



Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board

**Wednesday, 24 January 2007 6.30 p.m.
Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'David W R'.

Chief Executive

BOARD MEMBERSHIP

Councillor Ron Hignett (Chairman)	Labour
Councillor Dave Leadbetter (Vice-Chairman)	Labour
Councillor Ellen Cargill	Labour
Councillor Keith Morley	Labour
Councillor Christopher Rowe	Liberal Democrat
Councillor Paul Nolan	Labour
Councillor Dave Thompson	Labour
Councillor Tim Sly	Liberal Democrat
Councillor Pamela Wallace	Labour
Councillor Ian Whittaker	Conservative
Councillor Philip Worrall	Liberal Democrat

Please contact Caroline Halpin on 0151 471 7394 or e-mail caroline.halpin@halton.gov.uk for further information.

The next meeting of the Board is on Wednesday, 21 March 2007

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

Part I

Item No.	Page No.
1. MINUTES	
2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING PARTY WHIP DECLARATIONS)	
Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any personal or personal and prejudicial interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda, no later than when that item is reached and (subject to certain exceptions in the Code of Conduct for Members) to leave the meeting prior to discussion and voting on the item.	
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In accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act the Council is required to notify those attending meetings of the fire evacuation procedures. A copy has previously been circulated to Members and instructions are located in all rooms within the Civic block.

REPORT TO: Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 21 June 2007

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Corporate and Policy

SUBJECT: Public Question Time

WARD(s): Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To consider any questions submitted by the Public in accordance with Standing Order 33(5).
- 1.2 Details of any questions received will be circulated at the meeting.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That any questions received be dealt with.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 Standing Order 34(11) states that Public Questions shall be dealt with as follows: -
- (i) A total of 30 minutes will be allocated for members of the public who are residents of the Borough, to ask questions at meetings of the Policy and Performance Boards.
 - (ii) Members of the public can ask questions on any matter relating to the agenda.
 - (iii) Members of the public can ask questions. Written notice of questions must be submitted by 4.00 pm on the day prior to the meeting. At any meeting no person/organisation may submit more than one question.
 - (iv) One supplementary question (relating to the original question) may be asked by the questioner, which may or may not be answered at the meeting.
 - (v) The Chair or proper officer may reject a question if it:-
 - Is not about a matter for which the local authority has a responsibility or which affects the Borough;
 - Is defamatory, frivolous, offensive, abusive or racist;
 - Is substantially the same as a question which has been put at a meeting of the Council in the past six months; or
 - Requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information.

- (vi) In the interests of natural justice, public questions cannot relate to a planning or licensing application or to any matter, which is not dealt with in the public part of a meeting.
- (vii) The Chairperson will ask for people to indicate that they wish to ask a question.
- (viii) **PLEASE NOTE** that the maximum amount of time each questioner will be allowed is 3 minutes.
- (ix) If you do not receive a response at the meeting, a Council Officer will ask for your name and address and make sure that you receive a written response.

Please bare in mind that public question time lasts for a maximum of 30 minutes. To help in making the most of this opportunity to speak:-

- Please keep questions as concise as possible.
- Please do not repeat or make statements on earlier questions as this reduces the time available for other issues to be raised.
- Please note that public question time is not intended for debate – issues raised will be responded to either at the meeting or in writing at a later date.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

None.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

None.

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

There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act.

REPORT TO: Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board
DATE: 21 January 2007
REPORTING OFFICER: Chief Executive
SUBJECT: Executive Board Minutes
WARD(s): Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Minutes relating to the Urban Renewal Portfolio which have been considered by the Executive Board, Executive Board Sub and Executive Board (Transmodal Implementation) Sub Board are attached at Appendix 1 for information.
- 1.2 The Minutes are submitted to inform the Policy and Performance Board of decisions taken in their area.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Minutes be noted.

3.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 None.

4.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None.

5.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 5.1 None.

6.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 6.1 None.

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

- 7.1 There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act.

APPENDIX 1

Extract of Executive Board and Executive Board Sub Committee Minutes Relevant to the Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 7 DECEMBER 2006

PLANNING, TRANSPORTATION, REGENERATION AND RENEWAL PORTFOLIO

EXB68 Local Area Agreement

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy regarding Local Area Agreements. It was noted that a Local Area Agreement (LAA) was a three year protocol that set out the priorities for a local area. This had to be agreed between central government and the area itself, as represented by the lead local authority and other key partners through Local Strategic Partnership.

The Government had stipulated that Halton would be in Round 3 of the programme, which meant that an Agreement had to be negotiated by April 2007. A draft had been endorsed by the Board in September and had subsequently been submitted to Government Office North West (GONW) on 29 September. A number of developments had taken place since that time and these were outlined within the report for Members' consideration. This had resulted in the production of a revised LAA with the key changes being in the narrative and outcomes framework.

The Board noted that the final document had to be submitted to Government by 20 December 2006 and, as Halton Borough Council was to be the accountable body for the LAA, Members were requested to formally endorse the Agreement prior to its submission to GONW and subsequent sign off by the Minister.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the final agreement be endorsed and its submission to Government be agreed; and
- (2) the Leader and Chief Executive be given delegated powers to make any necessary minor drafting amendments to the submission following Executive Board

**EXECUTIVE BOARD SUB COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 16
NOVEMBER 2006**

**PLANNING, TRANSPORTATION, REGENERATION AND
RENEWAL PORTFOLIO**

ES52 Variable Message Signs and Journey Time Monitoring

As part of the Local Transport Plan 2 there was a proposal to provide Variable Message Signs (VMS) on the approaches to the Silver Jubilee Bridge, to provide information on traffic conditions and proposed work. In order to get the most benefit from the system it needed to be the same systems as installed in neighbouring authorities, Liverpool City Council, Warrington BC, and Wirral BC. All these authorities had recently installed systems supplied by Siemens Traffic Controls Limited after obtaining tenders. Liverpool's system included a sign within Halton on A562 Speke Road near Everite Road, Widnes.

Initially, the VMS system would only be operated by Halton but by agreement, it was envisaged that it would be able to be utilised by neighbouring authorities and the Highway Agency, who would reciprocate with similar sharing arrangements for their signs. It was also planned to show the information displayed on the VMS on the website as part of supplying travel information to the public.

The cost of supplying, installation and commissioning of six number variable message signs (VMS) from Siemens Traffic Controls Limited was £138,479.69. In addition, the Council would need to arrange traffic management for their installation and the provision of a mains electrical supply to each sign.

The Sub-Committee also considered proposals for the installation of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras at strategic points throughout the Borough. It was proposed to monitor the journey times across the Bridge on the routes from Speke Road and Watkinson Way to Runcorn and vice-versa. Initially, eight cameras would be needed but this number could be reduced by joint working with Cheshire Constabulary (subject to agreement and technical details).

As part of the Traffic Management Act 2004, the Authority was required to monitor journey time information to ensure that it was able to supply information that may be requested by the Department for Transport, to prove that the Authority was fulfilling its duties. The data could also be used to support the Mersey Gateway Proposal, as information would be constantly gathered about journey times

across the existing bridge.

Prices had been obtained from Siemens Traffic Controls who had installed systems for Liverpool and Warrington for the supply, installation and commissioning of a journey time monitoring system including four number Automatic Number Plate Recognition cameras for £43,720.00. In addition, the Council would need to arrange traffic management for their installation and the provision of mains electrical supply to each camera.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) procurement of Standing Orders 3.1 to 3.7 be waived to obtain equipment that is the same as neighbouring authorities to allow future joint use;
- (2) the quote from Siemens Traffic Controls for the supply, installation and commissioning of six number Variable Message Signs (VMS) for £138,479.69 be accepted;
- (3) the Authority agrees to pursue joint working with the Merseyside Authorities and Highways Agency for joint use of the Variable Message Signs;
- (4) the quote from Siemens Traffic Controls for the supply, installation and commissioning of Journey Time Monitoring System including Automatic Number Plate Recognition Cameras for £43,720.00 be accepted; and
- (5) the Authority agrees to pursue joint working with Cheshire Constabulary for joint use of Automatic Number Plate Recognition cameras.

**EXECUTIVE BOARD SUB COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 21
DECEMBER 2006**

**PLANNING, TRANSPORTATION, REGENERATION AND
RENEWAL PORTFOLIO**

The Sub-Committee considered a report which sought approval for the publication of paragraphs 5.8 and 5.9 of revised draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD); Provision of Open Space, for the purposes of an additional four-week public consultation to accommodate material changes to the document in light of responses received at the previous consultation stage.

Paragraphs 5.8 and 5.9 in the draft version of the SPD related to a very specific set of development circumstances for the repayment of commuted sums. This was not an issue that was highlighted during the first internal partnerships consultation period by any of those consulted. As a result of the comments made at the public consultation stage this policy had been simplified and may be perceived as a material change to the text.

Following consultation with the Government Office and the Council's Legal Services Division it was agreed to take forward the proposed changes by undertaking an additional four-week public consultation on the two paragraphs.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the relevant section of draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD); Provision of Open Space be approved for the purposes of Statutory Public Consultation for a period of four weeks;
- (2) the comments received at the public consultation stage, as set out in the statement of consultation and responses to them are noted; and
- (3) the results of the public consultation exercise and consequent recommended modifications to the draft SPD be reported back to the Executive Board for resolution to adopt as a Supplementary Planning Document.

REPORT TO: Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 24 January 2007

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Environment

SUBJECT: Public Consultation: Draft Town Centre Strategies for Halton Lea and Runcorn Old Town

WARDS: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Urban Renewal PPB of the publication of the Draft Town Centre Strategies for Halton Lea and Runcorn Old Town as Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) for the purposes of statutory public consultation.
- 1.2 Copies of the Halton Lea and Runcorn Town Centre Strategy SPDs can be found in **Appendix 1**.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That the content of the report and appendices be noted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 At the 21st September 2006 Exec Board it was resolved that the third Local Development Scheme (LDS) for Halton be approved by the Council for submission to the Government Office for the North West (GONW). This document sets out the spatial planning policy priorities for the Council, for the next three years. The GONW has informed the Council that they do not intend to amend the content of the LDS.
- 3.2 Included within the LDS programme of works is the production of Town Centre Strategies for Halton Lea, Runcorn and Widnes, to be produced as Supplementary Planning Documents. The purpose of the SPDs is to complement the Halton Unitary Development Plan (UDP), by providing additional guidance for those involved in the planning of new development within Halton Borough to:
 - a) Enable the town centres to prosper without adversely affecting the health of any other;
 - b) Safeguard and strengthen the individual role of each town centre as a safe and accessible place to shop, work and enjoy;
 - c) Co-ordinate public and private investment decisions;
 - d) Improve the economic prosperity of the Borough through the creation of employment opportunities; and
 - e) Ensure the highest standard of design and architecture within each town centre.

- 3.3 The new planning system requires that a record be kept of any consultees, their comments and how they have been taken into account, throughout the production of an SPD. Internal drafts of the Halton Lea, Runcorn and Widnes Town Centre Strategy SPDs were circulated between 2nd September 2005 and 16th September 2005 and a further Partnership Consultation draft was sent to a number of key stakeholders for comment between 25th November 2005 and 9th December 2005. The strategies were also the subject of several meetings with Council officers and members, including the Local Development Framework Working Party. These consultation stages were essentially concerned with obtaining officer and member support for the documents and then seeking technical observations from individuals within organisations that would either use or potentially endorse the document once it becomes an adopted SPD. The Partnership Consultation therefore did not look for ratification of the documents by those organisations. A list of those consulted, comments received and how these were taken into account is contained in **Appendix 2** of this report.
- 3.4 Another new requirement is that a scoping exercise must be undertaken to see if a Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) is required to assess the environmental effects of the SPD. Between 30th June 2005 and 4th August 2005 a Scoping Report was consulted upon in line with the relevant regulations; the conclusion was that a SEA was not required in relation to these SPDs. An additional new requirement in relation to producing a SPD is that a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is produced. The purpose of the SAs are to independently assess the contribution that the Halton Lea and Runcorn Town Centre Strategy SPDs will make to achieving the social, economic and environmental objectives of sustainable development. The two SAs also refer back to the conclusion and responses received in relation to the Scoping Report. SA Reports for Halton Lea and Runcorn (**Appendix 3**) are currently being produced and will be consulted upon at the same time as the respective Town Centre Strategies.
- 3.5 Both the Halton Lea and Runcorn Town Centre Strategy SPDs will be subject to an Appropriate Assessment (AA) screening assessment. An AA is undertaken to assess the potential effect of the SPD on sites of European importance, such as the Ramsar, Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) that are within or close to Halton. The Screening Report will conclude whether in the opinion of Halton Borough Council either of the Halton Lea and Runcorn Town Centre Strategy SPDs will or will not require an 'Appropriate Assessment'.
- 3.6 A Supplementary Planning Document is unable to formally designate sites for development. However, it is able to identify development principles for existing opportunities (such as UDP allocations and planning permissions). Sites that are identified as new opportunities in the respective Town Centre Strategy SPDs can, if necessary, be taken

forward as designations through the future New Retail and Leisure Development DPD.

- 3.7 It is also of note in this regard that Local Development Scheme 2006/07 programmes in the Widnes Town Centre Area Action Plan to commence preparation during late 2007 as a Development Plan Document (DPD). As a DPD is able to formally designate sites for development, and would be able to deal with the town centre as a cohesive geographic area, this is considered to be an appropriate way forward for dealing with Widnes town centre in the Halton Local Development Framework.
- 3.8 Once the formal public consultation exercise has been conducted, the responses will be recorded and taken into account. It is intended that a further report will be written to the Executive Board, seeking formal adoption of the Halton Lea and Runcorn Town Centre Strategy Supplementary Planning Documents.
- 3.9 However, if comments are received during the public consultation process which require alterations to be made to one or both of the SPDs that materially affect the content of the document(s) a further period of public consultation may be required regarding those proposed alterations. Officers' experience of producing Supplementary Planning Documents is that this scenario is unusual, but it did occur recently regarding the Provision of Open Space SPD. This required a further report to Executive Board Sub Committee to seek approval for a further period of public consultation, which was time consuming and meant that target dates in the Local Development Scheme were missed. Consequently, the Executive Board Sub Committee report of 11th January 2007, which sought approval of the two town centre strategies for public consultation, put forward recommendation 5). This stated that authority be delegated to the Operational Director – Environmental and Regulatory Services to approve any further statutory periods of public consultation, on the Halton Lea and Runcorn Old Town SPDs should they be required for the reason explained above.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The SPDs have been produced to ensure that through its function as a Local Planning Authority, the Council: -
- a) Is in accordance with national and regional planning policy and advice.
 - b) Wherever possible meets the priorities of the community it serves, as set out in the Halton Community Strategy and Corporate Plan.
- 4.2 These SPDs directly relate to a number of policies within the Halton Unitary Development Plan. They are particularly intended to provide

further detail in relation to policies contained within the Shopping and Town Centres chapter of the UDP.

- 4.3 Both Town Centre Strategy SPDs have the same policy format which includes strategic policies (section 5) followed by policies for specific sub areas within the respective town centres. Common strategic policies relate to matters such as increasing public art, having a co-ordinated approach to street furniture provision, ensuring suitable cycle access and parking and improving directional signage.
- 4.4 There is a mix of key policies that are specific to the Halton Lea town centre strategy. Those that might be considered as expressly relating to development matters deal with a new vehicular access being created from Hallwood Park Road into Trident Park and setting development criteria for the planned extension to the shopping centre across East Lane. Those that can be considered as operational improvements include refurbishing and improving the bus termini or reviewing and rationalising ground level uses underneath Rutland House and Halton Direct Link. There is also a management related policy, which encourages the setting up a town centre group that would be made up of property owners and other interested parties in the town centre.
- 4.5 As with Halton Lea, the Runcorn document contains a mix of key policies specific to that centre. The broad thrust of the strategy is to see the centre build upon recent successes and redefine and strengthen its position with regard to the various roles it fulfils, namely;
 - providing for the day to day shopping needs of it's immediate catchment;
 - offering a wider complementary function to neighbouring town centres, as a focus for local independent shops, niche retailers and service providers; and
 - improving facilities to become a centre for cultural and leisure activity.
- 4.6 Various policies are presented that seek to ensure future development contributes positively towards achieving these aims in addition to those dealing with more management orientated or operational issues such as car park management and general environmental improvements.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 No other known implications.

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 6.1 No legal or financial risks to the Council can be identified so long as the statutory procedures for the preparation of SPDs are met.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

7.1 Public consultation upon the draft SPDs will not have any identifiable equality and diversity implications.

8.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

8.1 The alternative options considered with regard to the preparation of this document are set out in the SA Report.

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

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Halton Unitary Development Plan, April 2005	Planning & Policy Division, Environmental & Regulatory Services, Rutland House.	Neil Macfarlane
Halton Local Development Scheme 2006/07	Planning & Policy Division, Environmental & Regulatory Services, Rutland House.	Neil Macfarlane
Runcorn Old Town and Halton Lea Town Centre Strategies Partnership Consultation Stage (November 2005)	Planning & Policy Division, Environmental & Regulatory Services, Rutland House.	Neil Macfarlane
Sustainability Appraisal Pre Production Scoping Reports (June 2005)	Planning & Policy Division, Environmental & Regulatory Services, Rutland House.	Neil Macfarlane



Runcorn Old Town Town Centre Strategy

Draft Supplementary Planning Document
Public Consultation Draft
January 2007



Halton Borough Council

Runcorn Old Town : Town Centre Strategy

Draft Supplementary Planning Document

**Public Consultation Draft
(FOR EXECUTIVE SUB APPROVAL)**

January 2007

to Operational Director ~ Environmental & Regulatory Services
Environment Directorate
Halton Borough Council
Rutland House
Halton Lea
Runcorn
WA7 2GW

Section	Contents
1	Purpose
2	Policy Background
3	Guiding Principles
4	Understanding the Issues
5	Strategic Issues & The Vision
6	Sub Area Analysis
7	Church Street
8	Central Area
9	Regent Street and western approaches
10	Bridge Street and eastern approaches
11	High Street
12	Canal Quarter and southern fringe
13	Promenade and The Deck
14	The Proposals for the Centre
15	Summary of Specific Opportunities

Appendix

- A Contacts and Useful Information
- B SWOT Analysis
- C Update of existing Town Centre Strategy
- D Summary of Policies in Connection with Planning Obligations

Operational Director
Environment Directorate
Halton Borough Council
Rutland House
Halton Lea
Runcorn WA7 2GW

This guidance note should be read in conjunction with the relevant policies of the Development Plan.

I Purpose



Introduction

- 1.1 Runcorn is one of three main shopping centres within Halton Borough. This Town Centre Strategy has been prepared to update and build upon the previous Town Centre Strategy adopted by the Council in 1997, and deals with land use planning matters for the centre. It provides additional guidance to that contained in the now saved policies adopted in the Halton Unitary Development Plan. This document is being prepared under the provisions of the 2004 Planning and Compensation Act and will be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), which will form part of the Local Development Framework (LDF) for Halton.
- 1.2 The Council has also prepared an updated Strategy for Halton Lea at this time. Widnes Town Centre will be the

subject of a later Area Action Plan (Development Plan Document).

- 1.3 These documents do not deal explicitly with non-land use planning matters such as marketing and visitor information, promotion of business, day to day town centre management, car parking management, crime and anti-social behaviour.
- 1.4 This document is the draft SPD relating to **Runcorn Old Town**.

Purpose

- 1.5 The purpose of this SPD is to complement policies adopted within the Halton UDP and saved as part of the Local Development Framework (LDF), to provide additional practical guidance and support for those involved in the planning of new development within Halton Borough to:

- a Enable the town centres to prosper without damaging the health of any other;
- b Safeguard and strengthen the individual role of each town centre as safe and accessible places to shop, work and enjoy;
- c Co-ordinate public and private investment decisions;
- d Improve the economic prosperity of the borough through the creation of employment opportunities; and
- e Ensure the highest standard of design and architecture within each town centre.

1.6 By stating this purpose, the Council will seek to improve through its function as a Local Planning Authority any development proposal that does not provide for, or meet the principles encouraged and required within this SPD and the Halton UDP or as replaced by the Halton LDF.

1.7 This SPD is also intended to encourage all of those who have or will have an interest in the vitality and viability of the town centre to follow the practical guidance it contains wherever opportunities arise whether or not planning permission or other consents are required.

Structure of the document

1.8 In the following sections, this document will set the Old Town in the context of national planning policy and national trends in town centre type uses, before locally specific factors such as historical circumstances and recent and future planned developments. A SWOT analysis (Appendix B) identifies current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for the future of the centre, and an assessment is made on progress regarding the recommendations from the original 1997 Town Centre Strategy (Appendix C) completes the evidence

and contextual base. From this the strategy identifies:

- Strategic policies and proposals which will be applied across the centre, and;
- Sub-area policies and proposals, which will apply within each of the sub-areas.

2 Policy Background

2.1 This SPD revises and updates the previous Runcorn Old Town: Town Centre Strategy. It has been produced to ensure that through its function as a Local Planning Authority, the Council is in accordance with national and regional guidance and advice and contributes, wherever possible, to meeting the priorities of the community it serves.

National Policy

2.2 Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1): Delivering Sustainable Development, states that planning policies should promote high quality inclusive design in the layout of new developments and individual buildings in terms of function and impact, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development. It also highlights the need to focus developments that attract a large number of people, especially retail, leisure and office development, in existing centres to promote their vitality and viability, social inclusion and more sustainable patterns of development.



2.3 PPS 6: Planning for Town Centres, states that the Government's key objective for town centres is to promote their vitality and viability by:

- planning for the growth and development of existing centres; and
- promoting and enhancing existing centres, by focusing development in such centres and encouraging a wide

range of services in a good environment, accessible to all.

2.4 It affirms that it is essential that town centres provide a high-quality and safe environment if they are to remain attractive and competitive. Policies for the design of development for main town centre uses, regardless of location, and for development in town centres, should promote high quality and inclusive design, in order to improve the character, quality and function of areas.

2.5 Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) imposes a duty of the Local Authority to exercise its functions with due regards to the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in its area. The SPD deals with the matter in relation to land use planning considerations only.

Regional Policy

2.6 Policy SD2 Other Settlements within the North West Metropolitan Area, highlights Runcorn and Widnes as areas where wide-ranging regeneration and environmental enhancement should be secured.

2.7 Policy EC8 Town Centres – Retail, Leisure and Office Development states that Development Plans, town centre management initiatives and other strategies should recognise the continued need to protect, sustain and improve all of the town and city centres in the Region.

Local Policy



2.8 The Halton Unitary Development Plan (UDP) currently provides the Development Plan Framework for Halton. However, the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 introduced major changes to the way the planning system operates, with each Local Authority now required to prepare a Local Development Framework (LDF). As part of the transitional arrangement for the new planning system the Halton UDP will be automatically saved for a period of three years from the date of adoption. This allows SPDs to be linked to existing 'saved' UDP policies.

2.9 The UDP contains a number of strategic aims and objectives, which are set out in Part I of the UDP. In relation to Halton's town centres they include the aim to increase their vitality and viability and the need to ensure that no retail development is allowed in one town centre that would seriously harm another.

2.10 Part 2 UDP policies seek to implement the broad aims and objectives contained within Part Proposal I. Those that are directly relevant to this SPD are:

- **Policy TCI: Retail & Leisure Allocations**, provides a list of sites that are allocated for specific uses, on the basis of both an assessment of need for new retail and leisure facilities in the Borough and a sequential approach to site selection. In Runcorn Old Town sites are allocated at

- Site 1 : Central Area
- Site 5 : Rear of High Street and
- Site 6 : Camden Gardens
- Site 7 : Crosville Bus Depot site

The latter 3 of these sites now being dealt with under the 'Canal Quarter' development scheme (see Chapter 12).

- **Policy TC2: Retail Development to the Edge Of Designated Shopping Centres**, introduces criteria for assessing when development will be permitted on the edge of centre locations.
- **Policy TC4: Retail development within designated shopping centres**, allows for retail development that contributes to the centre's vitality and viability.
- **Policy TC5: Design of Retail Development**, provides the design criteria for considering new retail development and extensions.
- **Policy TC6: Out of Centre Retail Development**, provides the criteria to assess out of centre retail proposals including small scale retail developments to meet local needs.
- **Policy TC8: Non-Retail Uses within Primary and Secondary Shopping Areas**, provides the requirements for Class A2 (financial and professional services) and Class A3 (sale of food and drink) uses and other appropriate non-retail town centre uses, at ground floor level in Primary and Secondary Shopping Areas.
- **Policy TCI0: Runcorn Town Centre Mixed Uses Area**, identifies the main uses that would be appropriate within the area defined on the Proposals Map. These do not include retail (except for local needs) as it is considered that this could result in a more dispersed retail function to the detriment of the centre as a whole.
- **Policies LTCl, LTC2 and LTC3** in the Leisure, Tourism and Community Facilities chapter provide the criteria to assess major

leisure and community facilities that are located in town centre, edge of town centre and out of centre locations respectively.

- **Policy TPI6: Green Travel Plans**, states that green travel plans will be required as part of all new development which would comprise jobs, shopping and services and which would generate significant jobs.

Community Strategy

2.11 This SPD is intended to contribute to the implementation of the Halton Community Strategy 2006. This strategy co-ordinates the resources of the local public, private and voluntary organisations towards common purposes. The vision of the Strategy is that *"Halton will be a thriving and vibrant borough where people can learn and develop their skills, enjoy a good quality of life with good health; a high quality, modern urban environment; the opportunity for all to fulfil their potential; greater wealth and equality; sustained by a thriving business community; and within safer, stronger and more attractive neighbourhoods."*

2.12 Within the 'Halton's urban renewal' priority of the Community Strategy there is an objective "to revitalise the town centres to create dynamic, well-designed high quality commercial areas that can continue to meet the needs of local people, investors, businesses and visitors."

2.13 Halton Borough Council is committed to contributing to achieving the priorities of the Community Strategy. The Council's priorities are set out in

the Corporate Plan. This plan also has five priorities, including 'urban renewal'.

2.14 The priorities in the Community Strategy and the Corporate Plan are based on the priorities set by the people of Halton. These were identified through community involvement via area panels, focus groups, and a telephone survey. The Corporate Plan was based on the same community involvement and statistical information compiled for the State of the Borough Report, 2005.

Waterside Strategy

2.15 The Waterside Strategy was launched in March 2005. As relates to Runcorn Old Town, it seeks to achieve the better integration of the waterside frontages into the town centre to achieve the following broad aims;

- Environmental improvements
- Generate additional economic activity
- Bring derelict and underused sites into active high quality uses
- Develop a brand image for the Old Town based upon its canal heritage
- Create a leisure, retail and commercial focus on the Bridgewater Canal with secondary residential
- Create a residential focus on the Manchester Ship Canal with ancillary retail and commercial

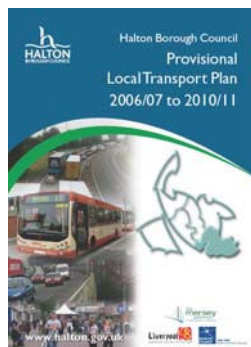
The Town Centre Strategy seeks to build upon the strategic aims of the Waterside Strategy, with amendments, to help achieve a more cohesive town centre that relates better to its canal frontages.



Waterside Development Strategy for Halton: Runcorn Historic Canal Town Masterplan / Development Brief (Key Diagram).

Local Transport Plan

2.16 The Halton Local Transport Plan 2006/7 to 2010/11 (LTP2) states that the ability of local people to access work, learning, health care, shopping, leisure and exercise can significantly impact on their quality of life and life chances.



2.17 Helping to ensure that people can access the services they need and want, is not just a matter of improving local transport, but also of improving the provision of other services and developments in more accessible places and ways, and at more accessible times. In addition to this, good access is a critical element in attracting new businesses to relocate to the area or to establish themselves. The LTP includes the Bus, Cycling, Parking and Walking Strategy as well as a draft Access Plan.

2.18 The LTP is aimed at meeting the targets in the Community Strategy, clearly this means that both this SPD and the LTP are ultimately trying to achieve the same goals and each will benefit the other

Supplementary Planning Documents

2.19 There are a number of other Supplementary Planning Documents (either adopted or emerging) that will be of relevance to developments within Runcorn Old Town centre.

Key amongst these are;

- Shop Fronts, Signage and Advertising.
- Designing for Community Safety.
- Design of New Industrial and Commercial Development.
- Design of New Residential Development.
- Transport and Accessibility

3 Guiding Principles

Introduction

3.1 In addition to formal policy Government has produced a number of documents that provide additional relevant guidance, some of these are detailed below.

Vital and Viable Town Centres

3.2 'Vital and Viable town centres: meeting the challenge' (DOE 1994) provides, through the use of a town centre health check, a method for evaluating town centre vitality and viability. It suggests collating a whole host of indicators, and analysing them using a variety of different techniques such as 4 'A's (attractions, accessibility, amenity and action) approach and swot (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis.

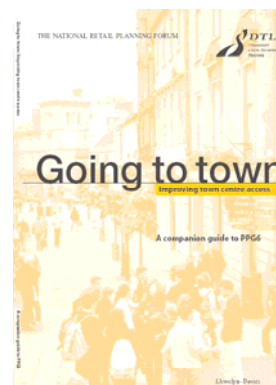
Planning for Town Centres

3.3 Planning for Town Centres: Guidance on Design and Implementation tools provides further detailed design guidance, stating that the issues which should be considered for inclusion in local development documents, include:

- identifying the capacity of each centre to accommodate growth, and making provision for this;
- providing a comprehensive plan for any area of renewal or development;
- addressing the location and layout of new development;
- developing an urban design strategy, which establishes a comprehensive urban design vision and is supported by specific urban design policies, guidelines or proposals for specific sites;
- addressing the spatial implications of strategies for parking, traffic management and improvement of the pedestrian environment; and
- setting out a detailed implementation programme for bringing forward development on key sites, including, where appropriate, proposals for

addressing issues such as land assembly through compulsory purchase orders.

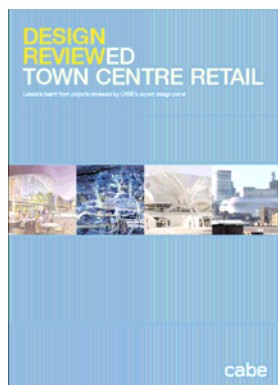
Going to Town



3.4 Going to town – Improving town centre access is a good practice guide and was published in 2002 by ODPM. It highlights what can be done to improve the key routes from the arrival points to the main attractions and provides the principles of route quality these are:

- **Connected:** good pedestrian routes which link the places where people want to go, and form a network
- **Convenient:** direct routes following desire lines, with easy-to-use crossings
- **Comfortable:** good quality footways, with adequate widths and without obstructions
- **Convivial:** attractive well lit and safe, and with variety along the route
- **Conspicuous:** legible routes easy to find and follow, with surface treatments and signs to guide pedestrians

Design Reviewed –Town Centre Retail



3.5 Design Reviewed states that when translated to town centre retail development, we can judge proposed designs against a number of key principles:

- Good urban design – the principles of which are set out in ‘By Design’, and include the importance of character, legibility, ease of movement, adaptability and a mix of uses.
- Good architecture – buildings with civic quality that enhance their internal and external environments through their scale, massing, proportions and detailing.
- Good for retail – the development must work for retail and leisure providers in their core business, selling products to customers.
- Good for everyone – the development must minimise any negative impacts on the environment and promote a safe and inclusive environment for all who want to use the town centre, including those with special access needs.

Planning and Access for Disabled People

3.6 Contains several good practice points of relevance to this document. Including that all parties involved in the planning and development process should recognise the benefits of, and endeavour to bring about inclusive design.

Building in Context



3.7 The belief underlying ‘Building in context’ (English Heritage/CABI 2002) is that the right approach is to be found in examining the context for any proposed development in great detail and relating the new building to its surroundings through an informed character appraisal. It suggests that a successful project will:

- relate well to the geography and history of the place and the lie of the land;
- sit happily in the pattern of existing development and routes through and around it;
- respect important views;
- respect the scale of neighbouring buildings;
- use materials and building methods which are as high in quality as those used in existing buildings; and
- create new views and juxtapositions which add to the variety and texture of the setting.

4 Understanding the Issues

History and context within the Borough

4.1 Halton Borough has three town centres at Widnes, Runcorn Old Town and Halton Lea, and the quality and image of these shopping centres plays an important role in securing economic growth and providing wider community services. Runcorn Old Town is the smallest of the three town centres being about a quarter the size of Widnes and Halton Lea, comprising approximately 14,000 Sq.M. (150,000 Sq.Ft.) of retail floorspace in 160+ separate units.

4.2 The Town Centre initially developed to serve the commercial and industrial settlement of Runcorn that grew up on the south bank of the Mersey promoted by the development of the Bridgewater Canal in the 1770's, the mainline railway and the Manchester Ship Canal in the latter half of the 17th century.

4.3 The opening of the transporter bridge in 1905 gave the development of the town centre a further boost, helping consolidate it as the main town centre for Runcorn which was by then home to a population of approximately 30,000.



View of the approach to the Transporter Bridge, which provided the sole vehicular link between Runcorn and Widnes until 1961.



Aerial view of Runcorn Old Town in 1945 Showing original street pattern with Transporter Bridge (top left)

4.4 In 1964 Runcorn was designated as a New Town and the New Town Development Corporation sought to significantly expand the town to the south and east, creating new homes, jobs and facilities for up to an additional 70,000 people bringing the total population to 100,000.

4.5 Developments by the New Town Development Corporation and others around this time would have significant impacts upon the *old* town centre. Chief amongst these were;

- The construction on Shopping City (since re-branded Halton Lea). a purpose built shopping and commercial centre located 2½km to the south east of the old town intended to serve Runcorn and a wider sub-regional role. As a consequence of this the existing town centre effectively became a district or large neighbourhood centre.
- The creation of a segregated busway network that cut through the old town centre between Church Street and High Street effectively cutting the centre in two.
- The creation of a grade separated expressway road network, linked to the new Silver Jubilee Bridge across the Mersey. This effectively bypassed the old town centre and

created a large impenetrable barrier between the centre and the surrounding residential areas to the south.

- Redevelopment of the land to the south of Church Street to provide a covered market hall and surface level open car park.
- Redevelopment of the buildings along the north side of Church Street, and southern Bridge Street to provide modern flexible unit shops with rear servicing,



Aerial view of Central Area in 1983 showing the elaborate busway interchange severing linkages between Church Street (top) and High Street (bottom).

4.6 For a number of years the Old Town struggled with its redefined role within the retail hierarchy, not aided by a poorly defined and disjointed physical environment ultimately leading to a period of neglect and decline.



Aerial view of Runcorn Old Town in 1983 showing new Silver Jubilee Bridge (top left) and expressway network (bottom) effectively bypassing the town centre.

Renaissance (1996~)

4.7 4.10 In 1996 Halton Partnership (a precursor to the Halton Strategic

Partnership), comprising public, private and voluntary sector organisations secured £13 million from the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) Challenge Fund for a package of projects aimed at tackling the historical legacy of industrial decline and the negative effects of the new town expansion.

4.8 4.11 The bid established four main areas for improvement:

- **To revitalise commercial activity.** Reinststate the ‘old town’ as the centre of Runcorn and an important hub of commercial activity;
- **To revitalise housing stock.** Improve existing housing stock and provide new housing with greater variety.
- **To revitalise the community.** Tackling wide-ranging issues such as confidence, health, employment and skills.
- **To revitalise the environment.** Improving morale and confidence, making the most of the attractive location and existing assets, including the waterfronts.



Expressway signage advertising Old Town SRB funded improvements.

4.9 4.12 The bid supported 39 projects between 1996~2003 with 75% of the

funding being spent on capital projects including:

- Improving road access and the layout of the old town centre and creating linkages to, and throughout, the area including footpaths and cycle ways;
- Levering in new retail investment;
- Improving the physical appearance of the town centre and shop fronts, and canal side improvements; and
- Improving levels of activity within the Old Town through new housing, a local college and a new arts centre;

Town Centre Strategy (1997~)

4.10 In 1997 Halton Borough adopted the Town Centre Strategy for Runcorn Old Town as Supplementary Planning Guidance. This sought to revitalise the centre with objectives including maintaining and enhancing the range of attractions and facilities, improving accessibility and promoting the centre in a positive light. The relevant land use objectives (including site allocations) were subsequently incorporated into the Halton UDP. Appendix C summarises the proposals in the 1997 Strategy and their outcomes.



Aerial view of Town Centre in 2000 showing new access road from Daresbury expressway (bottom right) and construction of new bus station (top centre left).

National issues

4.11 There are several national trends regarding shopping and town centres

that are of significance to Runcorn Old Town. These include:

- Competition from **retail parks** which have a competitive advantage in terms of ease of access and abundant free surface level car parking can result in loss of trade or relocation of traders (c.f. loss of Blockbusters to Trident Retail Park);
- **Superstores** selling an **increased range of non-food goods** (including clothing) as they seek new profit and growth opportunities;
- **Growth in unit sizes** to meet occupier requirements for fewer, larger units;
- **Growing disparity between large destination centres and medium and smaller centres** as key operators focus their attention on a limited number of locations.

Local issues

4.12 Three different sources of information have been used to pull together the principal local issues. These are:

- The Halton Town Centre Baseline Report 2004
- SWOT Analysis 2005
- Old Town Town Centre Survey

4.13 The progress against the proposed actions and recommendations in the previous Town Centre Strategy (1997), and their continuing relevance has been assessed in Appendix C.

Runcorn Old Town: Town Centre Baseline Report 2004

4.14 The Town Centres Baseline Report considered a suite of socio-economic and vitality & viability indicators to assess the key strengths and weaknesses of the 3 centres and provide a sound basis to re-evaluate their strategic direction.

- **Rental yields** are calculated as annual rental income as a percentage of capital investment, and are an indicator of investor confidence in a

centre (the lower the confidence, the higher the perceived investment risk and the higher the yield sought). The national data source used for this information only provides information for “Runcorn” and it is unclear whether this relates to Halton Lea, the Old Town or both. Between 1997 and 2001 the yield is quoted as being 11.5% and from 2001 to 2004 as being “10% or over”. This compares with a figure of 8.5% for Widnes over the same period and reflects comparatively poor investor confidence in the centres.

- The immediate **catchment population** of the Old Town seemed to be declining marginally (though recent housing completions and proposals are expected to reverse this trend). The catchment population differs from that for Halton Lea by having a higher ratio of homeowners, mainly in the ‘Blue Collar’, ‘Victorian Low Status’ and ‘Mortgaged Families’ social sub-groupings. Thus, whilst the localised housing stock is predominately owner-occupied, this appears to be dominated by lower market properties and is not indicative of high disposable incomes.
- Recorded **Crime levels** within the town centre have fluctuated slightly in recent years but the latest figures are some 20% lower than in the year 2000. Theft of and from motor vehicles showing a 50% drop (2000~2003). Unfortunately, the recorded incidences of assault have increased over this period, though this is in line with national trends and the number of incidents is still fairly low. However, any incidence of violent crime detracts from people’s perceptions of the centre and willingness to consider it as an evening destination. 23% of people indicated that they had felt intimidated using the centre.

- Perceptions of the evening entertainment offered by the centre were split with 37% saying the offer was Good or Very Good and the same number saying the offer was Poor or Very Poor. At 37% the number of respondents saying they never visit the centre of an evening was lower than that for Widnes (46%) and Halton Lea (59%).
- Respondents to the Town Centres Users Survey highlighted anomalies regarding **car parking** within the centre. Only 39% of respondents said they parked for 2 hours or less, against 73% for Halton Lea and 69% for Widnes. Over 30% identified that they parked for 7 or more hours, indicating that many people are using the car parks for all day parking, presumably whilst at work. This is likely to include a significant proportion that are using the free town centre car parks and commuting elsewhere by train (rather than using the pay & display rail station car parks). This is a problem for the town centre as it reduces the spaces and convenience for shoppers, whilst not contributing to the vitality of the centre by generating lunch-time trade. Over 34% of respondents rated parking as ‘fairly’ or ‘very difficult’. This appears to raise significant issues for the management of the parking provision.
- At almost 50% the proportion of visitors arriving by bus was the highest of the 3 town centres as was the proportion of those arriving on foot (circa 17%).

SWOT Analysis

4.15 A SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) of the Old Town has been undertaken and is reproduced at Appendix B. The main findings from the SWOT analysis are:

Strengths

- Runcorn Old Town is the dominant convenience centre within its local catchment. The centre has developed a strong complementary role to Halton Lea specialising in financial and professional services with specialist traders also increasingly evident. Shop fronts and environment are generally very good and there are below average vacancies. Recent developments have improved the centres appeal.

Weaknesses

- The town centre lacks mainstream offer with few national multiples present. The centre lacks identity or prominence and suffers from convoluted access routes, poor legibility (differentiation & linkages between areas), poor signage and fails to maximise on its key environmental assets.

Opportunities

- There is remaining capacity to support additional convenience goods retailing to further consolidate the centres strength in this area. Current development proposals at the Canal Quarter and The Deck together with remaining central development sites present great opportunities to build upon the recent successes of the Central Area redevelopment and the Brindley Arts Centre. These should create a more cohesive and attractive centre, consolidating its retail role and developing an enhanced leisure and cultural functions throughout the day and into the evening.

Threats

- Increased retail competition from surrounding centres (Halton Lea, Widnes and Liverpool), and in leisure terms from Widnes, Frodsham and Stockton Heath. Failure to fully integrate new developments whereby they act as stand-alone developments without

generating wider 'spin-off' benefits for the centre as a whole. The need to build on and carry forward the achievements from the previous SRB backed investment (i.e. maintaining the shop frontages/ street scene improvements to the same high standard).

Runcorn Old Town Centre Survey 2005

4.16 In 2005 the Council undertook a unit survey of the three main town centres within the borough. The purpose of this was to update previous work done by consultants in 1994 and 1999 and supplement the town centre baseline study, undertaken in 2004.

4.17 The most striking feature of the floorspace distribution within the Old Town is the very low percentage given over to food and convenience goods, which at just 18% is lower than in Halton Lea (24%) and Widnes (30%). Generally the lower a centre's position within the retail hierarchy the greater is its dependence on food and convenience goods retailing.

4.18 The recent addition of the new (relocated) Kwik Save foodstore (now re-branded Somerfield) and the adjacent Cool Trader has strengthened the centres' convenience goods offer. However, there is calculated to be remaining capacity for some 1,000+ Sq.M. (10,700+ Sq.Ft.) of additional convenience floorspace (Source: Chesterton Study 2002), possibly in the form of a discount operator. Securing this investment will require the careful identification of a suitable site and careful design to maximise its integration into the centre and to make the most of the potential for linked trips.

4.19 In the Old Town, the dominant use is financial and professional services, which account for 21% of the total floorspace. This highlights the complementary relationship that the Old Town has with Halton Lea, which with its larger unit

sizes, institutional leases and restricted opening hours provides limited accommodation for hairdressers, estate agents, solicitors etc.

4.20 In addition, at 16½%, the proportion of floorspace given over to food and drink uses is double that of Widnes and four times that of Halton Lea, again highlighting the complementary nature of the Old Town to its larger neighbour. The current range of such uses is predominately in the form of traditional and music orientated pubs and hot food take-aways (many open only during evening hours). There is potential to address this quality gap in the market with additional cafés, restaurants and more food orientated drinking establishments. The recently opened Brindley Gallery Café is reporting healthy patronage, particularly from lunchtime trade, and the opening of J.D. Wetherspoons in November 2006 further adds to the daytime offer.

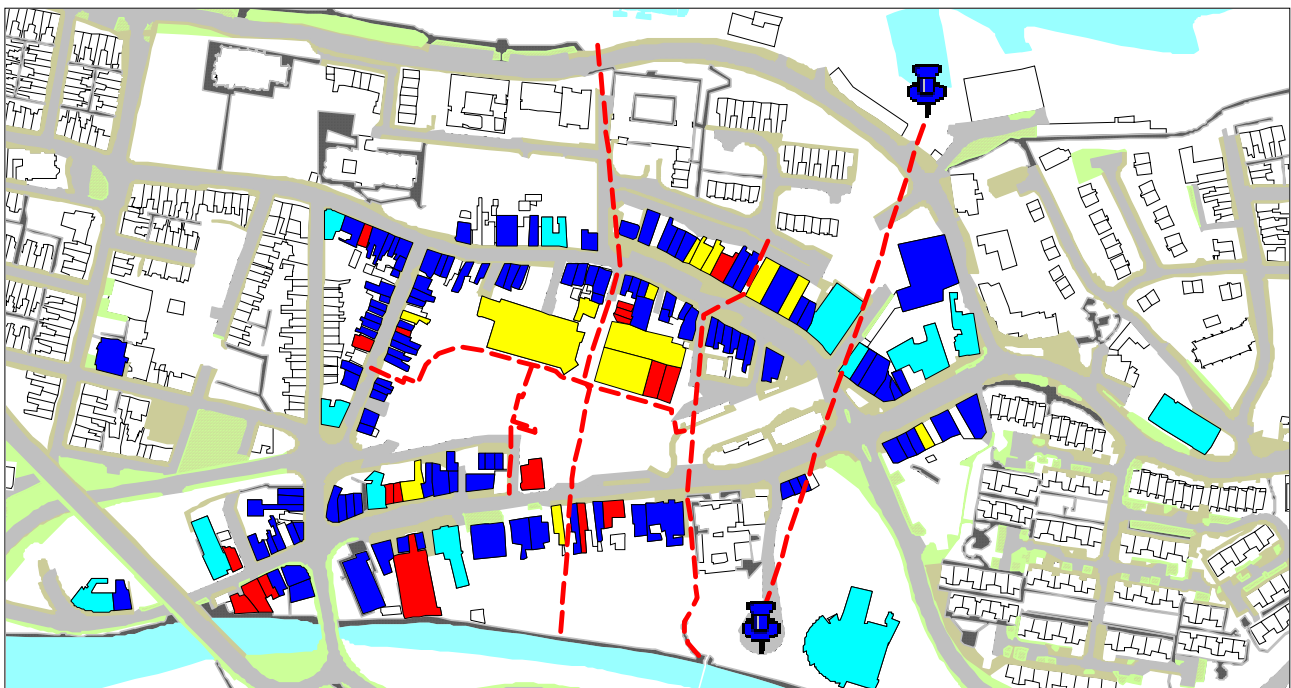
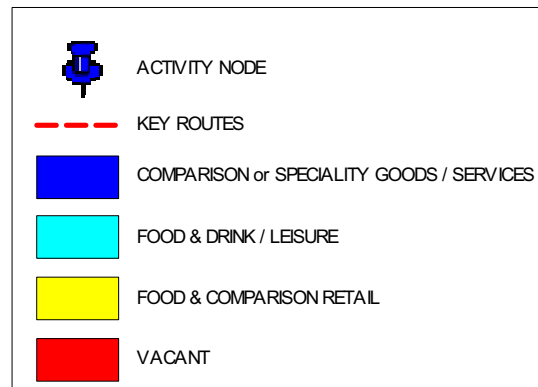
4.21 At 5% the amount of vacant floorspace is similar to the last survey, in 1999 (6%), but the number of vacant units has actually decreased (from 17 to 11).



Vacant Retail Units (2005 Trader Survey).

4.22 Of the current recorded vacancies, only 2 units were also vacant at the previous survey.

4.23 The survey also assessed the quality of the shop fronts within the centre with over three quarters being adjudged 'Good' or 'Excellent', with over 40% being in the top category. This again, largely being a legacy of the SRB funded investment.



Surveved Uses (HBC Retail Unit Survey).

5 Strategic Policies

Vision for Runcorn Old Town centre

Runcorn 'Old Town' Centre is a vibrant waterside location that provides for the day to day shopping needs of it's immediate catchment whilst offering a wider complementary function to the neighbouring town centre, as a focus for local independent shops, niche retailers and service providers, and as a centre for cultural and leisure activity.

Current Situation

- 5.1 The following set of policies and proposals will be applied to Runcorn Old Town town centre. They are not presented in any particular order either in terms of importance, timetable or deliverability.
- 5.2 Section 5 below contains strategic polices that apply across the centre as a whole whereas polices in following sections 7~13 apply to specific sub areas in the centre.
- 5.3 It is also of note that there are several polices, both strategic and specific to the sub areas, which promote the use of planning obligations to assist in the improvement of the town centre. These improvements fall into four categories, which are in relation to transport accessibility, linkages, the local environment and functional improvement of the town centre. For ease of reference, Appendix D contains details of all policies that have reference to planning obligations and therefore indicates the type of activities for which obligations could be used. This document cannot prescribe the exact nature of obligations being sought, as this must be done on a case-by-case basis in compliance with Circular 05/05. However, as a generality prioritisation will initially be given to schemes directed towards the improvement of accessibility and linkage to the centre.
- 5.4 As a Supplementary Planning Document, this Town Centre Strategy is unable to

formally designate sites for development. However, it is able to identify development principles for existing opportunities (such as UDP allocations and planning permissions). Sites that are identified as new opportunities can, if necessary, be taken forward as designations through the New Retail and Leisure Development DPD.

STRATEGIC POLICY: SPI

Review the Primary Shopping Area (PSA), Secondary Shopping Area (SSA) and Mixed Uses area boundaries as part of a future Development Plan Document (DPD).

- 5.5 The UDP defines Primary and Secondary Shopping Areas together with an area for mixed uses within the Old Town, to which different policies relating to the mix of retail and non-retail uses apply. The aim of these policies is to protect active retail frontages and restrict the proliferation of non-retail and other uses that could detract from the vitality of the retail core. Changes to the Use Classes Order¹, which now differentiates between Restaurants / Cafés (A3); Pubs / Bars (A4); and Hot Food Take Aways (A5) allows for the development of a more refined policy approach that will help deliver the broader aims for the centre as a whole.

¹ Circular 05/2005 (March 2005)

Implementation:

- 5.6 This SPD can only identify this issue. Any amendment to the Primary Shopping, Secondary Shopping and Mixed Use Area boundaries shown on the Proposals Map of the UDP must be progressed by Halton Borough Council, in conjunction with interested parties, as part of the forthcoming New Retail and Leisure Development Plan Document (DPD). Development control decisions will continue to be made on the basis of the approved development plan.

STRATEGIC POLICY: SP2

Opportunities to enhance the environment and increase the localised population by infill residential development (including as part of appropriate mixed use schemes) should be identified and promoted.

- 5.7 Opportunities to increase the population living within and in and around the Old Town should be encouraged. An increased population will provide additional customers for convenience businesses, increase footfall and activity levels and provide for a more vibrant atmosphere.

Implementation

- 5.8 This SPD can only identify this issue. Any allocation of land for residential purposes must be progressed by Halton Borough Council, in conjunction with interested parties, as part of the forthcoming New Residential Development (DPD).

CONVENIENCE RETAIL ROLE

STRATEGIC POLICY: SP3

The Old Town centres role within its localised catchment as the dominant convenience centre should be protected and enhanced wherever possible.

Opportunities for additional convenience provision (in line with identified capacity) should be identified and promoted.

Implementation

- 5.9 The Council will exercise its development control powers to ensure proposals for new development and/or change of use accord with the approved policies of the development plan. The Council will undertake periodic retail capacity studies to identify any quantitative or qualitative gaps in provision to inform the provision of up-to-date development plan policies (initially through the New Retail and Leisure DPD).

SPECIALIST RETAIL ROLE

STRATEGIC POLICY: SP4

The Old Town centre should build upon its strong complementary retail role to Halton Lea, providing a location for uses not well catered for within its larger neighbours, particularly retail services (e.g. hairdressers / estate agents / solicitors etc) and specialist or niche retailers, serving the needs of the whole community.

Implementation

- 5.10 The council will exercise its development control powers to ensure proposals for new development and/or change of use accord with the approved policies of the development plan.

CULTURAL / LEISURE / ENVIRONMENTAL ROLE

STRATEGIC POLICY: SP5

The Old Town centre should build upon its strong complementary leisure role to Halton Lea, providing a location for uses not well catered for within its larger neighbour, particularly entertainment, leisure and food and drink. Opportunities exist building on the success of the Brindley Arts Centre to develop the cultural and leisure role of the centre creating a safe and attractive day and evening destination serving the needs of the whole community

(particularly those south of the Mersey) and reducing the need to travel out of the borough to competing destinations.

Implementation

- 5.11 The council will exercise its development control powers to ensure proposals for new development and/or change of use accord with the approved policies of the development plan.

STRATEGIC POLICY: SP6

The Canal Quarter and The Deck developments should facilitate the introduction of a new north / south activity corridor, incorporating Public Hall Street, capable of attracting and supporting food, drink and complementary uses building upon the successes of the Brindley Arts Centre, waterside environmental improvements and promoting the Old Town as a cultural, leisure and entertainment destination to the benefit of the whole community.

Implementation

- 5.12 The Council sees a strong opportunity for the development of enhanced leisure facilities within the centre, building upon the success of the Brindley Arts Centre and utilising the areas waterside frontages and other environmental assets.
- 5.13 The commercial and passive leisure developments and improvements at the Canal Quarter and The Deck / Promenade provide an opportunity to establish better links between the 2 waterside locations, helping to better integrate the centre as a whole and introducing a north-south leisure orientated activity corridor.
- 5.14 The Council will exercise its development control powers to ensure proposals for new development and/or change of use accord with the approved policies of the development plan. The Council will undertake periodic retail capacity studies to identify any

quantitative of qualitative gaps in provision to inform the provision of up-to-date development plan policies (initially as the New Retail and Leisure DPD). The Council will further seek to use its powers and influence in conjunction with other stakeholders to promote suitable convenience goods developments beneficial to the centre as a whole.

STRATEGIC POLICY: SP7

Opportunities to develop new leisure based activities based around or on the Bridgewater Canal, including developments associated with the potential re-opening of the Runcorn Locks and/or the creation of a second Cheshire (Canal) Ring should be encouraged and supported.

- 5.15 The Bridgewater Canal is navigable and provides valuable opportunities for waterborne and waterside leisure activities.
- 5.16 Revised access arrangements to the Silver Jubilee Bridge may remove the current highway that blocks the route of the Bridgewater Canal. Should this occur, the Council will support proposals for the re-instatement of this section of canal.
- 5.17 In the longer term, there is the possibility of re-establishing the Runcorn Locks, linking Runcorn Basin with the Manchester Ship Canal and via the Weaver Navigation recreating a second 'Cheshire Ring'. Such a route is likely to be very attractive to leisure craft and holiday-makers. Runcorn basin would become a layover point for craft waiting to enter the lock 'staircase' creating opportunities for commercial activities to service the needs of waterborne and other visitors.

Implementation.

- 5.18 The council will rigorously exercise its development control powers to ensure

proposals for new development accord with the approved policies of the development plan. Policy GE29 of the Halton UDP places a presumption against development that would prejudice the operation or attractiveness of the canal environments.

AMENITY / ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

STRATEGIC POLICY: SP8

Improve pedestrian and cycling linkages within the centre and from surrounding areas by:

- the enhancement of existing pedestrian and cycling routes; and
- the creation of new pedestrian footpaths within the centre, including along the proposed new north ~ south activity corridor from the Brindley Arts Centre to the Promenade.

The Council will seek contributions for this from all new developments within the Old Town through planning obligations.

5.19 Recent improvements generated by the central area redevelopment have created the opportunity to fully integrate the different elements of the town centre. Further improvements to the footpath and cycle network are required to fully realise this aim.

Implementation:

5.20 The Council will seek planning obligations from all major new developments within the town centre areas to provide contributions towards the creation of a safe and attractive environment. This will include the improvement of linkages to surrounding areas by the enhancement of footpaths and cycle linkages.

STRATEGIC POLICY: SP9

Development of sites incorporating or adjoining greenways should be in accordance with UDP Policy TP9.

5.21 The greenway network is made up of proposed and potential off road routes for walking, cycling and, where appropriate, horse-riding. These connect people to facilities and greenspaces.

Implementation:

5.22 Development of sites that incorporate a greenway will be expected to enhance the condition and appearance of proposed routes and implement potential routes. Where proposed development adjoins a greenway, extensions and improvements to the network will be sought through negotiation.

STRATEGIC POLICY: SPI0

The supply of safe and attractive short stay shopper's car parking is essential to the vitality of the centre. The Canal Quarter redevelopment and/or other schemes significantly affecting the existing provision or likely demand for parking should contribute to or conform to a comprehensive access and parking study. This study will also need to address issues of long stay parking for traders and commuters.

5.23 The supply of safe, convenient and attractive car parking for short stay shopping trips has been identified as a major issue for the centre. Almost a third of cars are parked for 7 or more hours, limiting the spaces available to other visitors during the day.

Implementation

5.24 Any development scheme likely to significantly alter the existing parking provision or the demand for parking spaces will be expected to contribute to, or conform to, a comprehensive Access and Parking Study.

5.25 The results of this Study will be used as a basis for informing the work of the proposed Parking Partnership. (See Policy SPI 1)

STRATEGIC POLICY: SPI 1

Develop a Parking Partnership with all private car park operators within the centre that will review and monitor the demand for, provision and management of car parking spaces, .

- 5.26 The Local Transport Plan indicates that the Council will seek to develop a Parking Partnerships with private car parking operators. This is important in and around town centres where much of the car parking provision is in private rather than Council ownership, particularly in and around the Old Town.
- 5.27 Long stay parking, either by rail commuters or local shop staff is believed to be a significant issue affecting the centre. Long stay parking obviously restricts the availability and convenience of parking for shoppers and others visiting the centre during the day to conduct their business.



Southern section of Central area / Somerfield car park almost fully occupied by 8.45am.

- 5.28 The largest Council owned car park (to the rear of High Street) is scheduled for redevelopment. Whilst the Canal Quarter development will be expected to provide a level of replacement provision, this will probably be in private hands.

Implementation:

- 5.29 The Council will seek to facilitate the development of a co-ordinated approach to parking management within the centre by developing a Parking Partnership,

involving the main parking providers within the centre.

STRATEGIC POLICY: SPI 2

Environmental and frontage improvements secured through the previous SRB programme should be maintained and where possible enhanced by public and private sector partners and stakeholders as appropriate.

- 5.30 The frontage improvements secured during the SRB programme continue to have a beneficial effect on the centre, with very few individual shop fronts being adjudged to be of poor quality.

Implementation

- 5.31 The Council will exercise its development control powers to ensure proposals for new development and/or change of use accord with the approved policies of the development plan (including the recently adopted Shop Fronts, Advertisements and Signage SPD).
- 5.32 The Council will administer its Shop Fronts Grants Scheme to award grants to partially fund qualifying enhancements.

STRATEGIC POLICY: SPI 3

All new developments must include secure, concealed bin storage, and all existing units will be encouraged to create secure, concealed bin storage areas.

- 5.33 Secure, concealed bin storage areas are required within the town centre to reduce the risk of arson and to improve the general appearance of the area.
- 5.34 The cleanliness and maintenance of the town centre is one of the most visible measures of how well the centre is being cared for. Many people subjectively measure the quality of the area according to how well litter and refuse are collected. The public will no

longer tolerate litter, disrepair and a generally un-cared for environment.

Implementation:

5.35 The council will rigorously exercise its development control powers to ensure proposals for new development accord with the approved policies of the development plan. Policy BE1 of the Halton UDP requires that development must be designed to minimise the risk of crime (2e); must not cause unacceptable pollution or nuisance (2f) and must provide for waste storage and collection in a suitably screened and enclosed area (6e).

STRATEGIC POLICY: SPI 4

Increase in quality and quantity of public art within the Old Town, town centre.

5.36 Halton UDP policy BE2 states that development should take account of the provision of public art and the integration of art and craft work into the design of the development scheme. Supporting text to the policy explains that the Council will actively encourage developers to spend a percentage of the total development cost or a fixed amount of money on providing art and craftwork and on seeking the influence of artists and craft skills alongside architects and building professionals, to ensure integration of art and craftwork features as an essential part of the design.

5.37 Public art is particularly important within town centres as it contributes to improving the quality of the environment. Good public art helps creates a sense place, identity and community, its also adds to the cultural capital of an locality, all vital to making a town centre an attractive and vibrant place to visit. Public art embraces many aspects of the public realm including sculptures, murals, water features and lighting. It can be stand alone or incorporated into the design of buildings and spaces around them, such as through use of decorative boundary treatments or patterned floorscapes.

Implementation:

5.38 In accordance with UDP policy BE2, the Council will seek all new development (including change of use), within the centre, to allocate 1% of the total development costs (defined as construction costs) towards the enhancement of public art within the Old Town. The one percent approach is a standard national and international recognised figure. This will be required to be either directly provided on or off site; or via a commuted sum towards the provision of public art in the defined area. All public art must be demonstrated to be provided within a publicly accessible or visible locality. where appropriate, maintenance and other revenue implications will be taken into account when provision relates to a specific work of public art.

5.39 The Council is currently developing a public art strategy, this will provide further information on the provision of public in Halton. This will identity key locations, such as gateways to the town centre, were commuted sums will be directed, and if necessary accumulated to ensure high quality public art is achieved.

STRATEGIC POLICY: SPI 5

Provide a co-ordinated approach to the future provision of street furniture and ensure that it is usable by all members of the public, is well located and does not cause a safety issue. The Council will consider the development of a ‘design palette’ to secure uniformity to create a better visually more integrated centre.

5.40 The provision of street furniture needs to be well managed and coordinated. It will also need to be durable, easy to maintain and fit for purpose, and placed with consideration to ensure that it will contribute to the aesthetic and functional qualities of public spaces. The Designing for Community Safety

SPD provides further advice and guidance on these matters.

5.41 Furthermore, the use of a co-ordinated 'design palette' will help visually integrate the centre, reduce visual clutter and produce a more welcoming environment.

Implementation:

5.42 The Council can assist in the provision of a co-ordinated approach to the provision of high quality street furniture within and around the Old Town.

5.43 The Council will seek planning obligations from all new developments within the town centre to provide monies towards the creation of a safe and attractive environment, including the provision of high quality and co-ordinated street furniture.

STRATEGIC POLICY: SPI 6

Key points of vehicular and pedestrian access into the town centre should be enhanced with attractive entrance features such as landscaping, art forms or other 'gateway' features.

5.44 These gateways should also be well linked to the town centre through the use of appropriate routes, signage and lighting.

5.45 Key vehicular and cycle 'gateways' include:

- Bridge Street
- Leiria Way
- Greenway Road / Devonshire Place
- Station Road / Devonshire Place

Additional key pedestrian access 'gateways' include:

- High Street Bus Station
- Bridgewater Canal footbridge
- Bridgewater Canal towpaths
- St. John's Brow
- Victoria Road / Runcorn Spur Road underpass
- Mersey Road (from College)
- Station Road (from train station)

Key internal nodes, sub-zone interfaces include;

- High Street / Church Street junction
- Church Street / Granville Street / King Street
- Regent Street
- High Street / Canal Quarter routes
- Central Area Car Park / entrances.
- The Mound site / Brindley Plaza (subject to future development).

5.46 The overall importance and significance of key gateways into and out of town centres are often overlooked.

5.47 The first impressions of visitors to the town centre, whether arriving by car, public transport, on foot or bicycle is of great importance. The quality and appearance of approach routes and the outer edge that the town centre presents to the 'outside world' are crucial to the formation of a positive town centre image and identity.

Implementation:

5.48 In its role as both highways authority and local planning authority the Council will seek to improve these gateways into the town centre, to make the town centre more attractive to both pedestrians and car users.

STRATEGIC POLICY: SPI 7

All new developments should make suitable provision for safe and convenient cycle access linked to existing or proposed routes (where opportunities exist) and provide for convenient, safe, secure and covered cycle parking that is likely to be attractive to potential users in line with UDP Policy TP6.

5.49 This will encourage the greater use of this more sustainable form of transport and should ensure that any bicycles are safe from theft and are not causing a hazard to other road/footpath users.

5.50 Where provision of cycle lockers is not practicable, for reasons of security, 'Sheffield' style bicycle racks will be required in preference to the less secure 'butterfly' designs.

Implementation:

5.51 Where the development proposed requires off-site access improvements or the development is incapable or unsuitable for the on-site provision of cycle parking either due to site constraints or highway safety issues, payment in lieu of on-site provision as part of a planning obligation may be acceptable.

5.52 Further information with regard to cycle storage, facilities and networks will be provided in the forthcoming Transport and Accessibility SPD.

STRATEGIC POLICY: SPI 8

Improve directional signage to and within the town centre. All signage should be co-ordinated to ensure a consistent approach is taken to design, location and naming across the town centre.

5.53 Road linkages into and around the Old Town can be very confusing for visitors. The problems created by interlinking the original highway network to the newer bridge approaches, expressways and busways and traversing the canal, utilising have created a number of confusing routes and junctions.

5.54 This can made it very difficult for visitors to find there way into the centre and then gain a sense of where they are in relation to other parts of the centre or how to find their way back out. Whilst some improvements have taken place already to improve accessibility, better directional signage would be beneficial both in terms of updating and further additions.

5.55 The development of the Mersey Gateway Bridge (MGB) and the resultant de-coupling of the Silver Jubilee Bridge will prompt a comprehensive overhaul of the

current key vehicular access points, which should streamline the arrangements.

Implementation:

5.56 Halton Borough Council will seek planning obligations from all new developments within the town centre to provide monies towards the creation of a safe and attractive environment, including the provision of appropriate signage.

STRATEGIC POLICY: SPI 9

Applications for new development, likely to attract significant visitor numbers (particularly during evening hours) will be expected to provide locations for, or contribute towards, the maintenance or enhancement of the centres CCTV security system to the benefit of the public safety and the operation of the centre as a whole.

5.57 The provision of CCTV coverage helps both in deterring crime and anti-social behaviour and in reducing the fear of crime.

5.58 New development may aid the provision of an effective CCTV network by providing mounting or fixing points for cameras or contributing to the provision of the service. This matters is dealt with in more detail in the Community Safety SPD.

Implementation

5.59 Halton Borough Council will seek planning obligations from all new developments within the town centre likely to attract significant visitor numbers (particularly during evening hours) to provide monies towards the creation of a safe and attractive environment, including the provision of appropriate signage.

STRATEGIC POLICY: SP20

All developments should comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Acts (DDAs).

5.60 There are Disability Discrimination Acts (DDAs) of 1995 and 2005. The need to comply with the DDA should be considered as inherent within all policies that promote development within the centre where there is access to buildings and public areas. There is also a need to comply with the DDA for improvements that are outwith of the planning system, for example in relation to existing buildings. Consideration should be given to the requirements of DDA in the early stages of drawing up a proposal, alongside access requirements identified by UDP policies BE18-20.

Implementation:

5.61 Initial contact regarding DDA should be with the Council's Building Control Service, details of which are given at Appendix A.

STRATEGIC POLICY: SP21

Recycling facilities should be rationalised and / or improved.

5.62 Currently there are public recycling facilities located to the rear of Somerfield in the Central Area Car Park and a smaller facility at Lieria Way Car Park.

5.63 The Leiria Way facility in particular is not ideal, having a limited capacity and would benefit from replacement or improvement. This policy does not preclude the development of additional recycling facilities, as appropriate, in connection with further developments.

Implementation:

5.64 The Council will seek opportunities, possibly in conjunction with existing operators or new developments to secure the rationalisation or improvement to recycling facilities provided within the centre.

6 Sub Areas Analysis

6.1 Runcorn Town Centre comprises of a number of distinct areas :

- **Church Street** is the principal shopping street in the Old Town, providing accommodation for a range of traders mostly in 1960's style 2 storey, custom built shop units.
- **Central Area** is the recently reconfigured area between Church Street and High Street including new premises for Somerfields, Price Freeze and the Indoor Market Hall together with substantial open parking and the reconfigured bus station;
- **Regent Street and western approaches;** comprises of the historic, now secondary retail frontages on Regent Street with predominately residential areas behind, including interspersed community uses
- **Bridge Street and eastern approaches;** comprises of the secondary retail frontages on eastern High Street, with predominately residential areas beyond with interspersed community and commercial uses along Bridge Street;
- **High Street,** contains a mix of historic and more modern buildings housing a mix of predominately commercial and service uses;
- **Canal Quarter and southern fringes** comprises of underused land on either bank of the Bridgewater Canal to the rear of High Street. This is a key development opportunity site that the Council is currently seeking to promote for mixed uses with its selected development partner.

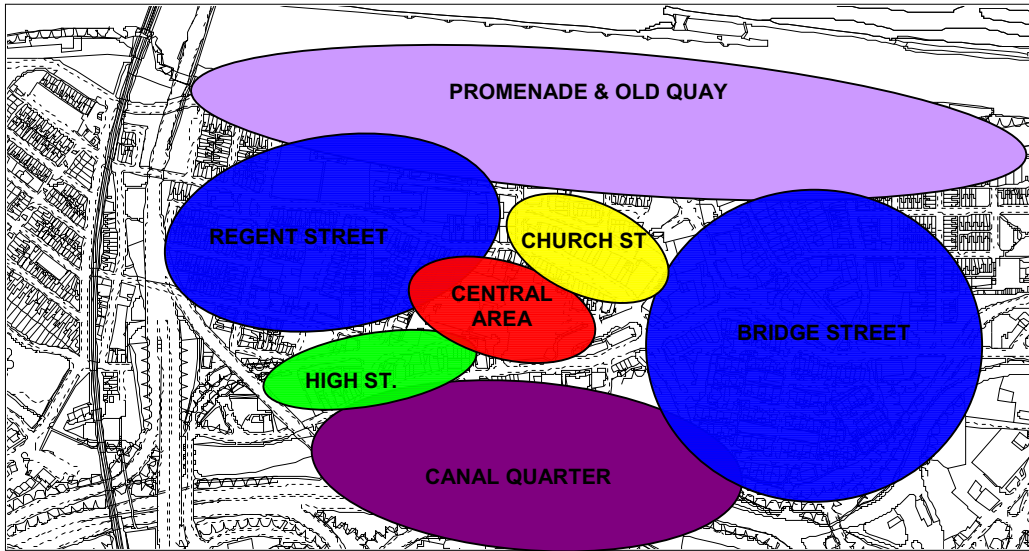
- **Promenade and The Deck,** is the northern extent of the town centre fronting the Manchester Ship Canal with the River Mersey beyond. The area encompasses the recently improved promenade stretching to Dukesfield to the west and Bryant Homes "The Deck" residential development site extending to the east.

6.2 Each of the sub areas have been considered in more detail in the next section. They have all been set out in a similar format. This entails explaining the current situation in terms of details of the present condition of the sub-area and existing planning policy. From the issues for the centre that have been identified, Policy Proposals and their implementation strategies are promoted to overcome these issues.

6.3 As indicated at paragraph 5.4, as a Supplementary Planning Document, this Town Centre Strategy is unable to formally designate sites for development.

6.4 It is able to identify development principles for existing opportunities (such as UDP allocations and planning permissions). Sites that are identified as new opportunities can, if necessary, be taken forward as designations through a future Development Plan Document (DPD).

6.5 The map below shows the separate town centres areas with the clear focus around Church Street, Central Core and High Street.



Runcorn Old Town Sub-areas.

7 Church Street

7.1 Church Street was designated as the Primary Shopping Area within the UDP, with Policy TC8 limiting units for class A2 (financial & professional services), A3 (food & drink)² and other appropriate not-retail town centre uses to approximately 20% of outlets with a restriction against more than 2 adjacent non-retail uses.

7.2 There are currently³ 6 non-retail units within the defined primary shopping area on Church Street limiting the scope for further diversification.

7.3 Running east to west, Church Street forms the retail heart of the Old Town. Prior to the relocation of Kwik Save (now re-branded Somerfield) it contained the centres' main food and convenience goods retail provision.



Typical unit :
Church Street
North West
frontage

Typical unit :
Church Street
North East
frontage



7.4 The street consists of 1960's style 2 storey retail units to the north, the easternmost having flat roofs and the westernmost having brick fascias to the second floor and traditional pitched roofs. These units, whilst being visually nondescript, appear mostly well maintained and offer modern accommodation (including rear

servicing) and house a mix of national multiple and independent traders. This area forms the backbone of the centres offer for day-to-day shopping needs.



Church Street :
Southern units
showing uniform
frontage treatment

Church Street
South side unit
with non- standard
Frontage treatment



7.5 The southern side of the street comprises of 19th century 2 and 3 storey buildings, which are mostly well maintained and have benefited from, part publicly funded, improvements to the ground floor fascias. These units are typically smaller than those opposite and house a range of mostly independent traders including a range of service providers.

7.6 The street comprises a traffic-calmed road with approximately 39 on-street short stay parking spaces. The road layout whilst not fully pedestrianised does incorporate traffic calming design elements and appears to represent an appropriate balance between access and the shopping environment. The unified paving treatment and decorative street furniture are attractive and of high quality.

7.7 Whilst there are no dedicated cycle routes accessing Church Street, there are 'Sheffield style' cycle racks accommodated within the main pedestrian areas.

²Refers to Use Classes Order 1987 (superseded April 2006)

³HBC Retail Unit Survey (2005-06)



View westwards along Church Street showing street furniture, surface treatments and on-street parking provision

CHURCH STREET POLICY: CSI

Church Streets’ role as the Primary Retail Area for day-to-day (convenience) goods within the Old Town should be maintained and enhanced wherever possible.

7.8 Strategic Policy: SPI states that the Council will revise the Primary (PSA) and Secondary Shopping Area (SSA) boundaries as part of a future Development Plan Document (DPD). This review may affect the units on the fringes of Church Street where it may be appropriate to allow other uses that support the wider strategy for the centre.

7.9 Notwithstanding this, the majority of Church Street represents the retail core for day-to-day shopping needs and the Council will seek to maintain its vitality and viability.

Implementation.

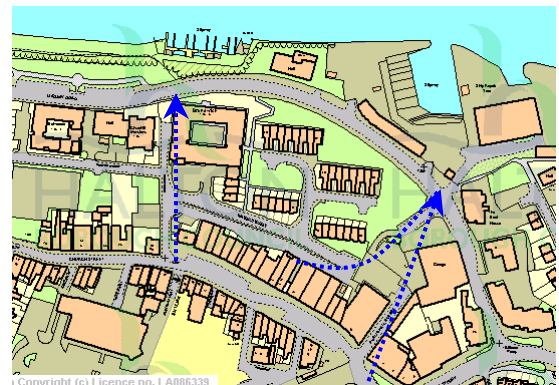
7.10 The Council will monitor land-uses within this area and planning applications for change of use will be judged against the approved policies in the development plan.

CHURCH STREET: CS2

Pedestrian routes from Church Street northwards to the Promenade and southwards to the bus station, new retail market development and beyond should be improved and upgraded as part of any scheme of development within these areas.

7.11 A key element of this strategy is to improve north south pedestrian linkages with the route between the Canal Quarter and The Deck having potential to become a key activity corridor accommodating leisure opportunities.

7.12 The recent central area developments have only been partially successful in creating a cohesive hub to the centre and the pedestrian links from Church Street would benefit from further improvements. Pedestrian linkages from the bus station to Church Street are particularly unattractive and detract from the image of the centre.



Possible pedestrian routes to Promenade.

Implementation.

7.13 The Council will expect any proposals for redevelopment affecting or adjoining key pedestrian routes to enhance the street scene and fully consider the needs of the pedestrian, providing safe and attractive through routes across the centre.

CHURCH STREET POLICY: CS3

Re-use of 19~23 Church Street for A1 (Retail), A3 (Restaurant / Café) or A4 (Drinking Establishments)

uses is preferable and will be supported.

7.14 No.19~23 Church Street is an imposing art-deco style building that though in need of significant improvements retains many original features, including turned mullions, decorative transoms, stall risers and a feature curved glass corner window. The building has most recently been used as a furniture showroom and general goods store, but has a history of A4 uses having previously been the Blue Lagoon club.

7.15 The development opportunities presented by the underused units at the eastern end of Church Street, may be fundamental to achieving the wider vision of Runcorn Old Town as a cultural and leisure destination.



19~23 Church Street.

Implementation.

7.16 The Council will support re-use of this building for A1 retail use and will consider favourably any planning application for change of use for A3 (Restaurant / Café), A4 (Drinking Establishments) or other use that would support the day-time economy or the establishment of the leisure based activity corridor (subject to other policy provisions of the approved development plan).

CHURCH STREET POLICY: CS4

Notwithstanding Policy 03, whilst 19~23 Church Street is an interesting building and its'

retention would be preferable, it is not listed, presents a blank frontage to the eastern approach and its' retention should not stand in the way of any redevelopment proposals should it prove unattractive or uneconomic for future re-use. Upper floor uses will be expected to complement or be compatible with the full range of ground floor uses proposed.

Implementation.

7.17 The Council will support the redevelopment of this site for A1 retail use and will consider favourably any proposals for change of use for A3 (Restaurant/Café), A4 (Drinking Establishments) or other use, or mixed uses, that would support the daytime economy or the establishment of the leisure based 'activity corridor' (subject to other policy provisions of the approved development plan). Any proposals for redevelopment will be expected to be of high quality in accordance with policies BE1, BE2 and BE3 of the UDP.

CHURCH STREET POLICY: CS5

The redevelopment of the No. 48~50 at the western end of Church Street presents an opportunity to create a landmark building and create an improved sense of place close to the junction with Granville Street (and the link through to the Market and central car park.

7.18 This site occupies a prominent location at the western end of the main pedestrian area of Church Street, and its redevelopment presents an opportunity to create a landmark building, of suitable massing (3 or 4 storeys), preferably with 'active' commercial uses to the ground floor.



Shapers Hair, 48~50 Church Street.
Consent for 3 & 4 storey landmark building.

Implementation.

7.19 The council will rigorously exercise its development control powers to ensure proposals for new development accord with the approved policies of the development plan. Policies BE1, BE2 and BE3 of the Halton UDP require that development must be designed to a high standard having due regard to its setting.

CHURCH STREET POLICY: CS6

Re-use of 4~8 Church Street for A1 (Retail), A3 (Restaurant / Café) or A4 (Drinking Establishments) uses will be supported. Upper floor uses will be expected to complement or be compatible with the full range of ground floor uses proposed.

7.20 No.s 4~8 Church Street occupy an important position within the centre sitting at the heart of the north~south axis between the Canal Quarter and The Deck on the interface between the primary retail area on Church Street and the secondary frontages fronting Bridge Street.

7.21 The units are currently occupied by Church Street Café/Wine Bar (No.8), the former Tourist Information Centre (No.6) and the Co-operative Funeral Services (No.4).⁴ The upper floors to no.s 6 and 8 contain office space occupied by community organisations; however, the accommodation is believed to be difficult to upgrade to

modern accessibility and service standards.

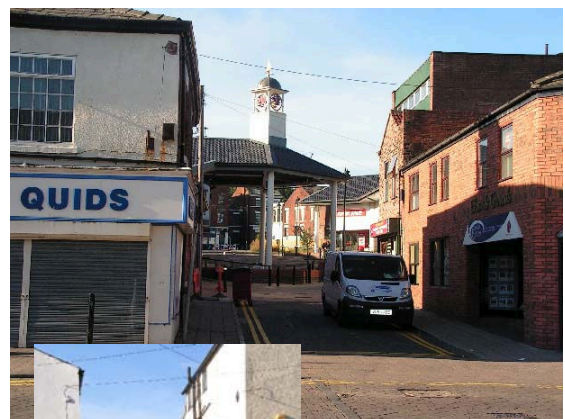
7.22 The future use of units on this site may be fundamental to achieving the wider vision of the Old Town as a cultural and leisure destination.

Implementation.

7.23 The Council will support re-use of this location for A1 retail use and will consider favourably any planning application for changes of use for A3 (Restaurant/Café), A4 (Drinking Establishments) or other use that would support the day-time and evening economy or the establishment of the leisure based activity corridor (subject to other policy provisions of the approved development plan). Upper floor uses will be expected to be compatible with the full range of ground floor uses proposed.

CHURCH STREET POLICY: CS7

Proposals to increase the visibility of the New Market Hall from the main shopping areas in Church Street will be supported.



Views of Market Hall from Church Street.

7.24 The Market Hall and central core retail development is not highly visible from Church Street. Prominent, feature signage, gateway arches or street

⁴ Halton Retail Unit Survey

furniture could be used to highlight linkages and better tie the retail zones together.

Implementation.

7.25 Proposals for improving the visibility of the retail market from the adjoining retail areas, particularly Church Street, will be supported.

7.26 Proposals could include improved signage, paving treatments or the creation of interlinked public focal points (perhaps including public art). Proposals should be of a high quality and actively add to the street scene.

8 Central Area

8.1 The Central area has been subject to various redevelopment schemes over the years. The most recent SRB funded program reclaimed land previously given over to the grandiose busway interchange, creating a new more compact bus station (to the east), new premises for the Council's Direct Link (One-Stop-Shop), new retail stores housing the relocated Kwik Save (now re-branded Somerfield), Cool Trader and a number of as yet un-let retail units (to the north), a new indoor market hall together with an enlarged and reconfigured central car park, incorporating a taxi rank.



New Kwik Save store (now rebranded Somerfield) on Central Redevelopment site with canopy entrance feature to Indoor Market Hall on pedestrianised Granville Street visible to the right.

8.2 The central core now represents the main point of arrival for those travelling by bus, taxi or private car.

8.3 The new Somerfield with its adjacent customer car park provides the centre with a much-needed convenience anchor store, which should attract new customers to the centre, increasing patronage and thereby adding to the centres overall vitality and viability. The site contains the main central shoppers parking area (though issues exist regarding commuter parking on this site).

8.4 This redevelopment has provided the opportunity to re-establish attractive pedestrian links between Church Street and High Street, helping unify the centre around a new core without sacrificing accessibility. This will help integrate and connect the proposed Canal Quarter development with the rest of the centre.

CENTRAL AREA POLICY: CA1

The development of the remaining undeveloped site fronting High Street presents a number of challenges that the design must address. Any development proposal will be expected to:

- a) relate well to the new retail units to the north, including providing a safe and attractive pedestrian route between Granville Street and the bus station;
- b) relate well to the buildings and redevelopment on the opposite side of High Street in the Canal Quarter;
- c) accommodate an enhanced pedestrian route running north-south along Granville Street linking the Market / Somerfield frontages to High Street (and beyond); and
- d) avoid presenting blank frontages onto main pedestrian routes.

8.5 It is important to deliver a quality redevelopment or environmental improvements to the remaining central site as this is currently detracting from the wider central core improvements. Being centrally located in a highly visible and accessible location the site presents a significant opportunity and a significant design challenge.

Implementation.

- 8.6 The council will rigorously exercise its development control powers to ensure proposals for new development accord with the approved policies of the development plan. Policies BE1, BE2 and BE3 of the Halton UDP require that development must be designed to a high standard having due regard to its setting.

CENTRAL AREA POLICY: CA2

The Council will support proposals that enhance the operational efficiency, convenience and attractiveness to passengers of the centre’s bus station facilities.

- 8.7 The bus station is an essential component of a vital and vibrant town centre and the current facility is conveniently located to serve most uses. The current bus stations layout has recently been improved to aid buses accessing and egressing individual bays, however operational issues regarding buses entering and exiting the site remain.
- 8.8 The current layout is somewhat compromised by providing access and screening to the semi-enclosed service yard on Alcock Street. A public entrance to the Market Hall, and short cuts to Church Street create informal pedestrian routes through this backland area, presenting those alighting from buses at this principle access gateway with a poor first impression of the centre.

Implementation.

- 8.9 The council will rigorously exercise its development control powers to ensure proposals for new development accord with the approved policies of the development plan. Policies BE1, BE2 and BE3 of the Halton UDP require that development must be designed to a high standard having due regard to its setting.

CENTRAL AREA POLICY: CA3

Any development of the remaining undeveloped site fronting High Street should have regard to the requirements for the future

operational development of the adjacent bus station site.

- 8.10 Together, the bus station, Alcock Street service area and the central area redevelopment site present developers with the opportunity to bring forward a comprehensive scheme for this highly visible, accessible site, improving facilities for public transport, localised servicing arrangements and pedestrian routes whilst delivering an enhanced commercial development package.
- 8.11 The Council expect any development proposals within this area to have given full regard to the possibilities for a comprehensive development package involving the wider area. To this end developers will be expected to have consulted fully with the Council, and other relevant stakeholders, prior to submission of development proposals to ensure that their proposals represent the most efficient use of these central areas.

Implementation.

- 8.12 The council will rigorously exercise its development control powers to ensure proposals for new development accord with the approved policies of the development plan. Policies BE1, BE2 and BE3 of the Halton UDP require that development must be designed to a high standard having due regard to its setting.

CENTRAL AREA POLICY: CA4

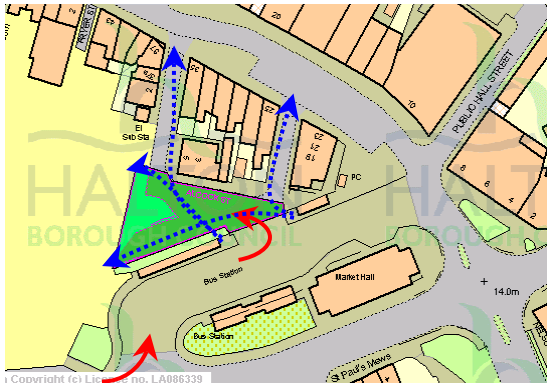
Key pedestrian routes linking Church Street to High Street and beyond should be protected and wherever possible enhanced:

- a) **Granville Street:** The northern section of this street has been pedestrianised and now forms the principle pedestrian through-route from Church Street to the new indoor market and Somerfield units. The southern section of the street runs along the side of the main access to the central car park to the west of the remaining central development site.



Entrance to central car park with Kwik Save now Somerfield (left), Indoor Market entrance canopy (central) and Cool Trader (right) on alignment of Granville Street.

- b) Alcock Street / Vicar Street:** These routes currently provide valuable but rather substandard pedestrian routes between Church Street and the bus station.



Alcock Street Service Yard (Green), vehicle access through bus station (red) and pedestrian routes from bus station (Blue)



View of Alcock Street 'service yard' from bus station.

- c) Princess Street:** Princess Street affords a valuable but less attractive pedestrian route from the rear of the car park (behind Somerfields service yard and recycling centre) to the

western end of Church Street. This has the look and feel of being very much secondary route but provides a valuable cut-through.



Views north and south along Princess Street. Secondary pedestrian route around Somerfield to western Church Street.

Implementation.

- 8.13 The Council will expect any proposals for redevelopment affecting or adjoining key pedestrian routes to enhance the streetscene and fully consider the needs of the pedestrian, providing safe and attractive through routes across the centre.

9 Regent Street and western approaches.

- 9.1 Regent Street and the western fringes of the centre comprise a predominately secondary retail and commercial area and transition zone to the residential areas to the west.
- 9.2 Regent Street and western Church Street comprise of a number of small retail units, many apparently converted from an original residential use. The area is allocated as part of the Secondary Shopping Area in the Halton UDP. The policy seeks to restrict A2 (professional services) and A3 (food & drink) and other appropriate town centre uses to no more than about 50% of outlets. The current ratio of such units within this area currently stands at approximately 30%.⁵
- 9.3 Regent Street comprises about 30, small, 2 storey shop units, which are generally of good quality, housing a mix of uses including specialist retail traders, retail services (hairdressers / tanning salons etc.), and hot food take-aways. At 2005 there were only 2 vacancies and 1 charity shop present.
- 9.4 Church Street narrows as it heads westwards away from the Primary Retail Area having a mixture of mostly 2 and 3 storey buildings in a mix of uses, including A3 (Food and Drink), retail service uses and Charity shops and specialist retail. Commercial uses on the north side of Church Street do not extend west of Regent Street with this area being a landscaped buffer to the primary school behind.
- 9.5 With a few exceptions, the units on Church Street to the east of Regent Street are mostly in good or excellent condition aided by take up of the Council's shop front improvement scheme. The quality of the units to the west of this point is poorer with a few poor frontages.
- 9.6 Regent Street slopes uphill from its junction with Church Street to Devonshire Place (the key western gateway and primary access point to the town centre). The roadway has been converted to one way running (uphill from Church Street) and includes valuable on-street short stay parking places provided to one side of the carriageway along most of its length. In addition to the pedestrian access at either end of the street, there is a link through to the revamped central area car park.
- 9.7 Bridgewater Street, behind and broadly parallel to Regent Street carries one-way traffic in the opposite direction (i.e. downhill from Devonshire Place) and provides the thoroughfare for traffic heading to Church Street (retail) and Dukesfield (residential) from the south and west via Station Road and Greenway Road.
- 9.8 The area to the west of Bridgewater Street mainly comprises of residential areas (with some interspersed commercial uses) arranged around a basic grid road layout including traffic calming and some one-way running.

REGENT STREET POLICY: RSI

Key pedestrian routes linking Regent Street to Church Street, High Street and the central retail area should be protected and wherever possible enhanced.

- 9.9 Whilst Regent Street contains it's own on-street parking provision and many of the units serve a predominately evening trade, connectivity with the rest of the centre (including the access to the central area parking / shopping areas) are important for the areas continued success. The pedestrian link-through

⁵ 2005 Halton Retail Unit Survey

to the revamped central area car park is particularly valuable. This area would however benefit from some cosmetic improvement.



Regent Street / Kwik Save car park linkway

Implementation.

9.10 The Council, through the exercise of its Development Control powers and powers as the Highways Authority will seek to protect and where appropriate improve the pedestrian connectivity of Regent Street with the surrounding commercial and residential areas.

REGENT STREET POLICY: RS2

The ‘gap site’ at 57-61 Church Street represents a development opportunity site. The Council will support its development for suitable uses as defined in the development plan.

9.11 The building frontage on Church Street has been punctured by the removal of units on the corner of Loch Street and this area is now used as an informal private parking area accommodating in the region of 15 vehicles. This is a development opportunity site and would appear suitable for a wide range of uses including A3 (Restaurant/Café), A4 (Drinking Establishment), A5 (Hot food take-away), or A2/B1 office type uses.

Implementation.

9.12 Development of this site will be for the private market. The Council will exercise its development control powers.

REGENT STREET POLICY: RS3

Proposals for the redevelopment of the library site (Egerton Street) should either:

- a) **Provide for a sympathetic re-use of the existing building; or**
- b) **Investigate the possibility of marrying this site with adjacent land holdings, potentially incorporating the adjacent former College Annex buildings and open car park land to form a comprehensive development package.**

9.13 The Council has been investigating opportunities to relocate the library to newer premises in a more central, accessible location. The current Egerton Street site is therefore liable to become redundant and available for alternative uses.

9.14 The site together with the adjoining community centre, former Halton College Annex and Egerton Street car park present a significant opportunity for a comprehensive commercial or residential conversion or redevelopment. Such development could, if possible, provide for the retention of the existing attractive Victorian buildings or their facades.



Library / former College site, Egerton Street. Potential development site.

Implementation.

9.15 The Council as partial landowner will seek to secure a suitable alternative use for the library site should the library facility be relocated.

10 Bridge Street and eastern approaches

- 10.1 Bridge Street and the eastern approaches extend eastwards from the cross roads created by High Street, Church Street and Leiria Way.
- 10.2 Retail units extend eastwards downhill for approximately 60m along High Street, comprising of 2 and 3 storey 1960's style blocks on the southern frontage with a mix of 1960's style units and older properties on the north.
- 10.3 The units on the south of the road mostly house service outlets (employment agencies etc) along with 1 restaurant and 1 hot food take-away with a gym across the upper floor. There is a post office on the corner with Leiria Way. Buildings of this style of construction are known to often suffer from a poor physical fabric and therefore may be expected to have a limited commercial lifespan.
- 10.4 The northern units include 2 large public houses (New York & The Last Orders Inn), a Chinese restaurant (above) a hot-food take away, off licence, and upper floor gym and a hotel, all of which back onto the Sefton House (Public Hall Street) service yard.



The New York & Last Orders Inn,
(North Eastern) High Street

- 10.5 The area was allocated as part of the Secondary Shopping Area in the Halton UDP. The policy seeks to restrict A2 (professional services) and A3 (food & drink)⁶ and other appropriate town centre uses to no more than about 50% of outlets. The current ratio⁷ of such units within this area currently stands at approximately 83%.
- 10.6 High Street gives way to the block paved Bridge Street that winds its way uphill past residential properties to the south and a decoratively paved St Johns Mews square and the public swimming baths to the north. Mersey Road heads north to the Promenade and The Deck development site.
- 10.7 Further to the east lies a mix of established traditional, new town and modern infill housing developments, including the recently completed (Persimmon Homes) Linnets Park development.
- 10.8 Bridge Street has excellent accessibility lying on the principal access routes from the east and the new Leiria Way access road from the Daresbury Expressway. The central bus station lies opposite the area, across Church Street.
- 10.9 There is on-street parking on either side of High Street and a council operated free car park sits behind the units on the south side of High Street. An informal taxis rank operates in front of the New York public house.
- 10.10 There is little further development opportunity on the principal frontages in this area. However the area is situated in the heart of the proposed new activity corridor stretching between 'The Deck' redevelopment to the north and the Canal Quarter to the south.

⁶ Refers to Use Classes Order 1987 (superseded April 2006)

⁷ Halton Retail Unit Survey 2005/06

This presents an opportunity for new development along the route between these 2 sites, with the underused area around Public Hall Street offering particular scope for the creation of a new link route, which could support new A3 (Restaurant/Café), A4 (Drinking Establishments) and complementary uses, thereby combining with the existing leisure provision on High Street to create a circuit.

BRIDGE STREET POLICY: BS1

The Council will seek to establish a direct pedestrian footpath between The Deck (Mersey Street) and Church Street.

10.11 As part of the planning approval for the Deck residential development, the developers will make a financial contribution towards the establishment of an improved pedestrian footpath linkage between the site and the town centre immediately to the south.

10.12 Ideally, the Council would like to see this proposed footpath run to the northern end of Public Hall Street, establishing a direct and attractive pedestrian link. Unfortunately, the land required to implement this direct route is not fully in Council control, and as such a less preferable route via Water Street may have to be implemented.

Implementation.

10.13 The Council will endeavour to secure the best practicable alignment for the improved footpath linkage between the Deck and Church Street.

BRIDGE STREET POLICY: BS2

The Council will support proposals for development and conversions to suitable uses in support of the development of a leisure corridor between the Canal Quarter and The Deck. Upper floor uses will be expected to complement or be compatible with the full range of ground floor uses proposed.

10.14 The Council has supported the redevelopment of the Canal Quarter and The Deck, as being intrinsic elements of the wider town centre renaissance. The redevelopment of these areas should be fully integrated into the wider centre and form key attractions at either end of a new activity corridor.

10.15 The Council will seek to secure improvements to the axis between these two major development sites and considers that Public Hall Street offers an ideal opportunity to establish a direct pedestrian link supporting an enhanced leisure quarter.

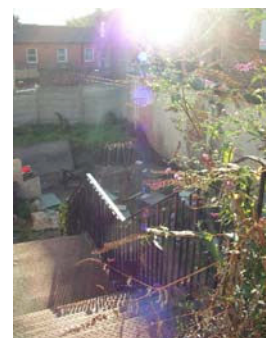


Public Hall Court (Sefton House)
Possible conversion to A3 and A4 uses.



Courtyard to rear of Public Hall Court (Sefton House). Potential to be used as open air bistro area / 'beer garden'.

Rear of The Last Orders Inn
With access from courtyard to rear of Sefton House
(Photo 18)



10.16 National pub chain, JD Wetherspoons has recently opened new public house (The Ferry Inn), including a rear beer garden at the heart of this axis in the former Kwik Save unit on the corner of Church Street / Public Hall Street.

10.17 The rear courtyard to Sefton House, appears to offer particular opportunities to establish an open-air 'bistro type' area, possibly linked to or shared between a number of units on Public Hall Street, Bridge Street and Mersey Street. To a lesser extent, Public Hall Street is a cul-de-sac that could also lend itself to being given over an open-air 'bistro type' area, during certain periods of the week (*Subject to Highways Orders and Licensing*).

10.18 The other existing buildings along Public Hall Street appear to be of little particular architectural merit and their demolition and replacement could be appropriate should they prove unsuitable for conversion. However given their positioning and basic form, it seems most likely that they could be retained and incorporated into an attractive and characterful development involving improvements to the street scene and lighting.

Implementation.

10.19 The development of this site will be for the private market.

BRIDGE STREET POLICY: BS3

The Council will support a suitable comprehensive redevelopment scheme for the units fronting Bridge Street and Leiria Way provided that the resultant development provides:

- a) **an improved elevational and corner treatments, particularly to the key Bridge Street / Church Street intersection;**
- b) **for uses in conformity to the prevailing development plan policy;**
- c) **active frontages onto Bridge Street;**

- d) **a more efficient use of the site (potentially including a single large space user on the upper level accessed from the higher southern elevation); and**
- e) **sufficient parking spaces to service the development in accordance with Highway Authority requirements.**

10.20 With the redevelopment of the Canal Quarter including the proposed removal of the corner 'mound' and its replacement with active uses, the site currently occupied by Leiria Way Car Park should increase in prominence and with increased activity in the area, may become an attractive development site. Together with the adjacent units fronting High Street, potential exists for the creation of a significant development parcel capable of exploiting the sites natural topography to accommodate retail units fronting High Street with a large space user fronting the rear car park above.

10.21 Any changes affecting parking provision will need to be considered in the light of the Access & Parking Study.

Implementation.

10.22 Development of this site will be for the private market.

BRIDGE STREET POLICY: BS4

The Council will consider favourably any proposals that individually or cumulatively can make better use of the section of busway between Bridge Street and Leiria Way, to the benefit of the wider area.

10.23 The section of busway between Bridge Street and Leiria Way appears to offer very little in the way of improved running times to bus operators. The route involves buses running a total distance of 500m, and negotiating the roundabout junction at Leiria Way. Only 40% of this route is dedicated busway, with the other 60% being shared with general traffic. The

removal of this section of busway would require buses to be diverted along Bridge Street, a distance of only 350m.



Aerial view of section of busway running parallel to north bank of Bridgewater Canal between Bridge Street and Leiria Way and former Petrol Filling Station that may be suitable for future housing development.

deemed necessary by the Highways Authority).

Implementation.

10.27 Development of this site will be for the private market.

10.24 The removal of the busway, could allow for a number of development options, with the busway corridor possibly developed individually or amalgamated with the adjacent (vacant) Bridge Street Petrol Filling Station site to create an opportunity site of approximately 1 ha. including over 200m of waterside frontage.

10.25 Acceptable uses are likely to be residential or commercial uses exploiting the canal side location. General retail uses will not be acceptable.

10.26 Any such development would be expected to:

- a) include suitable traffic control measures for buses entering and exiting the remaining busway at Bridge Street;
- b) incorporate any residual requirements for a through route between Bridge Street and Leiria Way, as determined necessary by the local Highways Authority;
- c) support the Bridgewater Way by providing upgraded public access along an improved towpath; and
- d) accommodate a replacement bus stop on the Bridge Street frontage (if

11 High Street

- 11.1 High Street is occupied by a mix of uses accommodated in a variety of building types and architectural styles. The daytime economy is dominated by A2 (professional services) uses comprising of banks, estate agents and solicitors. The evening economy comprises of 2 public houses, and a number of hot food takeaways.
- 11.2 The quality of the frontages along the street varies with the eastern end being dominated by the open central redevelopment site (see section 9) and the semi-derelict 3 storey building containing nos 59~69. The western end, particularly at its junction with Greenway Road / Devonshire Place contains a number of very attractive Victorian Buildings. There are a number of Grade II listed buildings and features located along the street.
- 11.3 The area was allocated in the Halton UDP under policy TC10: Runcorn Town Centre Mixed Use Area where a broad range of non-retail uses that contribute to the wider vitality of the centre will be allowed. The policy seeks to restrict retail uses as this area is intended to complement the shopping areas within the centre rather than compete with them as this would result in more dispersed retail function to the detriment of the centre as a whole
- 11.4 The area enjoys excellent accessibility being the main east-west route through the town centre linking directly with the main access points from the south. The centre's bus station; central car park and taxi rank are all accessed from High Street. A Council owned car park lies behind High Street accessed via a number of pedestrian routes (see Chapter 13). In addition, Runcorn's mainline Railway Station lies about a 5 minute walk to the south-west.
- 11.5 The development opportunities within this area are all inexorably linked to the future development of the Canal Quarter, lying immediately behind to the south. The Canal Quarter re-development will need to include certain of the properties currently fronting onto High Street. Precisely which buildings and what uses their sites will be put to will be determined as site feasibility studies and detailed design work is progressed. Successful implementation of the Canal Quarter scheme will act as a springboard for wider regeneration activities.
- 11.6 In addition, the proposed construction of the new Mersey Gateway Bridge will result in significant changes to the highway network and access routes into the Old Town as the Silver Jubilee Bridge is "de-coupled" from it's high capacity feeder roads. This is likely to affect local traffic management and access arrangements and may result in additional development opportunities as land is released from highway use and other land has constraints from development lifted.
- 11.7 Another positive outcome from the revised bridge access arrangements may be the removal of the current highway blocking the former route of the Bridgewater Canal (west of Runcorn Basin to the head of Runcorn Locks) thereby creating the potential for this waterway to be re-instated.

HIGH STREET POLICY: HSI

The Council will support development that utilises or enhances the canal side environment, or supports waterborne leisure activities.

- 11.8 The Bridgewater Canal and Runcorn Basin provide a valuable asset for the town centre that is currently somewhat under-utilised.

11.9 The Council will support proposals for development around the canal that help deliver the aims of the Waterside Strategy and accord with UDP policy TC10. Where appropriate, contributions will be sought to support the 'Bridgewater Way' by providing upgraded public access along an improved towpath

Implementation.

11.10 The Council will expect any proposals for development affecting or adjoining the Bridgewater Canal to enhance leisure opportunities and fully consider the needs of the canal users, including providing for safe and attractive pedestrian access to the waterside.

HIGH STREET POLICY: HS2

The Council will consider favourably any proposals for the re-instatement of the Bridgewater Canal to the west of Runcorn Basin. The restoration of Runcorn Locks and the connection of the Bridgewater Canal to the Manchester Ship Canal / Weaver Navigation will be supported.

11.11 Revised access arrangements to the Silver Jubilee Bridge may remove the current highway that blocks the route of the Bridgewater Canal. Should this occur, the Council will support proposals for the re-instatement of this section of canal.,

11.12 In the longer term, there is the possibility of re-establishing the Runcorn Locks, linking Runcorn Basin with the Manchester Ship Canal and via the Weaver Navigation recreating a second 'Cheshire Ring'. Such a route is likely to be very attractive to leisure craft and holiday-makers. Runcorn basin would become a layover point for craft waiting to enter the lock 'staircase' creating opportunities for service industries to service the needs of waterborne and other visitors.

Implementation.

11.13 Development to implemented by the private sector.

HIGH STREET POLICY: HS3

87~89 High Street represents a development opportunity site. The Council will support its development for suitable uses as defined in the development plan.

11.14 87~89 Church Street has been lying vacant for some time. This is a development opportunity site with an attractive outlook over Runcorn Basin and would appear suitable for a range of uses. In 2005 consent was granted for the redevelopment of the site to accommodate 11 apartments.

11.15 An elevated highway 'off-ramp' from the Silver Jubilee Bridge passes very close to this site at about 3rd storey level and currently presents a technical and psychological constraint to it's development. The future of this structure will be determined as part of a review of access arrangements to the Silver Jubilee Bridge following the opening of the Mersey Gateway Bridge.

Implementation.

11.16 The council will rigorously exercise its development control powers to ensure proposals for new development accord with the approved policies of the development plan. Policies BE1, BE2 and BE3 of the Halton UDP require that development must be designed to a high standard having due regard to its setting.

HIGH STREET POLICY: HS4

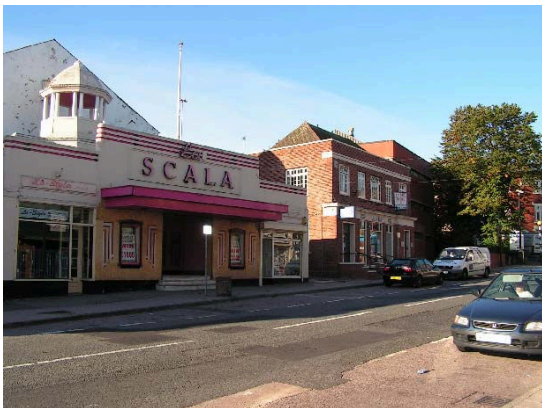
The units at 79~83 High Street contain a number of vacancies and represents a significant development opportunity. The Council will support proposals for its comprehensive redevelopment for suitable uses as defined in the development plan.

11.17 The sites at the corner of High Street and Greenway Road / Devonshire Place lie outside of the Canal Quarter redevelopment area. This is however

an important gateway site for pedestrian and vehicular traffic entering the Old Town from the south.

11.18A development opportunity has arisen with the closure of two large facilities in this area; La Scala Bingo (No.79) and the Employment Service Offices (No. 83)

11.19 Whilst these sites are currently in different ownerships and may come forward for redevelopment individually, the Council considers that a comprehensive redevelopment package should a better outcome than piecemeal development on this site given its constrained vehicular access and differential heights.



La Scala Bingo which has approval for residential redevelopment plus Cheshire Building Society and former Job Centre offices (to right) which together present large development opportunity,

11.20 The Council expect any development proposals within this area to have given full regard to the possibilities for a comprehensive development package involving the wider area. To this end developers will be expected to have consulted fully with the Council, and other relevant stakeholders, prior to submission of development proposals to ensure that their proposals represent the most efficient use of this site.

Implementation.

11.21 The council will rigorously exercise its development control powers to ensure proposals for new development accord with the approved policies of the development plan. Policies BE1, BE2 and BE3 of the Halton UDP require that

development must be designed to a high standard having due regard to its setting.

HIGH STREET POLICY: HS5

42 High Street represents a development opportunity. The Council will support proposals for the re-use or redevelopment of this site. The site presents a number of challenges that any proposals for redevelopment must address. Redevelopment proposals will be expected to:

- a) present an active frontage onto High Street;
- b) present an improved aspect, possibly incorporating an active ground floor frontage to the important pedestrian route along Granville Street;
- c) relate well to the buildings and redevelopment on the opposite side of High Street in the Canal Quarter;
- d) ensure that any rear servicing area from Loch Street is suitably screened from public view; and
- e) if possible and appropriate, provide a pedestrian route from Granville Street to Loch Street.

11.22 No. 42 High Street is a reasonably sized, 3 storey building, previously occupied by ProntaPrint, which presents elevations to High Street, Granville Street and the central area (Somersfield) car park. The site lies within the Primary Shopping Area as defined in the Halton UDP, and would appear suitable for a number of retail or commercial uses.

11.23 Should the site come forward for redevelopment, any proposals must be carefully designed to maximise the sites location and fulfil its potential.

Implementation.

11.24 The council will rigorously exercise its development control powers to ensure proposals for new development accord with the approved policies of the development plan. Policies BE1, BE2

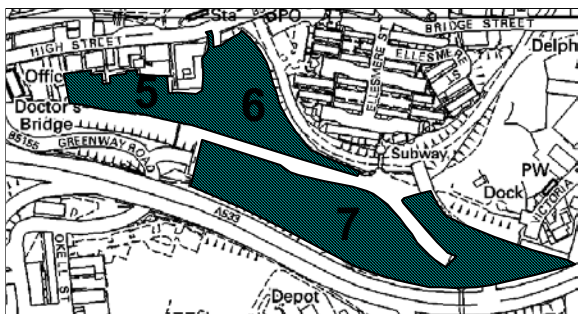
and BE3 of the Halton UDP require that development must be designed to a high standard having due regard to its setting.

12 Canal Quarter

12.1 The Canal Quarter straddles the Bridgewater Canal to the immediate south of the Old Town town centre including the backland area to the rear of High Street.

12.2 The area includes 3 areas allocated variously for retail and leisure uses in Halton UDP;

- Site 5: Rear of High Street.
- Site 6: Camden Gardens.
- Site 7: Crosville Bus Depot Site.



UDP Retail and Leisure Allocations

12.3 Site 6 now houses the multi-award winning Brindley Arts Centre, which offers a wide ranging programme of events including live theatre, music, participatory workshops and art-house cinema. The building respects the site topography (which slopes from the south) presenting its main entrance to the approach from High Street and including an upper level terrace café overlooking the canal to the north. The area between the Brindley and High Street is occupied by a large grassed mound that has been contoured create an informal amphitheatre facing the main entrance, but otherwise acts as a visual barrier, hiding the Brindley from much of the centre. A neon art installation mounted on top of the Brindley is mirrored by a similar street installation on High Street to provide a visual reference.



Matching Neon Installations on Roof of Brindley Arts Centre and mirrored opposite High Street vehicular access

12.4 Sites 5 and 7 represent key development opportunity sites for the delivery of the main strategic objectives of this Town Centre Strategy and will support wider aims and strategies of the Council and its strategic partners.

12.5 Development will be expected to build upon the successes of the Brindley Art Centre, fully utilise the environmental and leisure opportunities presented by the canal and contribute to the revitalisation of the centre as a whole.

12.6 In 2005 the Council undertook a developer competition to select a preferred development partner to devise and implement a suitable programme of redevelopment to rejuvenate the Canal Quarter, introducing new uses and creating a quality, well-connected environment where people will want to live, work and visit.

CANAL QUARTER POLICY: CQ1

The Council will work closely with its selected development partners, (or their successors) to achieve a comprehensive redevelopment of the Canal Quarter area to the benefit of the Old Town and the borough as a whole.

12.7 The Canal Quarter is the principal development in the Old Town and has the ability to build upon recent successes and transform the centre into a prime leisure and evening destination for the wider community, and together with the Deck development rejuvenate the centre by introducing new residential populations in the heart of the Old Town.

Implementation.

12.8 To be managed by the Council's Major Projects Team.

CANAL QUARTER POLICY: CQ2

The Council will, where necessary and appropriate, seek to use its compulsory purchase powers to ensure that land ownership constraints do not hinder the implementation and delivery of the comprehensive redevelopment of the Canal Quarter area.

12.9 The Canal Quarter is the principal development in the Old Town and is key to the delivery of the overall strategy and vision for the centre. The majority of the land holdings required for its delivery are in Council ownership, however, where necessary, the Council or its development partner may need to acquire additional land to fully realise the development. Where this cannot be secured through negotiation, the Council may seek to exercise its powers to compulsorily purchase the necessary land.

Implementation.

12.10 To be managed by the Council's Major Projects Team.

CANAL QUARTER POLICY: CQ3

The Canal Quarter development will be expected to contribute towards a comprehensive access and parking study for the centre as a whole and address the resulting issues in the detailed design and implementation of the scheme.

12.11 The redevelopment of the north bank sites, in particular which currently houses a large public car park, will have significant impact upon overall parking provision within the centre.

12.12 Issues regarding the attractiveness and availability of parking provision within the centre have already been identified. In order to maintain and improve the attractiveness of the centre as a retail and leisure destination it is important that it is perceived as convenient and accessible.

Implementation.

12.13 The Council will seek developer contributions towards an access and parking study for the Centre.

CANAL QUARTER POLICY: CQ4

The Canal Quarter development will be expected to provide parking spaces in accordance with Highway Authority standards. The development will be required to retain, or make alternative provision for a number of spaces throughout the construction phase. The number and location of such spaces will be informed by the Access and Parking Study and agreed with the Highway Authority prior to any existing spaces being lost to development.

12.14 The Canal Quarter north of the canal (Sites 5) currently houses a Council owned public car park providing approximately 190 free parking spaces. Originally provided as a temporary use over 20 years ago and subsequently extended, the spaces are well used and the proposed redevelopment proposals will need to address any issues around the loss or replacement of this provision, including during the construction phase.

Implementation.

12.15 The Council will rigorously exercise its development control powers to ensure proposals for new development accord

with the approved policies of the development plan.

CANAL QUARTER POLICY: CQ5

The Council envisages a co-ordinated comprehensive approach to the delivery of the Canal Quarter scheme. The development will be expected to adhere to the development principles detailed in the ‘Runcorn Old Town Centre Canal Quarter Developer Competition Brief (January 2005) and must be of the highest standard of design, including imaginative and contemporary architectural styles that incorporates ‘iconic’ landmark buildings. Key elements of the scheme include:

- a) Extensive public realm improvements centred on the Brindley Arts Centre including improvements to the northern towpath, creation of a piazza / public square and removal /reconfiguration of the ‘mound’.
- b) North bank commercial and residential development. This will incorporate leisure and A3 (food & drink) uses originally envisaged being located on south bank site.
- c) deliver a new activity node based around the Brindley Arts Centre forming the southern extent of the new corridor of activity running via Public Hall Street towards the Promenade at The Deck. A suitable scheme of street lighting for the corridor and other improved pedestrian routes should be included.
- d) New or improved pedestrian footbridge linkages between the northern and southern canal banks.
- e) South Bank development. By relocating the intended leisure and A3 (food & drink) uses to the north bank, the south bank area is

expected to accommodate mostly residential development possibly with a hotel use included at the eastern end of the site, and a day nursery at the western end. The site should be self sufficient in terms of parking provision.

- 12.16 The delivery of the above elements may overlap or run concurrently, however it is expected that development of the southern site will not be progressed until substantive progress has been made on the delivery of the northern site.

Implementation.

- 12.17 A full phasing regime will be conditioned as part of the formal planning application process.

CANAL QUARTER POLICY: CQ6

All residential units within the Canal Quarter Development should be achieve the Code for Sustainable Homes, 4 star level or higher.

- 12.18 The Council considers the Canal Quarter to be an important flagship development. As part of the commitment to securing the highest quality of contemporary design across the site, residential units will be expected to achieve a minimum of 4 stars under the Code for Sustainable Homes Standard.
- 12.19 The previous EcoHomes Standard is being replaced with the Code for Sustainable Homes. The new system scores residential units under 6 categories;
 - Energy / CO2
 - Water
 - Materials
 - Surface Water Run-off
 - Waste
 - Pollution
- 12.20 Points are awarded under each category and an overall star rating awarded (1~6). All dwellings on the site will be

expected to achieve a minimum of 4 stars with some units possibly scoring 5 or 6.

Implementation.

12.21 Achievement of a 4 star award under the Code for Sustainable Homes standard will be conditioned as part of the formal planning application process.

CANAL QUARTER POLICY: CQ7

The Canal Quarter development must create safe, attractive pedestrian and cycle routes through the site connecting to the wider pedestrian and cycle networks. Of particular importance are the linkages between :

a) The Brindley Arts Centre to Church St. / Public Hall St.:

The development is expected to create the southern section of the proposed 'corridor' linking key activity nodes at the Brindley Arts Centre towards the Promenade (via Public Hall Street)

b) Greenway Rd. to Granville St.:

The development is expected to create an attractive accessible route between, Greenway Road, across the canal (possibly utilising the existing footbridge) through the northern site to Granville Street.

c) Greenway Rd. to Alcock St.:

The development is expected to create an attractive accessible route between, Greenway Road, across the canal (possibly utilising the existing footbridge) through the northern site to Alcock Street.

d) Devonshire Place ~ Leiria Way:

The existing towpath along the northern side of the Bridgewater Canal should be respected and

where appropriate improved to form a safe, attractive and accessible pedestrian route for walkers and cyclists. Access to the towpath and the wider pedestrian and cycle network should be maximised wherever possible.



Vehicular access to Canal Quarter from High Street.



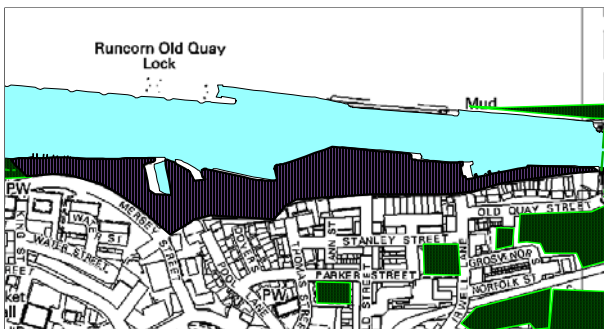
Existing pedestrian through routes which will need to be improved as part of development.

Implementation.

12.22 The Council will rigorously exercise its development control powers to ensure proposals for new development accord with the approved policies of the development plan.

13 Promenade and ‘The Deck’

- 13.1 The Old Town enjoys a large waterside frontage along the southern bank of the Manchester Ship Canal with the River Mersey beyond. Unfortunately access between and views through from the main retail and activity areas to the promenade and beyond are largely blocked by intervening development.
- 13.2 A ½ mile stretch of the canal frontage has been developed into the popular and well used Promenade, a linear walkway and park extending from The Deck site off Mersey Street in the east to the new Halton (Runcorn) College to the west of Dukesfield.



Bryant Homes “The Deck” Residential Development

- 13.3 Bryant Homes has recently commenced⁸ development of ‘The Deck’, a residential development comprising of 466 waterside apartments with 3 units for complementary commercial uses. This development represents a key opportunity for the delivery of the main strategic objectives of this Town Centre Strategy and will support wider aims and strategies of the Council and its strategic partners. The development will transform a previously industrial site affording no public access to the waterfront with a high quality, desirable residential development offering panoramic views of the Silver Jubilee Bridge and across the River Mersey. Together with the redevelopment at the Canal Quarter, this will introduce a

significant boost to the walk-in population available to the Old Town helping transform the image of the area, to become a highly desirable residential location.

- 13.4 By the inclusion of complementary commercial uses within the western end of The Deck site, the potential exists to create a northern node of activity to anchor the proposed new activity axis running south via Public Hall Street to High Street and the Canal Quarter / Brindley area.
- 13.5 Currently there is a lack of connections between the waterfront and the other town centre areas with Mersey Street acting as a town centre by-pass for traffic to and from Dukesfield & the new Waterside Place and Maritime Quay housing developments.

PROMENADE POLICY: TPI

The Council will support development proposals that maximise public access to the Promenade and the waterfront, enhancing their usage for leisure and as a safe, accessible pedestrian and cycling corridor.

- 13.6 The Promenade and waterfront, with their views over the Mersey and the Silver Jubilee Bridge represents a valuable environmental asset to the Old Town centre. With the location of the College and new residential developments to the west, the areas importance as an attractive pedestrian route to and past the Old Town is also enhanced.

Implementation.

- 13.7 The Council will rigorously exercise its development control powers to ensure proposals for new development accord with the approved policies of the development plan.

⁸ The Deck, construction commenced 2006

PROMENADE POLICY: TP2

Any proposals for redevelopment on land between the rear of Church Street and the Promenade will be expected to contribute positively towards increasing the pedestrian permeability of the area, establishing clear, legible and attractive pedestrian through routes.

- 13.8 Pedestrian linkages between the Promenade and Church Street are particularly poor. The existing intervening development includes elements such as undercroft parking

areas that present a strong vertical barrier to pedestrian movement.

Any proposals involving significant redevelopment within this area will be expected to address this deficiency.

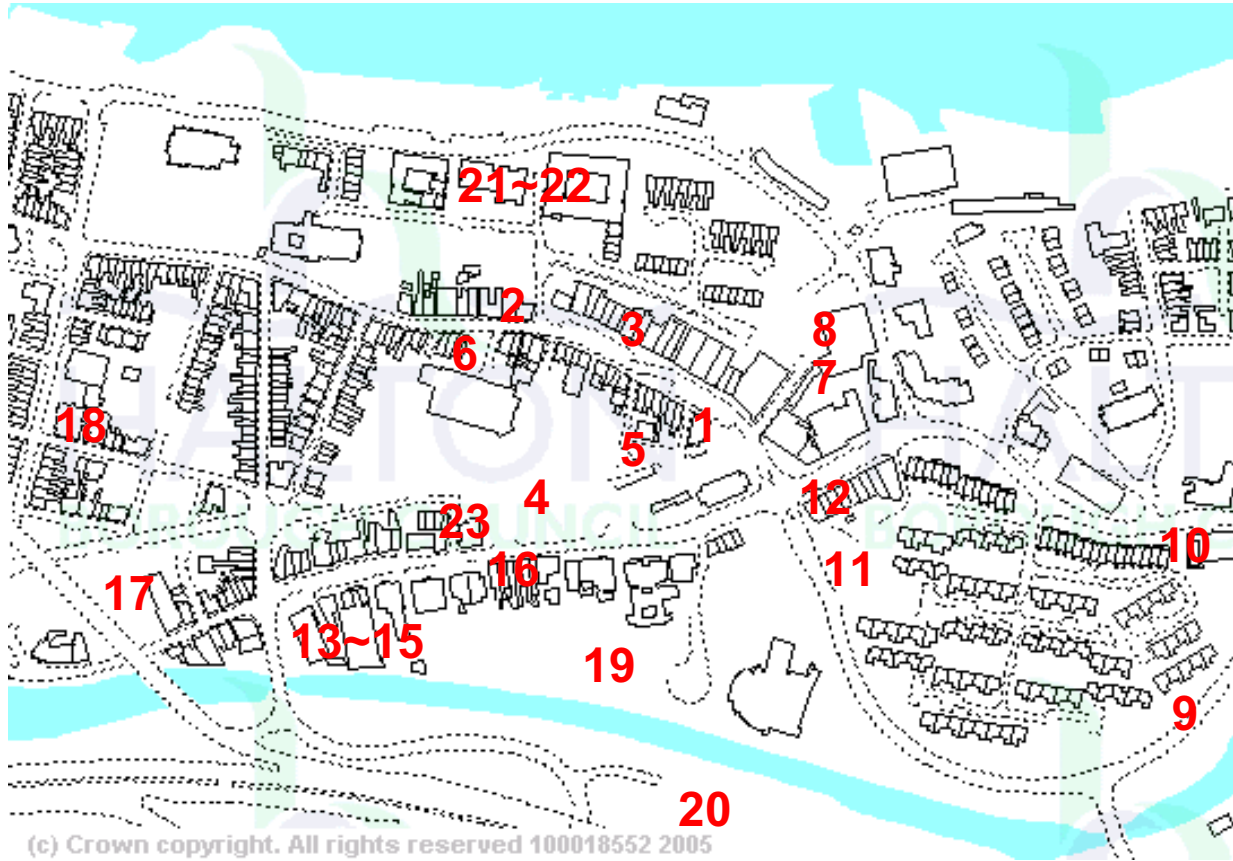
Implementation.

- 13.9 The Council will rigorously exercise its development control powers to ensure proposals for new development accord with the approved policies of the development plan.

14 Summary of Site Specific Opportunities

14.1 The preceding sections identify a number specific sites believed to have development potential, either now or in the future. The following table presents a quick summary of each site

together with a brief assessment of the potential future use and any resultant policy implications.



SITE REF.	LOCATION	POTENTIAL	TIME FRAME	POLICY ISSUES
1	19~23 Church Street	Former Senga Furnishings Unit. Attractive unit in need of repair. Potential for A1 (retail) or A3 (Food & drink) refurbishment. or redevelopment.	Short / Medium Term	Policy CS3
2	48~50 Church Street	Shapers Hair unit with outstanding consent for demolition and redevelopment to form 2 no. ground floor retail units with 10 apartments across 3 floors above.	Short Term	Policy CS5
3	28 Church Street	Vacant former Superior Saving Home Furnishings. Vacant unit within Primary Retail Area requiring re-tenanting with A1 retailer.	Short Term	UDP Policy TC8 presumption against non-A1 retail use as would create more than 2 adjacent non-A1 units.
4	High Street (between entrances to bus station & Somerfield car park)	Currently vacant central area redevelopment site, available and suitable for a number of uses. Previously envisaged as being used for a drive-thru restaurant, this site is better suited to a larger built form, with retail / office or community uses to the ground floor with opportunity for residential or offices above.	Short Term	Policies CA1 and CA3

SITE REF.	LOCATION	POTENTIAL	TIME FRAME	POLICY ISSUES
5	Alcock Street / Bus Station	The area to the rear of the bus station and new indoor market hall a poor use of space and an untidy gateway to passengers arriving by bus. A reconfigured site could potentially release additional land for inclusion with site 6	Short Term	Policies CA2 and CA3
6	Church Street / Loch Street	Corner site, currently in use as informal car park. Suitable for A3 (restaurant) or A2/B1 office use or A1 retail.	Short Term	Policy RS2
7	Sefton House / Public Hall Court, Public Hall Street	Currently in mixed commercial office type use, area has potential to form heart of new leisure / cultural activity corridor between Brindley & The Deck. The buildings appear suitable for conversion to A3 (café bar) use with potential for rear courtyard use as enclosed open air eating & drinking area.	Medium Term / Long Term	Policy BS2
8	Above Kwik Fit, northern end Public Hall Street	Currently in mixed commercial office type use, building is within potential heart of new leisure / cultural activity corridor between the Brindley & The Deck. The building appears suitable for conversion to A3 (café bar) type use with potential for entrance courtyard use as semi-enclosed open air eating & drinking area.	Medium Term / Long Term	Policy BS2
9	Bridge Street ~ Leiria Way Busway	This section of busway offers little value in reducing bus journey times and subject to transport studies, should be considered to be a potential development site. Broadly linear, abutting existing residential uses and offering over 200m of waterside frontage it is suitable for residential development. (see below)	Medium / Long Term	Policy BS4
10	Bridge Street Petrol Filling Station (PFS) site	A former PFS within a defined primarily residential area. Site has so far struggled to find a suitable after use. Amalgamation with the adjacent busway site (12) could offset remediation costs and create a development opportunity of approximately 1 Ha.	Medium / Long Term	Policy BS4
11	Leiria Way Car Park	Site currently well used car park, but removal of 'mound' opposite and introduction of new uses by opening up of Canal Quarter could make this an attractive future development site (perhaps linked to redevelopment of adjacent block fronting High Street (14).	Long Term	Policy SP21 and BS3
12	High Street (Gym ~ PO)	Unappealing 1960's style building currently fully let, but thought to have redevelopment potential. Sloping site could allow for unit shops to High Street with large space user fronting rear car park & Leiria Way above.	Long Term	Policy BS3
13	La Scala Bingo Hall, High Street	Site has permission for redevelopment with residential apartment blocks located behind a commercial frontage. Potential link with 16.	Short Term	Policy HS4
14	Job Centre Building, High Street	Site is currently being marketed. Potential exists for amalgamation with adjacent La Scala Bingo (15) and Cheshire Building Society sites to create a larger, more developable land parcel.	Short / Medium Term	Policy HS4
15	59~69 High Street	An attractive building(s) in a poor state of repair. Future dependant upon emerging proposals for Canal Quarter site to its rear.	Short / Medium Term	Policy HS4
16	87~89 High Street	Currently vacant buildings between High Street and canal towpath. Could be suitable for residential use or accommodate development associated with Canal Basin initiatives.	Short / Long Term	Policy HS3
17	Top Locks Car Park	Future use dependant upon Town Centre Access and Parking Review. Could accommodate development associated with Canal Basin initiatives.	Long Term	

SITE REF.	LOCATION	POTENTIAL	TIME FRAME	POLICY ISSUES
18	Public Library / Community Centre / Former College Annexe, Egerton Street	The Council is currently investigating the relocation of the library from its current peripheral location to a more central site within the Town Centre. This relocation creates the opportunity for amalgamation with the adjacent buildings and public car park to create a large infill conversion or redevelopment site for residential or other use.	Short / Medium Term	Policy RS3
19	Canal Quarter (North)	Backland development site between High Street and canal. Preferred development partner selected and mixed use scheme incorporating cultural, leisure, residential and retail uses being designed. Development tied to Canal Quarter (South) site.	Short / Medium Term	Policies CQ1, CQ2, CQ3, CQ4, CQ5 and CQ6
20	Canal Quarter (South)	Development site between canal and Daresbury Expressway. Preferred development partner selected and mixed use scheme incorporating residential, hotel and day-nursery uses being designed. Development tied to Canal Quarter (North) site.	Medium / Long Term	Policies CQ1, CQ2, CQ3, CQ4, CQ5 and CQ6
21	Belvedere House	Current homeless persons hostel use being reviewed. Uninspired building with undercroft parking on attractively located site with views over the Mersey estuary. Potential housing land redevelopment site.	Medium Term	Policy TP2
22	Brunswick House / Chadwick House	1960's residential tower block and 1970's elderly housing. Low rise block uninspired building with undercroft parking on attractively located site with views over the Mersey estuary. Potential housing land redevelopment site.	Long Term	Policy TP2
23	42 High Street	Former Prona Print unit.	Short Term	Policy HS5

Appendix A: Contacts and Useful Information

General information

Further information relating to the purpose of the intended SPD:

To access a downloadable copy of the Planning Policy Guidance notes or Planning Policy Statements detailed in Section 2, or for further general planning information visit the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) website at www.communities.gov.uk or for a hard copy contact the Department for Communities and Local Government by telephone on 0870 1226 236.

To access a downloadable copy of 'By Design, Urban Design in the planning system: Towards Better Practice' and 'Safer Places', documents relating to urban renewal, urban design and creating sustainable communities, and general planning information visit the Department for Communities and Local Government website at www.communities.gov.uk. 'Places, Streets & Movement. A companion guide to Design Bulletin 32' can be purchased from the DCLG for a cost of £20.00, quoting ISBN 1 85112 113 7.

Investing in the High Street can be purchased from the Civic Trust for £25.00. The Civic Trust, Winchester House, 259-269 Old Marylebone Road, London NW1 5RA.

Going to Town: Improving Town Centre Access can be downloaded free of charge from the National Retail Planning Forum (NRPF) at www.nrpf.org. A hard copy can also be purchased online at the same website address.

Vital and Viable Town Centres: Meeting the Challenge, is out of print. However, a photocopy of the original document can be purchased from The Stationery Office online at www.tso.co.uk or by phone: 0870 600 5522, Fax: 0870 600 5533 or email: customer.services@tso.co.uk.

Further information on the Secured By Design initiative, including details relating to the standards required for a development to

receive Secured By Design accreditation may be found at www.securedbydesign.com

For further information regarding any development which may affect a historic building or conservation area 'Building In Context' will be able to provide advice. It is available from English Heritage and the Commission of Architecture and the Built Environment and can be downloaded free of charge from <http://www.cabe.org.uk> or for a hard copy contact English Heritage at: Customer Services Department, PO Box 569, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN2 2YP, Tel: 0870 333 1181, Fax: 01793 414 926

Further information on the Halton UDP can be found online at www.halton.gov.uk or by phone on 0151 424 2061, email at forward.planning@halton.gov.uk or by post to Environmental and Regulatory Services, Environment Directorate, Halton Borough Council, Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn, WA7 2GW.

You can find out about the planning system and how it works at www.planningportal.gov.uk.

Local information

For advice relating to submitting a planning application, for pre-application discussion or to purchase a copy of this SPD or any other SPD contact:

Planning and Policy
Environment Directorate
Halton Borough Council
Rutland House
Halton Lea
Runcorn
WA7 2GW

Tel: 0151 907 8300

Fax: 0151 471 7304

Email: forward.planning@halton.gov.uk

Website: www.halton.gov.uk

If further highways or transport information is required, please contact the:

Highways Division
Environment Directorate
Halton Borough Council
Rutland House
Halton Lea
Runcorn
WA7 2GW

Tel: 0151 424 2061

Fax: 0151 471 7521

Website: www.halton.gov.uk

If further access information is required, or information relating to building control please contact the;

Building Control Consultancy
Environment Directorate
Halton Borough Council
Rutland House
Halton Lea
Runcorn
WA7 2GW

Tel: 0151 907 8300.

Email: building.control@halton.gov.uk

Website: www.halton.gov.uk

Appendix B: SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<p><u>Attraction</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dominant convenience centre within its catchment. • New Somerfield anchor store. • High proportion of independent / specialist shops (<i>a unique selling point</i>). • Range of professional and personal services (estate agents / hairdressers etc.). • Range of community facilities. <p><u>Accessibility</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved central car park. • Free parking. • On-street parking in main retail areas. • New bus interchange. • Public Transportation node / interchange. • Number of bus services (23 routes including 9 high frequency services). • Presence of nearby main line train station. • Good access by foot & bicycle <p><u>Amenity</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly good quality environment. • Human scale of centre. • Attractive location (e.g. canal / river / bridges). 	<p><u>Attraction</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor representation of national multiples. • Limited retail offer. • Limited leisure / entertainment offer. • Lack of prominence. • Lack of brand / image. • Limited catchment / lack of market penetration into New Town areas. • Cinema located at Halton Lea. • Few restaurants. • Over representation of service and specialist outlets generating infrequent visits. • Limited amount & variety of office / business space. <p><u>Accessibility</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confusing traffic circulation pattern / junctions / busway etc. • Poor signage • Barriers to access; canal / expressway <p><u>Amenity</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor perception of night-time offer. • Dominance of drinking establishments. • Poor perception of crime / violence. • Brindley Arts Centre hidden from view. • Undeveloped sites / semi-derelict buildings.
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<p><u>Attraction</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Brindley Arts Centre. • Remaining capacity to support additional retail floorspace (foodstore). • Success of new housing developments (Canal Street / Riverside) proving market. • Proposed The Deck redevelopment. • Canal Quarter redevelopment. • Addition of new leisure opportunities. • Bridgewater Canal proposals (Runcorn Locks and new Cheshire Loop) <p><u>Accessibility</u>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canal Quarter redevelopment to include improved parking provision. • Peripheral developments to fund pedestrian route improvements. <p><u>Amenity</u>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redevelopment proposals to improve environment of Canal Quarter / The Deck and linkages to town centre. 	<p><u>Attraction</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased competition – Halton Lea. • Increased competition – Widnes. • Increased competition – Other. • Internet shopping (threat to specialist retailers). • Need to generate and maintain additional footfall. <p><u>Accessibility</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mersey Gateway (new river crossing). • Availability of short-stay shoppers parking (issue re. commuter parking). • New town centre residential areas. • Concentration of A3 (hot food takeaways) along certain frontages. <p><u>Amenity</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private sector funding needed to maintain SRB aided improvements (shop fronts etc.) • Need to improve vitality and increase investor confidence to secure fresh investment.

Appendix C: Update of 1997 Town Centre Strategy

The 1997 Town Centre Strategy contained proposals for a number of actions. The following table summarises those proposals and groups them according to the level of success in their implementation over the period 1997 to date.

1997 Town Centre Strategy : Summary of Proposals.

ACHIEVED	PARTIALLY ACHIEVED	NOT ACHIEVED
Proposal 1.1 : Maintain range of retail provision on Church St. / Regent Rd through LPA functions. (ONGOING)	Proposal 1.6 : Introduce new leisure facilities including waterborne / waterside uses.	Proposal 1.5 : Introduce new business uses into centre / new units / upper floor uses
Proposal 1.2 : Introduce new retail uses into central area.	Proposal 1.7 : Enhance existing residential areas and develop new housing (Dukesfield / The Deck) (ONGOING)	Proposal 1.8 : Investigate relocation of Library into the centre (ONGOING)
Proposal 1.3 : Redevelop the site of existing covered market.	Proposal 2.5 : Encourage British Rail improve Runcorn Station and increase patronage	Proposal 2.1c : Provide new access road to service area behind Church Street.
Proposal 1.4 : Maintain High St. as business district through LPA functions (ONGOING)	Proposal 2.7 : Remove barriers to pedestrian movement and disabled access	Proposal 3.1 : Prepare an urban design guide to ensure retention of local identity
Proposal 2.1a : Provide new road link from expressway via busway.	Proposal 2.8 : Incorporate cycle access in new circulatory system and provide cycle parking	Proposal 3.4 : Create a theme for the design of new street furniture.
Proposal 2.1b : Introduce new road circulation pattern to ease congestion.	Proposal 2.9b Increase attractiveness of car parks ensuring security by design.	Proposal 3.7 : Install floral displays and hanging baskets throughout centre
Proposal 2.2 Remodel Church Street to reduce pedestrian / vehicle conflict.	Proposal 2.10 Improve signage to and within the centre including sign posts, maps and info boards.	Proposal 3.9 : Improve key gateways at; Church St/High St.; Devonshire Place; from car parks; into market area.
Proposal 2.3 Remodel busway removing physical barrier & creating developable land.	Proposal 3.2 Enhance and review street cleansing & maintenance plan	Proposal 4.2 : Create town centre guide to be included on public information boards a theme for the design of new street furniture
Proposal 2.4 Improve busway with revised shelters / information displays etc.	Proposal 3.5 : Encourage re-use of redundant buildings and vacant or underused land	Proposal 4.3 : Provide training for shop staff in customer care.
Proposal 4.1 : Create a Town Centre Working Group to deal with day-to-day issues	Proposal 3.6 : Improve landscaping and planting (inc. on Church St.) & development sites	Proposal 4.4 : Promote entertainment events, specialist market days and canal based leisure events
Proposal 4.1 : Create a Town Centre Working Group to deal with day-to-day issues	Proposal 3.8 : Improve security including use of CCTV	Proposal 4.5 : Prepare a marketing strategy
Proposal 2.9a : Increase parking availability through management of long-stay parking		

The 1997 Town Centre Strategy contained proposals for a number of specific development opportunity sites. The following table summarises those site-specific proposals together with progress to date and future direction.

1997 Town Centre Strategy : Summary of Site Specific Proposals.

SITES	PROGRESS	FUTURE
Site 1 : Central Area	Area has been largely reconfigured and redeveloped in line with stated development principals. Issues not addressed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedestrian links Church St. / High St. • Pedestrian links to Regent Rd. • Rear servicing for Regent Rd. units • New multiuse Town Square 	Development of remaining land will need to address outstanding issues, particularly regarding pedestrian linkages.
Site 2 : Crosville Bus Depot	No development on site. Permission for pub / restaurant use granted. Site included in new Canal Quarter joint development partner competition.	Site included within Canal Quarter redevelopment scheme. Predominately residential use envisaged for this site.
Site 3 : 59-69 High Street & land to the rear	No development on site. Some re-use of ground floor units.. Site included in new Canal Quarter joint development partner competition.	Site included within Canal Quarter redevelopment scheme. Predominately commercial or community use envisaged for this site.
Site 4 : The Deck Yard	Previous use abandoned. Planning permission granted for 466 residential apartments.	Site currently under construction.
Site 5 : Dukesfield	Environmental improvements implemented and new (private sector) housing developments provided at Waterside Place and Maritime Quay.	Development opportunities largely taken up. Library / former College Annexe site on Waterloo Road (has potential for residential redevelopment.
Site 6 : College Campus	Halton College now occupy the new development on this site. Pedestrian linkages to town centre but no road route yet provided.	Site developed for stated use.
Site 7 : Camden Gardens	Brindley Arts Centre developed on site. A multi-award winning building and facility that is to act as a focus for wider regeneration centred on the Canal Quarter.	Site developed for stated use.
Old Police Station	Building refurbished and now occupied by Halton Strategic Partnership.	Site in active use.
Retail Units (Princess Street/ Church Street)	Units reoccupied (Charity shop).	Site in active use.
Retail Units (Various)	Most recent trader survey indicates only 2 units were vacant at both 1999 and 2005. Other vacancies have arisen which provide development opportunities.	

Appendix D: Summary of Policies in Connection with Planning Obligations

Policy Number	Policy Content
Transport Accessibility	
Strategic Policy: SP8	Cycle access
Strategic Policy: SPI0	Access and Parking Study
Canal Quarter: CQ10	Access and Parking Study
Strategic Policy: SPI7	Cycle parking
Linkages	
Strategic Policy: SP9	Improve linkages
Local Environment	
Strategic Policy:SPI4	Provision of Public Art
Strategic Policy:SPI9	Provision of CCTV
Functionality	
Strategic Policy:SPI5	Provision of Street Furniture
Strategic Policy:SPI8	Provision of Signage

NB. The above table acts as a checklist that illustrates specific policies within this SPD that refer to the use of planning obligations. However, it must be recognised that, as such, it is not exhaustive in terms of geographical location or uses for which obligations may be sought by Halton Borough Council.

Halton Borough Council

Runcorn Old Town,
Town Centre Strategy
Draft Supplementary Planning Document

Statement of Consultation

Environmental & Regulatory Services
Environment Directorate
Halton Borough Council
Rutland House
Halton Lea
Runcorn
WA7 2GW

Introduction

Under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 it is a requirement to prepare and publish a Consultation Statement for a range of planning policy documents, including Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). This is a reflection of Government's desire to "strengthen community and stakeholder involvement in the development of local communities". In due course the Council will be adopting a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), that will set out how the public will be consulted on new planning policy and significant planning applications. Once the SCI is adopted, all such planning documents will be required to conform with its provisions. This Consultation Statement has been prepared in advance of the SCI, but aims to reflect the intentions of Government planning guidance for reporting on community involvement in the plan making process.

This Statement of Consultation sets out the details of the Pre-Partnership and Partnership Consultation conducted by Halton Borough Council in relation to the Town Centre Strategy SPD for Runcorn Old Town. It is being made available during the formal period of public consultation, alongside the Draft Runcorn Old Town SPD and the Sustainability Appraisal Report, in accordance with Regulation 17 (1) of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004.

Pre~Partnership Consultation

Pre~Partnership consultation period: 9th September 2005 ~ 20th September 2005

Date of consideration of representations: November 2005

Note – All paragraph and page references relate to the numbers as set out in the Pre~Partnership Consultation Draft

Consultee	Date and method of response	Comments	Response incorporated into Partnership Draft.
Phil Watts Operational Director - Planning	08/09/2005 E-mail	Change references in the documents to Forward Planning Section with EH and P Department.	Reference updated
Steve Rimmer Highways (Section Leader)	09/09/2005 E-mail	Street names need checking (e.g. Regent Road is Regent Street and Leiria Street is Leiria Way)	Street names corrected
Sarah Lucas ; collated comments for Major Projects	15/09/2005 E-mail	The promotion of the area, what does the area have to offer that are not available in other locations?	No changes "The Vision" for the centre set out in Chapter 5 expressly addresses this with references throughout the remainder of the document.
Major Projects		Accessibility and signage from the Expressway – although access has been improved with the addition of Leiria Way it is still unclear what the Old Town has to offer apart from the Brindley.	Lack of prominence / brand / image identified as weakness in SWOT (pg12 and Appendix B)
Major Projects		A design palette for the area may be appropriate ensuring that there is a co-ordinated approach to future developments in the Old Town, which in turn link all the sub-areas.	Comment noted
Major Projects		Use of gateway features (not only in Church Street but all the sub-areas) which clearly define the area that people are in.	Comment noted
Major Projects		Car parking – this will need to be carefully planned as there are already issues relating to parking provision in Runcorn Old Town.	Agreed. Strategic Policy SPI0 outlines a requirement for any significant proposals to contribute to an overall parking and accessibility study. This should not however be taken to be a ban on development on all parking areas. Need for Parking Partnership included
Major Projects		Signage – there should be clear signage directing people to the different facilities and areas in the Old Town.	Agreed. Town Centre Manager believed to be implementing additional signage.

Consultee	Date and method of response	Comments	Response incorporated into Partnership Draft.
David Hall / Ian Boyd via Steve Eccles HBC Transportation	16/09/2005 E-mail	Welcome the references in the Strategy to the recognition that public transport plays an important role in terms of allowing people to access the town centre.	Comment noted and welcomed. The Strategy intends to acknowledge the importance of public transport to the centre and vice versa the centres importance as a transport node..
HBC Transportation		However the Strategy implies that the remnants of the busway act as a major barrier to movement and development in the town centre. Yet the Strategy fails to pick up on the fact that the A557 and the Bridge infrastructure also act as a major barrier separating the town centre from its immediate hinterland.	Strategy highlights problems associated with <u>original</u> unsympathetic busway. Busway removed from weaknesses in SWOT as barrier to accessibility. Para 4.5 specifically mentions the A557 and bridge approaches as acting as a “large impenetrable barrier between the Old Town and the surrounding residential areas”
HBC Transportation		The draft SPD should place greater emphasis on ensuring there are better linkages between the different zones within the town centre by walking / cycling and public transport. It is suggested that as with the other draft SPD's, the Runcorn Town Centre Strategy contains a Movement and Linkages Strategy as an integral part of the Plan.	Document will contain maps / plans showing key movement corridors and linkages between zones and connections out to the wider surrounds. Each sub-area chapter covers access and linkages in detail. Further advice required from Transportation on detailed requirements for incorporating a Movement & Linkages Strategy or linking to a stand alone doc.
HBC Transportation		For the purposes of the SPD it is suggested that the Bridgewater Campus and regeneration area be included as a zone within the town centre. The Campus has an important influence on the continued vitality of the town centre and links between the town centre and the College site are a vital component of the SPD.	The Bridgewater Campus is divorced from the town centre being in excess of 1 Km walk from the town centre along non-direct routes of dubious attractiveness. The benefit of college (on such a remote isolated location) to the town centre is therefore questionable. Will increase cross-referencing to UDP Greenways policies

Consultee	Date and method of response	Comments	Response incorporated into Partnership Draft.
HBC Transportation		<p>The draft SPD raises important issues surrounding the design and operation of the existing Bus Station within Runcorn Town Centre.</p> <p>Based on existing levels of use and plans for improved bus services as set out in the new Halton Bus Strategy there is the need for six bus stands and a coach / layover bay at the site. The Bus Station needs to be more carefully integrated into the main land uses and zones within the town centre.</p> <p>For example the main facilities within the town centre (including the Bridgewater Campus site) by a new high quality shuttle bus service (operated by environmentally friendly low emission buses).</p>	<p>Comments noted.</p> <p>Welcome that the bus station layout is to be revisited. Strategy raises this as an issue together with the adjacent Alcock Street service yard. Mention that a revised layout could free-up some additional Central area development land (9.18) was not intended to reduce the facilities for buses, but rather present an opportunity for the wider area to be addressed comprehensively to achieve the best design solution thereby enhancing provision for bus patrons and service providers. Provision of shuttle bus to campus only highlights how remote it is.</p>
HBC Transportation		<p>The main bus routes through the town centre should also be better managed through the introduction of appropriate bus priority and traffic management, to ensure the more efficient flow of bus services through the centre.</p>	<p>This would appear to be a strictly highway management issue. The only direct references within the SPD to the operation of bus routes are the opportunities to redevelop Bridge St./ Leiria Way busway and the reconfiguration of the bus station, neither intended to compromise services.</p>
HBC Transportation		<p>The Strategy should also include Runcorn main line station as an integral Gateway, and ways in which interchange between buses and trains should be carefully improved at the site.</p>	<p>Agree in principle but unclear how this can be successfully addressed in this SPD.</p>
HBC Transportation		<p>In general we should be examining how best to increase building densities around the Station and other public transport gateways. The Strategy should aim to encourage the development of new high-density mixed-use development around the rail and bus stations.</p>	<p>Agree in principle. SPD seeks to encourage town centre as a location for high density mixed use and residential development. Perhaps needs stronger cross-referencing to relevant UDP policies. Train Station outwith scope of document.</p>

Consultee	Date and method of response	Comments	Response incorporated into Partnership Draft.
HBC Transportation		Finally we support references to the need to improve public realm in the town centre and feel more could be done to increase the importance and attractiveness of the promenade area as a key amenity site and focus for leisure related land uses and development.	Comments noted and welcomed. Key part of this strategy is to improve connections as and wherever possible. Policy Bridge Street BSI seeks to maximise benefit of proposed new footpath linkage, Other improvements may be dependant upon redevelopment of intervening uses (covered under policy The Promenade TP2).
Gary Collins Operational Director Economic Development	21/09/2005 E-mail	I will not repeat any of the general comments that I have already given in the Widnes SPD comments except for how up to date is the retail capacity study on which the SPD is based.	The retail study is due to be updated as background for Development Plan Document work from next year. SPD's cannot allocate land and as such these documents deal with general principles and structure rather than allocating specific sites to address a specific demand issues.
Economic Development		[from Widnes comments] There is no mention of waste/bin storage. At the moment there are shops etc that actually leave their bins outside in public areas – often on land they do not own. This makes the area look grotty and leaves them open to arson. All bins should be stored within the cartilage of the premises and out of site/harms way. This needs to be a policy in all the town centre strategies. Actually, we should also be advocating that all businesses should look to address this now as part of creating a safe/pleasant environment.	Fully agree in principle. Planning can only seek to control this on new developments. Covered under Strategic Policy 13 Need to cross reference with UDP, Industrial / Commercial SPD. Litter / waste management for existing premises an issue for Town Centre Manager.
Economic Development		Para 2.9 there are lots of TC numbers but TC 3 and 7 are missing. I know you mention relevant – but it will make people wonder what they are about – can we just not add these in so the number sequence is not broken?	TC3 relates to Widnes and TC7 to Local Centres etc. and are therefore of no relevance to this SPD. TC9 is also omitted. Balance to be struck between comprehensiveness and making document overly long. Latter consideration prevails in this instance. No change.
Economic Development		[from Widnes comments] Para2.10. is not the SPD trying to implement the community strategy. Think you need more about CS, particularly the vision statement. Also under safe and attractive reference , there is an objective that states ' to manage town centres effectively' - needs to be referenced.	Comment noted. Text amended (as for other 2 centres)

Consultee	Date and method of response	Comments	Response incorporated into Partnership Draft.
Economic Development		[from Widnes comments] Para 3.3 who produced the guide?	Comment Noted. Published by ODPM as daughter document to PPG6. Source added to text.
Economic Development		Para. 2.12 should say when exec board approved the strategy.	Not yet been able to find out precise status of document or of Runcorn Map.
Economic Development		Also, what is the actual status of the Runcorn map as per page 5 – I know the waterside strategy went to exec board and was approved, but thought the more detailed plan was indicative only. We need to be clear if this is adopted policy that the SPD has to implement of merely context/guidance.	See above comment. Town Centre Strategy in broad conformity with Waterside Strategy (except for detailed disposition of land uses on Canal Quarter).
Economic Development		Para 4.1 there was some discussion a little while ago about not calling it Runcorn Old Town anymore (the acronym was not liked...ROT). Can we not call it 'Runcorn'?	Tricky issue. "ROT" not ideal acronym but Runcorn Town Centre leads to confusion with Halton Lea. "Old Town" being promoted in other documents such as on Canal Quarter. "Old Town" has potential to market USP as historic centre. Runcorn on the Mersey as previously used, too generic and not specific as to area covered. No change.
Economic Development		I would not be some emotive by saying it is the smallest <i>by far</i> . Better just to say smallest.	It is important to highlight that the Old Town is significantly smaller than Widnes / Halton Lea and is in effect a large neighbourhood centre with a specialist retail role. "By far" deleted.
Economic Development		Para 4.6. similar point – the use of the word relegated may not go down too well. Perhaps say as a consequence of Halton Lea the role of the town centre became	Text rephrased.
Economic Development		Para 4.16 Widnes survey???	Text corrected.
Economic Development		Para 4.20 can you confirm that the yield rose from 1.5% to 10% also, need to put the 6.3 % unemployment into context i.e. ILO rate. I am not convinced the ILO rate is lower than 6.3% - please check with research. Also need to put a date in for the % and who it is from (ONS?)	Rental Yield of 1.5% a typo. Corrected to read 11.5%. Uncertain source for unemployment figure. Reference removed.
Economic Development		Re the 23% who felt intimidated – is this generally or can we be more specific i.e. at night etc	Survey is not specific. Anything further would be speculation.

Consultee	Date and method of response	Comments	Response incorporated into Partnership Draft.
Economic Development		Para 4.21 need to justify more lacks identity given the millions spent on it.	Section summaries more detailed analysis in the SWOT (Appendix B). All the comments in the summary are warranted. Adding justification would only extend the section and focus more on the negatives. Law of diminishing returns applies?
Economic Development		It is here we come across the canal quarter for the first time. Although this is explained in some depth later, I think it is so important that it needs to be introduced earlier say a new 2.13.	Reference to Canal Quarter added under UDP TCI (Para 2.10)
Economic Development		Para. 4.26 I used the phrase vertical drinking in something I did not long ago – management team deleted it. You need to make your point with more subtlety	Phrase deleted and replaced with “traditional and music orientated pubs”
Economic Development		Para. 4.27 what was the % in 1999 to aid comparison.	Comparative figure added
Economic Development		General – do we need to consider charity shops specifically?	Charity shops are no longer considered to represent decline of a town centre. Previously these uses accepted very short leases and therefore would not invest in reasonable fascias / signage. This is no longer the case. Charity Shops fall within the main A1 Retail use class making it very difficult to provide a policy that could restrict their number. It should also be noted the Shop Front SPD should ensure that all shop fronts are of a high quality.
Economic Development		Vision- looks ok – gets the point over	Comments noted & welcomed
Economic Development		General – we need a coat of thinking on waste disposal. Big bins are all over the place looking bad and sometimes being burnt. Some are even stored on the pavement fronting Church Street – this must be stopped. All waste storage must be within curtilage and safe and preferably out of site.	Fully agree in principle. Planning can only seek to control this on new developments. Covered under Strategic Policy 13 Need to cross reference with UDP, Industrial / Commercial SPD. Litter / waste management for existing premises an issue for Town Centre Manager

Consultee	Date and method of response	Comments	Response incorporated into Partnership Draft.
Economic Development		Para. 8.6 explain the use of the term unobtrusive – what are you actually advocating – having them as contrasting to background? What?	The majority of the decorative fixtures <u>are</u> unobtrusive. As an example, at the corner of Church Street / King Street the most visible fixture is not the public art or the decorative lampposts but the pole for the CCTV camera. This is not advocating the use of larger or garish coloured fixtures, simply saying that at present they do not contribute significantly to an unified image or sense of place. References deleted in slimmed down descriptive text
Economic Development		Para.s 8.7 8.9 last part – the planning permission should have covered this?	The design of the central core redevelopment will have to have juggled several (sometimes competing) factors. Introducing such a large unit into a tight urban fabric has lead to severance of previous routes. This is not to say that this does not represent an acceptable or even the best possible design solution. It may have been desirable to improve surface finishes on surrounding streets, but unless failure to do this rendered the scheme unacceptable, it would not have been grounds for refusal. Also if the works were on land outside the applicants' control, they could not be covered by a planning condition. The SPD is right to highlight issue.

Consultee	Date and method of response	Comments	Response incorporated into Partnership Draft.
Economic Development		Para. 8.10 why are they so bad?- this is a council scheme so how did we make such a mistake?	<p>As stated in the paragraph, the most direct pedestrian routes are “through a rear service yard or down the side of an apparently semi-derelict building.”</p> <p>Alcock Street service yard and the intervening land have not been resurfaced (see photo 13) and do not present the most attractive or welcoming environment.</p> <p>The design of the bus station was compromised by the requirement to service the new market / retail unit development. The servicing requirements were probably not fully known as the units were semi-speculative and the end occupiers were not known.</p> <p>Descriptive text slimmed down, but issue addressed in Central Area Policies CA2, CA3 and CA4.</p>
Economic Development		Para. 8.14 – had not heard of the 2006 date- is this from the company?	<p>Date taken from Wetherspoons website. Website still showing projected opening date as 1st February 2006 (as at 24/11/05)</p> <p>Reference removed as facility now open.</p>
Economic Development		Para, 8.23- fair point but perhaps this should have been picked up earlier in construction phase	<p>Comment noted.</p> <p>Issue probably should have been addressed at design stage, but could necessitate negotiations with other land owners.</p> <p>Right for issue to be flagged up in SPD.</p>
Economic Development		Para. 9.4 though – not thought. That said, I think this needs to be more unpacked to explain what is happening	<p>Typo corrected.</p> <p>Para 9.11 covered issue of long stay parking in greater detail.</p>
Economic Development		Para. 9.5 is this not the site for the proposed new direct link and library. How does this fit?	<p>Direct Link now opened in 'Island Building'. Location for replacement library not yet resolved.</p>
Economic Development		Para. 9.7 I think David Hall from transport is looking at the bus station now- he may have a view	<p>Transportation have submitted comments to the effect that bus station layout is to be looked at. Central Area policies CA2, CA3 and CA4 seek to address issue.</p>
Economic Development		Para. 9.8 linked to the above – Island building intended to house HDL.	<p>Island Building now occupied by HDL (now opened).</p>

Consultee	Date and method of response	Comments	Response incorporated into Partnership Draft.
Economic Development		The pronto print shop (or what ever it is called) opposite Kwik Save is an eyesore and needs sorting	Agreed. Increased prominence given to site in text of para 9.16 and site added to list of development opportunities (No. 23)
Economic Development		Para. 9.14 the A boards issue is on Dicks radar and he is to attend the next traders meeting about it. It would be good to get something into the SPD to reinforce what he says there.	'A' boards and on highway display of goods known to be a thorny issue. SPD does not directly address this, as this considered to be an issue for day-to-day management or the overarching strategy. On highway display of goods with canopies over could add 'charm' and distinctiveness to centre, but only if necessary (highway) consents are in place.
Economic Development		Para. 10.10 good point. Do you know who owns it, who parks there? What would be the consequence if it was build on?	Owner not known, parking patrons not known. Possible consequences for loss of parking spaces. Comprehensive parking / accessibility study may need to address this.
Economic Development		Para. 11.4 what makes us believe they are in poor condition- if visual inspection say so.	Reference rephrased to be more generic.
Economic Development		General – there is no reference to the future of the swimming baths. These are in poor condition and work on a replacement will have to begin in the next few years. I think it should be located in the town to aid/promote footfall and non-drink uses.	Agree. Unfortunately SPD cannot allocate land and funding for a replacement facility, nor allocated replacement use for current building. Possibility of including swimming baths on Canal Quarter briefly investigated but now considered unlikely. No specific reference in SPD at this time.
Economic Development		Para. 11.11 leads to a more general issue of commuters using free parking. This needs to be explicitly stated and appropriate policy developed- e.g. is there going to be a pay and display charge for long term parking? And how would this impact (if at all) on planning policies?	Agree, ongoing issue. Parking and accessibility study will need to address issue of making best use of existing spaces. This may include establishing a Parking Partnership with private space providers (inc. Kwik Save). Covered under Strategic Policy 11
Economic Development		Para. 12.4 the council (ED Williams site) car park was only ever meant to be temporary and will now in all likelihood be lost via canal quarter	Chapter 12 (Canal Quarter) deals with this issue.

Consultee	Date and method of response	Comments	Response incorporated into Partnership Draft.
Economic Development		<p>General issue – much has been said about creating good walking circulation routes round the town to boost shopping etc. This leads onto the idea of creating a centre / gathering space (square) which traders have talked about and urban splash is looking at. Does the SPD not need to advocate such a space and set out some parameters of size/functionality etc? This also links to the possible closure of high street in front of the bus station to create a square – what is the planning view about this and what does the SPD need to do to facilitate it?</p>	<p>Agree. Phase I of the Canal Quarter (para 13.15) covers this issue. “Extensive public realm improvements centred on the Brindley Arts Centre including improvements to the northern towpath, creation of a piazza / public square and removal /reconfiguration of the ‘mound’.” It is noted that this reference is quite generic at this time, but details are yet to be resolved through the detailed design.</p> <p>Level of detail in SPD regarding Canal Quarter has to be balanced with need for flexibility and to provide overarching principles applicable to any development proposals.</p>
Economic Development		<p>Para. 13.1 there are a lot of sites mentioned here, and the later map is very useful. Perhaps we could just reference in the text see map page</p>	<p>Paragraphs changed to better reference UDP. Small map added within this chapter for information.</p>
Economic Development		<p>Para. 13.3 the mound is a really big issue and it is good to mention it.</p>	<p>Comment noted & welcomed</p>
Economic Development		<p>Para. 13.8 can we be bold enough to say the buildings adjacent to the canal quarter zone fronting high street have some merit but demolition would be seen as appropriate if it was part of a bigger scheme – they have a limited life anyway</p>	<p>Preceding chapter covers properties on High Street and indicates that for certain properties, their future will be determined by the needs of the Canal Quarter scheme.</p>
Economic Development		<p>General point – we are still at early stages of the canal quarter, what happens if it does not go ahead, or goes ahead on a very different basis to what was originally stated? What does that mean for the SPD?</p>	<p>Canal Quarter concept is not tied to a single developer. Concept should remain even if incrementally delivered. It is necessary to fully reference the CQ scheme in this SPD as this will be used to help guide the development.</p> <p>Canal Quarter policies drafted to provide overarching principles that can be applied to current development scheme or alternatives, should they arise.</p>
Economic Development		<p>Para. 14.8 not sure you have described old quay earlier and as such it needs a bit of meat on the bone</p>	<p>Small map extract (UDP) added to illustrate area being referred to,</p>

Consultee	Date and method of response	Comments	Response incorporated into Partnership Draft.
Economic Development		General – need to explore relationship and accessibility issues between the town centre and the college, particularly relevant for this section given pathways	Para 14.2 discussed pedestrian routes through to college. With completion of housing on intervening sites scope for further improvements limited. Issue of undercroft parking fronting Mersey Street mentioned and highlighted as issue to be addressed in any future redevelopment schemes. General policies promoting walking / cycling and use of Promenade included in Public Consultation draft.
Economic Development		Para. 14.9 last part- very good point	Comment noted and welcomed.
Economic Development		Para. 15.2 functions clearly relate to Halton Lea – I understand that- but there are other functions in relation to the whole borough that perhaps need to be explored. For example the Bindley is for everyone. The town centre, along with Victoria square are to become the two main evening leisure areas complimenting each other.	Agree in principle, however, Strategy seeks to position Old Town as having a complementary retail role to Halton Lea and wider leisure role.
Economic Development		Proposal 5 talks about shoppers car parking – but in the area there is an issue of safe parking for traders, especially in winter. What is the position for them? It is thought that many of the Kwik Save spaces are where local traders park!	Needs of traders and commuters are important, but should be secondary to adequate short stay provision for shoppers. Covered under Strategic Policy 11.
Economic Development		Proposal 7 same issue about the wider role for the whole borough	Reference to population south of the Mersey removed.
Economic Development		Proposal 11 I like it- but needs contextualising earlier in the document – use of water as part of the identity, links to tourism, potential for the lock flight etc.	Runcorn Locks section added to chapter 11 (High Street). De-coupling of Silver Jubilee Bridge may remove key physical barrier to the realisation of this scheme.
Economic Development		Proposal 13 soft landscaping – like the idea but in reality we struggle to look after what we have – amalgamate 13 and 14 into a general landscaping policy.	Previous Strategy proposed “introduction of floral displays and hanging baskets”. Specific reference to additional ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ landscaping removed.
Economic Development		Proposal 18 If it is an application for only a small shop, they will not be able to make such provision. Or is there a link to s106 to provide money for such facilities.	Proposals redrafted as policies. Various policies seek provision of facilities or contributions towards provision of facilities. Each application will be dealt with on its merits.

Consultee	Date and method of response	Comments	Response incorporated into Partnership Draft.
Economic Development		Proposal 19- think they should also contribute to public transport via s106 (sort of mini Daresbury park) – also we should advocate s106 for town centre management	Various policies seek provision of facilities or contributions towards provision of facilities. No specific inclusion of TC Management fund.
Steve Eccles Transportation (Section Leader)	23/09/2005 E-mail	Need to mention LTP and its strategies together with the draft accessibility plan. There should be an emphasis on social inclusion and access from deprived areas.	LTP added to list of policy considerations (Chapter 2)
Transportation		Mention the Highways and Transportation draft SPD on Highway Development Control.	Section added to end of Chapter 2
Transportation		Travel Plans will be required and 106 Agreements to support walking, cycling, buses and car parking.	Reference made to Travel Plans and possible requirement for 106 contributions.
Transportation		Need greater reference to Greenways, cycleways, cycle parking and Public Rights of Way	Comments noted.
Transportation		A review of town centre parking needs to take place. A parking partnership needs to be developed between the Council and private car park operators.	Comments noted. Need for access and parking study mentioned at various points. Covered under Strategic Policy SPI0 (Access study) and SPI I (Parking Partnership)
Transportation		The previous Runcorn Town Centre parking study indicated that the introduction of parking controls in the central areas would displace long stay parking to the edge of centre. The implementation of this strategy would resolve the current parking problems. More work however needs to be done to predict future parking needs and management.	Comments noted. Parking controls / charging would be expected to displace long-stay parking to peripheral areas. However, EDU express concern about parking for traders/staff. Need for access and parking study mentioned at various points Covered under Strategic Policy SPI0 (Access study) and SPI I (Parking Partnership)
Transportation		Building on Top Locks and Leiria Way car parks should be avoided.	Comment rejected. This prejudices any results from the access and parking study. Also, parking should be subservient to the needs of the centre not the other way around. Mention of development affecting either of these car parks clearly references the Study. Both sites are shown as 'Long Term' opportunities.
Transportation		Public transport issues need to be addressed in more detail in the context of accessibility. Refer also to comments made by Transport Co-ordination.	Accessibility will be a key theme for the Core Strategy. Issues covered in this SPD focus of ease of pedestrian movement / cycling access and enhancement of public transport facilities.

Consultee	Date and method of response	Comments	Response incorporated into Partnership Draft.
Transportation		Obstruction of the highway by traders with goods and "A" boards needs to be addressed.	'A' boards and on highway display of goods known to be a thorny issue. SPD does not directly address this, as this considered to be an issue for day-to-day management or the overarching strategy. On highway display of goods with canopies over could add 'charm' and distinctiveness to centre, but only if necessary (highway) consents are in place.
Transportation		Para. 4.5, population of 70,000? Needs same explanation as para. 4.5 in Halton Lea SPD. Need to mention segregation of footway and cycle routes.	Reference reworded to make clear relates to original objectives for Runcorn New Town.
Transportation		Para. 4.20, don't understand Rental Yields.	Explanation of Rental Yields added.
Transportation		Para. 4.20 Need to mention LTP and parking partnership.	Not relevant in this section.
Transportation		Para. 4.21, weaknesses, signing could be improved.	"poor signage" added to summary.
Transportation		Para. 4.23, line 7, centre's.	Typo corrected
Transportation		Page 15, 3 rd bullet, street furniture could play a role.	References to co-ordinated street furniture added to revised document.
Transportation		Page 19, photo 11, 48-50?	Typo corrected
Transportation		Para 8.23, need for legal signage, not the illegal "A" board.	Comment noted.
Transportation		Para 9.7, need to check HGV swept paths.	Shouldn't this be done as part of re-visiting of the bus station design? Comments in SPD seem reasonable as they raise this as an issue.
Transportation		Para 9.8, is more explanation needed about the Direct Link?	Paragraph seems self-explanatory. Some additional info added.
Transportation		Para 9.14, the Council should not be promoting the use of "A" boards, best to delete the last 3 lines.	Lines deleted.
Transportation		Page 25, need to mention linkages to Runcorn Station.	Cannot see how this fits easily into this chapter.
Transportation		Para 10.12, not seen as a particular highway safety issue.	Paragraph deleted.
Transportation		Para 11.22, loss of car park could be a problem, need to look at town centre wide parking issue.	Reference added to any changes affecting parking being made in the light of the parking study.

Consultee	Date and method of response	Comments	Response incorporated into Partnership Draft.
Transportation		Para 12.8, Top Locks car park may be needed for displaced long stay from the town centre. There may also be demand for this parking from the Canal Quarter development.	Comments noted. Paragraph specifically tempers development potential with need for parking review. No change required.
Transportation		Para 13.7, this is also used by pedestrians.	Pedestrians added
Transportation		Parking provision for new residential developments will need to be addressed through the highway development control SPD, with different provision levels in accordance with accessibility to public transport and services.	Interesting but does not need to be included in this document. SPD makes reference to Transport and Access SPD.
Transportation		Para 13.20, how can lost parking be replaced?	Heads of Terms of Canal Quarter work includes requirement to include same number of spaces on north bank.
Transportation		Page 38, Proposal 10, could mention greenway link to Wigg Island.	
Transportation		Page 38, Proposal 11, could improve the Bridgewater Greenway.	
Transportation		Page 39, Proposal 18, Sheffield racks tend to be for short stay, long stay cycle parking for employees could be provided by cycle lockers.	Cycle lockers mentioned as most preferable.
Transportation		Page 39, Proposal 19, travel plans are required with a contribution to public transport and pedestrian facilities.	
Arnīs Bukloviskis collated comments for Development Control		Para 4.14, include reference to the central area redevelopment.	Reference added,
Development Control		Para.s 9.19 and 9.20, include reference to improved pedestrian linkages to Old Quay area.	Achievement of wider pedestrian linkages between Old Quay / Canal Quarter are covered ad-infinitum throughout the SPD. No benefit in adding here as concerned with delivery of particular stretches of footpath.
Development Control		Para 14.14, [commercial activities] marketing issues. Applicants are open to looking at small commercial element, but only of 'good quality'	Included in recent planning permission.
Development Control		Para 14.14, Car Parking issues?	Dealt with in recent planning permission
Development Control		Section 16; Site 23, Time frame dependant upon granting of full / reserved matters application.	Date removed & text updated to reflect recent consent.

Consultee	Date and method of response	Comments	Response incorporated into Partnership Draft.
Derek Sutton Operational Director Major Projects	28/10/2005 E-mail	Don't criticise HBC	Document does not seek to criticise HBC, however, it would be wrong not to reappraise developments, now completed and highlight outstanding issues regarding the physical environment and seek to address these wherever possible.
Derek Sutton		Contents The documents should start with the proposals for each area and then show how each area can contribute to them.	Document follows a house style for such SPD documents. The document sets out the policy background, emerging issues and establishes a Vision for the centre, before discussing each sub-area in detail and how they will contribute to the delivery of the vision.. No change
Derek Sutton		The 'softer' non-physical form proposals – marketing, skills, customer care training, street scene enhancement, events etc should all be covered and common to all centres	Para 1.1 covers this point “ <i>The overarching strategy will deal explicitly with non-land use planning matters such as marketing and visitor information, promotion of business, day to day town centre management, car parking management, crime and anti-social behaviour and the like.</i> ” The overarching strategy is to be produced by Gary Collins section.
Derek Sutton		Contents The section numbers are all wrong	Numbering & titles corrected
Derek Sutton		9 Paragraph 4.10 Delete the word effectively	Word deleted
Derek Sutton		10 Paragraph 4.14 (backed by SRB, NWDA, NRF and capital priorities fund)	Funding partners added,
Derek Sutton		11 Paragraph 4.20 2 nd bullet point should read ‘..though recent new housing developments and planning applications are expected to may have reversed this trend locally ’	Text amended
Derek Sutton		12 Paragraph 4.21 • Weaknesses – what does legibility mean?	Explanation added.
Derek Sutton		12 Paragraph 4.21 • Opportunities – from Current development proposals to the end of that paragraph is one sentence and needs to be broken up.	Paragraph amended

Consultee	Date and method of response	Comments	Response incorporated into Partnership Draft.
Derek Sutton		12 Paragraph 4.21 Threats – include Cheshire Oaks and St Helens in the list of retail competition	Disagree. The Old Town is a lower order centre and unlikely to be directly impacted upon by Cheshire Oaks & St/Helens. Existing Centres listed in document especially Chester & Warrington were probably overly tenuous and have been removed..
Derek Sutton		13 Paragraph 4.24 A planning application has been submitted for the Expressway site	Capacity referred to is for convenience goods. Expressway site is for Bulky Goods.
Derek Sutton		13 Paragraph 4.26 Line 8 – remove the word 'vertical'.	Phrase replaced.
Derek Sutton		13 Paragraph 4.27 Full stop after 'lying empty' and delete the rest of the sentence	Disagree. Units listed are specifically covered later in document as development opportunities.
Derek Sutton		15 Other issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of bus routes to centre must be maintained • Reinforcement of the Town Centre by centralising public services into the Town Centre (the library, HDL etc) is needed. 	Document does seek to protect bus routes. Proposal to remove section of busway is clearly justifies as having no impact on services. References regarding both points added to section5 Strategic Issues.
Derek Sutton		17 Paragraph 8.6 Delete the following wording 'but with their subdued tones and unobtrusive nature somehow fail to impart any sense of place'.	Text added that surfaces and furniture are of high quality. But point regarding lack of sense of place considered valid and retained for Partner Consultation..
Derek Sutton		18 Paragraph 8.10 Delete the following wording 'with the most direct routes being through a rear service yard or down the side of an apparently semi-derelict building'	Paragraph slightly amended, but problem of routes is a statement of fact that document is right to highlight.
Derek Sutton		20 Paragraph 8.23 Delete the wording 'Presence of the newly opened'	Wording deleted.
Derek Sutton		21 Paragraph 9.5 Delete the sentence beginning with 'In its current condition...'	Text deleted
Derek Sutton		21 Paragraph 9.7 Delete the paragraph from the word 'However its design'.	Section rephrased, but issues restated as considered valid.
Derek Sutton		22 Paragraph 9.8 Delete the paragraph from the wording 'utilised as a temporarily home'	Paragraph reworded though many issues restated as considered valid.

Consultee	Date and method of response	Comments	Response incorporated into Partnership Draft.
Derek Sutton		22/23 Paragraph 9.13 Delete the following wording 'This has the look and feel of being somewhat of an afterthought' and 'a fire escape being the only feature of any visual interest'.	Text amended.
Derek Sutton		23 Paragraph 9.14 Delete the text from 'Unfortunately, these routes are not particularly..'	Valuable secondary accesses. Text amended to highlight positives whilst still acknowledging shortcomings.
Derek Sutton		24 Other issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service access is poor to many of the retailers especially on Church Street and Regent Street. • Links to Runcorn Station – when you come out of the station, how do you know where the Town Centre is or how to get there? 	Comments noted. Wil consider further at next stage.
Derek Sutton		25 Paragraph 10.2 Delete the following wording 'There are currently only 2 vacancies and 1 charity shop present'.	Statement was intended as a positive, not a negative.
Derek Sutton		25 Paragraph 10.4 Add in the following text after 'excellent condition' because of the take up of the Council's shop front improvement scheme. The quality of the units to the west of this point is poorer with a few poor frontages.	Text added.
Derek Sutton		25 Paragraph 10.6 Delete the following wording 'which would benefit from some further improvement'.	Text slightly amended and similar para 10.13 deleted
Derek Sutton		25 Paragraph 10.10 This paragraph should be in with the Church Street section.	Understandable point. Church Street section is intended to relate to the principal shopping area with the western areas falling under Regent St & fringes. Sub zone map tweaked to better show differentiation. Will be improved for next stage.
Derek Sutton		26 Paragraph 10.15 The library occupies an attractive Victorian building, which should be retained if possible. The policy is to redevelop.	No change. The library is an attractive building and as a Planning Document the SPD is right to say it should be retained if possible. The paragraph does however end by saying that a "significant opportunity exists for conversion or redevelopment. "

Consultee	Date and method of response	Comments	Response incorporated into Partnership Draft.
Derek Sutton		26 Paragraph 10.16 Chip shops and takeaways won't relocate to the Canal Quarter will they?	"Quality" food & drink. Intention is not for take-aways on Canal Quarter, but emphasis of leisure uses along new activity corridor is intended to include restaurants etc.
Derek Sutton		29 Paragraph 11.21 Delete all the text and the picture apart from 'The current Leiria Way car park presents a poor environment'.	Items deleted.
Derek Sutton		29 Paragraph 11.23 Delete the text from 'The route involves buses running..' to 'improved running times to the bus operators'.	No change. It is considered important to explain why we consider that this proposal will not be a detriment to bus services.
Derek Sutton		30 Paragraph 12.4 Should read 'The centre's bus station'	Typo corrected.
Derek Sutton		30 Paragraph 12.5 '..will be determined shortly as the Development brief.'	Word deleted.
Derek Sutton		30 Paragraph 12.6 The possibility presents itself to should be replaced with 'A preferred option would be to'.	Text amended
Derek Sutton		33 Paragraph 13.12 This paragraph is unnecessary and will be untrue in 6 months time.	Paragraph amended.
Derek Sutton		34 Paragraph 13.15 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delete all the phase numbers Delete the wording 'and removal / reconfiguration of the 'mound' Paragraph starting with 'North bank' needs to be reworded so as it makes sense 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No change. Considered important in conditioning redevelopment scheme. No change, Forms part of architectural brief. Paragraph changed.
Derek Sutton		34 Paragraph 13.16 Certain phases may overlap or run concurrently. However, phase 4 which should be replaced with 'This latter phase'	No change.
Derek Sutton		35 Paragraph 14.3 This may change when detailed permission has been approved	Text updated to reflect reserved matters consent granted 21 st Nov'05
Derek Sutton		35 Paragraph 14.5 The paragraph should read ' The site of Belvedere House, a hostel for the homeless, could become available for redevelopment as... '	Text amended.

Consultee	Date and method of response	Comments	Response incorporated into Partnership Draft.
Derek Sutton		36 Paragraphs 14.12, 14.13 and 14.14 are in different fonts from the rest of the document.	Font amended
Derek Sutton		38 Proposal 11 Cheshire (Canal) Loop Ring	Text amended
Derek Sutton		39 Proposal 16 Need to include the link from the railway station.	“Station Road (from train station)” added to pedestrian gateways.
Derek Sutton		46 SWOT analysis Strengths Need to include rail access under accessibility	Not convinced that railway station contributes meaningfully towards v&V of town centre. Added to list.
Derek Sutton		48 Site 3 Progress Proposed purchase of gas board building	Comment noted. Need to check progress with Property Services before highlighting in SPD. No change at this time.
Derek Sutton		48 Site 5 Future Remove ‘former college site’ as it is not in Dukesfield	“former college site” relates to the Annexe on Waterloo Road. Text amended to make this clear,
Derek Sutton		48 Site 6 Progress ‘but no road yet provided’	Additional text added. (Are there proposals for a new road route?)
Derek Sutton		48 Old Police Station Building refurbished and now occupied by Halton Strategic Partnership	Additional text added

Partnership Consultation

Partnership consultation period: 25th November 2005 ~ 9th December 2005

Date of consideration of representations: November 2006

Note – All paragraph and page references relate to the numbers as set out in the partnership consultation draft

Consultee	Date and method of response	Comments	Response incorporated into Public Consultation Draft.
Meeting : 22 nd December 2005			
<p><u>Attendees:</u> Dick Tregae, Strategic Director - Environment Phil Watts, Operational Director – Environmental and Regulatory Services Andrew Pannell, Divisional Manager – Planning and Policy Jerry Goacher, Operational Director – Property Services Derek Sutton, Operational Director – Major Projects Steve Leng, Divisional Manager - Highways Mike Curtis, Divisional Manager – Major Projects Neil Macfarlane, Principal Planner Alasdair Cross, Senior Planner Joanne Dutton, Senior Planner Nathan Renison, Senior Planner Perran Baragwanath, Planner</p>			
Andrew Pannell	22/12/05 Meeting	Current drafts of documents somewhat a hybrid containing both issues and proposals.	Accepted. Partnership draft very much structured as an 'Issues' document
Jerry Goacher		Thought that the document titles of "Town Centres Strategies" were misleading as he was expecting a more fundamental review of the structure of the individual centres (something more akin to a Masterplan (or Area Action Plan)).	Runcorn Old Town and Halton Lea are being progressed as Supplementary Planning Documents. These cannot allocate land or alter the proposals map. Decision has been taken to progress Widnes as an Area Action Plan (DPD).
		Need to ensure that strategic issues are continued throughout the documents	Comment noted. Strategy seeks to deal with linkages to Community Strategy, establish a Vision and refer to these strategic themes throughout.
Derek Sutton		Glad to hear that these are still issues papers as still concerned about some of the content.	

Consultee	Date and method of response	Comments	Response incorporated into Public Consultation Draft.
		Had raised concerns earlier that these documents should not be over critical. Believes that there are still references that highlight problems without an understanding of the history or issues behind previous decisions / developments. Will be construed by the public as criticisms.	Comments noted. However, it is important to identify problem areas and identify solutions. Public consultation version more Policy driven, so less detail provided on specific issues. Hopefully more forward looking and hence 'positive'.
		Island Building (Runcorn Old Town) heavily criticised. Should be framed as an opportunity.	Island Building identified as an opportunity. Now occupied by Council HDL, so most references removed.
		Documents should not highlight problems / issues that cannot be addressed.	Comment noted. Public Consultation Draft more Policy driven, so less detail provided on specific issues. Hopefully more forward looking and hence 'positive'.
		Documents intended to be used as a development control tool, so issues and actions should be made in that context, i.e. where development can address issues, not raising expectations for the Council to carry out work that is hasn't the resources for.	Comments noted Public Consultation Draft presented as draft Policy document.
		There is often criticism that not enough development is occurring in the centres despite much having been achieved. Acknowledged that achievements are mentioned in preamble and in appendix at the back, but should be more explicitly highlighted within main body of the documents.	Successes highlighted, where space allows.
General Discussion		Next draft needs to be a draft SPD, <u>NOT</u> an issues paper.	Public Consultation Draft presented as draft Policy document.
Agreed Outcomes		References to Overarching Strategy to be removed (Not going to be written in time)	References removed.
		Need to more explicitly highlight past achievements from previous strategies.	Public Consultation Draft presented as draft Policy document.. Successes highlighted, where space allows, within this context.
		Need to better tie proposals into wider framework, i.e. Community Strategy".	TC Strategy seeks to deal with linkages to Community Strategy, establish a Vision and refer to these strategic themes throughout..

Consultee	Date and method of response	Comments	Response incorporated into Public Consultation Draft.
		Frame any problems created in context of "works in progress".	Public Consultation Draft presented as draft Policy document. Problems highlighted, only within a proposed policy context.
		Remove references to 'emerging issues' ~ these are not issues papers.	Partnership Drafts were part issues papers. Public Consultation Draft presented as draft Policy document.
		Need to tie proposals back to key strategy.	TC Strategy seeks to deal with linkages to Community Strategy, establish a Vision and refer to these strategic themes throughout..

Consultee	Date and method of response	Comments	Response incorporated into Public Consultation Draft.
Town Centre Working Group	27/04/05	Overhaul of signage in Old Town and Widnes to give more continuity, being carried out by Transportation.	
		Possibility of locating an outdoor market on Church Street on Tuesdays (say 40 pitches) being investigated by TC Manager. This goes back to a proposal from 1999. Crosville site to be used as overspill car parking on these days?	
		Bin Cages - ones near Somerfield to be completed mid June 2005	
		HDL fit out Sept/Oct 2005.	

Halton Borough Council

Draft
Runcorn Old Town
Town Centre Strategy
Sustainability Appraisal Report

Public Consultation
January 2007

[] for public consultation
between X January and Y March 2007

to:
Operational Director
Environmental & Regulatory Services
Environment Directorate
Halton Borough Council
Rutland House
Halton Lea
Runcorn
WA7 2GW

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I Summary and outcomes

Non-technical summary

- 1.1 This document contains the information relating to the appraisal of the draft Runcorn Old Town Town Centre Strategy Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in relation to how it contributes to meeting environmental, social and economic objectives. Put more simply, this document assesses how the SPD contributes towards achieving development that ensures a better quality of life for everyone, now and for future generations. The technical name for this document is a Sustainability Appraisal or SA for short. The SA is required to be produced because of new government guidance and legislation relating to the planning system.
- 1.2 The objectives that are used to test whether the Runcorn Old Town Town Centre Strategy SPD contributes towards achieving sustainability have been taken from the information gathered during the production of the Core Strategy SA and from other documents that identify the sustainability priorities of the local community. The main source of these objectives is the Community Strategy, produced by the Halton Strategic Partnership in consultation with the people of Halton, which was based on a new State of the Borough Report and a telephone survey of residents.
- 1.3 The objectives that are used to test the sustainability of the SPD are set out in a table (Appendix A), this table is called the Sustainability Appraisal Framework (SAF). This table sets out how the Council will measure each of the objectives to see if quality of life in Halton is improving. In summer 2005, in advance of producing the full SA, the Council asked a number of bodies if they agreed with the objectives that we included in the SAF. These bodies agreed with us, all their comments and how the Council responded is set out in Appendix B.
- 1.4 At the same time as asking these bodies about the SAF, we also asked if they agreed with us if we needed to produce a Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) of the SPD. The SEA is like an SA but looks in more detail at the effects that the SPD could have on the environment. SEA is required by a European Directive on plans and programs that could have a significant effect on the environment. The Council made an initial screening of whether a full SEA was needed to be produced, and decided it was not. The bodies agreed with us. This decision has been set out in the Runcorn Old Town Town Centre Strategy SPD – Statement of Determination, which can be found in Appendix C.
- 1.5 The Council then tested the draft SPD against the objectives in SAF, to appraise if the SPD contributes to achieving sustainability. This is set out in a table (Appendix D). The appraisal recognises that the SPD is supplementary policy and will not make dramatic changes to the way that we live, but will make small changes to the way buildings and places are designed. Therefore, the SPD will not significantly affect any of the environmental, social or economic objectives set out in the SAF.
- 1.6 Overall the appraisal shows that the SPD will have a positive effect upon contributing towards achieving sustainability, but there are several objectives that are difficult to test the SPD against because the Council is unsure how the SPD will affect those objectives. The appraisal also tells us that the positive effects will mainly only be seen in the longer term because the SPD will make gradual changes to places over many years as new development

happens.

- 1.7 This SA is not the end of the process, if you think that the appraisal has missed something out, or hasn't properly realised the effect that the SPD could have on a particular objective then let us know by following the instructions in section 1.10 – 'How to comment on the Appraisal'. A final SA, which includes all the comments received on this appraisal, will be published alongside the SPD when it is adopted. Sources of further information about the process and purpose of Sustainability Appraisals can be found in Appendix F.

Statement on the difference the process has made

- 1.8 Although the scope of the SPD is not significant, it is supplementary policy, providing practical guidance in relation to policies contained within Halton Unitary Development Plan (UDP), the SA process has made a valuable contribution to the process of producing the SPD. Firstly it focused attention at the pre-production scoping stage to identify the key areas that the SPD needed to address. This was achieved through the analysis of baseline information. This process has helped to shape the purpose of the SPD, which has provided a strong foundation upon which the rest of the SPD has been constructed.
- 1.9 By testing the SPD against the SAF it has helped to recognise the limitations of the SPD and how these might be overcome through additional planning policies or by other means (such as the need for better training within the planning section to understand 'design' better). The 'testing' process has also helped create a sharper more responsive SPD focused upon its purpose and contributing to achieving sustainability. The SA process has made a real difference to help ensure a quality end product.

How to comment on the Appraisal

- 1.10 If you would like to make comments on the SA or the SPD, which it has been produced to appraise, please complete one of the representation forms, which can be obtained from the places of inspection, from the Council's website or by contacting the Planning and Policy Division. Representations may be accompanied by a request to be notified at a specific address of the adoption of the SPD and hence the publishing of the final SA. The formal period of public participation in relation to the SPD and this SA, commences on 18th January 2007, for a six week period until 1st March 2007.

2 Sustainability Appraisal Rationale

Approach taken

- 2.1 The methodology selected to be applied within this Sustainability Appraisal (SA) has been chosen to ensure that the SPD, and the Local Development Framework (LDF) as a whole, is tested against the most appropriate sustainability criteria.
- 2.2 SA is fundamentally based on an objectives-led approach whereby the potential impacts of a plan are gauged in relation to a series of objectives for sustainable development. In other words, the objectives provide a methodological yardstick against which to assess the effects of the SPD. The Sustainability Appraisal Framework (SAF) – as the Guidance refers to it – consists of objectives and associated targets and indicators, the SAF is set out Appendix A.
- 2.3 The methodology of the SA has therefore been drawn from the information collected during the production of the LDF and the priorities, objectives and targets of other documents such as the Community Strategy, the sub-regionally agreed Merseyside objectives and the regional sustainability framework – ‘Action for Sustainability’. This approach has been agreed by both the Council and the Statutory Environmental Bodies and has been used for earlier SAs, which have assessed earlier SPDs. However, the SAF used in these earlier documents has now been updated using the information collected as part of the production of the Core Strategy.
- 2.4 It is our intention that the objectives, targets and indicators that form the SAF within this document will be broadly consistent throughout all future SAs that the Council undertakes. However, as the SAF evolves there may be situations that require the framework to be reviewed. These situations could

include:

- a new baseline information emerging that better reflects the current objectives in the sustainability framework,
- b changes to the objectives in the sustainability framework, and
- c direction from a consultation body that information within the framework needs amending, such as through consultation on this SA Report.

When the SA was carried out?

- 2.5 The SA process began in June 2005 with the production of the SA Scoping Report; this document was consulted upon between 30th June 2005 and 4th August 2005. The responses to the Scoping Report were considered and have informed and lead to the production of this document. The SA process has been an integral part of the production of the SPD, and has been prepared to enable its publication to coincide with the public consultation on the draft Runcorn Old Town Town Centre Strategy Supplementary Planning Document.

Who carried out the SA?

- 2.6 Halton Borough Council has conducted the entire process of the production of the SA, with consultation at the appropriate stages with statutory consultation bodies (for the SA and SEA process) and other stakeholders as necessary. This approach was felt to be commensurate to the intended purpose of the SPD. Responses to the Scoping Report, particularly those from the statutory consultation bodies, acknowledged the scope of the SPD and did not raise any significant issues that would deem it necessary for the SA to be produced externally / more independently.

Who was consulted, when and how?

2.7 The scope of the SA was formally consulted upon between Thursday 30th June 2005 and Thursday 4th August 2005. The consultation was targeted at those who the Council felt were best placed to further shape the SA process and the purpose of the proposed SPD. A list of those consulted, their comments and the how these have been addressed in the SA is contained in Appendix B.

3 Background

Purpose of the SA process and the SA Report

3.1 The Runcorn Old Town Town Centre Strategy SPD will form part of the Halton Local Development Framework (LDF). This document will not form part of the Statutory Development Plan for Halton. To be able to be formally adopted as part of the Halton LDF, the process of forming the SPD must comply with Part Five of The Town and Country (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004. Part five requires the production of a SA for SPDs. The purpose of preparing a SA is to encourage sustainable development, through improved integration of sustainability considerations throughout the preparation and adoption of land use plans and policies.

Purpose of Runcorn Old Town Town Centre Strategy SPD (Draft)

3.2 The purpose of the Runcorn Old Town Town Centre Strategy SPD is to complement the Halton Unitary Development Plan (UDP), by providing additional guidance to those involved in the planning of new development within Halton Borough to:

- a Enable the town centres to prosper without adversely affecting the health of any other;
- b Safeguard and strengthen the individual role of each town centre as a safe and accessible place to shop, work and enjoy;
- c Co-ordinate public and private investment decisions;
- d Improve the economic prosperity of the Borough through the creation of employment opportunities; and
- e Ensure the highest standard of design and architecture within each town centre.

3.3 The geographical coverage of the SPD is Runcorn Old Town town centre and immediate surrounds.

Compliance with the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Regulations

3.4 In accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulation 2004, the SA Scoping Report included a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening statement. The Council's intermediate determination of the statement was that the proposed SPD was unlikely to have a significant environmental effect and accordingly does not require a SEA to be produced. The four statutory agencies (English Nature, Environment Agency, English Heritage and Countryside Agency) were consulted as part of the pre-production scoping stage and they agreed with the Council's determination, their comments are set out in Appendix B.

3.5 Therefore a formal determination can be made that the Runcorn Old Town Town Centre Strategy Supplementary Planning Document is unlikely to have significant environment effects and accordingly does not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment. This decision has been set out in the Runcorn Old Town Town Centre Strategy SPD – Statement of Determination, which can be found in Appendix C.

4 Sustainability objectives, baseline and context

Relationship to other relevant plans and programmes

4.1 In producing the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Scoping Report for the Core Strategy the Council considered a large number of relevant plans, policies and programmes. However, in relation to the proposed SPD a smaller number of documents with a specific relationship to the Runcorn Old Town Town Centre Strategy have been identified.

National Planning Statements

4.2 **Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPSI):** Delivering Sustainable Development, states that planning policies should promote high quality inclusive design in the layout of new developments and individual buildings in terms of function and impact, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development. It also highlights the need to focus developments that attract a large number of people, especially retail, leisure and office development, in existing centres to promote their vitality and viability, social inclusion and more sustainable patterns of development.

4.3 **Planning Policy Statement 6:** Planning for Town Centres, states that the Government's key objective for town centres is to promote their vitality and viability by:

- planning for the growth and development of existing centres; and
- promoting and enhancing existing centres, by focusing development in such centres and encouraging a wide range of services in a good environment, accessible to all.

4.4 It affirms that it is essential that town centres provide a high-quality and safe environment if they are to remain

attractive and competitive. Policies for the design of development for main town centre uses, regardless of location, and for development in town centres, should promote high quality and inclusive design, in order to improve the character, quality and function of areas.

4.5 **'Vital and Viable town centres: meeting the challenge'** (DOE, 1994) provides, through the use of a town centre health check, a method for evaluating town centre vitality and viability. It suggests collating a whole host of indicators, and analysing them using a variety of different techniques such as 4 'A's (attractions, accessibility, amenity and action) approach and SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis.

4.6 **Planning for Town Centres: Guidance on Design and Implementation tools** (ODPM, 2005) provides further detailed design guidance stating that the issues which should be considered for inclusion in local development documents, include:

- identifying the capacity of each centre to accommodate growth and making provision for this;
- providing a comprehensive plan for any area of renewal or development;
- addressing the location and layout of new development;
- developing an urban design strategy, which establishes a comprehensive urban design vision and is supported by specific urban design policies, guidelines or proposals for specific sites;
- addressing the spatial implications of strategies for parking, traffic management and improvement of the pedestrian environment; and

- setting out a detailed implementation programme for bringing forward development on key sites, including, where appropriate, proposals for addressing issues such as land assembly through compulsory purchase orders.

Regional Spatial Strategy & Sustainability Framework

- 4.7 The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the North West is currently in the process of being updated. Adopted RSS Policy SD2 Other Settlements within the North West Metropolitan Area, highlights Runcorn and Widnes as areas where wide-ranging regeneration and environmental enhancement should be secured.
- 4.8 Policy EC8 Town Centres – Retail, Leisure and Office Development states that Development Plans, town centre management initiatives and other strategies should recognise the continued need to protect, sustain and improve all of the town and city centres in the Region.
- 4.9 Action for Sustainability is the North West Regional Sustainability Framework has been produced by the North West Regional Assembly (NWRA). The main goal of the framework is to improve the quality of life within the region.

Unitary Development Plan

- 4.10 The Halton Unitary Development Plan (UDP), which was adopted in April 2005, contains a number of strategic aims and objectives. These are set out in Part I of the UDP. In relation to Halton's town centres they include the aim to increase their vitality and viability and the need to ensure that no retail development is allowed in one town centre that would seriously harm another.
- 4.11 Part 2 UDP policies seek to implement the broad aims and objectives contained within Part I. Those that are directly

relevant to the Runcorn Old Town Town Centre SPD are:

- Policy TC1: Retail & Leisure Allocations, provides a list of sites that are allocated for specific uses, on the basis of both an assessment of need for new retail and leisure facilities in the Borough and a sequential approach to site selection.
- Policy TC2: Retail Development to the Edge Of Designated Shopping Centres, introduces criteria for assessing when development will be permitted on edge of centre locations.
- Policy TC4: Retail development within designated shopping centres, allows for retail development that contributes to the centre's vitality and viability.
- Policy TC5: Design of Retail Development, provides the design criteria for considering new retail development and extensions.
- Policy TC6: Out of Centre Retail Development, provides the criteria to assess out of centre retail proposals including small scale retail developments to meet local needs.
- Policy TC8: Retail uses within Primary and Secondary Shopping Areas, provides criteria to assess applications for change of use within the main retail areas.
- Policy TC10: Runcorn Town Centre Mixed Use Area, provides criteria to assess applications for change of use within the designated mixed use area.
- Policies LTC1, LTC2 and LTC3 in the Leisure, Tourism and Community Facilities chapter provide the criteria to assess major leisure and community facilities that are located in town centre, edge of town centre and out of centre locations respectively.
- Policy TPI6: Green Travel Plans, indicates the circumstances when a green travel plan will be required as

part of a new development. This may include major development proposals and smaller developments that would generate significant amounts of travel where there are particular local traffic problems.

- 4.12 The UDP was subject to a SA at two key stages in its production. These were the UDP First Deposit and Second (Revised) Deposit stages. This process has helped to ensure that the policies that this SPD is based upon contribute towards achieving sustainable development.

Community Strategy & Corporate Plan

- 4.13 The intended SPD will be produced to contribute to the priorities, principles, objectives and targets of the Halton Community Strategy (2006). This strategy co-ordinates the resources of the local public, private and voluntary organisations towards common purposes. The vision of the Strategy is that *“Halton will be a thriving and vibrant Borough where people enjoy a good quality of life with good health; a high quality, modern urban environment; the opportunity for all to fulfil their potential; greater wealth and equality sustained by a thriving business community; and safe and attractive neighbourhoods.”*
- 4.14 Within the ‘Halton’s urban renewal’ priority of the Community Strategy there is an objective *“to revitalise the town centres to create dynamic, well designed high quality commercial areas that can contribute to meet the needs of local people, investors, businesses and visitors.”*
- 4.15 Halton Borough Council is committed to contributing to achieving the priorities of the Community Strategy. The Council’s priorities are set out in the Corporate Plan. This plan also has five priorities, including ‘urban renewal’.
- 4.16 The priorities in the Community Strategy and the Corporate Plan are based on the priorities set by the people of Halton. These were identified

through community involvement via area panels, focus groups, and a telephone survey. The Corporate Plan was based on the same community involvement and statistical information compiled for the State Of Borough Report, 2005.

Baseline Information

- 4.17 The baseline information for this SPD can be put into two categories. Firstly, information and issues relating specifically to Runcorn Old Town that will be covered by the intended SPD; and secondly, other generic sustainability baseline information that is consistently applied as a baseline to all appraisals within Halton and that was collected as part of the production of the SA of the Core Strategy.

Runcorn Old Town Town Centre Issues

- 4.18 The following summary of Runcorn Old Town is taken from the Halton Borough Council Town Centre Baseline Report 2004 and supplemented by a survey of the town centre in summer 2005.
- 4.19 Runcorn Old Town is a specialised centre of a small size. Its catchment population is decreasing slowly in line with the trends of the rest of the borough. The age distribution shows shops and services should be tailored mostly to the 25 – 44 age group as in the other town centres in the borough. Being a small, localised town centre finding a specialised niche and consolidating its role as a local convenience service is more important than ever. Having said this the town centre at present still proves a popular destination for local people. It is obvious that Runcorn is not capable of direct competition with the other two centres in terms of the total retail provision,
- 4.20 The level of national multiple retailers is less than half of the other town centres. In terms of actual units, there are more vacant than used for convenience retail. In terms of floor space however

convenience has 2,600 Sq.M as with vacant properties occupying 2,140 Sq.M. The number of independents is 80% reflecting the highly localised centre.

- 4.21 In terms of the actual make up of the town centre, the vacancy rates are showing signs of falling, even though there are slightly contrasting sets of data. What is more worrying is the number of charity shops. In a small centre such as this any more than a few charity shops may damage the quality of the retail core. This may be part of the reason for the town centre yield being ≥ 10 . This figure may not decline much in the near future due to the nature of the centre. Certainly reaching a figure such as 6 or 7 will have to see a dramatic reduction in the number of charity shops and an increase in major retailers.
- 4.22 Car parking in Runcorn is used on the whole by people shopping in the area but there is a significant number of people who use parking whilst at work. The vast majority of those interviewed considered car parking to be safe. Together with the fact that bus usage is quite high the provision of car parking in the town centre seems to be adequate, at present, however it is at maximum capacity so room for further growth is needed and detailed figures on the total number of car parking spaces is required.
- 4.23 Street maintenance and cleanliness and poor public facilities were flagged up as continuing problems by the people interviewed in the Old Town. Unsurprisingly the willingness of those interviewed to visit the town centre during the evening was limited.
- 4.24 Crime in the area is now at a lower level than it has been for several years. However, instances of assault have increased significantly over the recorded period and further investigation is needed to determine whether this is a product of increased alcohol

consumption or a random increase over the years. The most important factor is that the total level of crime has decreased and that this progress continues.

Predicted future baseline information

- 4.25 The current generic baseline information will continue to be used until such a time as it is felt a review of the baseline is required. Situations that may require the baseline information to be reviewed could include
- a new baseline information emerging that better reflects the current objectives in the sustainability framework,
 - b changes to the objectives in the sustainability framework, and
 - c direction from a consultation body that baseline information needs amending.
- 4.26 It is felt that the current generic baseline information represents a competent rational for assessing the sustainability issues that are relevant to Halton and the wider area, specific baseline information to assess the effect of the proposed SPD.

Difficulties in collecting data and limitations of the data

- 4.27 Ideally the baseline information, found in Appendix 2 of the Core Strategy SA Scoping Report and in the SAF (Appendix A of this document), should relate to 2006, unfortunately due to the time it takes to collate data this has not been possible in many cases. As far as possible the most up date information has been used for each set of data provided.
- 4.28 The information tables also contain some omissions because, in some cases, it has not been possible to establish the most appropriate targets, figures or sources. Some difficulties in collecting data have also been associated with the reliance on external bodies to collect the data. For example, where external bodies have collected data for their own

purposes, in the future the data may not be available, or not available in the same format, in order to make reliable comparisons. Where possible the Council will look to overcome these problems by including information that is known to be collected by the Council or will be collected by the Council in the future. This may require further monitoring and data collection to be undertaken in the future.

- 4.29 It should be noted that the baseline information, found in Appendix 2 of the Core Strategy SA Scoping Report, represents a 'work in progress' in the sense that it will be added to / amended as new indicators / sources of baseline information come to the attention of the Council.

Sustainability Issues

- 4.30 In determining an appropriate SA approach to apply to this SPD, it is important to draw upon sources that identify those sustainability issues that are relevant to Halton and the wider area. This can be achieved by identifying issues that are based upon sound quantitative analysis; and / or involved extensive community participation.

- 4.31 The key sustainability issues for Halton and the wider area include:

- **Unemployment** - 'Halton: Gateway to Prosperity' 2005-2008
- **Disparity in employment** - 'Halton: Gateway to Prosperity' 2005-2008
- **Access to Employment** - State of the North West Economy (Sub-regional Report) (Oct 2004)
- **The need to raise the levels of education & skills** - The State of the Borough (Jan 2005)
- **The need to foster enterprise and entrepreneurship** - The State of the Borough (Jan 2005)
- **Reliance on a narrow economic base and low wage economy** -

'Halton: Gateway to Prosperity' 2005-2008

- **The need to improve the Economy** - The State of the Borough (Jan 2005)
- **The need to revitalise the Town Centres** - Community Strategy (2006)
- **The image of the Borough** - 'Halton: Gateway to Prosperity' 2005-2008
- **The need to improve health & life expectancy** - North West Public Health Observatory & Community Strategy (2006)
- **Long-term ill** - 2001 Census & Community Strategy (2006)
- **Ageing residents & the need to grow the health-care sector** - Department of Health
- **Perception of crime levels and fear of crime** - 'Quality of Life Survey' of 1999
- **Increased demand for affordable housing** - Land Registry and Housing Needs Study
- **Providing an appropriate and balanced housing supply** - Draft Housing Strategy 2005/06 to 2007/08
- **Providing appropriate sites to meet the needs of Gypsies and Travellers** - Circular 01-2006 'Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites'
- **Improve access to Services from the East of Runcorn** - Local Transport Plan 2
- **Improve access to Services in Widnes** - Local Transport Plan 2
- **Improve access to Services to those who do not own cars**
- **Community facilities**
- **Amount, location and access to Recreational Space** - PMP Open Space study
- **Population** - Nomis
- **Deprivation** - 2004 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)
- **Water quality** - Environment Agency

- **Conserving biodiversity, habitats and species-** Securing The Future - Delivering UK Sustainable Development Strategy
- **SSSI** - English Nature, April 2005
- **Waste Management** - Halton's Waste Management Strategy 2004
- **Transport congestion & pollution** – Local Transport Plan 2
- **Air Quality** – Local Transport Plan 2
- **Design quality in development** - Housing Audit (CABE, 2005)
- **Protecting cultural & built heritage** – English Heritage (2005)
- **Obtaining energy from renewable sources** - Securing The Future - Delivering UK Sustainable Development Strategy
- **Requiring energy efficiency improvements** - Securing The Future - Delivering UK Sustainable Development Strategy
- **Ensuring the most effective use of land** – Draft RSS (2006)
- **Water resources** - Securing The Future - Delivering UK Sustainable Development Strategy
- **Climate change** - Securing The Future - Delivering UK Sustainable Development Strategy
- **Industrial legacy** - Community Strategy (2006)

4.32 The issues highlighted blue are those issues which are considered to be of particular importance with regard to the proposed Runcorn Old Town Town Centre Strategy SPD.

5 Plan issues and options

Main strategic options considered and how they were identified

5.1 Three strategic options for delivering the purpose of the draft SPD were considered. These were identified and considered as part of the Runcorn Old Town Town Centre Strategy SA Scoping Report. This approach was taken as it was felt important that before the Council resources were committed to progressing the policy response selected to deliver the intended purpose of the SPD, the option selected was:

- a based on which would address the issues identified in the scoping report;
- b most likely to contribute to achieving sustainable development, and
- c supported by the statutory consultation bodies and other stakeholders.

5.2 In summary, the options considered during the pre-production scoping stage were identified based on the preliminary purpose and geographical coverage of the intended SPD. Significantly the coverage of the SPD directly relates to an identified geographical area i.e. Runcorn Old Town town centre and the immediate surrounds. The preliminary purpose and coverage were consulted upon, and neither has been amended as a result of responses to the SA Scoping Report consultation exercise, however, the purpose of the SPD has been slightly amended to reflect changes made during the drafting of the SPD. The comments received in relation to the Pre-Production Scoping Report consultation and the Council's responses are contained in Appendix B.

5.3 The preferred option identified and selected in the Scoping Report is the option appraised within this SA. For

comprehensiveness the options considered at that stage in the process are contained in Appendix E.

How social, environmental and economic issues were considered in comparing the options and choosing the preferred option.

5.4 As stated in 5.1 the purpose and coverage of the intended SPD were tested as part of the Scoping Report and have not been amended as a result of the SA Scoping Report consultation exercise. The report included the formal screening exercise required by Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) regulations. This exercise made an initial assessment of the characteristics of the proposed SPD, and its (environmental) effects, and of the area likely to be affected by it. This assessment demonstrated that the purpose and coverage of SPD would not have a significant environmental effect.

5.5 This process also contributed to identifying the limited scope of the SPD, that it will only provide additional practical guidance to policies that have already been scrutinised and consulted upon through the plan making process, which are adopted in the Unitary Development Plan (UDP). This recognised that the UDP itself had been through the Sustainability Appraisal process. The screening process identified that the purpose of the SPD is to promote sustainable development by creating a more pleasant, healthier and safer environment. The statutory SEA bodies and other stakeholders have agreed with the Council's conclusions during the screening process.

5.6 The preferred option for delivering the purpose of the intended SPD has been established and tested through the Scoping Report, it is recognised as contributing to achieving sustainability

and that its scope is only to provide additional practical guidance. This is felt to represent a sufficient scrutiny of comparison of the options identified. It also establishes that the preferred option that has been selected is commensurate to the scope of the intended SPD.

Other options considered, and why these were rejected

5.7 This was established and consulted upon as part of the Scoping Report. The relevant extract is contained in Appendix E.

Proposed mitigation measures

5.8 No proposed mitigation measures were considered necessary at this stage in the process, because of the scope of the SPD and its purpose of providing supplementary practical guidance to the adopted UDP.

6 Assessment of the social, environmental and economic effects of the draft Runcorn Old Town Town Centre Strategy SPD

Significant sustainability effects of the draft SPD

- 6.1 The Scoping Report, which incorporated the formal SEA screening statement, established that the intended SPD was unlikely to have a significant environmental effect. Additionally, the screening statement established that the intended scope of the SPD will be to provide additional practical guidance to policies within the adopted UDP. Within the context of this, an assessment of the likely social, environmental and economic effects can be made to accompany the draft Runcorn Old Town Town Centre SPD, as set out in Appendix D.
- 6.2 The assessment tests the likely effects that the proposed SPD will have on the social, environmental and economic objectives, indicators and targets set out within the Sustainability Appraisal Framework (SAF). These objectives, indicators and targets have been derived from the Community Strategy, the sub-regionally agreed Merseyside objectives and the regional sustainability framework – ‘Action for Sustainability’. This will ensure that the SPD is tested against local, sub-regional and regional priorities. The SAF was established in the Scoping Report and is contained in Appendix A.

Consideration of sustainability issues in developing the draft SPD

- 6.3 The pre-production stage enabled the identification of the social, environmental and economic issues relevant to Halton and to the intended purpose of the SPD, this was mostly through the collection and analysis of baseline information. This process

influenced the preliminary purpose of the SPD (which has now been slightly amended during the drafting of the SPD) and the preferred option to achieve its delivery. Additionally, the approach taken in relation to the SA, was also identified. These issues were 'tested' and consulted upon through the Scoping Report consultation. The outcome of this consultation led to the production of the draft SPD which has continued to take into account the relevant social, environmental and economic problems that can be addressed through the purpose of the SPD.

Proposed mitigation measures

- 6.4 No proposed mitigation measures were considered necessary after the testing of the SPD against the objectives contained within the SAF because the assessment did not identify any issues that could be suitably mitigated for. Additionally, the scope of the SPD and its purpose of providing supplementary practical guidance to the adopted UDP means that necessary policy checks are in place that afford greater protection to areas such as protected wildlife habitat, which the SPD is supplementary to.

Uncertainties and risks

- 6.5 The assessment of the likely effects that the proposed SPD will have on the social, environmental and economic objectives (as set out in Appendix D) identified that the effect of the SPD on a number of objectives was difficult to determine. This creates a degree of uncertainty in relation to the effects of the SPD. Additionally, the incremental cumulative nature of the changes that the SPD will make to places is difficult to test and predict against the objectives in the SAF.

7 Implementation

Links to other tiers of plans and programmes and the project level

7.1 The strategy for implementation of the proposed SPD, once adopted as a formal SPD will include Council Officer training in relation to the guidance set out in the SPD. This is to ensure that its purpose is achieved consistently across the centre. The SPD will also be actively signposted by relevant Officers to ensure that the general public and the development industry is fully aware of the content of the SPD, and take it into account within their proposals.

Proposals for monitoring

7.2 The objectives, targets and indicators contained within the SAF will be monitored as part of the Council's Annual Monitoring Report. This will bring together the monitored data from their source, such as the Regional Sustainable Development Framework for the North West monitoring report, and collect data deficits where appropriate.

Appendix A: Sustainability Appraisal Framework

	Objective	SEA Directive	Detailed Criteria	Indicator	Target	Baseline Data
Economic	1. To continue reducing the unemployment rate in Halton and increase the economic activity rate	Social inclusiveness Economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it encourage new employment that is consistent with local needs? 	Population employment in and unemployment	To bring Halton's employment and unemployment rates in line with England and Wales rate by 2021.	40% of people aged 16-74 in Halton are economically active and in full time employment, whilst 4.5% are economically active and unemployed. Compared to 40.6% of people aged 16-74 in England & Wales who are economically active and in full time employment with 3.4% economically active and unemployed. (Source: Office of National Statistics, April 2001)
				Job Density	To bring Halton's job density in line with England and Wales densities by 2016.	The 2003 job density, the ratio between total jobs to working age people, in Halton (0.76) is lower than the regional (0.81) and national average (0.83). (Source: Nomis)
	2. To improve educational attainment and opportunities for life long learning and employment	Social inclusiveness Economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it provide improved access to vocational training, education and skills for young people? Will it provide improved skills and knowledge in the workplace? 	% of 15 yr olds achieving five or more GCSE's at grades A-C or equivalent	Increase proportions achieving five or more GCSE's at Grades A*-C to 60% by 2010. (Community Strategy)	49.1% (2005) (Source: Department for Education and Skills)
				% of adults educated to NVQ level 2, 3 or 4	Increase the % of adults qualified to Level 3 to 70% by 2010. Reduce the number of adults with no qualifications to 10% by 2010. (Community Strategy)	NVQ2 and above: Halton – 54.3%, GB – 61.5% NVQ3 and above: Halton – 33.1%, GB – 43.1% NVQ4 and above: Halton – 15.7%, GB – 25.2% (Source: Local Area Labour Force Survey, Nomis, Mar 2003-Feb 2004)
	3. To encourage sustainable economic growth and	Economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it encourage the growth of indigenous businesses? 	Total number of VAT registered businesses	To increase the number of VAT registered businesses by 15% by 2010. (Community Strategy)	2,185 (2004) (Source: Nomis)

	Objective	SEA Directive	Detailed Criteria	Indicator	Target	Baseline Data
Economic	business development		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it improve the number of new, competitive businesses that last? Will it provide or contribute to the availability of a balanced portfolio of employment sites? 	Percentage of business registrations and de-registrations	To increase the % of VAT registrations whilst decreasing the % of de-registrations	10.8 % VAT registrations and 9.8% de-registrations (Source: InterDepartmental Business Register (IDBR), Nomis, 2004)
	4. To improve the competitiveness and productivity of business	Economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it improve business development and enhance competitiveness? 	Gross Value Added (GVA) per head	Sustain levels of GVA at above the regional norm. (Community Strategy)	GVA per head for Halton and Warrington was £17,190 (Source: Merseyside Economic Review, 2005)
	5. To enhance the vitality and viability of the three town centres (Runcorn Old Town, Runcorn Old Town and Widnes)	Economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it provide an improvement to one or more of the town centres? 	Footfall within the town centre	Increase footfall through each town centre by 25% by 2010. (Community Strategy)	Average weekly footfall within Runcorn Old Town of 292,605 Average monthly footfall for Widnes 595,747 (July – Nov 2005) Average monthly footfall for Runcorn Old Town 187,207 (July – Nov 2005) (Source: Runcorn Old Town – Brandspace, Runcorn and Widnes – Halton Borough Council Footfall Counters)
				Vacancy rates within the town centre	Decrease vacancy levels year on year.	Number of vacant units in 2005 Runcorn Old Town – 35 Widnes – 4 Runcorn Old Town – 41 (Source: Town Centre Survey 2005, Halton Borough Council)
	6. To improve the overall image of the Borough in order to attract investment.	Economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it encourage inward investment? 	Number of investment enquiries and the number of conversions (enquiries that are translated into actual, completed investment or expansion projects).	To increase the number of investment enquiries and the number of conversions.	317 enquiries 42 conversions (2004/5) (Source: Economic Development, Halton Borough Council)

	Objective	SEA Directive	Detailed Criteria	Indicator	Target	Baseline Data
Social	7. To improve health and reduce health inequalities	Population and human health, Social inclusiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it improve the standard of healthcare, particularly for the elderly? Will it support healthy lifestyles? 	Years of healthy life expectancy	Narrow the gap between life expectancy, at birth, in Halton and the national average by at least 10% by 2010. (Community Strategy)	Halton: Males – 73.90 years Females – 78.21 England: Males – 76.0 years Females – 80.6 (2000-2002) (Source: North West Public Health Observatory)
				Number of people who have a long-term illness	To reduce the % of residents in Halton with a long-term illness to within 1.5% of the England & Wales % by the 2011 Census.	21.5% of residents in Halton considered themselves to have a limiting long-term illness, compared to 18.2% for England and Wales as a whole. (Source: 2001 Census)
	8. To improve safety and reduce crime, disorder and fear of crime	Social inclusiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it encourage crime-sensitive design? Will it target, reduce and sustain a reduction in crime? Will it reduce the likelihood of violence and antisocial behaviour? 	Recorded crimes per 1,000 population	To reduce number of offences per 1,000 pop.	Halton offences per 1,000 population: Violence against the person 04/05 – 23 Sexual offences 04/05 – 1 Robbery 04/05 – 1 Burglary dwelling 04/05 – 4 Theft of a motor vehicle – 7 Theft from a vehicle – 11 (Source: Basic Command Unit - Recorded Crime for Six Key Offences 2004/05, Crime in England & Wales 2004/5, Home Office)
				Number of people reporting fear of crime	Reduce levels of expressed fear of crime and anti-social behaviour by 25% by 2010. (Community Strategy)	16.4% of people in Halton thought reducing crime would improve their local area. Just under three tenths (29.2%) of residents stated that they feel 'fairly unsafe' (17.3%) or 'very unsafe' (11.9%) when they are outside in their local area after dark.(Source: Halton Strategic Partnership Consulting the Communities of Halton 2005, March 2005)

	Objective	SEA Directive	Detailed Criteria	Indicator	Target	Baseline Data
Social	9. To provide well designed, good quality, affordable and resource efficient housing	Social inclusiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it provide for affordable housing for local people? Will it ensure that new housing is of a high standard of design and layout? Will it provide safe, secure and decent housing? 	Proportion of different housing types and tenures	To meet the requirements set out in the most up-to-date Housing Needs Survey.	<p>Housing Type 2001: Detached 19.2% Semi detached 33.0% Terraced 37.5% Other (flats etc.) 10.3%</p> <p>Housing Tenure 2004: Private 71.9% Council 12.9% Housing Association 15.2% (Source: Annual Monitoring Report, Halton Borough Council, 2005)</p>
				Average household income	To increase average household income in Halton to 90%+ of the national average by 2010. (Community Strategy)	The average household income in Halton is £27,898 which is 89.4% of the UK average (UK average salary is £31,200). (Source: Merseyside Economic Review, 2006)
	10. To improve access to basic goods, services and amenities	Social inclusiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it improve transport provision and accessibility? Will it provide for local retail needs? Will it improve public access to services and amenities? 	Percentage of new residential development within 30 minutes public transport time of a GP, hospital, primary and secondary school, employment and a major retail centre.	To ensure that all new housing development is within 30 minutes public transport time of a GP, hospital, primary and secondary school, employment and a town centre.	<p>% of housing completions 2004/5 within 30 minutes public transport time of key services:</p> <p>GP – 100% Hospital (Halton) – 48% Primary School – 100% Secondary School – 100% Employment – 100% Town centre – 100% (Source: Annual Monitoring Report, Halton Borough Council, 2005)</p>
11. To ensure access to high quality public open space and	Social inclusiveness Biodiversity, fauna and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it ensure that all people have access to public open space within 	Number and area of Local Nature Reserves (LNRs)	Ensure no loss of LNR (number or area).	10 LNRs covering an area of 142.02ha (Source: Halton Borough Council, 2004)	

	Objective	SEA Directive	Detailed Criteria	Indicator	Target	Baseline Data
Social	natural greenspace	flora, Cultural heritage and landscape	a reasonable distance from where they live? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it improve access to natural greenspace? 	Number of Green Flag Parks	To maintain and if possible increase the number of Green Flag Parks.	5 parks in Halton have Green Flag Awards. (Source: the Civic Trust – Green Flag Awards, 2005)
	12. To reduce social exclusion, deprivation and social inequalities	Social inclusiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it reduce poverty and social exclusion in those areas most affected? 	Index of Deprivation	For Halton to become less deprived and to move outside the 40 most deprived districts in England by 2010. (Community Strategy)	Halton is ranked 21 st , out of 354, in the average of ward scores where rank 1 is the most deprived. (Source: Indices of Deprivation 2004, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister)
Environmental	13. To protect, improve and where necessary, restore the quality of inland, estuarine and coastal waters	Water and soil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it improve the quality of controlled waters? 	Water quality (chemical & biological) classification of rivers, canals, estuaries and coastal waters and percentage lengths in different classes	To increase the % of rivers, canals, estuaries and coastal waters that classified as either good or fair year on year.	Halton: Biology 2004 Good – 0% Fair – 13.18% Poor – 79.39% Bad – 7.4% Chemistry 2004 Good – 11.0% Fair – 60.43% Poor – 20.55% Bad – 8.02% (Source: Environment Agency)
	14. To protect, enhance and manage biodiversity	Biodiversity, Fauna & Flora	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it protect sites and habitats of nature conservation value from inappropriate development? Will it improve the number and 	Number and total area of internationally and nationally designated nature conservation sites	To maintain the number and total area of internationally and nationally designated nature conservation sites	1 RAMSAR – 918.7ha 3 SSSI – 923.99ha 61 SINC – 742.65ha The RAMSAR site is also designated as a SSSI site therefore 918.7ha of the SSSI sites is also contributed as a RAMSAR. (Source: Annual Monitoring Report, Halton Borough Council, 2005)

	Objective	SEA Directive	Detailed Criteria	Indicator	Target	Baseline Data
Environmental			diversity of sites and habitats of nature conservation value in the Borough?	Condition of SSSIs	95% of SSSI land should be in favourable or recovering condition by 2010. (Public Service Agreement (PSA) target)	Flood Brook Clough SSSI - 100% unfavourable recovering (01/04/05) Mersey Estuary SSSI - 99.95% favourable, 0.05% unfavourable recovering (Various 08/02- 03/04) Red Brow Cutting SSSI - 100% favourable (06/01) (Source: English Nature)
	15. To minimise the production of waste and increase reuse, recycling and recovery rates.	Water and soil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it result in a reduction in the amount of waste requiring treatment and disposal? 	Level and % of household waste recycled	Waste Strategy 2000 set national recycling targets To recycle or compost at least 30% of household waste by 2010, and 33% of household waste by 2015.	During 2004/05, 8885.57 tonnes (13.65%) of household waste arising was sent for recycling. (Source: Annual Monitoring Report, Halton Borough Council, 2005)
				Total annual amount of municipal waste generated and % recycle or composted.	Ensure 30% of waste is recycled or composted by 2010. (Community Strategy)	Total municipal waste(04/05) – 65,083 tonnes Total municipal waste recovered – 8885 (14%) Total municipal waste composted – 5957 (9%) Total municipal waste landfilled – 50240 (77%) (Source: Annual Monitoring Report, Halton Borough Council, 2005)
	16. To reduce the need to travel and improve choice and use of sustainable	Air, Human Health, Climatic factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it minimise the need to travel? Will it reduce car use and encourage the use of integrated 	Number and total area of Air Quality Management Areas and population living in AQMAs	To maintain 0 AQMAs	0 AQMAs (2005) (Source: Local Air Quality Management website)

	Objective	SEA Directive	Detailed Criteria	Indicator	Target	Baseline Data
Environmental	transport modes, whilst protecting, and where necessary, improving local air quality		and public transport? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it improve air quality? 	Travel to work by mode	To reduce the number of people travelling to work by car or van by 10% by 2011 and by 20% by 2021.	Percentage of people in Halton aged 16 - 74 in employment who usually: <p>Work at or from home – 6.16%</p> <p>Travel to work by:</p> <p>Underground, metro, light rail, Tram or Train – 1.31%</p> <p>Bus, mini bus or coach – 7.12%</p> <p>Motorcycle, scooter or moped – 1.07%</p> <p>Driving a car or a van – 62.42%</p> <p>Passenger in a car or van – 9.06%</p> <p>Taxi – 0.65%</p> <p>Bicycle – 2.03%</p> <p>On foot – 9.78%</p> <p>Other – 0.41%</p> <p>(Source: 2001 Census)</p>
	17. To protect, enhance and manage the rich diversity of cultural and built environment and archaeological assets	Cultural heritage and landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it safeguard sites of archaeological importance? Will it preserve and enhance buildings which contribute to Halton's heritage? 	Number of Listed Buildings and Number and Area of Conservation Areas	To maintain the number of Listed Buildings and Number and Area of Conservation Areas	Halton has 122 Listed Buildings 2 of which are Grade I listed, 17 are Grade II* listed and the remaining are Grade II listed. Halton has 10 Conservation Areas and the total area is 92. 78ha. (Source: English Heritage and Halton Borough Council)
				Number of Conservation Areas covered by an up-to-date Conservation Area Appraisal	To increase the number of Conservation Areas covered by an up-to-date Conservation Area Appraisal	Currently there are 0 Conservation Areas covered by an up-to-date Conservation Area Appraisal (Source: Halton Borough Council)
				Number of buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments 'at risk'.	To reduce the number of buildings 'at risk' to 0 by 2016.	There are 2 buildings 'at risk' in Halton these are Daresbury Hall which is Grade II* Listed and the Undercroft of West Range at Norton Priory which is a scheduled monument. (Source: English Heritage, Buildings 'at risk' Register, 2005)

	Objective	SEA Directive	Detailed Criteria	Indicator	Target	Baseline Data
Environmental	18. To use land, energy, and water resources prudently and efficiently, and increase energy generated from renewable sources	Water and soil, Climatic factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will it enable development to re-use brownfield land and convert existing buildings? • Will it encourage prudent and efficient use of energy? • Will it use water efficiently and with care? • Will it encourage the development of appropriate types of renewable energy resources? 	Proportion of housing built on previously developed land per year	PPG3 set a target of 60% of dwellings on PDL by 2008.	61% of new and converted dwellings on PDL in 2004/05 42% in 2004 49% in 2003 28% in 2002 (Source: Annual Monitoring Report, Halton Borough Council, 2005)
				Proportion of energy generated from sustainable and renewable sources	Energy White 2003 set a national target that 10% of the UK's electricity supply comes from renewable sources by 2010, 15% by 2015 and 20% by 2020.	Halton has capacity for the generation of 6.5MW from renewable sources. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biomass: PDM (2 10MW) • Co-firing of Biomass: Shell Green Generation Plant (4.20MW) • Sewage Gas: Runcorn CHP (0.26MW) (Source: renewables northwest)

Appendix B: Statement of Consultation: Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Sustainability Assessment (SA) process

Draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD): Runcorn Old Town Town Centre Strategy

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Sustainability Appraisal (SA) - Statement of Consultation

SA Pre-production Scoping Report (incorporating SEA screening statement): Thursday 30th June to Thursday 4th August 2005

Date of consideration of representations: 22nd August 2005

Consultee	Date comments received and how responded	Comments	Response
Stephen Hedley The Countryside Agency	7/07/05 by email	<p>In relation to the SEA screening, the 2004 Regulations of course require the responsible authority to consider a number of questions in relation to the screening process. In its role as a consultation body, the Countryside Agency is unable to provide an opinion on many aspects of this process, such as whether the plan or programme sets the framework for future development consent of projects, or whether an environmental assessment is required, because these are matters for the responsible authority to determine and we have insufficient knowledge to give a view on these issues.</p> <p>We can, however, provide an opinion on the question: Is the plan or programme likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Article 3.5 of the 2001 Directive). In relation to the Countryside Agency's particular environmental interests, the question we have to address is: Will the plan or programme have a significant effect on the landscape or the enjoyment of it through access?</p> <p>On the basis of the information supplied, given location of the areas, the Countryside Agency considers that the SPD is unlikely to have a significant effect on the landscape or the enjoyment of it through access.</p>	No changes required.

Appendix C: SA of Runcorn Old Town Town Centre Strategy SPD - Statement of Determination

C1 Requirements of the SEA Regulations

The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulation 2004 (from now on referred to as 'the regulations'), places an obligation on the Council to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) on land use and spatial plans. Part of this process includes a screening exercise to determine the need for a SEA to be undertaken, by assessing if the proposed plan is likely to have any significant environmental effects. This screening process stage is particularly relevant where the plan being proposed can be considered to be small scale. The Runcorn Old Town Town Centre Strategy Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) can be considered to be a small-scale land use plan.

C2 Screening Process Methodology

The regulations provide a set of criteria for determining the likely significant effects on the environment of land use and spatial plans. These criteria are derived from Annex 2 of SEA Directive (2001/42/EC) and are set out in Schedule 1 of the regulations and can be summarised as:

1. The characteristics of 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;
 - b The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy;
 - c The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;
 - d Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme; and
 - 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).
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 the effects;
 - b The cumulative nature of the effects;
 - c The transboundary nature of the effects;
 - d The risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents);
 - e The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);
 - 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
 - iii. Intensive land-use; and
 - g The effects on areas or landscapes, which have a recognised national, [European] Community or international protection status.

These criteria will form the framework of the screening process

C3 Screening Process for Supplementary Planning Document (Draft): Runcorn Old Town Town Centre Strategy

The purpose of the Runcorn Old Town Town Centre Strategy SPD is to complement the Halton Unitary Development Plan (UDP), by providing additional guidance for anyone complement the Halton UDP, to provide additional practical guidance and support for those involved in the planning of new development within Halton Borough to:

- a Enable the town centres to prosper without adversely affecting the health of any other;
- b Safeguard and strengthen the individual role of each town centre as a safe and accessible place to shop, work and enjoy;
- c Co-ordinate public and private investment decisions;
- d Improve the economic prosperity of the Borough through the creation of employment opportunities; and
- e Ensure the highest standard of design and architecture within each town centre.

The intended geographical coverage of the SPD is Runcorn Old Town town centre and the immediate surrounds. Using the criteria in Schedule I of the regulations as a framework, the requirement for a need to carry out an SEA on the intended Runcorn Old Town Town Centre Strategy SPD can be determined.

C4 Runcorn Old Town Town Centre Strategy SPD - Statement of Determination

(as required by Regulation 11 of The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004)

Halton Borough Council in consultation with the statutory environmental consultation bodies (the Countryside Agency, English Heritage, English Nature and the Environment Agency) has determined that the Runcorn Old Town Town Centre Strategy SPD is not likely to have significant environmental effects and, accordingly, an environmental assessment will not be carried out as part of the Sustainability Appraisal process.

The SA Scoping Report, (Incorporating the Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Statement), for the Runcorn Old Town Town Centre Strategy SPD was available for consultation between Thursday 30th June 2005 and Thursday 4th August 2005.

Reasons for this Determination

Using the criteria, detailed in Schedule I of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, for determining the likely significance of effects on the environment the following assessments have been made.

1. The characteristics of proposed Runcorn Old Town Town Centre Strategy SPD

Criteria	Assessment
(a) The degree to which the SPD sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources.	The SPD is intended to be supplementary and complementary to the adopted planning policy contained in the UDP.
(b) The degree to which the SPD influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy	It is intended that the scope of the SPD will be to provide additional practical guidance to policies that have already been scrutinised and consulted upon through the plan making process.
(c) The relevance of the SPD for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development	By seeking to enable the town centres to prosper without adversely affecting the health of any other and ensure the highest standard of design and architecture, this SPD will help promote the image of the Borough, promote more sustainable travel patterns and therefore improve economic prosperity of the Borough.
(d) Environmental problems relevant to the SPD	The intended SPD is primarily concerned with enabling the town centre to prosper. However, this would be without adversely affecting the health of any other and therefore the roles of centres within the Borough should be strengthened.
(e) The relevance of the SPD for the implementation of [European] Community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection)	There are no direct linkages with the implementation of European Community legislation.

2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected by the proposed Runcorn Old Town Town Centre Strategy SPD

Criteria	Assessment
(a) The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects	<p>The probable effect of the intended SPD will be to improve the town centre in terms of economic health, prosperity and function.</p> <p>Once adopted as part of the Halton Local Development Framework (LDF), the short to medium term effects of the intended SPD could be incremental. However, as more SPD policies are implemented the longer term effect will be to create a comprehensive improvement in the town centre. The SPD will also set the platform for the further improvements via the future Retail and Leisure development DPD.</p> <p>As part of the LDF the intended SPD will be subject to annual review and its relevance and effectiveness will be</p>

2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected by the proposed Runcorn Old Town Town Centre Strategy SPD	
Criteria	Assessment
	monitored. The LDF system allows for the SPD to be amended, replaced or deleted relatively easily if required.
(b) The cumulative nature of the effects	The likely cumulative nature of the effects from the intended SPD are improving the quality of the built and natural environment of the town centre, to strengthen the role, improve economic prosperity and create an overall improvement in the environment.
(c) The transboundary nature of the effects	There are no transboundary effects from the SPD due to the intended scope of its purpose and the geographical coverage it will have.
(d) The risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents)	There are no significant or likely risks to human health or the environment from the intended SPD.
(e) The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	The intended SPD is site specific but not time constrained. Greatest effects from the SPD will therefore be individually incremental and with progressive cumulative effects locally. More general effects of lesser magnitude such as improved economic prosperity will be felt Borough wide.
(f) The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; ii. Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or iii. Intensive land-use. 	The intended SPD is area specific. However, it will not impact upon areas of value or vulnerability as identified in i - iii. The SPD will provide guidance to existing planning policies and be seen with the context of part of the LDF and not part of the Development Plan, which contains policies relating to shopping and town centres and their natural and built environment.
(g) The effects on areas or landscapes, which have a recognised national, [European] Community or international protection status.	The intended SPD is site specific and would be supplementary to adopted planning policy. The practical guidance it will contain will be considered in the context of planning policies relating to safeguarding and enhancing areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status. Therefore the SPD is not likely to have a negative effect on such areas, but will seek to provide additional guidance on enhancing such areas, where appropriate i.e. through acknowledging local distinctiveness in the design of new development.

In accordance with Part 2(9) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, the Council, as the responsible authority consider that the intended Supplementary Planning Document: Runcorn Old Town Town Centre Strategy is unlikely to have

a significant environmental effect and accordingly does not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment.

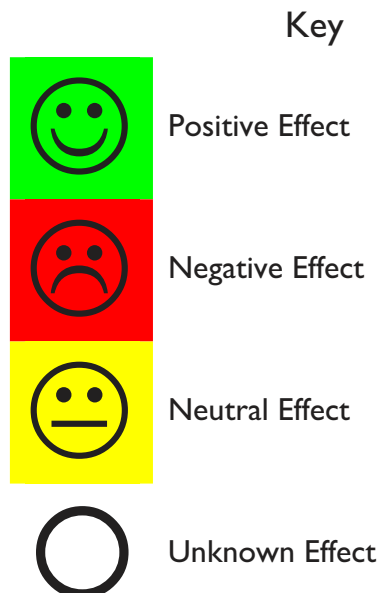
This determination has now been subject to consultation with the statutory environmental consultation bodies, none of the bodies have disagreed with the Council's determination.

Further Information










A copy of this determination and the accompanying statement of reasons may be inspected at each of the following locations Widnes, Runcorn Old Town & Ditton libraries; and Runcorn Old Town, Runcorn, Ditton and Widnes Halton Direct Links and can be viewed or downloaded free of charge from the Council's website at www.halton.gov.uk





If you require any further help or information, please feel free to contact the Spatial Planning Team on 0151 907 8300 or at forward.planning@halton.gov.uk

Appendix D: Testing the Purpose of the Runcorn Old Town Town Centre Strategy SPD against the Sustainability Appraisal Framework



	Objective	Nature of Effect	Additional Comments
Economic	1. To continue towards reducing the unemployment rate in Halton and increasing the economic activity rate		This SPD is expected to have a positive effect on the unemployment and economic activity rates in Halton.
	2. To improve educational attainment and opportunities for life long learning and employment		This SPD is not expected to have any effect on the educational attainment and opportunities for life long learning in Halton.
	3. To encourage sustainable economic growth and business development		This SPD is expected to have a positive effect on sustainable economic growth and business development in Halton.
	4. To improve the competitiveness and productivity of business		This SPD is intended to support the vitality and viability of the centre and therefore the strength and competitiveness of the businesses within it.
	5. To enhance the vitality and viability of the three town centres (Runcorn Old Town, Runcorn Old Town and Widnes)		This SPD is expected to have a positive impact on the vitality and viability of the three town centres.

	Objective	Nature of Effect	Additional Comments
	6. To improve and promote the overall image of the Borough in order to attract investment.		Strengthening the role and improving the design and quality of Runcorn Old Town Town Centre should improve the perception of the town centre and therefore should contribute towards improving the overall image of the Borough.
Social	7. To improve health and reduce health inequalities		The improved design, layout, and quality of Runcorn Old Town Town Centre will improve the perception of the town centre and will help to increase feelings of well-being. The promotion of better facilities for travel such as cycling will contribute towards improved health.
	8. To improve safety and reduce crime, disorder and fear of crime		The improved design, surveillance and security of Runcorn Old Town Town Centre will help to provide places that will contribute to reassuring communities and reduce the fear of crime.
	9. To provide good quality, affordable and resource efficient housing		The primary focus of this SPD relates to retail and leisure services, and whilst it does seek to encourage appropriate residential development it cannot allocate land for such uses.
	10. To improve access to basic goods, services and amenities		This SPD is expected to have a positive impact on access to basic goods, services and amenities.
	11. To ensure access to high quality public open space and natural greenspace		This SPD is expected to have some positive effect on access to high quality public open space and natural greenspace in Halton.
	12. To reduce social exclusion, deprivation and social inequalities		This SPD is expected to have an indirect but positive effect on social exclusion, deprivation and social inequalities in Halton.
Environmental	13. To protect, improve and where necessary, restore the quality of inland, estuarine and coastal waters		This SPD is not expected to have any effect on the quality of inland, estuarine and coastal waters.
	14. To protect, enhance and manage biodiversity		The direct / indirect of this SPD on biodiversity is difficult to quantify. However, it is likely that any negative impacts on biodiversity would be mitigated by the use of other policies from within the UDP.

Objective	Nature of Effect	Additional Comments
15. To minimise the production of waste and increase reuse, recycling and recovery rates.		The direct / indirect of this SPD on the production of waste and the increase reuse, recycling and recovery of waste is difficult to quantify. Whilst the SPD does contain a policy in relation to enhancement of waste recycling facilities the majority of waste issues are addressed presently by the UDP and, in the future, by the Joint Waste DPD.
16. To improve air quality by reducing the need to travel and improving choice and use of sustainable transport modes and reducing air pollution from other sources		The direct/ indirect effect of this SPD on air quality or the need to travel is difficult to quantify. Whilst the SPD does include policies to improve facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, the effects on air quality are likely to be imperceptible.
17. To protect, enhance and manage the rich diversity of the cultural and built environment and archaeological assets, whilst maintaining and strengthening a local distinctiveness through the enhancement of the character and appearance of the local landscape, townscape and coast		By seeking to ensure the highest standard of design and architecture within the town centre and improving quality, layout and design and local characteristics, the SPD will help to improve the built environment and maintain local distinctiveness.
18. To use land, energy, and water resources prudently and efficiently, and increase energy generated from renewable sources		The direct / indirect of this SPD on land, energy, and water resources is difficult to quantify. However, it is likely that this will be managed through the use of national guidance and other policies from within the UDP and emerging LDF.

Appendix E: Options Considered

Extract of Pre-Production Scoping Report

As a Local Planning Authority, it is important to consider the options available for meeting the purpose of the intended SPD. The options considered are:

Option 1: Do nothing

This approach relies on existing policy within the UDP and government advice, such as that contained within 'By Design, Urban Design in the Planning System: Towards Better Practice', Going to Town: Improving Town Centre Access or Planning Policy Statement 6: Planning for Town Centres, to help inform planning decisions and applications. Alternatively another agency or function of the Council could produce guidance we can subsequently adopt.

In seeking to achieve sustainable forms of development, it is important that practical guidance is produced that will have sufficient weight to promote better design, access and prosperity within Halton. This can only really be achieved if the SPDs are adopted. It would be difficult for another agency or function of the Council to lead on the production of what are essentially planning documents. Therefore although this option is rejected, it is necessary to ensure that all relevant agencies and functions of the Council are closely consulted throughout the production of the SPDs, as their knowledge relating to town centre strategies will assist in creating effective SPDs.

Option 2: Adopt government documents as SPD

Another option is to seek adoption of government documents as SPD. There are four documents which each (in part) contributes to meeting the purpose of the

intended SPD. These are: By Design, Urban Design in the Planning System: Towards Better Practice; Going to Town: Improving Town Centre Access, Planning Policy Statement 6: Planning for Town Centres and Vital and Viable Town Centres.

It is possible to adopt these documents as SPD for Halton, but firstly it would be difficult to amend them after a consultation exercise; secondly, the combined length of the documents would be difficult to digest by those involved in the planning and design of development, and; thirdly, the documents would not have the flexibility to respond to local circumstances. Therefore, it would not be the most effective means to deliver more sustainable places. It is clearly important that these four documents are used as a basis for developing a specific tailored document for Halton.

Option 3:

Produce the Town Centres SPDs

This option is to produce a Runcorn Old Town Town Centre SPD (and separately a Runcorn Old Town Centre SPD and a Widnes Town Centre DPD. This would be produced to meet the specific purpose and objectives of the need for its production.

This is the most likely option to create more attractive and sustainable places, although the SPDs must take into account national documents that relate to town centre development. The intended SPDs must be shaped throughout by those who are involved in seeking to meet the same objectives as those set out in the intended purpose of the proposed SPDs. It is therefore proposed to progress option 3.

Appendix F: Further Information

Further information relating to the purpose of the intended SPD:

To access a downloadable copy of the Planning Policy Guidance notes or Planning Policy Statements detailed in Section 2, or for further general planning information visit the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) website at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/> or for a hard copy contact the DCLG by phone on 0870 1226 236.

To access a downloadable copy of 'By Design, Urban Design in the planning system: Towards Better Practice' and 'Safer Places', documents relating to urban renewal, urban design and creating sustainable communities, and general planning information visit the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) website at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/>. 'Places, Streets & Movement. A companion guide to Design Bulletin 32' can be purchased from the DCLG for a cost of £20.00, quoting ISBN 1 85112 113 7.

Investing in the High Street can be purchased from the Civic Trust for £25.00. The Civic Trust, Winchester House, 259-269 Old Marylebone Road, London NW1 5RA.

Going to Town: Improving Town Centre Access can be downloaded free of charge from the National Retail Planning Forum (NRPF) at www.nrpf.org. A hard copy can also be purchased online at the same website address.

Vital and Viable Town Centres: Meeting the Challenge, is out of print. However, a photocopy of the original document can be purchased from The Stationery Office online at www.tso.co.uk or by phone: 0870 600 5522, Fax: 0870 600 5533 or email: customer.services@tso.co.uk

Further information on the Secured By Design initiative, including details relating to the standards required for a development to

receive Secured By Design accreditation may be found at www.securedbydesign.com

For information regarding any development affecting a historic building or conservation area 'Building In Context' will be able to provide advice. It is available from English Heritage and the CABE and can be downloaded free of charge from <http://www.cabe.org.uk> or for a hard copy contact English Heritage at: Customer Services Department, PO Box 569, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN2 2YP, Tel: 0870 333 1181, Fax: 01793 414 926

You can find out about the planning system and how it works at www.planningportal.gov.uk

Further information regarding Sustainability Appraisals and the Strategic Environmental Assessment can be found in the following documents:

- The Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities (for land use and spatial plans), October 2003
- A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive, September 2005
- Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents, November 2005

Are available via the Department of Communities and Local Government website at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/>. This website also contains a general introduction to SEA and SA. The DCLG can be contacted on 020 7944 4400.

- Strategic Environmental Assessment and Biodiversity: Guidance for Practitioners, June 2004; and
- Strategic Environmental Assessment and Climate Change: Guidance for Practitioners, May 2004

Are available via the Environment Agency website at www.environment-agency.gov.uk or telephone 08708 506 506

Halton Lea Town Centre Strategy



Draft Supplementary Planning Document
Public Consultation
January 2007



Halton Borough Council

Halton Lea Town Centre Strategy

Draft Supplementary Planning Document

**Public Consultation
January 2007**

[] for Public Consultation by Executive Board Sub Committee X January 2007

Public Consultation period Y January to Z March 2007

Operational Director
Environmental and Regulatory Services
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Halton Borough Council
Rutland House
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Plan 5	Potential Transport Opportunities

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This guidance note should be read in conjunction with the relevant policies of the Development Plan.

I Purpose

Introduction

1.1 Halton Lea is one of three town centres within Halton Borough. This Town Centre Strategy has been prepared to update and build upon the previous Strategies adopted by the Council in 1997, and deals with land use planning matters for the centre. It provides additional guidance to that contained in the now saved policies adopted in the Halton Unitary Development Plan. This document is being prepared under the provisions of the 2004 Planning and Compensation Act and will be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), which will form part of the Local Development Framework (LDF) for Halton.

1.2 The Council has also prepared an updated Strategy for Runcorn Old Town at this time. Widnes Town Centre will be the subject of a later Area Action Plan (Development Plan Document). This is due to the more complex land use issues that need to be addressed in Widnes.

1.3 These documents will not deal explicitly with non-land use planning matters such as marketing and visitor information, promotion of business, day to day town centre management, car parking management, crime and anti-social behaviour and the like.

1.4 This document is the draft SPD relating to **Halton Lea town centre**.

Purpose

1.5 The purpose of this SPD is to complement the Halton UDP, to provide additional practical guidance and support for those involved in the planning of new development within Halton Borough to:

- a Enable the town centres to prosper without adversely affecting the health of any other;
- b Safeguard and strengthen the individual role of each town centre as a safe and accessible place to shop, work and enjoy;
- c Co-ordinate public and private investment decisions;
- d Improve the economic prosperity of the Borough through the creation of employment opportunities; and
- e Ensure the highest standard of design and architecture within each town centre.

1.6 By stating this purpose, the Council will seek to improve through its function as a Local Planning Authority any development proposal that does not provide for, or meet the principles encouraged and required by this SPD and the Halton UDP or as replaced by the Halton LDF.

1.7 This SPD is also intended to encourage all of those who have, or will have, an interest in the vitality and viability of the town centre to follow the practical guidance it contains wherever opportunities arise. This will apply whether or not planning permission or other consents are required.

Structure of the document

1.8 In the following sections this document will set Halton Lea in the context of national planning policy and national trends in town centre type uses, before locally specific factors are considered for

each centre, such as historical circumstances and recent and future planned developments. SWOT analysis (Appendix B) identifies current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for the future of the centre, and an assessment of progress regarding recommendations from the original 1997 Town Centre Strategies (Appendix C) completes the evidence and contextual base. From this the strategy identifies:

- Strategic policies and proposals which will be applied across the town centre; and
- Sub area policies and proposals which will apply within each of the identified sub areas.

2 Policy Background

2.1 There are a number of other Supplementary Planning Documents (either adopted or emerging) that will be of relevance to developments within Halton Lea Town centre. Key amongst these are;

- Shop Fronts, Signage and Advertising.
- Designing for Community Safety.
- Design of New Industrial and Commercial Development.
- Design of New Residential Development.
- Transport and Accessibility

2.2 This SPD revises and updates the previous Halton Lea Town Centre Strategy. It has been produced to ensure that through its function as a Local Planning Authority, the Council is in accordance with national and regional guidance and advice and contributes, wherever possible, to meeting the priorities of the community its serves.

National Policy

2.3 Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1): Delivering Sustainable Development, states that planning policies should promote high quality inclusive design in the layout of new developments and individual buildings in terms of function and impact, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development. It also highlights the need to focus developments that attract a large number of people, especially retail, leisure and office development, in existing centres to promote their vitality and viability, social inclusion and more sustainable patterns of development.



Planning shapes the places where people live and work, and the countries in which they live and work. It supports the Government's wider social, environmental and economic objectives and its sustainable development.



2.4 PPS 6: Planning for Town Centres, states that the Government's key objective for town centres is to promote their vitality and viability by:

- planning for the growth and development of existing centres; and
- promoting and enhancing existing centres, by focusing development in such centres and encouraging a wide range of services in a good environment, accessible to all.

2.5 It affirms that it is essential that town centres provide a high-quality and safe environment if they are to remain attractive and competitive. Policies for the design of development for main town centre uses, regardless of location, and for development in town centres, should promote high quality and inclusive design, in order to improve the character, quality and function of areas.

2.6 Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) imposes a duty of the Local Authority to exercise its functions with due regard to the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in its area. The SPD deals with this matter in relation to land use planning considerations only.

Regional Policy

- 2.7 The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the North West is currently in the process of being updated. Adopted RSS Policy SD2 Other Settlements within the North West Metropolitan Area, highlights Runcorn and Widnes as areas where wide-ranging regeneration and environmental enhancement should be secured.
- 2.8 Policy EC8 Town Centres – Retail, Leisure and Office Development states that Development Plans, town centre management initiatives and other strategies should recognise the continued need to protect, sustain and improve all of the town and city centres in the Region.

Local Policy



- 2.9 The Halton UDP currently provides the Development Plan Framework for Halton. However, the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 introduced major changes to the way the planning system operates, with each Local Authority now required to prepare a Local Development Framework. As part of the transitional arrangement for the new planning system the Halton UDP will be automatically saved for a period of three years from the date of adoption. This allows SPDs to be linked to existing 'saved' UDP policies.

- 2.10 The UDP contains a number of strategic aims and objectives, which are set out in its Part I. In relation to Halton's town centres they include the aim to increase their vitality and viability and the need to ensure that no retail development is allowed in one town centre that would seriously harm another.

- 2.11 Part 2 UDP policies seek to implement the broad aims and objectives contained within Part I. Those that are directly relevant to the Halton Lea Town Centre SPD are:

- Policy TC1: Retail & Leisure Allocations, provides a list of sites that are allocated for specific uses, on the basis of both an assessment of need for new retail and leisure facilities in the Borough and a sequential approach to site selection.
- Policy TC2: Retail Development to the Edge Of Designated Shopping Centres, introduces criteria for assessing when development will be permitted on edge of centre locations.
- Policy TC4: Retail development within designated shopping centres, allows for retail development that contributes to the centre's vitality and viability.
- Policy TC5: Design of Retail Development, provides the design criteria for considering new retail development and extensions.
- Policy TC6: Out of Centre Retail Development, provides the criteria to assess out of centre retail proposals including small scale retail developments to meet local needs.
- Policies LTC1, LTC2 and LTC3 in the Leisure, Tourism and Community Facilities chapter provide the criteria to assess major leisure and community facilities that

are located in town centre, edge of town centre and out of centre locations respectively.

- It is also of note that the enclosed Halton Lea shopping centre plus Asda and the Trident Retail Park are shown as being within the Primary Shopping Area of the centre.
- Policy TPI6: Green Travel Plans, indicates the circumstances when a green travel plan will be required as part of a new development. This may include major development proposals and smaller developments that would generate significant amounts of travel where there are particular local traffic problems.

Community Strategy

- 2.12 This SPD is intended to contribute to the implementation of the Halton Community Strategy 2006. This strategy coordinates the resources of the local public, private and voluntary organisations towards common purposes. The vision of the Strategy is that *“Halton will be a thriving and vibrant Borough where people enjoy a good quality of life with good health; a high quality, modern urban environment; the opportunity for all to fulfil their potential; greater wealth and equality sustained by a thriving business community; and safe and attractive neighbourhoods.”*
- 2.13 Within the ‘Halton’s urban renewal’ priority of the Community Strategy there is an objective “to revitalise the town centres to create dynamic, well designed high quality commercial areas that can contribute to meet the needs of local people, investors, businesses and visitors.”
- 2.14 Halton Borough Council is committed to contributing to achieving the priorities of the Community Strategy.

The Council's priorities are set out in the Corporate Plan. This plan also has five priorities, including ‘urban renewal’.

- 2.15 The priorities in the Community Strategy and the Corporate Plan are based on the priorities set by the people of Halton. These were identified through community involvement via area panels, focus groups, and a telephone survey. The Corporate Plan was based on the same community involvement and statistical information compiled for the State Of Borough Report, 2005.

Local Transport Plan

- 2.16 The Halton Local Transport Plan 2006/7 to 2010/11 (LTP2) states that the ability of local people to access work, learning, health care, shopping, leisure and exercise can significantly impact on their quality of life and life chances.
- 2.17 Helping to ensure that people can access the services they need and want, is not just a matter of improving local transport, but also of improving the provision of other services and developments in more accessible places and ways, and at more accessible times. Good access is identified as a critical element in attracting new businesses to relocate to the area or to establish themselves. It includes a Bus, Cycling Parking and Walking Strategy as well as a draft Access Plan.
- 2.18 The LTP is aimed at meeting the targets in the Community Strategy, clearly this means that both this SPD and the LTP are ultimately trying to achieve the same goals and each will benefit the other.

3 Guiding Principles

Introduction

3.1 In addition to formal policy, Government has produced a number of documents that provide additional relevant guidance. Some of these are detailed below.

Vital and Viable Town Centres

3.2 'Vital and Viable town centres: meeting the challenge' (DOE, 1994) provides, through the use of a town centre health check, a method for evaluating town centre vitality and viability. It suggests collating a whole host of indicators, and analysing them using a variety of different techniques such as 4 'A's (attractions, accessibility, amenity and action) approach and swot (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis.

Planning for Town Centres

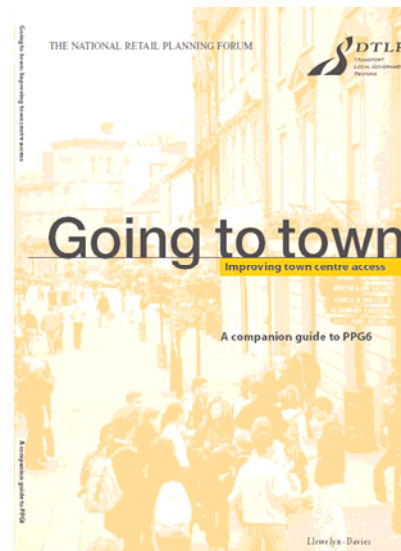
3.3 Planning for Town Centres: Guidance on Design and Implementation tools (ODPM, 2005) provides further detailed design guidance stating that the issues which should be considered for inclusion in local development documents, include:

- identifying the capacity of each centre to accommodate growth and making provision for this;
- providing a comprehensive plan for any area of renewal or development;
- addressing the location and layout of new development;
- developing an urban design strategy, which establishes a comprehensive urban design vision and is supported by specific urban design policies, guidelines or proposals for specific sites;
- addressing the spatial implications of strategies for parking, traffic

management and improvement of the pedestrian environment; and

- setting out a detailed implementation programme for bringing forward development on key sites, including, where appropriate, proposals for addressing issues such as land assembly through compulsory purchase orders.

Going to Town



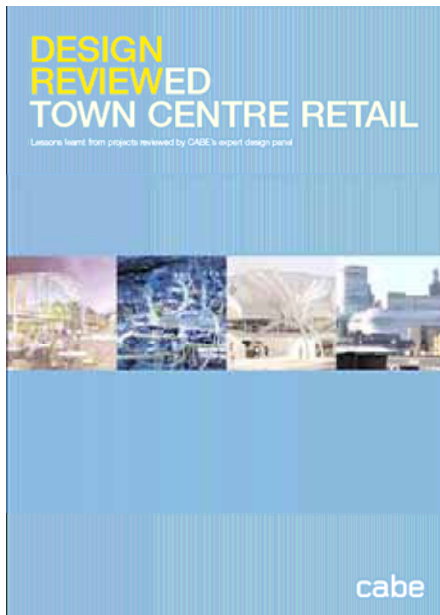
3.4 Going to town – Improving town centre access is a good practice guide and was published in 2002. It highlights what can be done to improve the key routes from the arrival points to the main attractions and provides the principles of route quality these are:

- **Connected:** good pedestrian routes which link the places where people want to go, and form a network
- **Convenient:** direct routes following desire lines, with easy-to-use crossings
- **Comfortable:** good quality footways, with adequate widths and without obstructions

- **Convivial:** attractive well lit and safe, and with variety along the route
- **Conspicuous:** legible routes easy to find and follow, with surface treatments and signs to guide pedestrians

- Good for everyone – the development must minimise any negative impacts on the environment and promote a safe and inclusive environment for all who want to use the town centre, including those with special access needs.

Design Reviewed –Town Centre Retail



3.5 Design Reviewed states that when translated to town centre retail development, we can judge proposed designs against a number of key principles:

- Good urban design – the principles of which are set out in 'By Design', and include the importance of character, legibility, ease of movement, adaptability and a mix of uses.
- Good architecture – buildings with civic quality that enhance their internal and external environments through their scale, massing, proportions and detailing.
- Good for retail – the development must work for retail and leisure providers in their core business, selling products to customers.

Planning and Access for Disabled People

3.6 It contains several good practice points of relevance to this document. This includes the fact that all parties involved in the planning and development process should recognise the benefits of, and endeavour to bring about inclusive design.

Building in Context



3.7 The belief underlying 'Building in context' (English Heritage & CABE, 2002) is that the right approach is to be found in examining the context for any proposed development in great detail and relating the new building to its surroundings through an informed character appraisal. It suggests that a successful project will:

- relate well to the geography and history of the place and the lie of the land;

- sit happily in the pattern of existing development and routes through and around it;
- respect important views;
- respect the scale of neighbouring buildings;
- use materials and building methods which are as high in quality as those used in existing buildings; and
- create new views and juxtapositions which add to the variety and texture of the setting.

4 Understanding the Issues

History and context within the Borough

4.1 Halton Borough has three town centres at Widnes, Runcorn Old Town and Halton Lea, and the quality and image of these shopping centres play an important role in securing economic growth and providing wider community services.

4.2 Halton Lea is the second largest (behind Widnes) of the three town centres and includes a custom built elevated covered shopping mall with 4 dedicated multi storey car parks in each corner (offering 1,950 free spaces). The enclosed centre contains approximately 51,000 square metres of floorspace on two levels, comprising a main shopping level and a balconied floor.

4.3 It is distinctive because it segregates the pedestrian, private and service vehicles and public transport (bus). This segregation is achieved vertically i.e. circulation of private and service vehicles at ground level, pedestrians at the raised shopping mall level above and public transport interchanges being at a further raised level above the shopping mall at its northern and southern ends, connecting to the busway. Passengers link directly to the shopping level via stairs, escalators and lifts. There is an upper level of vacant and underused floorspace above the shopping mall.

4.4 The wider Halton Lea area comprises:

- a freestanding Asda superstore to the west;
- Trident Park adjoining the centre to the south. This comprises a

further 17,000 sq.m of shopping and leisure development;

- To the north (and linked by an enclosed pedestrian walkway) are the library and an office block (Rutland House) with the police station, law courts and a further multi-storey office block (Grosvenor House) beyond;
- There are also other buildings outside the main access roads to the centre, including vacant and occupied Government Offices.

4.5 Runcorn New Town was designated in 1964 with a master plan aiming to provide homes and jobs for 45,000 people, which was envisaged to increase to an ultimate population of 100,000. Halton Lea (then called Shopping City) was purpose built to be the main shopping and commercial centre for the New Town as well as providing a wider sub-regional role.

4.6 Shops opened in November 1971, which pre-dated the development of several surrounding New Town residential areas. The centre was to be developed in further phases as the New Town population grew but this growth has been slower than anticipated, so that the role of Halton Lea has not developed into what was originally envisaged. Halton Lea has therefore never fulfilled the role of a traditional town centre, with a diverse range of uses. Nevertheless, it has improved since declining to a low point in the mid 1990's and a platform for further success has therefore been established.

Town Centre Strategy 1997

4.7 In 1997 Halton Borough Council adopted the Town Centre Strategy for

Halton Lea as Supplementary Planning Guidance. The strategy aimed to consolidate the refurbishment of Halton Lea shopping centre and the development of the Southern Loop site so that it fulfilled the role as the main centre of attraction for Runcorn and surrounding villages.

- 4.8 The Town Centre Strategy contained 39 proposals based around the headings of integration, enhancement, efficiency, promotion and development.

National issues

- 4.9 There are several national trends regarding town centres that put Halton Lea in context. These include:

- **Increased competition** for customers both between individual retailers and between shopping centres. This means that if a centre does not improve its offer, environment and attraction it will decline relative to other centres;
- Increased competition for town centres from **edge or out of centre retail parks** which have an advantage in terms of abundant free surface level car parking;
- A **smaller number of large national operators** having a **greater market share**. This means that centres become more alike with a reduction in the number of independents;
- **Superstores** selling an **increased range of non-food goods** to increase their market share;
- **Growth in the size of units** to meet the requirements of modern occupiers;
- Growth in the **leisure shopping trip**. Customers are becoming more discerning about the shopping experience they expect. Centres that can provide shopping as a leisure 'event', with a

distinctive experience, for example combining the likes of eating out or a visit to the cinema, will be more attractive than those that provide a standard experience.

- Leisure shopping trips also increase **dwell times** in centres, which is desirable in terms of increasing the footfall in a centre.

Local issues

- 4.10 Three different sources of information have been used to collate the local issues:

- the Review of UDP Retail and Leisure Issues Report by Chestertons (2002)
- SWOT Analysis 2005
- Town Centre Baseline report (2004) supplemented by an 'in house' Halton Lea Town Centre Survey (summer 2005)

- 4.11 The existing Town Centre Strategy has also been reviewed, a progress update of recommendations contained in the existing Town Centre Strategy (1997) is at Appendix C. There has been a good level of success with many of these proposals being achieved or partially achieved.

- 4.12 Identified local issues are:

- The catchment area of the centre is less affluent than the national average. There is potential to increase the number of customers to Halton Lea by improving the centre's offer;
- The Chesterton Report (2002) considered that the centre was under performing. A new strategic direction was needed to stabilise and improve its trading position.
- There are several planned future developments in and around the centre which are detailed when considering the sub-areas.

- Vacancies at mall level increased significantly to a peak in the late 1990's but this situation has since improved. Meadow Walk has been closed off to facilitate reconfiguration of the existing units and mall to create unit sizes that are more attractive to modern retailers.
- There has been an improvement in the number of non-food retail multiples in the centre and diversification of the leisure offer. Trident Park has played a notable role in this turn around.
- A town centre user survey indicated that perceptions of safety in the centre were better than for the other town centres in the Borough.
- Rental yields indicate that investor confidence is not particularly high.
- There is competition for occupiers of the larger office buildings from more modern and attractive offices, such as Daresbury Park, Preston Brook and other locations outside the Borough.

4.13 Strategic policies that have been drawn out of these national and local issues are highlighted in section 5.

SWOT analysis

4.14 SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) of Halton Lea has been undertaken and is reproduced at Appendix B. The main findings from this are:

Strengths

4.15 The centre has a large catchment population of potential shoppers. There is the potential for walk in shopping trips from surrounding employment and residential areas. There is a large amount of free car parking and the centre is accessible by bus. Malls provide protection from the

weather and are clean and safe. Trident Park successfully links with the main shopping centre and has diversified the range of activities.

Weaknesses

4.16 Halton Lea shopping centre has an impenetrable appearance from the outside. There is poor pedestrian linkage from surrounding ground level uses. Some buildings are showing their age.

4.17 The segregation of vehicles and pedestrians has created a 'concrete collar' of roads around the centre. Footbridges do not always appear to be the easiest means of access nor are they well maintained.

4.18 The one-way busway loop around Halton Lea results in there being two main public transport gateways into the centre (Halton Lea North and South) both of which require investment. There is a reasonable distance between the two, which does not aid effective integration in the evening when the shopping mall is closed. At these times pedestrians must walk at ground level to connect between the two.

4.19 There is a lack of retail variety, including the absence of a mall anchor. There is a large amount of void floorspace at the balcony level, which has never developed a successful role. Some vacancies at mall level do not meet the requirements of modern operators.

Opportunities

4.20 The development of the proposed Mersey Gateway Bridge (MGB) would significantly increase traffic (and therefore potential custom) passing Halton Lea on the Central Expressway, thus making the centre a more attractive commercial location. The provision of an anchor store in

connection with the implementation of the planned extension to Halton Lea across East Lane would reduce leakage of shopping spending to other centres. Reconfiguration of vacant mall units would assist in meeting modern operator requirements.

- 4.21 Reorganising and investing in public transport facilities should be investigated. The operational need for service and access roads around and underneath the centre should be reviewed, which could assist pedestrians at ground level. The evening economy could be expanded, based around Cineworld. Pedestrian and vehicular signage around the centre could be improved.

Threats

- 4.22 If Halton Lea does not improve, it will decline relative to other centres. There is competition from other towns in the area and from more modern offices. Cineworld must remain open to anchor the evening economy. There is an apparent lack of co-ordination of management activities between owners in and around Halton Lea including in relation to car parking.

Halton Lea Town Centre Survey 2005

- 4.23 The Council undertook a survey of the three main town centres within the borough in summer 2005. The purpose of this survey was to update previous work done by consultancies in 1999 and 1994. The results of this latest work also supplemented the town centre baseline study, undertaken in 2004.

- 4.24 In the years since 1999, Halton Lea has seen pronounced increases in floor space in a number of goods categories with the food and convenience goods category growing by 3400 sq.m floorspace. By far the largest increase has been in the toys / sports / video

category which has grown from 251 sq.m in 1999 to 7250 sq.m in 2005. This goods category now occupies 13% of Halton Lea floorspace as opposed to less than 1% six years previously.

- 4.25 In a marked difference to current retail market trends both nationally and regionally, the amount of floorspace devoted to the clothes / shoes goods category has actually decreased by around 1500 sq.m. The percentage in overall floorspace is now less than half of what it used to be, dropping from 14% in 1999, to 6% in 2005. There have also been increases in financial and professional services, leisure uses and food and drink categories, all of which have doubled in floorspace since 1999. However, there is no dedicated bookstore, which in some cases can compliment other associated uses, such as coffee shops.

- 4.26 After an initial decrease in vacant floorspace between 1994 and 1999, there has been an increase in vacancies leading up to the most recent survey. In summer 2005, there was 6,245 sq.m of vacant floorspace as opposed to 4,396 sq.m in 1999. This means that 20% of Halton Lea floorspace, is currently vacant. However, it must be noted that this figure includes vacancies at Trident Park, the development of which has added to the town centre's attraction, and above the mall level within the covered shopping centre. The level of vacancy is therefore a little misleading and unquestionably the town centre has improved in recent years.

5 Strategic Policies

Vision for Halton Lea

To enhance the retail, leisure and commercial function of Halton Lea so that it fulfils the role as the main centre of attraction for Runcorn and surrounding villages, whilst complementing the role of Runcorn Old Town.

- 5.1 Sections 5 and 7 to 12 contain policies and proposals that will be applied to Halton Lea Town Centre. They are not presented in any particular order either in terms of importance, timetable or deliverability.
- 5.2 Section 5 below contains strategic policies that apply to the town centre as a whole whereas policies in following sections 7-12 apply to specific sub areas in the centre. There are occasions when the two are linked, for example, there is an overarching policy in section 5 which deals with directional signage (SP9) which has a daughter policy in the Central Area (CAP2) that complements it and highlights a more specific location within the town centre where such an improvement should be promoted. Where this occurs there are clear cross references between the overarching strategic policy and the more specific sub area policy.
- 5.3 It is also of note that there are several policies, both strategic and specific to the sub areas, which promote the use of planning obligations to assist in the improvement of the town centre. These improvements fall into four categories, which are in relation to transport accessibility, linkages, the local environment and functional improvement of the town centre. For ease of reference, Appendix D contains details of all policies that have reference to planning obligations and

therefore indicates the type of activities for which obligations could be used. This document cannot prescribe the exact nature of obligations being sought as this must be done on a case by case basis in compliance with Circular 05/05. However, as a generality prioritisation will initially be given to schemes directed towards the improvement of accessibility and linkage to the centre.

- 5.4 As a Supplementary Planning Document, this Town Centre Strategy is unable to formally designate sites for development. However, it is able to identify development principles for existing opportunities (such as UDP allocations and planning permissions). Sites that are identified as new opportunities can, if necessary, be taken forward as designations through the New Retail and Leisure Development DPD.

STRATEGIC POLICY I

Improve retail and leisure choice at Halton Lea.



Photo 1: Activities in Town Square

Implementation:

5.5 This will be the responsibility of the centre’s owners, Fordgate, and would be assisted by Central Area Policy I, Trident Park Policy I and East Lane Policy I in particular.

STRATEGIC POLICY 2

Review the Halton Lea Primary Shopping Area (PSA) boundary as part of a future Development Plan Document (DPD).

5.6 The covered shopping centre, multi-storey car parks, the southern bus terminus, Asda and Trident Park all fall entirely within the Primary Shopping Area for Halton Lea in the Unitary Development Plan. This covers a wide area and it is appropriate to consider whether all these areas function as ‘in centre’ in policy terms and therefore if the current PSA boundary is appropriate.

Implementation:

5.7 A SPD can only identify this issue. Any review of the PSA boundary shown on the Proposals Map of the saved Plan (i.e. the UDP) must be done by Halton Borough Council, in conjunction with interested parties, as part of the forthcoming New Retail and Leisure Development Plan Document (DPD).

STRATEGIC POLICY 3

Improve linkages to the shopping centre from surrounding areas by:

- the enhancement of existing footbridges; and
- continued active management and enhancement of footpaths around the shopping centre, including from surrounding residential areas.

The Council will seek contributions for this from all new developments at Halton Lea through planning obligations.

5.8 Halton Lea was designed to meet the shopping and commercial needs of the New Town. As well as car borne visitors, this was also to include residents on foot from the surrounding areas of Palacefields and Hallwood Park (formerly Southgate). Footbridges and footpaths were constructed to assist this, some of which now require improvement and upgrading.



Photo 2: Footbridge towards Asda

Implementation:

5.9 The Council will seek planning obligations from all major new developments within the town centre (areas 1-6a inclusive as shown on Plan 2) to provide contributions towards the creation of a safe and attractive environment. This will include the improvement of linkages to surrounding areas by the enhancement of footpaths and footbridges, including resurfacing and exploring the potential for canopies.

STRATEGIC POLICY 4

Development of sites incorporating or adjoining greenways should be in accordance with UDP Policy TP9.

5.10 The greenway network is made up of proposed and potential off road routes for walking, cycling and, where appropriate, horseriding. These

connect people to facilities and greenspaces.

Implementation:

5.11 Development of sites that incorporate a greenway will be expected to enhance the condition and appearance of proposed routes and implement potential routes. Where proposed development adjoins a greenway, extensions and improvements to the network will be sought through negotiation.

STRATEGIC POLICY 5

Develop a Parking Partnership with all private car park operators that will review and monitor the impact of the emerging regeneration of Halton Lea on the demand for and provision of car parking.

5.12 Local Transport Plan 2 indicates that the Council will seek to develop a Parking Partnership with all private car parking operators. This is important in and around town centres where much of the car parking provision is in private rather than Council ownership, particularly at Halton Lea. It would facilitate a consistent approach to be taken towards parking management in and around the town centre.

5.13 Currently, there is not a parking capacity problem at Halton Lea, with upper levels of multi-storeys being underused, particularly at weekends. However, the planned extension to the centre (see East Lane Policy 1) could have implications in the future if, as desired, the development contributes towards a ‘step change’ in offer and consequently attracts significant numbers of new shoppers to Halton Lea.

Implementation:

5.14 A Parking Partnership would need to be developed between the owners of the shopping centre (Fordgate) the Council and other owners in the area such as Asda.

STRATEGIC POLICY 6

Develop a strategy for ground level pedestrian circulation around the shopping centre in the evening, when malls are closed.

5.15 The Halton Lea shopping centre closes at 6pm on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday, between 8.30 to 9pm on Thursday and Friday and at 5.30pm on Sundays. Shopping malls are not adopted highway and are privately owned. They are closed to pedestrians around these times as part of the management of the centre, which is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future. Access from footbridges into the car parks is also gated off in the evening, usually about an hour after the shopping malls are closed off. Safe evening pedestrian circulation at ground level is therefore an issue as is circulation during the day, for example between multi-storey car parks and office developments surrounding the covered shopping centre.



Photo 3: Pedestrian crossing road at ground level

5.16 It is also of note that there are issues regarding pedestrian circulation at

ground level during the daytime. Whilst access from multi-storeys to the surrounding areas is easiest in an east west direction via footbridges, some pedestrian movements do occur at ground level to the office and civic area to the north, which can create conflicts with vehicles.

Implementation:

5.17 Halton Borough Council, Fordgate and other site owners. The implementation of East Lane Policy 1 would give a major impetus to this work.

STRATEGIC POLICY 7

Increase in quality and quantity of public art within Halton Lea Town Centre.

5.18 Halton UDP policy BE2 states that development should take account of the provision of public art and the integration of art and craft work into the design of the development scheme. Supporting text to the policy explains that the Council will actively encourage developers to spend a percentage of the total development cost or a fixed amount of money on providing art and craftwork and on seeking the influence of artists and craft skills alongside architects and building professionals, to ensure integration of art and craftwork features as an essential part of the design.

5.19 Public art is particularly important within town centres as it contributes to improving the quality of the environment. Good public art helps create a sense place, identity and community, it also adds to the cultural capital of an locality, all vital to making a town centre an attractive and vibrant place to visit. Public art embraces many aspects of the public realm including sculptures, murals, water features and lighting. It can be stand alone or incorporated into the design of

buildings and spaces around them, such as through use of decorative boundary treatments or patterned floorscapes.

Implementation:

5.20 In accordance with UDP policy BE2, the Council will seek all new development (including change of use), within areas 1-6a inclusive as shown on Plan 2, to allocate 1% of the total development costs (defined as construction costs) towards the enhancement of public art within Halton Lea. The one percent approach is a standard national and international recognised figure. This will be required to be either directly provided on or off site; or via a commuted sum towards the provision of public art in the defined area. All public art must be demonstrated to be provided within a publicly accessible or visible locality. where appropriate, maintenance and other revenue implications will be taken into account when provision relates to a specific work of public art.

5.21 The Council is currently developing a public art strategy, this will provide further information on the provision of public in Halton. This will identify key locations, such as gateways to the town centre, were commuted sums will be directed, and if necessary accumulated to ensure high quality public art is achieved.

STRATEGIC POLICY 8

Provide a co-ordinated approach to the future provision of street furniture and ensure that it is usable by all members of the public, is well located and does not cause a safety issue.

5.22 The provision of street furniture needs to be well managed and coordinated. It will also need to be durable, easy to maintain and fit for purpose, and placed with consideration to ensure that it

will contribute to the aesthetic and functional qualities of public spaces.

Implementation:

5.23 The Council can assist in the provision of a co-ordinated approach to the provision of high quality street furniture within and around Halton Lea.

5.24 The Council will seek planning obligations from all new developments within the town centre (areas 1-6a inclusive as shown on Plan 2) to provide monies towards the creation of a safe and attractive environment, including the provision of high quality and co-ordinated street furniture.



Photo 4: Cycle racks in multi-storeys

STRATEGIC POLICY 9

All new developments should make suitable provision for safe and convenient cycle access linked to existing or proposed routes (where opportunities exist) and provide for convenient, safe, secure and covered cycle parking that is likely to be attractive to potential users in line with UDP Policy TP6.

5.25 This will encourage the greater use of this more sustainable form of transport and should ensure that any bicycles are safe from theft and are not causing a hazard to other road/footpath users.

5.26 Where provision of cycle lockers is not practicable, for reasons of security, ‘Sheffield’ style bicycle racks will be required and not the less secure ‘butterfly’ design.

Implementation:

5.27 Where the development proposed requires off-site access improvements or the development is incapable or unsuitable for the on-site provision of cycle parking either due to site constraints or highway safety issues, payment in lieu of on-site provision as part of a planning obligation may be acceptable. See also Central Area Policy 4 and Civic Quarter Policy 3.

5.28 Further information with regard to cycle storage, facilities and networks will be provided in the forthcoming Transport and Accessibility SPD.

STRATEGIC POLICY 10

Introduce more soft landscaping for screening and decoration, particularly in connection with development and redevelopment opportunities.

5.29 Halton Lea has been developed with a large amount of hard landscaping. Whilst this has given the town centre a distinctive appearance, some hard landscaping has either dated over time or presents a featureless environment. More recent built additions to the town centre have seen the introduction of soft landscaping (such as Asda or newer offices) which has added diversity and improved the visual appearance.

Implementation:

5.30 The introduction of further quality soft landscaping should be encouraged during future development and redevelopment of Halton Lea town centre. This would have visual benefits as well as environmental ones in terms of reducing surface run off of rainfall. This would primarily be the responsibility of Halton Borough Council, as the Local Planning Authority, when determining planning applications and imposing conditions on planning permissions as well as Fordgate, as the majority property holder. Where appropriate, Edinburgh House and other major occupiers of the town centre should be encouraged to introduce more soft landscaping, where this would be compliant with planning, highways and other legislation.

the best car park to locate in relation to various attractions of the centre (shops, Council offices etc). The second would be enhanced directions at the bus termini.

5.33 Thirdly, the development of the Mersey Gateway Bridge (MGB) will increase traffic on the Central Expressway adjoining Halton Lea. Although the town centre adjoins this road it is somewhat screened by virtue of topography and landscaping. As such, there may be potential in the future to open up views to the town centre from the Expressway. Improving the attraction of the centre through the planned commercial developments detailed elsewhere in this SPD, coupled with increased passing trade, represents a significant opportunity to improve patronage of the centre.

STRATEGIC POLICY 11

Improve directional signage to and within the town centre.

All signage should be co-ordinated to ensure a consistent approach is taken to design, location and naming across the town centre.

5.31 The unconventional and, in certain locations, impenetrable appearance of the town centre can make it difficult for visitors to have a sense of where they are in relation to other parts of the centre or where to gain the most appropriate access. Whilst some improvements have taken place already to improve permeability, better directional signage would be beneficial both in terms of updating and further additions.

5.32 There are three particular locations where there would be benefits from improved signage. The first would be to enhance directions for motor vehicle users regarding which would be

Implementation:

5.34 Halton Borough Council will seek planning obligations from all new developments within the town centre to provide monies towards the creation of a safe and attractive environment, including the provision of appropriate signage. Fordgate, as owners of the shopping centre, also have a significant role to play in the improvement of signage. A consistency in style would generate a sense of place, so must be encouraged. Strategic Policy 14 provides an arena to enable this.

STRATEGIC POLICY 12

All developments should comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Acts (DDAs).

5.35 There are Disability Discrimination Acts (DDAs) of 1995 and 2005. The need to comply with the DDA should be considered as inherent within all policies that promote development

within the centre where there is access to buildings and public areas. There is also a need to comply with the DDA for improvements that are outwith of the planning system, for example in relation to existing buildings. Consideration should be given to the requirements of DDA in the early stages of drawing up a proposal, alongside access requirements identified by UDP policies BE18-20.

Halton Borough Council, Asda, Edinburgh House and Savills. Halton Borough Council and Fordgate would logically act as the lead.

Implementation:

5.36 Initial contact regarding DDA should be with the Council's Building Control Service, details of which are given at Appendix A.

STRATEGIC POLICY 13

Recycling facilities should be rationalised and improved.

5.37 Existing public recycling facilities for the town centre are located at the Asda car park in the West Lane area and it would be desirable to improve these. This policy does not preclude the development of additional recycling facilities, as appropriate, in connection with further developments.

Implementation:

5.38 This will be the responsibility of the site owner, potentially in conjunction with Halton Borough Council, where appropriate.

STRATEGIC POLICY 14

Co-ordinate future action and improvements for Halton Lea and disseminate relevant information by setting up a town centre group, to meet periodically.

Implementation:

5.39 This group would consist of owners and other major interested parties in the town centre, such as Fordgate,

6 Sub Area Analysis

6.1 Halton Lea comprises a number of distinct areas as follows:

- **Halton Lea shopping centre** – this forms the core area of the centre and is enclosed by access roads to and around the centre;
- **Trident Park** – area to the south of Southway and west of West Lane consisting of large space retail and leisure users;
- **West Lane Area** – area to the west of West Lane including Asda and Vestric House;
- **Civic Quarter** - to the north of Second Avenue and south of Northway;
- **East Lane area** – to the east of East Lane and West of Palacefields.
- **Halton Hospital, Palacefields and Hallwood Park** – including the medical quarter to the south of Hospital Way and east of East Lane and the Hallwood Link Road and residential areas to the south (Hallwood Park) and east (Palacefields).

6.2 These areas are shown on Plan 2 in the Appendices and the function of each is considered in the ensuing sections 7-12.

6.3 Particular planning issues are linkages between sub areas, providing adequate car parking and where to focus new developments of adequate size to bolster town centre performance.

6.4 Each of the sub areas have been considered in more detail in the next section. They have all been set out in a similar format. This entails explaining the current situation in terms of details of the present condition of the sub-area and existing planning policy. From

the issues for the centre that have been identified, Policy Proposals and their implementation strategies are promoted to overcome these issues.

6.5 As indicated at paragraph 5.4, as a Supplementary Planning Document, this Town Centre Strategy is unable to formally designate sites for development.

7 Central Area - Covered Halton Lea Shopping Centre

- 7.1 This area comprises the covered shopping mall, four multi-storey car parks at each corner and two bus termini. The covered shopping centre segregates the pedestrian from vehicles vertically. Servicing and private vehicle access is beneath and surrounding the centre at ground level.



Photo 5: Service roads underneath mall

- 7.2 The enclosed nature of the centre means that there are limitations regarding planning controls compared to the other town centres in Halton. Within the centre, shop fronts are exempt from requiring advertisement consent and planning permission is not required for change of use or internal alterations. However, the single overall ownership and management of the centre results in consistency in the quality of frontages and the general shopping environment, which is clean, albeit somewhat dated.
- 7.3 The focal point for the Central Area is Town Square, which has developed more active uses and interest over recent years. Events take place, particularly in school holidays and kiosks have been introduced to offer the first step on the ladder to obtain commercial representation. The

presence of street furniture gives variety and additional customer facilities have been added, such as toilets a short distance away on Town Walk.

CENTRAL AREA POLICY I

Reconfigure smaller vacant units in the shopping centre to create new premises that are attractive to modern retailers.

- 7.4 There has been significant progress in tidying up unsightly and underused hinterland areas between the shopping mall and bus termini. The northern area has been converted to Halton Direct Link (a one stop shop for Council services) and the southern end has seen the development of Job Centre Plus and a food takeaway.
- 7.5 Similarly, vacant mall floorspace also detracts from the vitality and viability of the centre. There are opportunities to improve attraction by accommodating modern retailer requirements through the amalgamation of smaller vacant units to create larger premises. It is understood that this is already taking place in the former Meadow Walk area, which has been closed off to enable redevelopment.



Photo 6: Meadow Walk prior to closure

Implementation:

7.6 This is the responsibility of the shopping centre owner, Fordgate and would assist progressing Strategic Policy I.

CENTRAL AREA POLICY 2

Improve directional signage in multi-storey car parks to reduce pedestrian/ motor vehicle conflicts by guiding pedestrians towards the refurbished stairwells.

7.7 Car parks are named Meadow, Orchard, Bridge and River. They are managed by Strata Security and Combined Services Ltd and have been awarded the Park Mark Safer Parking Award. Car parking is free, and the only restriction is that level D (the main shopping deck) is specifically for shopper usage with a maximum 3 hours stay. Currently, the Meadow car park is largely closed off due to works in connection with Strategic Policy I and potential action in relation to East Lane Policy I.

Implementation:

7.8 Despite the presence of existing signage, and partly due to the unattractive nature of some stairwells, a notable proportion of visitors to the town centre walk along vehicle ramps in the multi storey car parks to access different levels. This is a safety hazard, accentuated in wet conditions. Improved directional signage, in conjunction with Central Area Policy 3 would reduce this problem. The emphasis should be on quality rather than quantity. It is the responsibility of the shopping centre owner, Fordgate and would assist progressing Strategic Policy II.

CENTRAL AREA POLICY 3

Investigate opening up and refurbishing stairwells in multi-

storey car parks to enable access via them to the highest deck levels.

7.9 There are four stairwells at the corner of each multi-storey, allowing access between all car park levels and the mall. One stairwell has been refurbished in each car park adjoining the pedestrian walkway (feeding from footbridges) with the remaining three being in a comparatively poor standard of maintenance.

7.10 If the highest levels of the multi-storeys become more heavily used as a consequence of improvements in the patronage of the shopping centre, there will be a need to consider reopening the upper levels of stairwells. This would allow access via them to all levels of the multi-storey car parks (currently they are boarded off at level F and therefore access to higher levels must, by necessity, be via the vehicle ramps).



Photo 7: Non-refurbished stairwells at multi storeys

Implementation:

7.11 This is the responsibility of the shopping centre owner, Fordgate, in conjunction with advice from Halton Borough Council. It would be assisted through Strategic Policy 5 and would assist the successful implementation of East Lane Policy I.

CENTRAL AREA POLICY 4

Investigate the potential for secure parking for motorcycles in multi-storey car parks, involving the provision of dedicated spaces with bollards or hoops.

7.12 There is no dedicated parking for motorcycles in the multi-storey car parks, although dedicated cycle racks are provided (on level D only). The provision of secure, dedicated motorcycle parking for customers should be investigated. This would involve considering the ground level in multi-storeys as the first option.

Implementation:

7.13 This is the responsibility of the shopping centre owner, Fordgate, in conjunction with advice from Halton Borough Council. It would be assisted through Strategic Policies 5 and 14.

7.14 Multi-storey car parks are also a suitable location for additional or replacement cycle racks which should be provided in accordance with Strategic Policy 9.

CENTRAL AREA POLICY 5

Refurbish and improve the existing bus termini.

7.15 The northern and southern bus termini are important gateways into the town centre. Their attractiveness can influence individual decisions regarding the use of public transport to visit the centre. The northern bus terminus and associated access is owned by Halton Borough Council whilst, although the southern terminus is also owned by HBC, the link building containing stairs, lifts and escalators belongs to Fordgate. Both are in need of improvement, including better signage and information. The northern terminus particularly is an unattractive entrance point and is in need of some remedial

measures such as the insertion of new benches and flooring.



Photo 8: Northern Bus Terminus



Photo 9: Surface leading from Northern Bus Terminus

Implementation:

7.16 This is the responsibility of Fordgate and Halton Borough Council. An improvement project for the northern terminus is planned to begin in spring 2007 and will include enclosing the platform, the provision of additional seating and installation of CCTV. The Council will seek planning obligations from all new developments within the town centre (areas 1-6a inclusive as shown on Plan 2) to provide monies towards the creation of a safe and attractive environment, including public transport infrastructure. Strategic policies 8 and 11 could assist.

8 Trident Park

- 8.1 Trident Park is a retail and leisure park to the south of the Halton Lea shopping centre. It comprises approximately 17,000 sq.m of floorspace and 322 parking spaces and was developed during the late 1990s. It has introduced a variety of new national operators to the town centre and has therefore been a significant success. It is also conveniently located to encourage linked trips with the covered shopping centre.
- 8.2 Trident is the major location of night time activity at Halton Lea, as it includes Cineworld. However, presently the town centre is not a vibrant and established evening destination. Consequently, Halton Lea and Runcorn Old Town have a complementary relationship with the former being the main retail destination for Runcorn and the Old Town being the main evening destination.
- 8.3 The area is well served by public transport from the southern bus terminus and taxi ranks. The Runcorn cycleway also passes through the car park in front of Fitness First and Carpertright.
- 8.4 Both Trident and Asda to the north west (see next section) are shown wholly within the Primary Shopping Area (PSA) in the UDP.

TRIDENT PARK POLICY 1

Develop additional small scale retail or leisure uses in the area of under used car parking space to the south of Cineworld.

- 8.5 The bulk of surface level car parking is well used. However, patronage is lower on the western side of Trident,

adjoining Carpertright and Fitness First and to the south of Cineworld. The underused car parking area to the south of Cineworld represents a development opportunity and planning permissions exists here for 3 relatively small additional retail units. This forms part of wider proposals to reorganise and improve the offer of Trident Park.



Photo 10: Under used car parking adjoining Cineworld

Implementation:

- 8.6 Implementation of these planning permissions is the responsibility of the site owner, Fordgate.

TRIDENT PARK POLICY 2

Develop a new vehicular access and an improved pedestrian access into Trident Park from Hallwood Park Road

- 8.7 As part of the planning permissions mentioned at 8.5 above, a new vehicular access into the retail park from the Hallwood Link Road and improved pedestrian access are planned. It would improve the accessibility of Trident Park and is shown locationally on Plan 5.

Implementation:

- 8.8 This is the responsibility of the site owner, Fordgate, in co-ordination

with Halton Borough Council regarding works encroaching onto the public highway. Contributions to funding works to the public highway could be achieved through planning obligations in relation to selected associated developments within the town centre (areas 1-6a inclusive as shown on Plan 2).

either reduced rents or more flexible leases.

Implementation:

8.11 This would be the responsibility of the owner, Fordgate, and would assist in the implementation of Strategic Policy 1.

TRIDENT PARK POLICY 3

Seek active uses for remaining vacant units at Trident Park, if necessary by the use of attractive letting terms, such as reduced rents or shorter letting periods.



Photo 11: Civic Square, note vacant units on right

8.9 There are two larger vacant properties on the western side of the Park (1,115 sq.m and 929 sq.m) It is understood that these could be occupied as part of wider proposals to reorganise and improve the offer of Trident Park.

8.10 The civic square outside Cineworld provides a good quality, external public space with street furniture and public art, which adds to aesthetic quality. However, the presence of small, longstanding, vacant units at the eastern edge of the Park close to Cineworld detracts. In order to diversify uses and increase activity, consideration should be given to attractive terms of occupation for these units, such as in the form of

9 West Lane Area

- 9.1 The West Lane area largely functions as a successful stand alone destination. It comprises an Asda superstore of 6,652 sq.m, petrol filling station and drive through McDonalds. There are 516 associated car parking spaces. Stand alone offices (Vestric House) are located in this area, to the north.
- 9.2 Soft landscaping provides a pleasant alternative to the hard landscaping found in several other areas of Halton Lea. Planning permission exists to extend Asda by 1,568 sq.m.



Photo 12: Asda site

upgrading. Funding for this could be sought in part from developer contributions in the form of planning obligations, facilitated by Strategic Policy 3. Pedestrian and cycle linkages to Trident could also be reinforced to encourage more linked trips.



Photo 13: Pedestrian links between Trident Park and Asda

WEST LANE POLICY 1

Improvements to public transport accessibility will be sought in the West Lane area, adjoining the busway.

- 9.3 Asda is less well located in relation to public transport and predominantly serves car borne shoppers. As part of the planning permission for the extension, a financial contribution has been agreed towards improving accessibility to public transport.
- 9.4 Whilst Asda trades well, there are only a modest number of linked trips between it and the rest of the town centre. Two pedestrian footbridges connecting it to the covered shopping centre require maintenance and

Implementation:

- 9.5 This is likely to be the responsibility of Halton Borough Council, but would depend upon the precise location of improvements and corresponding site ownership. Planning obligations would facilitate such improvements.

WEST LANE POLICY 2

Should the Vestric House site become available for redevelopment, first preference should be for reuse for employment purposes.

If the site does not prove to be attractive for such uses within a reasonable period of time, next preference should be for other uses that would contribute towards the vitality and viability of Halton Lea town centre.

- 9.6 The Vestric House site is located to the north of Asda and is shown hatched on Plan 2. It is segregated from

the rest of the West Lane area by the busway. It falls within a Primarily Employment Area on the Halton Unitary Development Plan proposals map. Policy E3 (Primarily Employment Area) is relevant in the first instance, with potential for additional consideration against Policy E4 (Complementary Services and Facilities within Primarily Employment Areas).

Implementation:

- 9.7 It would be for any potential developer of the site to prove to Halton Borough Council, in its role as Local Planning Authority, that a particular proposal is suitable when considered in relation to development plan policies and any other material considerations.

10 Civic Quarter

- 10.1 This area contains a mix of civic and office uses, including Rutland House and Grosvenor House (office blocks), a library, Halton Direct Link (Council one stop shop), police station and law courts. More recently developed offices are located on the edge of this area.
- 10.2 The majority of uses were developed at the same time as the shopping centre. Grosvenor House and surrounding hard landscaping is showing its age, creating an unattractive and uncompromising environment. Newer offices are surrounded by more visually appealing soft landscaping. Competition from more desirable and modern locations, including business parks, such as Daresbury Park has made this area a less attractive location for major office users than when it was developed in the '70s.
- 10.3 The location falls within a Primarily Employment Area in the adopted UDP and employment (B Use Class) development is considered appropriate, subject to compliance with other plan policies. It lies outside the Primary Shopping Area (PSA) boundary, which follows the southern side of East Lane.



Photo 14: Hard landscaping at Grosvenor House

CIVIC QUARTER POLICY I

Should the Grosvenor House site become available for redevelopment, first preference should be for reuse for employment purposes.

If the site does not prove to be attractive for such uses within a reasonable period of time, next preference should be for other uses that would contribute towards the vitality and viability of Halton Lea town centre.

- 10.4 Relevant UDP policies to consider any future major proposals for Grosvenor House against are E3 (Primarily Employment Area) in the first instance, with potential for additional consideration against E4 (Complementary Services and Facilities within Primarily Employment Areas).
- 10.5 On a smaller scale, there is potential to redevelop the hard landscaped areas adjoining Grosvenor House to improve attraction and security. As indicated at paragraph 10.2, this area is showing its age. This could involve the development of glazed atriums for a combination of lettable office space and/ or internal public space. Any such development would need to maintain a clearly defined pedestrian link to Wingate House and cycle access towards the west.

Implementation:

- 10.6 It would be for any potential developer of the site to prove to Halton Borough Council, in its role as Local Planning Authority, that a particular proposal is suitable when considered in relation to development plan policies and any other material considerations.

10.7 Smaller scale proposals are likely to be the responsibility of the major landowner and site manager in this area, Edinburgh House and Savills. It would need to be done in conjunction with Halton Borough Council to ensure compliance with planning, highways and other legislation and could be assisted in part by Strategic Policy 10.

CIVIC QUARTER POLICY 2

Review and rationalise existing uses at ground level (underneath Rutland House and Halton Direct Link). This will involve:

- reviewing existing car parking arrangements;
- reducing the length of the taxi rank; and
- removing all outdated signage and road markings, replacing with new, as appropriate.

10.8 The development of Halton Lea, in the context of local topography, created a ground level below the law courts, police station, Rutland House and northern bus terminus. Ancillary uses are situated here, including an under used taxi rank, car parking, remnants of the disused regional bus station and associated outdated signage and road markings. This ground level no longer functions as originally designed and has fallen into disrepair.

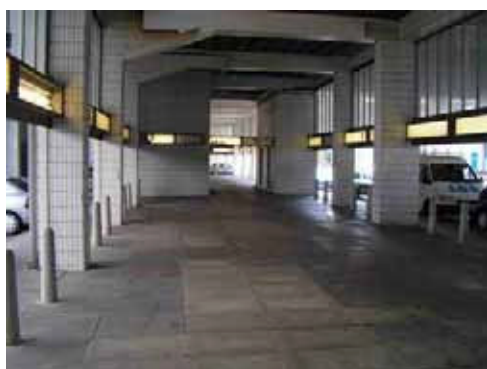


Photo 15: Disused former Regional bus station



Photo 16: Parking at the disused taxi rank. Note cycle chained to railings.

10.9 The area could be improved by reorganisation and updating to increase operational efficiency.

Implementation:

10.10 As this area is not in single ownership, improvements would need to be co-ordinated through Strategic Policies 5 and 14. Halton Borough Council's Property Services Department and Legal Services could act as the lead.

CIVIC QUARTER POLICY 3

Investigate the expansion of usage of secure cycle parking to include other Halton Lea employees.

10.11 A secure cycle cage for use by Council employees has been developed in the area to the north of Rutland House where there is natural surveillance. A shower room and lockers have also been added in part of the former regional bus station. There would be benefits from making this scheme more widely available to other employees at Halton Lea.



Photo 17: Existing secure cycle parking

Implementation:

10.12 Halton Borough Council could act as the lead on any further developments, in connection with Strategic Policy 14. Any scheme will need to respect existing servicing and access arrangements.

CIVIC QUARTER POLICY 4

Improve the attraction of Town Park as a resource to be enjoyed by office workers and shoppers alike.

10.13 Town Park is the northern entrance point to Halton Lea but is a major under utilised resource. An underpass below Northway provides the link but is not an attractive entry point and may have issues of perceived safety.



Photo 18: Underpass below Northway

Implementation:

10.14 The Council will seek planning obligations for contributions towards improvements to Town Park, including linkages, from all major new developments within the town centre (areas 1-6a inclusive as shown on Plan 2).

11 East Lane Area

11.1 This is a strategically important area, sitting between the Halton Lea shopping centre to the west and residential (Palacefields) and medical areas (Halton Hospital) to the south and east. Two large buildings dominate; East Lane House, and Castle View House, the former being a vacant 28,000 sq.m Government Office block that was built at the same time as the shopping centre. Castle View House is a modern development which is occupied by Government Departments (Education and Skills and Work and Pensions).



Photo 19: East Lane House

11.2 Other uses include a Territorial Army Centre, a nursery, two small stand alone offices and a Post Office sorting office. A cemetery is located along the northern fringe of this area.

11.3 With the exception of the cemetery, which is greenspace, the area is shown as being in primarily employment use in the adopted Unitary Development Plan. Employment (B Use Class) development is considered appropriate, subject to compliance with other plan policies. It lies outside the Primary Shopping Area (PSA) boundary, which follows the western side of East Lane.

EAST LANE POLICY 1

The East Lane development site (as shown on Plan 3) is suitable for retail use as an extension to the Halton Lea shopping centre. Any redevelopment should:

- be of an appropriate scale;
- create a gateway entrance into the Halton Lea Shopping Centre;
- integrate into the existing shopping centre;
- use quality materials which respect the existing built form;
- enhance vertical linkages from ground level to the mall level of Halton Lea shopping centre;
- respect and enhance existing pedestrian and cycle linkages in east-west and north-south directions in accordance with UDP Policies TP6 and TP7; and
- review and redesign the road network around the town centre including the potential closure of East Lane to through traffic.

11.4 Outline planning permission has been granted, subject to the signing of a legal agreement, for a 13,006 sq.m extension to the Halton Lea shopping centre, involving the demolition of East Lane House and Meadow car park and relocation of the TA Centre. East Lane would be closed as a through route, although it would remain as an access to the new development.

11.5 This development is a major opportunity to expand the covered shopping centre. It would help to balance the existing draw of Trident Park and Asda to the south and west respectively and break up the 'concrete

collar' of roads around the town centre to facilitate easier pedestrian movement. As indicated by the policy, it would need to consider widespread implications in terms of accessibility.

- 11.6 These would include considering whether Northway should remain one way in the wider context of reassessing the overall vehicular circulation strategy for the town centre. Additionally, pedestrian access from the east via raised footbridges above East Lane can beneficially be addressed. The northern footbridge would be removed during redevelopment but the southern footbridge will be retained and therefore requires improvement and upgrading.

East Lane development site, in conjunction with the necessary approvals from Halton Borough Council. Additional developer contributions in the form of planning obligations from related major new developments within the town centre (areas 1-6a inclusive as shown on Plan 2) will be sought where appropriate for matters in connection with bullet point 5. Like all area based policies, this also needs to be read in conjunction with the Strategic Policies contained in section 5, particularly no.3.



Photo 20: Surface of footbridge from East Lane House.



Photo 21: View of East Lane, looking towards East Lane House

Implementation:

- 11.7 This will predominantly be the responsibility of the developer of the

12 Halton Hospital, Palacefields and Hallwood Park

12.1 This area surrounds Halton Lea to the south and east. Both Hallwood Park (to the south) and Palacefields (to the east) are residential areas that were under construction in the early 1970s, with the former being redeveloped in the late 1980s. The original town centre master plan envisaged these residential areas having potential to generate walk in trips to Halton Lea for shopping, leisure or work.

12.2 The area to the east of the Hallwood Link Road contains the Hallwood health centre and Halton Hospital, which opened in 1976 and has subsequently been expanded.

12.3 Both Palacefields and Hallwood Park are shown as being in primarily residential use in the Halton UDP, with an area of greenspace between Hallwood Park and Trident Park. Halton Hospital is shown as undesignated (white) land, with the health centre being within a primarily employment area. There are two proposed greenways through this area. One is located to the west of Hallwood Park and the other to the west of Halton Hospital. Development of sites incorporating or adjoining the two proposed greenways is dealt with by Strategic Policy 4.

12.4 Footways from Palacefields connect with footbridges above East Lane and into the centre. In order to maintain and improve perceptions of safety and security vegetation along footways will need to be trimmed back, and in some cases be removed and replanted, and lighting enhanced.

12.5 The Hallwood Park redevelopment and construction of Trident Park reduced direct pedestrian links to Halton Lea. A pedestrian link has been constructed between the western end of Roehampton Drive and Trident Park by the side of Aldi. Linkage would be improved further by the implementation of Trident Park Policy 2. There is a cycletrack from Hallwood Park that needs to be rededicated and Strategic Policy 9 could assist this.



Photo 22: Vacant site of former Southgate district heating station

HALLWOOD PARK POLICY 1

The former Southgate power generation site should be redeveloped for uses that would complement the Hallwood Park residential estate and not compete with uses in the Halton Lea shopping centre.

12.6 The former Southgate district heating station (shown on Plan 3) was demolished and is currently a vacant site. It is shown in the UDP as being within a primarily residential area. Whilst housing may be the predominant land use in the area, local community facilities may also be appropriate as long as they accord with the above policy and the UDP.

Implementation:

12.7 This may depend upon a private developer. However, Halton Borough Council can exercise significant influence over any development as both site owner and Local Planning Authority.

Appendix A: Contacts and Useful Information

General information

Further information relating to the purpose of the intended SPD:

To access a downloadable copy of the Planning Policy Guidance notes or Planning Policy Statements detailed in Section 2, or for further general planning information visit the Department of Communities and Local Government website at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/> or for a hard copy contact the Department of Communities and Local Government by phone on 0870 1226 236.

To access a downloadable copy of 'By Design, Urban Design in the planning system: Towards Better Practice' and 'Safer Places', documents relating to urban renewal, urban design and creating sustainable communities, and general planning information visit the Department of Communities and Local Government website at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/> 'Places, Streets & Movement. A companion guide to Design Bulletin 32' can be purchased from the ODPM for a cost of £20.00, quoting ISBN 1 85112 113 7.

Investing in the High Street can be purchased from the Civic Trust for £25.00. The Civic Trust, Winchester House, 259-269 Old Marylebone Road, London NW1 5RA.

Going to Town: Improving Town Centre Access can be downloaded free of charge from the National Retail Planning Forum (NRPf) at www.nrpf.org. A hard copy can also be purchased online at the same website address.

Vital and Viable Town Centres: Meeting the Challenge, is out of print. However, a photocopy of the original document can be purchased from The Stationery Office online at www.tso.co.uk or by phone: 0870 600

5522, Fax: 0870 600 5533 or email: customer.services@tso.co.uk.

Further information on the Secured By Design initiative, including details relating to the standards required for a development to receive Secured By Design accreditation may be found at www.securedbydesign.com

For further information regarding any development which may affect a historic building or conservation area 'Building In Context' will be able to provide advice. It is available from English Heritage and the Commission of Architecture and the Built Environment and can be downloaded free of charge from <http://www.cabe.org.uk> or for a hard copy contact English Heritage at: Customer Services Department, PO Box 569, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN2 2YP, Tel: 0870 333 1181, Fax: 01793 414 926

Further information on the Halton UDP can be found online at www.halton.gov.uk or by phone on 0151 424 2061, email at forward.planning@halton.gov.uk or by post to Planning and Policy, Environment Directorate, Halton Borough Council, Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn, WA7 2GW.

You can find out about the planning system and how it works at www.planningportal.gov.uk.

Local information

For advice relating to submitting a planning application, for pre-application discussion or to purchase a copy of this SPD or any other SPD contact:

Planning and Policy
Environment Directorate
Halton Borough Council
Rutland House
Halton Lea
Runcorn
WA7 2GW

Tel: 0151 907 8300

Fax: 0151 471 7314

Email: forward.planning@halton.gov.uk

Website: www.halton.gov.uk

If further highways or transport information is required, please contact either the Highways Division (for general transport enquiries) or Transport Co-ordination (for public transport matters) at the following address:

Environment Directorate
Halton Borough Council
Rutland House
Halton Lea
Runcorn
WA7 2GW

Tel: 0151 907 8300

Fax: 0151 471 7521

Website: www.halton.gov.uk

If further access information is required, or information relating to building control please contact the;

Building Control Consultancy
Environment Directorate
Halton Borough Council
Rutland House
Halton Lea
Runcorn
WA7 2GW

Tel: 0151 907 8300

Email: building.control@halton.gov.uk

Website: www.halton.gov.uk

Appendix B: SWOT Analysis

SWOT ANALYSIS HALTON LEA JULY 2005

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<p><u>Attraction</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Large surrounding catchment population 2) Sizable surrounding workforce 3) Centre has some diverse uses – library, cinema, leisure public house, law courts, police and various offices 4) Proximity to other uses: nursery, hospital, health centre 5) Large amount of car parking: multi storey and surface level at Trident (and to a lesser extent Asda) which is free 6) Trident retail park well linked to main body of Halton Lea 7) Presence of national retail multiples 8) Presence of kiosks in Town Square adds some diversity and provides ‘starter’ retail units <p><u>Accessibility</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9) Accessible by a variety of transport modes 10) Good accessibility to centre from bus interchanges, including presence of customer lifts and escalators (latter, south side only) <p><u>Amenity</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11) Enclosed mall: protection from the elements and no traffic 12) Clean malls, litter bins and street furniture provided 13) Presence of a customer information point 14) Clear naming of malls gives a sense of where you are 	<p><u>Attraction</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Lack of an anchor store to the centre which provides a real attraction 2) Relatively high vacancy rates, including underused floorspace at first floor, Meadow Walk and southern access at Trident RP 3) Some monolithic, vacant, unsightly and under used office buildings, some of which do not appear to meet modern requirements. 4) Some vacant units are small and unlikely to be attractive to modern retail requirements 5) Relatively narrow range of service related uses. <p><u>Accessibility</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6) The one way busway loop around Halton Lea results in there being two main public transport gateways to the centre (Halton Lea North and South) – both of which require investment to improve the passenger environment and waiting facilities. There is a reasonable distance between the two, which does not aid effective integration in the evening when the shopping malls are closed. 7) The concrete collar to the centre (i.e. the roads around and service roads underneath) – the segregation of cars/ buses and pedestrians creates problems of pedestrian permeability from one side of the centre to the other. This is a particular problem in the evening when the centre is closed and passengers that need to connect between bus stations must do so via ground level, which has poorer pedestrian linkages. Not a pedestrian friendly environment at some locations outside the centre. 8) Weak pedestrian linkage to Asda superstore. Poor level of linked trips from major anchor 9) Poor maintenance of footbridges – including blistering and uneven surfaces 10) Inadequacy of directional signage

	<p>outside the centre – vehicular for non-retail facilities e.g. Council offices, Law Courts and pedestrian from bus interchange, Asda etc</p> <p>11) Inconsistency of signage in car parks in terms of centre opening hours when pedestrian links will be closed e.g. between Bridge and River</p> <p>12) Each stairwell (4 per car park) is sign posted as a fire exit. There is no guiding of pedestrians to the refurbished stairwell</p> <p>13) Occasionally intimidating underpass as main pedestrian access from Halton Village <u>Amenity</u></p> <p>14) Monolithic, unwelcoming appearance of shopping centre. Centre's principle of segregating private vehicles, pedestrians, public transport and servicing means that there is a lot of concrete relative to the amount of retail and other commercial floorspace provided</p> <p>15) Occasional intimidating environment for users of Grosvenor House</p> <p>16) Centre's evening closure means night time uses (adding diversity) must be located outside the shopping centre</p> <p>17) Presence of outdated signage adds to confusion e.g. Job centre sign adjoining Rutland House, incorrect Council departments etc. Re-branding of car parks – on stairwells Meadow still referred to as no.4, Orchard as no.3 etc.</p> <p>18) Unightly trolley bays on levels C & E – are they really practical propositions to use?</p> <p>19) Whilst each multi storey car park has one pleasant, refurbished stairwell, there are 3 others which have not been refurbished and offer an unwelcoming environment. This causes pedestrians to use ramps for cars between levels, creating conflicts with vehicles</p> <p>20) Underused areas of car parking at Trident (to side of Cineworld and behind Fitness First/ Carpetright)</p> <p>21) Car parking and taxi rank underneath centre (latter no longer main rank) disorganised and unsightly</p> <p>Other</p> <p>22) Limited role that the Council can play due</p>
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OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<p>Attraction</p> <p>1) A step change in offer of the centre - improve the comparison goods retention rate into the surrounding catchment area by providing additional complementary floorspace. The development of the proposed Mersey Gateway Bridge (MGB) would significantly increase traffic passing Halton Lea on the Central Expressway which creates the potential for increased custom to the centre. This would make Halton Lea a more attractive location for new retail and other commercial operators.</p> <p>2) Presence of vacant office buildings surrounding main shopping centre presents redevelopment opportunities</p> <p>3) Presence of vacant units within the centre presents opportunities for reconfiguration to create properties more suitable to modern retailer requirements</p> <p>4) Diversify the evening economy, most obviously in the area surrounding Cineworld</p> <p>Accessibility</p> <p>5) Break up the concrete collar of roads around the covered shopping centre to make a more pedestrian friendly environment at ground level. Doing this on the eastern side would make the centre more accessible to employees in the Govt office building and Halton Hospital. Proposal would need good pedestrian links.</p> <p>6) Consider enhancements to the northern and southern bus termini, as these are gateways into the centre.</p> <p>6) Improved directional signing to public buildings e.g. Council offices. Direct visitors to Meadow and Orchard car parks</p> <p>7) Maintain and enhance pedestrian routes. Lighting, trimming back of vegetation, resurfacing where necessary to maintain and improve perception of security on footpaths from residential areas into the centre</p> <p>8) Reduce pedestrian/ vehicle conflicts in multi storey car parks by better signage directing pedestrians to the refurbished stairwells.</p>	<p>to most areas being in private ownership</p> <p>Attraction</p> <p>1) If the centre stands still (i.e. does not improve its retail offer or environment) it will decline relative to other centres because they will improve</p> <p>2) Lack of quality anchor store</p> <p>3) Competition from other centres in the area, most notably Warrington</p> <p>4) Not enough co-ordination between different owners at Halton Lea</p> <p>5) Limited increase in spending potential of catchment population</p> <p>6) Fail to build upon the diversification of uses, both retail offer and other uses e.g. leisure</p> <p>7) Will Cineworld remain open?</p> <p>Accessibility</p> <p>8) Asda and its expansion considering the lack of linkage</p> <p>Amenity</p> <p>9) Centre fails to realise its potential due to evening closure of malls. Needs to be balanced with security concerns</p>

Amenity

9) Continued utilisation of **town square for events**

10) Need for redesigning of car parking and reduce size of taxi rank underneath the Civic Area to **improve layout** in this area. Space here to be used more efficiently and effectively.

Appendix C: Update of existing Town Centre Strategy

The 1997 Town Centre Strategy contained proposals and a number of actions. The following table summarises those proposals and groups them according to the level of success in their implementation over the period 1997 to date.

1997 Halton Lea Town Centre Strategy; Summary of Proposals

ACHIEVED	PARTIALLY ACHIEVED	NOT ACHIEVED
<p>Proposal 3 Improve toilet and baby changing</p> <p>Proposal 4 Prepare enhancement scheme for Town Square</p> <p>Proposal 5 Improve car parking environment</p> <p>Proposal 8 Improve signage and enhance spaces around bus stops</p> <p>Proposal 10 Open up walkways and make less intimidating by reducing fire escape effect</p> <p>Proposal 14 find uses for empty hinterland areas (HDL, Job Centre)</p> <p>Proposal 16 Agree consistent pricing policy for car parks</p> <p>Proposal 17 Make special arrangements for worker parking by allocating spaces and agreeing special rates (DONE as a consequence of allocating level D for shoppers)</p> <p>Proposal 20 facilitate transfer of goods from trolleys to vehicles through</p>	<p>Proposal 1 Improve retail choice</p> <p>Proposal 2 Encourage other facilities to locate</p> <p>Proposal 6 Improve directional signs to shops in car parks</p> <p>Proposal 9 Improve directional signs on external walkways</p> <p>Proposal 12 prepare scheme for ground level pedestrian access</p> <p>Prop 13 Facilitate vertical pedestrian movement</p> <p>Proposal 18 Provide clear directions to car drivers on the best car park for a particular facility (done for shops only)</p> <p>Proposal 19 Rationalise identification of multi storey car parks (nos 3-6) and revamp overhead signs</p> <p>Proposal 29 Provide pedestrian links</p> <p>Proposal 32 Provide new leisure and entertainment uses</p> <p>Proposal 35 Employ quality materials (ongoing)</p>	<p>Proposal 7 Improve evening access to facilities including. ATMs and emergency chemist</p> <p>Proposal 11 Improve evening access to facilities</p> <p>Proposal 15 encourage other employment uses and community uses in vacant non central units and office blocks</p> <p>Proposal 21 Provide safe and convenient spaces for cycle park (2nd avenue)</p>

ACHIEVED	PARTIALLY ACHIEVED	NOT ACHIEVED
<p>provision of lifts and trolley parks</p> <p>Proposal 22 Give greater prominence to directional signs to Halton Lea</p> <p>Proposal 23 use of bold exterior adverts to signal the centre's function</p> <p>Proposal 24 create a prestigious entrance on west or south side</p> <p>Proposal 25 open up entrances</p> <p>Proposal 26 improve quality of information given to visitors plan, directory etc.</p> <p>Proposal 27 Hold promotional events</p> <p>Proposal 28 Prepare marketing strategy</p> <p>Proposal 30 Create ground level square in front of the stitching platform</p> <p>Proposal 31 Make a feature of Halton Lea entrance</p> <p>Proposal 33 Provide retail units for mainly non-food goods</p> <p>Proposal 34 link design and materials for new development to existing</p> <p>Proposal 36 retain and protect significant planting on west and southern parts of Southern Loop site</p>	<p>Proposal 37 provide other soft landscaping for screening and decoration</p> <p>Proposal 39 design hard landscaping in a common theme as contribution to public art</p>	

ACHIEVED	PARTIALLY ACHIEVED	NOT ACHIEVED
Proposal 38 use high quality durable hard landscaping to add visual interest (TRIDENT)		

Appendix D: Summary of Policies in Connection with Planning Obligations

Policy Number	Policy Content
Transport Accessibility	
Strategic Policy 9	Cycle access
Central Area Policy 5	Improve bus termini
Trident Park Policy 2	New vehicular access into Trident Park
West Lane Policy 1	Public transport improvements adjoining busway
Linkages	
Strategic Policy 3	Improve linkages
Strategic Policy 4	Greenways
East Lane Policy 1	East Lane Development site
Local Environment	
Strategic Policy 7	Provision of Public Art
Civic Quarter Policy 4	Improve Town Park
Functionality	
Strategic Policy 8	Provision of Street Furniture
Strategic Policy 9	Provision of Signage

NB. The above table acts as a checklist that illustrates specific policies within this SPD that refer to the use of planning obligations. However, it must be recognised that, as such, it is not exhaustive in terms of geographical location within the identified town centre areas I-6a or uses for which obligations may be sought by Halton Borough Council.

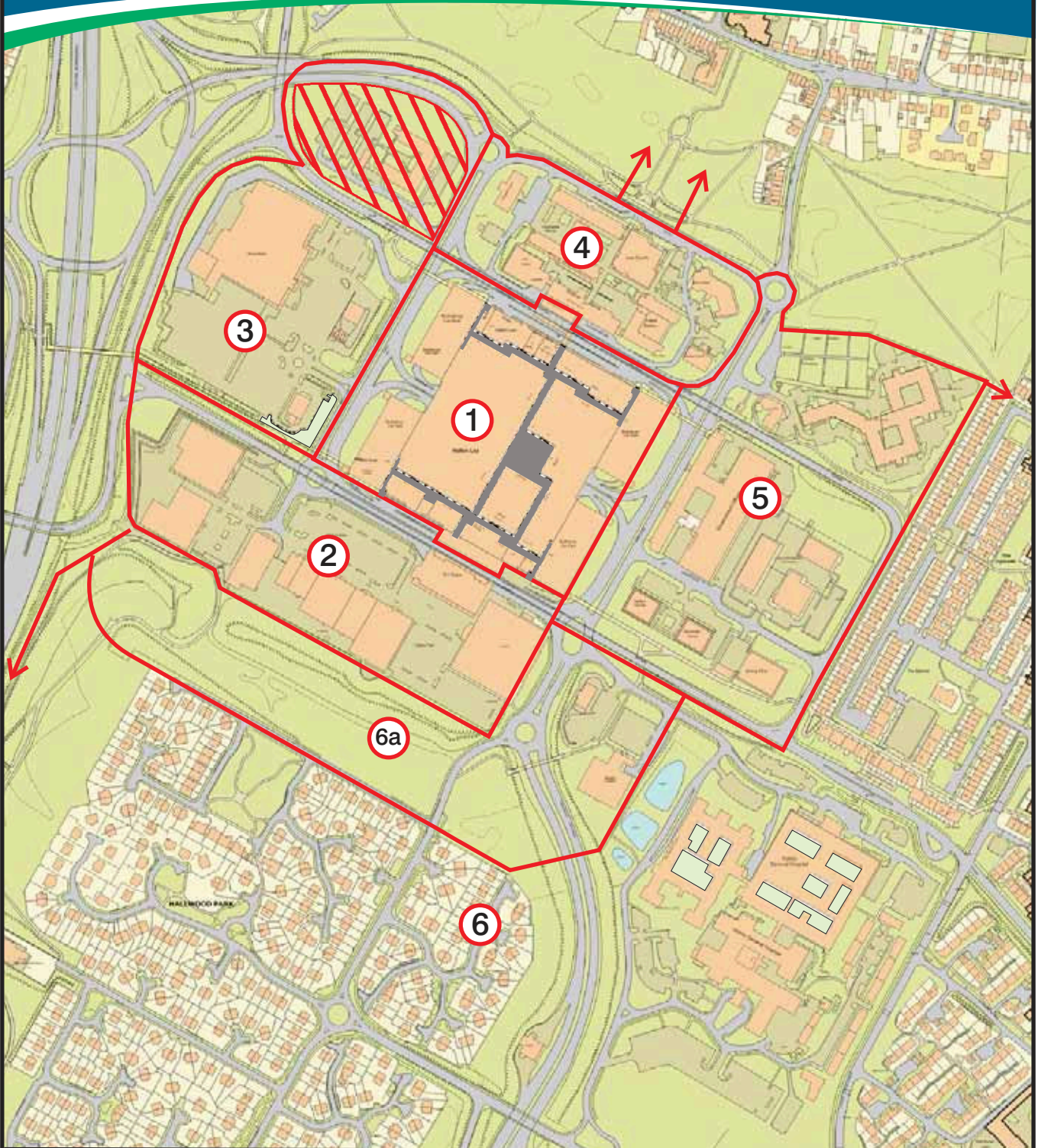
PLANS




**Plan I Halton Unitary Development
Plan Proposals Map Extract**

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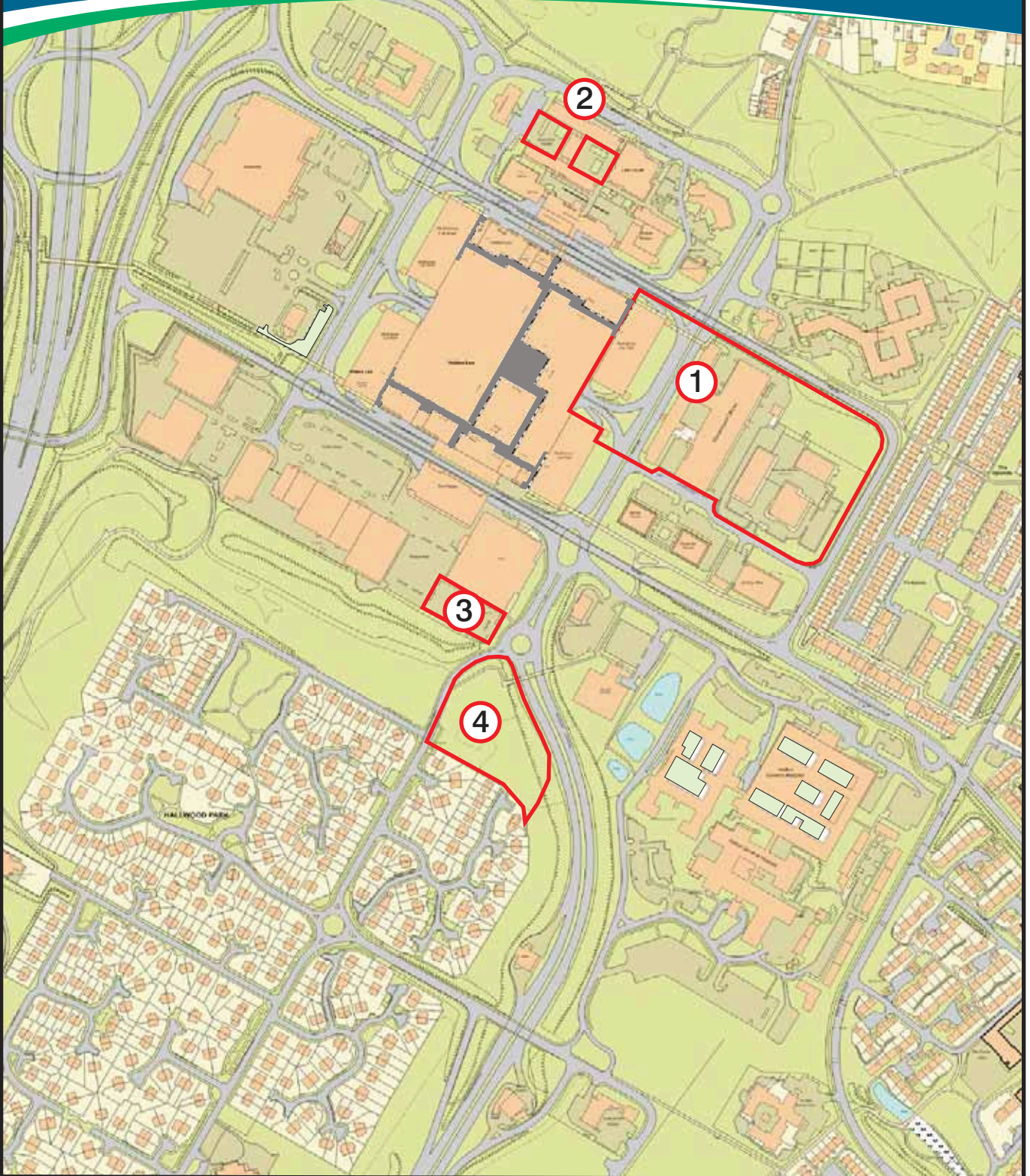


Plan 2 Sub Areas of Halton Lea

- ① Central Area - Covered Halton Lea Shopping Centre
- ② Trident Park
- ③ West Lane Area
- ④ Civic Quarter
- ⑤ East Lane Area
- ⑥ Halton Hospital, Palacefields and Hallwood Park
-  Vestric House

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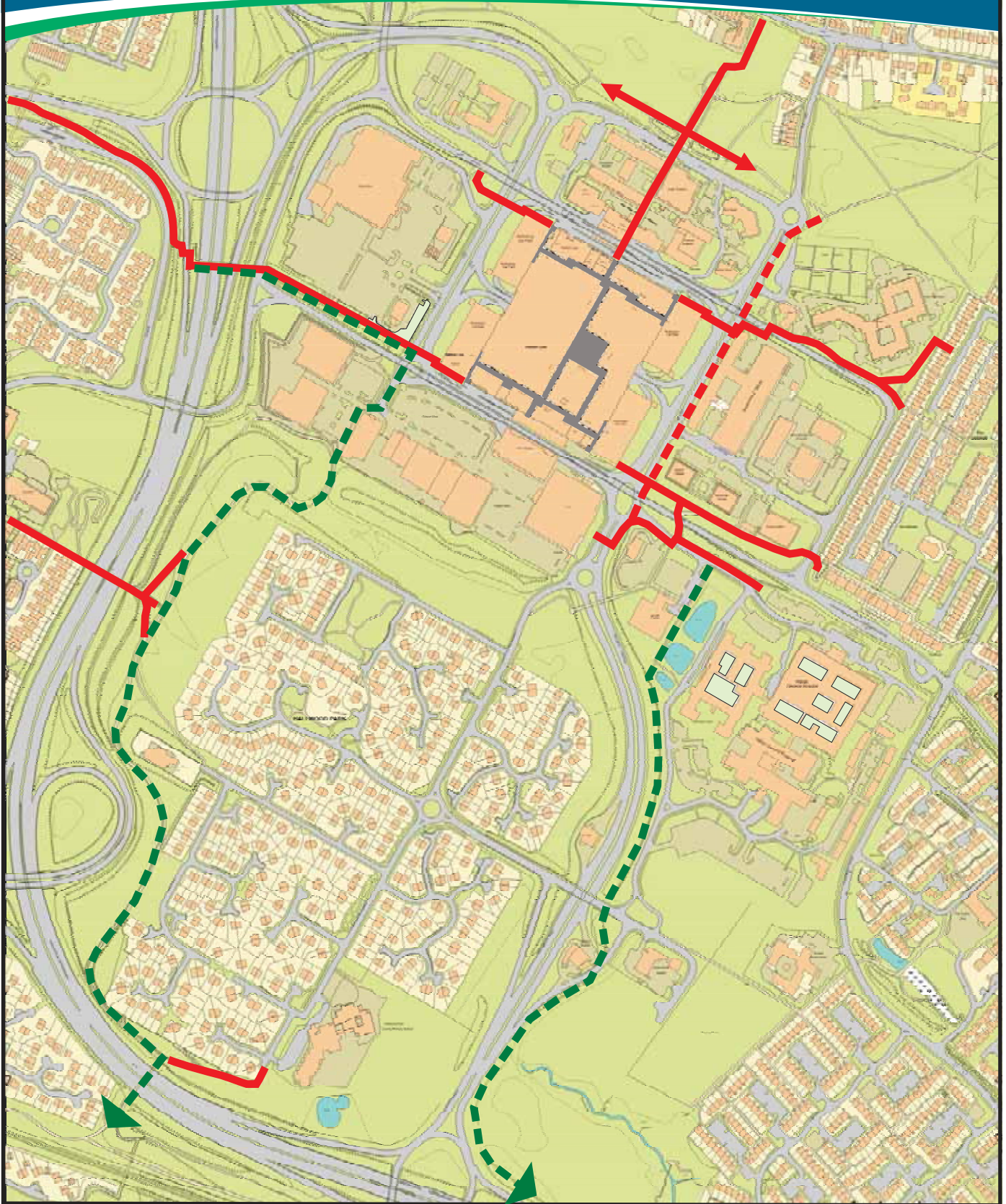


Plan 3 Potential Development Opportunities




- ① East Lane (East Lane Policy I)
- ② Adjoining Grosvenor House (Civic Quarter Policy I)
- ③ Car Park to the South of Cineworld (Trident Park Policy I)
- ④ Former Southgate District heating station (Hallwood Park Policy I)

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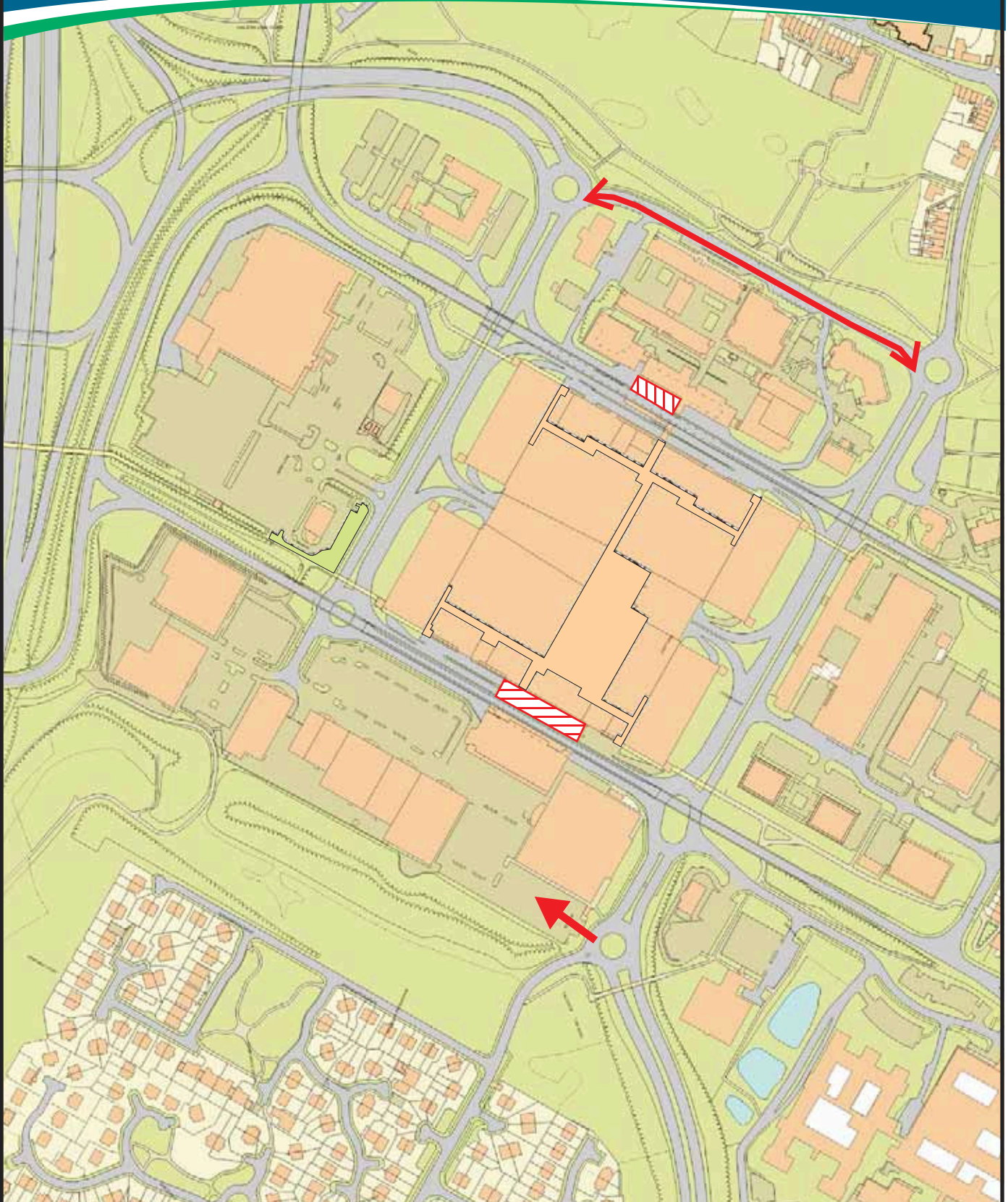


Plan 4 Pedestrian and Cycle Accessibility





-  Major Footpaths/Footways or Cycleways
-  Proposed Greenways
-  Proposed cycleways

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Plan 5 Potential Transport Improvements

-  Potential additional Vehicular Access
-  Investigate Potential for 2 way use
-  Northern Bus Terminus
-  Southern Bus Terminus

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Halton Lea Town Centre Strategy

Draft Supplementary Planning Document

Sustainability Appraisal Report
January 2007



Halton Borough Council

Draft Halton Lea Town Centre Strategy

Sustainability Appraisal Report

Public Consultation
January 2007

[] for public consultation
between X January and Y March 2007

to:
Operational Director
Environmental & Regulatory Services
Environment Directorate
Halton Borough Council
Rutland House
Halton Lea
Runcorn
WA7 2GW

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1 Summary and outcomes

- Non-technical summary
- Statement on the difference the process has made
- How to comment on the report

2 Sustainability appraisal rationale

- Approach adopted to the SA
- When the SA was carried out?
- Who carried out the SA?
- Who was consulted, when and how?

3 Background

- Purpose of the SA process and the SA Report
- Purpose of draft Halton Lea Town Centre Strategy Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)
- Compliance with the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive/Regulations

4 Sustainability objectives, baseline and context

- Links to other strategies, plans and programmes and sustainability objectives
- Description of the social, environmental and economic baseline characteristics and the predicted future baseline
- Difficulties in collecting data and limitations of the data
- The SA framework, including objectives, targets and indicators
- Main social, environmental and economic issues and problems identified

5 Plan issues and options

- Main strategic options considered and how they were identified
- How social, environmental and economic issues were considered in comparing the options and choosing the preferred option.
- Other options considered, and why

these were rejected

- Proposed mitigation measures

6 Assessment of the social, environmental and economic effects of the draft Halton Lea Town Centre Strategy SPD.

- Significant social, environmental and economic effects of the draft SPD
- Consideration of social, environmental and economic problems in developing the draft SPD
- Proposed mitigation measures
- Uncertainties and risks

7 Implementation

- Links to other tiers of plans and programmes and the project level
- Proposals for monitoring

Appendices

- A Sustainability Appraisal Framework (SAF)
- B Statement of Consultation: Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Sustainability Assessment (SA) process
- C SA of the Halton Lea Town Centre Strategy SPD - Determination Statement
- D Testing the purpose of the SPD against the SAF
- E Options considered for delivering the purpose of proposed SPD
- F Further Information

I Summary and outcomes

Non-technical summary

- 1.1 This document contains the information relating to the appraisal of the draft Halton Lea Town Centre Strategy Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in relation to how it contributes to meeting environmental, social and economic objectives. Put simpler, this document assesses how the SPD contributes towards achieving development that ensures a better quality of life for everyone, now and for future generations. The technical name for this document is a Sustainability Appraisal or SA for short. The SA is required to be produced because of new government guidance and legislation relating to the planning system.
- 1.2 The objectives that are used to test whether the Halton Lea Town Centre Strategy SPD contributes towards achieving sustainability have been taken from the information gathered during the production of the Core Strategy SA and from other documents that identify the sustainability priorities of the local community. The main source of these objectives is the Community Strategy, produced by the Halton Strategic Partnership in consultation with the people of Halton, which was based on a new State of the Borough Report and a telephone survey of residents.
- 1.3 The objectives that are used to test the sustainability of the SPD are set out in a table (Appendix A), this table is called the Sustainability Appraisal Framework (SAF). This table sets out how the Council will measure each of the objectives to see if quality of life in Halton is improving. In summer 2005, in advance of producing the full SA, the Council asked a number of bodies if they agreed with the objectives that we included in the SAF. These bodies agreed with us, all their comments and how the Council responded is set out in Appendix B.
- 1.4 At the same time as asking these bodies about the SAF, we also asked if they agreed with us if we needed to produce a Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) of the SPD. The SEA is like an SA but looks in more detail at the effects that the SPD could have on the environment. SEA is required by a European Directive on plans and programs that could have a significant effect on the environment. The Council made an initial screening of whether a full SEA was needed to be produced, and decided it was not. The bodies agreed with us. This decision has been set out in the Halton Lea Town Centre Strategy SPD – Statement of Determination, which can be found in Appendix C.
- 1.5 The Council then tested the draft SPD against the objectives in SAF, to appraise if the SPD contributes to achieving sustainability. This is set out in a table (Appendix D). The appraisal recognises that the SPD is supplementary policy and will not make dramatic changes to the way that we live, but will make small changes to the way buildings and places are designed. Therefore, the SPD will not significantly affect any of the environmental, social or economic objectives set out in the SAF.
- 1.6 Overall the appraisal shows that the SPD will have a positive effect upon contributing towards achieving sustainability, but there are several objectives that are difficult to test the SPD against because the Council is unsure how the SPD will affect those objectives. The appraisal also tells us that the positive effects will mainly only be seen in the longer term because the SPD will make gradual changes to places over many years as new development

happens.

- 1.7 This SA is not the end of the process, if you think that the appraisal has missed something out, or hasn't properly realised the effect that the SPD could have on a particular objective then let us know by following the instructions in section 1.10 – 'How to comment on the Appraisal'. A final SA, which includes all the comments received on this appraisal, will be published alongside the SPD when it is adopted. Sources of further information about the process and purpose of Sustainability Appraisals can be found in Appendix F.

Statement on the difference the process has made

- 1.8 Although the scope of the SPD is not significant, it is supplementary policy, providing practical guidance in relation to policies contained within Halton Unitary Development Plan (UDP), the SA process has made a valuable contribution to the process of producing the SPD. Firstly it focused attention at the pre-production scoping stage to identify the key areas that the SPD needed to address. This was achieved through the analysis of baseline information. This process has helped to shape the purpose of the SPD, which has provided a strong foundation upon which the rest of the SPD has been constructed.
- 1.9 By testing the SPD against the SAF it has helped to recognise the limitations of the SPD and how these might be overcome through additional planning policies or by other means (such as the need for better training within the planning section to understand 'design' better). The 'testing' process has also helped create a sharper more responsive SPD focused upon its purpose and contributing to achieving sustainability. The SA process has made a real difference to help ensure a quality end product.

How to comment on the Appraisal

- 1.10 If you would like to make comments on the SA or the SPD, which it has been produced to appraise, please complete one of the representation forms, which can be obtained from places of inspection, from the Council's website or by contacting the Planning and Policy Division. Representations may be accompanied by a request to be notified at a specific address of the adoption of the SPD and hence the publishing of the final SA. The formal period of public participation in relation to the SPD and this SA, commences on 18th January 2007, for a six week period until 1st March 2007.

2 Sustainability Appraisal Rationale

Approach taken

- 2.1 The methodology selected to be applied within this Sustainability Appraisal (SA) has been chosen to ensure that the SPD, and the Local Development Framework (LDF) as a whole, is tested against the most appropriate sustainability criteria.
- 2.2 SA is fundamentally based on an objectives-led approach whereby the potential impacts of a plan are gauged in relation to a series of objectives for sustainable development. In other words, the objectives provide a methodological yardstick against which to assess the effects of the SPD. The Sustainability Appraisal Framework (SAF) – as the Guidance refers to it – consists of objectives and associated targets and indicators, the SAF is set out Appendix A.
- 2.3 The methodology of the SA has therefore been drawn from the information collected during the production of the LDF and the priorities, objectives and targets of other documents such as the Community Strategy, the sub-regionally agreed Merseyside objectives and the regional sustainability framework – ‘Action for Sustainability’. This approach has been agreed by both the Council and the Statutory Environmental Bodies and has been used for earlier SAs, which have assessed earlier SPDs. However, the SAF used in these earlier documents has now been updated using the information collected as part of the production of the Core Strategy.
- 2.4 It is our intention that the objectives, targets and indicators that form the SAF within this document will be broadly consistent throughout all future SAs that the Council undertakes. However, as the SAF evolves there may be situations that require the framework to be reviewed. These situations could

include:

- a new baseline information emerging that better reflects the current objectives in the sustainability framework,
- b changes to the objectives in the sustainability framework, and
- c direction from a consultation body that information within the framework needs amending, such as through consultation on this SA Report.

When the SA was carried out?

- 2.5 The SA process began in June 2005 with the production of the SA Scoping Report; this document was consulted upon between 30th June 2005 and 4th August 2005. The responses to the Scoping Report were considered and have informed and lead to the production of this document. The SA process has been an integral part of the production of the SPD, and has been prepared to enable its publication to coincide with the public consultation on the draft Halton Lea Town Centre Strategy Supplementary Planning Document.

Who carried out the SA?

- 2.6 Halton Borough Council has conducted the entire process of the production of the SA, with consultation at the appropriate stages with statutory consultation bodies (for the SA and SEA process) and other stakeholders as necessary. This approach was felt to be commensurate to the intended purpose of the SPD. Responses to the Scoping Report, particularly those from the statutory consultation bodies, acknowledged the scope of the SPD and did not raise any significant issues that would deem it necessary for the SA to be produced externally / more independently.

Who was consulted, when and how?

2.7 The scope of the SA was formally consulted upon between Thursday 30th June 2005 and Thursday 4th August 2005. The consultation was targeted at those who the Council felt were best placed to further shape the SA process and the purpose of the proposed SPD. A list of those consulted, their comments and the how these have been addressed in the SA is contained in Appendix B.

3 Background

Purpose of the SA process and the SA Report

3.1 The Halton Lea Town Centre Strategy SPD will form part of the Halton Local Development Framework (LDF). This document will not form part of the Statutory Development Plan for Halton. To be able to be formally adopted as part of the Halton LDF, the process of forming the SPD must comply with Part Five of The Town and Country (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004. Part five requires the production of a SA for SPDs. The purpose of preparing a SA is to encourage sustainable development, through improved integration of sustainability considerations throughout the preparation and adoption of land use plans and policies.

Purpose of Halton Lea Town Centre Strategy SPD (Draft)

3.2 The purpose of the Halton Lea Town Centre Strategy SPD is to complement the Halton Unitary Development Plan (UDP), by providing additional guidance to those involved in the planning of new development within Halton Borough to:

- a Enable the town centres to prosper without adversely affecting the health of any other;
- b Safeguard and strengthen the individual role of each town centre as a safe and accessible place to shop, work and enjoy;
- c Co-ordinate public and private investment decisions;
- d Improve the economic prosperity of the Borough through the creation of employment opportunities; and

e Ensure the highest standard of design and architecture within each town centre.

3.3 The geographical coverage of the SPD is Halton Lea town centre and immediate surrounds.

Compliance with the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Regulations

3.4 In accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulation 2004, the SA Scoping Report included a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening statement. The Council's intermediate determination of the statement was that the proposed SPD was unlikely to have a significant environmental effect and accordingly does not require a SEA to be produced. The four statutory agencies (English Nature, Environment Agency, English Heritage and Countryside Agency) were consulted as part of the pre-production scoping stage and they agreed with the Council's determination, their comments are set out in Appendix B.

3.5 Therefore a formal determination can be made that the Halton Lea Town Centre Strategy Supplementary Planning Document is unlikely to have significant environment effects and accordingly does not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment. This decision has been set out in the Halton Lea Town Centre Strategy SPD – Statement of Determination, which can be found in Appendix C.

4 Sustainability objectives, baseline and context

Relationship to other relevant plans and programmes

4.1 In producing the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Scoping Report for the Core Strategy the Council considered a large number of relevant plans, policies and programmes. However, in relation to the proposed SPD a smaller number of documents with a specific relationship to the Halton Lea Town Centre Strategy have been identified.

National Planning Statements

4.2 **Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPSI):** Delivering Sustainable Development, states that planning policies should promote high quality inclusive design in the layout of new developments and individual buildings in terms of function and impact, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development. It also highlights the need to focus developments that attract a large number of people, especially retail, leisure and office development, in existing centres to promote their vitality and viability, social inclusion and more sustainable patterns of development.

4.3 **Planning Policy Statement 6:** Planning for Town Centres, states that the Government's key objective for town centres is to promote their vitality and viability by:

- planning for the growth and development of existing centres; and
- promoting and enhancing existing centres, by focusing development in such centres and encouraging a wide range of services in a good environment, accessible to all.

4.4 It affirms that it is essential that town centres provide a high-quality and safe environment if they are to remain

attractive and competitive. Policies for the design of development for main town centre uses, regardless of location, and for development in town centres, should promote high quality and inclusive design, in order to improve the character, quality and function of areas.

4.5 **'Vital and Viable town centres: meeting the challenge'** (DOE, 1994) provides, through the use of a town centre health check, a method for evaluating town centre vitality and viability. It suggests collating a whole host of indicators, and analysing them using a variety of different techniques such as 4 'A's (attractions, accessibility, amenity and action) approach and swot (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis.

4.6 **Planning for Town Centres: Guidance on Design and Implementation tools** (ODPM, 2005) provides further detailed design guidance stating that the issues which should be considered for inclusion in local development documents, include:

- identifying the capacity of each centre to accommodate growth and making provision for this;
- providing a comprehensive plan for any area of renewal or development;
- addressing the location and layout of new development;
- developing an urban design strategy, which establishes a comprehensive urban design vision and is supported by specific urban design policies, guidelines or proposals for specific sites;
- addressing the spatial implications of strategies for parking, traffic management and improvement of the pedestrian environment; and

- setting out a detailed implementation programme for bringing forward development on key sites, including, where appropriate, proposals for addressing issues such as land assembly through compulsory purchase orders.

Regional Spatial Strategy & Sustainability Framework

- 4.7 The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the North West is currently in the process of being updated. Adopted RSS Policy SD2 Other Settlements within the North West Metropolitan Area, highlights Runcorn and Widnes as areas where wide-ranging regeneration and environmental enhancement should be secured.
- 4.8 Policy EC8 Town Centres – Retail, Leisure and Office Development states that Development Plans, town centre management initiatives and other strategies should recognise the continued need to protect, sustain and improve all of the town and city centres in the Region.
- 4.9 Action for Sustainability is the North West Regional Sustainability Framework has been produced by the North West Regional Assembly (NWRA). The main goal of the framework is to improve the quality of life within the region.

Unitary Development Plan

- 4.10 The Halton Unitary Development Plan (UDP), which was adopted in April 2005, contains a number of strategic aims and objectives. These are set out in Part I of the UDP. In relation to Halton's town centres they include the aim to increase their vitality and viability and the need to ensure that no retail development is allowed in one town centre that would seriously harm another.
- 4.11 Part 2 UDP policies seek to implement the broad aims and objectives contained

within Part I. Those that are directly relevant to the Halton Lea Town Centre SPD are:

- Policy TC1: Retail & Leisure Allocations, provides a list of sites that are allocated for specific uses, on the basis of both an assessment of need for new retail and leisure facilities in the Borough and a sequential approach to site selection.
- Policy TC2: Retail Development to the Edge Of Designated Shopping Centres, introduces criteria for assessing when development will be permitted on edge of centre locations.
- Policy TC4: Retail development within designated shopping centres, allows for retail development that contributes to the centre's vitality and viability.
- Policy TC5: Design of Retail Development, provides the design criteria for considering new retail development and extensions.
- Policy TC6: Out of Centre Retail Development, provides the criteria to assess out of centre retail proposals including small scale retail developments to meet local needs.
- Policies LTC1, LTC2 and LTC3 in the Leisure, Tourism and Community Facilities chapter provide the criteria to assess major leisure and community facilities that are located in town centre, edge of town centre and out of centre locations respectively.
- It is also of note that the enclosed Halton Lea shopping centre plus Asda and the Trident Retail Park are shown as being within the Primary Shopping Area of the centre.
- Policy TPI6: Green Travel Plans, indicates the circumstances when a green travel plan will be required as part of a new development. This may include major development

proposals and smaller developments that would generate significant amounts of travel where there are particular local traffic problems.

- 4.12 The UDP was subject to a SA at two key stages in its production. These were the UDP First Deposit and Second (Revised) Deposit stages. This process has helped to ensure that the policies that this SPD is based upon contribute towards achieving sustainable development.

Community Strategy & Corporate Plan

- 4.13 The intended SPD will be produced to contribute to the priorities, principles, objectives and targets of the Halton Community Strategy (2006). This strategy co-ordinates the resources of the local public, private and voluntary organisations towards common purposes. The vision of the Strategy is that *“Halton will be a thriving and vibrant Borough where people enjoy a good quality of life with good health; a high quality, modern urban environment; the opportunity for all to fulfil their potential; greater wealth and equality sustained by a thriving business community; and safe and attractive neighbourhoods.”*

- 4.14 Within the ‘Halton’s urban renewal’ priority of the Community Strategy there is an objective “to revitalise the town centres to create dynamic, well designed high quality commercial areas that can contribute to meet the needs of local people, investors, businesses and visitors.”

- 4.15 Halton Borough Council is committed to contributing to achieving the priorities of the Community Strategy. The Council's priorities are set out in the Corporate Plan. This plan also has five priorities, including ‘urban renewal’.

- 4.16 The priorities in the Community Strategy and the Corporate Plan are based on the priorities set by the people of Halton. These were identified

through community involvement via area panels, focus groups, and a telephone survey. The Corporate Plan was based on the same community involvement and statistical information compiled for the State Of Borough Report, 2005.

Baseline Information

- 4.17 The baseline information for this SPD can be put into two categories. Firstly, information and issues relating specifically to Halton Lea that will be covered by the intended SPD; and secondly, other generic sustainability baseline information that is consistently applied as a baseline to all appraisals within Halton and that was collected as part of the production of the SA of the Core Strategy.

Halton Lea Town Centre Issues

- 4.18 The following summary of Halton Lea is taken from the Halton Borough Council Town Centre Baseline Report 2004 and supplemented by a survey of the town centre in summer 2005.

- 4.19 Halton Lea comprises of a custom built elevated covered shopping mall with 4 dedicated multi storey car parks (offering 2,400 free spaces) and integrated busway termini feeding shoppers directly to the main shopping deck. Surrounding the main building Trident Retail Park and a free-standing Asda superstore have been added, the former having good pedestrian linkages to the main mall and the latter essentially operating as a stand-alone facility.

- 4.20 There is a range of national multiple retailers represented within the centre, mostly concentrated around the prime retail area (Town Square & Forrest Walk). Away from this area the number of independents increases. The ‘retail offer’ is limited with certain types of shop (card and gift shops) occurring too frequently and certain good categories (particularly male outfitters) being under

represented or absent, to the detriment of the vitality of the centre. The centre management is aware of these deficiencies and is seeking to address them.

- 4.21 Vacancy rates show a disappointing trend, in 1990 only 5 units were vacant, by 1994 there were 34 vacant out of 104. by 1998 39 units were unused. By summer 2005, there was 6,245 sq.m of vacant floorspace as opposed to 4,396 sq.m in 1999. This means that 20% of Halton Lea floorspace, is currently vacant. However, it must be noted that this figure includes vacancies at Trident Park, the development of which has added to the town centre's attraction, and above the mall level within the covered shopping centre. The level of vacancy is therefore a little misleading and unquestionably the town centre has improved in recent years.
- 4.22 Prime retail rents show a positive scenario but yields remain quite high at $\geq 10\%$. Despite this, the recently added Trident Retail Park is trading successfully and the centre owners are considering further investment by way of a major extension.
- 4.23 Good results from the town centre user survey show the ability to manage an enclosed area. The public was happy with the cleanliness of the main shopping area and public facilities were considered well maintained, whilst public perception of safety is very high in this centre.
- 4.24 Of the three town centres Halton Lea has experienced the largest increase in population with the majority of this population in the 25 – 44 age bracket. Halton Lea not only has the highest proportion of low rise council flats but also the highest number of high income families at a level which matches the national average.
- 4.25 The centre has a similar catchment

employment level to Widnes, but has the most numbers of people employed in the town centre and the lowest unemployment of all 3 areas.

- 4.26 The local economy is steadily increasing in size with banking being the most prominent industry followed by manufacturing, then distribution. The vacant former Employment Department building to the west of the centre is seen as a potential future retail expansion site.

Predicted future baseline information

- 4.27 The current generic baseline information will continue to be used until such a time as it is felt a review of the baseline is required. Situations that may require the baseline information to be reviewed could include
- a new baseline information emerging that better reflects the current objectives in the sustainability framework,
 - b changes to the objectives in the sustainability framework, and
 - c direction from a consultation body that baseline information needs amending.
- 4.28 It is felt that the current generic baseline information represents a competent rational for assessing the sustainability issues that are relevant to Halton and the wider area, specific baseline information to assess the effect of the proposed SPD.

Difficulties in collecting data and limitations of the data

- 4.29 Ideally the baseline information, found in Appendix 2 of the Core Strategy SA Scoping Report and in the SAF (Appendix A of this document), should relate to 2006, unfortunately due to the time it takes to collate data this has not been possible in many cases. As far as possible the most up date information has been used for each set of data provided.

4.30 The information tables also contain some omissions because, in some cases, it has not been possible to establish the most appropriate targets, figures or sources. Some difficulties in collecting data have also been associated with the reliance on external bodies to collect the data. For example, where external bodies have collected data for their own purposes, in the future the data may not be available, or not available in the same format, in order to make reliable comparisons. Where possible the Council will look to overcome these problems by including information that is known to be collected by the Council or will be collected by the Council in the future. This may require further monitoring and data collection to be undertaken in the future.

4.31 It should be noted that the baseline information, found in Appendix 2 of the Core Strategy SA Scoping Report, represents a 'work in progress' in the sense that it will be added to / amended as new indicators / sources of baseline information come to the attention of the Council.

Sustainability Issues

4.32 In determining an appropriate SA approach to apply to this SPD, it is important to draw upon sources that identify those sustainability issues that are relevant to Halton and the wider area. This can be achieved by identifying issues that are based upon sound quantitative analysis; and / or involved extensive community participation.

4.33 The key sustainability issues for Halton and the wider area include:

- **Unemployment** - 'Halton: Gateway to Prosperity' 2005-2008
- **Disparity in employment** - 'Halton: Gateway to Prosperity' 2005-2008
- **Access to Employment** - State of the North West Economy (Sub-regional Report) (Oct 2004)
- **The need to raise the levels of education & skills** - The State of the Borough (Jan 2005)
- **The need to foster enterprise and entrepreneurship** - The State of the Borough (Jan 2005)
- **Reliance on a narrow economic base and low wage economy** - 'Halton: Gateway to Prosperity' 2005-2008
- **The need to improve the Economy** - The State of the Borough (Jan 2005)
- **The need to revitalise the Town Centres** - Community Strategy (2006)
- **The image of the Borough** - 'Halton: Gateway to Prosperity' 2005-2008
- **The need to improve health & life expectancy** - North West Public Health Observatory & Community Strategy (2006)
- **Long-term ill** - 2001 Census & Community Strategy (2006)
- **Ageing residents & the need to grow the health-care sector** - Department of Health
- **Perception of crime levels and fear of crime** - 'Quality of Life Survey' of 1999
- **Increased demand for affordable housing** - Land Registry and Housing Needs Study
- **Providing an appropriate and balanced housing supply** - Draft Housing Strategy 2005/06 to 2007/08
- **Providing appropriate sites to meet the needs of Gypsies and Travellers** - Circular 01-2006 'Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites'
- **Improve access to Services from the East of Runcorn** - Local Transport Plan 2
- **Improve access to Services in Widnes** - Local Transport Plan 2
- **Improve access to Services to those who do not own cars**
- **Community facilities**

- **Amount, location and access to Recreational Space** - PMP Open Space study
- **Population** - Nomis
- **Deprivation** - 2004 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)
- **Water quality** - Environment Agency
- **Conserving biodiversity, habitats and species**- Securing The Future - Delivering UK Sustainable Development Strategy
- **SSSI** - English Nature, April 2005
- **Waste Management** - Halton's Waste Management Strategy 2004
- **Transport congestion & pollution** – Local Transport Plan 2
- **Air Quality** – Local Transport Plan 2
- **Design quality in development** - Housing Audit (CABE, 2005)
- **Protecting cultural & built heritage** – English Heritage (2005)
- **Obtaining energy from renewable sources** - Securing The Future - Delivering UK Sustainable Development Strategy
- **Requiring energy efficiency improvements** - Securing The Future - Delivering UK Sustainable Development Strategy
- **Ensuring the most effective use of land** – Draft RSS (2006)
- **Water resources** - Securing The Future - Delivering UK Sustainable Development Strategy
- **Climate change** - Securing The Future - Delivering UK Sustainable Development Strategy
- **Industrial legacy** - Community Strategy (2006)

4.34 The issues highlighted blue are those issues which are considered to be of particular importance with regard to the proposed Halton Lea Town Centre Strategy SPD.

5 Plan issues and options

Main strategic options considered and how they were identified

5.1 Three strategic options for delivering the purpose of the draft SPD were considered. These were identified and considered as part of the Halton Lea Town Centre Strategy SA Scoping Report. This approach was taken as it was felt important that before the Council resources were committed to progressing the policy response selected to deliver the intended purpose of the SPD, the option selected was:

- a based on which would address the issues identified in the scoping report;
- b most likely to contribute to achieving sustainable development, and
- c supported by the statutory consultation bodies and other stakeholders.

5.2 In summary, the options considered during the pre-production scoping stage were identified based on the preliminary purpose and geographical coverage of the intended SPD. Significantly the coverage of the SPD directly relates to an identified geographical area i.e. Halton Lea town centre and the immediate surrounds. The preliminary purpose and coverage were consulted upon, and neither has been amended as a result of responses to the SA Scoping Report consultation exercise, however, the purpose of the SPD has been slightly amended to reflect changes made during the drafting of the SPD. The comments received in relation to the Pre-Production Scoping Report consultation and the Council's responses are contained in Appendix B.

5.3 The preferred option identified and selected in the Scoping Report is the option appraised within this SA. For

comprehensiveness the options considered at that stage in the process are contained in Appendix E.

How social, environmental and economic issues were considered in comparing the options and choosing the preferred option.

5.4 As stated in 5.1 the purpose and coverage of the intended SPD were tested as part of the Scoping Report and have not been amended as a result of the SA Scoping Report consultation exercise. The report included the formal screening exercise required by Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) regulations. This exercise made an initial assessment of the characteristics of the proposed SPD, and its (environmental) effects, and of the area likely to be affected by it. This assessment demonstrated that the purpose and coverage of SPD would not have a significant environmental effect.

5.5 This process also contributed to identifying the limited scope of the SPD, that it will only provide additional practical guidance to policies that have already been scrutinised and consulted upon through the plan making process, which are adopted in the Unitary Development Plan (UDP). This recognised that the UDP itself had been through the Sustainability Appraisal process. The screening process identified that the purpose of the SPD is to promote sustainable development by creating a more pleasant, healthier and safer environment. The statutory SEA bodies and other stakeholders have agreed with the Council's conclusions during the screening process.

5.6 The preferred option for delivering the purpose of the intended SPD has been established and tested through the Scoping Report, it is recognised as

contributing to achieving sustainability and that its scope is only to provide additional practical guidance. This is felt to represent a sufficient scrutiny of comparison of the options identified. It also establishes that the preferred option that has been selected is commensurate to the scope of the intended SPD.

Other options considered, and why these were rejected

- 5.7 This was established and consulted upon as part of the Scoping Report. The relevant extract is contained in Appendix E.

Proposed mitigation measures

- 5.8 No proposed mitigation measures were considered necessary at this stage in the process, because of the scope of the SPD and its purpose of providing supplementary practical guidance to the adopted UDP.

6 Assessment of the social, environmental and economic effects of the draft Halton Lea Town Centre Strategy SPD

Significant sustainability effects of the draft SPD

- 6.1 The Scoping Report, which incorporated the formal SEA screening statement, established that the intended SPD was unlikely to have a significant environmental effect. Additionally, the screening statement established that the intended scope of the SPD will be to provide additional practical guidance to policies within the adopted UDP. Within the context of this, an assessment of the likely social, environmental and economic effects can be made to accompany the draft Halton Lea Town Centre SPD, as set out in Appendix D.
- 6.2 The assessment tests the likely effects that the proposed SPD will have on the social, environmental and economic objectives, indicators and targets set out within the Sustainability Appraisal Framework (SAF). These objectives, indicators and targets have been derived from the Community Strategy, the sub-regionally agreed Merseyside objectives and the regional sustainability framework – ‘Action for Sustainability’. This will ensure that the SPD is tested against local, sub-regional and regional priorities. The SAF was established in the Scoping Report and is contained in Appendix A.

Consideration of sustainability issues in developing the draft SPD

- 6.3 The pre-production stage enabled the identification of the social, environmental and economic issues relevant to Halton and to the intended purpose of the SPD, this was mostly through the collection and analysis of baseline information. This process influenced the preliminary purpose of

the SPD (which has now been slightly amended during the drafting of the SPD) and the preferred option to achieve its delivery. Additionally, the approach taken in relation to the SA, was also identified. These issues were 'tested' and consulted upon through the Scoping Report consultation. The outcome of this consultation led to the production of the draft SPD which has continued to take into account the relevant social, environmental and economic problems that can be addressed through the purpose of the SPD.

Proposed mitigation measures

- 6.4 No proposed mitigation measures were considered necessary after the testing of the SPD against the objectives contained within the SAF because the assessment did not identify any issues that could be suitably mitigated for. Additionally, the scope of the SPD and its purpose of providing supplementary practical guidance to the adopted UDP means that necessary policy checks are in place that afford greater protection to areas such as protected wildlife habitat, which the SPD is supplementary to.

Uncertainties and risks

- 6.5 The assessment of the likely effects that the proposed SPD will have on the social, environmental and economic objectives (as set out in Appendix D) identified that the effect of the SPD on a number of objectives was difficult to determine. This creates a degree of uncertainty in relation to the effects of the SPD. Additionally, the incremental cumulative nature of the changes that the SPD will make to places is difficult to test and predict against the objectives in the SAF.

7 Implementation

Links to other tiers of plans and programmes and the project level

7.1 The strategy for implementation of the proposed SPD, once adopted as a formal SPD will include Council Officer training in relation to the guidance set out in the SPD. This is to ensure that its purpose is achieved more consistently across the Borough. The SPD will also be actively signposted by relevant Officers to ensure that the general public and the development industry is fully aware of the content of the SPD, and take it into account within their proposals.

Proposals for monitoring

7.2 The objectives, targets and indicators contained within the SAF will be monitored as part of the Council's Annual Monitoring Report. This will bring together the monitored data from their source, such as the Regional Sustainable Development Framework for the North West monitoring report, and collect data deficits where appropriate.

Appendix A: Sustainability Appraisal Framework

	Objective	SEA Directive	Detailed Criteria	Indicator	Target	Baseline Data
Economic	1. To continue reducing the unemployment rate in Halton and increase the economic activity rate	Social inclusiveness Economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it encourage new employment that is consistent with local needs? 	Population employment in and unemployment	To bring Halton's employment and unemployment rates in line with England and Wales rate by 2021.	40% of people aged 16-74 in Halton are economically active and in full time employment, whilst 4.5% are economically active and unemployed. Compared to 40.6% of people aged 16-74 in England & Wales who are economically active and in full time employment with 3.4% economically active and unemployed. (Source: Office of National Statistics, April 2001)
				Job Density	To bring Halton's job density in line with England and Wales densities by 2016.	The 2003 job density, the ratio between total jobs to working age people, in Halton (0.76) is lower than the regional (0.81) and national average (0.83). (Source: Nomis)
	2. To improve educational attainment and opportunities for life long learning and employment	Social inclusiveness Economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it provide improved access to vocational training, education and skills for young people? Will it provide improved skills and knowledge in the workplace? 	% of 15 yr olds achieving five or more GCSE's at grades A-C or equivalent	Increase proportions achieving five or more GCSE's at Grades A*-C to 60% by 2010. (Community Strategy)	49.1% (2005) (Source: Department for Education and Skills)
				% of adults educated to NVQ level 2, 3 or 4	Increase the % of adults qualified to Level 3 to 70% by 2010. Reduce the number of adults with no qualifications to 10% by 2010. (Community Strategy)	NVQ2 and above: Halton – 54.3%, GB – 61.5% NVQ3 and above: Halton – 33.1%, GB – 43.1% NVQ4 and above: Halton – 15.7%, GB – 25.2% (Source: Local Area Labour Force Survey, Nomis, Mar 2003-Feb 2004)
	3. To encourage sustainable economic growth and business	Economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it encourage the growth of indigenous businesses? 	Total number of VAT registered businesses	To increase the number of VAT registered businesses by 15% by 2010. (Community Strategy)	2,185 (2004) (Source: Nomis)

	Objective	SEA Directive	Detailed Criteria	Indicator	Target	Baseline Data
Economic	business development		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it improve the number of new, competitive businesses that last? Will it provide or contribute to the availability of a balanced portfolio of employment sites? 	Percentage of business registrations and de-registrations	To increase the % of VAT registrations whilst decreasing the % of de-registrations	10.8 % VAT registrations and 9.8% de-registrations (Source: InterDepartmental Business Register (IDBR), Nomis, 2004)
	4. To improve the competitiveness and productivity of business	Economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it improve business development and enhance competitiveness? 	Gross Value Added (GVA) per head	Sustain levels of GVA at above the regional norm. (Community Strategy)	GVA per head for Halton and Warrington was £17,190 (Source: Merseyside Economic Review, 2005)
	5. To enhance the vitality and viability of the three town centres (Runcorn Old Town, Halton Lea and Widnes)	Economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it provide an improvement to one or more of the town centres? 	Footfall within the town centre	Increase footfall through each town centre by 25% by 2010. (Community Strategy)	Average weekly footfall within Halton Lea of 292,605 Average monthly footfall for Widnes 595,747 (July – Nov 2005) Average monthly footfall for Runcorn Old Town 187,207 (July – Nov 2005) (Source: Halton Lea – Brandspace, Runcorn and Widnes – Halton Borough Council Footfall Counters)
				Vacancy rates within the town centre	Decrease vacancy levels year on year.	Number of vacant units in 2005 Halton Lea – 35 Widnes – 4 Runcorn Old Town – 41 (Source: Town Centre Survey 2005, Halton Borough Council)
	6. To improve the overall image of the Borough in order to attract investment.	Economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it encourage inward investment? 	Number of investment enquiries and the number of conversions (enquiries that are translated into actual, completed investment or expansion projects).	To increase the number of investment enquiries and the number of conversions.	317 enquiries 42 conversions (2004/5) (Source: Economic Development, Halton Borough Council)

	Objective	SEA Directive	Detailed Criteria	Indicator	Target	Baseline Data
Social	7. To improve health and reduce health inequalities	Population and human health, Social inclusiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it improve the standard of healthcare, particularly for the elderly? Will it support healthy lifestyles? 	Years of healthy life expectancy	Narrow the gap between life expectancy, at birth, in Halton and the national average by at least 10% by 2010. (Community Strategy)	Halton: Males – 73.90 years Females – 78.21 England: Males – 76.0 years Females – 80.6 (2000-2002) (Source: North West Public Health Observatory)
				Number of people who have a long-term illness	To reduce the % of residents in Halton with a long-term illness to within 1.5% of the England & Wales % by the 2011 Census.	21.5% of residents in Halton considered themselves to have a limiting long-term illness, compared to 18.2% for England and Wales as a whole. (Source: 2001 Census)
	8. To improve safety and reduce crime, disorder and fear of crime	Social inclusiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it encourage crime-sensitive design? Will it target, reduce and sustain a reduction in crime? Will it reduce the likelihood of violence and antisocial behaviour? 	Recorded crimes per 1,000 population	To reduce number of offences per 1,000 pop.	Halton offences per 1,000 population: Violence against the person 04/05 – 23 Sexual offences 04/05 – 1 Robbery 04/05 – 1 Burglary dwelling 04/05 – 4 Theft of a motor vehicle – 7 Theft from a vehicle – 11 (Source: Basic Command Unit - Recorded Crime for Six Key Offences 2004/05, Crime in England & Wales 2004/5, Home Office)
				Number of people reporting fear of crime	Reduce levels of expressed fear of crime and anti-social behaviour by 25% by 2010. (Community Strategy)	16.4% of people in Halton thought reducing crime would improve their local area. Just under three tenths (29.2%) of residents stated that they feel 'fairly unsafe' (17.3%) or 'very unsafe' (11.9%) when they are outside in their local area after dark.(Source: Halton Strategic Partnership Consulting the Communities of Halton 2005, March 2005)

	Objective	SEA Directive	Detailed Criteria	Indicator	Target	Baseline Data
Social	9. To provide well designed, good quality, affordable and resource efficient housing	Social inclusiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it provide for affordable housing for local people? Will it ensure that new housing is of a high standard of design and layout? Will it provide safe, secure and decent housing? 	Proportion of different housing types and tenures	To meet the requirements set out in the most up-to-date Housing Needs Survey.	Housing Type 2001: Detached 19.2% Semi detached 33.0% Terraced 37.5% Other (flats etc.) 10.3% Housing Tenure 2004: Private 71.9% Council 12.9% Housing Association 15.2% (Source: Annual Monitoring Report, Halton Borough Council, 2005)
				Average household income	To increase average household income in Halton to 90%+ of the national average by 2010. (Community Strategy)	The average household income in Halton is £27,898 which is 89.4% of the UK average (UK average salary is £31,200). (Source: Merseyside Economic Review, 2006)
	10. To improve access to basic goods, services and amenities	Social inclusiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it improve transport provision and accessibility? Will it provide for local retail needs? Will it improve public access to services and amenities? 	Percentage of new residential development within 30 minutes public transport time of a GP, hospital, primary and secondary school, employment and a major retail centre.	To ensure that all new housing development is within 30 minutes public transport time of a GP, hospital, primary and secondary school, employment and a town centre.	% of housing completions 2004/5 within 30 minutes public transport time of key services: GP – 100% Hospital (Halton) – 48% Primary School – 100% Secondary School – 100% Employment – 100% Town centre – 100% (Source: Annual Monitoring Report, Halton Borough Council, 2005)
11. To ensure access to high quality public open space and natural	Social inclusiveness Biodiversity, fauna and flora. Cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it ensure that all people have access to public open space within a reasonable 	Number and area of Local Nature Reserves (LNRs)	Ensure no loss of LNR (number or area).	10 LNRs covering an area of 142.02ha (Source: Halton Borough Council, 2004)	

	Objective	SEA Directive	Detailed Criteria	Indicator	Target	Baseline Data
Social	natural greenspace	flora, Cultural heritage and landscape	a reasonable distance from where they live? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it improve access to natural greenspace? 	Number of Green Flag Parks	To maintain and if possible increase the number of Green Flag Parks.	5 parks in Halton have Green Flag Awards. (Source: the Civic Trust – Green Flag Awards, 2005)
	12. To reduce social exclusion, deprivation and social inequalities	Social inclusiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it reduce poverty and social exclusion in those areas most affected? 	Index of Deprivation	For Halton to become less deprived and to move outside the 40 most deprived districts in England by 2010. (Community Strategy)	Halton is ranked 21 st , out of 354, in the average of ward scores where rank 1 is the most deprived. (Source: Indices of Deprivation 2004, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister)
Environmental	13. To protect, improve and where necessary, restore the quality of inland, estuarine and coastal waters	Water and soil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it improve the quality of controlled waters? 	Water quality (chemical & biological) classification of rivers, canals, estuaries and coastal waters and percentage lengths in different classes	To increase the % of rivers, canals, estuaries and coastal waters that classified as either good or fair year on year.	Halton: Biology 2004 Good – 0% Fair – 13.18% Poor – 79.39% Bad – 7.4% Chemistry 2004 Good – 11.0% Fair – 60.43% Poor – 20.55% Bad – 8.02% (Source: Environment Agency)
	14. To protect, enhance and manage biodiversity	Biodiversity, Fauna & Flora	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it protect sites and habitats of nature conservation value from inappropriate development? Will it improve the number and diversity of sites and 	Number and total area of internationally and nationally designated nature conservation sites	To maintain the number and total area of internationally and nationally designated nature conservation sites	1 RAMSAR – 918.7ha 3 SSSI – 923.99ha 61 SINC – 742.65ha The RAMSAR site is also designated as a SSSI site therefore 918.7ha of the SSSI sites is also contributed as a RAMSAR. (Source: Annual Monitoring Report, Halton Borough Council, 2005)

	Objective	SEA Directive	Detailed Criteria	Indicator	Target	Baseline Data
Environmental			diversity of sites and habitats of nature conservation value in the Borough?	Condition of SSSIs	95% of SSSI land should be in favourable or recovering condition by 2010. (Public Service Agreement (PSA) target)	Flood Brook Clough SSSI - 100% unfavourable recovering (01/04/05) Mersey Estuary SSSI - 99.95% favourable, 0.05% unfavourable recovering (Various 08/02- 03/04) Red Brow Cutting SSSI - 100% favourable (06/01) (Source: English Nature)
	15. To minimise the production of waste and increase reuse, recycling and recovery rates.	Water and soil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it result in a reduction in the amount of waste requiring treatment and disposal? 	Level and % of household waste recycled	Waste Strategy 2000 set national recycling targets To recycle or compost at least 30% of household waste by 2010, and 33% of household waste by 2015.	During 2004/05, 8885.57 tonnes (13.65%) of household waste arising was sent for recycling. (Source: Annual Monitoring Report, Halton Borough Council, 2005)
				Total annual amount of municipal waste generated and % recycle or composted.	Ensure 30% of waste is recycled or composted by 2010. (Community Strategy)	Total municipal waste(04/05) – 65,083 tonnes Total municipal waste recovered – 8885 (14%) Total municipal waste composted – 5957 (9%) Total municipal waste landfilled – 50240 (77%) (Source: Annual Monitoring Report, Halton Borough Council, 2005)
	16. To reduce the need to travel and improve choice and use of sustainable	Air, Human Health, Climatic factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it minimise the need to travel? Will it reduce car use and encourage the use of integrated 	Number and total area of Air Quality Management Areas and population living in AQMAs	To maintain 0 AQMAs	0 AQMAs (2005) (Source: Local Air Quality Management website)

	Objective	SEA Directive	Detailed Criteria	Indicator	Target	Baseline Data
Environmental	transport modes, whilst protecting, and where necessary, improving local air quality		and public transport? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it improve air quality? 	Travel to work by mode	To reduce the number of people travelling to work by car or van by 10% by 2011 and by 20% by 2021.	Percentage of people in Halton aged 16 - 74 in employment who usually: Work at or from home – 6.16% Travel to work by: Underground, metro, light rail, Tram or Train – 1.31% Bus, mini bus or coach – 7.12% Motorcycle, scooter or moped – 1.07% Driving a car or a van – 62.42% Passenger in a car or van – 9.06% Taxi – 0.65% Bicycle – 2.03% On foot – 9.78% Other – 0.41% (Source: 2001 Census)
	17. To protect, enhance and manage the rich diversity of cultural and built environment and archaeological assets	Cultural heritage and landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it safeguard sites of archaeological importance? Will it preserve and enhance buildings which contribute to Halton's heritage? 	Number of Listed Buildings and Number and Area of Conservation Areas	To maintain the number of Listed Buildings and Number and Area of Conservation Areas	Halton has 122 Listed Buildings 2 of which are Grade I listed, 17 are Grade II* listed and the remaining are Grade II listed. Halton has 10 Conservation Areas and the total area is 92. 78ha. (Source: English Heritage and Halton Borough Council)
				Number of Conservation Areas covered by an up-to-date Conservation Area Appraisal	To increase the number of Conservation Areas covered by an up-to-date Conservation Area Appraisal	Currently there are 0 Conservation Areas covered by an up-to-date Conservation Area Appraisal (Source: Halton Borough Council)
				Number of buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments 'at risk'.	To reduce the number of buildings 'at risk' to 0 by 2016.	There are 2 buildings 'at risk' in Halton these are Daresbury Hall which is Grade II* Listed and the Undercroft of West Range at Norton Priory which is a scheduled monument. (Source: English Heritage, Buildings 'at risk' Register, 2005)

	Objective	SEA Directive	Detailed Criteria	Indicator	Target	Baseline Data
Environmental	18. To use land, energy, and water resources prudently and efficiently, and increase energy generated from renewable sources	Water and soil, Climatic factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it enable development to re-use brownfield land and convert existing buildings? Will it encourage prudent and efficient use of energy? Will it use water efficiently and with care? Will it encourage the development of appropriate types of renewable energy resources? 	Proportion of housing built on previously developed land per year	PPG3 set a target of 60% of dwellings on PDL by 2008.	61% of new and converted dwellings on PDL in 2004/05 42% in 2004 49% in 2003 28% in 2002 (Source: Annual Monitoring Report, Halton Borough Council, 2005)
				Proportion of energy generated from sustainable and renewable sources	Energy White 2003 set a national target that 10% of the UK's electricity supply comes from renewable sources by 2010, 15% by 2015 and 20% by 2020.	Halton has capacity for the generation of 6.5MW from renewable sources. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Biomass: PDM (2.10MW) Co-firing of Biomass: Shell Green Generation Plant (4.20MW) Sewage Gas: Runcorn CHP (0.26MW) (Source: renewables northwest)

Appendix B: Statement of Consultation: Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Sustainability Assessment (SA) process

Draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD): Halton Lea Town Centre Strategy
 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Sustainability Appraisal (SA) - Statement of Consultation

SA Pre-production Scoping Report (incorporating SEA screening statement): Thursday 30th June to Thursday 4th August 2005

Date of consideration of representations: 22nd August 2005

Consultee	Date comments received and how responded	Comments	Response
Stephen Hedley The Countryside Agency	7/07/05 by email	<p>In relation to the SEA screening, the 2004 Regulations of course require the responsible authority to consider a number of questions in relation to the screening process. In its role as a consultation body, the Countryside Agency is unable to provide an opinion on many aspects of this process, such as whether the plan or programme sets the framework for future development consent of projects, or whether an environmental assessment is required, because these are matters for the responsible authority to determine and we have insufficient knowledge to give a view on these issues.</p> <p>We can, however, provide an opinion on the question: Is the plan or programme likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Article 3.5 of the 2001 Directive). In relation to the Countryside Agency's particular environmental interests, the question we have to address is: Will the plan or programme have a significant effect on the landscape or the enjoyment of it through access?</p> <p>On the basis of the information supplied, given location of the areas, the Countryside Agency considers that the SPD is unlikely to have a significant effect on the landscape or the enjoyment of it through access.</p>	No changes required.

Appendix C: SA of Halton Lea Town Centre Strategy SPD - Statement of Determination

CI Requirements of the SEA Regulations

The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulation 2004 (from now on referred to as 'the regulations'), places an obligation on the Council to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) on land use and spatial plans. Part of this process includes a screening exercise to determine the need for a SEA to be undertaken, by assessing if the proposed plan is likely to have any significant environmental effects. This screening process stage is particularly relevant where the plan being proposed can be considered to be small scale. The Halton Lea Town Centre Strategy Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) can be considered to be a small-scale land use plan.

C2 Screening Process Methodology

The regulations provide a set of criteria for determining the likely significant effects on the environment of land use and spatial plans. These criteria are derived from Annex 2 of SEA Directive (2001/42/EC) and are set out in Schedule I of the regulations and can be summarised as:

1. The characteristics of 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;
 - b The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy;
 - c The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;
 - d Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme; and
 - 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).
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 the effects;
 - b The cumulative nature of the effects;
 - c The transboundary nature of the effects;
 - d The risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents);
 - e The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);
 - 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
 - iii. Intensive land-use; and
 - g The effects on areas or landscapes, which have a recognised national, [European] Community or international protection status.

These criteria will form the framework of the screening process

C3 Screening Process for Supplementary Planning Document (Draft): Halton Lea Town Centre Strategy

The purpose of the Halton Lea Town Centre Strategy SPD is to complement the Halton Unitary Development Plan (UDP), by providing additional guidance for anyone complement the Halton UDP, to provide additional practical guidance and support for those involved in the planning of new development within Halton Borough to:

- a Enable the town centres to prosper without adversely affecting the health of any other;
- b Safeguard and strengthen the individual role of each town centre as a safe and accessible place to shop, work and enjoy;
- c Co-ordinate public and private investment decisions;
- d Improve the economic prosperity of the Borough through the creation of employment opportunities; and
- e Ensure the highest standard of design and architecture within each town centre.

The intended geographical coverage of the SPD is Halton Lea town centre and the immediate surrounds. Using the criteria in Schedule I of the regulations as a framework, the requirement for a need to carry out an SEA on the intended Halton Lea Town Centre Strategy SPD can be determined.

C4 Halton Lea Town Centre Strategy SPD - Statement of Determination

(as required by Regulation 11 of The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004)

Halton Borough Council in consultation with the statutory environmental consultation bodies (the Countryside Agency, English Heritage, English Nature and the Environment Agency) has determined that the Halton Lea Town Centre Strategy SPD is not likely to have significant environmental effects and, accordingly, an environmental assessment will not be carried out as part of the Sustainability Appraisal process.

The SA Scoping Report, (Incorporating the Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Statement), for the Halton Lea Town Centre Strategy SPD was available for consultation between Thursday 30th June 2005 and Thursday 4th August 2005.

Reasons for this Determination

Using the criteria, detailed in Schedule I of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, for determining the likely significance of effects on the environment the following assessments have been made.

1. The characteristics of proposed Halton Lea Town Centre Strategy SPD

Criteria	Assessment
(a) The degree to which the SPD sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources.	The SPD is intended to be supplementary and complementary to the adopted planning policy contained in the UDP.
(b) The degree to which the SPD influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy	It is intended that the scope of the SPD will be to provide additional practical guidance to policies that have already been scrutinised and consulted upon through the plan making process.
(c) The relevance of the SPD for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development	By seeking to enable the town centres to prosper without adversely affecting the health of any other and ensure the highest standard of design and architecture, this SPD will help promote the image of the Borough, promote more sustainable travel patterns and therefore improve economic prosperity of the Borough.
(d) Environmental problems relevant to the SPD	The intended SPD is primarily concerned with enabling the town centre to prosper. However, this would be without adversely affecting the health of any other and therefore the roles of centres within the Borough should be strengthened.
(e) The relevance of the SPD for the implementation of [European] Community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection)	There are no direct linkages with the implementation of European Community legislation.

2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected by the proposed Halton Lea Town Centre Strategy SPD

Criteria	Assessment
(a) The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects	<p>The probable effect of the intended SPD will be to improve the town centre in terms of economic health, prosperity and function.</p> <p>Once adopted as part of the Halton Local Development Framework (LDF), the short to medium term effects of the intended SPD could be incremental. However, as more SPD policies are implemented the longer term effect will be to create a comprehensive improvement in the town centre. The SPD will also set the platform for the further improvements via the future Retail and Leisure development DPD.</p> <p>As part of the LDF the intended SPD will be subject to annual review and its relevance and effectiveness will be</p>

2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected by the proposed Halton Lea Town Centre Strategy SPD	
Criteria	Assessment
	monitored. The LDF system allows for the SPD to be amended, replaced or deleted relatively easily if required.
(b) The cumulative nature of the effects	The likely cumulative nature of the effects from the intended SPD are improving the quality of the built and natural environment of the town centre, to strengthen the role, improve economic prosperity and create an overall improvement in the environment.
(c) The transboundary nature of the effects	There are no transboundary effects from the SPD due to the intended scope of its purpose and the geographical coverage it will have.
(d) The risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents)	There are no significant or likely risks to human health or the environment from the intended SPD.
(e) The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	The intended SPD is site specific but not time constrained. Greatest effects from the SPD will therefore be individually incremental and with progressive cumulative effects locally. More general effects of lesser magnitude such as improved economic prosperity will be felt Borough wide.
(f) The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; ii. Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or iii. Intensive land-use. 	<p>The intended SPD is area specific. However, it will not impact upon areas of value or vulnerability as identified in i - iii.</p> <p>The SPD will provide guidance to existing planning policies and be seen with the context of part of the LDF and not part of the Development Plan, which contains policies relating to shopping and town centres and their natural and built environment.</p>
(g) The effects on areas or landscapes, which have a recognised national, [European] Community or international protection status.	The intended SPD is site specific and would be supplementary to adopted planning policy. The practical guidance it will contain will be considered in the context of planning policies relating to safeguarding and enhancing areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status. Therefore the SPD is not likely to have a negative effect on such areas, but will seek to provide additional guidance on enhancing such areas, where appropriate i.e. through acknowledging local distinctiveness in the design of new development.

In accordance with Part 2(9) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, the Council, as the responsible authority consider that the intended Supplementary Planning Document: Halton Lea Town Centre Strategy is unlikely to have a

significant environmental effect and accordingly does not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment.

This determination has now been subject to consultation with the statutory environmental consultation bodies, none of the bodies have disagreed with the Council's determination.

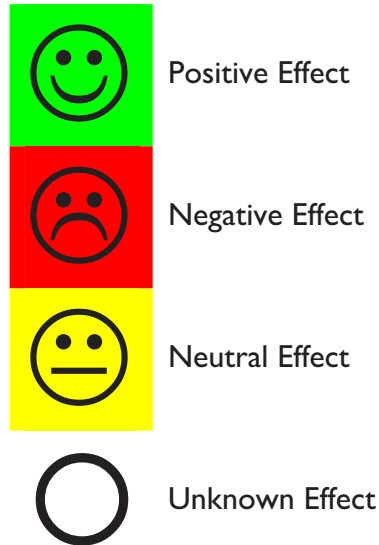
Further Information

A copy of this determination and the accompanying statement of reasons may be inspected at each of the following locations Widnes, Halton Lea & Ditton libraries; and Halton Lea, Runcorn, Ditton and Widnes Halton Direct Links and can be viewed or downloaded free of charge from the Council's website at www.halton.gov.uk










If you require any further help or information, please feel free to contact the Spatial Planning Team on 0151 907 8300 or at forward.planning@halton.gov.uk





Appendix D: Testing the Purpose of the Halton Lea Town Centre Strategy SPD against the Sustainability Appraisal Framework

Key



	Objective	Nature of Effect	Additional Comments
Economic	1. To continue towards reducing the unemployment rate in Halton and increasing the economic activity rate		This SPD is expected to have a positive effect on the unemployment and economic activity rates in Halton.
	2. To improve educational attainment and opportunities for life long learning and employment		This SPD is not expected to have any effect on the educational attainment and opportunities for life long learning in Halton.
	3. To encourage sustainable economic growth and business development		This SPD is expected to have a positive effect on sustainable economic growth and business development in Halton.
	4. To improve the competitiveness and productivity of business		This SPD is expected to have a neutral impact on the competitiveness and productivity of business within Halton.
	5. To enhance the vitality and viability of the three town centres (Runcorn Old Town, Halton Lea and Widnes)		This SPD is expected to have a positive impact on the vitality and viability of the three town centres.

	Objective	Nature of Effect	Additional Comments
	6. To improve and promote the overall image of the Borough in order to attract investment.		Strengthening the role and improving the design and quality of Halton Lea Town Centre should improve the perception of the town centre and therefore should contribute towards improving the overall image of the Borough.
Social	7. To improve health and reduce health inequalities		The improved design, layout, and quality of Halton Lea Town Centre will improve the perception of the town centre and will help to increase feelings of well-being. The promotion of better facilities for travel such as cycling will contribute towards improved health.
	8. To improve safety and reduce crime, disorder and fear of crime		The improved design, surveillance and security of Halton Lea Town Centre will help to provide places that will contribute to reassuring communities and reduce the fear of crime.
	9. To provide good quality, affordable and resource efficient housing		The nature of existing land use within the area covered by this SPD is likely to mean that there will be no effect upon the provision of good quality, affordable and resource efficient housing.
	10. To improve access to basic goods, services and amenities		This SPD is expected to have a positive impact on access to basic goods, services and amenities.
	11. To ensure access to high quality public open space and natural greenspace		This SPD is expected to have some positive effect on access to high quality public open space and natural greenspace in Halton.
	12. To reduce social exclusion, deprivation and social inequalities		This SPD is expected to have an indirect but positive effect on social exclusion, deprivation and social inequalities in Halton.
Environmental	13. To protect, improve and where necessary, restore the quality of inland, estuarine and coastal waters		This SPD is not expected to have any effect on the quality of inland, estuarine and coastal waters.
	14. To protect, enhance and manage biodiversity		The direct / indirect of this SPD on biodiversity is difficult to quantify. However, it is likely that any negative impacts on biodiversity would be mitigated by the use of other policies from within the UDP.

	Objective	Nature of Effect	Additional Comments
	15. To minimise the production of waste and increase reuse, recycling and recovery rates.		The direct / indirect of this SPD on the production of waste and the increase reuse, recycling and recovery of waste is difficult to quantify. Whilst the SPD does contain a policy in relation to enhancement of waste recycling facilities the majority of waste issues are addressed presently by the UDP and, in the future, by the Joint Waste DPD.
Environmental	16. To improve air quality by reducing the need to travel and improving choice and use of sustainable transport modes and reducing air pollution from other sources		The direct/ indirect effect of this SPD on air quality or the need to travel is difficult to quantify.
	17. To protect, enhance and manage the rich diversity of the cultural and built environment and archaeological assets, whilst maintaining and strengthening a local distinctiveness through the enhancement of the character and appearance of the local landscape, townscape and coast		By seeking to ensure the highest standard of design and architecture within the town centre and improving quality, layout and design and local characteristics, the SPD will help to improve the built environment and maintain local distinctiveness.
	18. To use land, energy, and water resources prudently and efficiently, and increase energy generated from renewable sources		The direct / indirect of this SPD on land, energy, and water resources is difficult to quantify. However, it is likely that this will be managed through the use of national guidance and other policies from within the UDP and emerging LDF.

Appendix E: Options Considered

Extract of Pre-Production Scoping Report

As a Local Planning Authority, it is important to consider the options available for meeting the purpose of the intended SPD. The options considered are:

Option 1: Do nothing

This approach relies on existing policy within the UDP and government advice, such as that contained within 'By Design, Urban Design in the Planning System: Towards Better Practice', Going to Town: Improving Town Centre Access or Planning Policy Statement 6: Planning for Town Centres, to help inform planning decisions and applications. Alternatively another agency or function of the Council could produce guidance we can subsequently adopt.

In seeking to achieve sustainable forms of development, it is important that practical guidance is produced that will have sufficient weight to promote better design, access and prosperity within Halton. This can only really be achieved if the SPDs are adopted. It would be difficult for another agency or function of the Council to lead on the production of what are essentially planning documents. Therefore although this option is rejected, it is necessary to ensure that all relevant agencies and functions of the Council are closely consulted throughout the production of the SPDs, as their knowledge relating to town centre strategies will assist in creating effective SPDs.

Option 2: Adopt government documents as SPD

Another option is to seek adoption of government documents as SPD. There are

four documents which each (in part) contributes to meeting the purpose of the intended SPD. These are: By Design, Urban Design in the Planning System: Towards Better Practice; Going to Town: Improving Town Centre Access, Planning Policy Statement 6: Planning for Town Centres and Vital and Viable Town Centres.

It is possible to adopt these documents as SPD for Halton, but firstly it would be difficult to amend them after a consultation exercise; secondly, the combined length of the documents would be difficult to digest by those involved in the planning and design of development, and; thirdly, the documents would not have the flexibility to respond to local circumstances. Therefore, it would not be the most effective means to deliver more sustainable places. It is clearly important that these four documents are used as a basis for developing a specific tailored document for Halton.

Option 3: Produce the Town Centres SPDs

This option is to produce a Halton Lea Town Centre SPD (and separately a Runcorn Old Town Centre SPD and a Widnes Town Centre DPD. This would be produced to meet the specific purpose and objectives of the need for its production.

This is the most likely option to create more attractive and sustainable places, although the SPDs must take into account national documents that relate to town centre development. The intended SPDs must be shaped throughout by those who are involved in seeking to meet the same objectives as those set out in the intended purpose of the proposed SPDs. It is therefore proposed to progress option 3.

Appendix F: Further Information

Further information relating to the purpose of the intended SPD:

To access a downloadable copy of the Planning Policy Guidance notes or Planning Policy Statements detailed in Section 2, or for further general planning information visit the Department of Communities and Local Government website at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/> or for a hard copy contact the Department of Communities and Local Government by phone on 0870 1226 236.

To access a downloadable copy of 'By Design, Urban Design in the planning system: Towards Better Practice' and 'Safer Places', documents relating to urban renewal, urban design and creating sustainable communities, and general planning information visit the Department of Communities and Local Government website at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/>. 'Places, Streets & Movement. A companion guide to Design Bulletin 32' can be purchased from the ODPM for a cost of £20.00, quoting ISBN 1 85112 113 7.

Investing in the High Street can be purchased from the Civic Trust for £25.00. The Civic Trust, Winchester House, 259-269 Old Marylebone Road, London NW1 5RA.

Going to Town: Improving Town Centre Access can be downloaded free of charge from the National Retail Planning Forum (NRPF) at www.nrpf.org. A hard copy can also be purchased online at the same website address.

Vital and Viable Town Centres: Meeting the Challenge, is out of print. However, a photocopy of the original document can be purchased from The Stationery Office online at www.tso.co.uk or by phone: 0870 600 5522, Fax: 0870 600 5533 or email: customer.services@tso.co.uk

Further information on the Secured By Design initiative, including details relating to the standards required for a development to receive Secured By Design accreditation may be found at www.securedbydesign.com

For information regarding any development affecting a historic building or conservation area 'Building In Context' will be able to provide advice. It is available from English Heritage and the CABE and can be downloaded free of charge from <http://www.cabe.org.uk> or for a hard copy contact English Heritage at: Customer Services Department, PO Box 569, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN2 2YP, Tel: 0870 333 1181, Fax: 01793 414 926

You can find out about the planning system and how it works at www.planningportal.gov.uk

Further information regarding Sustainability Appraisals and the Strategic Environmental Assessment can be found in the following documents:

- The Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities (for land use and spatial plans), October 2003
- A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive, September 2005
- Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents, November 2005

Are available via the Department of Communities and Local Government website at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/>. This website also contains a general introduction to SEA and SA. The Department of Communities and Local Government can be contacted on 020 7944 4400.

- Strategic Environmental Assessment and Biodiversity: Guidance for Practitioners, June 2004; and

- Strategic Environmental Assessment and Climate Change: Guidance for Practitioners, May 2004

Are available via the Environment Agency website at www.environment-agency.gov.uk or telephone 08708 506 506



Halton Lea Town Centre Strategy

Draft Supplementary Planning Document

Statement of Consultation
January 2007



Halton Borough Council

Halton Lea Town Centre Strategy

Draft

Supplementary Planning Document

Statement of Consultation

Environmental & Regulatory Services
Environment Directorate
Halton Borough Council
Rutland House
Halton Lea
Runcorn
WA7 2GW

Introduction

Under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 it is a requirement to prepare and publish a Statement of Consultation for a range of planning policy documents, including Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). This is a reflection of Government's desire to "strengthen community and stakeholder involvement in the development of local communities". The Council has adopted the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), this sets out how the public will be consulted on new planning policy and significant planning applications. This Statement of Consultation has been prepared to meet the requirements of the SCI, and also aims to reflect the intentions of Government planning guidance for reporting on community involvement in the plan making process.

This Statement of Consultation sets out the comments and representations made, and the response to them, in respect of the Partnership Consultation Stages conducted by Halton Borough Council, in relation to the Halton Lea Town Centre Strategy SPD. This Statement of Consultation has been produced in accordance with Regulation 17 (1) and 18 (4) of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004.

The period of formal public participation on the Halton Lea Town Centre Strategy SPD will be conducted in early 2007. The document will be made available at various deposit locations throughout the Borough, along with a copy of the public notice of 'SPD Matters and Public Participation', Representations Forms, the Sustainability Appraisal Report and an explanatory letter. Each of the aforementioned documents has also been made available on the Council website and in various formats upon request.

Statutory consultees (as outlined in Planning Policy Statement 12 - Local Development Frameworks, Appendix E) will be consulted specifically via letter with an individual copy of the draft SPD attached. In addition, those individuals on the Council's Local Development Framework consultation database that had requested to be informed of the publication of the draft SPD will also be sent a covering explanatory letter, a copy of the public notice of SPD Matters and Public Participation, and a Representation Form.

Internal Partnership Consultation

Internal Partnership consultation period: 2 September 2005-16 September 2005

Date of consideration of representations: October 2005

Note – All paragraph and page references relate to the numbers as set out in the partnership consultation draft

Consultee	Date comments received and how responded	Comments	Response
Michelle Baker	No comments received		
Mike Bennett	No comments received		
Angela Boag Property Services	No comments received		
Ian Boyd Transport Co-ordination	Via email 16/09/05	See comments for David Hall.	
Arnīs Buklovsķis Development Control	No comments received		
Gary Collins Economic Development	Via email 15/09/05	See comments below	
Para 2.9 there are lots of TC numbers but TC 3 and 7 are missing. I know you mention relevant – but it will make people wonder what they are about – can we just not add these in so the number sequence is not broken?			No change. TC3 and 7 are not relevant to Halton Lea.
Para 2.10. is not the SPD trying to implement the community strategy. Think you need more about CS, particularly the vision statement. Also under safe and attractive reference, there is an objective that states ‘ to manage town centres effectively’ - needs to be referenced.			Agreed. More details about the Community Strategy have been included.
Para 3.3 who produced the guide?			Insert (ODPM, 2005)

Consultee	Date comments received and how responded	Comments	Response
		Does/should the SPD take into account emergency planning issues. What happens if we need to evacuate – where do they go etc. talk to Spencer Webster.	No change. This issue is more appropriately covered by the overarching town centre strategy.
		Section 106 – need to keep this as wide as possible for all uses of such money. For example, if cleansing needs to be enhanced/or more town centre management, can we get S106 monies for that – lump sum banked and use the interest.	<p>It would not be appropriate to seek S106 monies for such day to day town centre management matters as street cleaning.</p> <p>It should be noted that a planning obligation (i.e. a section 106) must be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) relevant to planning; (ii) necessary to make the proposed development acceptable in planning terms; (iii) directly related to the proposed development; (iv) fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development; and (v) reasonable in all other respects. <p>We have to ensure that we meet each of these criteria.</p> <p>Section 11 of the Design for Community Safety SPD refers to appropriate schemes within town centres for which planning obligations, in the form of S106's agreements, may be sought.</p> <p>Refer to response to comments from Alan West for more details.</p>
Phil Cornthwaite	Meeting held 7/9/05	See comments below	
		Accessibility is one of the LTP priorities including transport barriers and social exclusion.	Chp 2 Policy Background – this is now dealt with by an insert at para 2.16.
		Need to make reference to relevant documents (LTP, walking and cycling strategies and draft accessibility plan)	Chp 2 Policy Background – insert reference to these documents after para 2.17.
		Include reference to Travel Plans (UDP policy TPI6)	Insert reference to policy TPI6 as bullet point to para 2.9
		Expand Paras 1.1 and 1.2 to explain succinctly the difference between the individual town centre strategies and the over arching document.	Agreed, paras 1.1 and 1.2 expanded to more explicitly explain the difference between the individual town centre strategies and over arching document.

Consultee	Date comments received and how responded	Comments	Response
		Links to greenways, current cycle ways and rights of way – possible need to include a map	Expand routes shown on Plan 4 to include cycleways and public rights of way (plan to be completed).
		Refer to LTP Parking Strategy	Reference inserted in Policy Background (Section 2.0)
		Very little parking owned by the Council therefore Private Partnerships are of importance.	Refer to response received in connection with meeting with Alan West (see below)
		Cross refer to Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act (Duty to consider crime and disorder implications)	Insert reference after para 2.4
		A new access adjoining Cineworld is a possibility. Speak to Alan West about the parking strategy for the whole centre.	See comments re meeting with Alan West 4/11/05
Alan West	Meeting 4/11/05		
		The pedestrian circulation strategy for HL involved the construction of footpaths circa 5 years ago.	Noted, amend 'Proposals' accordingly.
		A new vehicular access into Trident Retail Park off the Hallwood Link Road roundabout is planned.	Noted, amend 'Proposals' accordingly.
		There is no 'shopping list' of proposals for town centres in connection with major development proposals and S106 agreements. Each development would be considered on a case by case basis.	Noted, amend 'Proposals' accordingly.
		Parking Partnerships – most town centre car parking is owned by the private sector and not by HBC. There is a need to develop a private and public sector partnership towards car parking to a car parking strategy and a common approach to car parking in town centres.	Noted, amend 'Proposals' accordingly.
		Whilst there is not a problem with car parking provision at HL at present, if the planned extension to Halton Lea is successful there may be a problem in the future.	Noted, for 'Proposals'.
Dave Cunliffe Highways	No comments received		
Mike Curtis	No		

Consultee	Date comments received and how responded	Comments	Response
Major Projects	comments received		
Steve Eccles (co-ordinated response on behalf of the Transportation Division)	Via email 23/09/05	See comments below	
Need to mention LTP and its strategies together with the draft accessibility plan. There should be an emphasis on social inclusion and access from deprived areas.			See response above in response to same comment by P. Cornthwaite.
Mention the Highways and Transportation draft SPD on Highway Development Control.			This document is in the process of being drafted by the Transportation Division and was due for public consultation in 2006 (LDS 2005). Its correct title will be the Transport and Accessibility SPD. Reference will be made to the document in relation to appropriate highway related proposals.
Travel Plans will be required and I06 Agreements to support walking, cycling, buses and car parking.			Refer to earlier response regarding S106's. Cross reference to policies TP6 and TP7 in relevant proposals.
Need greater reference to Greenways, cycleways, cycle parking and Public Rights of Way.			Relevant changes to be made regarding Public Rights of Way. Planning requires further information regarding this issue.
A review of town centre parking needs to take place. A parking partnership needs to be developed between the Council and private car park operators.			Agree. See comments from Alan West above.
Page 8, para 4.4, 3 rd bullet, only the library and Rutland House are linked by the enclosed walkway.			Agreed. The wording of this sentence will be redrafted to reflect circumstances more accurately.
Review the need for both bus stations, possibly close the North and modernise the South.			Agreed. This has been incorporated into sections sections 5 and 7.
The Mersey Gateway would significantly increase traffic on the Central Expressway that could benefit Halton Lea.			Agreed. Reference has been made to this matter as an opportunity in section 4 and sets a context for the range of proposals in relation to improving the offer of the town centre.

Consultee	Date comments received and how responded	Comments	Response
		Page 13, para 2, where possible improve cycle access especially as part of the Runcorn Cycleway passes Halton Lea. Also the need to consider secure cycle parking.	It is considered that the document makes sufficient reference to secure cycle parking. However, a reference has been made to cycle access in strategic point 2 and the Runcorn cycleway in particular in connection with the greenway network (see sections 8 and 11 in particular).
		Page 17, para 7.14, better information and signage for the two bus stations.	Agreed. This point has been incorporated, but in the context of the need to review the need for two bus stations.
		Page 17, para 7.16, cycle parking on level D is not directly accessible from ground level and the bridges over Westway are not suitable for cyclists. Need to consider ground floor cycle parking.	Agreed. This has been mentioned as an option requiring further investigation.
		Page 17, para 7.17, many of the stairwells are uninviting.	Agreed, this has been stated explicitly.
		Page 19, para 7.23, final bullet, need to provide secure cycle and motorcycle parking.	Reference is already made at this point to secure motor cycle parking, but cycle parking has now also been added.
		Need to mention review/revamp of bus stations and the use of bus stops at night.	Agreed, this has been mentioned in the context of the need to review the operational requirement for two bus stations (north and south) to serve the centre.
		Page 21, para 8.7, Runcorn Cycleway passes through the car park, front of carpet world, fitness first and needs to be formalised.	This requirement has been incorporated into section 8.
		Page 21, para 8.8, replace 2 nd part of 2 nd sentence with, "a financial contribution has been agreed to improve accessibility to public transport.	Agreed, text amended accordingly.
		Page 21, para 8.12, replace "poorly maintained" with "in need of upgrading". Consider removing one or both bridges to the Asda site, but would need to have suitable at-grade crossings.	Agreed, text amended accordingly.
		Page 22, para 8.15, PSA not PCA?	Agreed, typo corrected

Consultee	Date comments received and how responded	Comments	Response
		Page 22, para 8.16, need to review bus stations.	Agreed, see comments above and from Alan West.
		Page 23, para 9.2, 2 nd to last line, change "accessible" to "desirable", as Halton Lea was designed to be very accessible in integrated transport terms.	Agreed.
		Page 23, para 9.3, ground level taxi rank is no longer used, perhaps consider the inclusion of a taxi rank in the car parks.	Not agreed, this comment is factually incorrect. Also, the shopping centre owners have no plans to include taxi ranks in their multi-storey car parks
		Page 24, paras 9.6 and 9.11, Northway is currently one way and lightly used but the potential new development could change this. Therefore future traffic levels would need to be considered when making an at grade crossing. Also differences in level with the existing infrastructure could make this unfeasible in any event.	Given these comments, reference to the possibility for an at grade crossing at this location has been removed from the SPD.
		Page 25, para 9.11, 6 th bullet, parking may not be possible if Northway becomes 2 way.	Comment accepted. Reference to redesigning car parking on Northway has been removed in favour of comments in relation to reassessing the wider vehicular circulation around the centre.
		Page 25, para 9.11, 7 th bullet, taxi rank has gone.	Not agreed, this comment is factually incorrect. The Council will reduce the length of this taxi rank, but it will be maintained.
		Page 26, para 10.5, pedestrian and cycle linkages.	Reference to cycle linkages added.
		Page 26, para 10.6, one of the bridges would need to be removed if the new development took place.	Reference to this matter has been incorporated.
		Page 27, para 10.7, where do pedestrians cross to on East Lane?	No change. Where pedestrians cross East Lane is not relevant to the comments in the paragraph in question.
		Page 27, para 10.8, change "maintenance" to "upgrading"	Agreed.
		Page 27, para 10.10, change "accessible" to "attractive".	Agreed.
		Page 27, para 10.11, 1 st bullet, pedestrian and cycle linkage, Palacefields and Hallwood Park.	Agreed.

Consultee	Date comments received and how responded	Comments	Response
		Page 29, para 11.7, some vegetation may need to be removed and replanted.	Comment incorporated.
		Page 29, para 11.9, cycletrack needs to be rededicated on a new line.	Reference to this matter incorporated.
		Page 30, para 11.10, proposed greenways to be delivered as part of developments.	No change. This matter is already addressed by paragraph 11.13.
		Page 31, Proposals 1 and 2, need to mention cycling.	Agreed.
		Page 31, Proposal 2, "glazed over", is this a recognised term?	Yes, no change proposed.
		Page 32, Proposal 6, need a clear idea (master plan) of improvements that 106 will fund in whole or part. Other comments on proposals have been given in the preceding text.	Not agreed. This comment appears to contradict those given by Alan West (see above). Furthermore, it is not the role of this document to draw up a master plan of improvements for the centre that S106 agreements could fund. If such a master plan is needed, this should be agreed within, and undertaken by, Highways and Transportation.
Phillip Esseen	No comments received		
Jonathan Farmer Transport Policy	No comments received		
Andy Findlater Highways	No comments received		
Steven Garnett	No comments received		
Jerry Goacher Property Services	No comments received		
Angela Gore Property Services	No comments received		

Consultee	Date comments received and how responded	Comments	Response
Ian Grady Policy & Performance	No comments received		
David Hall Transport Co- ordination	Via email 16/09/05	See comments below	
The draft SPD should place greater emphasis on ensuring there are better linkages between the different zones within the town centre by walking / cycling and public transport.			This point is already made throughout the document.
It is suggested that as with the other draft SPD's, the Town Centre Strategy contains a Movement and Linkages Strategy as an integral part of the Plan.			Not agreed, it is not the role of this SPD to produce such a strategy. If Highways and Transportation wish to produce such a strategy it can be either incorporated or cross referenced by the 3 Town Centre Strategies at the appropriate time.
It is recommended that the proposed complementary Movement and Linkages Strategy carefully examines and identifies the optimum location of public transport gateways / and interchange as part of proposals to improve the land uses within the town centre.			Not agreed as above. Highways and Transportation needs to produce this Strategy if they wish it to be included or cross referenced in the Town Centre Strategies.

Consultee	Date comments received and how responded	Comments	Response
		<p>The SWOT analysis needs to recognise the problems associated with the one way busway loop around Halton Lea. This results in there being two main public transport gateways to the centre (Halton Lea North and South) – both of which require investment to improve the passenger environment and waiting facilities. There is a considerable walk between the two bus interchanges, which does not aid effective integration. This is compounded by the fact that when the Mall is closed passengers needing to connect between bus stations must do so via the ground level, which has poor pedestrian linkages. There would be great advantages to combining main bus operation through a single arm of the busway with an enhanced single bus station facility. Basing this on the existing Halton Lea South site would also help improve public transport accessibility to the Trident Park site. This would also facilitate the introduction of an additional new bus stop to serve the Asda development off the southern link on the busway.</p>	<p>Agreed. This has been incorporated in the SWOT analysis at Appendix B and in section 4. Combining the bus termini into a single facility and the ongoing need for a section of the busway around Halton Lea is noted as a matter needing further investigation.</p>
Debbie Houghton Policy & Performance	No comments received		
John Hughes Property Services	No comments received		
Steve Johnson	No comments received		
Mandy Jones Property Services	No comments received		
Brian Leacy	No comments received		

Consultee	Date comments received and how responded	Comments	Response
Tim Leather	No comments received		
Stephen Leng Transport	No comments received		
Ian Lifford Landscape Services	No comments received		
Sarah Lucas Major Projects	Received outside of consultation period Via email 28/10/05	See comments below	
The documents should start with the proposals for each area and then show how each area can contribute to them.			Not agreed. Each Town Centre Strategy needs to set the context before providing any proposals.
The 'softer' non-physical form proposals – marketing, skills, customer care training, street scene enhancement, events etc should all be covered and common to all centres			Non planning related issues are to be covered by overarching strategy and not by the individual Town Centre SPDs.
I Paragraph 1.5 b Should read 'as a safe and accessible places to shop'			Relevant changes made
I Paragraph 1.5 d borough should read ' Borough '			Relevant changes made
I Paragraph 1.6 Should read 'or meet, the principles encouraged and required within by this SPD and the Halton UDP'.			Relevant changes made
I Paragraph 1.7 Should read ' This SPD is also intended to encourage all of those who have, or will have,' '... it contains wherever opportunities arise. This will apply whether or not..'			Relevant changes made
Rob Mackenzie Policy & Performance	No comments received		
Martin McCrimmon Property Services	No comments received		

Consultee	Date comments received and how responded	Comments	Response
David Murray Property Services	No comments received		
Dave Owen	No comments received		
Andrew Pannell Forward Planning	No comments received		
David Parr Chief Executive	No comments received		
Andy Pownall	No comments received		
Mark Prendergast Property Services	No comments received		
Stephen Rimmer	No comments received		
Pat Shone	No comments received		
Paul Smith Town Centre Manager	No comments received		
Derek Sutton Major Projects	Meeting 17/10/05	See comments below	
There is a need to water down criticism of what HBC has been involved with in the SPDs			It is only proper that problems in the three town centres are noted, irrespective of how they may have developed. However, any such comments have been redrafted to be as constructive as possible e.g. regarding the pedestrian footbridges.
Garry Taylor Major Projects	No comments received		
Dave Tierney Building	No comments		

Consultee	Date comments received and how responded	Comments	Response
Control	received		
Dick Tregear Environment	Meeting held 7/9/05	See comments below	
Need to include worklessness and other corporate priorities			This will be covered by Overarching Strategy and other sister documents.
The closure of the northern bus terminus and the northern part of the busway around Halton Lea is a possibility. This would affect footfall to HDL and the two shops in this area.			Agreed. This matter has been incorporated in the SWOT analysis at Appendix B and in section 4. Combining the bus termini into a single facility and the ongoing need for a section of the busway around Halton Lea is noted as a matter needing further investigation.
The SPD should make reference to the potential for increased traffic on the Expressway (and passing HL) if the new Mersey Crossing is built.			Agreed. This is now included in section 4, dealing with opportunities.
More consideration needs to be given to evening circulation around HL			This has been covered in considering matters in connection with the rationalisation of the bus termini (see above).
Do not be so critical of the condition of the footbridges at paragraph 8.12			Agreed, amendments made in connection with comments from Transportation Policy (see above).
The underpass from HL to the Palacefields residential area is prone to flooding and needs commenting upon.			No change proposed. Having spoken with Alan West regarding this matter, there are no further Council proposals to address this situation other than those already implemented.
Cllr Rob Polhill	Meeting 17/10/05	See comments below	
We need to lift the bar in terms of the quality of design of developments			Noted. The document takes this on board e.g. in relation to Proposal I.
John Tully Legal Services	No comments received		
Richard Wakefield Transport Policy	No comments received		
Phil Watts Environment	No comments received		
Spencer	Via email	See	

Consultee	Date comments received and how responded	Comments	Response
Webster	01/09/05	comments below	
Promotion of Business Continuity to local businesses (a Local Council statutory responsibility from 1st May 2006, but we now have to begin those preparations)			This should be covered by the overarching town centre strategy or other sister documents and not by the individual town centre strategies.
Town Centre evacuation plans - my division are currently working on Widnes, one exists for Halton Lea, none for Runcorn old town			This should be covered by the overarching town centre strategy and not by the individual town centre strategies.
Des Wilkinson	No comments received		
Development Control Section	Written Comments 29/9/05	See comments below	
Update paragraph 7.12 to reflect that the application in question now has planning permission, subject to the signing of a S106 agreement.			Updated text incorporated.
Update paragraph 8.5 to reflect that the application in question now has planning permission, subject to the signing of a S106 agreement.			Updated text incorporated.

Partnership Consultation

Partnership consultation period: 25 November 2005 - 9 December 2005 with additional face to face meetings on 22 December 2005, 27 January 2006, 9 February 2006, 27 February 2006, 23 October 2006.

Date of consideration of representations: November/ December 2006

Note – All paragraph and page references relate to the numbers as set out in the partnership consultation draft

Consultee	Date comments received and how responded	Comments	Response
<p>Numerous Council officers as follows: David Parr, Strategic Directors, Operational Directors, Sue Davies, Michelle Baker, Mike Bennett, Angela Boag, Ian Boyd, Nathan Chesney, Phil Cornthwaite, Dave Cunliffe, Phil Esseen, Jonathan Farmer, Andy Findlater, Steven Garnett, Iasn Grady, Angela Gore, David Hall, John Hughes, Steve Johnson, Brian Leacy, Tim Leather, Ian Lifford, Mandy Jones, Stephen Leng, Martin McCrimmon,</p>	<p>No comments received</p>		

Consultee	Date comments received and how responded	Comments	Response
Dave Owen, Mark Prendergast, Stephen Rimmer, Pat Shone, Paul Smith, Richard Wakefield, Spencer Webster, Des Wilkinson, Daniel Seddon			
Andrew Pannell, Planning & Policy Manager HBC	December 2005	Comments below	
Link Paragraph 9.8 (which deals with dedicated car parking) to the strategic car parking issue			Agreed. The document has now been reorganised so that policies are contained within the relevant sub area rather than in one section at the end of the document. This has allowed more details to be given regarding implementation. In this particular instance, new paragraph 10.10 cross refers to strategic policies 5 and 14 and therefore gives the necessary link.
Proposal 5 Brakes office site. Why mention this if it is not shown on Plan 3?			Not accepted. The Brakes office site (now referred to as Vestric House) is purposely not shown on Plan 3 'Development Opportunities' because, unlike the other sites on that plan, it is unclear if the site is a development opportunity at this point in time. This is reflected by the wording of the relevant policy (now West Lane Policy 2) which begins "Should the Vestric House site become available..." In order for the SPD to not become quickly out of date, it is correct to make reference Vestric House. In order that the site may be located, it is now shown hatched on Plan 2 Sub Areas of Halton Lea and (for the reasons given above) not on Plan 3.

Consultee	Date comments received and how responded	Comments	Response
Proposal 16	Seek active uses for remaining vacant units at Trident Park, if necessary by use of attractive letting terms is not a planning proposal.		The inference is that this proposal should be deleted. This is not accepted because although it is not a direct planning policy it would contribute towards planning objectives (i.e. improving vitality and viability). Given that the policy was not objected to by the site owners, Fordgate, it is retained (now as Trident Park Policy 3).
Proposal 26	Develop a Parking Partnership. Cross refer to Local Transport Plan.		Accepted. This policy has been renamed Strategic Policy 5 and moved to the relevant section of the revised document. Explanatory text to the policy makes clear reference to LTP2.
Proposal 27	set up a Halton Lea town centre working group to meet periodically. There needs to be a section on how proposals should be taken forward through either the planning system or town centre management.		It is agreed that more details needed to be given regarding the implementation of proposals. Therefore the document has been redrafted to include a section entitled 'implementation' in respect of every policy.
Plan 3	Development Opportunities. Add references to the relevant proposal in respect of each site		Agreed, these references have been added.
Plan 3	Development Opportunities. What about the Brakes office site, Proposal 5?		See comments above. The Vestric House site is now shown on Plan 2 Sub Areas of Halton Lea.
Development Control Team HBC	December 2005	Comments below	NB in actual fact the comments received related to the Internal Partnership copy of the SPD. Given when they were received, and the fact that they still apply to the Partnership Consultation document, they are considered at this stage.
Paragraph 7.12	Update text that the scheme in question has been approved, subject to signing a legal agreement		This was updated in any event as part of the Partnership consultation stage
Paragraph 8.5	correct text so say that the scheme in question has been approved, subject to signing a legal agreement		This was an error in the Internal Partnership consultation which has been corrected at Partnership Consultation stage.

Consultee	Date comments received and how responded	Comments	Response
Stephen Leng, Dick Tregea, Phil Watts, Andrew Pannell, Derek Sutton, Jerry Goacher, Mike Curtis	Meeting 22 December 2005	Comments below	
General comments were made about the SPDs resembling Issues Papers in terms of layout			It is accepted that SPD required redrafting to resemble a more user friendly policy document. Consequently, it has been extensively reorganised to move policies from section 12 at the back of the Partnership Consultation version to either a new section dealing with overarching/ strategic policies or within the various sub areas. Text which might be expected to be found in an Issues Paper as background information has also been removed.

Consultee	Date comments received and how responded	Comments	Response
		<p>Add to strategic issues that a car parking strategy is required. This is because most of the available car parking, although currently not charged for, is owned and controlled by the retail sector, the owners of the shopping centre and Asda. Visitors and workers at Halton Lea largely have to rely on the shopper car parks. There is no genuine public car park that is controlled by the Council like in Widnes and Runcorn Old Town.</p> <p>If private car park operators began to charge or introduced a different parking regime in terms of length of stay, this would inhibit parking for workers and visitors who wish to stay longer than the restricted parking time. This would affect the centre as a place of employment and investment.</p> <p>The Council should therefore work with the owners of the current car parks to agree a strategy for public car parking.</p> <p>Paragraph 3.1.9 of the Local Transport Plan mentions that a Parking Partnership will be established to review and respond to parking issues emerging from the regeneration of Halton's town centres.</p>	<p>Accepted. The Strategic Issues section has now been extensively redrafted to become a Strategic Policy section. As such the matter of car parking, and parking partnerships in particular, is addressed by the inclusion of new Strategic Policy 5 in this section (Proposal 26 at the Partnership Consultation stage). Explanatory text makes reference to the Local Transport Plan and how a parking partnership could be developed is dealt with under the sub heading entitled 'implementation'.</p>
Mr Bill Badrock Halton Chamber of Commerce & Enterprise	No comments received		
Laura McMurtire and Paul Bond Halton Primary Care Trust	No comments received		
Asda Stores	No comments received		

Consultee	Date comments received and how responded	Comments	Response
Barton Willmore on behalf of Fordgate	Letter received 9 January 2006	Comments below	
We welcome the aims and objectives of the draft Halton Lea town centre strategy. Fordgate would welcome the opportunity for an early meeting to discuss their interests in this draft SPD in more detail.			Noted.
We welcome the acknowledgment at paragraph 4.21 that the provision of an anchor store on the site of East Lane would reduce leakage of shopping spending to other centres.....however for the avoidance of doubt we would recommend that the wording of this paragraph be altered to reflect that the opportunity has been realised as (it) is being progressed with the Council.			Partly accepted. Paragraph 4.20 has been reworded as follows (additions in bold, deletions struck through) for clarification: "The provision of an anchor store in connection with the implementation of the planned extension of the centre to Halton Lea across East Lane....." The wording reflects the fact that this scheme does not yet have planning permission (this is subject to the signing of a legal agreement, which is still outstanding).
Paragraph 4.22 – Fordgate, as freehold owners of the shopping centre, object to a single bus station facility and would wish to see the retention of both bus stations.			Accepted. This matter has been clarified since the Partnership consultation stage and it is understood that the two bus termini will be retained. Improvements to the north terminus are to take place shortly.
<p><u>Sub area analysis</u></p> <p>We would recommend that Asda and Trident Park are identified as separate sub areas for the purposes of the Town Centre Strategy document. The two sites are physically separate from one another and have different functions/ offers. It is clear that Trident Park functions as part of the Primary Shopping Area, has strong links to the covered shopping area via the Southern Bus Station and also provides leisure based evening economy.</p> <p>This is further supported by paragraphs 8.5 and 8.12.</p>			<p>Accepted. Trident Park is now section 8 of the revised document and Asda (referred to as the West Lane Area) is section 9.</p> <p>As new Strategic Policy 2 indicates, the Primary Shopping Area boundary will be reviewed as part of the future Retail and Leisure Development Plan Document.</p>

Consultee	Date comments received and how responded	Comments	Response
		<p>Paragraph 7.23 indicates that the planned extension to the covered shopping centre could have capacity implications if significant numbers of new shoppers are attracted to the centre. The Transport Assessment (TA) submitted in support of the outline application for the shopping centre demonstrated that the development would not have capacity implications for car parking in and around the existing centre, and this was accepted by the Council's Highways officers. Furthermore, Fordgate are developing a number of highway proposals with the Council to ensure traffic circulation around the centre is not hampered by the development, but rather aided by the proposals. In this respect, we recommend that this statement be removed from the document.</p>	<p>Not accepted. The relevant text has now been moved to paragraph 5.13 in connection with Strategic Policy 5 (Parking Partnership).</p> <p>Whilst the TA in connection with the extension to the shopping centre indicated that there would not be adverse traffic capacity implications for the centre from that development, the point is that it could contribute towards a 'step change' in the attraction of the centre (and therefore numbers of visitors). It is therefore appropriate to keep the situation under review and a parking partnership is considered to be the appropriate mechanism to do this.</p> <p>The paragraph will therefore be reworded as follows (additions in bold, deletions struck through):</p> <p>Currently, there is not a parking capacity problem for the centre at Halton Lea, with upper levels of multi-storeys having available capacity being underused, particularly at weekends. However, the demolition of the Meadow car park in connection with the planned extension (albeit that new parking provision would be created in this area as a result) to the centre (see East Lane Policy I) could have capacity implications in the future if, as desired, the development contributes towards a 'step change' in offer and consequently attracts significant numbers of new shoppers are attracted to the centre in connection with this new development Halton Lea.</p>

Consultee	Date comments received and how responded	Comments	Response
		We would recommend that the Council considers the creation of a 'gateway' entrance to the centre which will function as an obvious access point from the approaches to the centre. The planned extension to the shopping centre, with surface (mall level) parking and outward facing entrances, would perform this role.	Accepted. A gateway entrance into the covered shopping centre already exists at Trident Park and a further entrance of this nature would be desirable to address a weakness identified in the SWOT analysis i.e. the centre's impenetrable appearance from the outside. An additional bullet point is therefore included in East Lane Policy I which states: "create a gateway entrance into the Halton Lea Shopping Centre;"
		We welcome paragraph 8.14 and would support the Council's view that the potential exists for additional retail development on the car parking area to the south of the cinema. There are, in our view, other opportunities to improve the retail and leisure offer within Trident Park.	Noted. This opportunity is promoted by new Trident Park Policy I.
		We welcome paragraph 8.16 which indicates that there is a need to review the Primary Shopping Area boundary. We would also recommend that the Council considers the inclusion of land which benefits from a resolution to grant planning permission for a new anchor store across East Lane up to the existing Busway (on the eastern edge of the site).	As new Strategic Policy 2 indicates, the Primary Shopping Area (PSA) boundary will be reviewed as part of the future Retail and Leisure Development Plan Document. This would be the appropriate time to consider an extension to the PSA in the manner described by Barton Willmore.

REPORT TO: Urban Renewal Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 24 January 2007

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Environment

SUBJECT: Derby Road, Widnes

WARDS: Farnworth

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The outcome of further investigations and a site visit to assess the current situation at the junction of Derby Road/Peelhouse Lane, Widnes is reported.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That the report be noted and the junction continue to be monitored.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The Policy and Performance Board at its 20 September 2006 meeting considered a petition requesting improvements to the junction of Derby Road/Peelhouse Lane, Widnes. The Board resolved (Minute URB17) that further investigations be undertaken and a site visit be arranged.

3.2 The further investigations have concluded that due to the bus routes and the space needed to allow deliveries to the Co-op shop it is not possible to install a refuge island. The possibility of installing traffic signals was investigated, but these would increase delays at the junction and cause problems for the adjacent properties.

3.3 The site visit was held on 23 November 2006, attended by the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Traffic Manager. All the options were discussed, together with the points raised in the previous report. The conclusion reached was that there was no action that could be recommended at this stage but the situation would continue to be monitored.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None

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

<i>Document</i>	<i>Available for inspection</i>	<i>Contact</i>
Petition	Highways & Transportation Department	Stephen Rimmer Ext. 3182
Further Letter	Rutland House	
Survey Results	Halton Lea	

REPORT TO:	Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board
DATE:	24 January 2007
REPORTING OFFICER:	Strategic Director, Environment
SUBJECT:	Local Transport Capital Settlement 2007/08
WARDS:	Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the PPB of the announcement made by the Secretary of State for Transport on 18th December 2006 that gave details of the 2007/08 Local Transport Capital Expenditure Settlement and the classifications awarded to the Council's second Local Transport Plan 2006/07-2010/11(LTP2) and first Local Transport Plan 2001/02-2005/06 (LTP1) Delivery Report.
- 1.2 The settlement includes an additional £392,000 awarded for the high performance achieved in both LTP2 and the LTP1 Delivery Report. The DfT performance assessments place Halton in the top quartile of the 82 local transport authorities in England.
- 1.3 It was agreed at the Executive Board meeting of 2 March 2006 that authority to agree each year's detailed implementation programme of the Local Transport Plan 2006/07–2010/11 be delegated to the Strategic Director Environment, in consultation with the Executive Board Member for Planning, Transportation and Development. (Minute EXB181)

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the 2007/08 Local Transport Capital Expenditure Settlement and the classifications awarded to the Council's second Local Transport Plan and Delivery Report of the first Local Transport Plan be welcomed.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 In March 2006 Halton submitted its second Local Transport Plan (LTP2), covering the years 2006/07 to 2010/11. DfT has classified each of the final second local transport plans as excellent, good, fair or weak. Halton's final local transport plan has been assessed as being **Excellent**.
- 3.2 The DfT states that *"the excellent classification means that a very high standard of transport planning has been evidenced."* Their overall comments on LTP2 are reproduced here:

"Halton's LTP2 is a clear, logical and comprehensive document that has generally been produced to an excellent standard."

The LTP correctly gives prominence to the shared transport priorities and links and cross references policies and proposals throughout to ensure that they are appropriate in meeting the objectives of the Council, national and regional aims and objectives, the defined targets and also represent value for money. Major scheme proposals are intrinsically linked to the aims of the Plan.

Thought has been given to linkages with other policy areas and geographically to neighbouring authorities. Overall a partnership approach is advocated in many areas of the LTP, to ensure consensus and to lever in complementary funds where possible.

Halton has produced a well-balanced LTP that provides a sound footing for the future of transport in this area.”

- 3.3 Halton's first Local Transport Plan (LTP1) covered the years 2001/02 to 2005/06. As part of the LTP process local transport authorities were required to produce Annual Progress Reports (APRs) for each financial year. In 2006 DfT required local transport authorities to produce a five year Delivery Report that covered all five years of LTP1 as well as the previously unreported 2005/06 financial year
- 3.4 Each of the LTP1 Delivery Reports has also been classified as being excellent, very good, good or satisfactory. In Halton's case, delivery was assessed as being **Excellent**.
- 3.5 DfT state that *“Excellent delivery means you demonstrated either strong delivery across most or all strategy areas, or achieved a very high core indicator score married to a high standard of overall delivery. Your actions resulted in a very positive impact both on local transport provision and on wider areas of policy.”*
- 3.6 The LTP Guidance indicated that as last year up to 25% of an authority's 2007/08 integrated transport block allocation might be varied for performance on delivery and the quality of the second LTPs. For Halton an additional 12.5% allocation for 2007/08 is to be received due to an **Excellent** LTP2 and similarly a further 12.5% will be received due to an **Excellent** LTP1 Delivery Report. This 25% uplift is to be applied to the remaining four years of the LTP2 period. See table below.
- 3.7 It should be noted that Halton was one of only fourteen local authorities in the country to achieve a top grading for both LTP2 and the LTP1 Delivery Report. In the North West, only the Halton and Merseyside LTPs achieved Excellent in both categories.
- 3.8 Halton's total settlement for 2007/087 is £4.15 million. This covers all items of transport capital expenditure apart from major schemes. The settlement includes no funding for Mersey Gateway nor for Halton's £31m major scheme bid for major maintenance on the Silver Jubilee Bridge. Although the SJB scheme is included in the DfT approved 3 year

programme with expenditure starting in 2008/09, final approval of the bid is still awaited from DfT.

- 3.9 The integrated transport minor works guideline announced last year for 2007/08 was £1.566m and with the performance enhancement of an additional 25% the final allocation for integrated transport is **£1.958m**. The Government has announced that this performance enhancement will continue through the remaining three years of the LTP2 period, although figures at this stage have to remain indicative. See table below.
- 3.10 The capital highway maintenance funding allocation for 2007/08 is **£2.192m** and includes £594,000 for major structural maintenance on the Silver Jubilee Bridge complex. Following the spending review the Government plans to make a three-year settlement for maintenance for the remainder of the LTP2 period. Therefore no maintenance figures beyond 2007/08 are shown in the table below:

Year	Integrated Transport £ms	Maintenance £ms	Total £ms
2006/07	2.111	2.274	4.385
2007/08	1.958	2.192	4.150
2008/09	1.885	N/a	N/a
2009/10	1.831	N/a	N/a
2010/11	1.767	N/a	N/a

- 3.11 The settlement is in response to the Council's LTP2 submission and therefore the schemes to be implemented are to be drawn from the detailed programmes included in LTP2 in line with the capital budget agreed by the Council. Under last year's decision of the Executive Board (Minute EXB181) the Strategic Director Environment will determine the final implementation programme in consultation with the Executive Board Member for Planning, Transportation and Development.
- 3.12 The agreed implementation programme will be included in the Highways, Transportation and Logistics Department Service Plan.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The capital expenditure settlement is to deliver the strategies contained in the Council's second Local Transport Plan. The final LTP2 and the LTP1 Delivery Report were the subject of extensive consultation and approved by the Executive Board at its meetings of 2 March and 22 June 2006 respectively.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The report details approved and indicative levels of funding to be allocated during the life of LTP2, which will be used to deliver the proposed interventions, described within the LTP2 capital programme.

5.2 The Local Transport Plan is targeted at improving transport opportunities for those without access to private cars and has therefore positive impacts on Social Inclusion and Sustainability issues.

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

The additional 25% performance funding allocated to the integrated transport block was achieved by gaining 12.5% for an **Excellent** LTP2 grading and 12.5% for an **Excellent** LTP1 Delivery Report. Whilst the 25% enhancement is carried forward into the indicative allocations for the succeeding three years, it will be essential to maintain performance levels to avoid any risk of losing the enhancement when the final allocations are made after the spending review.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

Accessibility and connectivity are essential issues for equality and diversity. Hence every effort is made to ensure that there is no obstruction to movement around the Borough. Particular emphasis is given to improving access to educational facilities and employment opportunities.

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

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Letter from DfT 18 December 2006	Highways and Transportation Department Rutland House, Runcorn	Alan West Ext. 3003

REPORT: Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 24 January 2007

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Environment

SUBJECT: Work Programme 2007/2008

WARDS: Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To consider progress on the 2006/7 Topic Reports and to consider the possible 2007/8 work programme.

2.0 RECOMMENDED THAT:

- (1) Members of the Policy and Performance Board indicate target topic areas for potential scrutiny in 2007 – 2008;**
- (2) details of the topic briefs subsequently be agreed by the Chair and Vice Chair of the PPB in conjunction with the Operational Director for Major Projects.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Each year the PPB identifies a number of areas which it intends to scrutinise in detail as part of its work programme for the year.

3.1.1 At the meeting of the Board on 26th. January 2006 it was agreed that the three topics to be considered in 2006/7 would be:

- Developing a Business Park Implementation Programme
- Street lighting
- Income generation

3.1.2 Additionally the Urban Renewal Policy Board inherited a Topic Group from the Health Policy and Performance Board on a review of Supported Housing in Halton, which had commenced in October 2005. The review had been suspended in March 2006, pending an announcement by the Department of Communities and Local Government on the long term funding arrangements and National Strategy for the Supporting People Programme. The Urban Renewal Board revived the Group in September 2006

3.2 Each of the Topic Groups has met and established their work programme. Each Group is targeting a report to the Policy Board at its meeting on 21st. March 2007, with the exception of the Supported

Housing Topic Group which expects its final report to be submitted in September 2007.

4. 2006-7 Work Programme

- 4.1 Given that detailed scrutiny cannot be carried out on everything, Members are asked to target attention on a specific number of areas. The recommendation of the Chief Scrutiny Advisor is that good practice based on experience suggests that 2/3 Topics is manageable. Following their adoption by this Board these are then to be worked up as detailed topic briefs and agreed with the Chair of the PPB in conjunction with the lead officer for this Board, the Operational Director, Major Projects Department. The Council's Chief Scrutiny Advisor further suggests that this action is considered now so that an early start can be made on the scrutiny work.
- 4.2 In considering which are good topics to include in the work programme Members will need to keep in mind the Overview and Scrutiny Guide/Toolkit. Guidance on Topic Selection is attached as an aide-memoire. In particular the Board's attention is drawn to paragraphs 12, 13 and 14 which relate to added value, capacity and resources.
- 4.3 It should be remembered that much of the work of this PPB will be cross-cutting and will impact or be of relevance to other PPBs.
- 4.4 It should also be noted that Performance Monitoring of the Reporting Departments (Economic Regeneration, Major Projects, Planning, Highways and Transportation) will in any case be received by this PPB.

5.0 Future Work Areas

- 5.1 In the past issues for consideration by Topic Groups have been drawn from the relevant Service Plans and from the Council's Best Value Performance Plan.
- 5.2 The Draft 2006-7 Service Plans are reported elsewhere to this Board, and Members are invited to draw from them suggestions for Topic Groups.
- 5.3 Issues identified within the Best Value Performance Plan which have not been reported on previously or elsewhere include:
- Ensure sufficient housing is built per annum to meet the UDP housing figures and in conformity with Regional Planning Guidance.
 - Ensure that all social housing conforms to the Government's 'decency standard' by 2010.
 - Increase footfall in the town centres year on year.

- Increase the viability and vitality of the town centres as measured by average rents and by vacant units.

5.3.1 Other topics previously suggested as suitable for consideration have included traffic calming and speed reduction measures, accident reduction, the impact of external policy-making on the regeneration of the Borough, the achievements of the inward investment enquiries service, the legacy of the SRB programmes and the impact of e-business on Halton's economy.

5.3.2 It must be remembered too that Housing Strategy now falls within the remit of this PPB, and that a Topic Group on the 'Supported Housing' topic is expected to report only on 20th September 2007.

5.3.3 It has been suggested by the Operational Director, Economic Regeneration, that 'the future of Town Centre Management' might be an appropriate issue to review at this time, especially in the light of the November PPB resolution concerning the lack of enthusiasm for a Business Improvement District in Halton's Town Centres.

5.3.4 Members will doubtless be able to think of other suitable areas for scrutiny and the Board is asked to discuss all of these, and other, suggestions.

5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None at this stage.

6.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

6.1 None at this stage

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

7.1 There are no background papers within the meaning of the Act.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

Topic Selection Checklist

This checklist leads the user through a reasoning process to identify a) why a topic should be explored and b) whether it makes sense to examine it through the overview and scrutiny process. More “yeses” indicate a stronger case for selecting the Topic.

#	CRITERION	Yes/No
<u>Why?</u> Evidence for why a topic should be explored and included in the work programme		
1	Is the Topic directly aligned with and have significant implications for at least 1 of Halton's 5 strategic priorities & related objectives/PIs, and/or a key central government priority?	
2	Does the Topic address an identified need or issue?	
3	Is there a high level of public interest or concern about the Topic e.g. apparent from consultation, complaints or the local press	
4	Has the Topic been identified through performance monitoring e.g. PIs indicating an area of poor performance with scope for improvement?	
5	Has the Topic been raised as an issue requiring further examination through a review, inspection or assessment, or by the auditor?	
6	Is the Topic area likely to have a major impact on resources or be significantly affected by financial or other resource problems e.g. a pattern of major overspending or persisting staffing difficulties that could undermine performance?	
7	Has some recent development or change created a need to look at the Topic e.g. new Government guidance/legislation, or new research findings?	
8	Would there be significant risks to the organisation and the community as a result of <u>not</u> examining this topic?	
<u>Whether?</u> Reasons affecting whether it makes sense to examine an identified topic		
9	Scope for impact - Is the Topic something the Council can actually influence, directly or via its partners? Can we make a difference?	
10	Outcomes – Are there clear improvement outcomes (not specific answers) in mind from examining the Topic and are they likely to be achievable?	
11	Cost: benefit - are the benefits of working on the Topic likely to outweigh the costs of doing so, making investment of time & effort worthwhile?	
12	Are PPBs the best way to add value in this Topic area? Can they make a distinctive contribution?	
13	Does the organisation have the capacity to progress this Topic? (e.g. is it related to other review or work peaks that would place an unacceptable load on a particular officer or team?)	
14	Can PPBs contribute meaningfully given the time available?	

REPORT TO:	Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board
DATE:	24 January 2007
REPORTING OFFICER:	Strategic Director – Environment
SUBJECT:	Review of Natural Assets Strategy
WARDS:	Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The current Natural Assets Strategy was approved in September 2000 and defines the Council's corporate policies for our trees, woodland, and nature conservation resource. The action programme of the Strategy has been implemented and a new replacement programme is proposed. The review also reflects the changes in the wider environment in which the Strategy operates, recent changes in legislation and highlights the success of the raised profile of Halton's natural environment.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- (1) the review of the Natural Assets Strategy is referred to the Executive Board for approval and published as a document available to the public;**
- (2) the policies and actions contained in the Natural Assets Strategy be noted by all Services and followed whenever any of the Council's activities would potentially impact on the natural environment; and**
- (3) a public launch of the document to take place in 2007.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The current Natural Assets Strategy is ready for review. Its work programme of 64 actions has been followed and reported over the last five years through the Quarterly Monitoring process and the Safe & Attractive Policy and Performance Board. In November 2005, the Board recognised the many and varied achievements of the Strategy and supported the recommended review process.
- 3.2 The Strategy is both a policy and action document and is as much about people as about the resources themselves. Halton's natural assets provide an attractive and interesting setting for work and leisure,

with known social and health benefits towards raising the quality of life for local people.

- 3.3 Topics covered in the Strategy have been updated and include the effect of recent legislation changes. For instance, since October 2006, section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act gives a specific duty to local authorities to consider biodiversity in the work that they do.
- 3.4 Through the actions in the strategy, there has been a marked increase in the environmental profile of Halton both locally and regionally. Initiatives such as the promotion of Local Nature Reserves have raised expectations amongst users and there is now solid community engagement in local environmental matters.
- 3.5 The Strategy has helped to bring about an increased awareness of the environmental value of trees and woodlands and, consequently, there have been significant improvements to the number of trees being successfully established, responsibly managed and legally protected. However, one shortcoming has been identified that needs to be addressed. This concerns the setting up of a system for regularly inspecting the health and safety of trees owned by the Council. The additional funding for this required survey work should be regarded as a high priority and found from existing budgets.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Strategy is set within the context of statutory land use policies in the existing Halton Unitary Development Plan. Its status in the emerging Local Development Framework will mirror its Supplementary Planning Guidance function and will be taken into account when deciding planning applications and appeals. The Strategy is a firm statement of the Council's corporate policies towards its natural resources and contributes to all of the five strategic themes in the Community Plan. It has been prepared in accordance with the key Urban Renewal objective to enhance, promote and celebrate the quality of the built and natural environment in Halton in the Council's Corporate Plan 2006-2011.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The actions proposed in the Strategy can be undertaken within the Council's existing budgets, or by making use of external sources of funding.
- 5.2 The policies and actions in the Natural Assets Strategy have been prepared against the backdrop of the Council's response to climate change, which will appear in a separate document.

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 6.1 Failure to review the Natural Assets Strategy could result in a downturn to the natural environment improvements of the last five years. Failure to inspect trees on a regular basis could leave the Council vulnerable to claims of negligence if an accident were to occur in circumstances that were foreseeable.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 7.1 There will be general equality and diversity benefits through a well managed natural environment.

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

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Natural Assets Strategy	Picow Farm Depot	John White, Paul Oldfield



NATURAL ASSETS STRATEGY 2007-2012

FOREWORD

A healthy natural environment should be of concern to everyone, as the quality of human life depends fundamentally on the quality of the environment.

Since 2000, the Borough Council has been carrying out its Natural Assets Strategy. This has provided measurable improvements to the natural environment and its importance to the people of the Borough. The highlights of this work programme include a marked increase in the number of tree preservation orders, an increase in woodland management schemes, the expansion of a network of Local Nature Reserves and an enhanced system of biological recording with community involvement.

The Council has five strategic priorities for the Borough, which will help to build a better future for Halton. These were reviewed by the Halton Local Strategic Partnership during 2005/6 in its new Community Strategy. These are Healthy Halton; Safer Halton; Children & Young People in Halton; Employment, Skills and Learning in Halton; and Urban Renewal in Halton.

This review highlights the Council action on our natural assets for the next 5 years, taking the strategy forward until 2012 and cutting across all the strategic priorities. We will continue with those policies that are tried and tested, and introduce new actions that reflect the changing environmental circumstances in which we live. The document continues to provide the framework from which to develop and apply understandable and workable policies for our trees, woodlands and nature conservation resource.

(Signed by Leader of Council, when the strategy is approved)

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 ORIGIN AND PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY

1.1.1 This strategy is both a policy and an action document. It provides information on the natural environment of Halton and how actions will be carried out to protect, manage and enhance this resource.

1.1.2 It is as much about people as about the resources themselves. Halton's natural assets provide an attractive and interesting setting for work and play, with known social and health benefits towards raising the quality of life for local people.

1.1.3 Since the first Natural Assets Strategy in 2000, the messages on sustainability and biodiversity have continued to be refined and kept high in the public domain. Halton's rôle remains as part of a global need to protect and improve the environment whilst also finding ways to meet social and economic needs.

1.1.4 Sustainability requires effective integration of social, economic and environmental policies, a full appreciation of environmental carrying capacities (limits and impacts) and the maintenance of our total stock of natural assets. This strategy is part of Halton's commitment to sustainable development.

1.1.5 The strategy highlights opportunities for action by a wide range of people and organisations, acting on their own or in partnership. The strategy provides a focus for actions with the overall aim of promoting Halton's natural assets resource for the future.

1.2 STATUS OF THE STRATEGY

1.2.1 The strategy is set within the context of the statutory land use policies in the Halton Unitary Development Plan (UDP) [*ref. 1*]. It will be taken into account when determining planning applications and appeals. Sections of the strategy will be used as the basis for Supplementary Planning Documents in the Local Development Scheme, which will take over from the UDP in 2008.

1.2.3 The strategy is a firm statement of the Council's corporate policies towards its natural resources and its actions form part of Halton's Community Strategy. It has been prepared in accordance with "Building a Better Future", Halton's Corporate Plan and Community Strategy.

2.0 A REVIEW OF 2000 - 2006

2.1 NATIONAL POLICIES

2.1.1 Central government has made a firm commitment to Sustainable Development. This is taken forward through Community Strategies and Local Strategic Partnerships, [ref. 2] where local authorities have an obligation to develop an environmental programme based on the principles of sustainable development, partnership and local community involvement. This provides the opportunity to develop a comprehensive and corporate approach to protecting irreplaceable natural assets and by compensating for damage or losses through habitat replacement or enhancement. Local authorities have to demonstrate, for instance, that local biodiversity planning has been considered within their community strategy and LSP.

2.1.2 The principles of the UN's Convention on Biological Diversity, together with the UK government's Sustainable Development drive, underpin all local authority work on their natural assets. Biodiversity is the variety of life, and the overall goal of the UK's Biodiversity Action Plan is "to conserve and enhance biological diversity within the UK and to contribute to the conservation of global diversity through all appropriate mechanisms". In October 2002, the England Biodiversity Strategy was published, establishing the government's vision for conserving and enhancing biodiversity in England. It expects to secure targets for species and habitat recovery. The targets will have a role in helping to meet the Government's commitment made at the 2002 Johannesburg world Summit to significantly reduce the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010. More recently, the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 places greater responsibility upon public sector bodies to consider biodiversity in the work they do.

2.1.3 Recent changes in the planning system reflect these sustainability and biodiversity issues. Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation (PPS9) marks a significant advance in how the planning system supports the conservation of the natural environment while delivering sustainable development. PPS9 requires planning policies to be based on up to date environmental information and acknowledges that natural asset issues have a key role to play in other policy agendas for rural renewal, urban renaissance, green space provision, quality of life and well-being. It also recognises that local wildlife sites, currently called SINC's in Halton, have a fundamental role to play in helping to meet national biodiversity targets

2.1.4 Parks and open spaces are very much back on the national agenda, so that everyone has access to attractive, well managed and safe greenspace within a short walk of home. This requires such areas to be multi functional, combing the natural environment with policies for recreation, heritage, social inclusion and regeneration agendas. CAGE Space is part of the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment and was set up in May 2003. It champions excellence in the design and management of parks, streets, squares and other open spaces in our towns and cities.

2.1.5 Climate change presents a series of important and immediate challenges to our natural assets. There is already clear evidence to show that plants and animals, including those characteristic of the England's countryside and seas, are being affected by climate change. This includes changes in populations, ranges, migration patterns, and seasonal and reproductive behaviour of certain species. Such effects will become more apparent and extensive as climate continues to change, with local species extinctions and habitat-loss becoming increasingly probable. Current work nationally suggests that green space may be the key to making cities liveable in future. Parks, gardens, street trees, living roofs and walls, ponds and rivers can help with overheating and the problems of both too much water and not

enough. National policies are emerging, and Halton's response will be published in due course.

2.1.6 Changes in the objectives and priorities for woodland management have been brought about by The England Forestry Strategy [ref. 3] and the introduction of a new Woodland Grant Scheme. The system of grants has been radically revised to reflect the values that are most desired by today's society. These include the creation and maintenance of habitats for wildlife, producing healthy and pleasing living and working environments for people, protecting biodiversity and aspects of our cultural heritage, and providing safe areas for recreation and sport.

2.1.7 The two British Standards which are most commonly used in arboriculture have been extensively revised to include recent advances in best practice. BS3998 recommends how tree surgery operations should be carried out in a safe and responsible manner. BS5837 gives recommendations and guidance on the principles to be applied when considering which trees should be retained on development sites and how those trees should be protected from the construction works.

2.1.8 New legislation about High Hedges was contained in Part 8 of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003. This gave local authorities the power to investigate complaints made by local residents about evergreen hedges in neighbouring properties.

2.2 REGIONAL ISSUES

2.2.1 The Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West [ref 4] sets out the future framework for development, including the adoption of sustainability principles, and covers a broad range of targets for the environment. In delivering these targets, Local authorities should afford the highest level of protection and management to those resources which are important or irreplaceable; ensure there is no net loss in the value of other biodiversity resources in the region; and return key biodiversity resources to viable levels in accordance with the targets in UK and Local Biodiversity Action Plans. The North West Biodiversity Forum provides a co-ordinating mechanism to assess biodiversity sustainability in the region.

2.2.2 Halton is part of a regional Natural Area put forward by English Nature called the Urban Mersey Basin [ref. 5]. This is not a formal designation but a way of combining physical features, wildlife habitats, land use patterns and culture. The Urban Mersey Basin covers approximately 2,360 square kilometres and contains all of Halton that is above the mid-tide level of the Mersey Estuary: permanently submerged marine habitats are in the Liverpool Bay Natural Area. Despite the pressures of manufacturing and service activities, agriculture still remains the most widespread use of land stretching from the Cheshire plain to the south and to the north of St. Helens. The estuaries of the Dee, Mersey and Alt are of international importance, saltmarsh and lowland heath of national importance, ancient woodland and ponds of regional importance and industrial sites with calcicole (alkaline-loving) vegetation of more local importance.

2.2.4 The Regional Forestry Framework for England's Northwest [ref. 6] was published in 1995 with the aim of helping to shape the woodland and forestry sector in the region for the next twenty years. The Framework is based on six Action Areas:-

- Enterprise and Industry
- Regional Image
- Biodiversity and Landscape
- Health, Well-being and Quality of Life
- Climate Change and Energy

- Supporting and Resourcing the Sector.

2.3 LOCAL INFLUENCES OF THE NATURAL ASSETS STRATEGY

2.3.1 The Council has five strategic priorities for the borough, which will help to build a better future for Halton. These were reviewed by the Halton Local Strategic Partnership during 2005/6 in its new Community Strategy. These are Healthy Halton; Safer Halton; Children & Young People in Halton; Employment, Skills and Learning in Halton; and Urban Renewal in Halton. The action programme of the Natural Assets strategy cuts across these priorities.

2.3.1. The Borough Council's Unitary Development Plan (UDP) provides a development control framework for enhancement and the current Natural Assets Strategy has been adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance. Further changes are now required to ensure our natural assets are included in the Local Development Scheme which is taking over from the UDP.

2.3.2 Community involvement in the Natural Assets Strategy continues to grow. Area forums have been in place since 2003 and successfully and quickly tackle local issues. At the same time, our Area Forums provide a vehicle for community empowerment, engagement and participation. On specific environmental matters, Halton's Natural Environment Roundtable brings together a wide range of organisations and individuals with an interest in the local environment.

2.3.3 Participation in the national Green Flag Awards has risen, with 6 of our open spaces regularly receiving this award. The Green Flag standard includes recognition of the natural element within site management plans and has further helped to carry out the natural assets work programme.

2.3.4 The Council's web site has developed significantly over the last five years, not least with its content regarding the natural environment. Information and guidance about many local issues of interest and concern can now be accessed in this way.

3.0 A STRATEGY FOR TREES & WOODLANDS

3.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF TREES & WOODLANDS

POLICY ONE The Council recognises the important contribution made by trees and woodlands to the environment and is committed to the responsible and sustainable custodianship of this resource on any land which it owns or influences.

3.1.1 Trees and woodlands are of vital importance in maintaining and improving the quality of life for those who live or work within the Borough. Trees are the most obvious of our natural assets, by virtue of their size and prominence, but they do not last for ever and are vulnerable to changes in their surroundings. The many benefits that trees bring to the environment have been well documented [ref. 7] and it is our duty to ensure that, as well as ourselves, future generations are also able to enjoy these benefits.

3.1.2 Trees have great visual amenity value which can significantly enhance the appearance of the locality. They provide contrasts of size, colour and texture to the urban landscape and effectively reflect the changing seasons, bringing nature into towns. Prominent trees become accepted as landmarks and are often held in high regard by local residents.

3.1.3 Of increasing value to modern living is the contribution that trees make to improving the quality of the air that we breathe. As well as removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and releasing oxygen, trees also improve air quality by filtering out harmful pollutants (such as ozone, ammonia, sulphur dioxide, nitrous oxides and dust particles). A number of scientific studies have demonstrated these properties, which are of benefit to us all but are of particular importance to the growing numbers of people with respiratory ailments.

3.1.4 Trees in towns can screen unsightly structures and activities. They can give privacy and help to reduce noise from traffic and industry. They can have a limiting effect on the extremes of weather by providing shelter from wind and shade from the sun. They are effective in intercepting rainfall, thus reducing problems of rapid water run-off from hard surfaces.

3.1.5 Woodlands, and parklands which contain trees, provide essential space for quiet, informal recreation activities such as walking, jogging and cycling. The opportunity to escape briefly into these areas from the hustle and bustle of modern life is very important and should not be taken for granted. Woodlands are also important for landscape and wildlife reasons, and for the production of timber, a renewable resource.

3.1.6 Halton is situated at the heart of The Mersey Forest, the largest of England's twelve designated community forests. The Council is an active partner in this project, which was launched in 1994 with the aim of dramatically increasing woodland cover in the region over the next 30 years. In Halton, the successful outcome has been the creation of more than 100 hectares of new woodland to date.

3.1.7 This strategy concerns all trees in the administrative area of Halton; whether old or young, whether urban or rural, whether publicly or privately owned and whether they are growing in woodlands or groups, or as individual specimens. All trees should be regarded as parts of the living landscape and subject to the principles of sustainability. Following sections of this strategy will describe the characteristics of these various components of the treescape, and the Council's policies towards them. The main purpose of these policies is to raise awareness of the value of trees, so that decisions affecting them are not taken without due consideration.

3.1.8 Only 7% of England's surface area is made up of woodland (greater than 0.25 hectare in size) and Halton has less than half of this national average. The resource of smaller wooded areas (less than 0.25 hectare in size) and individual trees in Halton is very varied, with some parts of the Borough being very poor in tree cover whilst other parts have relatively high numbers of trees. Runcorn New Town has an abundance of both mature woodlands and developing semi-mature trees, and is a good example of an urban forest.

3.1.9 Ancient woodlands are of particular historical and ecological importance, requiring special attention [see 3.4.13 & Appendix 3]. Halton has a number of ancient woodland sites but very few ancient individual trees, usually termed "veteran" trees. An explanation for this could be that dramatic losses of trees were caused by pollution in the 1880's, when emissions from chemical factories at Weston killed trees within a distance of eight miles, including 5,000 trees on the Norton Estate [ref. 8].

3.1.10 In the traditional urban and suburban areas, there are a significant number of trees in streets, parks and gardens which are fully mature (more than 60 years old). These trees are mainly of large-growing species such as Oak, Ash, Beech, Horse Chestnut, Sycamore and Lime. Post-war planting of verges and open spaces has tended to use a wider variety of species, with a higher proportion of smaller-growing varieties such as Cherry, Rowan, Thorn and Birch.

3.1.11 Runcorn has expanded greatly since its designation as a New Town in 1964 and large numbers of trees have been planted since then to landscape the new roads, housing estates and industrial units. A wide variety of tree types have been planted, including the full range of native species, some decorative exotics and fast-growing species such as Poplar, Alder and Willow. These trees are now semi-mature and in need of attention, as many are still at close spacing and some are situated close to properties.

3.1.12 Most of the larger and mature woodlands in the Runcorn area are managed by The Woodland Trust. These woods are essential to the local environment and are open to public access at all times. The grounds of Norton Priory contain some fine specimen trees, some of them being of rare species.

3.1.13 Widnes is very much associated with the chemical industry and has in the past been regarded as a hostile environment for tree establishment. Tree cover is still relatively poor but, in recent years, extensive planting has been carried out on reclaimed sites and within the corridor of the new trunk road system. These trees will become more noticeable in the landscape as they grow.

3.1.14 Outside Halton's principal towns of Runcorn and Widnes, are the villages of Moore, Preston Brook, Daresbury and Hale, and the adjoining countryside. Trees are significant and characteristic features of these areas too. Changes in agricultural practices and other factors have influenced the rural landscape over the last thirty years or so, with declining numbers of hedgerows and hedgerow trees. On a more positive note, there are some good local examples where new hedges and woodlands have been successfully planted on farmland.

3.1.15 Despite a general awareness of the tree stock and the pressures it is under, there is not enough detailed information available for it to be managed effectively. Surveys need to be undertaken to record the numbers, distribution, age and health of the Borough's trees. The data gathered could then be used to assist in making decisions about how they can be managed responsibly and sustainably.

3.1.16 The key objective of management should be to establish and maintain a resource of trees and woodlands which:-

- is sufficiently high in number to meet environmental needs,
- is diverse in species, but with a preponderance of native origin,
- is suited to location,
- is in a good state of health, and
- has balanced proportions of mature, semi-mature and young trees, thus ensuring continuity of cover in the future.

3.2 TREES ON DEVELOPMENT SITES

POLICY TWO The Council will seek, through the development control process, to retain and protect trees of high amenity value, to replace any trees which are unavoidably lost, and overall to increase the number and quality of trees in the Borough.

3.2.1 Existing trees in prominent locations are usually held in great esteem by the public and it is therefore not surprising that such trees can become the subject of controversy when threatened by a development proposal. The careful retention of healthy trees can give a sense of maturity to a development and be a significant asset when selling new properties. However, there is no point in trying to keep trees which are overmature or defective and which could soon become dangerous in their new surroundings.

3.2.2 The relevant British Standard [*ref. 9*] should be regarded as an essential reference for all those concerned with the development of sites where trees are present. It gives valuable guidance, following a logical sequence of events from the initial survey through the design period to the protection of retained trees from site works by the provision of temporary fencing. All developers of land in Halton where trees are present should be expected to adopt these principles when submitting applications for planning permission.

Action 1 The Council will require developers of sites containing trees to demonstrate that the principles of BS 5837 are being followed during the planning process, and will not grant permission if this is not the case.

3.2.3 The input of an experienced arboriculturalist at an early stage of the planning process is strongly recommended and, whenever the opportunity arises, the Council should encourage pre-application discussions with developers about the relative importance of existing trees. An information leaflet giving further advice on this topic is available from the Council, which will be updated and formally adopted as supplementary planning guidance.

Action 2 The Council will publish a Supplementary Planning Guidance document about trees on development sites.

3.2.4 An essential first stage of planning a development should be to carry out a thorough survey of existing natural features. Such a survey should plot all trees accurately and record details of species, size, approximate age and physical condition. The trees should then be categorised in accordance with the BS5837 guidelines and the information taken into account when designing possible layouts for the site.

3.2.5 Where significant trees are present, developers should engage a specialist consultant to prepare a detailed report about the arboricultural implications of the development and any special methods of working which need to be applied to ensure that important trees are retained in a healthy condition. Such a commitment may be necessary to show that all the factors relating to trees have been properly considered and that the granting of planning permission will not result in a net loss to the environment.

3.2.6 The Council has the opportunity to protect existing trees on a development site by making new tree preservation orders (TPOs) and by attaching conditions to any permission granted. The Council should take this responsibility seriously by carrying out surveys of potential development sites to assess the amenity value of any trees present and taking appropriate action.

Action 3 The Council will seek to protect trees of high amenity value on development sites by making tree preservation orders where appropriate and by attaching conditions to planning consents.

3.2.7 Under certain circumstances, trees can cause structural damage to buildings with inadequate foundations. To eliminate any potential threat of this type of damage, the National House Building Council (NHBC) has produced guidelines for determining the appropriate depth of foundation when building near to trees [ref. 10]. These standards should be applied to all new building operations, hopefully allowing trees and buildings to co-exist in the future without conflict.

Action 4 The Council will ensure that adequate foundations are provided for new buildings when they are constructed close to trees, in accordance with NHBC Standards, Chapter 4.2.

3.2.8 In situations where it is determined that the needs of development outweigh the amenity value of existing trees, there should be adequate compensatory planting. If there is insufficient space to plant suitable replacements within the site, the developer should be asked to fund planting on Council land in the vicinity.

3.2.9 The Council's minimum arboricultural target for development sites should be to maintain the number and quality of trees, in accordance with the principles of sustainability. However, where appropriate, opportunities to increase tree cover in the Borough should be taken and high quality landscaping schemes should be required as a condition of all planning permissions.

Action 5 The Council will seek to at least maintain, and wherever possible increase, the tree cover of the Borough as part of the development control process.

3.2.10 In summary, the Council's policies towards trees on development sites should aim to:-

- Retain wherever possible all trees which are of value to the environment, ensuring that they are fully protected from site works and successfully incorporated into their new.
- Ensure that appropriate replacement planting is carried out to compensate for any unavoidable loss of trees.
- Overall, to increase the quantity and quality of trees in the Borough.

3.3 THE SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF TREES & HEDGES

POLICY THREE The Council will manage its own stock of trees and hedges in a sustainable manner which takes into account both safety and amenity issues, and encourage other landowners to do likewise.

Council owned trees

3.3.1 The environmental benefits of trees and woodlands are great, but so are the responsibilities of management and the possible consequences of negligence. Trees are

living, changing entities and can sometimes develop into potentially dangerous structures which can cause serious damage to people and property [ref. 11].

3.3.2 Under Common Law, all landowners have a duty of care to manage trees in their ownership, in the interests of the safety of their neighbours and the general public. Where the owner is a large organisation such as a local authority, it is clear from past court judgements that a high level of expertise is expected in the management of trees in public places. The Council thus has an obligation to have its trees inspected on a regular basis by a qualified person, in order to detect any indications of disease, decay or structural defects, and to take any action found to be necessary.

3.3.3 The Council has set up a system for recording information about trees, but the process of data collection has been constrained by the limited availability of qualified staff. During the next five years, it is proposed to allocate funds for the appointment of an arboricultural consultant to assist with this task. To demonstrate that the available resources are being used as effectively as possible, trees in areas of high public usage (such as those in proximity to buildings and principal roads) will be designated as a high priority for regular inspection.

Action 6 The Council will continue to monitor the trees in its ownership by carrying out regular inspections and by storing information about their quantity, distribution, size, species, age, health and condition.

3.3.4 As well as the removal of trees which are found to be diseased or dangerous, trees which are unsuitable for their position should also be felled. Otherwise, they will become more of a problem in the future and more expensive to deal with by then. Thinning of groups of trees to promote healthy growth of the better ones should be regarded as an important investment for the landscape of the future.

Action 7 The Council will, subject to available finance, carry out all work recommended by the tree survey programme. Priority will be given to any works deemed necessary for safety reasons.

3.3.5 By inspecting trees and carrying out any recommended work proactively, the Council should be better placed to demonstrate that it is fulfilling its duty of care. In time, this should also help to reduce the number of complaints and emergency call-outs, as developing problems are dealt with at an earlier stage. However, with human nature and the weather being what they are, it will never be possible to remove this reactive type of work completely.

3.3.6 The Council regularly receives letters and telephone calls complaining about its trees, usually from those living nearest to them. Some complaints seem to be of a trivial nature, but others have more substance and are made with good justification. Trees can obstruct light and views, interfere with TV reception, and generally become troublesome because of honeydew drip and falling leaves. However, the positive benefits of the tree should always be weighed against any cited problems before deciding what action, if any, to take.

3.3.7 Requests to fell trees which are in a healthy condition and of high amenity value should usually be resisted; conversely, trees which are in poor condition or clearly unsuited to their location are best removed. Requests to reduce the height of trees should in most cases be turned down, but crown lifting or thinning may be an acceptable alternative. The Council has the technical knowledge and experience to make these judgements, including the priority and seasonal timing to be given to each agreed task.

Action 8 The Council will treat all communications about trees courteously and in compliance with the published standards of the Council. However, there will

be a presumption against felling or reducing the height of trees which are owned by the Council without good justification.

3.3.8 Whenever work is carried out on trees owned by the Council, it should be in accordance with good arboricultural practice [ref. 12]. Any pruning undertaken should not be detrimental to the general health, shape and character of the tree concerned. All work should also be carried out in compliance with all the current health and safety regulations.

Action 9 The Council will carry out all tree work in accordance with British Standard 3998 (latest revision) and all relevant health and safety regulations.

3.3.9 Street trees are probably the most prominent category of trees of the urban forest, but are usually the ones which face the most stressful growing conditions. As well as having to function in poor and compacted soils, often beneath hard surfacing, the roots have to share this space with the various utilities. This means that trenches are regularly dug by the statutory undertakers to install new services or to maintain existing ones. This ground disturbance, particularly when roots are severed, is a real threat to tree health and stability. National codes of practice have been produced to describe the best working methods to be adopted when carrying out excavation or other highways works close to trees [ref. 13]. The Council should insist that these standards are adhered to by all the utility companies and by its own contractors.

Action 10 The Council will expect and require all utility companies to carry out any essential trenching work close to trees in accordance with NJUG 10. The Council will apply the same principles when planning or undertaking its own work close to trees.

3.3.10 Claims are frequently made against the Council because of alleged damage to property by tree roots. Roots can cause damage either directly or indirectly. Direct damage can occur when an expanding trunk or root is in contact with hard surfacing such as paths and lightly-loaded structures such as garden walls. This type of damage is relatively common but remedial work is usually straight-forward and can often be carried out without felling the tree.

3.3.11 Indirect damage can occur when trees extract water from shrinkable soils, leading to subsidence of nearby buildings with inadequate foundations [ref. 14]. This type of damage is much less common, but potentially has more serious consequences. The interaction between trees, soils and buildings is complex and, unfortunately, assumptions that the trees are responsible for any damage are too often made before a proper investigation has been carried out. The Council should ensure that important trees are not needlessly felled because of unproven accusations.

Action 11 The Council will refer any claims of damage by trees to its insurers, together with a full report on the incident. The report will include recommendations for appropriate tree work, or for further investigation if necessary.

Privately owned trees

3.3.12 Trees are always the responsibility of the owner of the land on which they are growing. The Council can thus only influence the management of privately owned trees by giving advice when requested or by using legislation when applicable.

3.3.13 The Council does not have the resources to give detailed advice about privately owned trees, even if it were considered to be a proper function of local government. This is rightly the role of private consultants, and should remain so, particularly in cases where the trees may become a matter of dispute between two adjacent landowners. However, the

Council regularly receives enquiries from tree owners and should continue to offer initial guidance about good arboricultural practice and about the importance of choosing a reliable specialist contractor to carry out any work.

3.3.14 A proportion of the trees which were planted as part of the development of Runcorn New Town are now owned by various housing associations. Trees of certain species may not be suitable for long-term retention close to houses and it is accepted that some may have to be removed. However, such work should ideally be prioritised and phased over a number of years, in accordance with a set of agreed environmental principles. It is particularly important that trees which are well suited to their location and have the potential to develop into key landscape features of the future should be protected, either by designation in a management plan or by making them subject to a tree preservation order.

Action 12 The Council will, subject to staff resources, encourage and assist any housing association which is preparing a strategy for the management of its trees in the Borough.

3.3.15 Under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, the Council has the power to protect trees in the interests of amenity by making tree preservation orders (TPOs). The effect of a TPO is to prohibit the felling or pruning of the trees concerned without the permission of the Council. Trees in conservation areas which are not protected by TPOs are subject to other controls. Generally, anyone who proposes to fell or prune a tree over a certain size in a conservation area must give the Council six weeks notice. This is intended to give the Council a chance to make a TPO if it sees fit.

3.3.16 Although there are limitations to the TPO system, in that it is mainly preventative and can therefore be seen as a disincentive to positive management, it has been in existence for more than fifty years and has stood the test of time. A thorough review of the legislation was carried out in 1994 and this indicated widespread support for TPOs as an effective means of protecting trees which make a significant impact on the amenity of local areas. The Government believed that this review struck a good balance between the need to deliver effective protection of trees and the need to retain public confidence in a system which directly affects the freedom of the individual.

3.3.17 Following the 1994 review, new TPO Regulations came into force in 1999 [ref. 15]. The Government then published a document which gives guidance to local authorities about TPO legislation [ref. 16].

Action 13 The Council will make tree preservation orders to protect healthy trees which are of significant amenity value to the general public, particularly those considered to be under threat.

3.3.18 There are more than 100 TPOs, covering more than six thousand trees, in operation in Halton. The Council should administer these orders in a positive manner and not unreasonably refuse consent to carry out work. When deciding applications to fell or prune trees which are subject to a TPO, the issues to be considered should include both safety and public amenity. When requested, free advice about principles and procedures should be given to owners of protected trees.

Action 14 The Council will give free advice on the management of protected trees and will aim to issue a decision on all applications to carry out work on them within six weeks. However, there will be a presumption against granting consent to fell without good justification.

3.3.19 Anyone who cuts down a tree without consent is liable to a maximum fine of £20,000 in the Magistrates' Court (or an unlimited fine in the Crown Court). A lower fine of up to £2,500 may be imposed on anyone who deliberately damages a tree without destroying it. Failure to give the required notice to carry out work on a tree within a conservation area could result in penalties similar to those for contravening a TPO. To maintain the credibility of this legislation, the Council must be prepared to take the necessary action when there are any infringements.

Action 15 The Council will investigate all unauthorised work on protected trees and, if considered appropriate, prosecute those responsible.

3.3.20 Where privately owned trees are in such a condition as to present an imminent danger to persons or property, or where overhanging branches obstruct the highway, the Council has powers to serve notice under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1974 or the Highways Act 1980. This legislation should be used when necessary to make sure that action is taken, but with discretion and with the offer of free advice in the first instance.

Action 16 The Council will take appropriate action to ensure that privately owned trees which are in a dangerous condition or which obstruct the highway are felled or pruned to remove the danger or obstruction.

Hedges

3.3.21 Hedgerows are the most traditional form of field boundary in the local countryside and are important for historical, landscape and nature conservation reasons. They form distinctive visual features which contribute positively to the rural landscape. They often contain a great diversity of plant and wildlife species in their own right, but perhaps their greatest value to nature in this area are the links that they provide between habitats. A good network of hedgerows can enable wildlife to move freely along these corridors.

3.3.22 The loss of hedgerows from the countryside over the last thirty years or so has been a continuing cause for concern throughout England. A survey carried out by the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology [ref. 17] revealed that between 1984 and 1990 the total hedgerow length in England had fallen by more than 20%. However, a later survey [ref. 18] showed that the rate of hedgerow removal had slowed down to approximately 3,600 kilometres per year and that the rate of new planting had increased to 4,400 kilometres per year. The gains therefore now appear to be outweighing the losses in numerical terms, but there are still concerns about the dramatic losses of the past and the protection of those important hedgerows for which no amount of replanting can substitute.

3.3.23 The Environment Act 1995 included an enabling clause to allow the introduction of regulations to protect certain categories of hedgerows. These were then defined in The Hedgerows Regulations 1997 and guidance given to local authorities about the administration of the system [ref. 19]. In essence, a farmer or landowner must notify the local authority before removing a rural hedge which is at least 20 metres long, at least 30 years old and which meets at least one of a set of archaeological, historical, landscape or wildlife criteria. The local planning authority generally has 42 calendar days from receipt of notification in which to give or refuse consent. If the authority does not respond within this period, the hedgerow may be removed. Removal in contravention of these regulations is a criminal offence and liable to a fine of up to £5,000.

3.3.24 It is fair to say that the 1997 Regulations have been widely criticised by environmental organisations as being too weak, probably only giving some degree of protection to less than 20% of hedgerows. The present Government has acknowledged this

and announced that the regulations will be reviewed in due course. It is anticipated that any revision will extend the number of hedgerows which can be protected.

Action 17 The Council will administer and enforce the Hedgerow Regulations in the Halton area. In doing so, the Council will ensure that the procedures used are in accordance with the current legislation.

3.3.25 Irrespective of any legislation, the most effective means of protecting hedgerows remains in the hands of the farmers and landowners. They should be encouraged to manage their hedgerows in an environmentally sympathetic manner, including the use of traditional hedge laying. There are examples of good practice in hedgerow management, including renovation by laying operations, on the Daresbury Estate and adjoining the Runcorn Expressway.

Action 18 The Council will promote the management of hedgerows with landowners, colleges and voluntary groups, including the use of traditional hedge-laying techniques when and where appropriate.

3.3.26 In residential areas, conifer hedges which have been allowed to grow unchecked can reach excessive heights and thereby become a source of annoyance to neighbours. Since 2005, local residents have been able to complain to the Council about such hedges, provided that all other avenues for resolving the dispute have been tried and exhausted.

3.3.27 The role of the Council is not to mediate or negotiate between the complainant and the hedge owner, but to adjudicate on whether (in the words of the Act) the hedge is adversely affecting the complainant's reasonable enjoyment of their property. In doing so, the authority must take account of all relevant factors and must strike a balance between the competing interests of the complainant and hedge owner, as well as the interests of the wider community.

3.3.28 If the circumstances justify it, the Council will issue a formal notice to the hedge owner which will set out what action must be taken to remedy the problem, and by what date. Failure to carry out the works required by the local authority is an offence which, on prosecution, could lead to a fine of up to £1,000. The Government has published a document which gives guidance to local authorities about the administration of this legislation [ref. 20].

Action 19 The Council will investigate and determine all complaints made about high hedges under Part 8 of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003.

3.4 THE SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF WOODLANDS

POLICY FOUR The Council will manage its own woodlands in a sustainable manner which takes into account all landscape, silvicultural, recreational and nature conservation issues, and encourage private landowners to do likewise.

Council owned woodlands

3.4.1 The Council does not own extensive areas of woodland; most of the urban woodlands in Runcorn are owned by the Woodland Trust and the rest of the district is relatively poorly wooded. It is therefore all the more important that the woods which are owned by the Council are managed in a sustainable manner to maximise their benefit to those who live or work within the Borough.

3.4.2 The principal areas of mature woodland owned by the Council are at Daresbury Firs, Norton Priory, Pickering's Rough, Runcorn Hill and Clington Wood. The Council has in the last twenty years also created substantial new areas of developing woodland at Boston Wood, Beaconsfield Wood, Moore Meadows, Pickering's Pasture, Sunnybank, Arley Wood, Hale Road Woodlands and the extension to Clington Wood.

3.4.3 In addition to these woodlands, the Council is also responsible for substantial areas of structure planting which were established as part of the development of the New Town. These small wooded areas can be found on open spaces and road embankments throughout the Borough and are already very important in landscape terms.

3.4.4 Daresbury Firs is the largest Council-owned woodland (approx. 11ha.) and consists mainly of Corsican, Scots and Lodgepole Pine. It was established as a commercial forestry plantation in 1978 and acquired by the Council in 1996, since when it has been successfully managed on behalf of the Council by Groundwork Mersey Valley. The path network has been improved, bracken has been controlled and a programme of thinning has been started. A comprehensive management plan was produced in 2005 to guide future works.

Action 20 The Council will, in consultation with the Forestry Commission and other appropriate bodies, manage Daresbury Firs and its other principal areas of woodland in accordance with good forestry practice.

3.4.5 The woodland areas at Norton Priory have many valuable and interesting characteristics, such as the rare tree species within a woodland garden setting and the rejuvenated orchard area. The Council should sustain its support for the Museum and Gardens Trust in their management of these priceless natural assets for the benefit of visitors and the environment generally.

Action 21 The Council will sustain its support for the work of the Norton Priory Museum Trust in managing the grounds of Norton Priory, including the provision of forestry and arboricultural advice on a regular basis.

3.4.6 The maintenance of recent woodland planting and the selective thinning or coppicing of semi-mature groups of trees should be regarded as important investments for the future environment. This work can too easily be neglected in favour of projects which may appear to be of a more immediate priority. If this were allowed to happen, then the result would be an unacceptable failure rate of new planting (with consequent liability to pay back any grant) and a new generation of poor spindly trees (probably of the wrong species and more vulnerable to disease and windblow). The areas of structure planting need management of a specialist nature if they are to realise their full potential.

Action 22 The Council will, subject to budget limitations, carry out the maintenance, thinning and coppicing work necessary to establish new multi-purpose woodlands for the future, in accordance with good forestry practice.

3.4.7 Where semi-mature trees are felled as a thinning operation, replacement planting is not needed for reasons of sustainability because the remaining trees will exploit the extra space and increase in size accordingly. There will thus be no net loss in leaf area and all the environmental benefits will be retained, but the individual trees will be larger, healthier and more stable.

Privately owned woodlands

3.4.8 Mature woodlands are relatively scarce in Halton and therefore of all the more significance. Woodlands can provide timber and generate employment. They can enhance

the beauty of the countryside, reduce pollution, improve health and provide wildlife habitats. They can also provide opportunities for sporting and recreational activities, and improve the quality of life in and around towns by screening development and improving the setting for housing and industry. Few other land uses can provide such a diverse range of benefits to society and the Council's policies towards them should reflect this value.

3.4.9 Control over woodland management in general, including tree felling, is exercised by the Forestry Commission through the voluntary Woodland Grant Scheme (WGS) and the statutory felling licence regulations. Anyone proposing to fell more than five cubic metres of timber in a three month period must, with few exceptions, first obtain a felling licence.

3.4.10 All new applications to enter the WGS or to obtain a felling licence are listed by the Forestry Commission in a public register. After inclusion in the public register, there is a consultation period of 28 days for any comments to be submitted for consideration. All applications must meet the Forestry Commission's own published environmental standards, but it is right that any local concerns such as the effect on landscape or nature conservation are also taken into account at this stage. Any proposal which involves clear felling, inappropriate restocking or which would result in a net loss of woodland should be subject to particular scrutiny.

Action 23 The Council will object to, or seek revision of, any application appearing on the Forestry Commission's public register which is considered to be unjustifiably detrimental to the local landscape or to nature conservation.

3.4.11 The Council should welcome the sensitive and sustainable management of private woodlands for multipurpose objectives, mindful that it is the woodland as a whole which is important, not the individual trees within it. There is nothing wrong with cutting trees down for timber at the right time, provided that it is done in accordance with an approved plan which takes into account all the environmental constraints. In fact, the introduction of an uneven age structure usually benefits wildlife and is often the best way of conserving a woodland for the future. The Mersey Forest team can assist landowners in the Halton area to draw up plans for their woodlands and this should be welcomed by the Council.

Action 24 The Council will encourage private landowners to prepare management plans for their woodlands, and to seek advice from the Mersey Forest team if required.

3.4.12 In Runcorn most of the town's woodlands are managed by the Woodland Trust, a very large and successful charity organisation which is dedicated to acquiring and managing woodlands for the benefit of amenity and wildlife. The public has free access to all of its woodlands at all times and the Council recognises the importance of this natural resource for informal recreation, as well as all the other environmental benefits it provides.

Action 25 The Council will support in principle the objectives of the Woodland Trust in the management of its woodlands in Halton.

3.4.13 Ancient semi-natural woodlands (defined as those sites which have been continuously wooded since at least the year 1600) are a precious natural asset deserving particular attention. This is recognised by central government in the England Forestry Strategy [ref. 3]. The Cheshire region Biodiversity Partnership has prepared a Biodiversity Action Plan for Ancient Woodlands in this region and the Council is represented on the Working Group. The known ancient woodland sites in Halton are listed in Appendix 3.

Action 26 The Council will seek to prevent any loss of ancient semi-natural woodland and will assist Cheshire region Biodiversity Partnership in the implementation of a Biodiversity Action Plan for ancient woodlands in Halton.

3.5 THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW TREES & WOODLANDS

POLICY FIVE The Council will seek through its own actions, and in partnership with others, to establish new trees and woodlands in appropriate locations.

3.5.1 Trees are part of a living landscape which is not constant, but is changing with time. It is inevitable that some trees will be lost each year, for one reason or another, and a sustained effort is therefore needed to establish enough young trees to keep the numbers at an acceptable level. This is fundamental to the concept of sustainability and should be regarded as our responsibility to future generations. Just as we are able to enjoy the trees which our forefathers planted, so must we ensure that our successors will have the opportunity to appreciate trees which were planted during our era of land custodianship.

3.5.2 Where individual trees owned by the Council are felled, appropriate replacement planting should be carried out within the ward boundary. This need not necessarily be of the same species in the same location, as unsuitability may well have been the reason for removing the tree in the first place. However, it should be the intention to at least maintain, preferably increase, the number of trees overall within the Borough.

3.5.3 In all tree planting schemes, the choice of species is important. Planting trees of large ultimate size in confined locations can only be of short-term benefit and will produce a management problem and a financial burden for the future. Conversely, planting trees of only modest ultimate size in large open spaces can be a wasted opportunity. To create natural assets for the future which maximise the benefits and minimise the potential problems, any trees planted as individual specimens should be suited to the site and have sufficient space to grow to maturity.

Action 27 The Council will carry out suitable planting to replace every mature tree that has to be felled, thereby sustaining the number of trees on Council land.

3.5.4 Acting alone, the Council cannot hope to achieve the levels of planting needed to realise an increased tree cover for the future. The efforts of other organisations and private landowners are required, acting independently or in partnerships. Nationwide campaigns such as the annual “National Tree Week” are helpful in raising public awareness and the Council should support these locally, as far as resources allow. A good example of this is the work done at Norton Priory in raising seedlings from local seed sources, to be used in new planting schemes throughout the Borough.

3.5.5 The involvement of local communities and schoolchildren in tree planting schemes should be encouraged wherever possible. A welcome development in this respect would be an increase in the number of tree wardens in the Borough, to represent the urban areas as well as the areas covered by parish councils. The tree warden scheme is organised locally by the Cheshire Landscape Trust.

Action 28 The Council will support the aims of the Tree Warden Scheme and will encourage communication with any appointed tree wardens based in the Halton area.

3.5.6 The Mersey Forest is one of twelve community forests in England to be promoted by the Forestry Commission and the Countryside Agency. Halton Borough Council is one of the nine local authority partners in the project, which aims to substantially increase the woodland cover of the Merseyside and North Cheshire area over the next 30 years or so. The Forest Plan was first published in 1994 and reviewed in 2001 [ref. 21] and set out six central themes for creating the Forest:-

- Converting wasteland to woodland
- Creating networks of wooded greenways
- Greening key transport routes
- Returning farmland to forestry
- Weaving woodland into new development, and
- Capitalising on the existing woodland assets.

3.5.7 The guiding principles for The Mersey Forest in Halton are:-

- Provide a woodland buffer around the urban edge and create a wooded edge to the Mersey Estuary.
- Extend planting into the urban area using all appropriate and available land, including derelict land.
- Provide a new woodland structure for surrounding agricultural areas.
- Protect and manage the existing resource of urban trees and woodlands in a sustainable manner.

3.5.8 Following on from the guiding principles, the Plan contains a list of specific policies and opportunities which make up the “Halton planting strategy”. These policies are linked to areas of the Borough and have been incorporated into the Unitary Development Plan.

3.5.9 Since the concept of The Mersey Forest was adopted, more than 100 hectares of new woodland has been created in Halton. The Council should continue to play its part in the partnership and pursue the policies contained in The Mersey Forest Plan.

Action 29 The Council will remain an active partner in The Mersey Forest and maintain its input into the project.

4.0 A STRATEGY FOR BIODIVERSITY

4.1 PROTECTING THE BEST SITES & AREAS FOR WILDLIFE

POLICY SIX The Council will identify and protect the most valuable wildlife resources in Halton.

Protecting the best sites

4.1.1 A most important issue for Halton is to protect established habitats of greatest value. Recognition of some of the best sites has already taken place including the internationally important Mersey Estuary, designated as a RAMSAR site and a Special Protection Area. Halton has three nationally important SSSI's, including the River Mersey, Floodbrook Clough which is an example of a steep sided old wooded valley and Red Brow Cutting, designated for its geological formations. Hale Duck Decoy, part of the Mersey Estuary SSSI is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. There are also locally designated non-statutory sites in the Borough, called Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC's). 47 SINCs are recognised in the adopted Unitary Development Plan. [ADD MAP] Annual biological recording takes place to ensure that all local site designations are up to date and reflect their nature conservation value. Halton additionally has 10 Local Nature Reserves (LNR's), designated for their wildlife and educational value, and form the cornerstone for policies connecting people with wildlife.[ADD MAP OF LNR'S].

Action 30 The Council will identify all wildlife sites defined against clearly stated criteria that are relevant to Halton and including locally rare or outstanding wildlife habitats and sites of special community, amenity, access and educational value for their natural features.

4.1.2 The most important sites for biodiversity are those identified through international conventions and European Directives. In Halton, the Mersey Estuary is both a RAMSAR site and a Special Protection Area and is Halton's single most important natural asset.

Action 31 The Council will protect and preserve the Mersey Estuary RAMSAR and Special Protection Area through statutory protection in the Habitats Regulations.

4.1.3 Allied to this is also a need to maintain the level of the other sites, habitats and species which make up Halton's stock of environmental capital. They also contribute so much to local biodiversity and public enjoyment and the overall quality and character of the environment. Halton is a relatively densely populated and urban area in need of extensive regeneration. Sustainability principles must therefore include the need for evolution and change in the natural assets of the Borough, as with all its land uses. In April 2006, new national guidance from DEFRA will help to review the successful SINC system as part of the process to maintain the balance of environmental capital and to assist in their management wherever possible. PPS 9 recognises

Action 32 The Council will review the Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) system in line with DEFRA guidance

4.1.4 The Mersey Estuary is a particular case in point. The Borough Council is promoting a Second Bridge Crossing - the Mersey Gateway - over the Upper Mersey Estuary. Baseline survey data that has been gathered as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment for the Bridge Crossing is invaluable in shaping the ideas for an associated nature reserve. The information shows that the Upper Mersey Estuary is already of value for estuary wildlife, in

terms of its terrestrial and aquatic ecology and birdlife. This is an opportunity to create an Upper Mersey Estuary nature reserve in conjunction with the required mitigation as part of the planning process.

Action 33 The Council will create a significant new nature reserve which supports the council's efforts to deliver urban renewal through the Mersey Gateway.

4.1.5 Brownfield sites and post industrial land are being recognised as valuable for wildlife, often providing a refuge for species that can no longer thrive in the countryside. Research by English Nature reveals that such land supports 194 invertebrate species of conservation concern, often can be very important for urban birds and is where you find ordinary plants that have been tidied away from the countryside. Brownfield sites are the new flower-rich meadows and areas brimming with diversity: they have much more in common with the historic wildlife-rich countryside than the most of the intensively farmed modern landscape. Most of Halton's best grasslands are associated with its industrial past, and 13 of the 47 designated SINC's have an industrial connection. Some brownfield site can be viewed as the nature resource of the future, as an important habitat in their own right. As part of the continued re-use of post industrial sites in Halton, there are more extensive opportunities for sites of brownfield biodiversity.

Action 34 Biodiversity interests on brownfield sites are to be investigated through biological survey work as part of the overall re-use of land policies.

Protecting the best areas

4.1.5 While protecting the best sites helps those species that need relatively small areas of habitat, they do little to sustain those species that range over wider areas, for example, birds and mammals. If sites alone are protected without corridors or wedges, then less mobile species are prevented from appearing in the urban areas. Isolated sites increasingly become under threat and their attractiveness to both wildlife and to human visitor's declines.

4.1.6 There is a parallel need to protect a network of open spaces linking together sites of quality and special habitats. Such a network can also provide easy access to recreational facilities and recreational footpaths of great value to people.

4.1.7 This network has been partly identified in Halton's Biodiversity Action Plan as a series of wildlife corridors. In Halton, this includes the Mersey Estuary, river valleys, farmland, canals, highways, disused railway lines, public open space, allotments, golf courses, school playing fields, gardens and cemeteries. Areas of public open space are particularly important for wildlife management. These areas are an essential component of urban wildlife planning and a necessary complement to the protected sites.

4.1.8 The adopted Unitary Development Plan has a comprehensive Greenspace system that identifies key open areas of the Borough. The protection and enhancement of this infrastructure is important to conserve natural assets, protect local distinctiveness and minimise habitat fragmentation.

Action 35 The Council will develop and refine the nature value of the Greenspace system through the Halton Biodiversity Action Plan, in particular land within the ownership of Halton Borough Council, to assess its potential and to identify any areas of deficiency.

Action 36 The Council will seek to safeguard wherever possible the intrinsic value of any land or natural features having a corridor function, in terms of nature conservation value and associated access and amenity.

A Sound evidence base: habitat and species information

4.1.19 The evidence base for the above policies has been based largely around a Biodiversity Audit which was carried out in 1999 using habitat information from the 1990's. It is increasingly recognised that up to date information and regular monitoring is required to make sure the right actions are taken.

Action 37 The Council will maintain an up to date evidence base of its natural assets. This will include a review of the Borough's Phase 1 Habitat survey to be complete by 2007/8.

4.1.10 Halton has made a solid start to build up a biological recording database in partnership with RECORD, the Cheshire Local Records Centre. The number of individual species records has risen from 33,000 at the start of the Biodiversity Audit in 1999 to 83,000 by the end of 2005. Ultimately, this information will be linked to the National Biodiversity Network to improve access to reliable wildlife information and to ensure that decisions affecting wildlife are based on sound, quality data. Through the use of the Halton web site, the analysis of this data can be made widely accessible to Halton residents.

Action 38 The Council will remain a partner of RECORD, the Local Record Centre for Cheshire and develop a Halton database of biological information.

Action 39 The Council will continue to implement a regular and co-ordinated programme of biological recording.

4.2 HALTON'S BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

POLICY SEVEN The Council will implement the Halton Biodiversity Action Plan in conjunction with its partners.

4.2.1 A key action from the first Natural Assets Strategy has been Halton's Biodiversity Action Plan, published in February 2003. This is a detailed contribution to the Cheshire region Biodiversity Action Plan and contains a series of over 50 actions for two habitats and seven species, as well as information on wildlife corridors and action areas for People & Nature. This is not a static document and progress against the actions is reviewed every two years. This review can now be carried out in conjunction with the revised Natural Assets Strategy. Progress towards the targets in the Biodiversity Action Plan is also monitored by Halton's Local Strategic Partnership as part of the Community Strategy.

4.2.2 The emphasis is on practical delivery and some of the targets are specifically within the responsibility of the Borough Council. It is not, however, just a local authority document. It has been produced in conjunction with the Halton Natural Environment Roundtable which brings together up to 18 environmental organisations and individuals.

Action 40 Implement the Biodiversity Action Plan habitat and species targets as part of the work programme of the Natural Assets Strategy and carry out regular monitoring of progress.

4.2.3 The habitat and species targets stand alone in their own right but are also linked to other exciting initiatives that are taking place in Halton, in particular the creation of Local Nature Reserves and the involvement of local schools and people in their local environment.

Species protection

4.2.4 Urban nature conservation has an important role to play in protecting rare and declining species and in providing conditions that will help maintain their populations. Runcorn Hill Local Nature Reserve, for example, has regionally important heathland communities, which are being managed to maintain a stable population. The great crested newt, bats and badgers are protected species under Section 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, and may be found in both rural and urban areas. Many species have become dependent upon buildings for roosting or nesting, such as, swifts, house martins and bats.

Action 41 The Council will seek to ensure that laws in relation to protected species are implemented.

4.2.5 The growth of our biological record database has already highlighted other species which are locally important to Halton. In both Runcorn and Widnes, we now know there are significant breeding populations of swifts, a bird which spends the winter in the southern hemisphere. Buildings are vital to this hole-nesting bird, but repairs and renovations can threaten their breeding. Fortunately, plenty can be done to ensure that swift colonies continue to thrive, requiring the goodwill and co-operation of planners, architects and developers, and solutions to help breeding swifts are relatively straightforward and inexpensive. The introduction of nest boxes to a new housing development in Widnes is underway and if successful, it will pave the way for similar schemes.

Action 42 The Council will promote all aspects of species protection and will adopt the swift as a flagship species for suitable new development schemes and housing renovation projects.

Geodiversity

4.2.6 Recent national interest in geology, now termed geodiversity, has allowed Halton to look again at its earth science resource. Halton has a wealth of geological outcrops in both Widnes and Runcorn, each with a different story to tell about the local landscape of former times. More work needs to be carried out to identifying our best geodiversity assets. Halton is a partner of the Cheshire region Geodiversity Action Plan Action Group, who is able to assist in evaluating our resource. This is in line with PPS9 advice on protecting the best geodiversity areas, with the possible inclusion of Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS) in the Local Development Framework.

Action 43 The Council will promote all aspects of geodiversity, in partnership with the Cheshire region Geodiversity Action Plan Action Group.

Making the most of Halton's ponds

4.2.7 Ponds are a valuable aquatic habitat as well as a traditional landscape feature. Over 250 ponds were identified during the Biodiversity Audit in 1999, varying between 1 square metre and 2 hectares in size. Some were excavated on the Cheshire Plain to extract marl or boulder clay for spreading on surrounding fields. Many of these pits have since filled with water to form ponds. Elsewhere in Halton, ponds have been dug for a variety of reasons, including amenity and educational purposes.

4.2.8 Making the most of Halton's ponds has been a successful project during 2003-2006, involving 36 ponds, professional ecologists, volunteers and local residents and community groups. All the ponds have been surveyed for their wildlife value, followed by a management prescription and practical conservation work. Over time, this approach to pond management

can result in Halton having a representative selection of the different stages of the pond cycle, from open water through to damp, overgrown shaded areas, each having their own mix of wildlife species.

Action 44 The Council will continue to make the most of its ponds through projects to encourage biological recording and practical management.

4.3 PEOPLE AND WILDLIFE

POLICY EIGHT The Council will continue to promote the interest and involvement of local people in issues and projects concerning Halton's natural assets.

Local Nature Reserves

4.3.1 The Borough Council has adopted a successful policy of creating Local Nature Reserves (LNR's). LNR's have an important part to play in biological conservation, the protection and interpretation of wildlife features and the Borough wide strategic approach to nature conservation. The designation equally is about contributing to the quality of the environment to local people, the part they can play in community development and to providing space and resources for environmental education.

4.3.2 The Borough Council has 10 LNR's which are listed in Appendix 2. This amounts to 143 hectares of land or the equivalent of 1 hectares per 833 head of population. This figures exceeds the English Nature / Natural England standard of 1 hectare per 1000 head of population and makes Halton one of the top urban local authorities in achieving LNR's.

Action 45 The Council will continue to develop a programme of Local Nature Reserves.

4.3.3 Designation of Local Nature Reserves is one thing: managing them to a high standard for both people and wildlife is another matter. Between 2002 and 2005, three Local Nature Reserves under the English Nature funded Wildspace! scheme were funded to great affect. This money from English Nature has allowed Halton to employ a Wildspace Officer to "do things that local authorities don't normally do". This Wild About Halton programme has been extended up to 2009 with grant aid support from the Heritage Lottery Fund and landfill tax credits from WREN. This has firmly put the role of Local Nature Reserves and the Wildspace officer on the map

4.3.4 Wild About Halton is about reconnecting people with nature. The Wildspace Officer works with schools and community groups through a variety of mediums, including the web, to explain the environmental role of the reserves. This includes school visits to the Local Nature Reserves, with follow up work on the web. There is an emphasis on developing an educational resource centred around Key Stages 3 & 4 of the school curriculum. The Wildspace Officer encourages community involvement in the management of the reserves through the development of an Advisory Groups, Friends Groups and Halton's Natural Environment Roundtable. Regularly information is presented in the continuously evolving interactive web site at www.halton.gov.uk The project has seen the development of a web cam network and mpeg movie resource to enable people visiting the web site to view highlights from the natural environment of the reserves.

Action 46 The Council will continue to employ a Wildspace Officer and to deliver the Wild About Halton programme beyond 2009.

Participation

4.3.5 People's knowledge and understanding of the natural world are key factors in shaping their attitudes and responsibility towards it. Environmental education can play a vital role in building up knowledge and skills, helping people to make informed decisions in relation to nature conservation and enabling them to look after the environment.

4.3.6 Halton Borough Council has an important role in the delivery of environmental education, through the Wild About Halton project working alongside other key services.. These include:

- Education and Social Inclusion Directorate, including the Parks & Countryside Service and the Science Advisors
- Environment and Development Directorate, including Landscape Services, Waste & Recycling and Environmental Health

Action 47 The Council will seek to ensure that biodiversity continues to play an important part in the environmental education elements of schools, colleges and adult education centres.

Action 48 The Council will encourage the voluntary and private sectors to play a full and active part in the delivery of biodiversity related, environmental education services.

4.3.7 People can greatly benefit from close contact with nature. The environment is too important to be left to the environmental professionals: equally, the environment is too important to be conserved and managed without them. Since 1996, Halton's Natural Environment Roundtable (NER) has become firmly established as a community led body working with the local authority on all biodiversity issues in the borough. The NER chooses six projects a year for practical involvement and has an important part to play in identifying locally distinctive features of biodiversity interest.

Action 49 The Council will continue to act as the secretariat for the Natural Environment Roundtable.

4.3.10 Support by the council is provided through Service Level Agreements to a number of organisations with a wildlife and public involvement interest in Halton. These Agreements are important acknowledgement that partnership working is a key way forward on biodiversity issues.

Action 50 The Council will, through Service Level Agreements, support the activities of environmental groups such as Cheshire Wildlife Trust, RECORD and British Trust for Conservation Volunteers.

Awareness

4.3.11 A lot is already happening to promote the Natural Assets of Halton, through the Borough Council and its partners. The Borough Council has a Nature Conservation Officer, a Tree Officer, a Wildspace Officer and a Parks & Countryside Service whose role includes introducing children and adults to Halton's natural heritage. Groundwork Mersey Valley is committed to the conservation of the natural environment and works in partnership with the public, private and voluntary sectors. Norton Priory Museum Trust has an events and activities programme and active voluntary groups cover a wide range of interests; despite this, there are still people who do not realise what they have on their doorstep.

Action 51 The Council will promote awareness, understanding and enjoyment of nature in Halton.

4.4 NEW OPPORTUNITES

POLICY NINE The Council will promote suitable new initiatives and projects to further Halton's biodiversity resource.

4.4.1 Much of urban nature conservation is concerned with the protection of existing sites. However, dynamic situations in urban areas give many opportunities to add to the nature conservation value within Halton. Planning for wildlife offers many opportunities for creative thinking. The Mersey Forest and Wild About Halton are projects that are making a significant impact in Halton.

4.4.3 The creation of new places for wildlife, such as ponds and wetlands, can bring it into new areas. This is especially valuable in those parts of the strategic Greenspace network and in areas of deficiency. Moore meadows at Moore village is a recent example of new wildflower meadows especially created in conjunction with local consultation. Creative conservation can also add to existing sites of quality or special habitats, for example at Pickerings Pasture Local Nature Reserve.

4.4.4 Responsibility for the management of sites of quality, special habitats and other open spaces rests with a variety of owners and agencies in the public, private and voluntary sectors. The role of Halton Borough Council in managing its own land is very significant. Nearly 700 hectares of land is owned and managed as open space, including grassland, woodland and street trees, allotments and cemeteries

4.4.5 The management of Council owned open space within the Greenspace network is important for both nature conservation and people. It is this land which provides the most important experience of nature for the greatest numbers of people. Recent land at Manor Park that has come over to the Borough Council from English Partnerships has a high biodiversity potential. With suitable planning, consultation, design and management, there is scope for considerable biodiversity benefits with a new change of use.

Action 52 The Council will promote the biodiversity potential of land coming into its ownership, including a significant area of land at Manor Park.

4.4.6 Under the umbrella of Halton Natural Environment Roundtable, there is great scope in Halton for getting involved in biodiversity projects. Recents examples include

- bluebell recovery project,
- biological recording including a 5 year bird atlas
- wild flower meadows,
- geology in Halton
- bird box making
- Charcoal burning
- Making the most of Halton ponds

Action 53 The Council will continue to promote suitable new initiatives and projects to further Halton's biodiversity resource.

4.4.7 It is almost impossible to create high quality nature sites such as ancient woodlands and heathland in terms of their habitats, species and human experiences. It is possible

however to plant new woodlands, hedges and street trees, to encourage natural regeneration of scrub, to plant wild flower meadows and to create ponds and wetlands. Even something as simple as erecting a bird nestbox creates a feature for wildlife. [ref. 22].

4.4.8 The varying nature conservation value within Halton leaves room for habitat creation measures. These add to and support the existing wildlife resource. There is also a need to replace habitats lost or damaged through development, poor management or neglect. For instance, Halton constructed its first “green roof” at Victoria Park pavilion, Widnes in 2006. Green roofs are no longer a novelty item for specialist buildings and are becoming more mainstream for architects and engineers. Green roofs offer several benefits including providing habitats for plants and animals, reducing stormwater runoff and the risk of short term flooding, and the preservation and cooling of surface roof membranes, avoiding the “urban heat island” effect. There is great scope for the use of more green roofs in future developments

Action 54 The Council will seek through its own actions and through influencing others, to promote the use of green roofs in new developments.

4.4.8 As with green roofs, Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS) aim to use nature to provide a solution to a development issue. Natural drainage of new developments can reduce the impact on potential flooding and pollution to rivers, streams and ponds. Such systems offer the chance to enhance the urban environment and provide wildlife habitat. As yet, there has not been an uptake to SUDS in Halton but recent design advice may be able to remove perceived barriers that relate to technical and management issues.

Action 55 The Council will seek through its own actions and through influencing others, to promote the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems.

Exotic species control

4.3.22 Some species are not wanted! Most areas of the United Kingdom have species that exotic species and provide varying degrees of harm to our native species. In Halton, the biggest problem is the spread of Japanese Knotweed, Giant Hogweed and Himalayan Balsam on land, and the introduction of different pond species, including Mink, *Crassula helmsii* and floating Pennywort that damage our native pond species. Some work is carried out annually on Council owned land to control problem species but more is required to prevent a significant loss of our more valuable habitats and species.

Action 56 The Council will develop systems for the control of unwanted exotic species

5.0 IMPLEMENTATION AND ACTION PROGRAMMES 2007 - 2012

Action no.	Implementation & Action	By whom	Timescale	Budget
	TREES ON DEVELOPMENT SITES			
1	Require developers of sites containing trees to demonstrate that the principles of BS 5837 are being followed during the planning process.	Planning Officers, with advice from Trees & Woodlands Officer	On-going	Existing
2	Publish a Supplementary Planning Guidance document about trees on development sites.	Planning Officers, with advice from Trees & Woodlands Officer	2008	Existing
3	Protect trees of high amenity value on development sites by making tree preservation orders and by attaching conditions to planning consents.	Planning Officers, with advice from Trees & Woodlands Officer	On-going	Existing
4	Ensure that adequate foundations are provided for new buildings when they are constructed close to trees, in accordance with NHBC Standards, Chapter 4.2.	Building Control Officers, with advice from Trees & Woodlands Officer	On-going	Existing
5	Seek to at least maintain, and wherever possible increase, the tree cover of the Borough as part of the development control process.	Planning Officers, with advice from Trees & Woodlands Officer	On-going	Existing
	SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF TREES			
6	Continue to monitor the trees in its ownership by carrying out regular inspections and by storing information about their quantity, distribution, size, species, age, health and condition.	Trees & Woodlands Officer, Arboricultural Consultant, Officers in Landscape Services	All trees in high priority areas to be inspected before 2012 and a system for reinspection set up.	Meeting the timescale will be dependant on additional funding.
7	Carry out all work recommended by the tree survey programme. Priority will be given to any works deemed necessary for safety reasons.	Officers in Landscape Services, with advice from Trees & Woodlands Officer	On-going	Existing
8	Treat all communications about trees courteously and in compliance with the published standards of the Council.	Officers in Landscape Services, with advice from Trees & Woodlands Officer	On-going	Existing
	Carry out all tree work in accordance with British	Officers in Landscape Services,		

9	Standard 3998 (latest revision) and all relevant health and safety regulations.	with advice from Trees & Woodlands Officer	On-going	Existing
10	Require all utility companies to carry out any essential trenching work close to trees in accordance with NJUG 10. The Council will apply the same principles when planning or undertaking its own work close to trees.	Highways Officers, with advice from Trees & Woodlands Officer	On-going	Existing
11	Refer any claims of damage by trees to its insurers, together with a full report on the incident. The report will include recommendations for appropriate tree work, or for further investigation if necessary.	Trees & Woodlands Officer	On-going	Existing
12	Encourage and assist any housing association which is preparing a working plan for the management of its trees in the Borough.	Trees & Woodlands Officer	On-going	Dependant on staff time available
13	Make tree preservation orders to protect healthy trees which are of significant amenity value to the general public, particularly those considered to be under threat.	Trees & Woodlands Officer	On-going	Existing
14	Give free advice on the management of protected trees and will aim to issue a decision on all applications to carry out work on them within six weeks. However, there will be a presumption against granting consent to fell without good justification.	Trees & Woodlands Officer	On-going	Existing
15	Investigate all unauthorised work on protected trees and, if considered appropriate, prosecute those responsible.	Trees & Woodlands Officer, with advice from Legal Services	On-going	Existing
16	Take appropriate action to ensure that privately owned trees which are in a dangerous condition or which obstruct the highway are felled or pruned to remove the danger or obstruction.	Highways Officers, with advice from Trees & Woodlands Officer	On-going	Existing
17	The Council will administer and enforce the Hedgerow Regulations in the Halton area. In doing so, the Council will ensure that the procedures used are in accordance with the current legislation.	Trees & Woodlands Officer, with support from Nature Conservation Officer and Planning Officers	On-going	Existing
	The Council will promote the management of			

18	hedgerows with landowners, colleges and voluntary groups, including the use of traditional hedge-laying techniques when and where appropriate.	Nature Conservation Officer	On-going	Existing
19	The Council will investigate and determine all complaints made about high hedges under Part 8 of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003.	Planning Enforcement Officer, with advice from Trees & Woodlands Officer	On-going	Existing
	SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF WOODLANDS			
20	Manage Daresbury Firs and its other principal areas of woodland in accordance with good forestry practice.	Trees & Woodlands Officer, with support from Groundwork Mersey Valley & other partners	On-going	Existing, supported by external grants
21	Sustain its support for the work of the Norton Priory Museum Trust in managing the grounds of Norton Priory, including the provision of forestry and arboricultural advice on a regular basis.	Trees & Woodlands Officer and Nature Conservation Officer	On-going	Existing
22	Carry out the maintenance, thinning and coppicing work necessary to establish new multi-purpose woodlands for the future, in accordance with good forestry practice.	Landscape Services	On-going	Existing
23	Object to, or seek revision of, any application appearing on the Forestry Commission's public register which is considered to be unjustifiably detrimental to the local landscape or to nature conservation.	Trees & Woodlands Officer	On-going	Existing
24	Encourage private landowners to prepare management plans for their woodlands, and to seek advice from the Mersey Forest team if required.	Trees & Woodlands Officer	On-going	Existing
25	Support in principle the objectives of the Woodland Trust in the management of its woodlands in Halton.	Landscape Services	On-going	Existing
26	Seek to prevent any loss of ancient semi-natural woodland and will assist Cheshire region Biodiversity Partnership in the implementation of a Biodiversity Action Plan for ancient woodlands in Halton.	Trees & Woodlands Officer and Nature Conservation Officer	On-going	Existing
	ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW TREES &			

	WOODLANDS			
27	Carry out suitable planting to replace every mature tree that has to be felled, thereby sustaining the number of trees on Council land.	Landscape Services	On-going	Existing
28	Support the aims of the Tree Warden Scheme and encourage communication with any appointed tree wardens based in the Halton area.	Trees & Woodlands Officer	On-going	Existing
29	Remain an active partner in The Mersey Forest and maintain its input into the project.	Landscape Services	On-going	Existing
	PROTECTING THE BEST SITES & AREAS FOR WILDLIFE			
30	Identify all wildlife sites defined against clearly stated criteria that are relevant to Halton and including locally rare or outstanding wildlife habitats and sites of special community, amenity, access and educational value for their natural features.	Nature Conservation Officer, with Local Wildlife Sites Partnership	On-going	Existing
31	Protect and preserve the Mersey Estuary RAMSAR and Special Protection Area through statutory protection in the Habitats Regulations.	Nature Conservation Officer, with Natural England	On-going	Existing
32	Review the Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) system in line with DEFRA guidance.	Nature Conservation Officer, with Local Wildlife Sites Partnership	2007	Existing
33	Create a significant new nature reserve which supports the council's efforts to deliver urban renewal through the Mersey Gateway.	Nature Conservation Officer and Wildspace Officer	2009	Mersey Gateway project, and external sources
34	Biodiversity interests on brownfield sites are to be investigated through biological survey work as part of the overall re-use of land policies.	Nature Conservation Officer	On-going	Existing
35	Develop and refine the nature value of the Greenspace system through the Halton Biodiversity Action Plan, in particular land within the ownership of Halton Borough Council, to assess its potential and to identify any areas of deficiency.	Planning Officers, with advice from Nature Conservation Officer	On-going	Existing

36	Seek to safeguard wherever possible the intrinsic value of any land or natural features having a corridor function, in terms of nature conservation value and associated access and amenity.	Nature Conservation Officer	On-going	Existing
37	Maintain an up to date evidence base of its natural assets. This will include a review of the Borough's Phase 1 Habitat survey to be complete by 2007/8.	Nature Conservation Officer, with consultants	2008 for the Phase 1 Habitat survey, then on-going	External grants may be required
38	Remain a partner of RECORD, the Local Record Centre for Cheshire and develop a Halton database of biological information.	Nature Conservation Officer and Planning Officers	On-going	Existing
39	Continue to implement a regular and co-ordinated programme of biological recording.	Nature Conservation Officer, with Local Wildlife Sites Partnership	On-going	External grants are required when current funding runs out in March 2009: Natural England to be approached
HALTON'S BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN				
40	Implement the Biodiversity Action Plan habitat and species targets as part of the work programme of the Natural Assets Strategy and carry out regular monitoring of progress.	Nature Conservation Officer, with Local Wildlife Sites Partnership	On-going	External grants are required when current funding runs out in March 2009: Natural England to be approached
41	Seek to ensure that laws in relation to protected species are implemented.	Nature Conservation Officer	On-going	Existing
42	Promote all aspects of species protection and adopt the swift as a flagship species for suitable new development schemes and housing renovation projects.	Nature Conservation Officer and Wildspace Officer	On-going	Existing, working with development partners
43	Promote all aspects of geodiversity, in partnership with the Cheshire region Geodiversity Action Plan Action Group.	Nature Conservation Officer	On-going	Existing, supported by external grants
44	Continue to make the most of Halton's ponds through projects to encourage biological recording and practical	Nature Conservation Officer	On-going	Seek external funds to replace lottery

	management.			funding
	PEOPLE AND WILDLIFE			
45	Continue to develop a programme of Local Nature Reserves.	Nature Conservation Officer and Wildspace Officer	On-going	External grants are required when current funding runs out in March 2009: Natural England and other bodies to be approached
46	Continue to employ a Wildspace Officer and to deliver the Wild About Halton programme beyond 2009.	Wildspace Officer and Nature Conservation Officer	2009	To be approved as a growth item
47	Seek to ensure that biodiversity continues to play an important part in the environmental education elements of schools, colleges and adult education centres.	Wildspace Officer and Nature Conservation Officer	On-going	Existing, with external grants required by 2009
48	Encourage the voluntary and private sectors to play a full and active part in the delivery of biodiversity related, environmental education services.	Wildspace Officer and Nature Conservation Officer	On-going	Existing, with external grants required by 2009
49	Continue to act as the secretariat for the Natural Environment Roundtable.	Nature Conservation Officer	On-going	Existing
50	Through Service Level Agreements, support the activities of environmental groups such as Cheshire Wildlife Trust, RECORD and British Trust for Conservation Volunteers.	Nature Conservation Officer and Wildspace Officer	On-going	Current funding needs to be secured
51	Promote awareness, understanding and enjoyment of nature in Halton.	Nature Conservation Officer and Wildspace Officer	On-going	Existing
	NEW OPPORTUNITIES			
52	Promote the biodiversity potential of land coming into its ownership, including a significant area of land at Manor Park.	Landscape Services	On-going	Existing, supported by external grants
53	Continue to promote suitable new initiatives and projects to further Halton's biodiversity resource.	Nature Conservation Officer and Wildspace Officer	On-going	Existing, supported by external grants
54	Seek through its own actions and through influencing others, to promote the use of green roofs in new	Nature Conservation Officer and Wildspace Officer	On-going	Existing, supported by external grants

	developments.			
55	Seek through its own actions and through influencing others, to promote the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems.	Landscape Services and Highways Division, Maintenance.	On-going	Existing, supported by external grants
56	Develop systems for the control of unwanted exotic species.	Nature Conservation Officer	On-going	Existing, supported by external grants

APPENDIX 1 SITES OF IMPORTANCE FOR NATURE CONSERVATION

1. International Designations

RAMSAR and Special Protection Area	These are good examples of:
Mersey Estuary	Intertidal ecosystems

2. National Designations

Sites of Special Scientific Interest	These are good examples of:
Mersey Estuary, including Hale Duck Decoy	Intertidal ecosystems
Floodbrook Clough	Ancient woodland
Red Brow Cutting	Triassic sandstone outcrop

3. Local Designations

Local Wildlife Sites	These are good examples of:
Barkers Hollow Wood, Preston Brook	Ancient Woodland
Beechwood, Runcorn	Ancient Woodland
Big Boar's Wood, Hale	Woodland
Big Wood, Runcorn	Woodland
Clifton Cloughs, Runcorn	Ancient Woodland
Clifton Lagoon, Runcorn	Grassland of industrial origin
Clincton Wood, Widnes	Woodland, grassland, ponds
Clough Wood, Runcorn	Ancient Woodland
Daresbury Firs LNR	Conifer Woodland
Disused Railway Line, south of Warrington Rd, Widnes	Grassland
Dorchester Park, Sandymoor	Woodland, grassland
Dutton Hospital Wood, Dutton	Ancient Woodland
Green Wood and Pitts Heath, Runcorn	Woodland
Haddocks Wood Pasture, Runcorn	
Haddocks Wood, Runcorn	Woodland
Hale Road Woodland LNR	Woodland
Haystack Lodge, Runcorn	Woodland, grassland
Hopyard Wood, Hale	Ancient Woodland
Land adjacent Preston Brook Marina	Grassland
Land north of Hallwood Park, Runcorn	
Land off Lunts Heath Road, Farnworth	
Little Boar's Wood, Hale	Woodland
Lodge Plantation, Runcorn	Woodland
Manchester Ship Canal Bank, Astmoor	Grassland of industrial origin
Manor Park 3 Woodland, Moore	Woodland
Mill Wood LNR, Hale	Ancient Woodland
Morts Wood, Daresbury	Woodland

Murdishaw Wood and Valley LNR	Ancient Woodland, grassland
Norbury Wood and Marsh, Runcorn	Woodland
Norton Priory, Runcorn	Woodland, grassland, ponds
Old Plantation, Hale	Woodland
Oxmoor Wood and ponds, Runcorn	
Pickerings Pasture LNR, Widnes	Grassland
Pond at Delphfield, Runcorn	Pond
Pond off Meadway and adjacent grassland, Widnes	Pond
Ramsbrook Plantation, Hale	Woodland
Rows Wood, Daresbury	Ancient Woodland
Runcorn East railway station area	Grassland, woodland
Runcorn Hill LNR	Heathland
Sandymoor Wood, Sandymoor	Ancient Woodland
Southern verge embankment A533, Brookvale	Grassland
St. Helens Canal, (reclaimed), Widnes	Open water
Stenhills Open Space, Runcorn	Grassland, heathland
The Glen, Runcorn	Ancient Woodland
Upper Mersey Estuary	Intertidal ecosystems
Weston Marsh lagoons	Grassland of industrial origin
Windmill Hill Wood, Runcorn	Woodland

APPENDIX 2 LOCAL NATURE RESERVES

Local Nature Reserves	These are good examples of:
Runcorn Hill	Heathland
Pickerings Pasture	Wildflower meadows
Clincton Woods	Woodland, grassland, ponds
Dorchester Park	Birch –oak woodland, grassland
Oxmoor	Grassland, reedbed, lagoon
Wigg Island	Grassland, open water, saltmarsh
Hale Road Woodland	Grassland, woodland, reedbed
Mill Wood	Woodland
Murdishaw Wood And Valley	Woodland, grassland
Daresbury Firs	Conifer woodland

APPENDIX 3 ANCIENT WOODLANDS

Mill Wood, Hale	Flood Brook Clough, Runcorn
Hopyard Wood, Hale	The Glen, Runcorn
Old Plantation, Hale	Murdishaw Wood, Runcorn
Clifton Cloughs, Runcorn	Sandymoor Wood, Runcorn
Clough Wood, Runcorn	Rows Wood, Daresbury
Beech Wood, Runcorn	Barkers Hollow, Preston Brook
Dutton Hospital Wood, Runcorn	

APPENDIX 4 ORGANISATIONS CONSULTED

British Trust for Conservation Volunteers
British Waterways
CDS Housing Association
Cheshire and Wirral Ornithological Society
Cheshire County Council
Cheshire Landscape Trust
Cheshire Wildlife Trust
Council for the Protection of Rural England
Daresbury Parish Council
Daresbury Properties Ltd
English Partnerships
Environment Agency
Environment Forum, Natural Environment
Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
Forestry Commission
Groundwork Mersey Valley
Hale Conservation Group
Hale Estate
Hale Parish Council
Halton Friends of the Earth
Ineos Chlor
Knowsley MBC
Liver Housing Association
Liverpool City Council
Liverpool Housing Trust
Mersey Basin Campaign
Mersey Conservancy
Mersey Estuary Conservation Group
Moore Parish Council
Natural England
North West Naturalists Union
North West Water
Norton Priory Museum Trust
PondLife Project
Preston Brook Parish Council
Riverside Housing Association
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
St. Helens MBC
The Mersey Forest
The Woodland Trust
Vale Royal BC
Warrington Borough Council

APPENDIX 5 USEFUL CONTACTS

Arboricultural Advisory & Information Service, Alice Holt Lodge, Wrecclesham, Farnham, Surrey, GU10 4LH (tel Tree Helpline £1.50 per minute 09065 161147)

Arboricultural Association, Ampfield House, Romsey, Hants, SO51 9PA (tel 01794 68717)

British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, Trafford Water Mill, Warrington Road, Mickle Trafford, Chester, CH2 4EB (tel 01244 300230)

Cheshire Landscape Trust, Fountains Building, Upper Northgate Street, Chester, CH1 4EF (tel 01244 376333)

Cheshire Wildlife Trust, Grebe House, Reaseheath, Nantwich, CW5 6DA (tel 01270 610180)

Natural England (Area Office), Pier House, Wallgate, Wigan, WN3 4AL (tel 01942 820342)

Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group, Reaseheath College, Nantwich, CW5 6DF (tel 01270 627938)

Forestry Commission (Area Office), Linnere, Delamere, Northwich, CW8 2JD (tel 01606 889912)

Groundwork Mersey Valley, Phoenix House, Spring Street, Widnes, WA80NL (tel 0151 257 2720)

Halton BC Landscape Services, Picow Farm Depot, Picow Farm Road, Runcorn, WA7 4UB (tel 01928 583900)

Halton BC Parks & Countryside Division, Town Hall, Heath Road, Runcorn, WA7 5TD (tel 0151 424 2061)

The Mersey Forest, Risley Moss, Ordnance Avenue, Birchwood, Warrington, WA3 6QX (tel 01925 816217)

The Norton Priory Museum Trust, Tudor Road, Manor Park, Runcorn, WA7 1SX (tel 01928 569895)

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