Cheshire West & Chester Council

Local Plan **Update** 2023

Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report

June 2023

Cheshire West and Chester

Local Plan Update 2023 Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report

Appendices

1 Introduction

Introduction to the scoping report

1.1 This is the scoping report for the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan Update.

1.2 A scoping report brings together the results of the initial stages of the SA process. It sets out baseline information on a wide range of topics, highlighting key trends, issues and objectives for the area. A key output of the scoping report is the sustainability framework, which will be used to appraise the sustainability of the Local Plan Update.

1.3 This scoping report provides up-to-date baseline information and details of the plans, programmes and strategies that could influence the preparation of the Local Plan Update. This background information forms the basis for development of the sustainability framework.

1.4 The scoping report has been based on the original scoping report prepared for the CWaC Local Plan (Part One) in 2009, but has been amended to make this report more concise and easy to use and also to provide updated information. As such, the objectives, criteria and indicators used to assess the sustainability of the Local Plan have also been amended.

1.5 Preparation of the scoping report has been undertaken to meet the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and the national Planning Practice Guidance (nPPG) and relevant national guidance including the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (as amended). The statutory consultation bodies will be consulted on this document and will be given at least 5 weeks to respond to the consultation.

1.6 The baseline information and sustainability framework is set out in a series of chapters dealing with a wide range of sustainability topics as follows:

- Climate change, energy and air quality
- Waste
- Land and resources
- Water
- Landscape, townscape and cultural heritage
- Biodiversity
- Population and housing
- Health, wellbeing and equality
- Economy and employment
- Infrastructure

1.7 For each topic a summary is provided of the policy context. Baseline information is set out in relation to the past and current situation, recent changes and anticipated trends without the Plan. Any evidence gaps are noted and the Local Plan's potential influence on that topic is identified. Key sustainability issues, SA objectives, sub-objectives/criteria and indicators are identified. A list of all of

the sustainability objectives, which together make up the appraisal framework, is included in the final summary in the SA framework chapter.

Local Plan Update

1.8 The Council has commenced initial work, including evidence gathering, in advance of an update to its Local Plan (Part One). The updated Local Plan will replace the current Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies document. Once in place, it will establish a strategy for growth and change over the plan period (of at least 15 years) from 2030, allocate sites to deliver the strategy as well as to allocate new sites for non-strategic development in the local authority area. The Local Plan update will also set out the suite of planning policies that will be used to deliver sustainable development in Cheshire West.

1.9 At this stage the number of changes to existing local plan policies and introduction of new policies is not known but the level of changes to strategy and policies is likely to be significant and will impact across the whole of the borough. The updated plan will reflect the overall amount of new residential and employment development and where it should be located, through site allocations, as well as set out the infrastructure required to support that growth e.g., schools, transport, community facilities and green spaces. New sites for non-strategic development will also be allocated.

1.10 The plan will be prepared under the Town and County (Local Planning) Regulations 2012, in accordance with current Government policy as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021 and to also reflect the Government's online Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). In particular, the NPPF requires local authorities to take a positive approach to development, with an up-to-date local plan that meets objectively assessed needs, including local housing needs, as far as is consistent with sustainable development.

1.11 However, the Council is mindful of the recent consultation on the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill and reforms to national planning policy that took place between 22 December 2022 and 2 March 2023. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill(currently in the Committee Stage in the House of Lords), which followed the Planning for the Future White Paper(2020) (and the Levelling Up White Paper(2022) would introduce significant changes to the planning system. The Government said it would make further changes to national planning policy (2021), including the NPPF, alongside the Bill. As such, a different approach may have to be taken to the Local Plan update depending on the introduction, timing, and content of changes to national planning policy, legislation, national development management policies and Environmental Outcomes Reports.

Council Plan 2020-24

1.12 The Council Plan outlines the vision and priorities for 2020-2024. The priorities are:

- Tackle the climate emergency.
- Grow our local economy and deliver good jobs with fair wages for our residents.
- Support children and young people to make the best start in life and achieve their full potential.
- Enable more adults to live longer, healthier and happier lives.

- Make our neighbourhoods even better places to call home.
- Be an efficient and empowering Council.

1.13 The Council Plan is an important part of the policy context in which the SA of the Local Plan Update is being carried out and has been used to inform the appraisal framework set out in this scoping report.

2 Sustainability Appraisal process

Overview of the SA process

2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) [(i)] identifies that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. It states that achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives - an economic objective, social objective and environmental objective. These objectives are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways.

2.2 Planning authorities must ensure that their Local Plans are centred around the concept of sustainable development and balance social, economic and environmental needs. SA is a tool to help to assess the contribution that planning policies make to sustainable development and to use this information to inform decision making on policies and to improve their sustainability where possible.

2.3 SA is a process that identifies and reports on the likely effects of a plan and the extent to which the plan's implementation will impact upon the environmental, social and economic objectives for an area. SA incorporates Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), which focuses on environmental objectives, and SA also includes social and economic objectives. There is a government consultation on changes to the SA and Environmental Assessment process, which suggests that there will be a move to an Environmental Outcomes Report approach and a focus on environmental issues. This approach has not yet been confirmed and as such, this scoping report has been prepared in line with current legislation and guidance and includes environmental, social and economic issues within the scope of the SA. If the Environmental Outcomes Report approach is brought in at a later stage in preparation of the Local Plan Update, the SA scoping report will be updated accordingly if required. This should not be a problem as all relevant environmental issues have been considered in this SA scoping report.

2.4 The Council's SA must meet the requirements of two principal pieces of legislation:

- The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, and
- The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulation 2004 (as amended), which transpose the EU Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive into national law.

2.5 The overall aims of the Council's SA are:

- to ensure that all aspects of sustainable development are fully integrated into the Local Plan Update throughout its preparation;
- to consult on the SA procedure, allowing the public and stakeholders to have an input into the process;
- to provide an assessment of the potential environmental, economic and social effects of the plan; and
- to meet the requirements of the relevant regulations.

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i (2019, paragraph 7)

2 Sustainability Appraisal process

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

2.6 A SEA screening process for the Local Plan Update was undertaken prior to the commencement of the scoping report. This involved preparation of a SEA screening opinion by the Council to establish whether the Local Plan Update is likely to have potentially significant effects. The screening opinion concluded that the Local Plan Update is likely to have a significant environmental effect and will therefore require SEA. The Council consulted the statutory environmental bodies on the SEA screening for a four week period. The statutory bodies who responded all either agreed with the decision that the Local Plan Update may have significant environmental effects and therefore SEA was required, or had no comments. A SEA screening determination was then prepared and this is included at Appendix A: 'SEA Screening determination'. The Council is of the view that the Local Plan Update is likely to have potentially significant environmental effects and as such, the SA of the Local Plan Update will incorporate the requirements of an environmental assessment, in line with the SEA Directive.

2.7 To show how the requirements of the SEA directive are met during the appraisal process, a checklist is provided in Appendix B: 'Quality assurance checklist'

SA methodology

2.8 The following sections contain a brief summary of the key SA stages the Council will complete during production of the Local Plan. The methodology used follows national guidance on the appraisal of Local Plans.

2.9 There are several stages in the SA process:

- **Stage A** – Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope
- **Stage B** – Developing and refining plan options
- **Stage C** – Appraising the effects of the plan
- **Stage D** – Consulting on the Local Plan Update and the SA Report
- **Stage E** – Monitoring and implementation of the plan

Stage A - Scoping

2.10 This is the current stage and includes five key elements:

- **Stage A1** - the identification of key national, regional and local policies and programmes which will impact on the emerging Local Plan Update (see Chapters 3-12);
- **Stage A2** - the collection of baseline information to provide a picture of past, present and likely future conditions within the area (see Chapters 3-12). Where possible data trends have been identified. For the purposes of assessment, it has been assumed that these trends will continue, as identified, without the implementation of the new policies. Key sources of information include census data; population forecasts; commissioned studies and stakeholder consultation. Through this stage, indicators can be developed to monitor the effects and performance of the Local Plan Update;

- **Stage A3** - identification of sustainability issues and problems affecting the area, which can be addressed through the development of strategies and policies within the Local Plan Update (see Chapters 3-12);
- **Stage A4** - development of a SA framework to assess the impacts of the emerging Local Plan objectives, policies and proposals (see Chapter 14);
- **Stage A5** - consultation on the appropriateness and robustness of the scope of the SA and proposed appraisal framework.

Stage B: Developing and refining options and assessing effects

2.11 Stage B will be undertaken alongside the development of Local Plan Update. In this stage of the SA, the emerging Local Plan objectives will be tested against the sustainability objectives identified in the Scoping Report.

2.12 The likely effects of policy options on the baseline information will then be predicted and evaluated in terms of their significance. Where any potential adverse impacts are identified, mitigation measures will be proposed accordingly and there may also be opportunities to maximise any beneficial effects.

2.13 Similarly, proposed allocated sites, and their reasonable alternatives, will also be assessed. This assessment will be based upon the SA objectives identified in this document, where appropriate. To adequately assess sites more specific information will be required. Without greater clarity as to which sites are likely to to be allocated, and for what reasons, it is difficult to identify what information will be required, and how this assessment will take place.

2.14 Monitoring mechanisms for evaluating the significant effects of implementing the Local Plan Update will also be put in place.

Stage C: Preparing the Sustainability Appraisal report

2.15 The SA report will present information on how sustainability issues have been considered in the preparation of the Local Plan Update. It will include references to the sustainability objectives and how proposals were judged against them. Proposed mitigation measures for any significant adverse affects, opportunities to maximise positive affects and proposals for monitoring will also be identified. The SA report will incorporate the Health and Equality Impact Assessments on the Local Plan Update, where relevant. Habitats Regulations Assessment will be undertaken separately, but the findings will be incorporated into the SA report where relevant.

Stage D: Consulting on the draft Local Plan Update and the Sustainability Appraisal report

2.16 The draft Local Plan Update and accompanying SA report will then be formally consulted on (with statutory consultees and other relevant stakeholders in line with the regulations). The results of this consultation will then inform the finalised Local Plan Update.

Stage E: Monitoring the significant effects of implementing the Local Plan Update

2.17 Following adoption, the Local Plan Update will be monitored to test its effects against those predicted in the SA report, and to identify any need to respond to unforeseen adverse effects. This will be done through the AMR, where possible.

Integration of SA and Local Plan preparation

2.18 The table below shows how the SA stages fit into the Local Plan Update preparation process.

Local Plan Stage	Community involvement and consultation	SA stage
Pre-production (current stage)	This stage involves the authority gathering evidence and establishing relevant planning issues for the area. The authority will seek input from relevant interested organisations and individuals.	**Stage A** The SA sets the context, baseline information and scope of the Local Plan Update. There is a statutory consultation period of 5 weeks on a SA Scoping Report.
Pre-submission	This is a key stage of plan development and therefore wide stakeholder input is important.	**Stages B and C** As the Local Plan Update is developed, the SA will assess any social, environmental and economic effects. This is a continuous process and will help inform the pre-submission Local Plan Update.
Pre–submission consultation	At this stage, the version of the document as amended following earlier consultation is considered 'sound' by the Council. Responses made to this stage of consultation should therefore only be concerned with matters of 'soundness'. The Council will produce a summary of the main issues raised by the responses and this will also be examined as part of the submission material.	**Stages C and D** The final SA report will be published and consulted on alongside the Local Plan Update during the formal consultation period.
Submission	Following any revisions made the Council will formally submit the Local Plan Update along with all representations made to the Secretary of State for independent examination.	The final SA report will be submitted to the Inspector alongside the Local Plan Update.

2.19 The Local Plan update could contain a range of policy types, including area based, development management and site allocations policies. It is unlikely that the same methodology for assessing the development management policies will be suitable to assess site allocations within the plan. For this reason, different appraisal methods will be selected to effectively appraise the different policy types within the Local Plan update. This report sets out the SA Framework that will be used to assess, against relevant sustainability criteria, the different options and alternatives being considered when progressing the Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan update.

Interaction with other assessments

2.20 The SA will incorporate other assessments such as Equality Impact Assessment and Health Impact Assessment where relevant. These assessments will be fed into the SA process and final SA report as they are carried out.

2.21 In addition work will be undertaken in relation to a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) of the Local Plan Update. This will involve an initial screening process, followed by a more detailed assessment if required. These assessments will run in parallel to the SA process. A HRA demonstrates compliance with the EU Habitats Directive. This sets out that any wildlife sites that have European-level protection, must not be negatively impacted as a result of new strategies, plans, policies and projects.

3 Climate change, energy and air quality

Policy context

3.1 Over the past 20 years it has become increasingly clear that the current change in the climate being seen worldwide is a direct result of human activity and the release of greenhouse gases. Greenhouse gas emissions should be reduced by at least 100% of 1990 levels (net zero) by 2050 – according to the Climate Change Act and the government has pledged to achieve this [(ii)]. Climate change is likely to lead to the following effects in the UK: hotter, drier summers; milder, wetter winters; rising sea levels; and more extreme weather events. This will lead to more droughts, more flooding and increased temperatures in summer. The urban heat island effect means that risks of heat stress are more severe in cities.

3.2 The UK target is important to meet the commitments agreed under the 2015 Paris Agreement, which sets out a global action plan to limit global warming to well below 2°C and pursue efforts to limit it to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. However, greenhouse gasses are not reducing quickly enough and in March 2023 the government published a plan[(iii)]setting out how energy security will be enhanced and net zero commitments will be delivered. This sets out the ambition to fully decarbonise the power system by 2035.

3.3 The UK has been reliant on natural gas to meet its energy needs, particularly for heating. Natural gas is a cleaner fuel than coal and oil, but burning natural gas still generates CO_2 emissions. Only around 50% of our gas supply is produced within the UK, so this reduces energy security, increases risks and reduces control over costs. This has been part of the reason for the large increases in energy prices in recent months. As such, renewable energy is becoming increasingly important, for both carbon emissions and energy security.

3.4 CWaC unanimously declared, on 21 May 2019, that the borough is in a climate emergency. The Council agreed that:

- Climate change presents a threat to our way of life;
- the Council recognised the need to act in-line with worldwide agreements on climate change and the best available evidence, which states that, to limit emissions to 1.5°C, there is a requirement to reach 'net zero' by 2045; and
- the Council must play its part by evidencing leadership on this issue.

3.5 In order to respond to the identified Climate Emergency, the Tyndall Centre report (2019) recommends that CWaC should aim to reach zero or or near zero carbon no later than 2040. Most of the drivers for reductions in carbon emissions are outside the control of the local authority, for example the pace at which electricity is decarbonised and vehicle taxation policies. However, local authorities can influence carbon emissions through the ways in which they provide their services and how they plan and develop housing and infrastructure.

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ii (Net Zero: The UK's contribution to stopping global warming, May 2019

iii (Powering Up Britain, 30 March 2023)

3.6 Tackling the climate emergency is identified as one of the key priorities in the CWaC Council Plan, which states that the ambition is to be a carbon neutral borough, reducing emissions of greenhouse gasses to net zero by 2045 or earlier. The Council Plan was informed by a residents survey, in which 83% of respondents said that they were concerned about climate change and 44% said they were very concerned. The Council, as an organisation, emits around 28,332 tonnes of CO_2 emissions each year (0.7% of total carbon emissions for the borough). The Council Plan identifies that the Council will set an example as a low carbon organisation.

3.7 As a result of identifying a climate emergency, CWaC commissioned consultants to provide a climate emergency strategy support document (Anthesis, 2019) and prepared a climate emergency response plan and carbon management plan. The Anthesis report sets out the current emissions profile and identifies energy system pathways and interventions.

3.8 The Air Quality Standards Regulations (2010, as amended) regulate concentrations of key pollutants in England in order to protect human health and the environment. The 2016 amendments to the regulations transpose European Directives on air quality into UK legislation.

3.9 A major cause of air quality problems are the emissions of nitrogen oxides and particulate matter from vehicle exhausts. Serious health problems such as respiratory, cardiovascular illness and even premature death can also be associated with air pollution. The effects are most commonly felt by sensitive and vulnerable groups such as the infirm, people with asthma, children and the elderly. It is also often the case that those living in deprived areas suffer the worst air pollution. Air pollution can have impacts upon the natural environment, in particular on sensitive habitats and species, which need to be closely monitored and the causes identified.

3.10 The authority is required to assess and where necessary monitor the concentrations of key atmospheric pollutants, primarily those that represent a threat to human health, but also those thought to adversely affect vegetation. Where objectives are unlikely to be met, an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) must be declared, and an Air Quality Action Plan implemented to improve air quality.

3.11 The CWaC climate emergency report Jan 2020 - sets an ambitious target of 2030 to achieve carbon neutrality for the Council's own emissions, to be delivered through a Carbon Management Plan.

3.12 The Climate Emergency Strategy Support report (Anthesis, 2019) states that by 2025 new builds should be PassivHaus or equivalent standard.

3.13 The National Design Guide 2019 identifies the need to follow the energy hierarchy for well-designed places and buildings:

- reduce the need for energy;
- energy efficiency;
- maximising the potential for energy supply from decentralised, low carbon and renewable energy sources; and then
- efficiently using fossil fuels from clean technologies.

Baseline information

National

3.14 In the UK the ten warmest years on record have occurred since 2002. The Met Office have stated that heatwaves are now 30 times more likely to happen and UK winters are likely to become warmer and wetter. The Met Office project that by 2070 winter will be between 1 and 4.5°C warmer and up to 30% wetter and summer will be between 1 and 6°C warmer and up to 60% drier.

3.15 In the UK, 49% of carbon emissions are attributable to buildings (according to the UK Green Building Council).

3.16 There is currently a shift towards renewable electricity, with almost 40% of electricity generated by renewable sources in 2019 [(iv)].

Local

3.17 Carbon emissions are a major issue for CWaC and the borough ranks fourth out of 391 authorities in terms of CO_2 emissions. In per capital terms it ranks fourteenth and has the highest per capita footprint amongst council areas with a population of more than 200,000. The 'Setting climate commitments for CWaC' report (Tyndall Centre, 2020) states that for CWaC to make its 'fair' contribution towards the Parish Climate Change Agreement it should have a maximum cumulative carbon dioxide emissions budget of 24.0 million tonnes for the period of 2020 to 2100. At 2017 emission levels (four million tonnes per year) CWaC would use this entire budget within 6 years from 2020.

3.18 Terratorial CO_2 emission estimates within the scope of influence of Local Authorities (including commercial, domestic, industry, transport and public sector) were 10.2kt CO_2 per capita in CWaC, compared to 4.3kt CO_2 per capita for England. This is partly due to the very high industrial emissions in CWaC due to industrial sources such as Stanlow refinery. When the industrial areas north of the M56 (including Stanlow refinery) are considered together, they use 5 percent of the UK's total energy. The Anthesis study (2019) identifies that CWaC emits 4 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions per year and the primary contributor to emissions is industrial and institutional buildings (53 percent of emissions), followed by on-road transport (19 percent) and residential buildings (14 percent) and commercial buildings and facilities (11 percent).

3.19 The table below shows CO_2 emissions estimates for CWaC in kt $C0_2$ (UK local authority and regional carbon dioxide emissions national statistics, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, 2021).

	Domestic	Industrial	Commercial	Transport	Public sector
2010	797.8	2,866.4	536.8	952.0	136.2
2017	531.2	2,126.1	432.3	943.1	101.6

iv (The Second National Infrastructure Assessment: Baseline Report, November 2021)

	Domestic	Industrial	Commercial	Transport	Public sector
2019	520.0	2,000.5	303.0	923.9	86.8
Percentage change 2010 to 2017	- 35%	- 30%	-44%	- 3%	-36%

3.20 Domestic energy consumption is reducing over time. The mean domestic consumption of electricity per household in the borough has decreased from 4,378kWh in 2010 to 3,700kWh in 2021 [v]

3.21 The number of renewable energy installations, installed capacity and total renewable electricity generation in CWaC is increasing significantly over time. Further information is provided in the table below.

Installed capacity from renewable energy sources		
2018	**2019**	**2020**
Installed capacity (MW) in Cheshire West and Chester (as at end of 2018) Total: **118.47 MW** Photovoltaics: 32.50 MW Onshore wind: 50.38 MW Anaerobic digestion: 5.41 MW Sewage gas: 1.47 MW Landfill gas: 7.21 MW Plant biomass: 21.50 MW Number of installations (end 2018) Photovoltaics: 5,262 Onshore wind: 5* Anaerobic digestion: 3 Sewage gas: 2 Landfill gas: 3 Plant biomass: 1 Total renewable electricity generation (MWh):**244,085 MWh**	Installed capacity (MW) in Cheshire West and Chester (as at end of 2019): Total: **126.5 MW** Photovoltaics: 40.5 MW Onshore wind: 50.4 MW Anaerobic digestion: 5.4 MW Sewage gas: 1.5 MW Landfill gas: 7.2 MW Plant biomass: 21.5 MW Number of installations (end 2019) Photovoltaics: 5,373 Onshore wind: 5* Anaerobic digestion: 3	Installed capacity (MW) in Cheshire West and Chester (as at end of 2020) Total: **127.8 MW** Photovoltaics: 41.8 MW Onshore wind: 50.4 MW Anaerobic digestion: 5.4 MW Sewage gas: 1.5 MW Landfill gas: 7.2 MW Plant biomass: 21.5 MW Number of installations (end 2020) Photovoltaics: 5,413 Onshore wind: 5* Anaerobic digestion: 3 Sewage gas: 2 Landfill gas: 3 Plant biomass: 1 Total renewable electricity generation (MWh)

v (Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy sub-national electricity consumption statistics, 2021) Regional and local authority electricity consumption statistics - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Installed capacity from renewable energy sources		
2018	**2019**	**2020**
This is made up of Photovoltaics: 31,391MWh Onshore wind: 92,016 MWh Anaerobic digestion: 24,343 MWh Sewage gas: 6,397 MWh Landfill gas: 28,713 MWh Plant biomass: 61,225 MWh	Sewage gas: 2 Landfill gas: 3 Plant biomass: 1 Total renewable electricity generation (MWh) Total: **252,409 MWh** Photovoltaics: 35,108 MWh Onshore wind: 92,549 MWh Anaerobic digestion: 29,187 MWh Sewage gas: 5,940 MWh Landfill gas: 31,067 MWh Plant biomass: 58,559 MWh	Total: **287,205 MWh** Photovoltaics: 39,947 MWh Onshore wind: 104,875 MWh Anaerobic digestion: 22,326 MWh Sewage gas: 4,855 MWh Landfill gas: 30,453 MWh Plant biomass: 84,749 MWh
Source: Government National Statistics - Renewable electricity by local authority. Published September 2020 * Stats only added 1 installation, but all 19 turbines at Frodsham Wind Farm are operational, bringing the total of wind turbines to 23		

3.22 The CWaC Landscape Sensitivity Study (2016) identifies areas where the sensitivity of the landscape to wind development and solar development is likely to be greatest and areas where impacts may be more moderate.

3.23 Energy performance of buildings is improving slowly in CWaC, but there are still very few with an Energy Performance Certificate rating of 'A'. In the first quarter of 2023, 20 domestic buildings received an 'A' rating and 349 received a 'B' rating. In the first quarter of 2020, 2 domestic buildings received an 'A' rating and 344 received a 'B' rating. In 2010 96% of new buildings had an EPC rating of 'B' or 'C' (none had an 'A' rating) in terms of fuel costs and in 2019 97% of new buildings had an EPC relating of 'A', 'B' or 'C' (although less than 1% had an 'A' rating). In terms of existing dwellings, out of those who lodge EPC's, in 2010 33% had an EPC rating of 'B' or 'C' (none had an 'A' rating) and in 2019 39% had an EPC rating of 'A', 'B' or 'C' (although less than 1% had an 'A' rating). This indicates that there is a major difference between energy performance in new and existing buildings [vi]

3.24 There is relatively high private car use due to the rural nature of parts of the borough and the distances travelled to work, both within and outside the borough (for example to Liverpool and Manchester). In 2021, 659 vehicle miles were travelled per100,000 people in CWaC, whereas the figure for England was 450 vehicle miles. 74 percent of employed residents travel to work by car, with 15 percent of residents commuting out of the Cheshire West and Chester region. 40 percent of households own more than one car and within the Chester urban area, fewer than 10 percent of journeys to work

vi (live tables on Energy Performance of Buildings Certificates, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, April 2023).

were undertaken on public transport and 21% of journeys were on foot or by bicycle (Climate emergency strategy support document Anthesis, 2019).

3.25 Car ownership and use in the Borough is above the national average. The 2011 Census found that 81% of households own at least one car and 40% own two or more vehicles. Low emission vehicle ownership was 924 per 100,000 population in CWaC and 1,441 in England in quarter 2 of 2022 [vii].

3.26 There are currently four Air Quality Management Areas within CWaC, covering a relatively small proportion of the borough. They are located on the A5032 Whitby Road/ Station Road in central Ellesmere Port, at Boughton gyratory in Chester city centre, in Thornton-le-Moors and at Fluin Lane in Frodsham. They are all declared for management of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO_2) apart from Thornton-le-Moors, which relates to Sulphur Dioxide ($S0_2$) around Stanlow oil refinery. The 2022 Air Quality Annual Status Report (CWaC, 2022) identified that monitored levels of Nitrogen Dioxide at Whitby Road / Station Road have steadily declined over time and no exceedances have been recorded between 2017 and 2021 and as such, this Air Quality Management Area will be revoked. At the Fluin Lane site monitoring results were below the objective since 2017 and the status of this Air Quality Management Area will also be reviewed.

Evidence gaps and proposed work

3.27 There are no significant evidence gaps relating to climate change, energy or air quality. However, the CWaC Landscape Sensitivity Study could potentially be updated, as average heights of wind turbines have increased since the study was undertaken, solar farm schemes tend to be larger and national government support for renewable energy has changed. The Low Carbon and Renewable Energy Study 2012 could also potentially be updated as low carbon and renewable energy technologies and options have moved on significantly since then. There would also be the potential to undertaken further work on whole life carbon assessments and the impact of development on carbon emissions.

Recent changes and anticipated trends

3.28 The COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdown period resulted in significant short-term reductions in emissions of climate change gasses as a result of reduced industrial activity, changes in working patterns and methods (including much higher levels of working from home) and reductions in travel due to restrictions. It is likely to result in longer-term changes due to increased working from home and use of online services and facilities, but also due to increased car use and reductions in public transport use. This may also have impacts on Air Quality Management Areas and may reduce emissions in these areas further.

3.29 The Anthesis report (2019) set out the following renewable energy targets:

vii (Department for Transport Ultra-Low Emission Vehicles Statistics)

Energy type	Current level of installed capacity	Target for 2025 (installed capacity)	Target for 2030 (installed capacity)	Target for 2050 (installed capacity)
Solar PV		0.3 GW	0.4 GW	0.8 GW
Onshore wind		0.275 GW	0.404 GW	1.02 GW
Bioenergy supply (heat and electricity)		160 MW	171 MW	263 MW
Solar thermal		102 MW	124 MW	279 MW
Hydro power		24.3 MW	25.5 MW	37.5 MW

3.30 In future, energy requirements will change in terms of type as well as amount, for example increased numbers of electric vehicles will increase requirements for electricity. The UK has committed to preparing for 100 percent electric vehicle sales by 2030. The sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans in the UK will be banned from 2030 [(viii)]. Take-up of electric vehicles in the borough is likely to be higher than nearby boroughs in the North Wales / Liverpool City Region area according to research undertaken by SP Manweb (Future Energy Scenarios, 2019). This is due to population numbers and densities, socio-economic profile and opportunities for off-street parking.

3.31 The peaks and troughs in energy demand are also likely to change and energy storage will become increasingly important as more renewable energy capacity is developed.

3.32 Provision of solar farms is becoming more popular within CWaC and the number of planning applications received for solar farms has increased significantly over the last year. The government appear to be more supportive of solar developments and as a result, the number of solar farm applications may continue to increase. The Council has added solar panels to many of the buildings it owns, including schools and leisure centres and the uptake of domestic scale solar is also increasing significantly.

3.33 There is a current Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) for a Carbon Dioxide pipeline and Hydrogen pipeline as part of the HyNet project. Whitby in Ellesmere Port has also been chosen as a hydrogen demonstration village, with a hydrogen demonstration facility. If approved and developed, this could significantly increase the use of hydrogen in CWaC and could reduce emissions, as long as carbon is captured when the hydrogen is produced (if produced using natural gas).

viii (The Second National Infrastructure Assessment: Baseline Report, November 2021)

Local Plan Update scope and influence

3.34 The Local Plan Update will focus on updating the Local Plan (Part One) and will therefore concentrate on strategic policies, rather than detailed Development Management policies. As such, the main ways in which the Local Plan Update could influence climate change, energy and air quality are:

- Controlling the location of future development. Depending on the broad locations chosen this could maximise opportunities for sustainable transport, walking and cycling and minimise dependence on cars and reduce congestion, thereby also reducing air pollution.
- Influencing levels of sustainable transport through location of development and provision of safe and attractive walking and cycling routes that are well connected to services and facilities.
- Facilitate more renewable and low carbon energy development.

Key sustainability issues and opportunities

3.35 The key sustainability issues relating to climate change, energy and air quality at a strategic planning level are:

- High levels of carbon emissions per capita in the borough due predominantly to industry in Ellesmere Port and Stanlow Oil Refinery.
- High levels of Nitrogen Dioxide in three Air Quality Management Areas (one of which will be revoked soon) and high levels of Sulphur Dioxide in one Air Quality Management Area in the borough. New development could contribute to or be affected by poor air quality. Poor air quality can have a significant impact on people's health, such as increasing incidences of respiratory illness
- Difficulties improving accessibility to services and facilities and reducing car use in the rural area.
- Additional renewable energy developments may impact negatively on the landscape, particularly if undertaken in greater numbers and at a larger scale.
- Energy performance of buildings.

3.36 The key sustainability opportunities relating to climate change, energy and air quality are:

- Due to the scale of the borough and the relatively compact nature of the main centres, there are opportunities for developments to be built in accessible locations that help to reduce the need for car travel.
- Homeworking increased significantly in borough due to COVID. This may reduce over time, but there is an opportunity to continue and expand levels of homeworking to continue to reduce travel and therefore reduce carbon emissions.
- Potential to make significant reductions in carbon emissions by decarbonising industry in Ellesmere Port. This could be done by heat networks, hydrogen use, additional renewable energy capacity etc. The businesses in the Ellesmere Port area already have expertise in the energy sector and have been working on ways to decarbonise these energy-intensive industries. This provides opportunities for innovative work, such as a district-wide micro-grid.

- The TATA Chemicals plant in Northwich has a combined heat and power plant which has the UK's only industrial scale carbon capture and utilisation plant (CCU). This supports the reduction of carbon emissions in this area and similar technology could also be used in other areas.
- The geology of CWaC provides opportunities for the development of underground gas storage in salt caverns (including hydrogen) as well as carbon capture and storage. It also has links to offshore facilities and pipelines. This gives opportunities for future hydrogen and carbon capture and storage in the borough.
- The climate emergency and increased awareness of climate change issues among Councillors and members of the public is an opportunity as it may make it easier to gain support for changes, particularly more difficult change that prioritises climate change reduction over other social or economic issues.
- There are opportunities for additional capacity from future renewable energy schemes, particularly biomass, anaerobic digestion, photovoltaics and onshore wind. The CWaC Low Carbon and Renewable Energy study (2012) identifies opportunities for renewable energy within the borough and states that biomass and commercial scale wind energy provide opportunities for the greatest contribution to the borough's energy demand. It identified that there is capacity for up to 389 MW of medium and large scale wind, excluding areas in international or nationally designated landscape and taking account of some constraints on wind development.
- There is the opportunity for additional tree planting to help with shading in urban areas.
- The Planning and Energy Act 2008 identifies that Local Planning Authorities may include policies in their development plan documents that impose reasonable requirements for: a proportion of energy used in development in their area to be energy from renewable sources in the local of the development; a proportion of energy used in development in their area to be low carbon energy from sources in the locality of the development; and development in their area to comply with energy efficiency standards that exceed the energy requirements of building regulations. The current Local Plan requires high levels of energy efficiency and for opportunities to incorporate sustainable design features to be maximised. However, it does not include specific requirements for renewable or low carbon energy or energy efficiency standards. This is an opportunity as it could be included in future plan policies.
- There are opportunities to reduce the carbon impact of new buildings, both in terms of embodied carbon (the carbon emitted during production of the concrete, steel, timber etc that are used to construct the building) and carbon emitted from the operation of the building (heating, cooling, lighting, technology and appliances).
- The Local Plan and / or design code could require design of new buildings to maximise solar gain and prevent overheating and use of insulation and other measures to prevent heat loss are particularly important in new buildings as retrofitting is more disruptive and costly. Retrofitting is usually outside the control of the planning system (unless permission is required for external changes for example).
- There are opportunities for urban greening and tree planting as carbon sinks and to reduce heat island issues and links to the work of the Mersey Forest. The Mersey Forest Plan sets out an ambition to increase woodland cover from 8 percent to 20 percent across the Mersey Forest area over a 25 year period and woodlands store an average of 5.5 tonnes of carbon dioxide per hectare per year. Green roofs and walls could also be supported and can help to reduce air temperatures, improve air quality and to slow and contain run-off from heavy rainfall.

SA framework

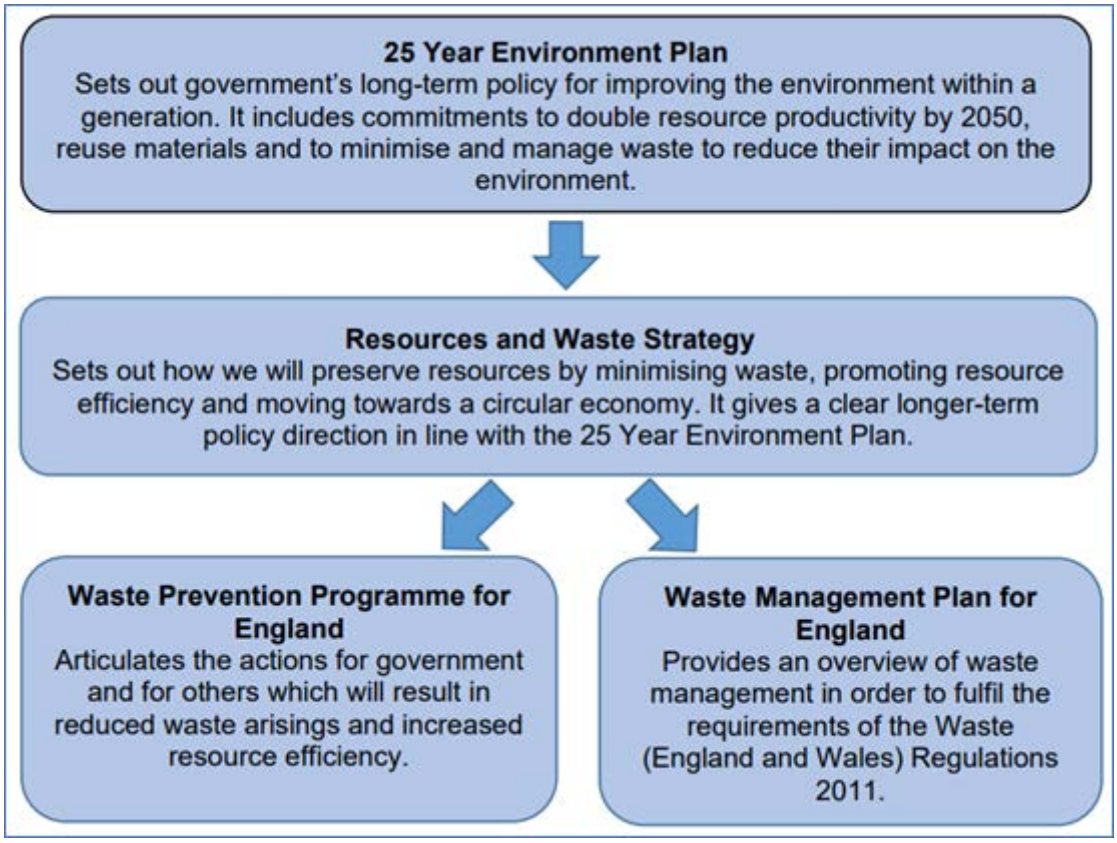
Sustainability objective	Appraisal criteria/ sub-objective	Baseline indicator
Protect air quality where it is of a high standard and to improve it elsewhere	Will it improve or have an insignificant effect on local air quality, ensuring minimum impact on people's health?	Annual average background nitrogen dioxide concentration in AQMAs (ug/m^3)
		Number of Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs)
	Will it encourage the use of clean technologies and working practises and a shift to more sustainable modes of transport?	Number of tonnes of NOx emitted annually from road transport
		Number of tonnes of PM10 emitted annually from road transport
Reduce the emission of greenhouse gasses, in particular CO_2	Will it ensure that new development is in accessible locations in order to reduce the need for car borne travel and / or encourage sustainable forms of transport?	Percentage of new residential developments of over 10 units within 15 minutes walking distance of a retail centre
		PM10 annual emissions from road transport
		$C0_2$ emissions from road transport
		Percentage of new residential development located within or adjacent to an urban area or Key Service Centre
	Will it encourage the use of clean technologies and working practises?	Total CO_2 emissions
		CO_2 emissions per capita arising from domestic; industry and commerce and transport
Reduce energy consumption, promote energy efficiency and increase the use of energy from renewable resources	Will it reduce energy consumption?	Annual average domestic consumption of electricity (Kilowatt Hours) Annual average domestic consumption of gas (Kilowatt hours)
	Will it promote energy efficiency?	Housing energy efficiency (SAP rating)
	Will it result in an increase in installed renewable energy capacity?	Amount of renewable energy generation by installed capacity

4 Waste

Policy context

4.1 In the 25 Year Environment Plan (till 2050), the government pledged to leave the environment in a better condition for the next generation. The Resources and Waste Strategy (DEFRA 2018) sets out how we will preserve material resources by minimising waste, promoting resource efficiency and moving towards a circular economy in England. It sets out how we will minimise the damage caused to our natural environment by reducing and managing waste safely and carefully, and by tackling waste crime. It combines actions we will take now with firm commitments for the coming years and gives a clear longer-term policy direction in line with our 25 Year Environment Plan. It is our blueprint for eliminating avoidable plastic waste over the lifetime of the 25 Year Environment Plan, doubling resource productivity, and eliminating avoidable waste of all kinds by 2050.

Figure 4.1 Relationship between the Waste Management Plan for England and other policy



4.2 National waste planning policy is an important part of delivering the objectives of the Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011. Current planning policy in the NPPF and the National Planning Policy for Waste (2014) contains planning policies which should be taken into account by local authorities in assessing the suitability of areas and sites for waste development within local plans and in determining planning applications.

4.3 As part of the background work on Local Plan (Part Two), an update to the Waste Needs Assessment was undertaken in 2016. The 2016 update confirmed that there is still sufficient capacity to meet forecast needs and therefore it is not necessary to identify additional land to meet the borough's waste management requirements. This situation will continue to be kept under review through the Council's annual monitoring report (AMR) and through the current update to the Waste Needs Assessment.

4.4 There are many different types of waste produced in the UK however, in the context of CWaC, the following types of waste streams are relevant:

- household waste (Local Authority Collected Waste);
- commercial and industrial waste (waste from businesses and industry);
- construction, demolition and excavation waste;
- agricultural waste;
- hazardous waste; and
- sewage sludge.

4.5 Depending upon the nature of the waste it may be able to be re-used in some way or recycled or it may be possible to use it to generate heat or electricity. In 2022, the amount of commercial and industrial waste produced in the borough sent for energy recovery / landfill / treatment was 127,000 tonnes, that is 28% of the total waste arisings of the borough.

Baseline information

4.6 A report from S&P Global Platts, a commodity market specialist, revealed that recycled plastic now costs an extra $72 (£57) a tonne compared with newly made plastic. According to the analysts this trend is driven in part by the growing demand to include recycled plastics in new products. The value of recycled materials and the markets available are reducing which makes recycling less cost effective and increases costs for local authorities. The COVID-19 pandemic has also had an impact on recycling levels and availability of recycled materials (such as glass cullet for glass making). With many international investors acquiring or investing in UK waste management businesses, the foreign interest is expected to rise.

4.7 The Council's Waste Needs Assessment (WNA) from 2010 was updated in 2016. The 2016 WNA updates the forecasts for arisings of various waste streams over the plan period and monitors the borough's waste arisings and management over the 2013/14 period (the most up to date available information at the time the report was written). The Council has recently commissioned BPP Consulting LLP to produce an Updated WNA, which is expected to be published by in the next few months.

4.8 The forecast of waste arisings to 2030 set out below are taken from the WNA 2016. The figures shown include Local Authority collected waste, commercial and industrial, and construction demolition and excavation waste.

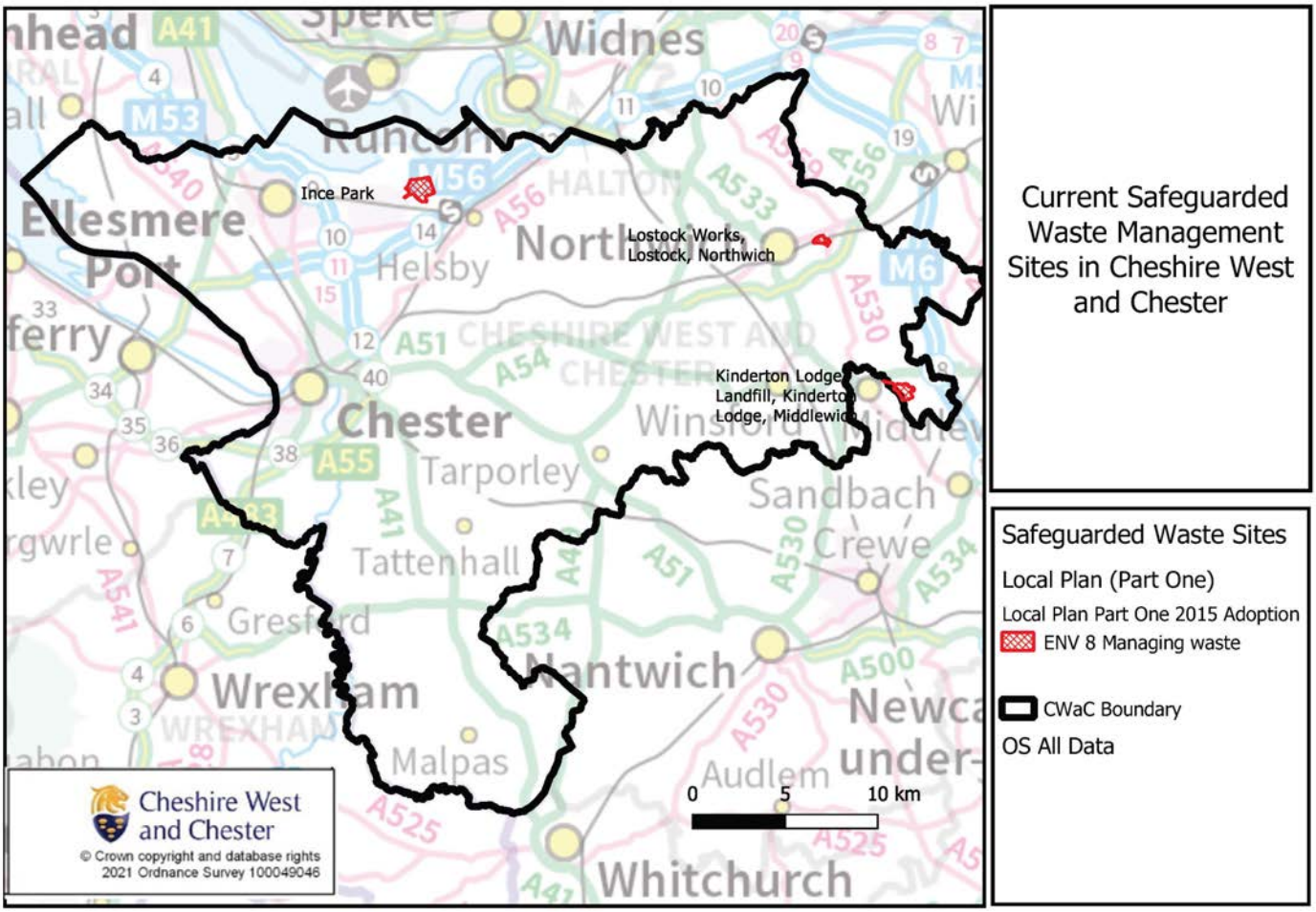
2014	2015	2020	2025	2030
967,000	960,000	1,002,000	1,009,000	1,010,000

4.9 In 2022, the capacity in operational sites was 2,059,494 tonnes per annum (materials recycling facilities, composting, recycling, transfer stations, hazardous waste treatment, landfill and other waste facilities).

Waste Management Type	No. of Operational Facilities (2021)	Input for 2021 (Tonnes)	%
Incineration	2	112,582.08	5.86
Landfill	4	519,692.31	27.03
MRS	6	17,337.33	0.90
On/In Land	1	14,240	0.74
Transfer	20	158,126.29	8.22
Treatment	22	1,100,552.34	57.24
Total	**55**	**1,922,530.35**	

4.10 Within CWaC, there are three main sites where waste uses are proposed – Protos (previously known as Ince Park), Lostock Works and Kinderton Lodge. Protos includes soil treatment, biogas and renewable fuel generation, integrated waste management facility, plastics recycling facility, water treatment, energy from waste , hydrogen production facility, resource recovery village and block making facility. Lostock Works mainly includes energy from waste and bio-energy generation and the proposed Kinderton Lodge includes landfill, materials recycling, green waste composting. Apart from these large scale sites, there are several other sites with planning permission, including Urenco (for treatment of low level and very low level radioactive waste) and Land at North Road Ellesmere Port which will process imported contaminated materials.

Map 4.1 Current Safeguarded Waste Management Sites in CWaC



4.11 Sufficient sites were provided for waste management to provide for the needs of the borough, through Local Plan policies as seen on the map and from the above tables. The 2016 WNA identified that in 2025, there would be a capacity surplus of 1,534,000 tonnes by 2030. However, as seen in the above tables, in 2021, Waste input from WDI 2021 is 1,922,530.35 tonnes which is approximately 917,030.35 tonnes more than what was anticipated by the forecast of arisings in the 2016 WNA update.

4.12 The WNA 2016 update also mentioned that, consideration should be made to the fact that there will be no non-hazardous landfill capacity after 2022. There was a slight increase in the level of waste being landfilled in 2017/18 compared with 2016/17, due to an energy from waste facility being out of operation for a period, during which time the waste was landfilled. There was also an increase in 2020/21 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdown, disruption to facilities and significant increase in levels of LACW. For 2021, 0.00% of the waste has been landfilled as per Waste data flow in terms of 'direct' landfill of waste.

4.13 So whilst there is sufficient energy recovery capacity assuming planned facilities are financed and built, not all residual waste can be treated this way, and some landfill will be required. Note there is planning permission for a mineral extraction and restoration by waste disposal at Kinderton Lodge which can potentially fill this gap. However, as of May 2023 Kinderton Lodge site has not started operations fully. There are plans to commence later in 2023.

Evidence gaps and proposed work

4.14 The latest full WNA was produced in 2010, to which, the latest update was in 2016 and hence requires updating. A new full WNA is underway now which is intended to be published in the next few months. For the purpose of this scoping report, the data is based on the WNA 2016 update, the latest Waste Data Interrogator (2021) and the Annual Monitoring Report (2022) which monitors the effectiveness of policies of the adopted Local Plan (Part One and Two) through various indicators.

4.15 The HS2 Phase 2b route passes through CWaC and will potentially result in large amounts of waste that cannot be re-used within the HS2 scheme. The majority of this waste is likely to be inert waste which could be disposed of via recovery to land (for example to infill quarries or where land raising is required), but due to the timescales involved, opportunities for land recovery are not yet known. Further information is awaited from HS2 Ltd to confirm the anticipated level of waste to be generated and the amount likely to require disposal to landfill or other waste treatment / disposal. This will be considered within the WNA if the information is available in time.

Recent changes and anticipated trends

As of July 2021, there were about 160,000 household dwellings in the borough receiving waste collection services and this is rising at a rate of about 1,100 dwelling per annum as new properties are developed. Over the past 10 years, CWaC residents have made significant improvements in rates of recycling. In 2019-20, the overall recycling rate was just over 56 per cent - this is a vast improvement on a rate of 48 per cent in 2010-11. However, there is still a long way to go, with the Council required to pay to process the remaining 44 per cent (69,000 tonnes) of household waste that isn't recycled. This processing also has an environmental impact. If there is not a reduction in residual waste, the Council will face annual rising costs and will not be in a position to address the climate change emergency.

The COVID 19 crisis of 2020 and 2021 has impacted on the delivery of the Council's waste management services and the amount of waste that residents produce. The effect of the pandemic meant the Council had to temporarily close and then reconfigure how the HWRC's operate. However, because many residents were working from home, the amount of household waste needing to be managed and disposed of also rose which further impacted on the Council resources and finances. There were similar knock-on effects on other waste streams as well which could potentially explain the difference in actual arisings and that forecasted by WNA 2016 update.

There has been a steady increase in the proportion of local authority waste being recycled and composted. The reduction in 2020/21 is due to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated impacts on disruption of services, including temporary closures of household waste recycling centres and temporary suspension of garden waste collections. However, the borough still has one of the highest recycling

rates in the country and has met the target of 50% recycling by 2020 set in the Cheshire Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy. In 2022 the number was closer to pre-pandemic levels at 57.62%.

Local Plan Update scope and influence

4.16 The current Local Plan makes adequate provision for waste management and disposal based on the 2010 WNA and in the 2016 Update there was a forecast that in 2020, waste arisings would be in the region of 1,002,000 tonnes and in 2025, the number would be 1,009,000 tonnes. For 2022-23, we can calculate a middle figure of 1,005,500 tonnes. However, the real time figure is now 1,922,530 tonnes, almost 917,030 tonnes more than what was forecasted by WNA 2016 update for 2022-23 . While it is possible that existing facilities are coping with the increased arisings , this cannot be confirmed until we have the results of the updated WNA. CWaC will then be in a position to identify the level of additional waste management and disposal provision required in the borough.

4.17 Local Plan policies can influence the location and provision of facilities, but movement of waste is normally based on market decisions (cost and distance). The Local Plan can safeguard existing facilities and can prevent new development in areas adjacent to existing or proposed waste facilities limiting future operation of facilities (the agent of change principle – para 187 of NPPF). The change in the waste hierarchy and the priority given to different types of waste use, recycling and disposal generally relates to Government policy and taxation and it is difficult to control through planning policies.

4.18 Policies on sustainable construction can support re-use and recycling of materials and other policies can help to promote recycling and re-use, but most of the factors that impact on recycling rates and use of recycled materials are outside the planning process and therefore cannot be influenced by the Local Plan.

Key sustainability issues and opportunities

- National levels of recycling are increasing, but the rate of increase has now slowed. England's recycling rate in 2021/22 rose by just 0.3 percentage points compared to the last financial year, moving from 43.8% to 44.1%.
- Use of landfill is reducing as residual waste is increasingly sent for treatment and used for energy generation. Nationally the emphasis is on developing new types of waste management facilities to deliver sustainable waste management including new facilities that take residual waste for treatment and produce an end product that can re-used.
- Recycling is more costly to undertake which in turn makes products with recycled materials more costly than making them with new materials. In a Link report for Wildlife and Countryside, the policies needed for widespread adoption of reuse and refill packaging systems have been discussed. Some of their recommendations were to cut taxes on products and packaging sold as part of reuse and refill system activities, cut taxes on products and packaging sold as part of reuse and refill system activities, ensure that packaging producers pay to transition the sector away from single use packaging and provide a clear policy signal to businesses by setting reuse targets. Such government policy and taxation would change the recycling industry in the near future.

- There is the opportunity to deliver sustainable waste management by application of the waste hierarchy - prevention, preparation for re-use, recycling, other recovery and disposal, landfill as last resort. The Government's overall objective for waste is to protect human health and the environment by producing less waste and using it as a resource wherever possible. The emphasis is on reducing the volume of waste produced initially, then increasing the volume of waste which is re-used and recycled. This will significantly reduce the amount of residual waste which is disposed of at landfill.

- There were 4,762 incidents of fly-tipping within CWaC in 2022 against a baseline of 4,068 incidents in 2018/19. There is a need to reduce fly tipping and for better prevention and detection and enforcement against fly tipping and other illegal waste activity to reduce the costs of clear up operation.

- The Local Plan Update could provide additional facilities for waste recycling to meet the anticipated increases in recycling levels (Anthesis, 2019 state that 60% of household and non-household waste is sent for reuse, recycling or composting and suggest that this should increase to 67% in 2025, 71% in 2030 and 85% in 2050.) The updated WNA will provide more information on requirements for recycling facilities.

SA framework

Sustainability objective	Appraisal criteria/ sub-objective	Baseline indicator
Achieve sustainable waste management by reducing the production of waste, increasing opportunities for recycling and reducing the amount of waste being sent for final disposal to landfill	Will it encourage a reduction in the amount of waste produced?	Municipal Solid Waste Arisings Kilogrammes of household waste collected per head Total amount of Commercial and Industrial Waste
	Will it encourage increased recycling and composting and achieve the diversion targets for waste away from landfill?	% of Municipal Solid Waste landfilled % of Commercial and Industrial Waste landfilled / land Recovered % of Municipal Solid Waste recycled and composted % of Municipal Solid Waste sent for energy recovery % of Commercial and Industrial Waste recycled
	Will it result in new or enhanced waste management facilities to meet the waste management needs of the area?	Capacity of new waste management facilities by waste planning authority

Sustainability objective	Appraisal criteria/ sub-objective	Baseline indicator
	Will it result in improvement in the management of fly tipping and reduction in the number of incidences of fly tipping?	Number of fly-tipping incidents

5 Land and resources

Policy context

5.1 Land resources within Cheshire West and Chester, like everywhere else is valuable and finite. It is important that the resource is protected and safeguarded through Local Plan policies. Some of the main components of land resources for the purpose of this scoping report are mineral resources, Green Belt, geological and geomorphological resources, and agricultural land. Regard should also be given to manage vacant, derelict and contaminated land.

5.2 For England, the key national planning policies for minerals are set out in the NPPF. The focus of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The NPPF recognises that it is important that there is a sufficient supply of material to provide the infrastructure, buildings, energy and goods that the country needs whilst ensuring that permitted mineral operations do not have unacceptable adverse impacts on the natural and historic environment or human health. The NPPF also recognises that, since minerals are a finite natural resource, and can only be worked where they are found, it is important to make best use of them and to secure their long-term conservation through the mechanism of mineral safeguarding. Specific mineral related policies can be found in Section 17 of the NPPF.

5.3 Section 97 of Part II of Schedule 5 and Schedule 9 to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 establish a range of orders for mineral planning authorities to control minerals development. The NPPF 2021 lays out policy guidance for safeguarding the finite supply of minerals and secures their long-term conservation. CWaC is a mineral planning authority and has a duty to plan for steady and adequate supply of aggregates. Paragraph 24 of the NPPF 2021 also identifies that local planning authorities are under a duty to co-operate with each other, and with other prescribed bodies on strategic matters that cross administrative boundaries. Cheshire West and Chester Council will co-operate with relevant local authorities and other bodies on strategic minerals issues. CWaC includes significant deposits of sand and gravel and there are three operational quarries within the borough. Coal extraction was previously undertaken in CWaC, but is no longer viable and the borough does not include any workable reserves of crushed rock or dimension stone for building.

5.4 The Managed Aggregates Supply System (MASS) seeks to ensure a steady and adequate supply of aggregates in England, taking into account the geographical imbalances in occurrence and need of suitable aggregates resources. It involves national, sub-national and local partners working together from minerals planning authorities at the local level, Aggregate Working Parties at the sub-national level and a National Aggregate Coordinating Group who monitor the overall provision of aggregate in England. Cheshire West and Chester is a member of the Northwest AWP. The AWP are consulted annually on the draft LAA (Local Aggregate Assessments) and ratify the final version.

5.5 Developers and local planning authorities (LPAs) should refer to government policies and legislation when considering development proposals that affect agricultural land and soils. They aim to protect and manage all soils, especially, the best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land from significant, inappropriate or unsustainable development proposals. Natural England uses these policies to advise on development proposals as a statutory consultee in the planning process. A Green Future: Our 25

Year Plan to Improve the Environment sets out the government's 25-year plan to improve the health of the environment by using natural resources more sustainably and efficiently.

5.6 NPPF 2021, chapter 15 provides a steer for making decisions on planning applications as well as for formulating policies on a local level. Schedule 4(y) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure (England) Order) (DMPO) 2015, requires planning authorities to consult Natural England on all non-agricultural applications that result in the loss of more than 20 hectares (ha) of BMV land if the land is not included in a development plan. For example, this includes the likely cumulative loss of BMV land from the proposed development if it's part of a phased development.

5.7 The North Cheshire Green Belt is a major designation in the borough and covers 42% of the land area (39,230 hectares). Green Belt surrounds much of the area around the City of Chester and most of the land between Chester and Ellesmere Port and Chester and Northwich. Green Belts have the fundamental aim of preventing urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; prevent neighbouring towns from merging; assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; preserving the setting and character of historic towns and aiding regeneration by encouraging the reuse of derelict and other urban land.

5.8 Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGS) is a non-statutory designation intended to help protect areas of geological importance. These can be designated for scientific significance, aesthetics, historical importance or educational purposes. CWaC has a number of sites of importance, some crossing administrative boundaries. RIGS in Cheshire are identified by a Cheshire RIGS Group. RIGS complement the series of statutorily designated SSSIs, but do not receive any statutory protection other than through the policies contained in Development Plan Documents. There are currently 24 RIGsS within CWaC, covering 174 hectares.

5.9 CWaC also has some contaminated land and the Environmental Protection Team identify, investigate and manage such land within the Borough. Land can be contaminated by substances such as heavy metals, such as arsenic, cadmium and lead, oils and tars, chemical substances and preparations, like solvents, gases, asbestos and radioactive substances. Contaminated land may previously have been used as a factory, mine, steel mill, refinery or landfill. A dataset of polygons with an attribute table that summarises the location and status of land recorded within the public register kept under the Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 by the government (Contaminated Land Part IIA public register - data.gov.uk).

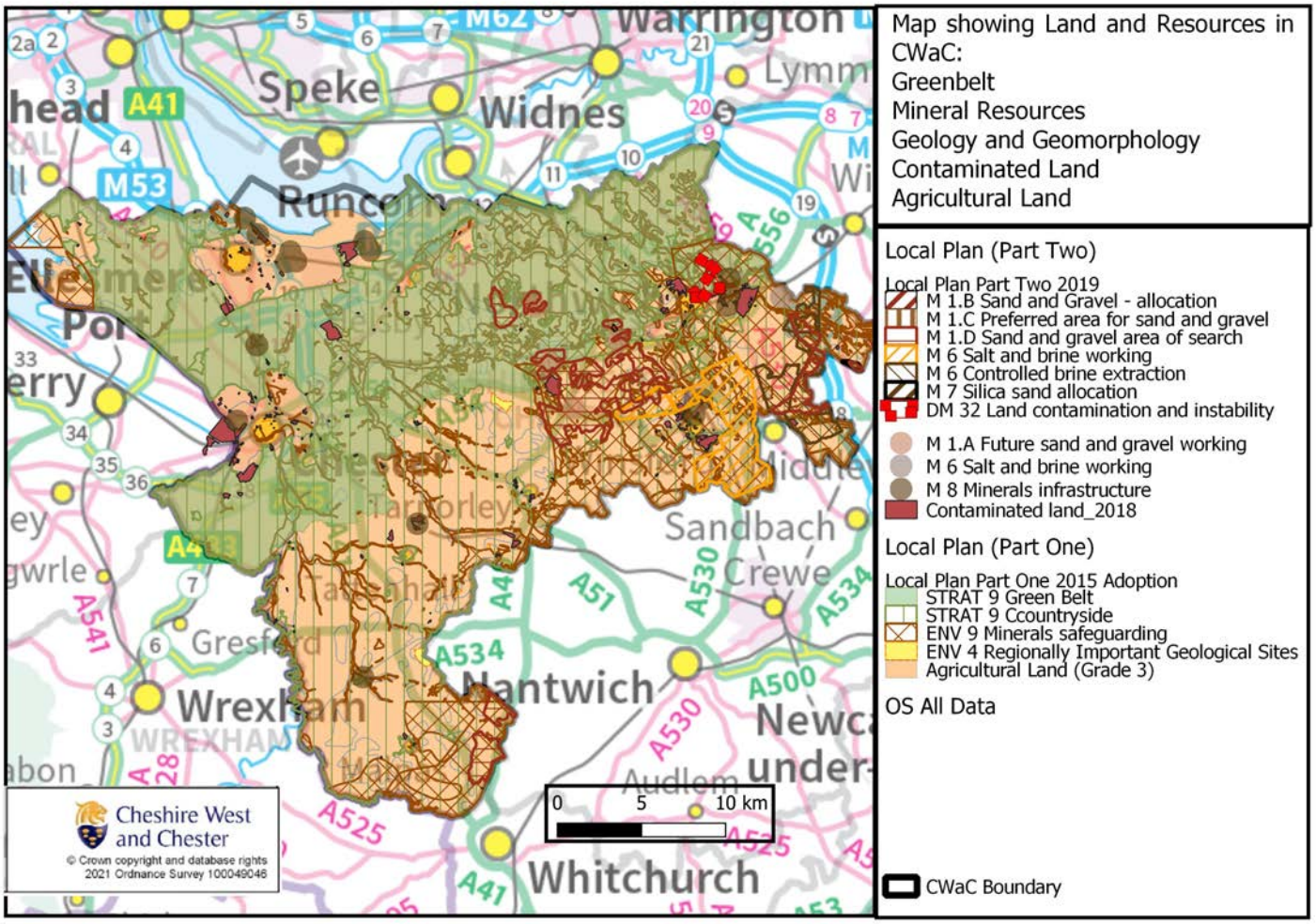
Baseline information

5.10 Land-based resources such as Green Belt and agricultural land, are designated and protected at national levels, whereas Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGS) and Minerals are designated and protected at more local levels.

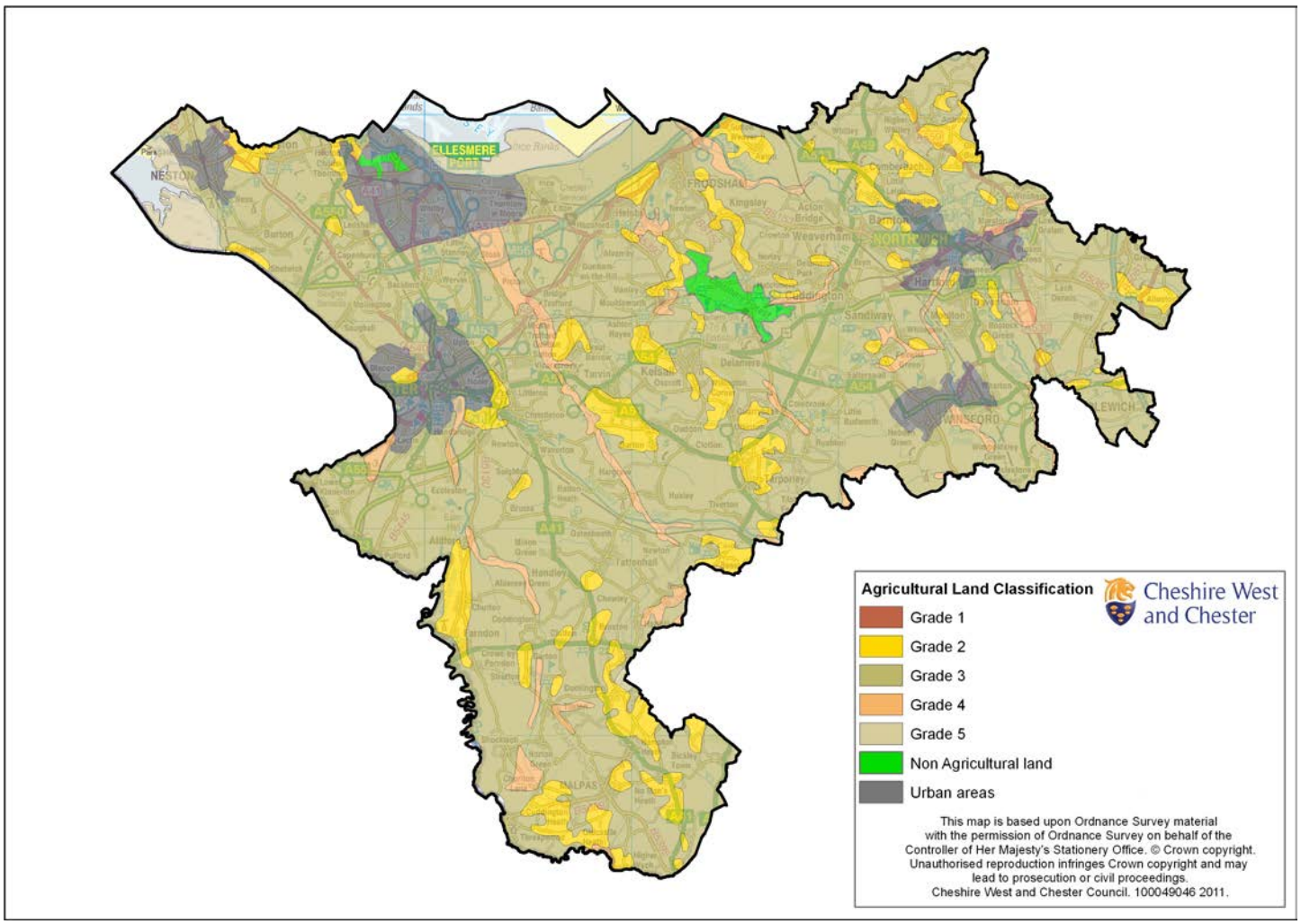
5.11 The extent of each of the elements of land resources within CWaC are shown in the maps below, followed by a more detailed map on the available grades of agricultural land in the borough.

5 Land and resources

Map 5.1 Elements of land and resources within CWaC



Map 5.2 Agricultural Land Quality in Cheshire West and Chester



5.12 Soils in the borough are predominantly slow permeable loams and clays although the Sandstone Ridge (running down the eastern part of the borough) is characterised by freely draining loamy and sandy soils. The marshland/coastal flats near the areas of Frodsham/Helsby and near Parkgate/Neston are naturally wet loamy and clayey soils. The key mineral resources present in the borough are sand and gravel, salt and coalbed methane. There are currently two active sand and gravel sites within the borough (Crown Farm Quarry in Delamere and Forest Hill Quarry in Sandiway). There is also one industrial silica sand site (Rudheath Lodge) which is partly within CWaC and partly within Cheshire East. This quarry provides industrial silica sand and aggregate sand. CWaC has no crushed rock reserves and there are no dimension stone extracted, although sandstone was extracted in the area in the past, currently there are no workable deposits.

5.13 Salt is present in extensive areas underlying the borough in both its solid form as rock salt and in solution form as brine. Rock salt is currently mined underground at the Winsford Rock Salt Mine, which currently has a mine capacity of around 2.25 million tonnes per year. The Winsford Rock Salt Mine is considered to be a nationally significant resource of rock salt. The voids created by the extraction

are also of strategic importance being used for document storage (archiving services) and contributing to hazardous waste storage capacity.

5.14 Salt is also extracted in solution form as brine at the Holford Brinefields. The brine is extracted at numerous brine wells which supply works at Northwich for use in industrial processes. Some of the cavities created at the Holford Brinefields also contribute to the nationally significant storage of natural gas.

5.15 Coal also underlies parts of the borough but no extraction currently takes place. In addition hydrocarbons are found in both conventional and unconventional form in sandstone and limestone reservoirs beneath the borough in the form of coal bed methane and shale gas. There are currently five permitted exploratory borehole sites and two sites which also have permission for the production phase of coalbed methane extraction. These permissions do not allow for the exploration, appraisal and/or production of shale gas.

5.16 According to the Mineral Products Association (contribution of recycled and secondary materials to total aggregate supply in GB, 2020 estimates), in 2020, total recycled and secondary sources of aggregates accounted for 28% (61.8 million tonnes) of total aggregates supply in Great Britain, a leading position internationally in the use of recycled and secondary aggregates.

5.17 The NPPF requires that local authorities provide at landbank of at least 7 years supply of sand and gravel. The Local Aggregate Assessment (LAA) (2022) provides information about the landbank based on the ten-year average sales figure and on the annual apportionment figure. The total reserves in 2021 was 5.32 mt. The apportionment figure was originally set for Cheshire and was split into specific figures for Cheshire East and CWaC set at 0.80 mt for CWaC. At 31 December 2021 the landbank based on ten year average sales was 8.44 years, whereas the landbank based on the annual apportionment figure was 6.65 years, which is just below the required 7 years. Aggregate monitoring was undertaken at a national level in 2020 (for 2019 period) by the British Geological Society which revealed that 1.86 million tonnes were imported in the Cheshire region (not split into Cheshire East and CWaC).

5.18 In 2020-21 a planning application was approved for an extension to the existing quarry at Forest Hill, to provide 350,000 tonnes of sand and gravel. This extension site was allocated in the Local Plan (Part Two).

5.19 Data for construction, demolition and excavation waste recycling is difficult to obtain as most of the material is reprocessed and utilised at source, using mobile plant and is therefore not recorded. In 2021, a Secondary and Recycled Aggregate Survey was undertaken in the borough as part of the North West Aggregate Working Party Annual Monitoring Survey (recording data for the 2018 period), but only one company responded, the data for which could not be published due to data protection.

5.20 A Cheshire Region LGAP (Local Geodiversity Action Plan) Group has been produced with the aim of contributing to the maintenance and improvement of the wellbeing of the Cheshire region by producing a Cheshire LGAP to safeguard the geology, geomorphology, soils and landscapes of the area.

Evidence gaps and proposed work

5.21 The annual Local Aggregate Assessments for CWaC provide up-to-date data for main quarry operators. However, there is a gap in evidence for secondary and recycled aggregate data within CWaC. The response rate of the operators have decreased year-on-year and for the latest survey in 2023 (2022 data) there have been no returns. A study or monitoring is required to provide further information.

5.22 Consultants have been engaged in early 2023 in order to produce an up-to-date WNA for the borough which would help increase the borough's total mineral reserves and also understand recycling rates for construction, demolition and excavation wastes from a waste management perspective.

5.23 The evidence and consultation work undertaken for the Local Plan (Part One and Part Two) in relation to minerals may need to be updated. This includes:

- Consultation on Mineral Safeguarding undertaken for LPP1 in 2012.
- Consultation on MSAs and buffer zones.
- Mineral infrastructure sites – as these are likely to have changed since the consultation work in 2012A call for sites for mineral uses.
- Information on future provision of crushed rock and ability to continue importing crushed rock. Relevant local authorities that provide crushed rock to CWaC will need to be consulted to check if this can continue.

5.24 Areas at risk of subsidence due to brine extraction and natural solution have already been identified, but this could be updated to assess future risk of subsidence and this would also need to be taken into account when assessing potential allocations for alternative uses such as housing or employment.

5.25 A Cheshire Region LGAP (Local Geodiversity Action Plan) Group was in the making in early 2000 with the aim of contributing to the maintenance and improvement of the wellbeing of the Cheshire region by producing a Cheshire LGAP to safeguard the geology, geomorphology, soils and landscapes of the area. No recent monitoring information has been found in this regard, but this is not an issue as the which is acceptable for the purposes of the Local Plan Update as this resource is not likely to change over the plan period. However, the plan would still require to safeguard this resource where possible.

Recent changes and anticipated trends

5.26 The current proposed route alignment of HS2 (phase 2b) passes through eastern parts of the borough. Creation of HS2 and its associated infrastructure, will have significant aggregate requirements. An updated borrow pit report for HS2 indicates that there are likely to be three large borrow pits located within CWaC to meet part of the shortfall of sand, gravel, crushed rock and clay. Para 10.1.5 of the borrow pit report says that the deficit of high-quality engineering fill materials will be approximately 1.9 million cubic meters. This would not all need to be provided by CWaC, but nonetheless, it could have major impact on CWaC's reserves / landbank. A recent amendment to the HS2 scheme (Additional Provision 1) has resulted in a reduced need for aggregates and as a result, one of the borrow pits would no longer be required. CWaC have submitted comments at various stages of consultation and will

continue to seek further clarification on the exact requirements for sand and gravel and details of how this will be provided.

5.27 The HyNet Northwest Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) will also result in aggregate requirements and will impact on existing MSAs, but opportunities for re-use of extracted material and additional volumes required are not currently clear. The project includes a hydrogen production plant in Ellesmere Port, a carbon dioxide pipeline from Ellesmere Port to depleted gas reservoirs under Liverpool Bay and a hydrogen pipeline from the production plant to storage areas and users.

5.28 Large parts of the Mineral Safeguarding Area is within the area covered by the Sandstone Ridge, which has been shortlisted as a potential AONB. If the designation continues, there may be difficulty in allocating sites for quarries in this area.

5.29 CWaC imports all of its crushed rock requirements as there are no workable reserves within CWaC. However, some key suppliers of minerals such as the Peak District and Lake District are likely to be increasingly restricted in future due to their National Park status.

5.30 The area of land that is considered vacant and derelict has decreased in the authority between 2002 and 2009. A relatively high percentage of new housing is being built on previously developed land, although this is lower than the level in previous years. During the 2014/15 period, 56% of housing completions recorded during the monitoring period were on previously developed land, 27% of greenfield land and 17% on sites that were a mix of greenfield and previously developed land. Employment completions on previously developed land were high in 2012-13, but a slightly lower level than in 2009-10.

5.31 Percentage of new dwellings built on previously developed land was 61% as of 2021-22 and percentage of employment floorspace on previously developed land was 13.2 ha (AMR 2022).

5.32 While Green Belt area remained the same within CWaC, there has been an increase in the amount of good quality agricultural land (grade 3) since 2014, from 59.2% to 71.69% in 2021-22 (AMR 2022).

Local Plan Update scope and influence

5.33 Green Belt is protected and designated nationally. While the general extent usually remains unchanged, Local Plans can influence the extent by either releasing land from Green Belt in order to facilitate more development or increase the Green Belt protect existing minerals sites, minerals infrastructure and areas where minerals are located (MSAs).

5.34 The Local Plan can allocate new sites for minerals development and can also identify preferred areas (where minerals development will be supported) and areas of search (where knowledge of mineral resources is less certain, but proposals for minerals development will be supported where it can be demonstrated that the permitted reserves, allocated sites and preferred areas cannot meet the required level of provision). It is difficult to identify new sites as minerals can only be worked where they are found and many of the mineral resource areas have already been sterilised or are significantly constrained.

5.35 There are no supplies of crushed rock in the borough, so all crushed rock requirements need to be imported. The Local Plan update will provide an opportunity to conduct Duty to cooperate exercises to ensure existing imports from other authorities can continue – especially given increasing restrictions on quarrying in Peak District and Lake District national parks.

5.36 Natural England has identified that areas of peat deposits should not be built on due to potential impacts on carbon emissions. The Local Plan could control development in peat areas. Some collaborative work would need to be done with Natural England on the exact locations of peat deposits, depths, type of peat etc. Whilst not a major land type in Cheshire West and Chester, peatland is a major store of carbon. Restoration of peatlands is a priority for government and part of its Nature for Climate programme that is delivering over 600m over the next four years. The Natural Capital report will provide up to date information on the extent and location of peatland across the borough.

5.37 Local Plan policies can protect RIGS and other important geological or geomorphological sites.

5.38 The spatial strategy for new development set out in the Local Plan Update will impact on levels of development on vacant and contaminated land, depending upon the areas chosen for the majority of development (i.e. whether this is the urban areas or more rural areas). It will also impact on levels of development on agricultural land.

5.39 Planning policies can influence whether agricultural land is used for housing or agricultural diversification for example. Planning cannot have a major influence on how land is farmed and whether this is done more intensively or more organically and supports biodiversity. This will be influenced by government policy, taxation and grants and the market for agricultural products.

Key sustainability issues and opportunities

- The Green Belt should be protected. Green Belt boundaries can be altered through Local Plans, but only in exceptional circumstances. The evidence prepared for the Local Plan Update will need to identify whether exceptional circumstances exist and if so, which parts of the Green Belt need to be reviewed and amended.

- There may be additional pressure on provision of sand and gravel from CwaC in the future as several quarries in the Greater Manchester and Merseyside area have recently closed and many of these authorities do not now have a 7 year supply of aggregates.

- It may be possible for some additional aggregate provision to come from additional marine extraction.
- Changes to government policy and taxation relating to re-use of buildings rather than demolition and on recycling of construction, demolition and excavation waste may influence levels of recycled aggregates. This will impact on the levels of primary aggregates required to be extracted to meet the 7-year supply.
- The Mineral Products Association identify in the 9th AMPS report (2021) As of the end of 2020, the rolling 10-year average for sand & gravel replenishment is 63%, indicating that sales continue to outstrip the tonnage of new reserves permitted. (MPA_AMPS_2021.pdf (mineralproducts.org))

- Changes to levels of housebuilding, employment development and major infrastructure schemes will impact on demand for minerals.
- Existing important sites of geological and geomorphological interest should be protected and enhanced.
- Development of vacant and derelict land should be prioritised .
- Remediation of contaminated land should be promoted and encouraged.

Sustainability objectives, targets and indicators

Sustainability objective	Appraisal criteria/ sub-objective	Baseline indicator
Reduce the consumption of natural resources	Will it result in the prudent use of natural resources?	Sand and gravel sales per annum
	Will it promote the use of secondary/recycled aggregates?	Sales of secondary and recycled aggregates per annum
	Will it safeguard minerals to ensure continued provision during the plan period	Number of planning applications permitted in sand and gravel Mineral Safeguarding Areas
Protect land and soil quality	Will it impact on the extent and quality of soils?	Number of planning applications permitted on Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land
Optimise the re-use of of previously developed land and buildings	Will it promote re-use of buildings or development of brownfield land?	Percentage of new and converted dwellings built on previously developed land Percentage of employment floorspace completed on previously developed land
Manage contaminated land effectively	Will it increase land availability or enable development by effective treatment and management of contamination?	Number of planning applications approved on contaminated land with contamination assessment
Protect and enhance the number and area of RIGS	Will it increase the number and area of RIGS?	Number and area of RIGS

6 Water

Policy context

6.1 The principal rivers within the borough are the River Weaver, River Gowy, River Dee, River Dane, and the River Croco. The River Mersey also flows along part of the northern border and the Shropshire Union Canal, the Trent and Mersey Canal, the Weaver Navigation and the Mersey Ship Canal also pass through the borough.

6.2 Serious flooding can happen at any time. Climate projections suggest that extreme weather will happen more frequently in the future. The Flood and Water Management Act (2010) aims to reduce the flood risk associated with extreme weather. Cheshire West and Chester is a Lead Local Flood Authority and the Act places a duty on all flood risk management authorities to co-operate with each other and requires flood and coastal erosion risk management authorities to aim to contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development when exercising their flood and coastal erosion risk management functions.

6.3 Providing for the housing, business and associated needs of an increasing population may increase the consequences of a flood or coastal erosion incident. As a result, it is essential that spatial planning ensures that new development takes these risk factors fully into account. New developments should be safe from these risks, cause no increased risk elsewhere, and where possible reduce risk over their lifetimes. Land management and development can have significant effects on the movement of water within a catchment. Development or changes in land use in areas that themselves may not be at risk of flooding can reduce or prevent rainwater infiltration into the ground which increases quantities of surface water run-off and as a result increases the risk of flooding downstream.

6.4 In the UK the ten warmest years on record have occurred since 2002. The Met Office have stated that heatwaves are now 30 times more likely to happen and UK winters are likely to become warmer and wetter. The Met Office project that by 2070, winter will be between 1 and 4.5oC warmer and up to 30% wetter and summer will be between 1 and 6oC warmer and up to 60% drier. In the North West of England there is predicted to be an 18% decrease in rainfall in summer and a 13% increase in winter by 2050 (Met Office 2014 UK Climate Projections: Medium emission scenario).

International

6.5 The European Water Framework Directive (WFD) (2000/60/EC) promotes an integrated and coordinated approach to water management at the river basin scale. One of its key objectives is the requirement to prevent deterioration in status and achieve at least 'Good Ecological Status' in inland and coastal waters. The WFD also requires all Artificial or Heavily Modified Water Bodies to achieve Good Ecological Potential.

National

6.6 The Flood and Water Management Act (2010) sets out measures to ensure that risk from all sources of flooding, not just rivers and seas, are managed more effectively. This includes: incorporating greater resilience measures into the design of new buildings; utilising the environment in order to reduce

flooding; identifying areas suitable for inundation and water storage to reduce the risk of flooding elsewhere; roll back development in coastal areas to avoid damage from flooding or coastal erosion; and creating sustainable drainage systems (SuDS).

6.7 The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) Regulations 2017, referred to as the WFD Regulations, seeks to establish an integrated approach to the protection and sustainable use of the water environment. The WFD requires the: preparation and publication of river basin management plans setting out environmental objectives for groundwater and surface waters (including estuaries and coastal waters) and devising and implementing programmes of measures to meet those objectives. Under the WFD Regulations, a river basin management plan must be developed for each river basin district and reviewed and updated every 6 years. These plans were first published in December 2009. They were updated in February 2016 and December 2022.

The objectives and measures must:

- prevent deterioration in the status of surface waters and groundwater
- achieve 'Protected Area' objectives and standards
- aim to achieve good status for all water bodies
- aim to achieve good ecological potential and good surface water chemical status for artificial and heavily modified water bodies
- provide additional measures for protected areas

6.8 NPPF 2021: Flood Risk and Coastal Change - the main change to the NPPF within the flood risk and coastal change context relates to the requirement for flood risk management to take account of flooding from all sources. In August 2022, the Government published a significant refresh to their Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) in relation to flood risk and coastal change in line with changes introduced in 2018 and 2021 to the (NPPF).

6.9 The NPPF states that Local Planning Authorities should set out strategic policies to provide infrastructure for water supply, waste water and flood risk (paragraph 20b). Paragraph 159 of the NPPF states that inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk (whether existing or future). Where development is necessary in such areas, the development should be made safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere, and paragraph 169 requires major developments to incorporate sustainable drainage systems.

Key messages from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) include:

- Plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account the long-term implications for flood risk, coastal change, water supply;
- Policies should support appropriate measures to ensure the future resilience of communities and infrastructure to climate change impacts, such as providing space for physical protection measures, or making provision for the possible future relocation of vulnerable development and infrastructure.

- Inappropriate development in areas at high risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas of highest risk (whether existing or future).
- Plans should adopt proactive strategies to adaptation and manage risks of flooding through adaptation measures including well planned green and natural infrastructure.

6.10 NPPF key messages include that Local Plans and strategic polices should:

- set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and design quality of places, and make sufficient provision for water supply, wastewater, flood risk and coastal change management.
- take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account the long-term implications for water supply.
- prevent new and existing development from contributing to, and putting at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of water pollution.
- ensure that, wherever possible, development helps to improve local environmental conditions including water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans.

6.11 River Basin Management Plans (RBMP): set out a framework for how all river basin stakeholders, including water companies and local communities, can help improve the quality of the water environment. There are eight RBMPs in England which were updated in 2022. Cheshire West and Chester is covered by two RBMPs, namely the North West River Basin District RBMP (including the Weaver Gowy management catchment) and the Dee River Basin District RBMP, each published in 2022. The RBMPs describe the challenges that threaten the water environment and how these challenges can be managed. The current health of the water environment is assessed in terms of its status. Surface waters are assessed for ecological status or potential and chemical status. Groundwaters are assessed for quantitative status and chemical status.

Regional

6.12 North West Marine Plan and Welsh National Marine Plan - these plans set out policies for the sustainable use of marine areas and public authorities must make decisions based on the relevant policies in the marine plans. CWaC has several coastal areas and also has rivers which link to coastal areas and can therefore impact on them.

6.13 Mersey Estuary Flood Risk Management Plan and River Dee Catchment Flood Management Plan - CFMPs help us to understand the scale and extent of flooding now and in the future and set policies for managing flood risk within the catchments. CFMPs should be used to inform planning and decision making by key partners.

6.14 The Tidal Dee Catchment Action Plan (March 2022) - compliments a number of strategic documents relating to the River Dee Basin District and outlines the context and challenges specifically for the Tidal Dee area. It provides a local source of information and includes the priorities and plans of the Tidal Dee Catchment Partnership.

6.15 There are two water companies providing sewerage services within the borough: Dwr Cymru Welsh Water – Neston to Malpas areas, including Chester and Tattenhall and United Utilities – The eastern part of the Borough. The two water companies providing clean water within the borough are: Severn Trent Water – Chester area and United Utilities which serve the remainder of the borough.

6.16 **Water Resource Management Plans (WRMP**) are prepared by water companies to ensure supply continues to meet demand into the future, even under water stressed conditions. WRMPs cover 25-year planning periods to ensure that long term needs, trends and changes are considered appropriately at a strategic level.

6.17 Water availability both within CWaC and in the wider region has potential to be affected by projected growth and by an increased risk of drought as a result of climate change. Although the North West is not generally a water stressed region, poorly planned development could potentially lead to unsustainable pressure on water resources through intensifying demand without providing additional supply.

6.18 **Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan** - The DWMP assesses the effects of future pressures on our wastewater systems over the short, medium and long term, and what can be done to address these issues.

6.19 Future development has the potential to affect water quality and availability through increased consumption and pollution, wastewater discharges, water runoff and modification. The utility providers and are likely to maintain adequate water services over the plan period; however, it will be important for new development to avoid negative impacts on water quality, and instead contribute to reducing consumption and improving efficiency.

Local

6.20 Under the Flood and Water Management Act (2010), Cheshire West and Chester is designated as the Lead Local Flood Authority for the area and has certain responsibilities for managing flood risk from 'local' sources. In the Act, 'local' sources of flooding are defined as flooding from:

- surface water
- groundwater
- ordinary watercourses

6.21 **Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment (PFRA):** One of the requirements of an LLFA, is to produce a PFRA. This is a high level screening of flood risk in the borough and was undertaken for CWaC covering the period (2017-2023). The PFRA provides a strategic overview of flood risk from local flood sources through a review of historic flooding incidents and the predicted future extents of flooding, based on the outputs of computer models from both Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council and the Environment Agency. In summary, the PFRA concluded that there hadn't been any flooding events identified from local sources that have been deemed to have "significant consequences" during the period June 2011 to June 2017. An analysis of data available on future flood risk has found that there could be flooding with adverse consequences as a result of surface water flooding. Modelling outputs provided by the Environment Agency indicate that up to 2,0181 properties, of which 1767 are residential

and 251 business, could be at risk from surface water flooding in a 1% (1 in 100 year) annual probability rainfall event, therefore the scale of risk is not sufficient to be considered to be reportable at a European Level. During the investigation process into historic and future flood risk there were no flooding instances which needed to be reported at either a National or European level. There were however, a number of flooding problems that have potential to become greater issues considered locally important to Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council. Furthermore, the surface water modelling undertaken by the Environment Agency indicated that there may be a significant number of properties at risk in the future.

6.22 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) 2016 - Flood risk in Cheshire West and Chester may come from a range of sources, the main ones being fluvial (from rivers) and tidal (from the sea). Other sources may include groundwater, sewage and artificial sources (e.g. canals). The SFRA draws the following conclusion in relation to key areas of flood risk in the Borough:

6.23 The main rivers in Cheshire West and Chester include the River Dee, the River Dane, River Weaver and River Gowy. The Manchester Ship Canal also runs through the area, and the Mersey Estuary lies to the north. The areas particularly vulnerable to flood risk include:

Northwich- this is the area at greatest risk of flooding due to three river catchments converging in the town centre. The main source of flooding comes from the fluvial River Dane and at the confluence with the Weaver the town centre. There is an area of functional floodplain covering rural land to the south of the railway line on the Dane and on the Weaver around Kingsmead.

Since the SFRA was published, a flood risk management scheme for Northwich was opened in 2017. The scheme reduces flood risk to almost 400 homes and businesses as well as 3 development sites in Northwich. The scheme is made up of 1.7km of flood defences using a combination of flood walls and embankments, along the banks of the River Dane and River Weaver. In addition to fixed flood defences, the scheme uses demountable defences and flood gates across key footpaths and highways.

Following an unprecedented flood event in Northwich in 2021, following Storm Christop, there is now an updated Multi-Agency Flood Plan, which incorporates the lessons learnt from this storm and previous flood events; this document sets out how the Council and its partners work together during flood incidents, ensuring an effective response, timely communications with the public and efficient post incident recovery operations. A Northwich specific flood response plan has also been developed.

Chester- the River Dee runs through the centre and there is a risk of both tidal and fluvial flooding. Flood defences through the City centre offer protection from tidal flooding. The Sealand Basin to the west of Chester city centre is at risk of flooding from the Finchetts Gutter and Sealand Main Drain. This area acts as a flood storage reservoir during a flood event and is designed to a high standard of protection. The SFRA contains data from Environment Agency Breach Analysis modelling and the Sealand Basin would be flooded to significant depths in all of the breach scenarios considered. An up-to-date assessment of this area is provided through the SFRA Update 2015.

Winsford: The main source of flooding comes from the fluvial River Weaver and the Weaver Navigation. Also from the Bottom Flash waterbody. The functional floodplain follows the course of the River Weaver and Navigation for the majority of its length through Winsford though is mainly confined to the river banks.

Ellesmere Port - The main source of flooding comes from the tidal and fluvial River Mersey and fluvial River Gowy and Thornton Brook. There is an area of functional floodplain covering rural land to the south of Stanlow at Thornton-le-Moors.

Ince Marshes is low lying reclaimed marshland following the dredging of the Manchester Ship Canal. The area is at risk of both fluvial and tidal flooding. There may also be a risk of flooding from the Manchester Ship Canal. Likewise, parts of Ellesmere Port waterfront may also be at risk of flooding from the Ship Canal.

Rivacre Brook: This watercourse presents the greatest flood risk within the Ellesmere Port area. For the majority of the course the Rivacre Brook is confined by steep topography on both banks. However, the floodplain extends in Great Sutton around Farmers Heath and Manor Park. Flooding from Rivacre Brook in Great Sutton occurs on a regular basis.

Stanlow: The Environment Agency's flood zone maps show that much of the Stanlow complex is at risk of flooding, however these do not take account of flood defences. The flood hazard for the whole of the complex is high, however flooding would only occur if the extensive flood alleviation scheme failed.

6.24 Cheshire West and Chester – Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (2016) (at the time of writing this document is being updated). This strategy identified a list of objectives as follows and an action plan to meet these objectives which included producing Local Plan policies to help avoid inappropriate development in risk areas.

Strategy objectives include:

1. Understand the risks of flooding and coastal erosion and work towards putting long-term plans into place to manage the risks and make sure that other plans take account of them
2. Avoid inappropriate development in areas of flood and coastal erosion risk and being careful to manage land elsewhere to avoid increasing risks
3. Build, maintain and improve flood and coastal erosion management infrastructure and systems to reduce the likelihood of harm to people and damage to the economy, environment and society
4. Increase public awareness of the risk that remains and engaging with people at risk to encourage them to take action to manage the risks that they face and to make their property more resilient
5. Preparing for and dealing with local flood incidents and ensuring that the multi-agency emergency response plan is properly deployed in response to flood emergencies.

6.25 Cheshire West and Chester Water Cycle Study 2010 - A holistic Water Cycle Study was undertaken in 2010 to assess the potential impact of new growth on water quality limits, supply and demand. The main overall findings at this time which informed the Local Plan (Part One) included:

- Growth in the borough will not be constrained by water resource availability.
- Water quality in many locations in the borough is of poor ecological status and although not a direct constraint to growth it will require close liaison with the Environment Agency;
- New development within or near to Groundwater Source Protection Zones will need to consider appropriate mitigation to prevent contamination; rainfall and surface water levels will be vulnerable

to climate change and demand for water from agriculture is likely to increase with warmer drier summers.
- The potential impacts on international and national sites of conservation importance identified include surface water run-off from new development, water discharge and water abstraction.

6.26 National Infrastructure Assessment - With extreme weather events such as floods and drought more likely in future years, cities, towns and villages need to be prepared. Currently one million homes in the UK have more than one per cent chance of flooding in any given year, and there is a one in four chance of a severe drought before 2050. Similarly, the demands on our water and wastewater systems are increasing as the population grows. The Commission advises on how government can work with industry and other stakeholders to mitigate such risks with long term plans for adaption and resilience.

6.27 To avoid the risk of severe drought, the Commission's analysis suggests that additional water supply and demand reduction totalling 4,000Ml/day should be delivered by 2050 – the equivalent of well over 22 million bath tubs of water. The Commission's work on water seeks to inform decision making about the future capacity of the water supply and wastewater systems in England, by increasing capacity and reducing leaks and wastage to reduce the risk of drought.

6.28 The final report of the study – Reducing the risk of surface water flooding – was published on 29 November 2022. It finds that up to 600,000 properties could be at high risk of this type of flooding over the next three decades. In response, the report says stricter controls on new developments connecting to existing drainage systems, alongside up to £12bn in additional investment in drainage infrastructure, could move up to 250,000 properties in England out of this high risk category.

6.29 The report makes recommendations in three main areas:

- Reduce the amount of run-off water entering drainage systems.
- Expand the capacity of drainage.
- Create more joined-up, targeted governance and funding.

Baseline information, recent changes and anticipated trends

Water quality and supply:

6.30 In terms of water quality, in 2016: 2 water bodies achieving 'good ecological status' in 2019 (when the last data was available, 0 water bodies were achieving 'good ecological status'). The latest WFD classification data was published in 2022 and will be incorporated with in the 2022-2023 AMR.

6.31 Parts of West Cheshire are identified as Nitrate Vulnerable Zones. Source Protection Zones are identified in Water Cycle Study. Only rural areas affected.

6.32 Water supply and abstraction – Historically, Dee Valley Water's supply-demand balance showed a surplus throughout the planning horizon (2015 - 2040) United Utilities: had a supply-demand surplus in three of our four water resource zones – (2015 – 2040). This data will be monitored and updated upon final publication of the relevant regional Water Resource Management Plans (Severn Trent and United Utilities).

Flood Risk:

6.33 The proportion of the borough within the three flood zones are: (taken from data in the 2016 SFRA)

Zone 2 - 607.78ha - 0.65% of the borough area.

Zone 3- 405.62ha - 0.43% of the borough area.

6.34 The number of properties in flood zone 3 in the borough has been monitored and has reduced between 2008 and 2015: (the latest data and mapping was taken from the 2016 SFRA)

Properties in Flood Zone 3:

2008 = 1959

2015 = 1,011

6.35 The number of planning permissions granted contrary to the advice of the Environment Agency on either flood defence grounds or water quality grounds has been monitored in the AMR and has remained low with 0 recorded in the period 2022/23.

Evidence gaps and proposed work

6.36 There are no significant evidence gaps relating to flood risk and water management, however a number of local studies are currently out of date and will need updating to provide up to date evidence and technical data; namely the SFRA (which will require updates and modelling data covering flood risk from all sources and updated climate change allowances) and the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (prepared by the LLFA).

Local Plan Update scope and influence

6.37 The Local Plan Update will focus on updating the Local Plan (Part One) and will therefore concentrate on strategic policies, rather than detailed Development Management policies. As such, the main ways in which the Local Plan Update could influence flood risk and water management are:

- Controlling the location of future development. Adapt to current and future flood risk by directing development away from the areas of the Borough at the highest risk of flooding from all sources and provide sustainable management of current and future flood risk through sensitive and innovative planning, development layout and construction.
- Ensure plan options will deliver Natural Flood Management schemes, flood storage options, SuDS and flood resilient design.

- Promote sustainable forms of development which minimises pressure on water resources, water consumption and wastewater flows to maintain and enhance water quality consistent with the aims of the Water Framework Directive;
- Improve and extend green infrastructure networks to support adaptation to the potential effects of climate change.

6.38 There is a need for an integrated approach to all aspects of the sustainable management of the water cycle including water demand, water supply, water quality, surface water drainage and river and flooding from all sources. Development Plan policies should take account of environmental issues such as the protection of groundwater from contamination, avoiding new development in areas of flood risk and sea level rise.

The Local Plan should ensure that:

- the quality of land, air and water and the potential impacts from new development are considered through the planning process.
- flood risk is taken into account at all stages of the planning process, avoiding inappropriate development and directing new development away from areas of highest risk following the sequential and exceptions tests.
- new development incorporates sustainable drainage schemes and encourage water efficiency.
- development is located where there is spare capacity in the existing waste water supply and waste water treatment, sewage and surface water mains capacity.
- there are no adverse impacts on the River Dee and Estuary SPA from increased abstraction and wastewater discharges.

6.39 To achieve good status/good potential for all waters by 2027. The Local Plan should not cause the loss of potential to achieve this and where practicable contribute to enhancing water quality.

Key sustainability issues and opportunities

6.40 There is a need for an integrated approach to all aspects of the sustainable management of the water cycle including water demand, water supply, water quality, surface water drainage and flooding from all sources. New development should incorporate sustainable drainage schemes and encourage water efficiency. The Government is currently reviewing the way SuDs are implemented. Under Schedule 3 to the Floods and Water Management Act 2010, a SuDs Approval Body (SAB) would approve any construction work that has drainage implications before it is commenced and adopt drainage systems where applicable. The Schedule does not require approval for construction work that is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP), as defined in section 31 of the Planning Act 2008. These projects will require approval from the Planning Inspectorate.

6.41 The key sustainability issues relating to flood risk and water management at a strategic planning level are:

Flood risk

6.42 Climate projections suggest that extreme weather will happen more frequently in the future. Providing for the housing, business and associated needs of an increasing population may increase the consequences of flood incidents. There is a need to minimise the risk of flooding from all sources arising from new development. New development should be steered to areas of lowest risk and designed to manage surface water run off (with the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems being encouraged).

Water supply and water efficiency

6.43 Demands on our water and wastewater systems will increase as the population grows. There should be sufficient water capacity to accommodate new growth and development, with water efficiency measures in order to make the best use of existing resources.

Water quality and green infrastructure

6.44 The risk of water pollution arising from new development should be minimised. Water courses are valuable ecological habitats and landscape features and contribute to the provision of Green Infrastructure. In addition, waterways are also a valuable recreational/leisure resource. CWaC is situated within two operational catchments – all waterbodies within these three operational catchments have varying ecological statuses and failed chemical statuses. Development should avoid impacts to the water quality of these water bodies.

6.45 The key sustainability opportunities relating to flood risk and water management are:

- Sensitive location of development sites in order to avoid development in the flood plain and areas at risk of flooding from all sources
- Minimise impact on surface and groundwater networks.
- Reduce flooding and water pollution.
- Promote best practice for SuDs and minimise impact on drainage and water supply infrastructure.
- Ensure the efficient and effective use of water in addition to protecting and enhancing water quality.
- Avoid any negative impacts on water quality and support improvements to water quality.
- Ensure appropriate drainage and mitigation is delivered alongside proposed development.
- Ensure that there is sufficient capacity of water supply and sewage treatment to support sustainable growth and to address flood risk issues that arise as a result of the growth proposals
- Ensure there are no adverse impacts on the River Dee and Estuary SPA from increased abstraction and wastewater discharges.

SA framework

Sustainability objective	Appraisal criteria / sub-objective	Baseline indicator
Minimise the risk of flooding from all sources.	Will it reduce the risk of flooding from all sources e.g. encourage the integration of mitigation measures such as SUDs into new development?	Percentage of relevant development incorporating SuDS.
	Is new development directed towards areas of least risk, dependant on the compatibility of the proposed use following the sequential and exceptions test?	Number of planning applications granted contrary to the advice of the Environment Agency on flood risk grounds
Protect, maintain and improve the quality of water resources, minimise the risk of pollution and improve water efficiency.	Will the Plan protect, maintain and improve the quality of water resources?	Number of planning applications granted contrary to the advice of the Environment Agency on water quality grounds
	Will the Plan minimise the risk of pollution arising from new development?	Water quality/ecological status of Rivers
	Will the plan encourage water efficiency and promote the use of grey-water recycling / rainwater harvesting?	Number of planning applications with a completed sustainable construction checklist referring to water efficiency measures

7 Landscape, townscape and cultural heritage

Policy context - Landscape

7.1 Landscape character can be defined as the distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape. Cheshire West and Chester holds a great variety of valued landscapes in all areas of the borough. Landscapes are each unique and landscape character objectively summarises important landscapes, rather than focusing on the scenic and aesthetic qualities the landscape may hold. Landscapes have evolved over time as a result of both natural and cultural processes. Landscape has social, economic and environmental value, attracting business and tourism and contributing to a sense of identity and wellbeing. Understanding the character of the borough's landscapes is important to ensure that future change is for the better and harmonises with the features that make it distinct.

7.2 Landscape character types (which are generic and share common combinations of geology, topography, vegetation and human influences, e.g. River Valleys) are combined with landscape character areas (which are single, discrete geographical areas of the landscape type with a unique 'sense of place').

7.3 There are sixteen different landscape character types that reflect the unique character of the borough and within these character types, the landscape classification identifies 53 separate landscape character areas.

International

7.4 The Council of Europe Landscape Convention 'Promotes the protection, management and planning of the landscapes and organises international co-operation on landscape issues.' (Council of Europe Landscape Convention / Official website - Council of Europe Landscape Convention (coe.int)). In addition, the following international plans and programmes relate to landscape: The Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (Granada Convention) (1987) and The Convention for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage of Europe (1992). This contains provisions for the identification and protection of archaeological heritage. Its objectives include the integration of the conservation and archaeological investigation of archaeological heritage in urban and regional planning policies, and the dissemination of information.

National

7.5 The NPPF 2021 **-** Paragraph 20 sets out that an overall strategy should 'conserve and enhance the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure, and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation'.

7.6 Paragraph 130 states 'Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments: are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting'.

7.7 Paragraph 174 highlights that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes.

7.8 Paragraph 176 – 'Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads. The scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited.'

7.9 The NPPF (paragraph 134) is clear that design quality in the built environment needs to improve, adding developments that are not well designed should be refused. The introduction of the National Design Guide, Building for a Healthy Life and the National Model Design Code all provide further guidance around well designed, beautiful places. The Levelling up and Regeneration Bill has yet to receive Royal Assent, but the Bill is likely to mandate area-wide design codes. The changes to the NPPF and the push to increase design quality was in part a result of the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission.

7.10 National Character Area (NCA) Profiles are published by Natural England and divide England in 159 distinct natural areas based on their landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, historic, cultural and economic characteristics. NCAs follow natural features in the landscape and are not aligned with administrative boundaries. NCA profiles describe the features which shape each of these landscapes, providing a broad context to its character.

7.11 The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan states the intention to work with relevant authorities to deliver environmental enhancements within all 159 NCAs across England.

Local

7.12 The Cheshire West and Chester Landscape Strategy (2016) provides the first concise strategy for managing the landscapes of the borough and for guiding landscape change beyond the built-up areas of the borough to 2030.

7.13 The Council has also produced other evidence base documents relating to landscape including a Local Landscape Policy Review (January 2016); a Landscape Sensitivity Study (March 2016) and 'Local Landscape Designations – Areas of Special County Value' (June 2017). The Local Landscape Policy Review reviews landscape designations from the former authority Local Plans including ASCVs and ASLEVs, and identifies Key Settlement Gaps.

Policy context - Heritage

7.14 The borough contains a wealth of heritage assets of international, national and local significance including the walled city of Chester with its unique Row buildings, market towns and villages with the area's distinctive "black and white" architecture, as well as Georgian, Victorian and modern development. Decisions involving the protection and enhancement of historic assets should ensure that their special interest is sustained for future generations to value and enjoy.

7.15 Across the borough there are currently (2022-23) 11,111 sites of archaeological/historic importance recorded on the Historic Environment Record.

National

- the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 provides specific protection for buildings and areas of special architectural or historic interest
- the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 provides specific protection for monuments of national interest
- the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 makes provision for the compilation of a register of gardens and other land (parks and gardens, and battlefields).

7.16 The NPPF 2021, section 16 sets out the measures for 'Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment'. The NPPF states that plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. In developing their strategy, plan-making bodies should identify specific opportunities within their area for the conservation and enhancement of heritage assets, including their setting. This could include, where appropriate, the delivery of development that will make a positive contribution to, or better reveal the significance of, the heritage asset, or reflect and enhance local character and distinctiveness with particular regard given to the prevailing styles of design and use of materials in a local area.

7.17 Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) – Historic Environment. These messages are supported by the PPG which itself includes the key message that local authorities should set out in their Local Plans a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment which recognises that conservation is not a passive exercise and that identifies specific opportunities for the conservation and enhancement of heritage assets.

7.18 National Model Design Code (2021) - provides detailed guidance on the production of design codes, guides and policies to promote successful design. It expands on the ten characteristics of good design set out in the National Design Guide (2019), which reflects the government's priorities and provides a common overarching framework for design.

Regional

7.19 The Cheshire Historic Environment Record contains information on a wide range of historic sites from archaeological sites and stray finds to listed buildings, historic parks and gardens and the wider historic landscape of Cheshire. Approximately one fifth of heritage assets recorded by the Cheshire Historic Environment Record are subject to some form of protection through a heritage designation, however the majority (especially archaeological sites), are not.

Local

7.20 Conservation Area Appraisals - Local planning authorities are obliged to designate as conservation areas any parts of their own area that are of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. There are 97 conservation areas across the borough. The Council are currently undertaking a three-year project (as of 2023)

producing Statements of Special Interest and new mapping for those conservation areas where it is currently lacking.

7.21 Locally listed buildings - Distinct from listed buildings, locally listed buildings have been identified as having local interest and importance. The identification as a locally important building comes with no additional restrictions, but any works to the buildings should recognise their interest and be sensitive to that. The Council is currently (2023) involved in the Cheshire Local List project in collaboration with Cheshire East and Halton Boroughs. Work on a new website and a number of pilot studies across the county, are being undertaken with funding from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

7.22 Historic parks and gardens - Certain public parks and both public and private gardens are identified as being of special interest. Further information about which landscapes are covered can be found on the Council's interactive map.

7.23 Chester Characterisation Study - In 2012 the Chester Characterisation Study was completed. This document is an assessment of the character of the built environment of Chester and its surrounds and the natural and designed landscape, as derived from its heritage and history.

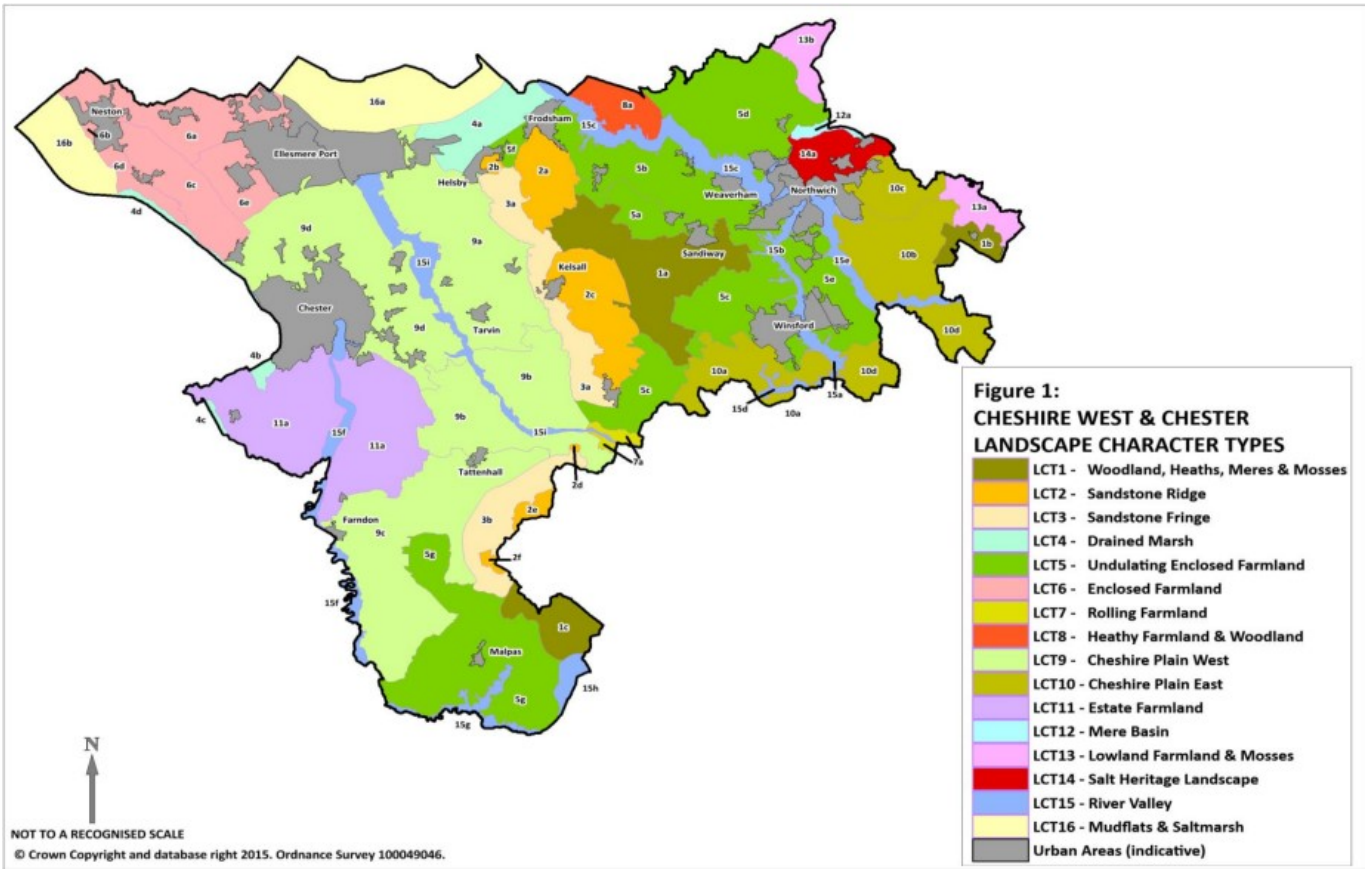
7.24 Chester Rows Design Guide – March 2022

7.25 Cheshire West and Chester Heritage Strategy (Consultation) - A consultation on a new heritage strategy for the borough which has been developed through extensive engagement and partnership working with key stakeholders – due for completion early 2024

Baseline information

7.26 There are 20 different landscape character areas across Cheshire, with a diverse range from coastal to sandstone ridges located in Cheshire West and Chester. There are also 12 historic landscape character groups, further broken down into 34 character types, which can be used to assess capacity to accommodate change. It is important that the character of the landscape is understood when considering how it might change, so that any change will be for the better. A number of parishes within the borough have completed Village Design Statements. These documents detail the local character and features that make these areas distinct, setting out guidelines for new development. The landscape character types throughout Cheshire West and Chester can be seen below.

Map 7.1 CWAC Landscape Character Types



7.27 The following ASCV's have also been identified for their combined significance of features of historic, landscape, archaeological and nature conservation value:

- Beeston/Peckforton/Bolesworth
- Dee Coastal Area
- Delamere/Utkinton
- Grosvenor Estate/Dee Valley
- Helsby and Frodsham Hills
- Weaver Valley
- Willington
- Wych Brook Valley

7.28 There are currently 97 Conservation Areas in Cheshire West and Chester. This has increased by 1 since 2010 with the designation of the Chester Canal Conservation Area. Of the 97 Conservation Areas, 1 is recorded as being at risk within CWAC by English Heritage which has fallen from 8 in 2010.

7.29 The number of Listed Buildings has increased overall between 2015 from 2,498 to 2,520 in 2022/23 (Grade I : 86, Grade II*:175, Grade II: 2,259). The number of Locally Listed Buildings has remained the same over the same period at 1,313.

7.30 The total number of heritage assets has increased from 4,395 in 2010 to 11,111 in 2021/22.

- Scheduled Monuments - 118
- Listed Buildings – 2,520
- Locally Listed Buildings – 1,313
- Conservation Areas – 97
- Registered Parks and Gardens – 7
- Registered Battlefields - 1
- Areas of Archaeological Potential - 12
- Area of Archaeological Importance - 1

7.31 Of those heritage assets, as of 2021/2022 the Heritage at Risk Register had 21 entries: Listed Buildings: 8, Scheduled Monuments: 12 and Conservation Areas: 1.

Evidence gaps and proposed work

7.32 There are no significant evidence gaps relating to landscape. The Cheshire West and Chester Landscape Study could potentially be updated, as the existing study was undertaken in 2016.

7.33 There are no significant evidence gaps relating to the historic environment. A Heritage Strategy for the borough is currently being prepared which will link in with the requirement to produce a borough wide Design Code. Work to identify locally listed buildings and complete Conservation Area Appraisals is currently on-going.

7.34 There are a number of plans, strategies and reports that cover various aspects of design, however this does not communicate a clear and concise approach to raise design quality, creating beautiful places as required by the NPPF. A document that sets out the Council's expectation of design quality will be needed.

Recent changes and anticipated trends

7.35 There have been no recent changes to landscape or relevant planning applications determined in accordance with landscape policies.

7.36 The total number of heritage assets in the borough has increased from 4,395 in 2010 to 11,111 in 2021/22. Of those:

- There is currently 1 conservation areas listed on the Heritage at Risk Register, this has fallen from 8 in 2010.
- There are now 12 Scheduled Monuments listed on the Heritage at Risk Register, this has fallen from 22 in 2010.
- There are 8 listed building entries on the national heritage at risk register, this has fallen from 10 in 2010.

- The number of additional locally listed assets registered on the historic environment record has not increased from the baseline of 1,313 in 2017/18, although a new Local Listing project is currently underway (2023).
- The number of Conservation Area Appraisals as a proportion of Conservation Areas has increased from 40% in 2014/15 to 43% in 2021/22 and the Council has embarked on a programme of preparing conservation area appraisals, where there are gaps (2023).

7.37 There is a clear direction from Government that design quality needs to increase in the built environment. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill has yet to be finalised and has some radical changes to the planning system along with upcoming consultations. Area wide design codes will be more common place and likely to be mandatory if the new planning system comes into force.

Local Plan Update scope and influence

7.38 New development in Cheshire West and Chester as a result of the Local Plan Update has the potential to lead to incremental changes in landscape quality within the borough, particularly if located on greenfield sites at the edges of settlements. This could include the loss of landscape features, visual impact on existing features and the potential for incremental merging of settlements. If as part of the Local Plan update it was deemed that any form of Green Belt release was necessary, then this could have associated effects on the landscape character through the potential erosion of gaps between settlements.

7.39 There is also a chance that any further development linked to the Local Plan update could impact landscape quality in the vicinity of the road network, either via increased traffic flows interrupting tranquillity or due to works needed to add additional capacity to the network.

7.40 New development within CWaC has the potential to impact on the fabric and setting of heritage assets, for example through unsympathetic development that does not fully consider the contribution of assets (designated or non-designated) to the historic character of the borough. Existing historic environment designations, implemented through the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, offer a level of protection to designated heritage assets and their settings, however the Local Plan can set the local context for their protection and enhancement and areas character and design.

7.41 The Council is preparing an overarching Heritage Strategy for the borough which will; in tandem with the new Local Plan outline the borough's priorities across natural, built, and cultural heritage.

7.42 The Local Plan Update and associated design codes can be very clear and detailed about the boroughs' design expectations to meet the needs of our residents and maintaining the character of our borough through new development.

Key sustainability issues and opportunities

7.43 The key sustainability issues associated with this landscape and heritage are:

- Preserving and enhancing the borough's designated and non-designated historic environment resource.
- Protecting and enhancing Chester and its heritage assets.
- Enhancing and managing the character and appearance of the borough's landscape.
- Ensuring the provision of open space to meet identified needs and deficiencies.

7.44 The key opportunities are:

- Controlling the location of future development. Depending on the broad locations chosen this could maximise opportunities for landscape protection maintaining and strengthening local distinctiveness, design and sense of place.
- The Local Plan must recognise that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and need to be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. There are threats to the character of the borough from the cumulative impact of development proposals and associated infrastructure requirements. Work should continue to reduce the number of assets in CWaC on the Heritage at Risk Register.
- Chester is an important historic city both locally and nationally which is currently experiencing a number of challenges for its future. Its archaeology, historic buildings and townscape are under pressure through demands for redevelopment and new development. It is important to understand the existing character of the city and the capacity to which it can accommodate development and future change. The historic setting of the City, including landscape and key views, is also an important characteristic that requires protection.
- Protection and enhancement of built heritage - It is important to preserve and enhance the borough's designated and non-designated heritage assets, taking account of the significance of the heritage assets and conserving the significance of the asset and its setting. Listed buildings, conservation areas, scheduled monuments and historic parks and gardens all contribute to cultural heritage and should be afforded adequate protection from development.
- Local distinctiveness, character and design - protecting and enhancing the natural, historic and cultural elements that contribute to local character is important to contribute to sustainability.
- Sensitive location of development sites in order to:

    - Protect and enhance heritage assets including their setting and ensure development in or adjacent to conservation areas or listed buildings (and their settings) respects the character and context and enhances the quality of the built environment.

    - Make a positive contribution to, or better reveal the significance of, the heritage assets, or reflect and enhance local character and distinctiveness with regard given to the prevailing styles of design and use of materials in a local area.

    - Reduce impacts on the fabric and setting of designated and undesignated archaeological sites, monuments, structures and buildings, registered Historic Parks and gardens, registered battlefields, listed buildings and conservation areas or their settings.

    - Avoid harmful impacts on the borough's historic landscape.

- Raising design quality in new developments, seeking to maintain the character of our settlements.
- Enhance and protect the natural and built environments and their settings. The historic environment and its heritage assets should be conserved and enjoyed for the quality of life they bring to this and future generations.
- New development and site allocations could present the opportunity to enhance the borough's historic assets through improving the historic setting of heritage assets, contributing to the understanding and interpretation of assets and working to reveal their significance. This should be achieved through implementing proposals that consider the historic environment in their design in conjunction with a borough wide/local, or site-specific Design Code.
- With a wealth of both designated and non-designated heritage assets within CWaC, development of the new Local Plan provides an opportunity to deliver a spatial strategy that avoids or minimises impacts for the historic environment. It is important to ensure that development considered the fabric and the setting of heritage assets equally.
- Development of the new Local Plan provides an opportunity to develop the existing evidence base in relation to the historic environment, especially in terms of considering new evidence and changes in the character and design aspects of the borough that might have occurred since the designation of the multiple conservation areas, for example through the programme of reviewing existing Conservation Area Appraisals and identifying Locally Listed Assets . Developing the evidence base will allow for a raised awareness and understanding of the heritage and historic environment in CWaC, for the benefit of residents and visitors alike.

SA framework

Sustainability objective	Appraisal criteria/ sub-objective	Baseline indicator
Protect, enhance and manage the character and appearance of the landscape and townscape, maintaining and strengthening local distinctiveness, design and sense of place.	Will it protect and reinforce the borough's landscapes and the natural, cultural and historic elements which make them distinct?	None identified
	Will it increase the quantity or quality of open space?	Total amount of open space (ha) per 1,000 persons.
Preserve and enhance historic assets, sites, features, areas and settings of archaeological, historical and cultural heritage importance	Will it ensure the continued protection and enhancement of physical sites and areas of importance to cultural and historical heritage and their settings, including the setting and character of Chester?	Number of listings on the Heritage at Risk Register
	Will it ensure the protection and enhancement of the significance of heritage assets?	Number of heritage assets (Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments)

8 Biodiversity

Policy context

8.1 Biodiversity is the variety and variability of the natural environment and is a crucial part of all ecosystems. Cheshire West and Chester contains a wide range of ecosystems; from the relatively undisturbed, to intensively managed landscapes. Given the prevalence of managed ecosystems across the borough and the pressures on them, it is critical that the value of biodiversity is recognised, managed, protected and enhanced. 'There has been a significant decline in biodiversity for the last hundred years, with damaging implications for future wildlife and humanity. Local authorities have a duty to protect and enhance biodiversity' (RTPI, 2019).

8.2 Green infrastructure is the network of multi-functional green and blue spaces, wildlife sites and greenway linkages which unite town and country which provide a wide range of social, economic and environmental benefits. 'Green infrastructure is increasingly considered a fundamental aspect of integrated urban design and can provide important environmental, social and economic benefits' (UK Green Building Council, 2020).

International

8.3 The international plans and programmes that relate to biodiversity include the following: Convention on Biological Diversity (came into force December 1993), Bern Convention on Conservation of European wildlife and natural habitats (1979, came into force June 1982), EU Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC and 2009/147/EC), Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (1971, as amended), EU Directive on the Conservation of Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (92/43/EEC as amended by 97/62/EC), and the EU Biodiversity Strategy (2011).

National

8.4 One of the three overarching objectives of The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is the need 'contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment' by 'helping to improve biodiversity'. Section 15 outlines the need to conserve and enhance the natural environment, by 'minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures'. Paragraph 179 in the NPPF highlights how plans should enhance biodiversity, by 'mapping wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks' and 'promoting the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats' in order to secure measurable net gains for biodiversity.

8.5 The publication 'Climate Change and Biodiversity Adaptation: the Role of the Spatial Planning System' (2009) helps identify the role in which the planning system could play in assisting biodiversity adaptation to climate change. In addition, the following national plans and programmes are relevant for biodiversity in the UK: Wildlife and Countryside Act (as amended) (1981), Countryside and Rights of Way Act (as amended) (2001), The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (March 2006) / Guidance for Local Authorities on implementing

the Biodiversity Duty (2007), The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (1994), Natural England's Green Infrastructure Guidance (2009), and the UK Marine Policy Statement (2011).

Regional

8.6 The Mersey Forest Plan - Commitment to increase woodland cover and to help to offset our carbon emissions which receives significant funding from Cheshire West and Chester Council. The programmes within the plan aim to offset carbon emissions whilst at the same time supporting people to live better, healthier lives and reduce demand on the health and social care system.

Local

8.7 The Interim CWAC Biodiversity Net Gain Guidance Note sets out the various ways development can ensure the protection and enhancement of biodiversity within the Borough.

Baseline information

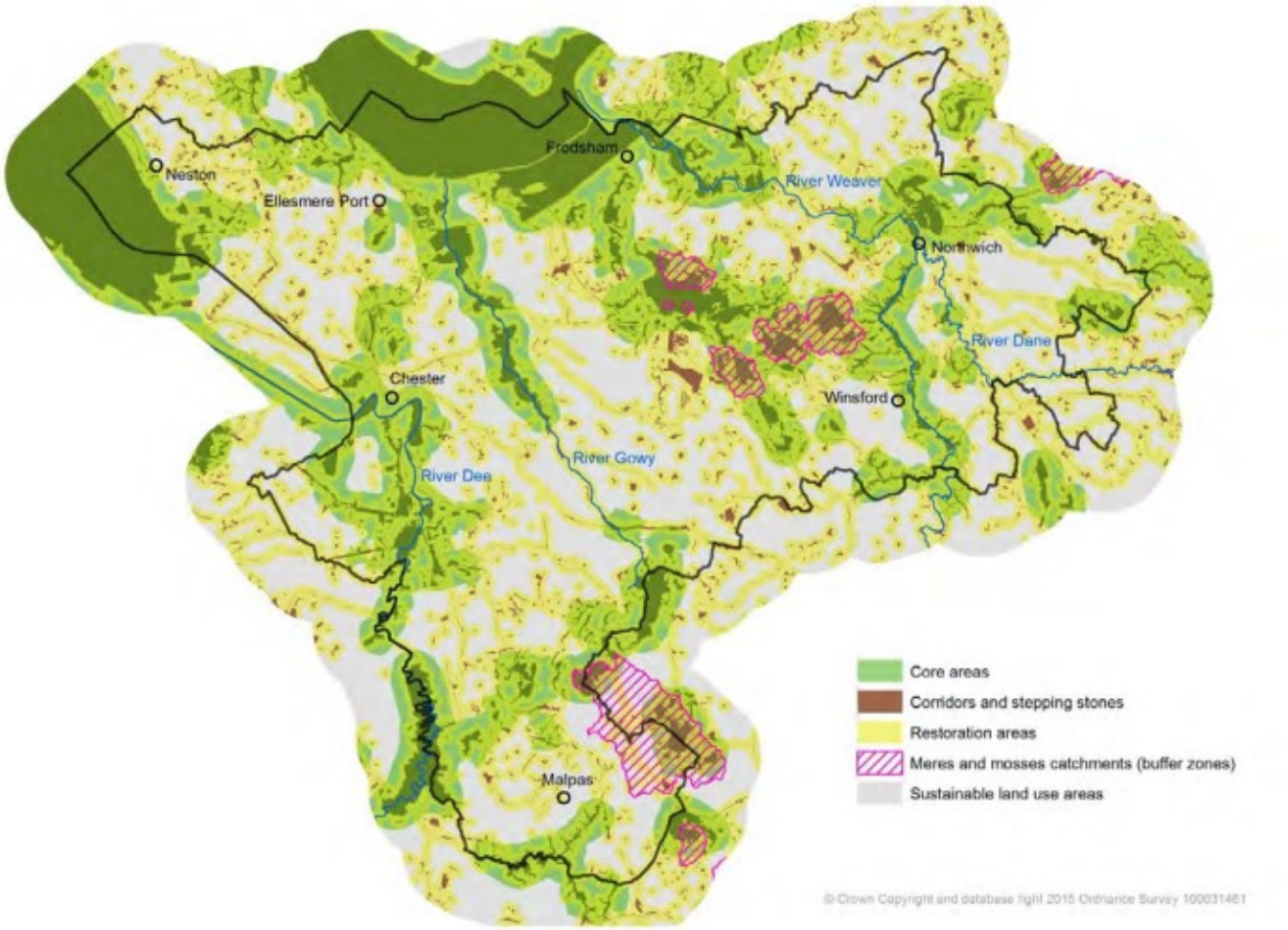
8.8 Cheshire West and Chester has 28 Sites of Special Scientific Interest; 443 Local Wildlife Sites; 39 Areas of Nature Conservation Value; 6 Local Nature Reserves; 6159 hectares of woodland and 31 Biodiversity Action Plan habitats.

8.9 The condition of the 28 SSSI sites are as follows: Favourable 70.6%, Unfavourable Recovering 26.7%, Unfavourable declining 0.4%, Unfavourable no change 2.4%. However, of the remaining area, the greater part of the following SSSIs are in an unfavourable condition: Abbots Moss, Bar Mere, Bickerton Hill, Black Lake, Flaxmere Moss, Hatch Mere, Hallwood Farm Marl Pitt, Hatton's Hey Wood, Whittle's Corner and Bank Rough, Linmer Moss, Little Budworth Common, Mersey Estuary, Oak Mere, Pettypool Brook Valley, River Dee (England), Well Rough and Long, Wimboldsley Wood, and Witton Lime Beds.

8.10 All environmental designations make up the borough's ecological network, which is made up of Core Areas, Corridors and Stepping Stones, Meres and Mosses catchments and sustainable land uses.

8.11 The CWAC ecological network (July 2016): Ecological Network identifies the strategic priorities across the Borough where habitat needs to be maintained, restored or created to ensure a resilient ecological network.

Map 8.1 CWAC Ecological Network map



8.12 Cheshire West and Chester also has several Natura 2000 sites within the borough, these include Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation and Ramsar sites.

Natura 2000 sites (SPA, SAC, Ramsar)

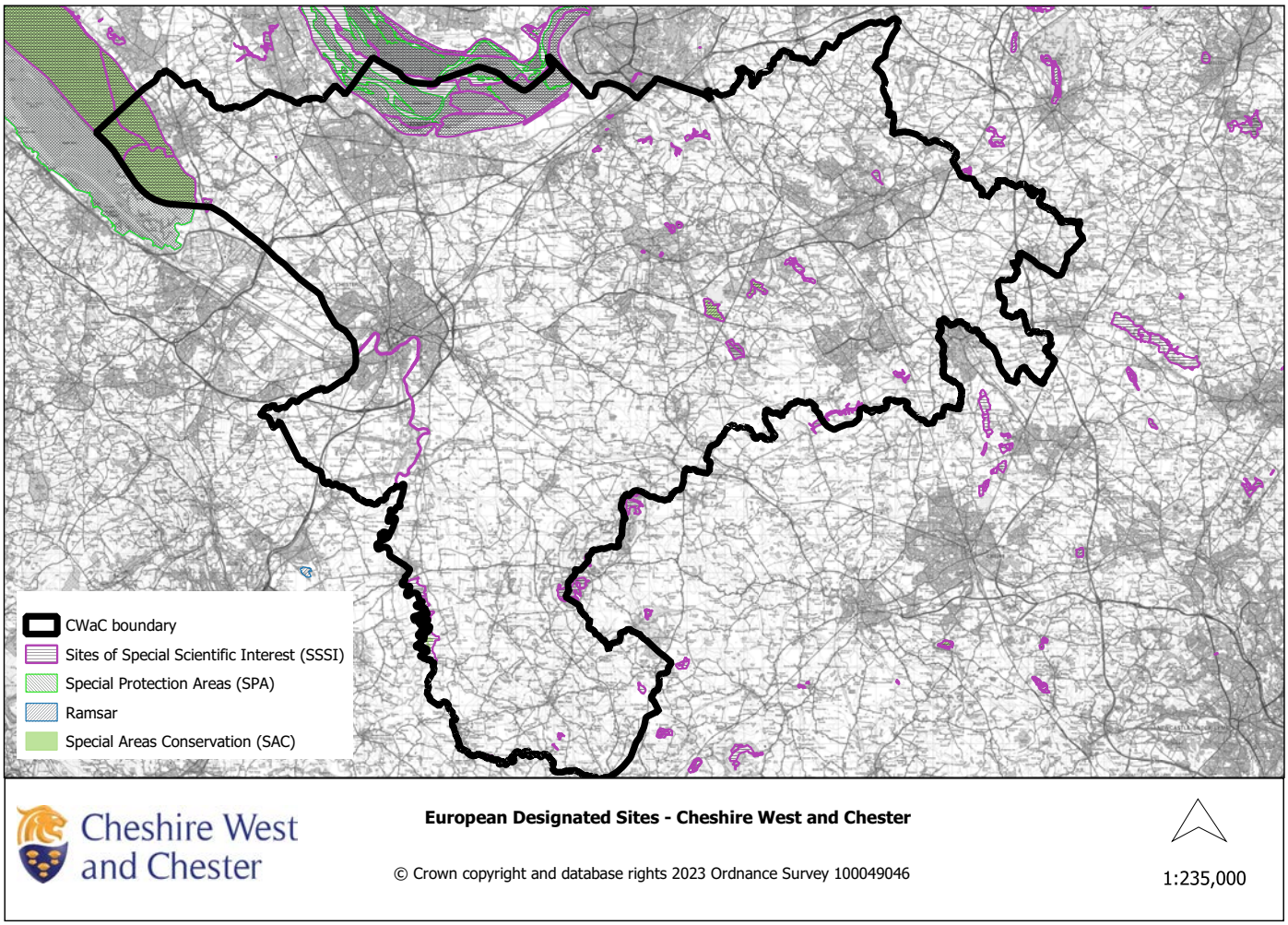
- Mersey Estuary Ramsar and SPA (Special Protection Area)
- The Dee Estuary Ramsar SPA and SAC (Special Area of Conservation)
- Midland Meres and Mosses - Phase 1 Ramsar
- Midland Meres and Mosses - Phase 2 Ramsar
- River Dee and Bala Lake SAC
- Oak Mere SAC
- West Midlands Mosses SAC

The following sites fall within a 15km buffer of the borough boundary:

- Rostherne Mere (Ramsar)

- Mersey Narrow and North Wirral Foreshore (Ramsar, SPA)
- Brown Moss (SAC)
- Fenn's, Whixhall, Bettisfield, Wem and Cadney Mosses (SAC)
- Manchester Mosses (SAC)
- Rixton Clay Pits (SAC)
- Liverpool Bay (SPA)

Map 8.2 CWAC European Designated Sites



Areas of Nature Conservation Value (ANCV)

- 39 Areas of Nature Conservation Value
- 4 Strategic Wildlife Areas

Local Nature Reserves (Statutory)

- 6 sites – Rivacre Valley, Whitby Park, Stanney Wood, Marshall's Arm, Helsby Quarry, Burton Mill Wood.

Non-statutory Nature Reserves

- 15 Sites (344.79 ha) managed by Cheshire Wildlife Trust.
- 3 sites (76 ha) managed by National Trust.
- 15 sites (170 ha) managed by Woodland Trust.
- 3 Sites managed by RSPB (not all land area within the borough)

Trees and woodland

- Woodland cover 2015: 6159ha
- Mersey Forest planting: 775Ha (cumulative between 1991 and 2015)
- Future: 1994 (Mersey Forest 8,000 ha new woodland by 2024)

Habitats and species

- 31 Cheshire Biodiversity Action Plan habitats (including 17 UK BAP priority habitats)
  63 Cheshire Biodiversity Action Plan species (including 32 UK BAP priority species)

Nutrient Neutrality Sites

There are currently two nutrient neutrality sites in the borough, both relatively small in size. Abbotts Moss and Oakmere are located near to Delamere Forest, north-west of Winsford. Planning proposals within these sites must prove that development will not be actively increasing the levels of nutrients – mainly phosphorous and nitrogen.

Blue Infrastructure

The area's waterways are also an important part of the green infrastructure within Cheshire West and Chester. A Green Infrastructure Feasibility Study was undertaken by the Mersey Dee Alliance exploring the green infrastructure objectives for the River Dee area, and how this could enable sub-regional growth. The River Dee is designated as a site of European importance (SAC) and the estuary a SPA and Ramsar site. There are also a number of other nature conservation designations linked to the area's waterways (SSSI's, SBI's etc) and they form important features in the landscape. Rivers are home to nationally rare flora and fauna and also locally important species and habitats. Therefore maintaining and improving water quality is important. Water quality is also influenced by a number of factors outside the control of the planning system (e.g. agriculture). [see 6 'Water']

Future Baseline

8.13 There is a possibility that existing habitats and species present in the borough could come under threat as a direct result of the Local Plan Update. This could be due to the increased provision of housing, employment and infrastructure in the borough. This could include increased disturbance (recreational, noise and light) and atmospheric pollution, this could lead to the loss of some habitats and fragmentation of biodiversity networks. Habitat loss and fragmentation could be exacerbated by the effects of climate change, which has the potential to lead to changes in the distribution and abundance of species and changes to the composition and character of habitats.

8.14 Sustainable growth can also lead to opportunities to understand and integrate biodiversity habitats and networks into new development schemes and strategies. New development from the Local Plan update, such as housing allocations can help protect and enhance habitats with biodiversity value and help establish and maintain the connections between them such as the enhancement of green infrastructure and the established ecological network.

Evidence gaps and proposed work

8.15 There are no significant evidence gaps relating to biodiversity. However, it could be argued that information about the extent and condition of wildlife habitats and protected species could be updated. In addition to this, further discussions with Natural England and other interested parties regarding nutrient neutrality should be undertaken, and further research may be required.

Recent changes and anticipated trends

8.16 The requirements in the upcoming Environment Act are expected to bring considerable change, particularly around topics such as biodiversity net gain. As part of the Environment Act, Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) will be introduced. The Cheshire and Warrington LNRS of spatial strategies will map areas of importance for nature recovery and support efforts to recover nature across the Borough and beyond.

8.17 With regard to nutrient neutrality, there is potential for the River Dee (and catchment) to become a new designation to meet new phosphate standards in future. Wrexham County Borough Council and Flintshire County have produced the Dee Catchment Phosphorus Reduction Strategy in order to combat this issue.

Local Plan Update scope and influence

8.18 The Local Plan (Part One) update will focus on strategic policies, rather than detailed Development Management policies. As such, the main ways in which the Local Plan Update could influence biodiversity and green infrastructure are:

- Controlling the location of future development. Depending on the broad locations chosen this could maximise opportunities for biodiversity and the boroughs ecological network.
- Influencing the amount of biodiversity/ green infrastructure as part of development, the need to provide natural capital, particularly on site could increase as part of the update.

Key sustainability issues and opportunities

The issues within Cheshire West and Chester include:

- Development within the borough could have an impact on wildlife and nature conservation. Ensure that provision is made for enhancement, mitigation and protection.
- Providing space for and maintaining and improving biodiversity will be a key consideration in planning green infrastructure provision in the borough.
- Extending the current ecological network by creating new sites and green infrastructure linkages.

- Improving biodiversity links between rural and urbans areas.
- The strain on environmental infrastructure from new allocations must be managed.
- There are few statutorily designated conservation sites. The balance of non-statutory conservation sites may be more vulnerable to development pressure and lack of management.

SA framework

Sustainability objective	Appraisal criteria/ sub-objective	Baseline indicator
Protect and enhance the borough's biodiversity and wildlife habitats.	Will it protect and promote effective management of the borough's sites of ecological and nature conservation importance?	The percentage area of land designated as sites of special scientific interest (SSSI) within the local authority area in favourable condition.
		Number and total area of new statutory and non-statutory nature conservation sites.
	Will it provide opportunities for the enhancement and creation of habitats and to foster species conservation, diversity and resilience to climate change?	Number and total area of internationally and nationally designated nature conservation sites.
	Will it maintain, enhance or increase (rural and urban) tree cover and woodlands?	Scale of tree cover in rural and urban areas.

9 Population and housing

9.1 Cheshire West and Chester has a population of 357,147 at the time of the 2021 census, with just over a quarter living in rural areas. It is the 10th least densely populated borough in the North West (Source: ONS Census 2021). The population structure shows an ageing population with an older population than the England average. The population is forecast to increase by more than 10% by 2038, with the greatest increase expected in those aged 65 or over (Source: Cheshire West and Chester State of the Borough dashboard). This suggests that pressure to provide homes for first time buyers at one end of the age profile, and for supported living for the older demographic.

9.2 Local Planning Authorities are required to plan, monitor and manage the supply of new housing. As part of this there must be regular reviews of the amount and type of housing being delivered in the borough, ensuring that the variety of needs are being met.

Policy context

9.3 NPPF (July 2021) - In order to support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, the NPPF ensures Local Plans enable sufficient land to come forward where it is needed so that "the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed" (NPPF paragraph 60). The amount and type of land needed is determined by the number of homes that are required and this is informed by the standard method for housing need that is set out in national planning guidance. A housing requirement figure for the borough should be established in policy and this will show the extent to which the identified need can be met over the plan period.

9.4 Paragraph 62 of the NPPF also sets out a requirement to provide, within the context of an overall housing figure, to plan for the size, type and tenure of new homes that are needed for the range of different groups in the community. This should include affordable housing, older people, students, families with children, people with disabilities, service families, travellers, people who rent their home, and those wishing to self and custom-build.

9.5 A strategic housing land availability assessment will provide a clear understanding of the amount and location of land available in an area. This assessment should then be used to identify a sufficient supply of sites to meet the identified need. The plan should identify a mix of sites that are suitable, available and deliverable, and should include small and medium sized sites as they can make an important contribution towards meeting a housing requirement.

9.6 Paragraphs 74 to 76 of the NPPF set out the requirement to manage and monitor a sufficient supply of homes to meet the identified need. A housing trajectory should illustrate the expected rate of housing delivery over the plan period, and a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites should be identified and updated annually. In addition, the Housing Delivery Test will monitor the delivery of housing looking back over a three year period.

9.7 National Planning Practice Guidance - Housing and economic needs assessment (December 2016) - this guidance sets out the standard method for calculating a Local Housing Need (LHN) as expected by the NPPF. The standard method will provide a minimum annual housing figure that can

be used to identify a housing requirement in a Local Plan. The standard method takes into account population change over a ten year period using population projections, and applies an adjustment factor that is based on a local authority affordability ratio. Paragraph 005 (reference ID: 2a-005-20190220) confirms that "2014-based household projections are used within the standard method to provide stability for planning authorities and communities, to ensure that historic under-delivery and declining affordability are reflected".

9.8 A local housing need figure should be calculated at the start of the plan-making process, and the number should be kept under review and revised where appropriate. There may also be local circumstances that require a planning authority to deviate from the standard method and a higher figure may be appropriate. Paragraph 010 (reference ID: 2a-010-20201216) suggests examples where a figure may deviate, and includes consideration of growth strategies; strategic infrastructure improvements; or meeting unmet need from a neighbouring authority.

9.9 Housing needs of different groups (May 2021) - The standard method for assessing local housing need (as set out in guidance for housing and economic needs assessments) identifies an overall minimum average annual housing need figure, however it is not broken down into the housing need of individual groups. This guidance suggest how plan-making authorities should identify and plan for the housing needs of particular groups of people, assessing the need for different housing and reflecting this is policy. In addition, local authorities must also consider their duties under the Equality Act 2010 (including the Public Sector Equality Duty).

9.10 Housing supply and delivery (July 2019) - this guidance explains both the five-year land supply position and the Housing Delivery Test, both of which are used to determine the weight attributed to policies within a Local Plan. A local authority should identify and evidence a *deliverable* five-year supply of land for housing to meet the requirements set out in a Local Plan, as well as identifying specific *developable* sites (or broad locations) for housing in order to meet the housing requirement over the whole of a plan period.

9.11 The five-year land supply identifies the future supply of sites and planning permissions that will deliver homes to meet the future housing requirement. The Housing Delivery Test, as set out above, is used to monitor the progress and implementation of planning permissions and to ascertain the number new homes completed over a three-year period.

Local Plans and Programmes

9.12 Cheshire West and Chester Empty Homes Strategy 2022 - 2027: This new strategy builds on the progress made to date on bringing the borough's empty homes back in to use, providing a framework for addressing neglected properties with a target to help bring a further 1,000 empty homes back in to use.

9.13 Chester One City Plan is an emerging vision for 2022 - 2045 to build on the and take forward relevant actions from the first One City Plan. The plan will be in two parts: the vision that is being developed in partnership with local communities; and the action plan that will includes 45 actions to be delivered by 2045.

9 Population and housing

Baseline information

9.14 Dwellings and households - There are 163,300 dwellings in the borough that equates to 155,156 households (Source: MHCLG table 100 Dwelling stock, ONS table TS041 Number of households). Over 65% of all households are 1 or 2 person households, a further 16% are 3 people households, and 17% are 4 or more people households (Source: Census 2021)

9.15 House prices, rent and affordability - At March 2022 the median house price in Cheshire West and Chester is £228,875. The national median house price is £270,000. The affordability ratio (median house prices to work based earnings) for the borough is 7.18. The ratio for England is 9.05. The higher the affordability ratio, the less affordable it is to purchase a home. (Source: ONS House price statistics, ratio of house price to workplace-based earnings).

9.16 Empty and unfit properties - In September 2022 a total of 1,038 Class C properties were recorded as long term empty (between six months and two years), and a further 424 properties were recorded as long term empty premium properties (empty over two years). The information reported on empty properties has changed since the base level was set in 2015/2016 so it is difficult to identify any trends in the data. However, in 2015/2016 the total long term empty homes was 2,246 units which suggests that properties have been brought in back to use, and that the level of long term empty properties has decreased.

Evidence gaps and proposed work

9.17 A housing requirement, or Local Housing Need figure (LHN) is calculated using the Government's Standard Method. This uses the latest population figures and population projections (based on the 2011 census), and a published affordability ratio for the borough. The population projections, using the outcomes of the Census 2021 are anticipated in late 2023 / early 2024. Using the current published population projections (2014-based) the Cheshire West and Chester local housing need figure is 548 dwellings per year (2023-2033). The calculation of this figure is set out in Figure 9.1 below.

Figure 9.1

Local housing need - Standard method calculation

Step1: Population change over a ten year period 2023 - 2033 (Source: 2014-based population projections, Table 406. Government statistical data sets - live tables on household projections)
Population 2023: 148,608
Population 2033: 153,150
Population change 2023 - 2033 = 4,542

Step 2: Adjustment factor (Source: ONS ratio of house price to workplace-based earnings)
Cheshire West and Chester median workplace-based affordability ratio = 7.29
Adjustment factor: 1.206

Step 3: Local housing need figure
Total ten year requirement = 5,478 dwellings
Annualised requirement = 548 dwellings

9.18 A Land Availability Assessment, considering land for a range of uses including housing and employment, is required to identify the capacity of identified sites. This should be considered in the context of an LHN to determine if sufficient land has been identified, or if further work is required to identify options that can deliver the level of new homes required.

9.19 Housing Needs Assessment: A Local Plan is required to meet the needs of all communities and the mix and type of new housing can be established through a local housing needs assessment. This can include market and affordable housing, student accommodation, and older persons (including extra care) housing. Housing needs for gypsy and traveller and travelling showpeople can be established through a separate needs assessment (Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment) that identifies the range of needs for temporary and permanent plots and pitches in the borough.

Recent changes and anticipated trends

9.20 Population change - The 2021 Census indicates that the population structure of Cheshire West and Chester increased by 8.4% from around 329,600 in 2011 to 357,200 in 2021. This increase is above the the overall increase for England (6%), and higher than the population increase for the North West (5.2%). Cheshire West and Chester had the fourth largest increase in population in the North West region. However, in 2021 the borough ranked 22nd for total population out of the 309 local authority areas in England, and has remained in that position since the last census in 2011.

9.21 The population change by age group in Cheshire West and Chester is dominated by an increase of 24.2% in people aged 65 and over. However there has also been an increase of 6.4% in children aged under 15 years. Figures 9.2 (Cheshire West and Chester) and 9.3 (England) below compare the population change by age group between the 2011 census and the 2021 census.

Figure 9.2 Cheshire West and Chester population change 2011-2021

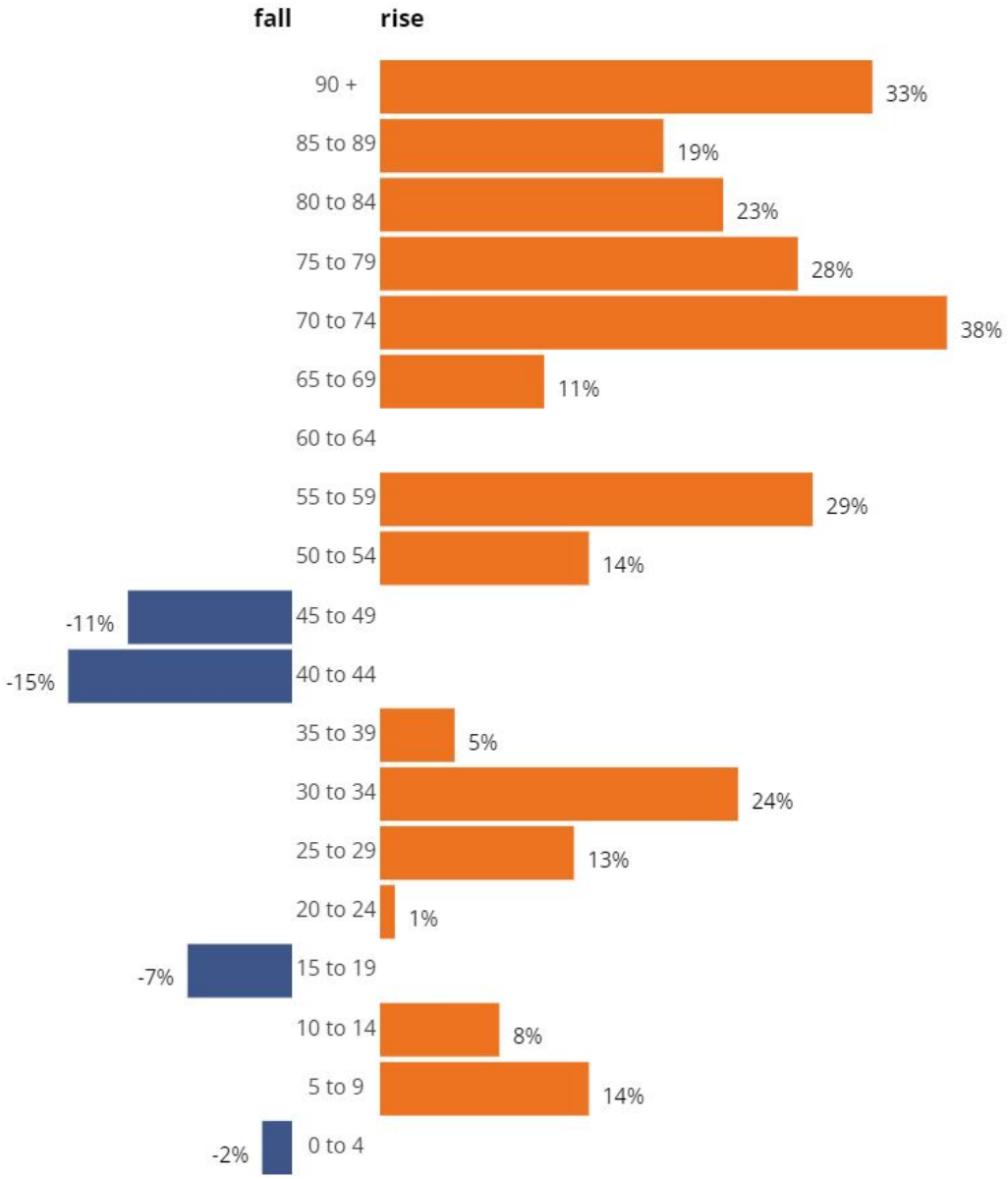
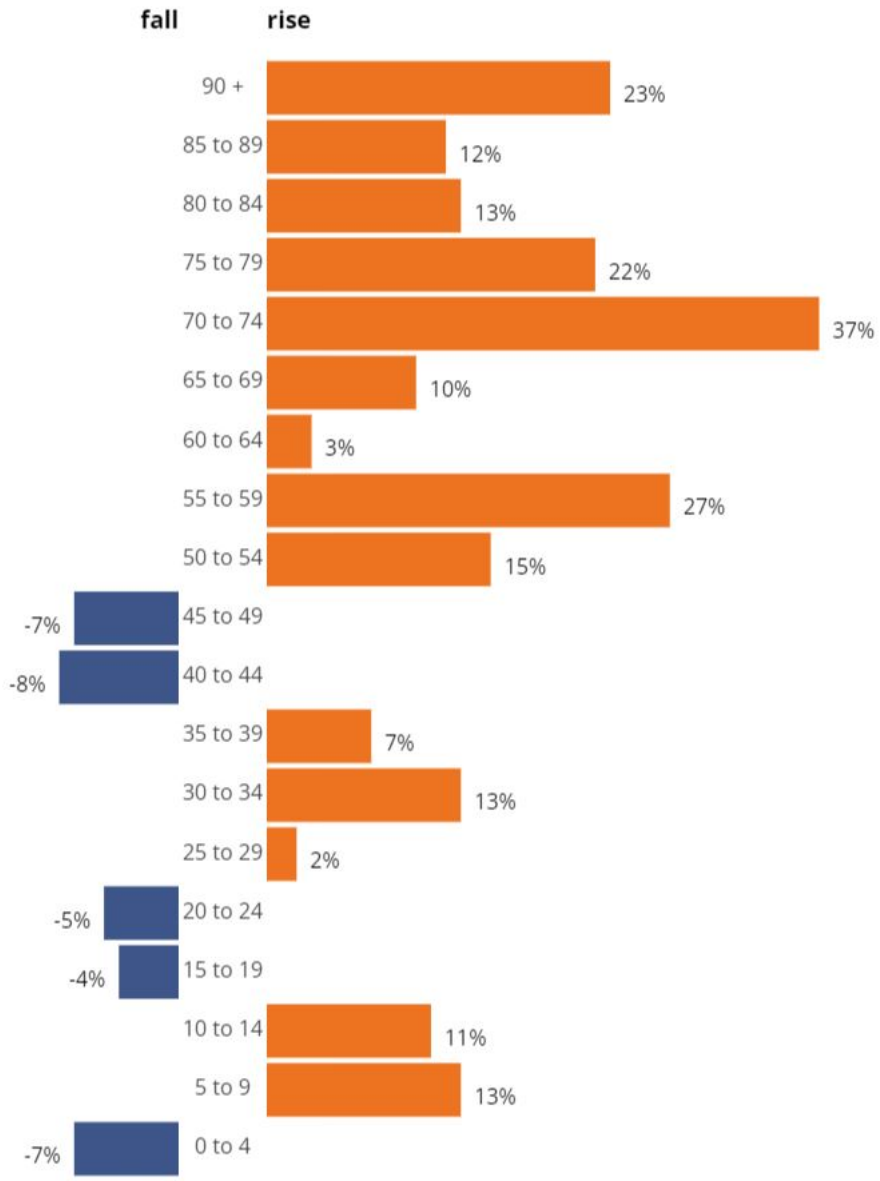


Figure 9.3 England population change 2011-2021



9.22 House prices - The average house price in Cheshire West and Chester between 2017 and 2021 has increased by over 19%, or almost £47,000. The lower quartile house price increased by 13% in the same time period.

Table 9.1 Average and lower quartile house prices 2017 to 2021

Year	Average house price	Lower quartile house price
2017	£242,804	£146,000
2018	£243,440	£144,000
2019	£249,824	£147,500
2020	£277,913	£160,000
2021	£289,457	£165,00

9.23 Housing delivery - Since the base date of the Local Plan (Part One) a net total of 17,845 dwellings have been delivered across the borough. The annual housing delivery rate has ranged from 654 net dwellings in 2010/2011, peaking as 2,542 net dwellings in 2017/2018. The average annual net delivery rate is 1,487 dwellings. The delivery rate is influenced by the deliverable supply of housing land and the level of extant planning permissions. The five-year land supply is monitored in the AMR (indicator STRAT 2 (D)). This shows that as permissions are implemented, meeting the Local Plan housing requirement, the level of deliverable land supply decreases.

9.24 Affordable housing delivery - The Local Plan (Part One) policy SOC 1 sets a target of up to 30% of new homes on sites over a specific threshold are delivered as affordable dwellings. The AMR 2022 (Table 11.1) shows that between 2010 and 2022 an average of 26% of new dwellings completed each year have been affordable units. The annual level of affordable housing delivery in this period ranges from 45.5% in 2011/2012 to 15.5% in 2013-2014.

9.25 Housing mix and type - The mix and type of new housing completed in the borough ranges from one-bed single-storey living (flats and apartments) to five-bed executive homes, and more specialised housing that can be age or health restricted such as for older people. Tables 11.4 and 11.5 of the AMR 2022 set out the mix and type of new housing completed in the borough since 2010 and is split into market housing and affordable housing. Three and four bed market houses are the dominant house type completed in the borough with over 9,000 dwellings completed since 2010. The dominant affordable house type completed has been two and three bed houses, followed by one and two-bed flats / apartments

9.26 The delivery of specialist accommodation in both communal and self-contained housing options is important to monitor alongside other housing types that will also meet the needs of older people i.e. bungalows and smaller house types. Between 2010 and 2022 a range of schemes for older people have been approved and completed in the borough increasing the options available to people, and the supply of homes and bedspaces. In total, 928 new self-contained units, and 314 bedspaces have been

completed. There are seven schemes for older persons accommodation that have extant planning permission and are at different stages in the construction process.

9.27 The provision of student accommodation in Chester is important to meet the needs of all of our communities. Table 11.7 of the AMR 2022 sets out the level of new student housing delivered since 2010. The trend in self-contained accommodation rather than communal halls of residence peaked between 2015 and 2020 when a total of 956 new self-contained student units were completed. Since 2022 there have been no further self-contained or communal schemes approved or completed.

9.28 Provision of Gypsy and Traveller accommodation is vital in ensuring equality, community cohesion and social sustainability. Local authorities have a responsibility to undertake housing needs assessments for all those residing within the borough, to identify their accommodation needs. This is the same for Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople's accommodation which is just another form of provision that takes into account people's different ways of life. An updated GTAA was published in July 2018 and identifies a need for 21 additional pitches for Gypsy and Traveller households that meet the Government's planning definition from 2017 to 2030, three plots for Travelling Showpeople and provision of a 5-10 pitch transit site. In 2021-2022, 3 additional pitches were approved within CWaC.

9.29 These needs are fed into the local planning framework and the Council will address the housing need by providing different types of accommodation, for example flats, houses or perhaps supported accommodation.

Local Plan Update scope and influence

9.30 The Local Plan Update will provide a policy framework for sustainable housing growth in the borough. It can consider the range of future housing requirements including, but not limited to, affordable housing and specialist accommodation for students and older people; and the land use requirements for different types of new housing across the borough. The Local Plan can allocate land for new housing to meet the future identified needs over the new plan period and identify broad locations for new strategic development. It can contain policies and land allocations to support the delivery of new housing across the borough, and promote sustainable development and regeneration within key areas.

Key sustainability issues and opportunities

9.31 The key sustainability issue for new delivering new housing in Cheshire West and Chester are:

- Identifying sites and land to deliver the right mix and type of new sustainable homes in sustainable locations, reducing the reliance on car usage.
- Need to reduce the impact of houses on the environment, and to increase the number of sustainable homes and communities.
- Meet the market and affordable housing needs for the rural area.
- Need to address an increasing need for affordable housing within the borough, and reduce homelessness.
- Use of previously developed land and regeneration opportunities within existing identified settlements

SA framework

Sustainability objective	Appraisal criteria/ sub-objective	Baseline indicator
Provide sufficient high quality, well designed, sustainable housing solutions to meet the range of identified needs for market and affordable housing (including housing options for older people, students, Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople, self and custom housebuilding)	Will it help to meet identified housing needs?	Number of new dwellings approved and completed (net and gross)
		Mix and type of new dwellings completed
	Will it help to improve the existing housing stock?	Number of affordable dwellings approved and completed
		Number of self contained older persons dwellings and communal extra care bedspaces approved and completed
		Number of student dwellings (self contained and communal bedspaces) approved and completed
		Number of additional gypsy and traveller pitches and plots approved and delivered
		Number of unfit and empty properties

10 Health, wellbeing and equality

Policy context

10.1 The NPPF (2021) aims to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which promote social interaction, safe and accessible places that crime or the fear of crime doesn't undermine quality of life and enable healthy lifestyles. The NPPF recognises that economic, social, and environmental factors can influence health and wellbeing. Planning policies should promote public safety and take into account wider security and defence requirements. Design of developments should make use of assessment frameworks such as Building for a Healthy Life.

10.2 The Health and Care Act (2022) promotes a wide range of health reforms in England. The Act formalises Integrated Care Bodies (ICBs) and integrated Care Partnerships (ICPs) as statutory bodies and commissioner of local NHS services. The changes seek to increase coordination of services within the NHS, Local Government and wider stakeholders.

10.3 The NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Health and Care Partnership (the ICP for the borough), brings together stakeholders and will generate an integrated care strategy to improve health and care outcomes. The Cheshire and Merseyside draft interim strategy 2023, published by the partnership sets out that tacking health inequality is their shared aim.

10.4 The Place Plan, is the health and wellbeing strategy for the borough with a vision "to reduce inequality, increase years of healthy life and promote improved mental and physical health and wellbeing for everyone in Cheshire West."

10.5 In October 2020, Cheshire West and Chester Council declared a Poverty Emergency. The declaration sets out the importance of tackling poverty alongside climate change as part of a fairer, greener economy. This has resulted in a Fairer Future strategy 2022/2032, a ten-year plan to reduce the number of people in the borough experiencing poverty and financial hardship. The Inclusive Economy Strategy (2022) prioritises reducing poverty and inequality, supporting people with new skills and jobs, combatting the climate emergency, supporting community wellbeing and enhancing the vibrancy of the borough.

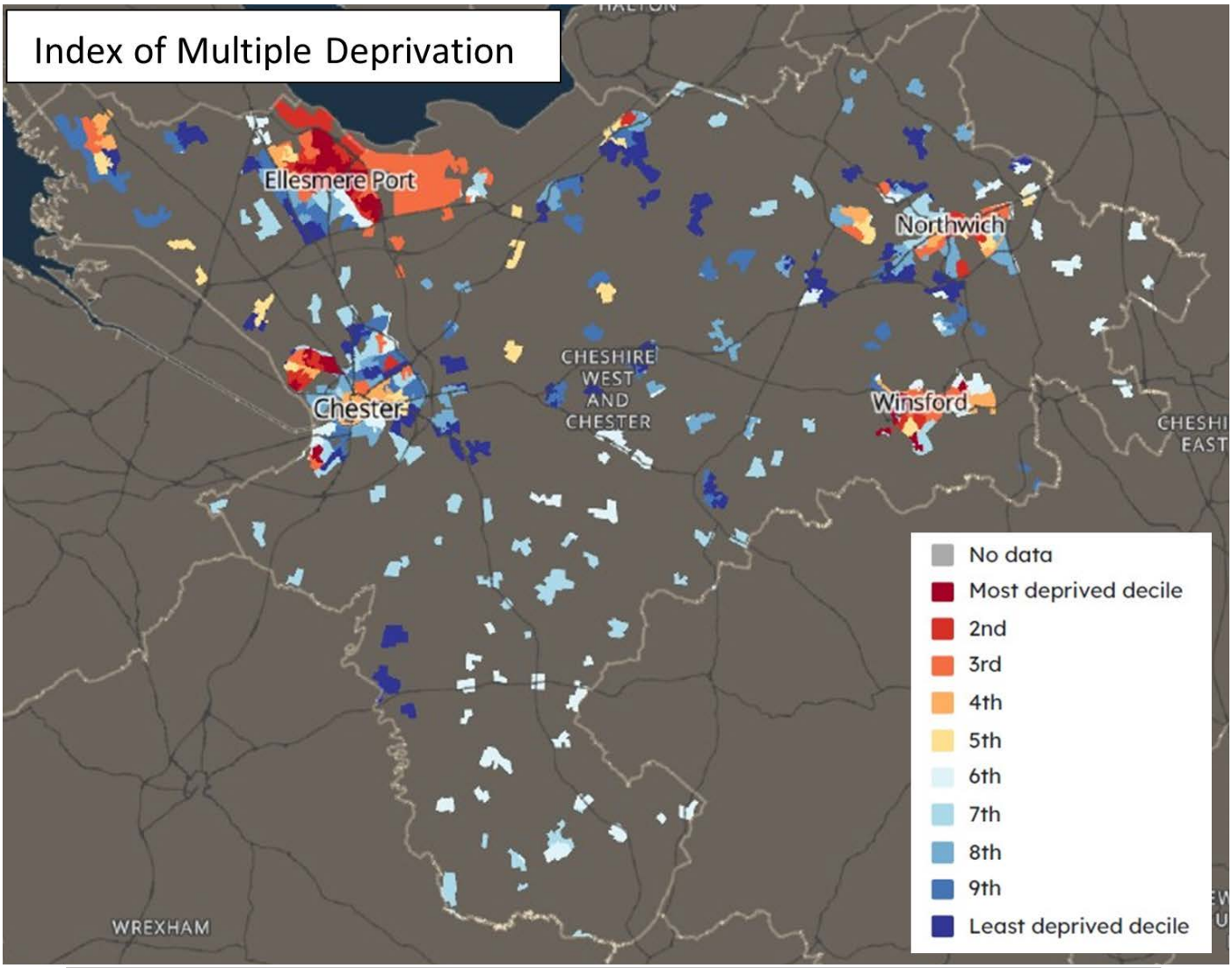
Baseline information

10.6 The Covid 19 pandemic had a big impact upon the world and the long-term impacts are yet to be known. Ill health during the pandemic, long Covid and other illnesses that have been impacted by lockdowns or covid priorities will have a lasting impact. Waiting lists for hospital treatment nationally are at a record high (7.2 million in January 2023) [ix].

ix NHS Key Statistics March 2023 - NHS Key Statistics: England, March 2023 - House of Commons Library (parliament.uk)

10.7 Deprivation of a social, economical or environmental nature, can lead to social exclusion, and social problems. These include increases in crime rates, and decreases in the quality of the housing stock, living conditions, health, and educational attainment. Some indicators measure the effects of deprivation and can act as secondary indicators themselves. The measure of the percentage of the population who smoke, binge drink or are obese can to some degree identify the scale of deprivation.

Map 10.1



Source: https://mapmaker.cdrc.ac.uk/#/index-of-multiple-deprivation?m=imde19_rk&f_lad=E06000050&lon=-2.6599&lat=53.185&zoom=9.57

10.8 Cheshire West and Chester is a comparatively affluent area. However, whilst overall the borough scores comparatively well on the Index of Multiple Deprivation, Cheshire West and Chester does have some of the worst areas of deprivation in the country, measured at Lower layer Super Output Area (LSOA) level. There are 24,670 CWAC residents living in LSOAs ranked in the 10% most deprived in

England. Two of these areas, Lache and Winsford are in the 2% most deprived in England. High levels of deprivation are predominately concentrated in the four urban areas (Chester, Ellesmere Port, Winsford and Northwich). Although dispersed rural poverty could also be an issue. Social mobility is among the bottom 25% of Local Authorities with youth social mobility particularly poor (303 out of 324 authorities).

10.9 In 2021, 11.8 per cent (18,705) of households were living in fuel poverty compared with 13.1 per cent in England. However, since the data was collected, inflation and energy bills have increased which most likely will see this figure increase over the next few years. The Cheshire West and Chester Fuel Poverty Strategy (2023) includes actions to improve energy efficiency in the home, increase renewable and low carbon technologies in domestic properties and encouraging behaviour change to reduce energy consumption.

10.10 The Local Plan Update will be subject to a Health Impact Assessment, which will be used to feed back into subsequent stages of the Sustainability Appraisal.

10.11 Safe and healthy neighbourhoods are fundamental to the economic, social and environmental well-being of the community. Crime is not a particular problem in Cheshire West and Chester when compared with England and has remained relatively stable over the past few years with an increase in the crime rate nationally.

Figure 10.1

Source: State of the Borough: https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/your-council/key-statistics-and-data/state-of-the-borough/crime

10.12 In the Our Place Survey (Autumn 2021) 92 per cent of respondents felt safe during the day and 60 per cent after dark. These are borough wide figures and further analysis into the spatial area should be undertaken to understand if this is truly representative. Well-designed places can reduce the opportunity for crime and the fear of crime, helping to create safer, more attractive environments.

Consideration of crime reduction measures at all stages of the planning process has a demonstrable positive impact on levels of crime and anti-social behaviour.

10.13 Such proactive measures can have a significant impact on public spending on community safety issues and should therefore form a key consideration in the design and layout of new development. The recognised standard for incorporating these principles into the planning process is 'Secured by Design'.

10.14 Health and wellbeing can also be improved by access to various forms of green infrastructure, either for recreation or physical exercise. The Open Space Study (2017) provides an assessment of need of all accessible open space in the borough in terms of quality, quantity and access. The study then sets local open space standards based on this assessment, and these are included within the Local Plan (Part Two). The study highlights deficiencies in provision in at least two open space typologies within each area profile, with deficiencies in youth play space in all areas. In addition, the Playing Pitch Strategy is in the process of being updated and will provide up to date information about existing and future needs for all outdoor sport facilities in terms of quality, quantity, and location.

10.15 Measurement of social value within the built environment is a rapidly evolving, with no common methodology to provide a consistent definition or approach. Within the Delivery Social Value: Measurement by the Green Building Council they suggest that “social value is a term for economic, environmental and social benefits that are experienced by people. To understand their worth, these benefits are often measured, and sometimes assigned a financial figure.”

Evidence gaps and proposed work

10.16 Further data will be published from the Census over the next few years. Understanding people’s movements to work and services as well as demographics can support future strategies.

10.17 The Open Space Study will need updating to reflect the new open space provided as well as re-assessing the quality of existing and the impact of new development.

10.18 Setting out a methodology and assessment for social value along with a health impact assessment. This should be an ongoing process through the development of the Local Plan Update.

Recent changes and anticipated trends

10.19 The Health and Care Act 2022 radically changes how the NHS and health provision is organised, collaboratively providing care closer to people’s homes, as well as taking a pro-active approach to people’s health. Secondary legislation is likely to be published, providing greater clarity over the new way of working for health systems.

10.20 The declaration of a poverty emergency highlights the need to consider inequality in all aspects of the Council. Since the Covid pandemic and cost of living crisis, this is unfortunately likely to only become more of an issue.

Local Plan Update scope and influence

10.21 The Local Plan Update should look at current community infrastructure that supports health and wellbeing when considering future strategies as well as policies that protect and enhance key facilities. The Local Plan Update can support the proactive approach to health and wellbeing through the promotion of active travel, protection for open spaces as well as designing new developments with health as a priority. Not only does this benefit health, but climate, inequality and air quality. Ensuring a high-quality design and access to open spaces in all areas of the borough, regardless of socio-economics ensures opportunities to improve health for all.

Key sustainability issues and opportunities

- Under supply of open space when compared to the recommended standard.
- Ensure that development supports existing communities and contributes to the creation of safe, sustainable and liveable communities.
- Policies can support the pro-active approach to health, enabling people to live healthier lifestyles.
- Design of new developments that considers public security and promotes active travel, active frontages and opportunities for overlooking to increase the feeling of safety, accessible for all that effectively incorporates open spaces.
- Boosting the night-time economy in town centres, leading to busier centres that feel safer.
- Ageing population and considerations of our town centres that cater of all ages as well as care in the community.
- Housing and site layouts can impact someone living with dementia, mental health issues or disabilities.
- Accessibility to services and jobs, especially in the rural area can lead to social isolation.
- Inequality across the borough with low social mobility, especially for the young.
- Pockets of deprivation, mainly in urban areas, with inefficient homes leading to additional costs.

SA framework

Sustainability objective	Appraisal criteria/ sub-objective	Baseline indicator
Promote regeneration, particularly of deprived areas.	Will it deliver urban/rural regeneration?	None identified
	Will it improve economic conditions, particularly in deprived areas?	Number of LSOA in 20% most deprived in the borough
	Will it support rural diversification?	Number of planning applications approved for rural diversification
	Will it improve equality across the borough?	Number of households in fuel poverty Local Authority ranking in the social mobility index
	Will it cater for all ages?	None identified
Create a safe environment to live in and reduce the fear of crime.	Will it reduce opportunities for crime, and therefore, levels of crime?	Domestic burglaries per 1000 households
		Violent crime per year per 1000 population in the LA area
	Will it affect the fear of crime and feelings of safety?	Fear of crime (Community Survey)
	Will it improve road safety and reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured on the roads?	Total number of people killed or seriously injured (KSI) in road traffic collisions
		Total number of children (aged under 16) killed or seriously injured (KSI) in road traffic collisions
Enable environments that promote health and wellbeing	Will it promote active lifestyles?	Percentage of physically active adults
		Obesity percentages of children in the borough
	Will it increase the quantity or quality of open space?	Total amount of open space per 1,000 persons
	Will it safeguard shops and services in existing centres? Will it help to protect existing community facilities and services? Will it provide new or improved community facilities or services?	Vacancy rates in town centre
		Number of applications approved involving loss of a community facility (e.g. demolition or conversion to an alternative use)
		Number of applications approved involving provision of new community facilities or improvement of existing community facilities.

11 Economy and employment

Policy context

National

11.1 The NPPF supports building a strong and prosperous economy (Section 6 paragraphs 81-85). Policies should support economic growth and productivity, taking account of local business needs, wider opportunities and particular strengths or drivers for innovation, and support a prosperous rural economy. Strategic policies (paragraphs 20-23), should look a minimum of 15 years ahead. Broad locations for development should be identified and the Local Plan should provide a clear strategy for meeting objectively assessed needs. Planning policies should ensure the vitality of town centres (section 7, paragraph 86-91) by supporting the role they play within communities. The NPPF promotes a town centre first approach to main town centre uses.

11.2 The national Planning Practice Guidance sets out further guidelines of how to plan for future business, including Housing and Economic Needs Assessments and Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessments.

11.3 In November 2020, the Government published 'The Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution'. It sets out how the UK will recover from the impacts of the Covid pandemic, specifically leading on green technologies to transform the economy, deliver jobs and growth whilst taking account of climate change. The main points of the Plan that may be relevant to Cheshire West include; Point 2 driving the growth of low carbon hydrogen, Point 3 delivering new and advanced nuclear power, Point 4 accelerating the shift to zero emission vehicles, Point 5 green public transport cycling and walking, Point 6 jet zero and green ships, Point 7 Greener buildings, Point 8 investing in CCUS, Point 9 protecting the natural environment. In December 2020, the Government published the Energy White Paper: it notes climate change offers the opportunity for economic growth and job creation linked to low carbon technology, electric vehicles and clean energy. Alongside this the National Infrastructure Strategy (November 2020) was published, which notes infrastructure underpins the economy and transport, digital, energy and utility networks are vital for jobs, businesses and economic growth. Priorities include backing new green growth clusters in traditional industrial areas, with carbon capture and storage, offshore wind, port infrastructure and low carbon hydrogen; bringing jobs investment and prosperity to deprived communities, revitalising town centres and high streets.

11.4 The Levelling up and Regeneration Bill (May 2022) and Levelling Up White Paper (February 2022): aims to boost productivity, pay, jobs and living standards by growing the private sector. It provides tools that can be used to deliver regeneration and make good use of previously developed land, reinvigorate high streets, promote locally led local development corporations. It aims to improve the planning process and further changes to national policy, guidance and legislation are anticipated. A key aim is enabling the regeneration of brownfield and other underused land to support local economic growth, whilst rejuvenating town centres by reducing blight and enabling high streets to thrive.

11 Economy and employment

Sub Regional and local

11.5 The Cheshire and Warrington Strategic Economic Plan (July 2017) outlines the growth ambitions for the sub region, including world class, science, technology and innovation within the Cheshire Science Corridor. There are economic opportunities from HS2 and cross border opportunities with the Mersey Dee Alliance area.

11.6 The Cheshire and Warrington Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) and CWAC Local Area Industrial Strategy (2019) contain a wide range of economic data/evidence. CWAC has sector strengths in advanced manufacturing and engineering, financial services, chemicals, automotive. Jobs are concentrated in Ellesmere Port, Winsford, Ince and Capenhurst with multi-national companies such as Essar, TATA Chemicals and Vauxhall located in the borough. Other major employers include Urenco and Encirc. Stand out sub-sectors include motor vehicle manufacture with 2000 jobs, mineral oil refining and hollow glass manufacture are areas of particular specialisation. In the rural area, agri-food and visitor economy are important sectors . Future growth/employment sectors are likely to be linked to low carbon energy, hydrogen, sustainable aviation fuel, zero emission vehicles, and nuclear industries, or 'green jobs'. Ellesmere Port and Northwich, have particular strengths in these areas.

11.7 Cheshire West and Chester Inclusive Economy Strategy seeks to build: a more productive economy, a more resilient economy and a more inclusive economy.

11.8 The CWaC Climate Emergency Response Plan, Climate Emergency Land Action Plan's state by 2045, all land in west Cheshire helps tackle the climate and nature emergencies. The relevance to the Economy Topic is to provide low carbon energy, reduce the need to travel, provide a resilient outdoor recreation and visitor resource, agricultural land and food production (rural economy).

11.9 The Cheshire Retail Study (2016) assessed the need for additional retail floorspace, proposed retail boundaries and policy for town centre strategies in the Local Plan (Part Two).

Baseline information

11.10 The Council maintains a suite of economic data through the 'State of the Borough Dashboard' including business and economy, culture and tourism, and skills and employment data: State of the Borough dashboard | Cheshire West and Chester Council The Council's Annual Monitoring Reports (AMR) provide Local Plan monitoring data on new developments in the borough since 2010, together with contextual economic indicators. As above, detailed information is also available in the Local Area Industrial Strategy (2019). The text below summarises the key baseline information relevant to the preparation of the new Local Plan.

Employment characteristics of the borough

11.11 The Cheshire West and Chester Unemployment rate for May 2021-June 2022 is 1.9%. This is well below the regional and national averages. Recent trends show a spike in unemployment 2019-2021 most likely linked to the Covid pandemic.

11.12 In June 2022 the number of borough residents in employment was 76.8%, a higher level than that for North West 73.3% and England 75.7%. The borough has a skilled population, ONS data shows that for all NVQ+ qualifications CWaC levels are higher than regional and national averages. The percentage of people with no qualifications is below the regional and national level.

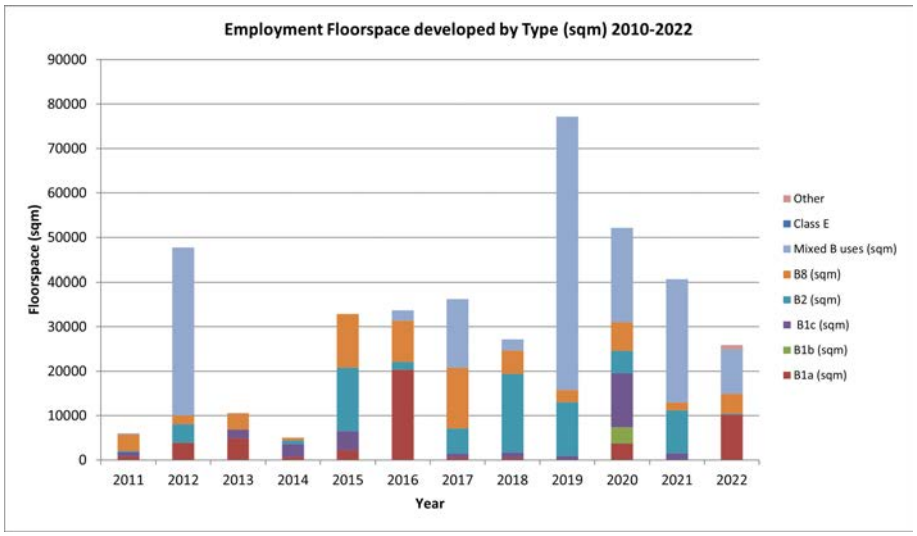
11.13 Data on earnings by residence and workplace, shows that residents earnings are higher than the workplace earnings, this may be an indication of residents out commuting to higher paid jobs outside the borough. There are 192,000 workplace jobs within Cheshire West and Chester, with a jobs density of 0.87 (2021) which is slightly above the regional and national density.

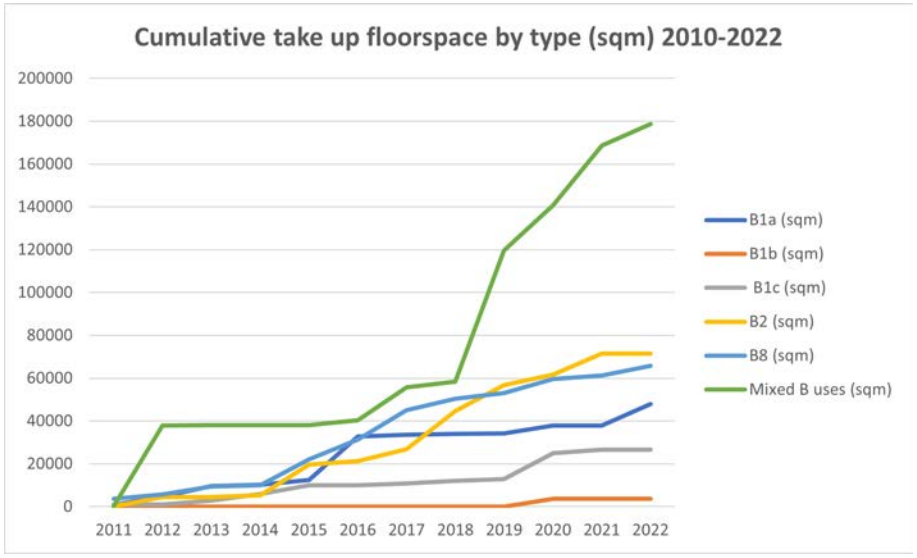
Business and enterprise

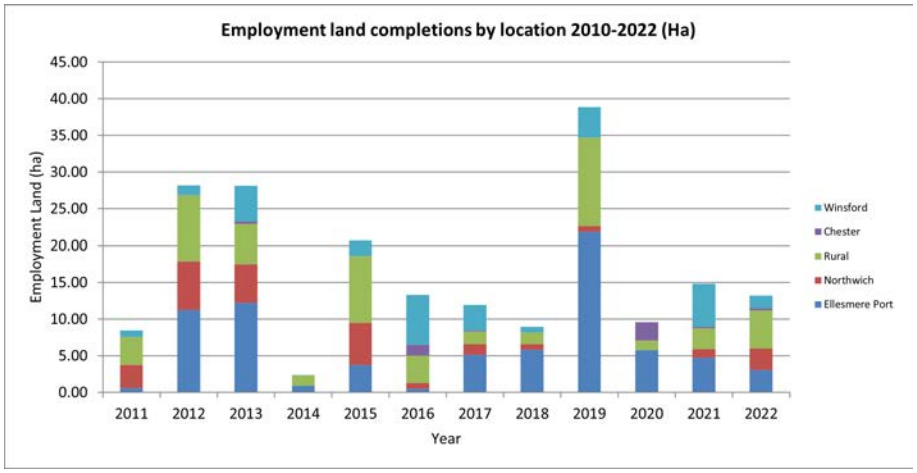
11.14 Number of businesses in CWaC 2021: 14,560 (ONS, IDBR March 2022). Since 2010, there has been a gradual increase in the number of businesses in CWaC from approx. 11500 to 14500 businesses. The business births have generally been at a higher level than business deaths and increased since 2010. The gap between business births and deaths narrowed in 2019-2021, this is likely to be as a result of the Covid pandemic.

Employment Land and Floorspace

11.15 The Council's Annual Monitoring Report (2022) provides information on employment by type and location. This includes employment land provision, take up and losses over the current local plan period and the development of key employment sites identified in Local Plan (Part One). Employment uses include offices, general industrial and warehousing/distribution. The cumulative amount of employment land developed (ha) 2010-2030, as at April 2022:198.3ha / 25,859sqm. Alongside this 145ha of land has been redeveloped from employment to other uses (such as retail, waste, housing). Since 2010 the overall provision of employment land (completions and supply) exceeds the Local Plan requirement of 365ha to 2030. Over the Local Plan period (2010-2022) the average employment land take up has been 17.7ha/pa. This includes the period of lockdown due to Covid - prior to this the average take up was slightly higher; over a 10 year period 2009-2019 the average take up rate was 20.6ha/pa and over a 15 year period 2007-2022 average take up has been 18.6ha/pa. The Council maintains sufficient provision of employment land to meet the strategic requirements of the Local Plan. The graphs below show how employment land take up varies by type and location:


Employment Floorspace developed by Type (sqm) 2010-2022
Floorspace (sqm)
90000
80000
70000
60000
50000
40000
30000
20000
10000
0
2011
2012
2013
2014
2015
2016
2017
2018
2019
2020
2021
2022
Year
Other
Class E
Mixed B uses (sqm)
B8 (sqm)
B2 (sqm)
B1c (sqm)
B1b (sqm)
B1a (sqm)

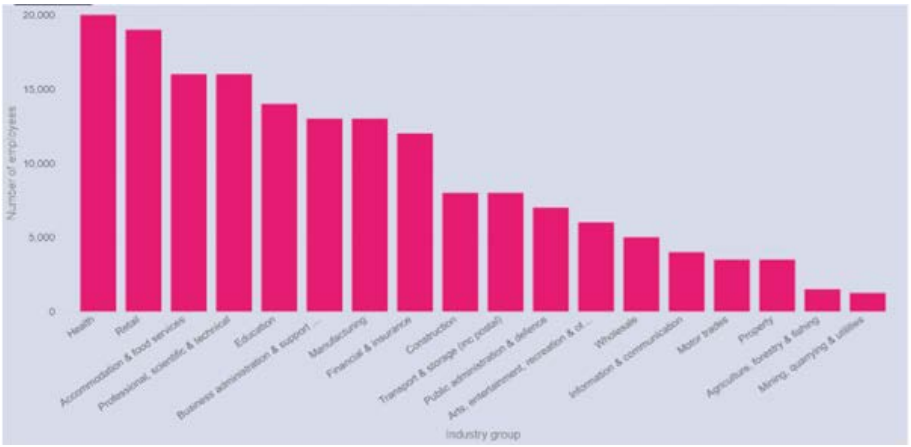

Cumulative take up floorspace by type (sqm) 2010-2022
200000
180000
160000
140000
120000
100000
80000
60000
40000
20000
0
2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022
B1a (sqm)
B1b (sqm)
B1c (sqm)
B2 (sqm)
B8 (sqm)
Mixed B uses (sqm)


Employment land completions by location 2010-2022 (Ha)
Employment Land (ha)
45.00
40.00
35.00
30.00
25.00
20.00
15.00
10.00
5.00
0.00
2011
2012
2013
2014
2015
2016
2017
2018
2019
2020
2021
2022
Year
Winsford
Chester
Rural
Northwich
Ellesmere Port

Employment Distribution by sector

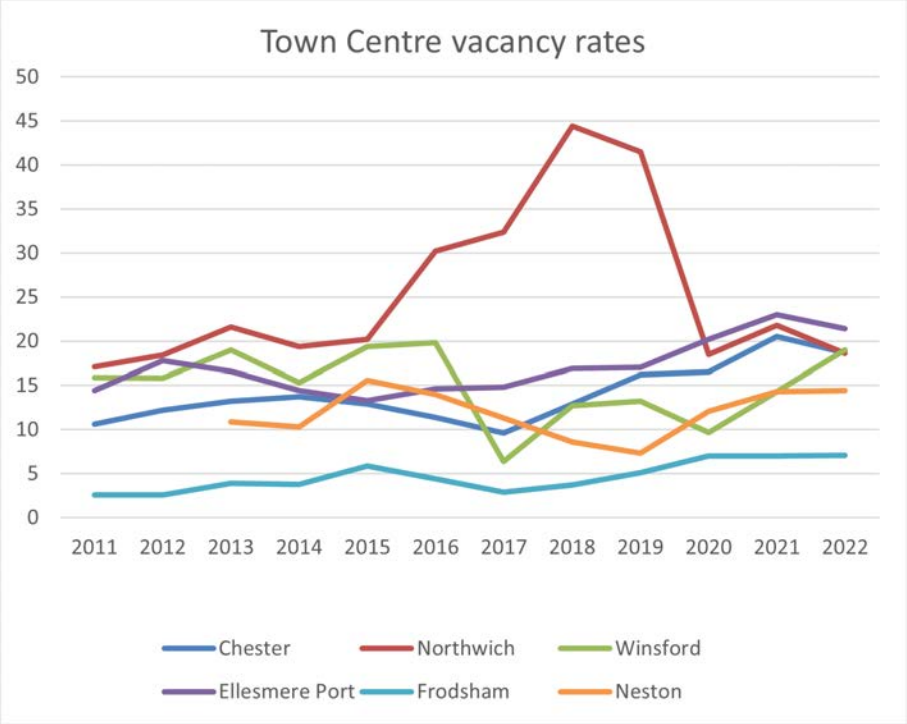
11.16 Employment by Broad Industrial Group (BRES Survey 2022) provides information on sectors of the borough's economy. This is shown in the graph below. The sectors with the highest number of employees in CWAC at 2021 are Health (20,000); retail (19,000); Accommodation and food services (16,000); Professional, scientific and technical (16,000) Education (14,000). Census 2021 data provides information on the types of industries that the borough's residents work in. Compared to surrounding areas a high proportion of residents work in the following: retail (11.2%), chemicals (0.6%) and pharmaceuticals (0.7%), Human health (8.5%) and veterinary activities (0.5%) or other manufacturing (1.4%) wholesale and retail related to motor vehicles and motor cycles (1.8%) food and beverage (4.4%), financial services (3%).

Employment by Sector (BRES, 2021)



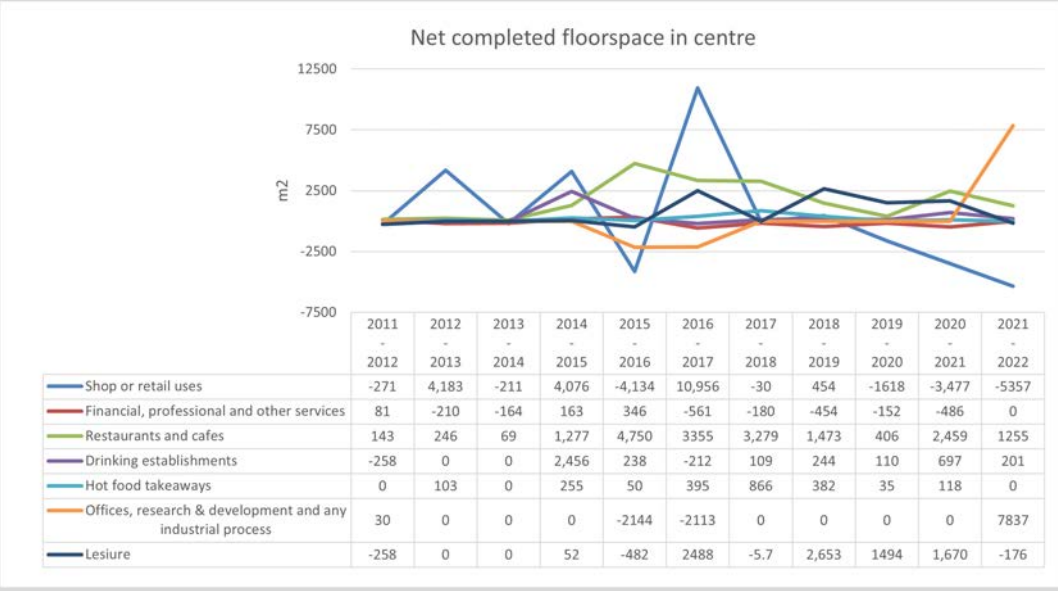
Retail and town centres

11.17 Vacancy rates can provide an indication of the overall health of the borough's town centres. Within the six town centres, three have decreased their vacancy rate in 2022 compared with 2021 (Chester, Northwich and Ellesmere Port). Two (Neston and Frodsham) have marginally increased their vacancy rate, although relatively stable and Winsford has increased its vacancy rate. Ellesmere Port currently has the highest vacancy rate overall (21 per cent) and Frodsham has the lowest (7 per cent). The peak in Northwich from 2017-2020 can be linked to the completion of the new Baron's Quay development, and also the regeneration of the Weaver Square area. Likewise regeneration schemes are taking place within Winsford town centre which may account for the recent increase.

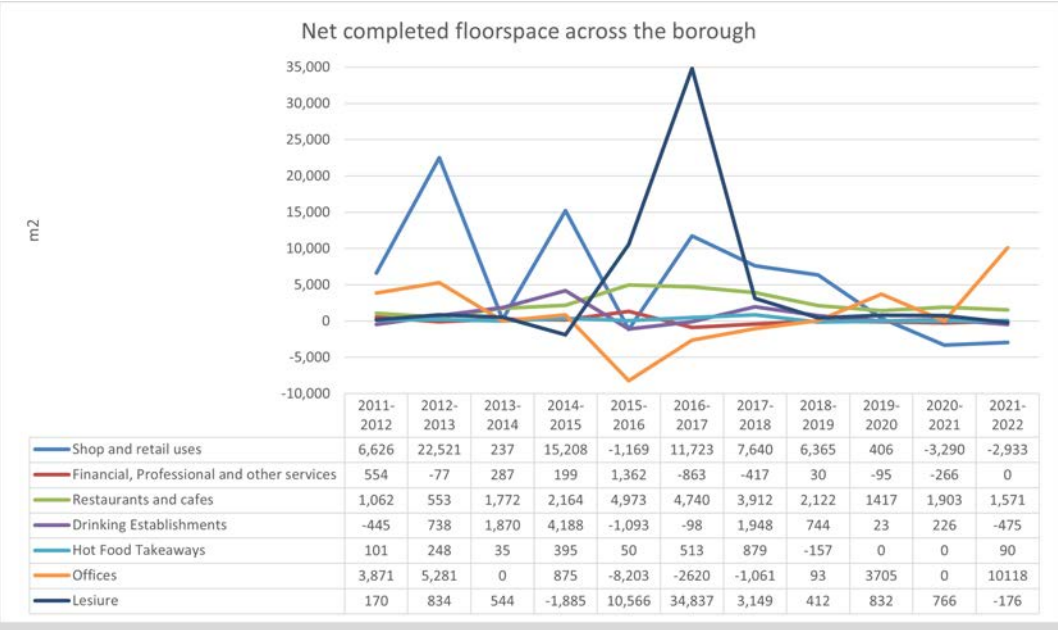


11.18 In 2022 the net shop floorspace completed decreased both in and out of the town centres, with an increase in food and drink and office development (the high level of office floorspace can be attributed to the development of the Council's new Portal Building), whilst drinking establishment floorspace decreased across the borough. The Council's AMR contains details of the amount of new floorspace developed within town centres for main town centre uses, in line with the aims of Local Plan policy over the plan period. It also monitors the overall development of floorspace for main town centre uses across the borough. Trends show the levels of floorspace developed since 2010 have fluctuated. There is a high proportion of floorspace that has been developed in edge or out of centre locations. The borough has some large out of town retail areas including Cheshire Oaks, Ellesmere Port and Greyhound Retail Park Chester. Changes to the Use Classes Order and introduction of flexibility under Class E, means not all sites will be identified due to permitted development rights.

11.19 The two graphs below show the trend of completed floorspace in main town centre uses since 2011 in centre and across the borough. Policy directs main town centre uses to the town centres (Chester, Northwich, Ellesmere Port, Winsford, Neston, Frodsham and Local Retail Centres) in line with the NPPF. However, the completed floorspace shows this is not the case. Food and drink uses are more likely to be completed within the town centre where as out of centre retail is consistently out performing the town centres, with the exception of Council led schemes such as Barons Quay. The town centre is changing and retail is unlikely to be the anchor it once was. Northgate (Chester) and Weaver Square (Northwich) were once allocated for retail use, however more alternative diverse uses are now likely to be developed.



	2011 - 2012	2012 - 2013	2013 - 2014	2014 - 2015	2015 - 2016	2016 - 2017	2017 - 2018	2018 - 2019	2019 - 2020	2020 - 2021	2021 - 2022
Shop or retail uses	-271	4,183	-211	4,076	-4,134	10,956	-30	454	-1618	-3,477	-5357
Financial, professional and other services	81	-210	-164	163	346	-561	-180	-454	-152	-486	0
Restaurants and cafes	143	246	69	1,277	4,750	3355	3,279	1,473	406	2,459	1255
Drinking establishments	-258	0	0	2,456	238	-212	109	244	110	697	201
Hot food takeaways	0	103	0	255	50	395	866	382	35	118	0
Offices, research & development and any industrial process	30	0	0	0	-2144	-2113	0	0	0	0	7837
Lesiure	-258	0	0	52	-482	2488	-5.7	2,653	1494	1,670	-176



	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Shop and retail uses	6,626	22,521	237	15,208	-1,169	11,723	7,640	6,365	406	-3,290	-2,933
Financial, Professional and other services	554	-77	287	199	1,362	-863	-417	30	-95	-266	0
Restaurants and cafes	1,062	553	1,772	2,164	4,973	4,740	3,912	2,122	1417	1,903	1,571
Drinking Establishments	-445	738	1,870	4,188	-1,093	-98	1,948	744	23	226	-475
Hot Food Takeaways	101	248	35	395	50	513	879	-157	0	0	90
Offices	3,871	5,281	0	875	-8,203	-2620	-1,061	93	3705	0	10118
Lesiure	170	834	544	-1,885	10,566	34,837	3,149	412	832	766	-176

Visitor Economy

11.20 Tourism and culture is an important part of the borough's economy. In 2021 there were 24.5 million visitors to the borough. This was a slight decline from 37.4 million visitors in 2019, the majority are day visitors (23.3 million in 2021). Figures state that total employment supported by visitors (FTE) is 17206 / 21.4% in 2021. The borough has some large visitor attractions such as Chester Zoo, it provides heritage based tourism including Beeston Castle and historic settlements. The borough also provides for major sporting events such as Chester Races and Oulton Park racecourse. Staying visitors were 1.2 million in 2021, a decline from 1.6 million in 2019. Decline in numbers since 2019 can be accounted for due to the Covid pandemic, and are likely to increase to former levels in future.

11 Economy and employment

Travel to work areas

11.21 The 2021 Census results provide data on labour market and travel to work data. The Census 2021 took place during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, a period of unparalleled and rapid change; the national lockdown, associated guidance and furlough measures which will have affected the travel to work topic. ONS advises care should be taken when using this for planning and policy purposes. In Cheshire West and Chester 31.5% of people worked mainly from home. The distances travelled 20-30km and 30-40km, were slightly higher than the national percentages (with other distances comparable to national rates). Further analysis of the travel to work data would be useful for smaller geographical areas within the borough.

Evidence gaps and proposed work

11.22 More detailed evidence and analysis on employment by sector is required for the Local Plan Update to identify any growth sectors, or declining sectors for the borough and understand any implications for employment land provision in the Local Plan. Further analysis could review the sector specialisms in CWaC, sub areas and surrounding areas. Evidence could consider any sectoral trends over the plan period, and longer term economic cycles. PPG advises this can be done through an Economic Development Needs Assessment, to include information from local economic forecasting models (for example, the Cheshire and Warrington Economic Model or equivalent). This work could be done alongside or jointly with housing, population and demographic modelling.

11.23 Additional evidence on the local commercial property market would be useful, to consider any differences between local areas within the borough. Former Employment Studies have included survey data with major employers and local companies to understand their future land requirements (either surplus land for redevelopment, or requirements for land for growth and expansion). Evidence should consider the Council's economic development and regeneration schemes and any implications for future delivery of employment land (PPG para 25-30).

11.24 PPG advises Local Authorities to assess the need and allocate land for logistics (PPG para 31). Logistics industries have a critical role in enabling efficient, effective and sustainable supply of goods to businesses and contributing to local employment opportunities. Further evidence on this should be considered alongside work on the Council's Local Transport Plan. Likewise further analysis of travel to work areas may be useful.

11.25 National policy states the Local Plan should identify strategic sites, for local and inward investment. Further assessment of these broad locations, existing and future employment land allocations, could be done through a Economic Land Availability Assessment (alongside sites for housing or other uses).

11.26 Retail is a fast paced sector that has been changing for a number of years. The Retail Study was undertaken in 2016 and the retail environment has changed significantly since this was published. Therefore, an up-to-date assessment of the town centre environment and future strategy will be needed. This may also look at the trends in out of town retailing in the borough and any potential effect this may have on the town centres.

Recent changes and anticipated trends

11.27 As noted above, the impact of Covid during 2019-2020 has affected baseline economic data and the prediction of future trends. The impact of the Covid pandemic on longer term economic trends is uncertain. There has been a recent shift towards homeworking, which has affected offices in particular and travel to work patterns. More data on vacant office floorspace and availability in the borough may be required. The way in which economic forecasts are used to derive future floorspace and land estimates may be adjusted to account for these changes (i.e. floorspace to employee ratios). Given changes to the office market, it is likely that some vacant buildings will be under pressure for re-use or redevelopment to alternative uses. Employers/developers may explore other ways that vacant employment buildings can be used more effectively, particularly poorer quality premises where commercial viability is a concern. These trends are likely to continue, unless there are further changes to policy/legislation.

11.28 The Council's employment land monitoring/AMR data includes data on employment land completions by type and location. The previous graph shows the trends for the cumulative take up of employment floorspace (B2, B8 and former B1 use classes) at April 2022. Most land developed has been flexible for mixed employment uses, with high levels of floorspace also developed for for B2 and B8 uses. Office development in the borough has been at lower levels. There was an increase in office floorspace in 2022 due to the completion of the Council's Portal building in Ellesmere Port, and this increase is not necessarily representative of longer term trends. It is anticipated that the trend for employment land for B2/B8 uses is likely to continue.

11.29 In September 2020, the Government amended the Use Classes Order to introduce a new Class E, to replace town centre uses including the former Class B1(a) offices. This provides greater flexibility for different uses falling within Class E, to change without the need for planning permission (for example, an office to a shop). The intention was to support city/town centres and high streets to reflect changing requirements. However the legislation is not limited to specific areas and applies equally to purpose built Business Parks for offices and out of town retail areas, unless these are controlled through measures such as legal agreement or conditions (for example Chester Business Park, Gadbrook Park, Cheshire Oaks). The likely trend is that a wider range of uses are likely to appear on High Streets and flagship office Business Parks, or smaller scale changes to offices/retail in rural areas may occur. National planning policy has not kept up with the changes to the use class system and it is anticipated this will change when the NPPF is reviewed.

11.30 Changes to the way we shop and use our town centres has been changing and potentially accelerated by the Covid 19 pandemic. The use of online shopping is increasing year on year. The high street needs to adapt to this new way of shopping and town centres are offering an ever increasing experience, something that cannot be replicated online. In recent years, the trend towards food and drink and leisure uses was increasing. However, inflation and the cost of living has resulted in less disposable income for retail and leisure along with the increased costs operators have in a physical unit. The increase in working at home has for a lot of people meant their local centres have become more important to meet day to day needs. There is also a potential threat to town centres from out of town retailing, with the greater flexibility of class E and the range of uses that could be accommodated in out of centre locations under permitted development.

11 Economy and employment

Local Plan Update scope and influence

11.31 The new Local Plan will provide a policy framework for sustainable economic growth in the borough. It can consider future economic growth requirements, the land use requirements for new investment, to allow for business growth or expansion, by employment type and location in the borough. The Local Plan can allocate employment land to meet the future identified needs over the new plan period and identify broad locations for new economic development. It can contain policies and land allocations to support the boroughs town and local centres, and promote economic regeneration within key areas.

Key sustainability issues and opportunities

- Maintaining economic growth and economic recovery following the Covid Pandemic.
- Planning for green jobs, logistics needs or other potential economic growth sectors.
- Supporting economies in urban and rural areas, including the visitor economy.
- Providing a sufficient portfolio of employment land and premises to meet forecast economic needs, by type and location.
- Provision of services and facilities to support the visitor economy.
- Provision of infrastructure to underpin the economy and enable economic growth.
- Regeneration of brownfield and underutilised land and buildings to support local economic growth.
- Re-invention of our high streets, providing a greater mix of uses to reduce vacancy rates.
- Support for local retail and services to meet day to day needs closer to peoples homes.

SA framework

11.32 The following objectives, criteria and indicators have been developed to assess the sustainability effects relating to the economy.

Sustainability objective	Appraisal criteria/ sub-objective	Baseline indicator
To support a sustainable, resilient and inclusive economy and provide opportunities for economic growth and investment	Will it help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt? Will it support sustainable economic growth? Will it provide a balanced portfolio of employment land for the area by type and location? Will it maintain/safeguard high quality employment land and premises? Will it contribute to meeting the employment needs of the rural/urban are Will it promote tourism and the visitor economy? Will it improve accessibility to jobs? Will it take account of the different locational requirements of different sectors?	Employment land supply and distribution, by type and location Employment land completions, by type and location Employment land loss, by type and location Employment by broad industrial sector Enterprise births and deaths, number of businesses and business survival rates STEAM data on visitor economy
To maintain and improve the vitality and viability of City, town and local centres	Will it safeguard shops and services in existing centres?	Vacancy rates within town centres.
	Will it safeguard and improve the retail, leisure and service provision?	Amount of floorspace developed for town centre uses
	Will it provide improved physical, social and environmental infrastructure in city, town and local centres?	None identified

12 Infrastructure

12.1 Infrastructure is a wide-ranging topic area and as such it overlaps with several other thematic chapters. Water supply, treatment and flood prevention is covered in the water chapter; safety and security, open space and health infrastructure is covered in the health, wellbeing and equality chapter; and green infrastructure is covered in the biodiversity chapter. Renewable energy infrastructure is covered in the climate change chapter and affordable housing is covered in the population and housing chapter.

12.2 This chapter covers transport infrastructure, community facilities, education, cultural assets, electrical grid connections, telecommunications and broadband.

Policy context

12.3 Good transport connections have direct benefits to people, businesses, the environment and the economy. Effective transport infrastructure can help people to access jobs, reduce commuting times and the cost of living. It can support innovation, productivity and economic growth, helping to attract inward investment by reducing costs and improving access to skilled labour. Reducing the reliance on cars and promoting greener modes of transport (such as public transport and active travel) can relieve congestion and reduce carbon emissions. It can unlock new development sites for business and housing if roads, bus services and rail are in place to serve them.

12.4 Technological change is rapid and digital infrastructure is becoming more and more important. This is likely to increase further in the future with the increasing analysis and use of Big Data (extremely large data sets that can be analysed to reveal patterns, often relating to human behaviour and interactions) and the Internet of Things (connecting devices embedded in everyday objects enabling them to send and receive data via the internet).

12.5 High speed broadband is becoming more and more important to local communities and it can help to reduce travel and social exclusion by enabling home working, e-learning and access to on-line applications and services provided by the public and private sector. Gigabit-capable connections can provide speeds of over 1,000 megabits per second (mbps). Gigabit-capable connections are often, but now always, delivered by full fibre connections. In addition to broadband connections, 5G is the new mobile communications standard which replaces 4G and allows wireless internet access at much higher speeds.

National

12.6 The NPPF (2021) requires plans to promote sustainable development including aligning growth and infrastructure. Strategic policies should set out the strategy and scale of development including making sufficient provision for infrastructure. Plans should set out the contributions expected from development to the provision of various types of infrastructure.

12.7 Nationally significant infrastructure projects (NSIPs) in the transport sector include: new roads which are to form part of the strategic road network (motorways and trunk roads) operated by Highways England, and new railway lines in England which are to be operated by Network Rail. Under the Planning

Act 2008 (as amended) a developer intending to construct an NSIP must obtain 'development consent'. The National Infrastructure Directorate of the Planning Inspectorate receives and examines applications for development consent.

12.8 National planning policy says that Plans should promote sustainable transport modes such as walking cycling and public transport with significant developments in particular focused in locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. They should minimise the number and length of journeys and provide for walking and cycling networks and large-scale transport facilities to support the wider economy, and recognise the importance of maintaining general aviation airfields and provide for adequate lorry parking facilities.

12.9 Decarbonising Transport: A Better, Greener Britain sets out how the UK government will deliver emission reductions and associated benefits in the country; presenting the path to net-zero transport in the UK and the commitments and actions necessary to make progress on this path.

12.10 The National Infrastructure Strategy states that transport networks are vital for jobs, businesses, and economic growth. As such, the government will continue its efforts with decarbonising the transport sector to meet the net zero emissions target by 2050.

12.11 The Transport Investment Strategy sets out investment priorities to improve the connectivity, effectiveness and reliability of transport network whilst simultaneously reducing impacts on the natural environment. Furthermore, the document places great emphasis on making cycling and walking the natural choice for shorter journeys, or as part of longer journeys.

12.12 The government has committed to nationwide full fibre broadband by 2033 (as recommended in the National Infrastructure Assessment, 2018). In December 2022 the Building Regulations 2010 were amended to ensure that new homes constructed in England will be fitted with infrastructure and connections capable of delivering gigabit broadband, subject to certain criteria.

12.13 In January 2023 a government press release on broadband [x] identified that gigabit broadband is now available in over 72 percent of the UK.

12.14 The government have set an ambition of nationwide coverage of standalone 5G to all populated areas of the UK by 2030 (UK Wireless Infrastructure Strategy, April 2023). Certain telecommunications developments have been considered to be permitted development and do not require planning permission. In April 2022 the General Permitted Development Order was amended to grant additional rights to certain types and sizes of telecommunications installations in specific locations. This means that many types of telecommunications developments do not need full planning permission and would only require prior approval.

x Millions of homeowners and tenants to get better access to faster broadband - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

12 Infrastructure

Regional

12.15 Transport for the North's Strategic Transport Plan sets out connectivity priorities across the North and identifies corridors with required improvements on both the road and rail networks to inform the accompanying long term Investment Programme. The key objectives are increasing efficiency, reliability and resilience on the transport system, promoting and supporting the built and natural environment and improving access to jobs and markets across the North.

12.16 The Cheshire and Warrington LEP prepared a Transport strategy in 2021 setting out how transport provision within Cheshire and Warrington should develop over the next 20 years. The plan focuses on strategic transport priorities of fast and frequent connectivity within 30 minutes between key centres and within 1 hour, door-to-door from all parts of the LEP area and the key economic centres, while supporting inter-urban corridors, links to London and UK city economics and key international gateways.

Local

12.17 The Community Infrastructure Levy was set up in CWaC in July 2017. There is a charge for residential development of £86.89 per square metre in Chester and rural area. There is a charge for retail development of £260.66 per square metre at Cheshire Oaks and £67.03 at Sealand Road.

12.18 Local Transport Plans are statutory borough-wide strategies which set out a vision, policies and a delivery programme for passenger and freight transport, along with metrics to gauge success. The Council's current Local Transport Plan was adopted in 2011 and refreshed in 2017. It aims to address local transport issues by providing a framework for decisions on future investment by setting objectives for transport to support wider goals and ambitions, establishing policies to help achieve these objectives, and containing plans for implementing these policies.

12.19 Cheshire West And Chester's "Walk. Ride. Thrive" Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) 2020-2030 was approved in July 2020 and identifies the cycling and walking infrastructure improvements which would make most difference for each major urban area of the Borough: Chester, Ellesmere Port & Neston, Northwich, Frodsham & Helsby and Winsford.

12.20 In collaboration with local bus operators, the Council submitted a Bus Service Improvement Plan in October 2021. While unsuccessful, the Dept for Transport expects local authorities that didn't received funding to objectives including: a statutory enhanced partnership scheme, a passenger charter, retain existing bus priority measures, a commitment to reinvest operating cost savings and a commitment to draw on/publish a single source of bus service information.

12.21 Cheshire West and Chester Infrastructure Delivery Plan (2013) -assessed the infrastructure requirements, costs and known funding relating to growth, and identify any barriers, cross boundary working, or phasing issues that might affect proposed growth and advised on the future delivery of infrastructure needed to support the planned growth through the Local Plan.

12.22 SP Energy Networks – Network Development Plan evaluates network capacity and demand constraint to 2050.

12.23 Cheshire and Warrington Energy &Clean Growth Strategy - This strategy sets out the energy challenges facing the LEP area and how, in collaboration with industry and key public-sector partners, we can rise to the challenge of delivering 'affordable energy and clean growth'.

Baseline information

12.24 Car ownership and travel to work patterns - Car ownership is above the national average. 2011 Census found 81% households own at least one car and 40% own two or more vehicles. There is a very high dependence on the car for commuting and 74% of residents travel to work by car. Again, this figure is higher than the national and regional averages of 60% and 64% respectively. Only 5% of trips are made by bus and 13% either walk or use a bicycle.

12.25 Commuter trips by public transport rail are relatively low. The exception to this is for trips to Merseyside. Bus use for inbound trips is also particularly high from North-East Wales. The distance that people commute is also of significance. 28% of residents commute ten or more miles on a daily basis and data suggests that the trend to commute greater distances to reach employment opportunities is increasing.

12.26 Some 63% of CWaC residents in employment work within the Borough itself. Just over 35% of inbound commuter trips in to CWaC come from North East Wales with a further 34% from Merseyside, the majority (22%) being from the Wirral. Just over 17% of trips come from Cheshire East and 7% come from Greater Manchester. 16% of commuter trips within the area were made on foot or by bike and 6% by bus. A further 14% of residents work from home. Examining outbound commuter patterns shows more varied patterns. Some 32% of commuter trips are to Merseyside, 23% to North East Wales, 20% to Cheshire East, 15% to Manchester and 8% to Warrington.

12.27 **Road** - The Council is responsible for 328 km of Principal Road; 642 km of classified and 1359 km of unclassified road. A further 70 km of Motorway and Trunk Road including parts of the M6, M56, M53, A55 and A550 is managed by National Highways.

12.28 Public transport networks - Despite relatively low levels of public transport use, Cheshire West and Chester has a number of important strategic public transport linkages. It is serviced by a number of major rail lines and parts of the area benefit from relatively well used bus networks.

12.29 **Rail** - There are 21 rail stations within Cheshire West and Chester, with a wide offer in terms of destinations beyond the borough. The West Coast Main Line runs through the centre of the area. There are stations at Acton Bridge, Hartford and Winsford, but these are not served by Inter-City services to London or Scotland, for which a connection is needed at Crewe or Warrington Bank Quay.

12.30 **Bus** - The borough is served by around 50 routes, largely focused on Chester, Ellesmere Port, Northwich and Winsford – although the network is denser in the west than the east. The rural areas are served by considerably fewer and less frequent services, with many villages not served by any frequent bus services. There are no direct services between Winsford and Chester, or between Ellesmere Port and either Northwich or Winsford, and only an hourly service between Chester and Northwich.

12.31 **Active travel** - DfT (2017/18) walking and cycling statistics show that Cheshire West has some of the highest levels of regular walking and cycling in the North-West. 13% of residents walk or cycle to work compared to 74% of residents use a car and 5% who use a bus.

12.32 There is an extensive network of public rights of way and cycle routes. This includes a 1261 km Public Rights of Way network including 1088 km of public footpath and 88 km of bridleway. The National Cycle Network in the Borough is some 131km in length, while Regional Routes cover a further 217 km. Additional circular and traffic free routes extend the cycle network by a further 155 km.

12.33 There are approximately 348km of cycleways in the Borough as well as 155km of additional traffic free routes including canal towpaths. There are a further 1,280km of Public Rights of Way (68% footpath, 7% bridleways and 1% byway open to all traffic).

12.34 **Waterways** - There are four navigable waterways within Cheshire West and Chester, the Manchester Ship Canal, the Shropshire Union Canal, the Weaver Navigation and the Trent and Mersey Canal.

12.35 **Education** - here are currently 190 educational establishments in the borough including one University (Chester), 1 sixth form college, 129 primary schools and 20 secondary schools The majority of schools are in local -authority maintained schools but there are a number of private schools, free schools and academies. 60% of the borough's secondary schools are academies. New housing development would generate a need for pupil places in most areas of the borough.

12.36 **Culture** - Main museums include: Grosvenor Chester; Stretton Watermill; Lion Salt Works, Northwich and Weaver Hall Museum and Workhouse (Northwich), Cheshire Military Museum (Chester), and the National Waterways Museum (Ellesmere Port). Theatres include Storyhouse Chester, Theatre Porto, Ellesmere Port and the Harlequin Theatre, Northwich.

12.37 **Energy networks** - The SP Energy Networks application provides an indication of the potential opportunities to connect Distributed Generation to the HV, 33kV and 132kV network in the SP Manweb plc licence area. Category: Red – At least one factor is close to its operational limit and so installation of most levels of Distributed Generation and a local connection is highly unlikely. It may also require extensive reinforcement works or given the lack of a local connection, require an extensive amount of sole user assets to facilitate such a connection. The situation for Cheshire West is shown online at: https://www.spenergynetworks.co.uk/pages/sp_manweb_heat_maps.aspx

12.38 **Broadband** - In CWaC at May 2023, 97.2% of residential and business premises had superfast broadband (over 30mbps) and 69.3% had gigabit-capable broadband. In 2018 only 4% of UK premises have access to full fibre. According to the UK Wireless Infrastructure Strategy (April 2023), a basic 5G signal was delivered for 77% of UK premises. However, coverage from all four operators is much lower, at approximately 20%.

Evidence gaps and proposed work

12.39 As the Local Plan is developed to identify levels and locations of development the Infrastructure Development Plan (IDP) will need to be updated including liaising with infrastructure providers. The last IDP covered the following topics transport; education, health, leisure and cultural facilities; waste; renewable energy, electricity; gas, waste water, potable water and telecommunications.

12.40 The Council's current Local Transport Plan (LTP 3) was initially adopted in 2011. It was refreshed in 2017, with background data and delivery progress updated but the fundamental vision, objectives and policies were unchanged. As such, while it technically spans to 2030, the core drivers of the current Plan are now over a decade old.

12.41 As a result, LPT 3 is out of step with significant local, regional and national developments which have taken place over the last decade, including the declaration of climate and poverty emergencies, adoption of a suite of new strategies, and the emergence of regional transport bodies. Inclusive accessibility is high on the national agenda and transport is also key to supporting economic recovery from the pandemic. The future seems more uncertain than ever, but the Council's strategic approach to transport needs to change to reflect these priorities

12.42 Local Transport Plan 4 is therefore being developed, which will be considerably different to LTP 3 with an increased emphasis on delivery and metrics to gauge success, linked to future Department for Transport funding allocations for both strategic transport and highways maintenance, as well as delivering the change needed to achieve the Council's 2045 net zero carbon target and other strategic objectives. It is anticipated that public consultation on a draft plan and supporting evidence and documents will take place in summer/ autumn 2024 with adoption in early 2025.

12.43 Stage 1 of preparing LTP 4 will include a technical review and, where necessary, enhancement of the Council's strategic modelling capabilities to inform the development and implementation of the Plan.

12.44 Growth levels and locations will have to be tested against electricity infrastructure capacity to ensure there are no barriers to growth.

12.45 There are no evidence gaps relating to broadband or 5G as this information is collected by Ofcom and is available online.

Recent changes and anticipated trends

12.46 Cheshire West and Chester has a population of 357,200 (2021 Census) an increase from the previous 2011 census of 329,600 (8.4%), with an increasing proportion of older people. From a transport perspective there will be increasing demand for passenger transport requirements to support access and mobility requirements and the need to consider access to health care and local services. A particular challenge will be supporting the needs of an ageing population group that have become accustomed to a very high level of car dependency.

12.47 Approximately a quarter of the population live in rural areas. Access to jobs and key services is of particular importance to this group although levels of car ownership and use are higher on average than in the urban areas.

12.48 Traffic volumes have increased by 25% since 1993 and are a significant problem and are forecast to increase by 12% by 2026 and a further 8% by 2030.

12.49 During 2009-2019, bus patronage has fallen by around 20%, while car vehicle miles have increased by 11%, indicating both a shift in modal share from bus to car over the last 10 years, and an increase in number of journeys per resident. This data does not include the impacts of the pandemic.

12.50 Potentially higher demands on the electricity infrastructure network due to energy requirements from major employers and significant renewable energy schemes coming forward as well as electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

12.51 Access to superfast broadband and 5G are both increasing over time. The rate of increase of access to superfast broadband had slowed over recent years as 95% coverage was reached in 2018 and only the more remote and more difficult to access properties remain. The provision of gigabit-capable broadband should continue to increase, particularly in new-build properties due to the recent changes to the Building Regulations to require infrastructure and connections providing gigabit-capable broadband. The government's changes to the permitted development rights for telecommunications developments aimed to ensure that the planning system supports the delivery of mobile infrastructure.

Local Plan Update scope and influence

12.52 Through policies and allocations in the plan the Council can set out where development should make direct provision for infrastructure on site or make contributions to provision off-site.

12.53 The Local Plan Update will focus on updating the Local Plan (Part One) and will therefore concentrate on strategic policies, rather than detailed Development Management policies. As such, the main ways in which the Local Plan Update could influence transport infrastructure are:

- Ensuring that new development is in accessible locations that reduce the need to travel.
- Ensuring that growth is integrated with new transport infrastructure.
- Ensuring new development sites are designed and built with the appropriate walking and cycling infrastructure, to ensure people feel safe and confident to access local services and facilities by active travel.
- Ensuring appropriate contributions towards appropriate transport infrastructure and community services.
- Encouraging the provision of on-site services and access to public transport.
- Locating development sites in order to maximise access to community facilities particularly by sustainable modes of transport.
- Continuing to supply the required infrastructure to meet the needs of a modal shift to sustainable transport, particularly future transport modes.

12.54 The Council is responsible for ensuring there are sufficient school places available including through the extension of existing schools or provision of new schools. It should be noted that the Council has no power to direct academies to expand therefore close partnership working will be required to deliver new secondary places if needed.

12.55 The changes to Building Regulations and the associated requirement for new homes constructed in England to be fitted with infrastructure and connections capable of delivering gigabit broadband will reduce the need for planning policies on this issue. The planning system cannot influence provision of gigabit-capable broadband to existing properties, unless this requires equipment or buildings that require planning permission (which is unlikely). The expansion of permitted development rights also means that potential control over telecommunications masts and other mobile communications infrastructure through the Local Plan is more restricted. In addition, any policy relating specifically to telecommunications and broadband is likely to be a detailed policy and as such, would be covered by the proposed national development management policies or Local Plan (Part Two) policies, rather than within the Local Plan Update. As such, it is not considered necessary to include a specific objective relating to telecommunications and broadband, although this could be covered under a general infrastructure objective.

Key sustainability issues and opportunities

Sustainability issues

- The Local Plan will need to ensure that essential infrastructure is in place or programmed to ensure planned for growth can take place.
- Around 72% of the population own a private vehicle and cars and vans represent the most popular travel to work method at around 38%. The next most popular method is by foot at just 5%, suggesting a relatively high level of car-dependency, especially in rural areas, but need to acknowledge that in rural areas car travel is inevitable.
- Traffic congestion is already a problem on the strategic network including parts of the M56, M53, A55 and A49. Known congestion problems also occur in a number of locations across Chester, Ellesmere Port and Northwich. On the wider rural and inter-urban network, a number of specific hot spots are understood to experience congestion.
- High levels of car ownership, means that congestion and improving access to public and community transport for those without a car remains an issue, and improving facilities for pedestrians and cyclists is also critical
- Rail connectivity within the borough and between the borough's urban centres is relatively poor with no direct services between Chester and Ellesmere Port, or between Ellesmere Port and either Northwich or Winsford, or between Chester and Winsford.
- Rail service frequencies on some routes are quite low – for example, Northwich is served by only one train per hour on the Chester-Manchester Piccadilly mid-Cheshire line route.
- Public transport links between the EP/Chester corridor in the west and the Northwich/ Winsford corridor in the east are particularly poor.
- Reducing bus services and falling patronage. There are multiple bus services, however some areas of the borough are not served by buses at all, or are only served with buses that run at limited times.

- A high quality and effective rural public transport service is essential to ensure people have access to facilities and services within and access to employment opportunities.
- Ensure that the strategic and local road networks can accommodate additional traffic generated by new development
- Reduce the need to travel by car through locating development proposals in the most accessible locations, and that are served by an attractive choice of sustainable transport modes.
- Need to increase 5G mobile coverage.
- Need to increase gigabit-capable broadband provision.

Sustainability opportunities

- Large scale housing developments may also provide new services and facilities for new and existing residents.
- Housing development may increase viability and retention of existing community services and facilities.
- Development has the potential to lead to enhancements in the strategic transport network and promote sustainable travel.
- Development of forthcoming LTP 4 and supporting evidence base (including transport modelling).
- There are opportunities to improve public transport networks and opportunities for active travel within Cheshire West in accordance with the emerging LTP4.
- The recovery from the COVD-19 pandemic has the potential to change travel patterns in the short, medium, and longer term. Travel decreased during the lockdowns implemented by the government, and many workplaces have become more flexible when it comes to where people work. The provision of infrastructure, such as improved broadband, will help wit the ability for home working. As such, sustainable travel may become more popular in the future and less people may travel to work.
- The negative effects of new development on the transport network are likely to be mitigated in part by new infrastructure, there will be a continuing need for development to be situated in accessible locations.
- DfT (2017/18) walking and cycling statistics show borough has some of the highest levels of regular walking and cycling in the North-West. Walking and cycling represent very important modes of travel at the local level. It is recognised that there is considerable scope to increase the number of short and medium length trips on foot or by bike.
- There are extensive Public Rights of Way (PRoW) in CWaC. Development should seek to connect with and where possible extend PRoW and maximise opportunities for active travel.

SA framework

Sustainability objective	Appraisal criteria/ sub-objective	Baseline indicator
Protect and enhance community facilities and services	Will it help to protect existing community facilities and services?	Number of applications approved involving loss of a community facility (e.g. demolition or conversion to an alternative use)

Sustainability objective	Appraisal criteria/ sub-objective	Baseline indicator
	Will it provide new or improved community facilities or services?	Number of applications approved involving provision of new community facilities or improvement of existing community facilities.
Make the best use of existing transport infrastructure and ensure everyone has access to high quality and affordable public transport, cycling and walking infrastructure	Will it help to ensure that the provision of infrastructure is managed and delivered to meet local population and demographic change whilst helping to reduce congestion and travel times?	None identified
	Will it provide infrastructure that maximises accessibility for all and connects new developments with new and existing services and facilities via sustainable modes of travel?	Percentage of major applications providing connections to new/existing services by sustainable modes of transport

13 SA methodology and framework

13.1 This scoping report aims to set out a framework to assess the sustainability effects of the Local Plan Update as it is being prepared. The framework is central to the SA process and is made up of a series of sustainability objectives covering environmental, social and economic issues.

13.2 The complete set of sustainability objectives and sub-criteria that form the sustainability framework is listed in the table below. The objectives will provide a benchmark 'intention' against which the sustainability effects of the Plan can be tested. Each objective includes one or sub-objectives, which will be used to help to understand the extent to which the objective is being met for each policy or allocation. Each sub-objective has an indicator to provide a way of measuring the progress towards achievement of the objective. The indicators are set out in the thematic chapters.

	Sustainability objective	Appraisal criteria / sub-objective
1	Protect air quality where it is of a high standard and to improve it elsewhere.	Will it improve or have an insignificant effect on local air quality, ensuring minimum impact on people's health? Will it encourage the use of clean technologies and working practices and a shift to more sustainable modes of transport?
2	Reduce the emission of greenhouse gasses, in particular CO_2	Will it ensure that new development is in accessible locations in order to reduce the need for car borne travel and / or encourage sustainable forms of transport? Will it encourage the use of clean technologies and working practices?
3	Reduce energy consumption, promote energy efficiency and increase the use of energy from renewable resources.	Will it reduce energy consumption? Will it promote energy efficiency? Will it result in an increase in the installed renewable energy capacity?
4	Achieve sustainable waste management by reducing the production of waste, increasing opportunities for recycling and reducing the amount of waste being sent for final disposal to landfill.	Will it encourage a reduction in the amount of waste produced? Will it encourage increased recycling and composting and achieve the diversion targets for waste away from landfill? Will it result in new or enhanced waste management facilities to meet the waste management needs of the area? Will it result in improvement in the management of fly tipping and reduction in the number of incidences of fly tipping?

	Sustainability objective	Appraisal criteria / sub-objective
5	Reduce the consumption of natural resources.	Will it result in the prudent use of natural resources? Will it promote the use of secondary/recycled aggregates? Will it safeguard existing provision of sand and gravel and to ensure continued provision during the plan period?
6	Protect land and soil quality.	Will it impact on the extent and quality of soils?
7	Optimise the re-use of previously developed land and buildings.	Will it promote re-use of buildings or development of brownfield land?
8	Manage contaminated land effectively	Will it increase land availability or enable development by effective treatment and management of contamination?
9	Protect and enhance the number and area of RIGS.	Will it increase the number and area of RIGS?
10	Minimise the risk of flooding from all sources.	Will it reduce the risk of flooding from all sources e.g. encourage the integration of mitigation measures such as SUDs into new development? Is new development directed towards areas of least risk, dependant on the compatibility of the proposed use following the sequential and exceptions tests?
11	Protect, maintain and improve the quality of water resources, minimise the risk of pollution and improve water efficiency.	Will the Plan protect, maintain and improve the quality of water resources? Will the Plan minimise the risk of pollution arising from new development? Will the plan encourage water efficiency and promote the use of grey-water recycling / rainwater harvesting?
12	Protect, enhance and manage the character and appearance of the landscape and townscape, maintaining and strengthening local distinctiveness and sense of place.	Will it protect and reinforce the borough's landscapes and the natural, cultural and historic elements which make them distinct? Will it increase the quantity or quality of open space?
13	Preserve and enhance historic assets, sites, features, areas and settings of archaeological, historical and cultural heritage importance.	Will it ensure the continued protection and enhancement of physical sites and areas of importance to cultural and historical heritage and their settings, including the setting and character of Chester? Will it ensure the protection and enhancement of the significance of heritage assets?

	Sustainability objective	Appraisal criteria / sub-objective
14	Protect and enhance the borough's biodiversity and wildlife habitats.	Will it protect and promote effective management of the borough's sites of ecological and nature conservation importance? Will it provide opportunities for the enhancement and creation of habitats and to foster species conservation, diversity and resilience to climate change? Will it maintain, enhance and increase (rural and urban) tree cover and woodlands?
15	Provide sufficient high quality, well designed, sustainable housing solutions to meet the range of identified needs for market and affordable housing (including housing options for older people, students, Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople and self custom house building)	Will it help to meet identified housing needs? Will it help to improve the existing housing stock?
16	Promote regeneration, particularly of deprived areas.	Will it deliver urban/rural regeneration? Will it improve economic conditions, particularly in deprived areas? Will it support rural diversification? Will it improve equality across the borough? Will it cater for all ages?
17	Create a safe environment to live in and reduce the fear of crime.	Will it reduce opportunities for crime and therefore, levels of crime? Will it affect the fear of crime and feelings of safety? Will it improve road safety and reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured on the roads?
18	Enable environments that promote health and wellbeing.	Will it promote active lifestyles? Will it increase the quantity or quality of open space? Will it safeguard shops and services in existing centres? Will it help to protect existing community facilities and services? Will it provide new or improved community facilities or service?

	Sustainability objective	Appraisal criteria / sub-objective
19	Support a sustainable, resilient and inclusive economy and provide opportunities for economic growth and investment.	Will it help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt? Will it support sustainable economic growth? Will it provide a balanced portfolio of employment land for the area by type and location? Will it maintain/safeguard high quality employment land and premises? Will it contribute to meeting the employment needs of the rural/urban area? Will it promote tourism and the visitor economy? Will it improve accessibility to jobs? Will it take account of the different locational requirements of different sectors?
20	Maintain and improve the vitality and viability of city, town and local centres	Will it safeguard shops and services in exciting centres? Will it safeguard and improve the retail, leisure and service provision? Will it provide improved physical, social and environmental infrastructure in city, town and local centres?
21	Protect and enhance community facilities and services	Will it help to protect existing community facilities and services? Will it provide new or improved community facilities or services?
22	Make the best use of existing transport infrastructure and ensure everyone has access to high quality and affordable public transport, cycling and walking infrastructure.	Will it ensure that the provision of infrastructure is managed and delivered to meet local population and demographic change whilst helping to reduce congestion and travel times? Will it provide infrastructure that maximises accessibility for all and connects new developments with new and existing services and facilities via sustainable modes of travel?

13.3 The objectives set out in the Local Plan Update will be checked against the sustainability objectives to draw attention to any potential conflict between them and to identify areas where the implementation of the objective is fundamental to a sustainable Plan.

Testing compatibility of SA Objectives

13.4 In order to fully meet the SA objectives it is necessary to ensure that there will be no potential conflicts between the achievement of individual objectives. The matrix set out below details where any potential conflicts may occur.

	Key:	√ Compatible	? Uncertain	~ No Link	X Conflicting
1. Air quality		√	√	√	√
2. Greenhouse gasses	√		√	?	√
3. Energy	√	√		?	√
4. Waste management	?	?	?		√
5. Consumption of natural resources	√	√	√	√	
6. Land and soil quality	~	√	?	√	√
7. Previously developed land	?	√	?	√	√
8. Contaminated land	?	√	?	√	√
9. RIGS	~	√	?	√	√
10. Flooding	~	√	?	?	√
11. Water resources	~	√	~	√	√
12. Landscape/ townscape	~	√	?	√	√
13. Historic assets	~	√	?	√	√
14. Biodiversity	√	√	?	√	√
15. Housing	?	√	√	?	√
16. Regeneration	?	√	?	√	√
17. Crime and safety	~	√	?	√	√
18. Health and wellbeing	√	√	√	?	√
19. Economy	?	√	?	√	√
20 Retail centres	?	√	?	√	√
21 Community facilities	?	√	?	√	√
22 Transport infrastructure	√	√	√	√	√

13.5 The testing of potential conflicts displayed in the matrix above has shown that the majority of the SA objectives are either compatible or there is no link between them. For quite a large number of objectives however there is uncertainty over whether conflicts or further positive compatibility will arise, with these only likely to be observed during the implementation of policies. This is because the potential for conflict or compatibility would depend upon the exact nature, location and design of any proposals supported by that policy.

13.6 There is uncertainty in particular over the implications further housing, employment, regeneration and transport infrastructure could have on achieving objectives such as protecting air quality, minimising flooding, preserving and enhancing historic assets and protecting biodiversity. Depending on their implementation such schemes could have either a positive or negative impact towards meeting these objectives. Adequately developed policies however will offer the ability to control these impacts.

SA Methodology

13.7 The first stage of the detailed SA of the Local Plan Update will be initial screening of the policies or proposals against the sustainability topics. At the first stage of consultation, detailed policies may not yet have been produced, so the general proposals will need to be considered. The screening will consider whether the impact on each SA objective would be significant or note. This will allow the appraisal to focus on those issues of significance and reduce the amount of uncertain or no impact scores.

13.8 The proposals / policies / allocations in the Local Plan Update will then be scored to identify whether the impacts on each objective are likely to be very positive, positive, no impact/screened out, negative or very negative. The sub-objectives will help with this assessment. The use of a scoring system will highlight the scale of any potential impact. The scoring will take account of whether the impacts are: short, medium or long term; permanent or temporary; secondary or indirect; synergistic or cumulative; and the likely areas to be significantly affected.

13.9 The appraisal process will also involve identification of any potential mitigation measures. This includes mitigation measures that would reduce negative impacts and any measures that would increase or improve positive effects further.

13.10 The Local Plan Update will be amended in light of the SA findings and consultation responses. The appraisal process will then be undertaken again, to assess the sustainability effects of the updated proposals / policies / allocations.

Monitoring

13.11 The success and effectiveness of the SA process will be monitored by the collection of baseline data according to the identified indicators. A cost-effective and reasonable monitoring scheme will be developed and reported on in the SA report. This will include addressing any data gaps in the baseline monitoring and to develop appropriate longer term monitoring indicators for monitoring the significant effects of the policies in the Local Plan Update (and Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies and any other Development Pan Documents). Data collected on the relevant indicators is likely to be covered within the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR).

14 Consultation and next steps

14.1 A key part of the SA process is consultation. The draft scoping report will be subject to consultation with the statutory consultation bodies (Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency) for a 5-week period. Comments received will be reviewed and the scope of the assessment revised accordingly.

14.2 The next stage in the SA process will be preparation of an interim SA report. This will document the assessment of the draft Local Plan Update against the SA objectives and will involve developing and appraising reasonable spatial strategy alternatives for the Local Plan Update. This will consider alternative policy approaches for the plan, including relating to alternative development strategies which can be considered capable of meeting established development requirements and wider plan objectives, including through site allocations and potentially broad locations for development. These options will undergo a high-level sustainability appraisal using the sustainability appraisal objectives identified within this scoping report.

14.3 Consultation will be undertaken on the interim SA report and the findings will be integrated into the draft Local Plan Update and draft SA report, as part of an iterative process.

A: SEA Screening determination

Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal Determination for the Cheshire West and Chester (CWaC) Local Plan Update

June 2023

Introduction

In accordance with the requirements of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (as amended), this document is the screening determination on the need for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the CWaC Local Plan Update.

Under the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, the responsible authority (i.e. the local planning authority) must carry out an environmental assessment for any plan or programme that is prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, which sets the framework for future development consent of certain projects. It is likely that Development Plan Documents (DPDs), such the Local Plan Update will require SEA as they will contain planning policies that influence the above list of topics, and which will be used to determine planning applications.

The first stage in the SEA process is for the Council to determine whether or not a plan is likely to have a significant effect on the environment. This process should use a specified set of criteria (set out in Schedule 1 of the regulations). The results of this process must be summarised in an SEA screening opinion, which is then sent to the statutory bodies for comment. Once comments have been taken into account a screening determination is prepared setting out whether SEA is required and reasons for the decision and this must be made publicly available.

This initial screening determination has been based on the likely scope of the Local Plan Update. If the scope of the Local Plan Update changes significantly the SEA screening exercise will be reviewed and updated as required. If updates or amendments to the SEA screening were required the statutory environmental organisations would be consulted again.

An initial screening opinion was produced in February 2023. The Council has a duty to consult Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency. The statutory environmental bodies and the corresponding Welsh bodies were consulted on 15 February 2023.

Details of the bodies consulted, the responses received and the associated amendments to the initial screening report are set out in Table 1. The consultation period ran from 15 February until 15 March 2023.

SEA Screening determination

Table 1 Responses to consultation on the SEA Screening Opinion

Consultee	Consultation point	Consultee comments	Council's response	Action taken
Historic England		In terms of our area of interest, we would concur with your assessment that the Local Plan will require a SEA. Also provided a link to a guidance document on the effective assessment of the historic environment in SEAs.	No response required	No action required
Natural England		It is our advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that, in so far as our strategic environmental interests are concerned (including but not limited to statutory designated sites, landscapes and protected species, geology and soils), that there are likely to be significant environmental effects from the proposed plan. We are therefore in agreement with the conclusion of the SEA Screening Opinion. Please note that Natural England reserves the right to provide further comments on the environmental assessment of the plan beyond this SEA screening stage, should the responsible authority seek our views on the scoping or environmental report stages.	No response required	No action required
Environment Agency		No response required	No response required	No action taken
Cadw		Cadw have been consulted on a screening opinion as to the need for a SEA to be prepared for the CWaC Local Plan. The request for a screening opinion is accompanied by a report which concludes that a SEA is required. This report notes that the Local Plan could have an effect on the built, natural and archaeological heritage of the area, and in our opinion, these affects could extend into Wales. As such we agree with the conclusions in the report that a SEA is required.	No response required	No action required
Natural Resources Wales		We note your conclusion that an SEA is required. We have no comments to make on the SEA Screening Opinion.	No response required	No action required

No comments were made on the SEA screening opinion that required any amendments or disagreed with the conclusion that the Local Plan Update is likely to have significant environmental effects and accordingly will require a SEA.

Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan Local Plan Update

In April 2022 CWaC Cabinet committed to an update to the Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies and recommended that a start be made on initial work to include evidence gathering. It was recognised as part of any update to the Local Plan (Part One) there may be a need to amend or replace policies in the Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies. It was established that strategic policies would be required to look ahead over a minimum 15-year period from the adoption of the Plan therefore there would be a need to address development requirements beyond the current plan period of 2030. The Local Plan Update will set out a vision and strategy for meeting future development needs for at least a 15-year plan period going beyond the current plan period of 2030. This is likely to require strategic allocations to be shown on an amended Policies Map. At this stage the number of changes to existing Local Plan policies and introduction of new policies is not known but the level of changes to strategy and policies is likely to be significant and will impact across the whole of the borough, as set out in table 2 below.

Preparation of the Local Plan Update will involve stakeholders and the community in line with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

The Council considers that the preparation of the Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies falls within the scope of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations on the basis that:

- The Local Plan Update is a plan which is subject to preparation and adoption by an authority at a local level and is required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions, as defined in Regulation 2;
- The Local Plan Update is prepared for town and country planning or land use and will set the framework for the future development consent of projects listed in Annex I or II of European Council Directive 2011/92/EU; and
- The Local Plan Update will apply to a wider area than a small area at local level and is not a minor modification to an existing plan or programme.

A determination under Regulation 9 is, therefore, required as to whether the Local Plan Update is likely to have significant environmental effects.

Characteristics of the Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies

The screening process set out in Regulation 9 and Schedule 1 of the regulations includes two sets of characteristics for determining the likely significance of the effects on the environment. These relate firstly to the characteristics of the Local Plan Update and secondly to the characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected. There are a number of criteria relating to each of these characteristics, the answers to which are set out below.

Table 2 Assessment of the significant environmental effects of the Local Plan Update

Criteria (Schedule 1)	Significant environmental effect likely (yes/no)?	Assessment and justification
1 The characteristics of the plans and programmes, having regard in particular to:		
(a) The degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources.		The Local Plan Update will set a new policy framework. This will set the strategic context for CWaC's projects and activities in terms of the location of new development and the nature, size and operating conditions of such developments.
(b) The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy.	Yes	The Local Plan Update sets the overarching vision for the other documents that make up the Council's Local Development Framework. It will set strategic policies and any future Neighbourhood Plans will need to be in general conformity with these strategic policies. It also sets the context for Supplementary Planning Documents which may either be topic based or site specific in nature.
(c) The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations, in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.	Yes	Section 39 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act requires CWaC's Local Plan Update to have the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development.
(d) Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme.	Yes	The Local Plan Update will seek to address environmental problems that are relevant to the Council's statutory development plan.
(e) The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).	Yes	The Local Plan Update is relevant to the implementation of the land use elements of the CWaC Council Plan and the CWAC Climate Emergency Response Plan.
2 Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular to:		
(a) The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of effects.	Yes	The Local Plan Update will set a long-term vision, objectives and strategy for the spatial framework for new development within CWaC. Individual policies will have a different probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of effects, but generally

Criteria (Schedule 1)	Significant environmental effect likely (yes/no)?	Assessment and justification
		the policies as a whole will have medium to high probability and medium to long-term duration effects. The effects are likely to be frequent within CWaC and some effects will be reversible, but others will be more difficult or potentially impossible to reverse.
(b) The cumulative nature of the effects.	Yes	There are likely to be cumulative affects arising from and between the different policies within the Local Plan Update. There could also be cumulative effects with other Development Plan Documents, Supplementary Planning Documents and Neighbourhood Plans.
(c) The transboundary nature of the effects.	No	There are no transboundary effects arising from the Local Plan Update.
(d) The risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents).	No	There are unlikely to be risks to human health or the environment arising from the Local Plan Update.
(e) The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).	Yes	The Local Plan Update will apply to new development in the CWaC geographical area. This has an area of nearly 1,000 square kilometres and a population of 357,147 people (according to population estimates from the 2021 Census).
(f) The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to; (i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage (ii) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values or (ii) intensive land use	Yes	The Local Plan Update covers the whole of CWaC, which is valued in terms of its built, natural and archaeological heritage. There may be the potential for the value and vulnerability of the area to be affected as a result of the Local Plan Update.
(g) The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status.	Yes	The Local Plan Update will apply to all landscape types in CWaC, including those which have a recognised national, community or international protection status.

A: SEA Screening determination

Conclusion

In accordance with Part 2(9) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (as amended), the Council, as the responsible authority, consider that the intended Local Plan Update is likely to have significant environmental effects and accordingly will require a SEA.

Section 19(5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires local planning authorities to carry out a Sustainability Appraisal of all DPDs including the Local Plan Update. The requirements of the SEA will be incorporated into the Sustainability Appraisal for the Local Plan Update.

Date of determination: 28/06/23

Delegated decision made by Rob Charnley, Head of Planning and Place Making

Further information

If you require any further information, please contact the Planning Policy team on 01244 973887 or by email at: planningpolicy@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk.

B: Quality assurance checklist

The Quality Assurance checklist below has been based on the checklist provided in the document 'A Practical Guide to the SEA Directive' (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2005). This is used to ensure that the requirements of the SEA Directive have been met and fully integrated into the Sustainability Appraisal process. The Quality Assurance checklist covers both the technical and procedural steps of the process and not all requirements are applicable to the scoping stage. The checklist will be updated as the different stages are reached.

Quality Assurance Checklist	Relevant section in Scoping Report
Objectives and context	
The plan's purpose and objectives are made clear	N/A
Sustainability issues, including international and EC objectives, are considered in developing objectives and targets	Yes Individual topic chapters
SA objectives are clearly set out and linked to indicators and targets where appropriate	Yes Individual topic chapters
Links with other related plans, programmes and policies are identified and explained	Yes Individual topic chapters
Conflicts that exist between SA objectives, between SA and plan objectives, and between SA and other plan objectives are identified and described	Yes between SA objectives (Plan objectives N/A) SA methodology and framework
Scoping	
The environmental consultation bodies are consulted in appropriate ways and at appropriate times on the content and scope of the SA report	Yes
The appraisal focuses on significant issues	Yes Individual topic chapters
Technical, procedural and other difficulties encountered are discussed; assumptions and uncertainties are made explicit	Yes
Reasons are given for eliminating issues from further consideration	Yes
Options / alternatives	
Realistic alternatives are considered for key issues, and the reasons for choosing- them are documented	N/A

B: Quality assurance checklist

Quality Assurance Checklist	Relevant section in Scoping Report
Alternatives include 'do nothing' and/or 'business as usual' scenarios wherever relevant	N/A
The sustainability effects (both adverse and beneficial) of each alternative are identified and compared	N/A
Inconsistencies between the alternatives and other relevant plans, programmes or policies are identified and explained	N/A
Reasons are given for selection and elimination of alternatives	N/A
Baseline information	
Relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and their likely evolution without the plan are described	Yes Individual topic chapters
Characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected are described, including areas wider than the physical boundary of the plan area where it is likely to be affected by the plan where practicable	Yes Individual topic chapters
Difficulties such as deficiencies in information or methods are explained	Yes Individual topic chapters
Prediction and evaluation of likely significant effects	
Likely significant social, environmental and economic effects are identified, including those listed in the SEA Directive (biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage and landscape) as relevant	N/A
Both positive and negative effects are considered, and where practicable, the duration of effects (short, medium or long-term) is addressed	N/A
Likely secondary, cumulative and synergistic effects are identified where practicable	N/A
Inter-relationships between effects are considered where practicable	N/A
Where relevant, the prediction and evaluation of effects makes use of accepted standards, regulations and thresholds	N/A
Methods used to evaluate the effects are described	N/A
Mitigation measures	
Measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and offset any significant adverse effects of implementing the plan are indicated	N/A

Quality Assurance Checklist	Relevant section in Scoping Report
Issues to be taken into account in development consents are identified	N/A
The Sustainability Appraisal Report	
Is clear and concise in its layout and presentation	N/A
Uses simple, clear language and avoids or explains technical terms	N/A
Uses maps and other illustrations where appropriate	N/A
Explains the methodology used	N/A
Explains who was consulted and what methods of consultation were used	N/A
Identifies sources of information, including expert judgement and matters of opinion	N/A
Contains a non-technical summary	N/A
Consultation	
The SA is consulted on as an integral part of the plan-making process	To be undertaken in line with the development of the Local Plan Update
The consultation bodies, other consultees and the public are consulted in ways which give them an early and effective opportunity within appropriate time frames to express their opinions on the draft plan and SA report	Consultation with statutory environmental bodies undertaken on screening and additional consultation will be undertaken on the scoping report
Decision-making and information on the decision	
The SA Report and the opinions of those consulted are taken into account in finalising and adopting the plan	N/A
An explanation has been given of how they have been taken into account	N/A
Reasons are given for choices in the adopted plan, in the light of other reasonable alternatives considered	N/A
Monitoring measures	
Measures are proposed for monitoring are clear, practicable and linked to the indicators and objectives used in the SA	N/A

B: Quality assurance checklist

Quality Assurance Checklist	Relevant section in Scoping Report
Monitoring is used, where appropriate, during the implementation of the plan to make good deficiencies in baseline information in the SA	N/A
Monitoring enables unforeseen adverse effects to be identified at an early stage. (These effects may include predictions which prove to be incorrect)	N/A
Proposals are made for action in response to significant adverse effects	N/A

Accessing Cheshire West and Chester Council information and services

Council information is also available in Audio, Braille, Large Print or other formats. If you would like a copy in a different format, in another language or require a BSL interpreter, please email us at **equalities@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk**

إذا أردت المعلومات بلغة أخرى أو بطريقة أخرى، نرجو أن تطلب ذلك منا.

যদি আপনি এই ডকুমেন্ট অন্য ভাষায় বা ফরমেটে চান, তাহলে দয়া করে আমাদেরকে বলুন।

Pokud byste požadovali informace v jiném jazyce nebo formátu, kontaktujte nás

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo uzyskać informacje w innym języku lub w innym formacie, prosimy dać nam znać.

ਜੇ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ, ਤਾਂ ਇਹ ਸਾਥੋਂ ਮੰਗ ਲਓ।

如欲索取以另一語文印製或另一格式製作的資料，請與我們聯絡。

Türkçe bilgi almak istiyorsanız, bize başvurabilirsiniz.

اگر آپ کو معلومات کسی دیگر زبان یا دیگر شکل میں درکار ہوں تو برائے مہربانی ہم سے پوچھئے۔

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