Halton Borough Council

New Local Plan

Scoping Report

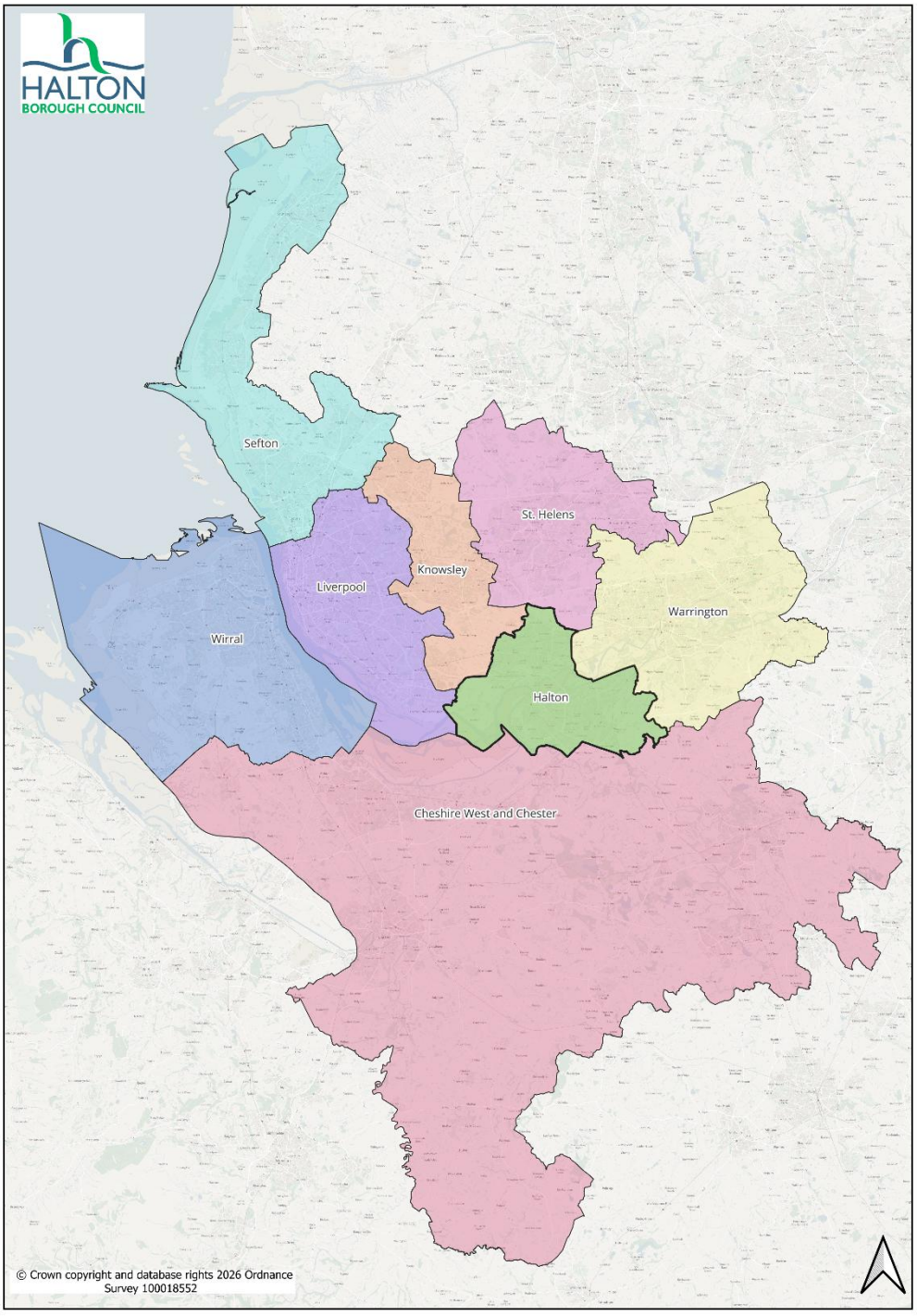
October 2026



HALTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Introduction

This is the first stage of consultation in the preparation of the Council's new Local Plan. Our existing Local Plan was adopted by the Council in March 2022 but needs to be updated to meet the Government's new requirements. Halton's new Local Plan will be prepared under the new system of plan making, in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026. It will also incorporate a Minerals and Waste Plan.



This stage of the Local Plan preparation process follows the publication of the Notice to Commence an update of the Local Plan and the publication of the Local Plan Timetable, both of which have been issued on 28th October 2026. Further information can be found at https://www.halton.gov.uk/localplan

The purpose of this scoping consultation is to provide meaningful early engagement in the plan-making process by seeking views from local residents and stakeholders as to what the plan should contain and how future engagement should be carried out.

How to get involved

The consultation will run from the 28th October 2026 until the 14th December 2026 and you can find more information on the https://www.halton.gov.uk/localplan website.

To sign up for future Local Plan and Planning Policy Updates please complete this form Planning Contact | HBC forms.

The Local Plan

A Local Plan sets out the vision and framework for the borough, over a period of a minimum of 10 years. All future development is based on the policies in the Local Plan. Local Plans are the basis of England's planning system, shaping how places grow and develop. They set out where new homes, jobs, infrastructure, and community facilities are located, and provide clarity for residents, businesses, and developers.

Halton's Adopted Local Plan - Delivery and Allocations Local Plan 2022 - 2037

Halton's current Local Plan is the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan (DALP) and was adopted in March 2022. It spanned the plan period 2022 to 2037 and explained how we should deliver at least 8,050 dwellings over the plan period, alongside 180ha of Employment Land. It also included a number of strategic and non-strategic policies that applied to development within the Borough.

What stage is the Council at currently?

The Council published a Notice of Intent to Commence (Regulation 19) and the Local Plan Timetable (Regulation 4) on 28th October 2026. The Council is required to undertake this Scoping Consultation (Regulation 20), prior to passing through a Gateway 1 Self-Assessment by 1st March 2027, which marks the start of the formal plan making process. For more information on the new Local Plan system please visit the website Create or update a local plan using the new system - GOV.UK.

Why produce a new Local Plan?

Changes to National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The Council has a statutory duty to prepare a Local Plan and keep it updated. Alongside this, there has also been significant changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) that changes how Local Authorities should approach plan-making. One significant adjustment is the change to the way local housing need is calculated.

The 2024 NPPF introduced a new standard method, which applies a percentage increase to the existing stock of housing in each Council area. Under the latest calculation of this new approach Halton's figure has risen to 485 dwellings a year[1], an increase on the 350 agreed in the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan (DALP 2022).

[1] *Halton Local Housing Need figure will change annually as it is based on the yearly update from Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to the total dwelling stock in the Borough.

Local Plans are also now required to ensure they do not duplicate any of the policies within the NPPF. This is intended to limit the Local Plan to cover locally specific planning policies and generally decrease the content in Local Plans.

Changes to the Plan-making system

The government has introduced a new plan-making system, intended to speed up the process of preparing a Local Plan and deliver more succinct documents that are easier for people to use. This system was established under the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 and came into effect on 25th March 2026.

The new system introduces a new Gateway system where Councils will have to meet certain criteria to pass through to the next stage. The intention is to ensure that Councils are progressing with Local Plan preparation in a timely fashion and can help identify early if the Plan is not going to meet certain deadlines. Each Local Planning Authority (LPA) is required to provide a timetable which meets the 30-month timeline with prescribed gateways, which requires certain progress to be made in developing the plan.

Liverpool City Region Spatial Development Strategy

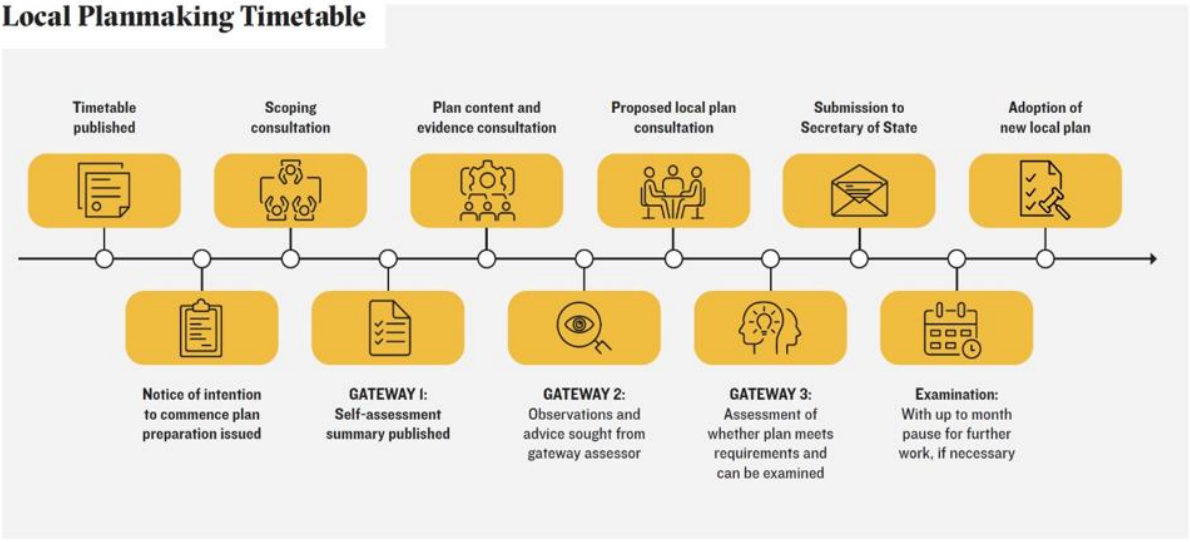
A key strategic factor for the Council is the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) Spatial Development Strategy (SDS), which is being progressed alongside the new plan making system and will provide an overarching spatial framework for the Liverpool City Region (LCR), including setting out the scale and distribution of housing and employment growth. Our Local Plan will need to be in general conformity with the SDS. Once adopted, the SDS will form part of the development plan for Halton and carry significant weight in decision making. Halton continues to be actively engaged in the preparation of the SDS.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

Proposed plans, policies and strategies must be subject to a robust, high-level process to evaluate their potential environmental impact prior to adoption. This is typically undertaken through an SEA. As part of the new Local Plan system, the Government is intending to replace SEA and Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) with Environmental Outcomes Reports (EORs). However, at the current time these requirements have not been formalised through regulations and, as such, the 2004 SEA Regulations continue to apply.

In addition, the requirement for a broader Sustainability Appraisal (SA), incorporating social, economic and environmental considerations, as undertaken for the current Local Plan, has been removed. As a result, and during this transition period, the Council is proposing to undertake an Integrated Impact Assessment to inform the Local Plan. This incorporates the functions of an SEA, Equalities Impact Assessment (EQiA), and an assessment of community safety. A separate Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA), which assesses whether the Local Plan will have a significant adverse effect on protected ecological sites, will also be undertaken.

Local Plan Timetable



The above table shows a draft example of a Local Plan Making Timetable. Our new timetable has been prepared in line with the new plan-making expectations and replaces the previous Local Development Scheme. The timetable is available on our website here. This will be review and updated throughout the plan making process.

This Scoping Consultation

Before the Local Plan can pass through the first Gateway of the new plan making system (Gateway 1), the Council must carry out this scoping consultation. This early stage seeks views on what the new Plan should cover and how we, as a Council, should engage with communities and stakeholders as the Plan progresses.

How to engage with you in the plan-making process?

Firstly, we would like to understand how to engage with you in the plan-making process. Traditionally, the Council has:

- published information on the website
- advertised in the Runcorn and Widnes weekly news
  conducted face-to- face public consultation exercises

Question 1 offers you the opportunity to propose any other suitable methods of communication that the Council could use. This could include online or in person places for the Council to carry out consultation exercises.

Question 1	Are there any other methods of communication or engagement that you would consider more effective and that we should consider that we haven't already included?

Question 2 offers you the opportunity to tell us how we can engage meaningfully with those who may not traditionally respond or participate in these consultation exercises. We are interested in how you think it would be best to initially contact or make people aware of the Local Plan. Also, we would like to understand how we make the content of this Local Plan more digestible.

Question 2	Do you have any views on how we can best ensure that all communities and demographics are able to meaningfully participate in the Local Plan process? This could include young people and people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

What would you like to see in the Local Plan?

The second requirement for this Scoping Consultation is to identify what content you would like to see in the Local Plan. At this early stage, it is important for us to understand what matters most to you about the future of Halton. People's priorities will differ, and your feedback will help shape a Local Plan that reflects the needs, aspirations and character of our borough.

Vision

A vision is important to help indicate the kind of place we want to have as a Borough. It should genuinely reflect what makes the Borough distinctive and what the Local Plan should deliver by the end of the plan period. Government guidance states that the vision should be supported by no more than ten measurable outcomes which will form the basis in monitoring the success of the plan. The vision must consider national planning policies and any relevant Spatial Development Strategy in place for the area.

To make the vision feel locally distinctive and reflect Halton's priorities we are interested in what you think to be the specific and unique areas of strength and opportunity within the Borough. We want your feedback on what issues matter most to you.

Question 3	Which features of the Borough do you think could be included as strengths and opportunities when we start to draft a Local Plan vision?

For more information on what we need to include in a Local Plan Vision, please see Preparing a local plan vision - GOV.UK.

Plan Content

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the key topic areas that the Local Plan **must** address:

Sustainability	**Green Belt**
Climate Change	**Design**
Housing	**Transport**
Employment and Retail	**Health, Pollution and Safety**
Communications and Infrastructure	**Natural Environment**
Minerals and Waste	**Flood Risk**
Effective use of Land	**Historic Environment**

In this scoping document, we are looking for your opinions on the key topics which will be included in the Local Plan. There will also be an opportunity to provide suggestions on other topic areas further on in the report.

Housing

A key driver for the new plan is the need for more homes. The existing Delivery and Allocations Local Plan sets out a minimum requirement of 8,050 homes over the Plan period, which calculates at 350 dwellings per annum.

Due to the changes to the standard method for calculating housing need[1] this has increased to 485 and will apply to the Council from March 2027. This means that the Council may need to identify additional land beyond the current allocations.

It is important to note that if the Council does not demonstrate enough land supply to accommodate this increased housing number, developers can submit speculative applications on land and can lead to lengthy/costly appeals, which may be decided in the developer's favour. This is more likely if the Council does not have an up-to-date Local Plan, as it means that an application is decided with regard to National Policy, rather than local policy.

Given these circumstances, we would like your opinions on the following questions:

Question 4	What type of housing would you like to see more of in the Borough? Apartments, 1 beds, 2 beds, Family homes, specialist homes etc.

Question 5	Are there any places that you think could benefit from new homes? You might want to consider places with good transport links, access to jobs, or where new homes could help regenerate underused or neglected land or help support underutilised local services.

Question 6	What are the main infrastructure issues that could impact or prevent housing development in the Borough? E.g. Lack of access to a train station or bus service, road traffic congestion, electricity grid constraints etc.

Employment

Employment is a crucial part of any Local Authority's agenda for growth. Halton has a diverse business base with a strong presence in the LCR identified economic growth sectors. As a Council we need to ensure that land identified for employment use is well located and accessible, helping residents to live and work within Halton, and support our local economy.

We would like to know where there may be opportunities for economic growth, where businesses can take advantage of strong connectivity and proximity to housing developments, so Halton retains its workforce. With that in mind Halton is seeking your views on the following question:

Question 7	Where do you think there are opportunities for economic growth in the Borough, particularly in locations that benefit from good transport links and access to housing, helping businesses to attract and retain workers?

Retail

Post-covid changes to consumer behaviour have drastically changed how people use Town Centres across the UK. Customers prefer to shop online or at large retail stores, which has taken away business from the traditional town centres.

We understand how important town centres are to the community so we want to understand how the Local Plan can help revitalize town centres.

Halton is unique in the fact that it has two recognised town centres: Halton Lea, and Widnes Town Centre and it also has the district centre of Runcorn Old Town and a series of recognised local centres which offer day-to-day shopping.

Question 8	How should our town and local centres evolve to remain vibrant and attractive places to shop, work, visit and spend time in?

Environment, Climate Change and Flood Risk

On 16th October 2019 Halton Borough Council declared a climate emergency, which recognised the severe risk that climate change and global warming poses to the future of our planet. Our new Local Plan needs to ensure that all development helps reduce carbon emissions, minimises harm to the environment, and incorporates measures to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Question 9	What standards or measures should new development meet to make Halton more resilient to extreme weather and climate change, such as flooding or overheating?

Transport

As part of the future transport objectives for the Council, Halton has identified a need to:

- Work closely with Liverpool City Region Combined Authority
- Coordinate new housing and employment development with the provision of new and improved transport infrastructure and services
- Ensuring planned development is supported by sustainable and accessible travel options such as walking or cycling
- Manage the impact of additional vehicle trips generated by new development
- Improve air quality, particularly in relation to reducing carbon emissions from transport in line with national requirements and our local climate commitments
- Plan parking provision carefully so it supports development needs while making efficient use of land and encourages sustainable travel choices.

Question 10	Do you think there are any other challenges and opportunities we should be aware of in relation to transport connectivity?
Question 11	How accessible do you think public transport services are currently in the Borough?

Other topic areas

This Local Plan will cover multiple topic areas in addition to the ones discussed above, however we did not want this document to be too lengthy.

However, we are aware that users may want to respond or make comment on different topic areas, so the below question has been included as a way in which this can be facilitated. Please use the following question to make these suggestions.

Question 11	Do you think there are any other planning related challenges and/or opportunities we should be aware of that could be addressed in the Local Plan?

Next steps

At the end of the Scoping Document consultation, we will review the responses and publish a Scoping Consultation Summary which will include:

- the main issues raised in the responses received; and
- how we will have regard to those responses at the point of publication.

We then plan to initiate gateway 1 on the 1st March 2027.

Appendix A:

Halton Borough Council Scoping Consultation Questions

The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026

i) such matters relevant to the preparation of the local plan as the authority or body consider appropriate, including what the plan should contain, and (PLAN CONTENT)

ii) how the authority should engage with them in the preparation of the local plan, (CONSULTATION APPROACH)

Consultation Approach

1. Are there any other methods of communication or engagement that you would consider more effective and that we should consider that we haven't already included?
2. Do you have any views on how we can best ensure that all communities and demographics are able to meaningfully participate in the Local Plan process? This could include young people and people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Plan content

Vision

3. Which features of the Borough do you think could be included as strengths and opportunities when we start to draft a Local Plan Vision?

Housing

4. What type of housing would you like to see more of in the Borough? Apartments, 1 beds, 2 beds, Family homes, specialist homes etc.
5. Are there any places that you think could benefit from new homes in the Borough? You might want to consider places with good transport links, access to jobs, or where new homes could help regenerate underused or neglected land or help support underutilised local services.
6. What are the main infrastructure issues that could impact or prevent housing development in the Borough? E.g. Lack of access to a train station or bus service, road traffic congestion, electricity grid constraints etc.

Employment

7. Where do you think there are opportunities for economic growth in the Borough, particularly in locations that benefit from good transport links and access to housing, helping businesses to attract and retain workers?

Retail and Town Centres

8. How should our town and local centres evolve to remain vibrant and attractive places to shop, work, visit and spend time in?

Environment, Climate Change and Flood Risk

9. What standards or measures should new development meet to make Halton more resilient to extreme weather and climate change, such as flooding or overheating?

Infrastructure and Transport

10. Do you think there are any other opportunities we should be aware of in relation to improving transport connectivity?
11. How accessible do you think public transport services are currently in the Borough?

Any other issues

12. Do you think there are any other planning related challenges and opportunities we should be aware of that could be addressed in the Local Plan?

Appendix B – Privacy Notice

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL'S GENERAL DATA PROTECTION

Notification regarding the processing of any personal data supplied on this form. The Council's Data Protection Officer can be contacted on 0151 511 7002 or by email to dpo@halton.gov.uk

The Councils Data Protection Registration Number is Z4803991

The Data Protection Act applies to personal information and ensures that it is handled properly and securely. Halton Borough Council holds and processes a significant amount of personal information in order to provide its services. There are a number of Privacy Notices which explain how information is collected by both the Council and Schools and how it is used and shared.

To provide this service, it is necessary for the council to collect, store and process some personal information. Safeguards are in place to ensure that this data is kept secure, and the privacy of individuals is protected. The below notice should be read in conjunction with the Council's Data Protection.

PRIVACY NOTICE

Council Service : Planning Policy

Who is the Data Controller for the information I provide?

Halton Borough Council is the Data Controller for the personal information you provide.

Why do you need my information?

We collect and hold information about you in order to assist in the making of statutory development plans (for example the Local Plan), and to identify appropriate sites for development. The personal data is specifically used in relation to the Local Plan preparation process and land availability assessment for these purposes. This includes making the responses received available to be viewed both in the council offices and online and maintaining an archive of historic plan responses. Contact details are held for current and future planning policy consultation exercises.

We collect information from you when you submit representations following consultations on draft planning policy, make a planning related application with supporting documentation, contact us about an existing application, or related information or make an enforcement complaint. This includes contact by email, letter or telephone.

We may also receive information about you from third parties, including planning agents and interested parties who comment on planning and related applications.

What legal basis allows you to use my information?

Public task: the processing is necessary for the Council to collect the evidence base to inform a Local Plan, which is a statutory function of a Local Authority.

Legal obligation: the processing is necessary for the Council to comply with the National Planning Policy Framework (National Planning Policy Framework - GOV.UK), Planning Practice Guidance on Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (Housing and economic land availability assessment - GOV.UK), and the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012).

Do I have to provide this information and what will happen if I don't?

You do not have to submit an application in this exercise. However, if you would like your submissions to be assessed and considered moving forward, we do need to collect your information to contact you in the future regarding this exercise.

Who will my information be shared with?

We may share personal data with other services within the Council and with third parties including statutory consultees. Your information will be shared with relevant organisation who provide either regulatory functions or expert support in relation to your application / comments / complaint:

- Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service
- Neighbouring Councils
- Natural England
- Environment Agency
- Historic England
- Health and Safety Executive
- Homes England
- Highways Agency
- Planning Inspectorate

How long will you keep this information for and why?

Original Submissions may be held for a maximum of 15 years from adoption of plan. Summary information held in plan-making documents (for example statements of consultation) may be retained permanently for historic value.

How will my information be stored?

Your details will be stored in paper and through electronic form on IDOX Uniform.

Will this information be used to take automated decisions about me?

No

Will my data be transferred abroad and why?

No

What rights do I have when it comes to my data?

- Right to be informed – through this Privacy Notice
- Right to rectification – you have the right to have personal data rectified if it is inaccurate or incomplete.
- Right to restrict processing – you have the right to block or suppress processing of your data, however this right does not apply in some circumstances.
- Right to object to processing (to certain types of processing only)
- Rights related to automated decision making and profiling.
- Right of Access - you have the right under the Data Protection Act (General Data Protection Regulation 2018) to request a copy of your information and to know what it is used for and how it has been shared. This is called the right of subject access. To request a copy of your data or ask questions about how it is used download a copy of our form from https://www4.halton.gov.uk/Pages/councildemocracy/Data-Protection.aspx and send it to Halton Borough Council, Information Governance Service, PO Box 317, Runcorn, WA7 9BZ, or email by email to informationgovernanceservice@halton.gov.uk

Who can I complain to if I am unhappy about how my data is used?

You can complain directly to the Council's Data Protection Officer by writing to: Data Protection Officer, Halton Borough Council, PO Box 317, Runcorn, WA7 9BZ or by email to informationgovernanceservice@halton.gov.uk You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner's Office using the following details: The Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF. Telephone: 0303 123 1113. Website: www.ico.org.uk

For more information visit Halton Data Protection.