	Greenfield	19.84	417	SRL2	LSEs on European Sites cannot be ruled out for this site allocation without appropriate assessment. Located 6.1km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing greenfield site. From review of freely available online imagery the site appears to comprise sections of agricultural farmland, semi-improved grassland (possibly for grazing) and some scattered trees. It is situated between Bridgewater Canal and a Business Park. Given the large size of this site and its relatively undisturbed location it is considered that this site might be functionally linked land. The following linking impact pathways are likely to be present: Loss of functionally linked land.

						This residential site allocation is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
--	--	--	--	--	--	---

Widnes and Hale

Ref	Site	Greenfield / Brownfield ¹⁵⁸	Site Size	Potential Capacity	Notes	TOLSE Outcome
H1	Land adjacent to 1 Church End, Hale Village	Greenfield	0.45	12		Located 415m from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing greenfield site. It is below 1ha in size and situated in an existing disturbed urban setting. At its closest the SPA and Ramsar is 1.5km walk from this site. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
W1	BPI Widnes Films	PDL	4.26	38	Part u/c 2019	Located 2.5km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing brownfield site. Freely available online imagery indicates that this site contains buildings and is located within an urban setting. It is therefore considered not to be suitable as functionally linked land. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
W2	Former Eternit site, Derby Road	PDL	5.21	116		Located 3.8km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing brownfield site. It is located within an existing urban and disturbed setting. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
W4	Chapel Lane to Old Upton Lane	Greenfield	14.26	299	SRL8 / GBM	LSEs on European Sites cannot be ruled out for this site allocation based on desk study, without further consideration as part of an appropriate assessment. Located 3.7km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing greenfield site. The Cheshire Bird Atlas Distribution Maps identifies that the site is located within an area that potentially acts as functionally linked land. Potential linking impact pathways present: • Loss of functionally linked land • Visual and noise disturbance The residential site allocation is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.

¹⁵⁸ Brownfield or Previously Developed Land (PDL) as defined in Annex 2, National Planning Policy Framework

W5	Sandy Lane to Queensbury Way	Greenfield	6.33	133	SRL8 / GBM	LSEs on European Sites cannot be ruled out for this site allocation based on desk study, without further consideration as part of an appropriate assessment. Located 3.7km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing greenfield site. The Cheshire Bird Atlas Distribution Maps identifies that the site is located within an area potentially acting as functionally linked land. Potential linking impact pathways present: • Loss of functionally linked land • Visual and noise disturbance The residential site allocation is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
W9	Land at Mill Green Farm	Greenfield	22.63	433	SRL7 / GBM	LSEs on European Sites cannot be ruled out for this site allocation without appropriate assessment. Located 4.5km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing greenfield site. The Cheshire Bird Atlas Distribution Maps do not identify the site or its surroundings as supporting bird species associated with the SPA and Ramsar. However, the allocation provides for a relatively large quantum of 476 residential dwellings. Potential linking impact pathways present: • Recreational pressure. The residential site allocation is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
W10	South Lane	Greenfield	1.45	39	SRL7 / GBM	Located 4.8km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing greenfield site. The Cheshire Bird Atlas Distribution Maps do not identify the site or its surroundings as supporting bird species associated with the SPA and Ramsar. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
W11	Boundary Farm and Abbey Farm, South Lane	Greenfield	13.23	278	SRL7 / GBM	Located 4.8km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing greenfield site. The Cheshire Bird Atlas Distribution Maps do not identify the site or its surroundings as supporting bird species associated with the SPA and

						Ramsar. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
W17	Land east of The Eight Towers Public House	Greenfield	0.72	20		Located 3.8km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing greenfield site. According to the Cheshire Bird Atlas Distribution Maps, this site is located within an area known to contain populations of bird species for which the SPA and Ramsar is designated and as such could constitute functionally linked land. However, freely available online imagery identifies that this site is disturbed by heavy vehicle use and contains tall grassland. Additionally, the site is located in an urban context immediately adjacent to the A562. As such the site is considered to be unsuitable as functionally linked land. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
W24	West of Hale Gate Rd	Greenfield	23.06	484	SRL9	LSEs on European Sites cannot be ruled out for this site allocation based on desk study, without further consideration as part of an appropriate assessment. Located 500m from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing greenfield site. The Cheshire Bird Atlas Distribution Maps indicates that this site is located within an area that supports bird species for which the SPA and Ramsar is designated and could in itself provide functionally linked land. Potential linking impact pathways present: • Loss of functionally linked land; • Visual and noise disturbance; and • Recreational pressure. The residential site allocation is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
W28	Broseley House	PDL	0.33	10		Located 1.8km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing brownfield site. It is situated within an existing disturbed urban setting. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

W30	Opposite Beaconsfield Surgery Site	PDL	0.4	11		Located 3.6km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing brownfield site. Freely available online imagery indicates that this site comprises hardstanding, tall tussocky grassland and scattered scrub. It is not located within an area identified within the Cheshire Bird Atlas as supporting bird species associated with the SPA and Ramsar. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
W31	Greenoaks Farm Industrial Estate, Warrington Road	PDL	0.32	10		Located 2.7km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing brownfield site. It is situated within an existing disturbed urban setting. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
W32	Land At Terrace Road (RMC House), West Bank	PDL	0.51	14		This site has been granted full (REM) planning permission and as such is not assessed further. It is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
W34	Widnes Timber Centre, Foundry Lane	PDL	0.96	26		Located 600m from Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing brownfield site. It is situated within an existing urban setting. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
W38	Land to the rear of Appleton Village Pharmacy	PDL	0.29	9		Located 2.9km from Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. It is situated within an existing urban setting. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
W39	The Albert Hotel, 160 Albert Road	PDL	0.05	2		Located 2.9km from Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. It is situated within an existing urban setting. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
W40	Watkinson Way Loop	PDL	0.89	24	SRL7	Located 4.4km from Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. It is situated within an existing urban setting adjacent to major roads and industrial buildings. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
W42	Land off Vine Street	Greenfield	0.06	5		Located 1.8km from Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. It is located within an existing urban setting adjacent to major roads and industrial buildings. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

W44	Land Adjacent to 20 Rock Lane	Greenfield	0.41	111		Located 3.6km from Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. It is situated within an existing urban setting. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
W45	Parcels on Halebank Road	Mixed	2.26	54	SRL9	LSEs on European Sites cannot be ruled out for this site allocation based on desk study, without further consideration as part of an appropriate assessment. Located 1km from Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on existing mixed-use land parcels. The Cheshire Bird Atlas Distribution Maps identifies the site to be in proximity to functionally linked supporting habitat for SPA and Ramsar bird species. Whilst the site itself is unlikely to constitute functionally linked land (freely available online imagery indicates the sites are small fields located immediately adjacent to existing development), it could be in close proximity to important habitats beyond the designated site boundary and any activities within this site could disturb bird species that use neighbouring sites Potential impact pathways present: • Visual and noise disturbance The residential site allocation is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
W47	Land to the rear of Harrison Street Pumping Station	Brownfield	5.96	125		Located 730m from Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing brownfield site. It is located within an industrial estate located in a wider disturbed urban setting. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
W49	Lunts Heath Road (East)	Greenfield	18.13	381	SRL7 / GBM	LSEs on European Sites cannot be ruled out for this site allocation based on desk study, without further consideration as part of an appropriate assessment. Located 920m from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing greenfield site.

						The Cheshire Bird Atlas Distribution Maps indicates that this site is located within an area that potentially constitutes functionally linked land for SPA and Ramsar birds. Freely available online imagery indicates that the site mainly comprises agricultural farmland. Potential linking impact pathways present: • Loss of functionally linked land • Visual and noise disturbance; and • Recreational pressure The residential site allocation is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
W50	(former Stobarts site) Foundry Lane	Brownfield	0.71	19		It is located within an industrial estate located in a wider disturbed urban setting. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

Policy RD2.1: Permanent Gypsy and Traveller Site Allocations

Ref	Site	Status	Pitches	Transit	Private / Council	TOLSE Outcome
GT5	Bigfield Lodge, Runcorn	Residential Consent	8	0	Private	Located 3.6km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar, and approximately 100m from Wigg Island (known to act as functionally linked land for SPA birds). However, the site separated from Wigg Island by the already disturbed Manchester Ship Canal and vegetation, ensuring activities within the site will not disturb qualifying species. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
GT6	Warrington Road (extension)	Allocation	9	0	Council	Located 3.7km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar, and approximately 100m from Wigg Island (known to act as functionally linked land for SPA birds). However, the site is separated from Wigg Island by the already disturbed Manchester Ship Canal and vegetation, ensuring activities within the site will not disturb qualifying species. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

GT7	Windmill Street, Runcorn	Residential Consent	6	0	Private	Located 1.1km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar within a disturbed urban setting. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

Table RD2.2: Gypsy and Traveller Sites in Runcorn

Ref	Site	Status	Pitches	Transit	Private Council	TOLSE Outcome
GT1	Canalside, Warrington Road	Authorised	12	0	Council	Located 3.7km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar, and approximately 100m from Wigg Island (known to act as functionally linked land for SPA birds). However, the site separated from Wigg Island by the already disturbed Manchester Ship Canal and vegetation, ensuring activities within the site will not disturb qualifying species. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
GT2	Runcorn Transit Site	Authorised	2	12	Council	Located 3.7km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar, and approximately 100m from Wigg Island (known to act as functionally linked land). However, the site is separated from Wigg Island by the already disturbed Manchester Ship Canal and vegetation, ensuring activities within the site will not disturb qualifying species. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

Table RD2.3: Gypsy and Traveller Sites in Widnes and Hale

Ref	Site	Status	Pitches	Transit	Private Council	TOLSE Outcome
GT4	Riverview, Widnes	Authorised	23	0	Council	Located 2.3km from the Medway Estuary SPA and Ramsar and located within a disturbed urban setting. The residential site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

Policy HC2: Retail Allocations within Halton's Centres, Runcorn

Ref	Site	Status	Brownfield/ Greenfield	Size	Proposed Use	TOLSE Outcome
TC1	Land to the north of the Brindley (former Brindley Mound), Runcorn Old Town		Brownfield	0.42ha	Retail & Leisure	Located 700m from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. Situated on a brownfield site so not considered to be suitable as functionally linked land. Furthermore, located approximately 400m from the River Mersey and separated from it by the Manchester Ship Canal. The retail site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
TC2	Bus Interchange, Car Park and Former HDL, Runcorn Old Town		Brownfield	0.54ha	Retail	Located 500m from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. Situated on a brownfield site so not considered to be suitable as functionally linked land. Furthermore, located approximately 350m from the River Mersey and separated from it by the Manchester Ship Canal. The retail site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
TC5	East Lane House		Brownfield	1.14ha	Mixed (Retail, Leisure & Residential)	Located on an existing brownfield site and therefore not considered to be suitable as functionally linked land. The retail site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
TC6	Sandymoor Local Centre		Greenfield	1.35ha	Retail	Located approximately 5.3km east of the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar site. Located on a greenfield site within an urban setting. The Cheshire Bird Atlas Distribution Maps do not identify the area within which the site lies to contain populations of bird species associated with the SPA and Ramsar site. The retail site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
TC7	TA Centre		Brownfield	1.44Ha	Mixed (Retail & Residential)	Located on an existing brownfield site and therefore not considered to be suitable as functionally linked land. The retail site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
TC8	Library, Grosvenor House, Former		Brownfield	2.32ha	Mixed (Office, Retail,	This site has prior approval permitted.

	Magistrates Court, Police Station et al, Halton Lea				Leisure and Residential)	Located 3.9km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on an existing brownfield site. As such it is not considered to be suitable as functionally linked land. Furthermore, located approximately 2.2km from the River Mersey and separated from it by the Manchester Ship Canal. The retail site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
TC10	Daresbury Local Centre		Greenfield	0.39ha	Retail	Located approximately 6.3km east of the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar site. The Cheshire Bird Atlas Distribution Maps do not identify the area within which the site lies to contain populations of bird species associated with the SPA and Ramsar site. The retail site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

Widnes and Hale

Ref	Site	Status	Brownfield/ Greenfield	Size	Proposed Use	TOLSE Outcome
TC3	Widnes Retail Park (Phase 2)	Extant Permission	Brownfield		Retail	This site is an extant permission and as such is not assessed further. It is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
TC9	Albert Square Car Park		Brownfield	tbc	Retail	Located 2.2km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar on existing brownfield site. It is therefore not considered to be suitable as functionally linked land. Furthermore, located approximately 1.4km from the River Mersey and separated from it by the St Helens Canal. Can be screened out alone. The retail site allocation is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
TC11	South Widnes (West Bank)		Brownfield		Retail	LSEs on European Sites cannot be ruled out for this site allocation based on desk study, without further consideration as part of an appropriate assessment. Located within 630m of the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar site and within 40m of Spike Island, and 100m of Runcorn Sands which are known to act as functionally linked supporting habitat outside of the European designated site. The site is located within an existing busy urban setting so development in this

						location is considered unlikely to disturb bird features using the functionally linked supporting habitat in proximity to the site. However, due to the site's proximity to the River Mersey the following impact pathway requires consideration: • Water pollution from surface runoff
--	--	--	--	--	--	---

LEGEND

-  Halton Borough
 District Boundary
 Ramsar
 Special Protection Area (SPA)
 SEL/SIL/SRL Site Allocation
 Site Allocation

Copyright
Contains Ordnance Survey Data © Crown Copyright
and database right 2017
© Natural England material is reproduced with the
permission of Natural England 2017

Purpose of Issue

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

MAP OF SITE ALLOCATIONS IN HALTON BOROUGH

Drawing Title

SITE ALLOCATION LOCATIONS

Drawn TD	Checked CN	Approved IH-H	Date 12/07/2019
-------------	---------------	------------------	--------------------

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN PREPARED PURSUANT TO AND SUBJECT TO THE TERMS OF ACOM'S APPOINTMENT BY ITS CLIENT. ACOM ACCEPTS NO LIABILITY FOR ANY USE OF THIS DOCUMENT OTHER THAN BY ITS ORIGINAL CLIENT OR FOLLOWING ACOM'S EXPRESS AGREEMENT TO SUCH USE, AND ONLY FOR THE PURPOSES FOR WHICH IT WAS PREPARED AND PROVIDED.

AECOM
Midpoint
Aercon Link, B
Hampshire, RG
Telephone (0125
Fax (01256) 31
www.aecom.com

AECOM

Drawing Number

Drawing Number

