

Halton Borough Council

Core Strategy
Issues and Options Consultation
Document I – Issues Paper

Making it Happen ~
A Spatial Plan For Halton

Internal Partnership Consultation
19th May – 9th June 2006

Operational Director
Environmental and Regulatory Services
Halton Borough Council

Rutland House
Halton Lea
Runcorn
WA7 2GW

Foreword

[Insert Picture of Cllr McDermott or Cllr Polhill]

This is your chance to have your say about shaping future development within Halton, through to 2021.

The Government has recently introduced major changes to the planning system. Halton Borough Council are now required to prepare a number of individual documents that together will contain the policies that will guide development at the local level. Together these documents will be known as the Halton Borough Local Development Framework or LDF. This framework is very important, as it will be used to assess planning applications and to allocate land for new development up to 2021. It will affect everyone who lives, works and visits the Borough.

This **Issues Paper** sets out the broad issues that planning policy within the Borough will need to help address, including those issues identified by the newly updated Community Strategy. The accompanying **Options Paper** establishes the role of planning policy in addressing these issues and the constraints that have to be taken into account when considering possible options. Both documents should be read together to allow a broad understanding of the spatial planning issues and options for Halton. If you wish to comment on either document please complete the relevant sections within the Options Paper, and return it before the end of the consultation period set out overleaf. In addition, the development of options and policies will be subject to a **Sustainability Appraisal (SA)**, the Scoping Report for the SA has already been produced. An interim SA has been published alongside the Issues and Options Papers which makes an initial comparison of the of the broad spatial options discussed in the Options Paper.

Both this Issues Paper and the Options Paper, and information relating to the SA are available on the Borough Council's website, or as paper copies from Runcorn Town Hall; Widnes, Halton Lea & Ditton libraries; Runcorn Tourist Information Centre; and Halton Lea & Widnes Halton Direct Links.

Cllr name

Cllr post

How to get involved

Comments should be made using the **Options Paper**, which accompanies this document. Please submit your comments and suggestions during the consultation period, which runs from Thursday 27th July until 5.00 pm on Thursday 7th September 2006.

What will happen to your comments?

Your views will be reported to Council Members and will be taken into consideration when developing the best options to take forward in the Core Strategy, the next stage of which will be the publication of preferred policies later in the year.

There are a number of ways in which you can get in touch with us. You can send your completed Options Paper and any additional comments to:

By Post:

Spatial Planning – Issues and Options
Consultation
Environmental and Regulatory Services,
Halton Borough Council,
Rutland House,
Halton Lea,
Runcorn,
WA7 2GW

By Email:

spatial.planning@halton.gov.uk

On the Web:

An electronic version of this document is available from the Council's website at www.halton.gov.uk/spatialplanning

Further Information:

If you would like to discuss any matters relating to the Core Strategy consultation process, please call the Spatial Planning Team on 0151 907 8300.

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I Introduction

1.1 The Council has recently adopted its latest development plan, the Halton Unitary Development Plan (UDP), which guides development and is used to assess planning applications across the Borough. The UDP is considered to be generally up-to-date, with a sound evidence base, however because the Government has introduced changes to the planning system, it now needs to be reviewed and updated promptly and replaced by new Local Development Frameworks (LDF).

What is the Local Development Framework (LDF)?

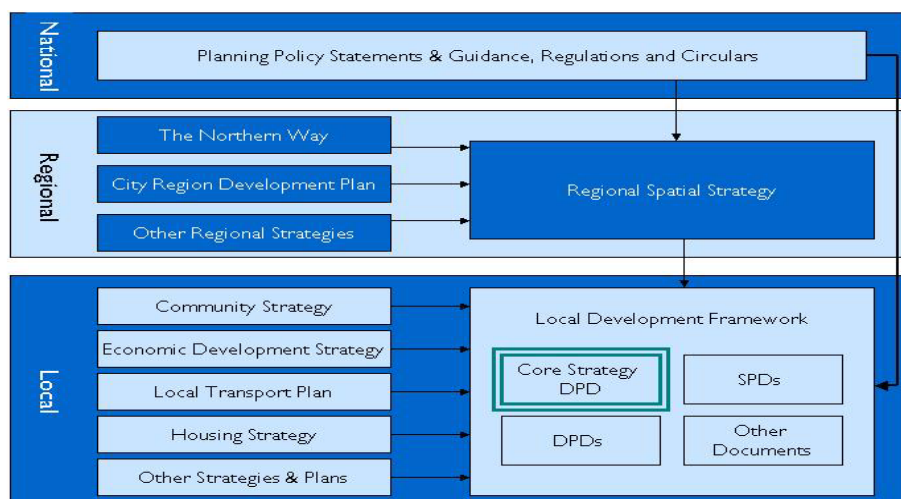
1.2 The Government has introduced major changes to the planning system replacing ‘old style’ development plans, which could take 5 or more years to prepare, with a system of smaller more focused documents that together will guide development at the local level. Together these documents will be known as the Local Development Framework (LDF).

1.3 Policies and proposals within these documents will eventually replace those in the adopted Halton UDP. The documents that will contain the statutory policies and proposals will be known as Development Plan Documents (DPDs). The Core Strategy will be the first of these documents. Further, more detailed planning advice, such as technical guidance relating to how to design shop fronts or advice relating to the development of a particular part of the Borough is predominantly contained in Supplementary Planning Document’s (SPDs). These SPD also form part of the LDF, but are not statutory documents.

1.4 One of the main aims of the LDF will be to assist in the delivery of ‘Making It Happen In Halton – A Community Strategy for a Sustainable Halton’, by setting out policies to guide decisions on planning applications, and making specific proposals for the use and development of land (for example by allocating land for housing, shops, schools, employment, etc).

1.5 The LDF must take account of and conform to national planning policy and the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), as well as important local strategies, plans and projects. Figure I, sets out the national, regional and local framework for the LDF and shows where the Core Strategy sits within that framework.

Figure I: Summary of International, National, Regional and Local context for the LDF & Core Strategy



What is the Core Strategy?

- 1.6 The Core Strategy is the main Development Plan Document (DPD) within the Local Development Framework (LDF). It sets out the vision, objectives and strategy for the spatial development of the Borough and provides the over-arching policy for the LDF. All subsequent DPDs and SPDs will therefore be guided by the over-arching policies that the Core Strategy sets, hence its importance, as is your chance to shape its content.
- 1.7 Details of other documents to be prepared as part of the LDF are set out in the Council's 'project plan' for the LDF - called the Local Development Scheme (LDS). The LDS is available on the Borough Council website or on request from the Spatial Planning Team.

What is Spatial Planning?

- 1.8 The new planning system requires Local Authorities to take a 'spatial' approach to planning policy to ensure the most efficient use of land by balancing competing social, environmental and economic priorities within the context of sustainable development. This goes beyond traditional land use planning to bring together and integrate policies for the development and use of land with other policies and programmes which influence the nature of places and how they function.

What is Sustainable Development?

- 1.9 The LDF is intended to balance environmental, economic and social needs and ensure a better quality of life for everyone, now and for future generations. This is known as sustainable development
- 1.10 A 'Sustainability Appraisal' must be undertaken on the Core Strategy during its production to ensure that it promotes sustainable development. A report setting out the proposed scope and extent of this SA was produced and consulted upon prior to this consultation stage. The Scoping Report has been used alongside the Community Strategy to help identify within this document the key issues and priorities that need to be addressed through the Core Strategy and other LDF documents. In addition an 'interim SA' has been produced to help compare how sustainable the different spatial approaches, set out in the Options Papers are. Copies of either the Core Strategy SA Scoping Report or the 'interim SA' can be found on the Council's website or on requested from the Spatial Planning Team.

About this Document

- 1.11 This Issues Paper forms the initial stage in the preparation of the Core Strategy. It is intended to generate discussion on the issues facing the Borough, and thereby inform the development of appropriate policies in the Core Strategy.
- 1.12 This Issues Paper starts by providing an explanation of the main elements of the National and Regional planning policy framework, to which planning policy in Halton must conform. The Paper then goes on to set the local framework, starting with issues relating to existing land allocations in the recently adopted Halton UDP, and also environmental designations such as protected habitats and the Green Belt. The local framework is continued by using the Community Strategy as a basis for looking at the issues affecting the Borough.
- 1.13 The Core Strategy Issues & Options Consultation: Document 2 – Options Paper accompanies this **Issues Paper**. The Options Paper takes the consultation process forward

by beginning to identify options for the planning policy that will contribute to addressing the issues identified within this document. Your views on what should be covered by these policies can be expressed in the Options Paper and returned to the Council so that your comments can be taken into account.

- 1.14 Once all comments have been received and the Issues and Options consultation has ended, your comments will be considered and reported to elected Council Members. What you tell us will help refine and shape a draft Core Strategy; containing preferred spatial planning policy options for Halton. These preferred policy options will be presented for another period of public consultation later in the year. Figure 2 summarises the process leading to the formal adoption of the Core Strategy.

Figure 2: Core Strategy Timetable



2 National and Regional Framework

What are we required to do?

- 2.1 All the documents forming the Local Development Framework (LDF) must be prepared in the context of national, regional and local policies, plans and strategies. Information about where the documents referred to in this section can be viewed can be found in Appendix I.

What is the National and International framework?

- 2.2 The International framework consists mainly of European Union Directives and Designations and various International Agreements and Conventions. One such convention affecting Halton is the RAMSAR International Treaty on the protection of wetlands to which the Mersey Estuary was added in December 1995.
- 2.3 The national framework is set by a combination of Planning Policy Guidance notes (PPGs), which are gradually being replaced by Planning Policy Statements (PPSs), regulations and planning circulars.

What does the National and International framework require of the LDF?

- 2.4 The policies developed as part of the LDF must be consistent with national planning policy on different aspects of spatial planning, including housing, transport and open space.
- 2.5 National Planning Policy Statement (PPS)1: Delivering Sustainable Development, sets out the Government's objective for the planning system to be a key means of delivering sustainable development in England PPS1 states that the Government is committed to:
 - Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone;
 - Effective protection of the environment;
 - Prudent use of natural resources; and
 - Maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth.

What is the Regional framework?

- 2.6 Regional spatial planning guidance is contained in the North West Plan. This plan now forms part of the Development Plan for Halton and is currently under review. The draft North West Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State in January 2006. It is expected that the plan will be adopted towards the end of 2007, following a formal public consultation stage and an Examination In Public conducted by a national government inspector.

What does the Regional framework require of the LDF?

- 2.7 The Core Strategy must be in general conformity with the North West Plan. It raises several issues that will need to be considered during the production of the LDF, the most significant of these are detailed below.

Halton's Sub-Region

- 2.8 In preparing the LDF it is important to understand how Halton relates to the sub-region. Halton is located between the Regional Centres of Manchester and Liverpool and is situated

within the Liverpool City Region along with Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral.

- 2.9 The Liverpool City Region is already established as an important driving force in the North of England's economy and as a strategic sea and air gateway to the European Union and beyond. The draft North West Plan indicates that within Halton, plans and strategies will be expected to promote economic development, urban renaissance and social inclusion that is complementary to the programmes in Liverpool City Centre and Inner Area.

Housing

- 2.10 Once adopted, the North West Plan will identify the number of dwellings that will need to be accommodated in the North West up until 2021. Individual districts will be allocated a share of the regional housing provision. The draft North West Plan currently indicates that Halton's should plan to deliver 500 new dwellings each year. This presently represents an increase on Halton's current annual requirement of 330 new dwellings annually, which is accommodated within the Adopted UDP.

Employment land

- 2.11 The draft North West Plan identifies the amount of land to be made available for employment development until 2021. Halton will be required to liaise with other authorities within Merseyside to deliver its allocated share of the regional employment land provision through the LDF. Due to the need to liaise with other local authorities, it is presently difficult to say how much land will need to be allocated in Halton for employment purposes.
- 2.12 In addition to the general employment land allocation, the draft North West Plan identifies Regionally Significant Economic Development Sites. The draft currently includes South East Halton –Daresbury International Science and Technology Park, and Widnes, with access to the West Coast Main Line – Ditton Strategic Rail Freight. Both of these sites are within Halton, and the LDF will need to safeguard and enhance the purposes they are allocated for.

Energy and Waste

- 2.13 The draft North West Plan acknowledges that the impacts of climate change are already evident and becoming more significant in the region, for instance it states the North West is experiencing hotter summers, increased winter rainfall, and growing incidences of severe weather conditions and sea level rises. Therefore Halton will be required to contribute to the minimisation of greenhouse gas emissions by promoting high standards of energy efficiency in developments, encouraging use of renewable energy, and reducing the need for transport.
- 2.14 In relation to energy production, the draft North West Plan requires that by 2010 at least 10% (rising to at least 15% by 2015 and at least 20% by 2020) of the electricity supplied in the North West should be provided from renewable sources. Therefore Halton will have to find appropriate locations, for renewable energy generation.
- 2.15 In respect of waste, the draft North West Plan requires that Halton, in collaboration with Warrington Council, will need to develop and enhance alternative handling methods such as composting, re-use, recycling or energy recovery and reduce reliance on land fill. Locations for additional facilities will therefore need to be identified to deal with the projected 6.5 million tonnes of municipal waste by 2020 plus the commercial waste stream.

Green Belt

2.16 The draft North West Plan specifies that there will be no review of Green Belt boundaries until after 2011. After 2011, the need for exceptional substantial strategic change to Green Belt should be investigated by strategic studies, undertaken by the NWRA, together with the relevant local authorities and other interested parties.

Regional Parks

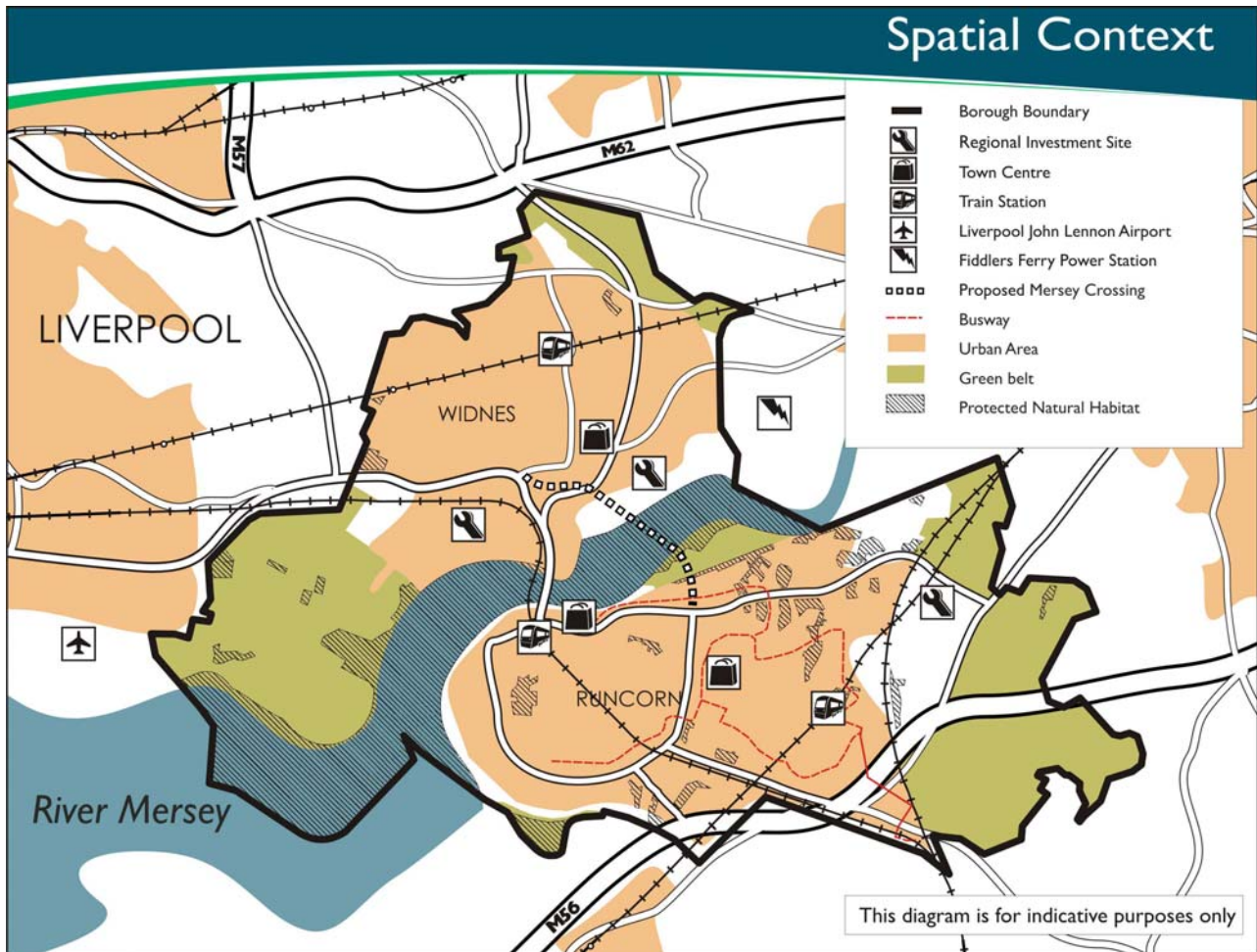
2.17 Halton is located at the convergence of the Mersey Basin Regional Park and North West Coast Regional Park. These aim to capitalise on the strengths of the North West coast, to provide high quality, easily accessible recreation, leisure and sporting opportunities. They aim to aid regeneration, increase employment and business activity and to conserve the landscape close to where people live, including its character, biodiversity and heritage assets.

3 Local Framework

Existing Local Policy Context

- 3.1 The context for the LDF will largely be set by the recently adopted Halton UDP, which itself developed the approach from the previous Local Plan. The UDP has allocated sites for future housing and employment development until 2016. The LDF and, in particular, the Core Strategy will need to take some of these sites into consideration when reviewing and formulating new policies.
- 3.2 Sites for future housing development were allocated, and split into three phases covering the periods to 2007, 2011 and 2016 (subject to monitoring).
- 3.3 The Sandymoor development area is an eastward urban extension of Runcorn covered by UDP Phase 2 allocations (2007-11). These sites benefit from permission under the New Towns Act and many also have outstanding planning permissions. These current permissions will need to be acknowledged in the Core Strategy housing policies and in the subsequent Housing DPD. This will ensure that Sandymoor is fully developed as the sustainable neighbourhood originally envisaged.
- 3.4 UDP Phase 3 sites, programmed for release for development from 2011-2016 include land to the north of Widnes and further eastward expansion of Runcorn. These sites, although allocated in the UDP, do not yet benefit from planning permission. The role of these areas and a range of housing scenarios are considered in the accompanying Options Paper.
- 3.5 In respect of employment land, the UDP allocates a range of greenfield and brownfield sites for new development. Some have already been committed. These allocations include land which contributes to the Regionally Significant Economic Development Sites, identified in the draft North West Plan. Therefore some existing allocations will need to be continued, other uncommitted (without planning permission) sites will be considered in the context of the spatial development options, set out in Options Paper. Additionally, Government advice concerning land for housing states that existing employment sites and allocations should be reappraised to confirm that employment is the most suitable use.
- 3.6 In addition to these allocations there are also a number of other local policy contexts, such as designated and protected landscapes and habitats. These are summarised in figure 3. Also identified on this map are other important factors, which together creates a summary of the spatial context for considering planning policy options against.

Figure 3: Spatial Context Map



Spatial Realisation of the Community Strategy

3.7 A key aim of the LDF and the Core Strategy will be to contribute towards the spatial realisation of the Community Strategy. The Community Strategy vision is:

‘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; opportunity for all to fulfil their potential; greater wealth and equality; and, safer, stronger and more attractive neighbourhoods.’

3.8 In order to achieve this vision, the aims and objectives of the Community Strategy have been divided into five key priorities:

- A Healthy Halton;
- Halton’s Urban Renewal;
- Halton’s Children and Young People;
- Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton; and
- A Safer Halton.

3.9 Section 4 of this document - The Issues Paper - sets out the 5 key priorities from the Community Strategy and introduces the areas where spatial planning may be able to make a contribution to the realisation of the vision and key aims from that document. A further

section considers other important issues that cannot be placed in any one of the five proceeding priorities.

- 3.10 For each priority, an overview of key issues is provided, including details about the current local situation (using information, taken from sources such as the 2001 Census and information used in the Sustainability Appraisal baseline data) and what the people of Halton have told us about how this affects their areas and impacts upon their lives (taken from a Halton Strategic Partnership residents survey conducted in 2005). This public feedback was conducted through telephone surveys and focus groups. The final section of each theme begins to explore what spatial planning can do to influence the delivery of that priority.

Community Strategy and Planning – Creating the linkages

- 3.11 The Community Strategy will be implemented by a range of partner organisations and therefore groups its aims and proposed actions under broad, topic based themes. Spatial Planning and the allocation and control of land use do not fit easily under such themes.
- 3.12 Document 2, the **Options Paper** sets out how we intend to take forward the aims of the Community Strategy in spatial planning terms. Initially these will be developed in the Core Strategy which will in turn be supplemented by a series of topic based Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). A full list of the documents we intend to produce and the timetable for their production is contained in the Local Development Scheme which can be found on the Council's website or on requested from the Spatial Planning Team.
- 3.13 The Core Strategy will be developed around the following series of spatial planning themes:
- A decent home;
 - A balanced and prosperous economy;
 - Vital and vibrant town centres;
 - Well deigned places and spaces;
 - A cleaner, safer and greener environment;
 - An effective and efficient transport network; and
 - Social infrastructure.
- 3.14 Within the 'what spatial planning can do' section for each priority, links are included to the relevant spatial planning theme (set out above) of the **Options Paper**. If you are interested in a particular issue just use the '[GO TO >](#)' box, which will direct you to the appropriate section of the **Options Paper** where you will be able to make comments about how you think spatial planning should influence that issue. Where the Community Strategy priority can be influenced by more than one planning 'theme' there will be pointers to a number of different sections in the **Options Paper**.

4 Community Strategy Themes

A Healthy Halton

Community Strategy aim:

To create a healthier community and work to promote well-being ~ a positive experience of life with good health (not simply an absence of disease), and a place where people are encouraged to care and look after themselves.

What are the issues?

- 4.1 Halton has a comparatively young population structure, largely as a legacy of the arrival of young families with the development of Runcorn new town. However, first generation new-town residents are getting older and the proportion aged 65+ is set to increase by over 40% by 2021, with projected reductions in numbers aged under 20 of 12% and of those aged 30~44 of 15%.
- 4.2 Ill health, disability and reduced life expectancy are major problems in Halton Borough. On average, men can expect to live 2 years less than the average for England, women 2½ years less and over 1 in 5 residents are living with a disability or long-term illness.
- 4.3 Unemployment and workless households are significant problems in many parts of the borough. There is a very strong correlation between deprivation, lifestyle and poor health. Either through lack of choice or low aspirations, many residents have lifestyles that actively contribute to adverse health outcomes.
- 4.4 Environment, fear of crime, access to services and access to friends / family and other social interaction can also affect a person's feeling of well-being, their self-esteem, happiness and ultimately their health.
- 4.5 Delivery of health services within Halton is undergoing structural changes, due to a move to more localised delivery of care within the NHS. This may lead to demands for new or enlarged health care facilities in certain locations whilst other existing sites may reduce in size.

Local Situation

- More than half of the adult population in Halton is overweight.
- Almost a third of residents smoke.
- A quarter of men drink excessively (over 21 units p.w.). Deaths from liver disease and cirrhosis are almost 50% greater than the national average. For women it is over 70% greater.
- About half of residents take no vigorous exercise on an average weekday and on average take vigorous activity less than once a month or never. Women are less likely than men to take exercise.
- 32% of households report one or more member having a disability or Limiting Long Term Illness, with 1 in 10 households containing a wheelchair user.

- In many parts of the Borough the proportion of children living in households receiving means-tested benefits is among the highest in the country.
- 11% of children in Widnes, and 4% of children in Runcorn, live in houses with no central heating.
- In winter the death rate in Halton rises by twenty per cent.

What You Told Us

- Generally, residents appeared satisfied with access to services and amenities. The following proportions of residents found it ‘very easy’ or ‘fairly easy’ to access services:
 - 83% for a GP;
 - 87% for a chemist / pharmacy;
 - 79% for a shop selling fresh fruit and vegetables;
 - 72% for a sports and leisure centre;
 - 54% for a cultural or recreational facility (cinema or theatre); and
 - 84% for parks and open spaces.
- “Improve local parks and make them safer and tidier” was thought to be most effective in improving the environment by 15% of residents. Other improvements suggested included:
 - Reduce pollution;
 - More facilities i.e. Shops, Pubs & clubs;
 - More parks, plant more trees;
 - Reduce anti-social behaviour;
 - Tidy up run down areas;
 - More traffic calming schemes;
 - Reduce traffic calming measures; and
 - Improve transport.

What Spatial Planning Can Do

- 4.6 Planning cannot compel people to lead healthy lifestyles, but it can seek to ensure that people enjoy a healthy and safe environment that provides equitable access to the social infrastructure and facilities to allow healthy living choices. [GO TO > Social Infrastructure](#)
- 4.7 Planning can help deliver better residential environments with access to open spaces and green corridors. These provide safe and attractive options for healthy transport (walking and cycling) as well as for recreation. [GO TO > Social Infrastructure & An Effective and Efficient Transport Network](#)
- 4.8 Planning can seek to help deliver special or adapted housing in association with Registered Social Landlords and others where there is an identified demand. [GO TO > A Decent Home](#)
- 4.9 Planning can seek to improve the image of the borough and provide land for new employment development to improve the local economy, increase job opportunities for local residents and tackle deprivation. [GO TO > A Balanced and Prosperous Economy](#)
- 4.10 Issues relating to improving opportunities and aspirations through supporting employment development and education are discussed further under the Community Strategy themes

“Halton’s Children and Young People” and Employment Learning and Skills” within this document.

Halton’s Urban Renewal

Community Strategy aim:

To transform the urban fabric and infrastructure, to develop exciting places and spaces that create a vibrant and accessible Borough that makes Halton a place where people are proud to live and see a promising future for themselves and their families.

What are the issues?

- 4.11 Halton’s industrial legacy continues to influence the way the Borough develops today. Modern day Halton inherited an unenviable legacy of contaminated land and potentially hazardous industrial processes some of which undermines the attractiveness of the Borough. Positive assets from early industrialisation, include the Sankey, Bridgewater and Manchester Ship Canals. These are forgotten gems that for too long development in Runcorn and Widnes have under-utilised and turned their backs on and only recently are providing an attractive backdrop to new development.
- 4.12 The recently approved new crossing of the River Mersey at Runcorn/Widnes, called “The Mersey Gateway” will provide a landmark and inspirational development that will remove a physical and psychological barrier to investment and increased prosperity.
- 4.13 There is real potential for Halton to embrace a culture of urban renaissance, to bring prosperity and activity to parts of the Borough that have otherwise been neglected. By reinvigorating our urban areas, and making them attractive places to live and work, it will reduce the need to develop outwards onto Halton’s surrounding countryside.
- 4.14 Promoting urban renewal is also concerned with encouraging sustainable and inclusive patterns of development with new housing and places to work, close to existing shops and services, and public transport opportunities. New retail and leisure opportunities can be accessibly located, which also reinforces the existing role of Halton’s town centres.
- 4.15 Promoting urban renewal and knitting Halton’s existing urban fabric back together is therefore key to greater prosperity and boosting the image of the Borough, and ultimately in making Halton a better place to live.

Local Situation

- At the time of the 2001 Census, 29% of households in Halton did not have access to a car. This is the highest proportion of non-car households amongst the Merseyside authorities. In some parts of the Borough the proportion of non-car households is even higher: Windmill Hill (48%), Castlefields (45%), Appleton (43%) and Riverside (38%).
- In 2004, Halton’s submission to the National Land Use Database identified 118 hectares of previously developed vacant land and buildings. Of this land, 69 hectares is incapable of beneficial use without treatment.

What You Told Us

- 82% of residents were satisfied with their local area as a place to live.

- 41% of residents felt that their local area has improved as a place to live over the preceding 2 years.
- Daresbury residents were the most satisfied with their area but complained about access to shops, health and education services.
- Over 60% who envisage moving home within the next 3 years expect to remain within Halton.
- 43% of households expecting to move to market housing within Halton, expressed a preference for the Upton Rocks, Birchfield, Farnworth, Halton View area. 23% expressed a preference for Old and Higher Runcorn and Weston Village / Point.
- Improving the natural and urban environment within their local area was identified by 22% of people as being an effective way of making a better place to live.

What Spatial Planning Can Do

4.16 Spatial planning has a key role to play in achieving urban renewal because it presents an opportunity to reshape and restructure the existing urban environment. Spatial planning can help take account of changing needs of people and businesses, such as by directing new uses to redundant land and buildings to stimulate activity and creating a new purpose for a place. Fundamentally, spatial planning can seek to ensure that new buildings are sustainable and adaptable to the changing needs of society to reduce the need for intervention in future. The ways that spatial planning can contribute include:

- Encouraging new housing, industrial and commercial development to be located on previously developed land. [GO TO > A Balanced and Prosperous Economy & A Decent Home](#)
- Balancing and linking the development of greenfield sites (such as existing countryside or open spaces) with the remediation of contaminated land for soft end uses (e.g. amenity open space). [GO TO > A Cleaner, Safer and Greener Environment](#)
- Seeking to ensure that retail, leisure and other complimentary uses are, wherever possible, located to reinforce the role of the Borough's existing town centres, as accessible places for shops, services and leisure opportunities. [GO TO > Vital and Vibrant Town Centres](#)
- Look for the highest quality of design in new development, which promotes existing urban areas as attractive places to live, work and visit. [GO TO > Well Designed Places and Spaces](#)

Halton's Children & Young People

Community Strategy Aim:

To ensure that Halton is a vibrant and thriving borough for children and young people where they have the opportunity to fulfil their potential and to prosper living in a quality environment within safe and attractive neighbourhoods.

What are the issues?

- 4.17 Development in early childhood, success while at school through educational and other achievement, and the acquisition of needed employable skills, are key determinants of individuals' life and employment chances. They have a major effect on people's ability to get a job, on the income they earn, on their aspirations, behaviour, health and longevity, and on the range of positive choices they are able to make in life.
- 4.18 As many factors affect the life and development of children and young people, other topic areas within this document will also need to be considered in relation to their impact on children & young people within the Borough;

Local Situation

- The 2001 Census in Halton showed that 22% of the total population were between the ages of 0-15 indicating Halton has a higher proportion of children and young people than the national average.
- Statistics also show that Halton has some of the most deprived wards in the country in terms of child poverty.
- The 2005 Open Space Assessment identified that although there are some deficiencies in the amount of children's play space in the Borough, the majority of the existing provision is geographically well distributed. Demand for additional play facilities has been evident in all consultations, and indicated that the quality of provision was more important than the quantity. This may imply that some play equipment is still in need of renovation.
- GCSE passes are 9 percentage points below the national average. The numbers of pupils with no passes is above the national average.
- In January 2005 there were 11,826 primary school places and there were 10,108 pupils. Thirteen Primary Schools had in excess of 25% surplus capacity.
- In January 2005 there were 8,715 secondary school places and there were 8,156 pupils. One Secondary School had in excess of 25% surplus capacity.

What You Told Us

- Residents stated the factor that would be most effective in making their local area a better place to live, is 'create opportunities for children and young people'.
- 34% of people surveyed believe that anti social behaviour in their local area is a big or fairly big problem.

- 84% of residents stated that they find it easy to gain access to open spaces. In addition, evidence from the Open Space Assessment 2005 shows there is room to improve the quality of many of the existing sites.
- 67% of people felt that there was “too little” provision of open space and recreational facilities for children & young people.
- College students commented that access to a healthy lifestyle can often be expensive when it comes to buying fresh fruit and vegetables and accessing gymnasiums.

What Spatial Planning Can Do

- 4.19 Provision of social infrastructure such as nurseries, education establishments, and youth and community facilities, will give children the necessary opportunities to learn valuable skills. [GO TO > Social Infrastructure](#)
- 4.20 Provision of opportunities for recreation, sport and play gives opportunities to maintain an active and healthy lifestyle. Planning can seek to ensure that new development includes appropriate provision for open space and recreational facilities either on site, or through alternative provision. [GO TO > Social Infrastructure & A Cleaner, Safer and Greener Environment](#)
- 4.21 Other planning issues such as providing safer environments for children & young people are considered in other strategic priorities, such as A Safer Halton.

Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

Community Strategy Aim:

To create an economically prosperous borough that encourages investment, entrepreneurship, enterprise and business growth, and improves the skills and employment prospects of our residents and workforce so that they can share in the all the opportunities Halton affords.

What are the Issues?

4.22 High economic inactivity rates across the Borough, with particular pockets of high deprivation and social exclusion, are widespread in the local economy. The Halton economy is heavily reliant on a small number of large employers across a narrow range of industry sectors such as industrial chemicals and is therefore vulnerable to changes and pressures in the global marketplace.

4.23 Changes to education provision and increased emphasis on the importance of lifelong learning have already seen the provision of new college facilities in Runcorn. Continuing changes may result in changing needs in primary, secondary and further education.

Local Situation

- Although Halton's economic situation is improving, there remains a high unemployment rate, particularly amongst the under 25's.
- There is a lack of suitable brownfield sites available for employment development within the Borough. This is particularly true for Widnes where there has been difficulty in attracting companies to employment sites that are often contaminated, slowing economic growth.
- Skill levels among the current workforce are low with a quarter of all workers lacking any qualification.
- Companies have expressed reluctance on having to depend on crossing the often heavily congested Silver Jubilee Bridge, which can be a disincentive to economic investment in Runcorn and Widnes.

What You Told Us

- A large percentage of economically inactive lone parents identified childcare issues as a barrier to employment.
- 29% of households in Runcorn and 19% of households in Widnes with at least one dependent child have no adult in employment.

What Spatial Planning Can Do

4.24 Spatial planning can help address this strategic priority by providing an adequate mix, quantity and quality of employment land and premises which could:

- Help meet business demand both through identifying new sites and where appropriate protecting existing employment land and buildings in both Widnes and Runcorn; [GO TO > A Balanced and Prosperous Economy](#)

- Entice a wider range of businesses to the area and support an entrepreneurial culture by seeking small and flexible business and office unit spaces which new businesses can grow within; [GO TO > A Balanced and Prosperous Economy](#)
- Provide opportunities for clustering of similar or complementary business uses (particularly in identified growth sectors) to help bolster and diversify the local economy; [GO TO > A Balanced and Prosperous Economy](#)
- Encourage development in locations that would minimise the length and number of trips for workers and visitors, and/or promotes access by means of travel other than the private car; and [GO TO > An Effective and Efficient Transport Network](#)
- Locate development requiring access mainly to trunk roads close to major routes, to avoid heavy vehicles negotiating local roads in or around residential areas. [GO TO > An Effective and Efficient Transport Network](#)

4.25 Spatial Planning can also help people gain the necessary skills to enhance their employment chances, by providing access to lifelong learning and employment opportunities such through provision of educational facilities and businesses in locations accessible to people who have not got access to a car. [GO TO > An Effective and Efficient Transport Network](#)

A Safer Halton

Community Strategy Aim:

To ensure pleasant and secure neighbourhood environments, with attractive, safe surroundings, good quality local amenities, and the ability of people to enjoy life where they live.

What are the issues?

- 4.26 Crime and fear of crime affect everybody's life. Creating a safe, secure and pleasant environment in Halton for people to live and work within is fundamental to success of the Borough. Section 17 of The Crime & Disorder Act (1998) places a duty on every Local Authority to do all that they reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in their area.
- 4.27 The phrase 'fear of crime' covers a whole variety of reactions to the prospect of becoming a victim of crime, ranging from mild anxiety to real dread. For example, it might mean being gripped by terror on hearing footsteps behind you as you walk down a dark alley late at night, or an occasional state of apprehension at the thought of being burgled.
- 4.28 The environment of a place, and the design of buildings and the spaces around them have a role to play in reducing opportunities for crime to be committed and also in reducing 'fear of crime'. Some features such as narrow alleyways and subways, blind corners and areas of overgrown shrubbery or poor street lighting contribute to fostering a 'fear of crime' amongst individuals.
- 4.29 The decline of a place is intrinsically linked to a reduced sense of civic pride and ownership; where crime and anti social behaviour take hold and fear of crime exists, people can become excluded from places and their own local area.
- 4.30 Delivery of Policing is undergoing significant change with Police Authorities being amalgamated, the introduction of Community Support Officers and centralised Custody Suites. This may lead to demands for new or enlarged policing facilities in certain locations whilst other existing sites may contract.

Local Situation

- Crime in Halton is actually low when compared to the other 318 Police Basic Command Units (police areas that generally relate to local authority boundaries). The main crime issues in Halton are vehicle crime, violent crime and anti social behaviour
- In terms of recorded crime, criminal damage accounts for around a quarter of total recorded crime over the last three years. Added to this youth annoyance accounts for a large proportion of incidents reported to the Police. Burglary remains low and has continued to fall over the last three years
- Fear of crime remains high in Halton. It is difficult to assess and there is little data currently available to how this affects communities. It is a major concern according to every survey of Halton residents.

What You Told Us

- 93% of residents felt either 'very safe' or 'fairly safe' when outside in their local area during the day, falling to 55% after dark. Castlefields residents felt the least safe.

- 29% of residents said they felt unsafe in their local area after dark.
- 33.6% of residents perceived anti social behaviour as a problem in their local area.

What Spatial Planning Can Do

4.31 Spatial planning can help achieve a safer Halton by:

- Seeking to create better, more sustainable neighbourhoods, that are well designed, well built, capable of being well maintained and valued by the people who live in them. [GO TO > Well Designed Places and Spaces](#)
- Designing places that help to reduce crime, the fear of crime and anti social behaviour. This would include encouraging natural surveillance through promoting activity and overlooking onto streets (Design is addressed as a cross cutting issue within this document). [GO TO > Well Designed Places and Spaces](#)
- Making certain that no planning decisions result in a detriment to wider community safety, by having the necessary policies in place to ensure that the local police and community safety officers, and the local community are consulted and any concerns taken into account. [GO TO > Well Designed Places and Spaces](#)

Cross Cutting Issues

4.32 There are a number issues raised in the Community Strategy that cut-across two or more of the Strategy's 5 key themes.

Promoting Quality of Design

What are the issues?

4.33 The design of buildings and the spaces around them is critical to the success of places and the people who use them. Design is about creating a place fit for its purpose. Society should not be let down by the design of places.

4.34 The design of places impacts in some way upon all 5 of the strategic priorities in the Community Strategy. For instance, design can contribute to making Halton safer by reducing opportunities for crime to occur; design can help make Halton healthier by encourage people to walk rather than drive; design can contribute to economic prosperity by improving the image and perceptions of an area.

4.35 Design can contribute to achieving the aims of sustainable development, such as by designing buildings that:

- Minimise energy and water usage;
- Make the best use of land;
- Incorporate renewable energy production;
- Are flexible and adaptable for societies changing needs; and
- Respond to their context and location, and fit in with their surroundings.

Local Situation

- There are 122 Listed Building within Halton and 10 Conservation Areas. The latter cover 93 hectares and contain 568 properties.
- Parts of Halton have been blighted by a legacy of poor design, most notably in Runcorn where the New Town indulged in novel layouts, construction methods and building designs. Some of these elements have been successful (e.g. the busway / expressway network) and others less so (Southgate / Castlefields etc).
- Halton is one of the most urbanised authorities in the North West.
- 2,555 Ha. representing 28% of the borough's land area is designated greenbelt.
- 1,604 Ha., 18% of the borough is currently designated as urban greenspace.
- 1,207 Ha. (13%) of the borough is shown as being primarily residential on the UDP Proposals Map with 693 Ha. (8%) being primarily employment.
- 171 Ha. (2%) of the borough is identified as previously developed land with redevelopment potential, of which 21 Ha. (0.2%) is considered suitable for housing.

What you told us

- Improving the natural and urban environment within their local area was identified by 22% of people as being an effective way of making a better place to live.

What Spatial Planning Can Do

4.36 Spatial planning can help improve quality of design in Halton by:

- Ensuring that development makes the best use of land and accessible locations, by being of an appropriate density. [GO TO > Well Designed Places and Spaces](#)
- Seeking the use of quality materials in all new development that responds to the character and identity of their surroundings and reduce environmental impact such as through energy/water conservation and efficiency. [GO TO > Well Designed Places and Spaces](#)
- Create places with good quality public and open spaces, such as residential streets which create a safe and inviting environment, where people will want to live now and in the future. [GO TO > Well Designed Places and Spaces & Social Infrastructure](#)

Sustainable Transport Provision

What are the issues?

4.37 Transport is key to the quality of people's lives and cuts across the five strategic priorities identified in the Community Strategy. The ability of people to access places of work, learning, health care, shopping, leisure and exercise, and other opportunities significantly impacts on their quality of life and life chances. Transport also impacts on air quality and can contribute to climate change.

4.38 Improved accessibility can encourage participation and retention in education, reduce inequalities in health, and help people move from welfare into work.

4.39 The Council's Local Transport Plan (LTP) 2006/07 – 2010/11 is structured around four priorities agreed with Central Government:

- Tackling Congestion;
- Delivering Accessibility;
- Safer Roads; and
- Better Air Quality.

4.40 It aims to deliver a smart, sustainable, inclusive and accessible transport system and infrastructure that seeks to improve the quality of life for people living in Halton by encouraging economic growth and regeneration, and the protection and enhancement of the historic, natural and human environment.

Local Situation

4.41 The biggest congestion problems in the Borough occur on the approaches to the Silver Jubilee Bridge with up to 90,000 vehicles crossing the bridge each working day. This bottleneck in the strategic highway network stands in the way of economic development, and hinders the development of an integrated transport system that meets the travel needs

of the Borough's residents, businesses and visitors. The recent announcement of agreed funding for the Mersey Gateway paves the way for the construction of the much-needed new crossing, which should generate substantial benefits for Halton, and the economy of the whole sub-region.

- 4.42 Halton has made substantial progress in reducing casualties on our roads. Particular initiatives have been focused on reducing child pedestrian accidents, which have a strong correlation to deprivation (child accidents being 5 times more prevalent in areas of high deprivation).
- 4.43 There are known linkages between high levels of air pollution and people's health. A study and extensive modelling of pollution in the Borough has shown that pollution levels are currently within acceptable air quality standards.

What you told us

- Good transport links and public transport links (bus and rail) are among the reasons quoted for where you have chosen to live.
- Most residents felt they had 'very easy' or 'fairly easy' access to services and amenities.
- Suggested transport measures included:
 - Improve road maintenance;
 - Improve street lighting;
 - More traffic calming schemes;
 - Reduce traffic calming measures;
 - Better transport of students;
 - Improve parking;
 - Improve transport; and
 - Build a bridge.

What Spatial Planning Can Do

- 4.44 In partnership with the Local Highways Authority, planning can help ensure that new developments are:
- Designed and completed to ensure highway safety and the efficient operation of the transport network; [GO TO > An Effective and Efficient Transport Network](#)
 - Includes facilities for walking and cycling, such as by providing secure cycle parking as part of a commercial development, as well as for private cars and public transport; [GO TO > An Effective and Efficient Transport Network](#)
 - The protection of key transport corridors and facilities, such as the Runcorn Busway, green corridors and key railway infrastructure. [GO TO > An Effective and Efficient Transport Network](#)
- 4.45 Another way Planning can encourage sustainable transport, is by locating developments such as shops, libraries and leisure facilities in accessible places you can walk, cycle or get the bus to, such as Halton's town centres. [GO TO > An Effective and Efficient Transport Network & Vital and Vibrant Town Centres](#)

Town Centres and Shopping

What are the Issues?

- 4.46 Halton's three town centres (Widnes, Halton Lea and Runcorn 'Old Town') are the very heart of the communities that they serve. Traditionally they are hubs of activity throughout the day and into the evening, as places where people can shop, work, access services and leisure opportunities.
- 4.47 The strength, vitality and vibrancy of these town centres within the Borough can therefore impact, in many different ways, on the strategic priorities of the Community Strategy and quality of life of people within the Borough.
- 4.48 The town centres are important sources of employment with over 2,300 directly employed in retail within them, over 500 employed in leisure including food and drink and approximately 2,000 in office based occupations.
- 4.49 Halton's Town Centres are not shown on Draft RSS's list of centres identified as the primary focus for future growth of retail shopping in the region. However this does not preclude investment to meet local shopping needs, or for commercial and residential development, particularly where this will assist in the regeneration of the centre or the wider area.
- 4.50 Each centre has good existing public transport links and is in close proximity to surrounding residential areas, and is therefore largely accessible to people by means other than the private car. Town centres can contribute to reducing social exclusion by being places where people can conduct their daily lives. This is particularly important in some areas of Halton where car ownership is relatively low.
- 4.51 Like town centres, neighbourhood centres, provide focal points within residential areas where people can meet, access services (such as primary health care and a post office) and do 'top up' shopping for daily necessities. They contribute to making the Borough's residential neighbourhoods sustainable, providing shops and services in accessible locations. For people with restricted travel opportunities, such as the elderly, local centres can play an essential function in their lives.
- 4.52 It is therefore crucial to the success of the Borough that the role of town centres and neighbourhood centres are safeguarded and enhanced.

Local Situation

- Survey work undertaken in 2005 revealed that there were 43 vacant shop units in Widnes (out of 332), 41 in Halton Lea (out of 129) and 4 in Runcorn Old Town (out of 49).
- There are outstanding retail consents and fresh proposals for new retail development in both Widnes and Runcorn in both in-centre and out-of-centre locations. In Widnes these include developments at the Windmill Centre and for a new DIY store and in Runcorn for developments at Halton Lea / Trident Retail Park and at the Bridge Retail Park to the south of Runcorn Old Town.
- There are currently 33 neighbourhood centres in Halton; additionally there are two proposed centres to serve new communities at Upton Rocks, Widnes, and Sandymoor, Runcorn.

What You Told Us

- 99% of respondents to a town centres users survey in 2003 felt that it was either 'very easy' or 'fairly easy' to find their way around Halton's town centres.
- 17% of respondents to the 'consulting the communities' survey in 2005 stated that it was either 'very difficult' or 'fairly difficult' to access a shop selling fresh fruit and vegetables from their homes.

What Spatial Planning Can Do

4.53 Planning can help safeguard and strengthen the role of town and neighbourhood centres in Halton by:

- Enabling individual town and neighbourhood centres to prosper without damaging the health of any other; [GO TO > Vital and Vibrant Town Centres](#)
- Co-ordinate public and private investment decisions through the identification of sites for future development; and [GO TO > Vital and Vibrant Town Centres](#)
- Ensure the highest standard of design and architecture within each town centre to create safe and attractive environments for people shop, live and work. [GO TO > Well Designed Places and Spaces](#)

Pollution

What are the issues?

- 4.54 Pollution can directly impact on people's health. Airborne pollution in particular can exacerbate health problems for people with pre-existing respiratory conditions and may lead to an increased incidence of hospital admissions.
- 4.55 Indirectly, pollution can have a negative impact on the image and attractiveness of an area and act as a deterrent to both inward investment and in-migration.
- 4.56 Pollution and potential nuisance are not restricted to smells and odours. Noise, vibration and even light sources can equally be considered to be pollution.

Local Situation

- Pre-existing pollution in the form of land contamination is a particular issue for large areas of Halton. The Borough's history as the birthplace of the modern chemical industry has left a legacy of many highly contaminated sites.
- A study and extensive modelling of pollution in the Borough has shown that air pollution levels are currently within acceptable quality standards.
- A study by Lancaster University in 2003 failed to find a causal link between Halton's industrial legacy of contaminated land and existing pollution and the Borough's poor records for health and mortality.

- The same study estimated that 15% of the land in Halton is potentially contaminated.

What you told us

4.57 Measures identified by Halton’s residents to improve their local areas included:

- Reducing pollution;
- Reducing traffic congestion; and
- There was a particular concern about the “smell” of the air, and potential impacts on health from this, this was particularly identified as a problem by resident who live on the northern bank of the River Mersey.

What Spatial Planning Can Do

4.58 Working together with other agencies with responsibility for environmental matters, planning can:

- Seek to ensure that all developments are designed and built to the proper standards to minimise risk of pollution to the environment; [GO TO > Well Designed Places and Spaces](#)
- Resist development proposals that would lead to an unacceptable increase in traffic congestion and seek provision of mitigation measures as necessary; [GO TO > An Effective and Efficient Transport Network](#)
- Encourage the reuse and redevelopment of previously developed land, including potentially contaminated land (subject to appropriate investigation and remediation); and [GO TO > Well Designed Places and Spaces, A Decent Home & A Balanced and Prosperous Economy](#)
- Balance and link the development of greenfield sites, such as existing countryside or open spaces with the remediation of contaminated land for soft end uses, such as for amenity open space, to compensate for the loss of greenfield sites to development. [GO TO > A Cleaner, Safer and Greener Environment](#)

Waste

What are the issues?

4.59 The National Waste Strategy and various European Directives set out the priorities for dealing with waste in the form of a hierarchy of preferred methods of handling:

- Minimise waste production
- Reuse
- Recycle
- Compost
- Energy Recovery
- Disposal (Landfill)

- Disposal (Land-raise)

4.60 The national waste Strategy states that energy recovery should only be considered where re-use, recycling and composting are not appropriate. Disposal should only be considered if none of the former options are viable and land-raise should be discouraged and considered as the very last resort.

4.61 Other key principals regarding the handling of waste are the:

- Best Practicable Environmental Option (BPEO); and
- Proximity Principal

4.62 The former states that waste should be dealt with in the way which has the least environmental impact (guided by the principles of the Waste Hierarchy), whilst the latter states that waste should be dealt with as near as possible to the point of production to minimise the environmental impact of transporting waste.

Local Situation

- 83% of Halton's municipal waste goes to land-raise at Arpley Tip in Warrington.
- 10% of Halton's municipal waste is recycled and 6% composted.
- On average each household in the North West throws out 1¼ tonnes of waste per year.
- Nationally, domestic waste is increasing by 3% per annum.

What you told us

4.63 Measures identified by Halton's residents to improve their local areas included:

- Recycling more; and
- Provide more recycling sites.

What Spatial Planning Can Do

4.64 There are a number of ways that spatial planning can assist in tackling the issue of waste, these include:

- Identifying sites for waste management facilities (waste transfer stations / public recycling collection centres etc) that may be required to delivery the Council's Waste Management Strategy. [GO TO > A Cleaner, Safer and Greener Environment](#)
- Ensuring that the design of future developments are able to accommodate likely requirements for waste collection and recycling such as providing facilities so that people can separate and store recycling at home. [GO TO > Well Designed Places and Spaces](#)

Appendices

Appendix I: Further Information

General Information on the Planning System

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

National Planning Framework

To access a downloadable copy of the Planning Policy Statements & Guidance, Regulations or Circulars which form the national framework for the LDF. Visit the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister website at www.odpm.gov.uk or for a hard copy contact the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister by telephone on 0870 1226 236.

Regional Planning Framework

To access a downloadable copy of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) or to find out more information about regional planning, visit the North West Regional Assembly (NWRA) website at: <http://rpg.nwra.gov.uk/planning/spatial.php> or for a hard copy contact the NWRA by telephone on 01942 737921.

Local Planning Framework

For further information on the local framework including: the Corporate Plan; the Local Transport Plan; the Housing Strategy and Halton: Gateway to Prosperity visit the Halton Borough Council website, at www.halton.gov.uk or contact the Council on 0151 907 8300.

The Community Strategy and the Safer Halton Partnership Strategy are both available for download on the Halton Strategic Partnership website at www.haltonpartnership.net or a hard copy can be obtained from the Partnership on 0151 424 2061 extension 1106.

