

Southern Widnes

Draft Supplementary Planning Document

Consultation Draft

**P. Watts
Operational Director – Environmental and Regulatory Services
Environment Directorate
Halton Borough Council
Rutland House
Halton Lea
Runcorn
Cheshire
WA7 2GW**

February 2009

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1. PURPOSE OF THE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

- 1.1 This document is a draft version of the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for Southern Widnes, situated within the Southern Widnes Regeneration Action Area as identified in the Saved Policies of the Halton Unitary Development Plan (UDP). It has been prepared for the purposes of public consultation and approved by Halton Borough Council's Executive Board Sub-Committee.
- 1.2 The document serves to give supplementary planning guidance to the existing policies set out in the Halton UDP. The UDP identifies Southern Widnes as one of six Action Areas in the borough of Halton that require significant development or redevelopment to secure their regeneration. The Action Area Policies identify appropriate land uses for each, and the principles of development that should be applied. However, these policies do not allocate individual sites for specific land-uses. The proposals set out within this SPD are therefore supplementary to the relevant saved UDP policies, and provide Halton Borough Council as the Local Planning Authority with greater detail and certainty in order to control and guide new development within the Action Area.
- 1.3 The SPD is being prepared under the provisions of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and in accordance with Planning Policy Statement 12: *Local Spatial Planning*. Before this SPD can be used with any weight for development control purposes, it must first be prepared in consultation with the general public, business and other interested parties, and their views should be taken into account before it is finalised. The draft SPD will then be the subject of a Council resolution to formally adopt it as a supplementary planning document.
- 1.4 The majority of the SPD boundary falls within the Southern Widnes Regeneration Action Area as identified within the Halton UDP (figure 1.1). Policies and proposals contained within this SPD however, relate to the totality of Southern Widnes and are not confined to the UDP-defined Action Area. The SPD boundary therefore incorporates additional land outside of the defined Southern Widnes Regeneration Action Area (figure 1.2). This wider land intake will provide for the comprehensive regeneration of Southern Widnes as opposed to piecemeal redevelopment.

Figure 1.1: Halton Council Regeneration Action Areas

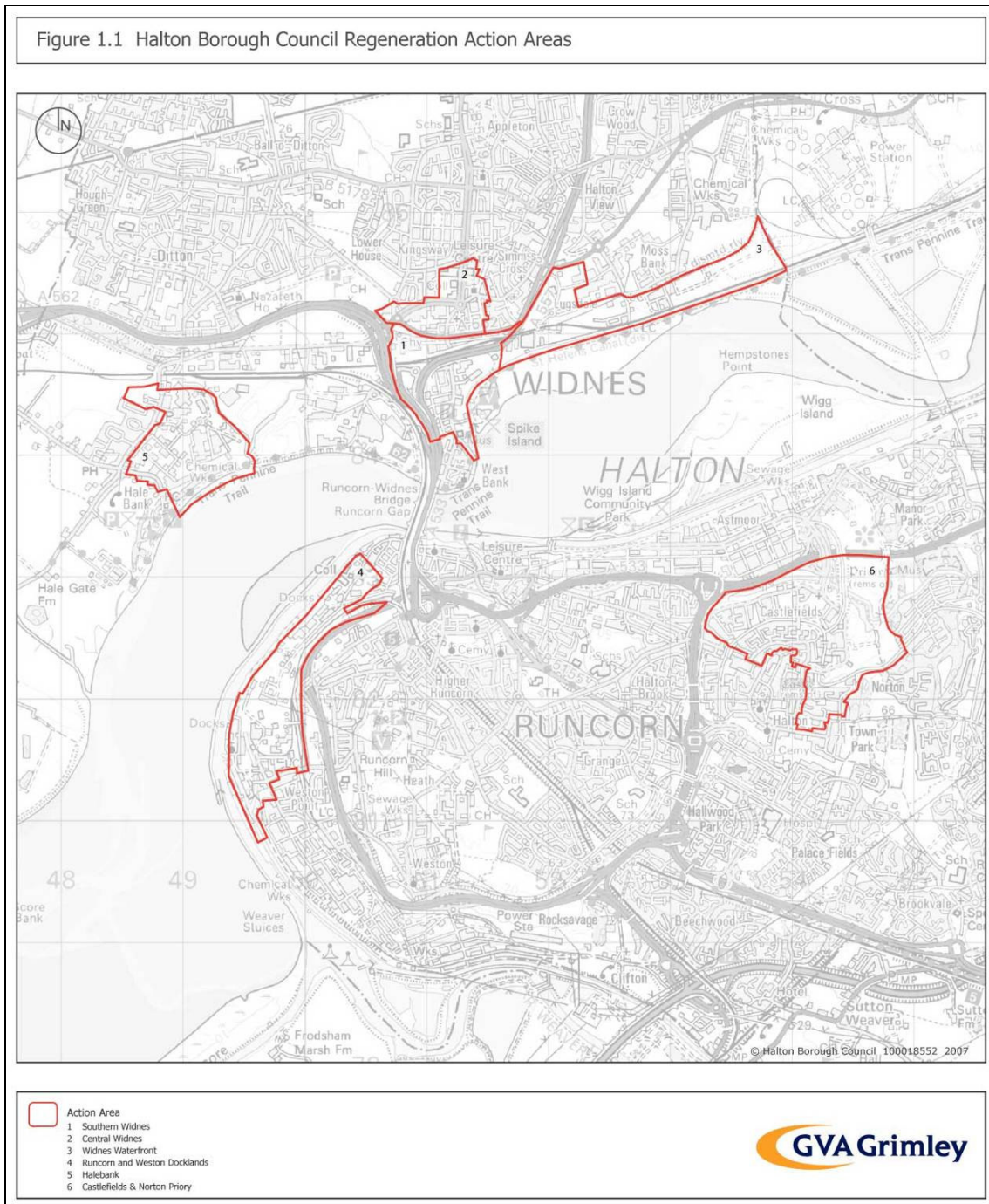
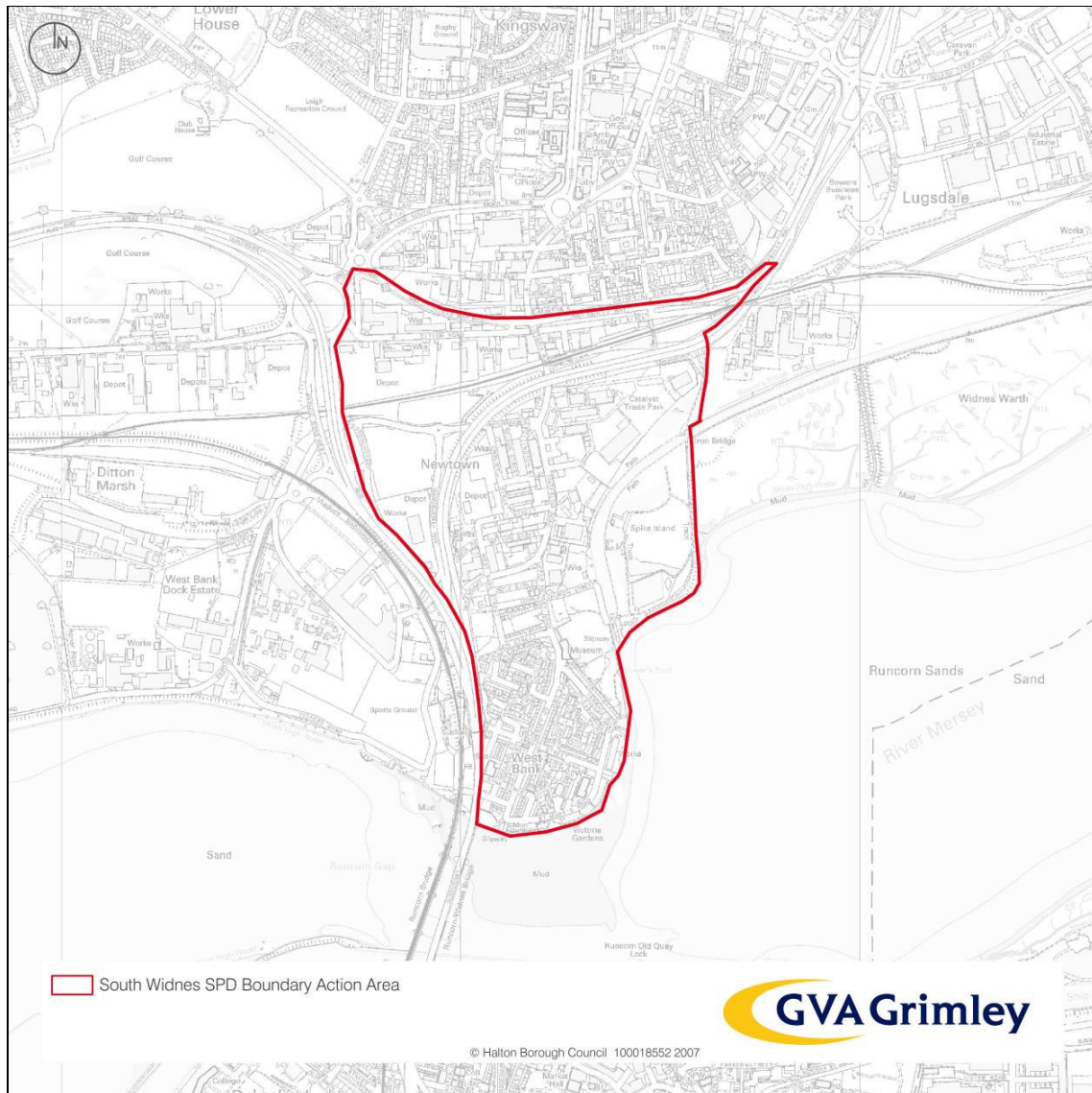


Figure 1.2: Southern Widnes Regeneration Action Area SPD Boundary



Purpose

- 1.5 The purpose of this SPD is to establish and identify potential development or improvement opportunities within Southern Widnes in order to help sustain the existing community and deliver regeneration benefits to area. The SPD also seeks to ensure a suitable standard of

development is achieved that will improve the visual and environmental quality of the area. The SPD will specifically lend itself to addressing the following opportunities:

- creating a 'sense of place';
- improving local accessibility; and
- improving sustainability.

1.6 This SPD will be used alongside the Saved Policies of the Halton UDP and other relevant documents within the Halton Local Development Framework, including other Council Supplementary Planning Documents to determine development proposals submitted to the Council for approval within the defined Southern Widnes area. It also forms the justification for the use of compulsory purchase powers to acquire land under section 226 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the Acquisition of Land Act 1981 to enable the regeneration of West Bank to take place.

1.7 The SPD is accompanied by a number of supporting documents, including a Sustainability Appraisal, an Appropriate Assessment (a requirement of the Habitats Directive) and a Statement of Consultation.

Structure of the Document

1.8 The following sections of this SPD are structured to establish the context the Southern Widnes area in light of existing national, regional and local planning policy, culminating in the identification of potential land-uses across the area, and the phased delivery of this new development. The delivery of the development opportunities identified within this SPD are supported by the following:

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

2. CONTEXT AND LOCATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Historical Context

- 2.1 The Cheshire Historic Towns Survey – Widnes Archaeological Assessment (2003) establishes a clear picture of Widnes' historical context. This traces back to 1849, the time at which the first chemical manufactory was constructed in Widnes by John Hutchinson. By the 1860s, the town had grown into an international centre for alkali production. Before industrial development altered the local landscape, Widnes largely comprised moor and marshland, and scattered farmsteads. With the decline of the chemical industry, Widnes lost its central function and its population actually declined between 1891 and 1901: its subsequent growth has been a steady process
- 2.2 Early in the 20th century there were a number of important civic developments within the Town. These included the laying out of Appleton Park and the Victoria Promenade, and the construction of the Transporter Bridge. Road access was also greatly improved with the replacement of the Transporter Bridge by a new road bridge in 1961: The Silver Jubilee Bridge.

Figure 2.1: Transporter Bridge



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

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- 2.3 Following the loss of the town's principal economic driver, the lack of a suitable replacement is still apparent within Widnes today, over 100 years later. The landscape now comprises large areas of derelict land, in particular within Southern Widnes.
- 2.4 In light of the town's industrial history, the *Area of Archaeological Potential* defined by the Cheshire Historic Towns Survey includes the West Bank Area of Widnes. This designation reflects the location of sites within this area previously occupied in advance of the industrialisation of the area during the 19th century. Further, the area contains a variety of industrial remains, evidence for which survives both above and below ground.
- 2.5 In 1974 the *Welcome to Widnes* project was launched. This was designed to enhance local environmental quality. This process has involved extensive programmes of reclamation within the town, and a significant amount of debris from former industrial uses has been cleared away. Concurrently, there have been attempts to provide an interpretation of the areas former industrial heritage through the creation of the Catalyst Museum and displays at Spike Island. The modern town of Widnes now covers a large area, incorporating a self-contained town centre.

Locational Characteristics

- 2.6 The Southern Widnes Area currently comprises a variety of different land uses, albeit predominantly including residential, commercial and industrial uses.
- 2.7 The character of Southern Widnes can be broken down into a number of discrete 'zones', which are largely defined by the infrastructure of roads, railway lines, and waterways, all of which dissect the area from Widnes Town Centre and other parts of the Borough.
- 2.8 The poor circulation and lack of permeability, which afflicts the area today, can be traced back to successive infrastructure projects, aimed at improving the wider transport network. Undoubtedly, these have enhanced the wider network and opened up specific sites but these improvements have often been at the expense of local permeability.
- 2.9 There are a number of man-made and natural barriers, which collectively dissect the area and isolate its community. The River Mersey creates a definitive edge forming the eastern boundary and a natural barrier to movement.
- 2.10 The estuary landscapes offer few access points for pedestrians and the disused Sankey Canal reinforces the separation between the river corridor and the residential hinterland.

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- 2.11 Spike Island is crossed by tracks which continue northwards threading their way through industrial estates and the railway line, which defines the northern perimeter of the area.
- 2.12 Links across the Mersey (at this location) are restricted to the Silver Jubilee Bridge, which runs between Runcorn and Widnes South predominantly serving the wider transport network. Local links are frustrated by the congestion arising from the volume of traffic running across the bridge resulting in poor inter-town connectivity.
- 2.13 The railway viaduct and the expressway (A533) run north to south, forming the western boundary.
- 2.14 Victoria Road forms a further division, running north to south, through the centre of the area. As a gateway to Widnes south (the junction of Ashley Way West and Victoria Road), it is unfortunately restricted and narrow in character. The feeling of separation between the town centre and Widnes South is further accentuated by Ashley Way West itself, which as a main vehicular thoroughfare presents a number of challenges for pedestrians and local traffic wishing to cross it. The A562 (Ashley Way) forms the northern boundary of the Widnes South area.
- 2.15 The freight line off the West Coast Main Line railway line runs parallel to the south reinforcing the divisions, which exist between Widnes Town Centre and Widnes South. The railway also passes over Victoria Road next to an overhead road bridge of the A568 Widnes Eastern Relief Road, which heads north through the area before turning eastwards at the railway forming yet another boundary along Victoria Road.
- 2.16 The location is dominated by vehicles and road infrastructure creating an environment, where pedestrians are only likely to use the route out of necessity (most likely preferring to use the route within day light hours). The current layout means that pedestrians are less likely to feel safe or comfortable walking along Victoria Road and this creates an 'obstacle' impeding free movement between West Bank and the town centre where inter-area visibility is reduced and the Waterloo Centre left located in a poor setting adjacent to the bridges.
- 2.17 Other site constraints comprise the following:
- **Contamination:** All of the sites identified as suitable for development in the Action Area are subject to varying degrees of land contamination due to the legacy of past chemical works on the site.
 - **Flood Risk:** The Flood map affecting this area is available on the Environment Agency's web site <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/>. This shows much of the area as lying

within Flood Zone 2 and 3 (medium and high probability of flooding). In accordance with the provisions of PPS25, flood risk must be taken into account at all stages of the planning process.

- **Sankey Canal:** British Waterways have a consultation zone 150 metres from the canal. They should be consulted on any applications involving work that affects the safety and structural integrity of the land and/or an increase in surface water discharge.

3. THE MERSEY GATEWAY PROJECT

- 3.1 A key characteristic of the local area is the Silver Jubilee Bridge (SJB), a Grade II listed structure linking the two towns of Runcorn and Widnes. However, the Bridge is now operating beyond its capacity at over 80,000 vehicles every weekday, significantly exceeding its original operational capacity, thus creating a congestion bottleneck during peak hours.
- 3.2 To relieve the increasing problem of congestion, Halton Borough Council is promoting the delivery of a New Mersey Gateway Crossing across the River Mersey, situated c. 1.8km upstream of the SJB¹.
- 3.3 The case for an additional crossing of the Mersey at Halton dates as far back as 1978, in which a number of options for route alignment have been considered culminating in the submission of a Major Scheme Appraisal to the Department for Transport in July 2003 as part of Halton's Local Transport Plan.
- 3.4 The vision for the Mersey Gateway is that it is '*more than just a bridge*' but the '*catalyst*' that will connect communities and lead to regeneration and investment throughout Halton, Cheshire, the Liverpool City Region and the North West.
- 3.5 The main objectives of the Mersey Gateway Project are to:
- relieve the congested Silver Jubilee Bridge, thereby removing the constraint on local and regional development and better provide for local traffic needs;
 - apply minimum toll charges to both Mersey Gateway and the Silver Jubilee Bridge consistent with the amount required to satisfy affordability constraints and to manage road travel demand to ensure the delivery of transport and environmental benefits by maintaining free flow traffic conditions on the MG and SJB;
 - improve accessibility in order to maximise local development and regional economic growth opportunities;
 - improve local air quality and enhance the general urban environment; and
 - improve public transport links across the river and to encourage the increased use of cycling and walking; and

¹ Halton Borough Council has also produced a Parking and Access Study (2008) for the authority inclusive of access plans to improve accessibility throughout Halton.

- restore effective network resilience for transport across the River Mersey.

3.6 The reconfiguration of public transport and sustainable movement modes will be achieved through the Mersey Gateway Sustainable Transport Strategy (STS). The principal objective of the STS is to *'identify and promote a network of high quality, safe, affordable, accessible and environmentally friendly travel measures for local residents, businesses and visitors to Halton, which support the key objectives of Halton's Local Transport Plan and the Mersey Gateway Project'*.

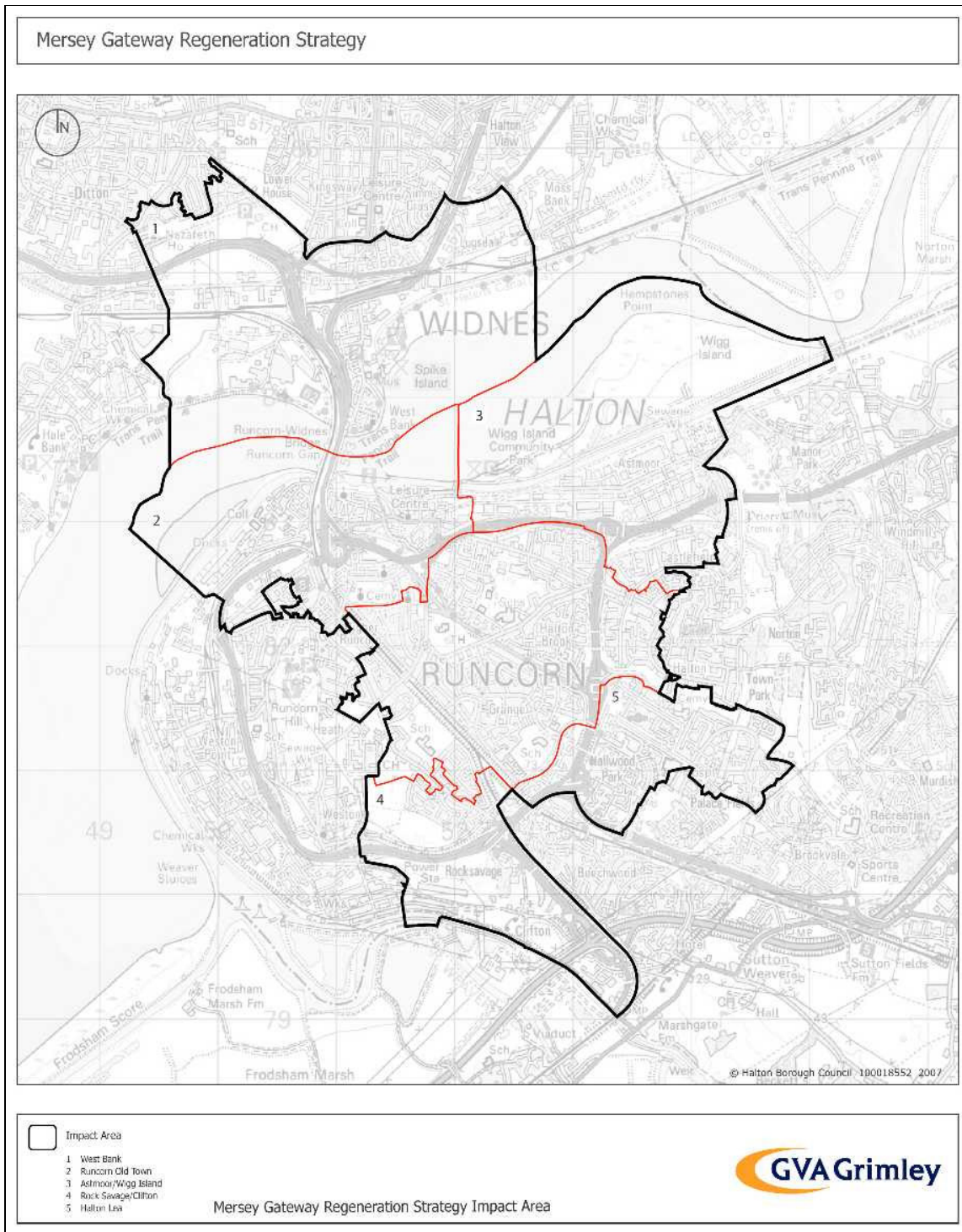
The Route

- 3.7 The scheme comprises 2.4 km of new dual 3-lane highway, a major river estuary crossing and several crossings of other obstacles (i.e. road, canals and a railway).
- 3.8 From the existing A562 Speke Road, the route would head eastwards towards a new junction called the Ditton Interchange, which would replace the Ditton roundabout. It would cross St Helens Canal, Widnes Warth Saltmarsh, Astmoor Saltmarsh and Wigg Island, as well as the Mersey Estuary itself, before turning southwards over the Manchester Ship Canal and across Astmoor Industrial Estate on the southern side of the river. It would connect into the existing road network in Runcorn by joining the Central Expressway and would join up with the M56 Motorway at Junction 12 to the south of Runcorn.
- 3.9 The Mersey Gateway Project would reduce the volume of traffic crossing the Silver Jubilee Bridge by directing the natural movement of through traffic over the new crossing, a process known as 'delinking' from the strategic highway network, which would require the physical process of removing unnecessary pieces of highway infrastructure.
- 3.10 The de-linking process would remove the direct links to the Silver Jubilee Bridge encouraging non-local traffic to use the Mersey Gateway, resulting in significantly less congestion and traffic flow and returning local highway infrastructure to local uses. This would ultimately improve local access to the Silver Jubilee Bridge from the local highway network and provide a local link across the river between Widnes and Runcorn.
- 3.11 The de-linking of redundant road infrastructure would also create new development opportunities and herein the chance to physically regenerate and improve a number of Halton's local centres and neighbourhoods. This includes a significant tract of land within both Southern Widnes and Runcorn Town Centre.

The Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy

- 3.12 The Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy (May, 2008) is an important element of the Mersey Gateway project. Based on the adopted vision of *'more than just a bridge'*, it is concerned with how the bridge can deliver a new context for place-shaping, set the agenda for a sustained economic, social, physical and environmental regeneration programme over the next 20 to 30 years, reconnect the communities of Runcorn and Widnes and facilitate regeneration and investment throughout Halton, Cheshire, the Liverpool City Region and the North West.
- 3.13 The Regeneration Strategy is **Bold**; it is **Challenging** and it will **Change Perceptions**:
- **Bold** – A visionary and ambitious holistic framework for investment in Halton within a detailed phased 20-year delivery horizon, setting the agenda for new capital and revenue investment based upon the opportunities that the Mersey Gateway will create;
 - **Challenging** – A plan for dealing with some of the most contaminated and constrained land in the country, as part of an ambitious place-shaping regeneration programme, based upon the opportunities that the Mersey Gateway will create;
 - **Changing Perceptions** – Setting a new agenda for investment in delivering a place that people can be proud of and that people aspire to live and work in, invest and spend time.
- 3.14 The Regeneration Strategy covers an area in excess of 20 square kilometres within the borough of Halton (figure 3.1). It includes an area of Widnes to the south of the town centre, to the east of the Mersey Multimodal Gateway and to the west of the Widnes Waterfront Economic Development Zone. The Regeneration Strategy also incorporates a larger expanse of Runcorn, including Runcorn Town Centre, Halton Lea Town Centre, Astmoor Industrial Estate, Rocksavage and Clifton and also includes the existing Silver Jubilee Bridge as well as the proposed route of the new Mersey Gateway.
- 3.15 The area was agreed with the Council to provide a statutory planning basis for policy development due to its influence on the Local Development Framework. Several key elements of this SPD have been informed by the Regeneration Strategy, building upon some of the principles, objectives and development opportunities in the document.

Figure 3.1: Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy – Area of Influence



4. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

4.1 This section of the SPD outlines the planning policy context applicable to all emerging development proposals within Southern Widnes. The Halton UDP should be read alongside this document as a whole as other generic policies, not addressed within this SPD, will also be of relevance in determining and future development proposals. This SPD should also be read in conjunction with other relevant Council planning policy and corporate documents.

4.2 Planning policy of relevance to new development within Southern Widnes is set out at three tiers; national; regional; and local. Those policies of direct relevance to the regeneration and redevelopment of Southern Widnes are discussed below:

National Policy

4.3 **Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1): *Delivering Sustainable Development***, states that planning policy should promote the delivery of high-quality design through new developments. It recognises the need to focus development that attracts a large number of people, especially retail, leisure and office development, in existing centres to promote their vitality and viability, social inclusion, and sustainable patterns of development.

4.4 **Planning Policy Statement: *Planning and Climate Change – Supplement to PPS1*** sets out the contribution of spatial planning to reducing emissions and stabilising climate change when providing for new development and infrastructure to serve the needs of communities. The guidance aims to:

- Ensure planning policy contributes towards the Government's Climate Change Programme;
- Deliver energy efficient homes;
- Deliver sustainable patterns of urban growth; and
- Secure developments that shape places resilient to the effects of climate change in ways consistent with social cohesion and inclusion.

4.5 Government policy on new retail development is set out within **PPS6: *Planning for Town Centres***. This establishes the key objective to promote the vitality and viability of town centres by virtue of:

- [Planning for the growth and development of existing centres;](#)

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- Promoting and enhancing existing centres, focusing development in such centres and encouraging a wide range of services in a good environment, accessible to all;
 - Delivering more sustainable patterns of development, ensuring that locations are fully exploited through high-density, mixed-use development; and
 - Promoting sustainable transport choices, including reducing the need to travel and providing viable alternatives to the private car.
- 4.6 To deliver the Government's key objectives, PPS6 requires proposals for town centre uses outside of existing centre's to demonstrate the need for development that it is of an appropriate scale, sequentially compliant and accessible, and will not unacceptably impact upon the vitality and viability of existing centre's.
- 4.7 **PPS9: *Biodiversity and Geological Conservation*** refers to the role of urban renaissance in enhancing biodiversity. The guidance specifically states that development proposals should;
- Promote sustainable development by ensuring that biological and geological diversity are conserved and enhanced as an integral part of social, environmental and economic development;
 - Conserve, enhance and restore the diversity of England's wildlife and geology by sustaining, and where possible improving, the quality and extent of natural habitat;
 - Enhance biodiversity in green spaces and among developments so that they are used by wildlife and valued by people, recognising that healthy functional ecosystems can contribute to a better quality of life and to people's sense of well-being; and
 - Ensure that developments take account of the role and value of biodiversity in supporting economic diversification and contributing to a high quality environment.
- 4.8 **PPS23: *Planning and Pollution Control*** seeks to ensure the sustainable and beneficial use of land. Within this aim, polluting activities that are necessary for wider social and economic reasons should be carefully sited and planned, and subject to such planning conditions so that their adverse effects are minimised and contained within acceptable limits.
- 4.9 PPS23 states that the planning system should focus on whether the development itself is an acceptable use of the land, and the impacts of those uses, rather than the control of processes or emissions.
- 4.10 The presence of ground contamination is considered to affect or restrict the beneficial use of land, though development can present an opportunity to deal with it. Where land is affected by

contamination, “development can provide an opportunity to address the problem for the benefit of the wider community and bring the land back into beneficial use.”

- 4.11 The Governments objectives for contaminated land are set out in DEFRA Circular 01/2006, *Contaminated Land*. These include:
- a. *to identify and remove unacceptable risks to human health and the environment;*
 - b. *to seek to bring damaged land back into beneficial use; and*
 - c. *to seek to ensure that the cost burdens faced by individuals companies and society as a whole are proportionate, manageable and economically sustainable.*
- 4.12 **PPS25: Development and Flood Risk** sees to ensure that flood risk is taken into account at all stages of the planning process to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding, and to direct development away from areas at highest risk. Where new development is, exceptionally, necessary in such areas the policy aims to make it safe without increasing flood risk elsewhere and where possible, reducing flood risk overall.
- 4.13 PPS25 requires Flood Risk Assessments to be carried out to the appropriate degree at all levels of the planning process. The guidance advises that landowners have the primary responsibility for safeguarding their land and other property against natural hazards such as flooding. Individual property owners and users are also responsible for managing the drainage of their land in such a way as to prevent, as far as is reasonably practicable, adverse impacts on neighbouring land. For development within Zones 2 and 3, PPS25 recommends the application of the Sequential and Exception Tests at all stages of the planning process with the aim to steer new development to areas of lower probability of flooding.

Regional Policy

- 4.14 Regional planning policy for the North West is set out in the North West of England Plan – Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021 (2008). RSS comprises several policies of direct relevance to the regeneration objectives of Southern Widnes, as follows:
- 4.15 **Policy DP1 (Spatial Principles)** sets out the key principles underpinning the RSS, namely:
- Promote sustainable communities;
 - Promote sustainable economic development;
 - Make the best use of existing resources and infrastructure;
 - Manage travel demand, reduce the need to travel, and increase accessibility;

- Marry opportunity and need;
- Promote environmental quality;
- Mainstreaming rural issues;
- Reduce emissions and adapt to climate change.

4.16 **Policy DP4 (Make the Best Use of Existing Resources and Infrastructure)** affords priority to developments in line with the regional and sub-regional spatial framework set out in Policy RDF1. Developments are required to conform to the following sequential approach:

- (i) using existing buildings and previously developed land;
- (ii) using other suitable infill opportunities; and
- (iii) the development of other land where this is well-located in relation to housing, jobs, other services and infrastructure.

4.17 The accompanying text advises that the re-use of disused land and buildings, where appropriate, is vital to enhancing the image of the North West.

4.18 **Policy RDF1 (Spatial Priorities)** affords priority for growth and development within the regional centres of Manchester and Liverpool, and then the inner areas surrounding these regional centres. Widnes is afforded third tier priority for growth and development, focused in and around its town centre.

4.19 **Policy LCR3 (Outer part of the Liverpool City Region)** refers to the outer part of the Liverpool City Region, beyond the city centre and its inner areas. The policy aims to focus economic development in towns and cities, including the district of Halton.

4.20 **Policy EM3 (Green Infrastructure)** requires schemes to incorporate environmental and socio-economic benefits by:

- Conserving and managing existing green infrastructure;
- Creating new green infrastructure; and
- Enhancing its functionality, quality, connectivity and accessibility.

Halton Unitary Development Plan (Saved Policies)

- 4.21 The Halton UDP was adopted in April 2005, and sets out the Council's planning policy framework for the social, economic and environmental improvements of the Borough, within both Runcorn and Widnes. Maybe add sentence about Saved Policies here? The UDP identifies six specific Action Areas which are considered to represent an important tool in support of the Council's priority of promoting urban renewal to encourage regeneration in a number of areas within the Borough. The principles of this are set out under the "Spatial Strategy" in Part One of the UDP.
- 4.22 The introductory section of the Regeneration Chapter of the UDP explicitly sets out the aims associated with designating Action Areas. It describes how the UDP, in identifying Regeneration Action Areas, can help to contribute to the regeneration of Halton Borough, in accordance with the Council's Regeneration Strategy (1998). The purpose of the Regeneration Strategy (1998) is:
- to build on strengths and embrace opportunities;
 - to drive forward the regeneration of the Borough;
 - to create a thriving area in which people will want to live, work and invest; and
 - to revitalise Halton.
- 4.23 The UDP seeks to implement these objectives as spatial policies and proposals, where appropriate.

Policy RG1 - Action Area 1 – Southern Widnes

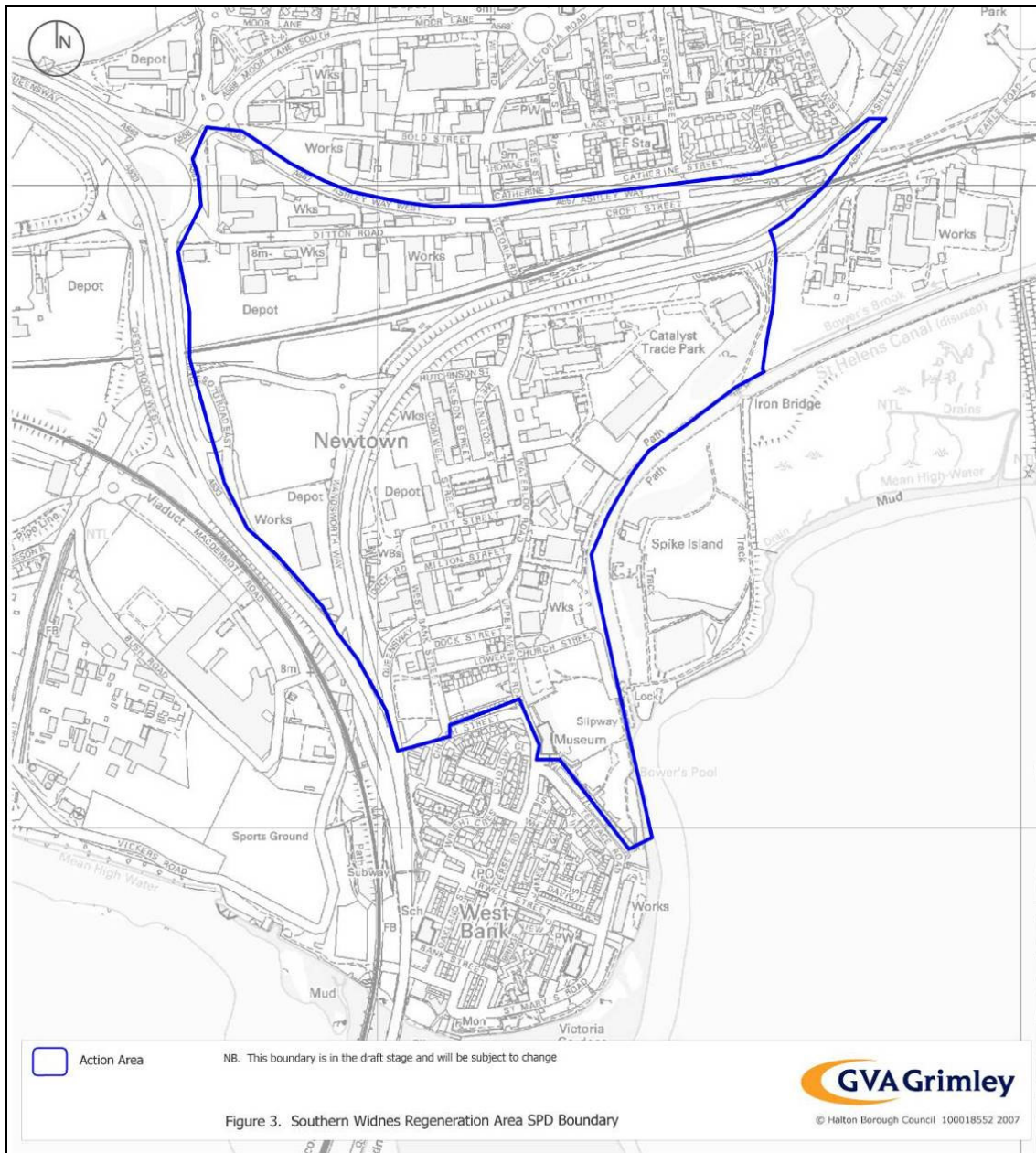
- 4.24 Policy RG1 of the Halton UDP identifies the Southern Widnes Action Area (amounting to c. 59.8ha) as being in need of regeneration, with preference for mixed-use development, including residential development. The policy identifies appropriate land uses as
- Business Use (B1);
 - General Industry (B2);
 - Residential (C2);
 - Dwelling houses (C3);
 - Community Facilities (D1);
 - Shops (A1);

- Food and Drink (A3);
- Recreation and Leisure (D2); and
- Open Space.

4.25 Policy RG1 advises that new forms of development should provide people with the opportunity to work within walking or cycling distance of home. The policy states that the car should be safely accommodated without “encouraging its use in preference to other means of transport.” The supporting text states that to support this objective, the layout of streets, buildings and spaces forming part of new development should aim to “minimise journeys by car and encourage movement by foot and bicycle.” The policy requires the “visual quality of the built and natural environment to be enhanced”, and the quality of design to “enhance its surroundings to raise the overall image and appearance of the area”.

4.26 The supporting text advises of the need for regeneration within the area, particularly investment in the current housing stock, redevelopment of derelict and contaminated sites, and overall improvements in the living and working environment. The supporting text advises that the aim of this Action Area is to provide a convenient, efficient and pleasing place within which people can live, work and pursue their daily lives.

Figure 3.1: Policy RG1 Boundary



- 4.27 In addition to policy RG1 (Figure 3.1), the Halton UDP includes the following policies that are relevant to the consideration of development proposals within the West Bank Action Area. These have been taken into account in the preparation of this guidance.

Policy BE3 - Environmental Priority Areas

- 4.28 This policy defines the two Environmental Priority Areas within the Borough, focused largely upon the waterfront / townscape fringes of Runcorn and Widnes. Within the Environmental Priority Areas, policy BE3 advises that proposals for development will be:

- i. Expected to be of a quality of design that enhances the quality and appearance of the area; and
- ii. Development, visible from main transport routes, and of a high quality in terms of landscape, boundary treatments and facing materials.

- 4.29 West Bank is situated within the designated Environmental Priority Area. Proposals for development in this area will therefore need to have full regard to the provisions of policy BE3.

Policy BE5 – Other Sites of Archaeological Importance

- 4.30 This policy states that development proposals likely to have an unacceptable affect on other known sites and monuments of archaeological significance will not be permitted. Appropriate mitigation measures may be appropriate with the agreement of the Local Planning Authority.

Policy BE6 – Archaeological Evaluations

- 4.31 Where development proposals may affect sites of known or suspected archaeological importance, the Council may require the applicant to submit an archaeological evaluation prior to the determination of any planning application. The prime archaeological objective is the preservation in situ of important remains. Potential measures by which this can be achieved include design modification and landscaping within sensitive areas.

Policy BE9 – Alterations and Additions to Listed Buildings

- 4.32 The predominant consideration in applications for internal or external works to a listed building or structure will be the preservation of the special architectural or historic features and character of the building or structure. This policy sets out the special criteria which apply for proposals which seek to alter or extend a listed building, as follows:

- Extensions must respect the character and scale of the original buildings and not be allowed to dominate;
- The replacement of doors, windows and other features in non-traditional materials will not be permitted;
- Attention should be paid to the retention of the original plan form, roof construction, and interior features of merit, as well as the exterior of listed buildings;
- Extensions must as far as possible be built of materials matching those of the original building.

4.33 All alterations and additions should not unacceptably affect the essential character of the building, and it should be in-keeping with its architectural style and features. Development should be of a high standard of design and external appearance and materials will be expected to match, as near as possible, those of the existing buildings in kind and in detail.

Policy BE10 – Protecting the Setting of Listed Buildings

4.34 It is a requirement of this policy that development likely to affect the setting of a listed building should aim to preserve both the character of that setting and its historic relationship to the listed buildings. This will include the preservation of trees and other landscape features. Close control will be afforded to the quality of design of development in close proximity to a listed building.

Policy BE12 – General Development Criteria Conservation Areas

4.35 This policy states that development affecting a Conservation Area will only be permitted if it will preserve or enhance the special architectural or historical character and appearance of the area. Development proposals will need to apply a high standard of design which respects the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, including building materials and boundary treatments. Development should also harmonise with adjoining buildings to enhance the existing street-scene and views and vistas. Important architectural and historical street features, landscape and ecological features should be enhanced where possible.

4.36 Victoria Promenade at West Bank was designated as a Conservation Area in 1978.

Policy BE13 – Demolition in Conservation Areas

4.37 Policy BE13 states that demolition of buildings or structures will only be permitted provided that they do not contribute to the character or appearance of a Conservation Area. Consent

for demolition of a building or a structure within a Conservation Area will only be permitted where one or more of four exceptional circumstances are satisfied, as follows:

- It is proved to be wholly beyond economic repair;
- It is incapable of reasonable beneficial use;
- It is not of intrinsic architectural, historic or townscape importance and its removal or replacement would enhance the appearance or character of the area; or
- Its removal would allow the redevelopment or rehabilitation of an adjacent larger site which is underused, neglected or derelict if this would enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Policy GE6 – Protection of Designated Greenspace

4.38 This policy advises that development within designated and proposed Greenspace will not be permitted unless it is ancillary to the enjoyment of the Greenspace, or in the case of designated Greenspace within educational use, it is specifically required for educational purposes. Policy advises that exceptions may be made where the loss of the amenity value is adequately compensated for where either of the following criteria can be satisfied:

- i. Development on part of the site would fund improvements that raise the overall amenity value of the Greenspace; or
- ii. The developer provides a suitable replacement Greenspace of at least equal size and amenity value, or significantly enhances the amenity value of nearby Greenspace.

4.39 The policy notes that no proposal should result in a loss of amenity for local residents by forcing them to travel to a less convenient location, and that in all exceptional cases, there would need to be clear and convincing reasons why development should be permitted or that loss of amenity value could be adequately compensated. The supporting text identifies that Greenspace, regardless of whether or not it is publicly accessible, makes an important contribution to the quality of life of those who live and work within the Borough.

4.40 The defined West Bank area incorporates existing greenspace allocated under this policy. Proposals should therefore seek to retain this existing greenspace, or provide compensatory greenspace in accordance with the provisions of policy GE6.

Policy GE24 - Protection of Important Landscape Features

- 4.41 This policy advises that development will not be permitted where it will result in an unacceptable effect on the visual or physical characteristics for which a site was designated as having 'Important Landscape Features.' The policy identifies a number of such areas including the Trans-Pennine Trail (West Bank Dock section) and Spike Island in Widnes. Development proposals should seek to protect these existing Important Landscape Features and where possible maintain and enhance them.

Policy GE28 – The Mersey Forest

- 4.42 This policy identifies locations where planning permission for development will be conditional upon the carrying out of tree planting and other landscape improvements, as identified on Map 7 of the UDP. The Council is committed to supporting the principles of the Mersey Forest, which aims to increase woodland planting around urban edges and extend planting into urban areas for the benefit of the public and environment. To this end, appropriate tree planting and other landscape improvements will be required within the West Bank Action Area with the aim of contributing to the relevant targets for woodland coverage.
- 4.43 The accompanying text states that the Mersey Forest is the largest in area of the twelve community forests being established throughout England. Identified opportunities for extended tree planting and woodland areas include the *"corridor between the A562 and the River Mersey."* The supporting text advises that an expansion of the woodland cover of the Borough will deliver many recreational, educational, landscape and wildlife benefits, whilst helping to absorb housing, transport routes and commercial development into a greener environment. It will also assist in improving air quality standards, given trees remove carbon dioxide, release oxygen and filter out harmful pollutants.
- 4.44 The accompanying text states that the guiding principles for the Mersey Forest in Halton are:
- i. Provide a woodland buffer around the urban edge and created a wooded edge to the Mersey Estuary:
 - ii. Extend planting into the urban area using all appropriate and available open land, including derelict land;
 - iii. Provide a new woodland structure for surrounding agricultural areas;
 - iv. Protect and manage the existing resource of urban trees and woodlands in a sustainable manner.

- 4.45 Development proposals within Southern Widnes will need to have regard to the provisions of policy GE28.

Policy GE30 - The Mersey Coastal Zone

- 4.46 Policy GE30 advises that proposals for development within the Undeveloped Coastal Zone will not be permitted unless the development specifically requires a coastal location, relates to the recreational use of the zone, or is necessary for reasons of human health or public safety. Policy advises that proposals which would contribute to regeneration, such as within Southern Widnes, and/or to the enhancement of environmental quality, tourism and recreation will be encouraged. The policy advises that development within the Developed Coastal Zone need not be limited to those which require a coastal location. However, policy advises that proposals within the Developed Coastal Zone should pay particular regard to environmental quality, and where possible to improving accessibility to the coast.
- 4.47 The Southern Widnes Regeneration Action Area as identified on the UDP proposals map falls partly within the Mersey Coastal Zone. Development proposals within this area should conform to the requirements of policy GE30.

Policy H8 Non Dwelling House Uses

- 4.48 Policy states that within existing residential areas, including West Bank, proposals for development other than Class C3 (dwelling houses) will be considered mainly with regard to their effect on residential amenity. In such cases, it must be demonstrated that proposed development will not detract from the character of the area or the amenity of residents; will not result in an over-concentration of non-dwelling houses uses to the detriment of the character of the area or amenity of residents; and where car parking is to be provided fronting a highway, one third of that area should be provided with soft landscaping and screening.

Policy TP4 - New Public Transport Facilities

- 4.49 The policy states that development likely to prejudice the opportunity for new railway stations, including that proposed within Southern Widnes Regeneration Action Area, will not be permitted. Policy TP4 advocates the development of new stations and other new public transport facilities, including bus and rail interchanges and part and ride facilities. The supporting text states that the opening of new public transport facilities will enable more people to use the public transport network, and *“thus reduce the need to travel by private car.”* These are also fundamental objectives of the Mersey Gateway Project.

- 4.50 The supporting text states that providing new public transport facilities will increase the prospects of more people travelling by a variety of modes of transport other than the car, as will providing interchanges between rail and bus. This will also “*increase the potential for access to Liverpool Airport using public transport.*”

Policy TP10 – The Trans-Pennine Trail and Mersey Way

- 4.51 The Trans-Pennine Trail and Mersey Way are important routes in the Greenway Network. They also form important sections of longer distance recreation routes, providing valuable routes for the residents of the Borough, opening up the riverfront to public access. The Trans-Pennine Trail is also an important tourist asset, potentially bringing hundreds of walkers and cyclists to the Borough. A key conceptual element of the Trans-Pennine Trail is the provision of associated facilities for its users including car parking, toilets, visitor centres, cafes, pubs, restaurants and overnight accommodation. The Council is seeking to encourage the development of such facilities where they would enhance the recreational and tourism role of the trail.

Policy PR14 – Contaminated Land

- 4.52 This policy establishes a number of criteria which must be satisfied prior to the determination of any planning applications for development on or adjacent to land which is known or suspected to be contaminated, comprising the following:

- Submit details to assess the nature and degree of contamination (type, degree and extent of contamination);
- Identify remedial measures required to deal with any hazard to safeguard future development and neighbouring uses;
- Submit details of a programme of implementation for the roll out and completion of mitigation measures to be agreed with the Council.

- 4.53 The requirement to undertake the above will be controlled either by planning conditions or, when necessary, by planning obligations. Within Southern Widnes, there are historic areas of landfill, notably at Ditton Road, ICI Coal Stockyard, and Spike Island. An assessment of their potential contamination may therefore be required as part of any planning application.

PR16 – Development and Flood Risk

- 4.54 Development will not be permitted on sites:

- At risk from fluvial or tidal/coastal flooding;
 - It would contribute to the risk of flooding elsewhere;
 - It would cause adverse access or maintenance problems on or adjacent to watercourses;
 - It will cause loss of functional floodplain;
 - It will adversely affect the integrity of existing fluvial or tidal flood defences;
 - It will adversely affect the geomorphology or channels, or increase instability and erosion;
 - It will result in extensive culverting; unless the site is protected to the appropriate standard of defence and it can be clearly demonstrated that sustainable and appropriate mitigation methods can be implemented.
- 4.55 In accordance with the provisions of policy PR16, a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) will be required where it is considered that there would be an increased risk of flooding as a result of the development or the development itself would be at risk of flooding. Where development is allowed, mitigation measures are likely to be required to alleviate flood risk both on and off site. These measures should be derived from the FRA and be included as part of the development proposals.

General Policy

- 4.56 Other saved policies in the UDP relating to land surrounding the Southern Widnes Regeneration Action Area that are allocated with specific land-uses can also contribute to the aims of the Regeneration Action Area. The aims are to promote social, economic and environmental regeneration, but must not prejudice the Southern Widnes Regeneration Action Area and its development potential.

Local Development Framework

- 4.57 The Halton LDF is intended to replace the UDP as the principal planning policy framework for Halton over the next few years. In the meantime – under the provisions of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 – it is necessary to continue to ‘save’ a number of UDP policies until replaced, merged or deleted as appropriate by emerging LDF documents.

4.58 The Council's Local Development Scheme (2007)² provides details on key emerging Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). Those relevant to development within Southern Widnes, are as follows:

Development Plan Documents (DPDs)

- **Core Strategy (DPD)** – this will establish the vision and objectives for future spatial development across the Borough, scheduled for adoption in 2009;
- **New Residential Development (DPD)** – this will allocate sites for residential development within Halton, and comprise detailed policies on the delivery of new housing provision. Scheduled for adoption in 2012;
- **New Employment Development (DPD)** – this will allocate future employment sites across the Borough alongside an accompanying policy framework. Scheduled for adoption in 2012;
- **New Retail and Leisure Development (DPD)** – this will allocate sites for retail and employment development, incorporating specific policies to control the delivery of these facilities. Scheduled for adoption in 2012;

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)

4.59 There are a number of Supplementary Planning Documents (adopted and emerging) that will be of relevance to development proposals within the defined Southern Widnes SPD area. Key amongst these are:

- Shop Fronts, Signage and Advertising;
- Designing for Community Safety;
- Design and of New Industrial and Commercial Development;
- Design of New Residential Development;
- Transport and Accessibility;
- Provision of Open Space; and
- Affordable Housing.

² The Council's Local Development Scheme is subject to annual review through the Council's Annual Monitoring Report, and in line with the new PPS 12: *Local Spatial Planning* (June 2008), thus the projected dates for preparation of these documents may be subject to change.

Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

- 4.60 The Council's SCI was adopted in July 2006, outlining the consultation process to be applied by the Council in the preparation of its future Local Development Documents. This SPD will be consulted upon in accordance with the provisions of the SCI.

Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS)

- 4.61 The Southern Widnes SPD is intended to contribute towards the implementation of the Halton Sustainable Community Strategy (2006). This Strategy co-ordinates the resources of 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."

- 4.62 The SCS also includes a priority for the borough titled 'Halton's Urban Renewal' with 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."*
- 4.63 Halton Borough Council is committed to contributing to achieving the priorities set out in the SCS, through a number of priorities set out in the Council's Corporate Plan. This plan also has five priorities, including 'urban renewal.'
- 4.64 The priorities in the SCS 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

- 4.65 The Waterside Strategy was launched in March 2005. It seeks to achieve the better integration of waterside frontages in order to achieve environmental improvements, generate additional economic activity and bring derelict and underused sites into active high-quality uses.
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Local Transport Plan 2

4.66 The Halton Local Transport Plan (LTP) 2006/07 – 2010/11 states that the ability of local people to access work, learning, healthcare, shopping, leisure and exercise can significantly impact on their quality of life and opportunities. The Local Transport Plan contains four shared priorities, as follows:

- *Tackling Congestion* – to facilitate the emerging regeneration of Runcorn and Widnes, there is the need to address the problem of congestion arising from increased levels of car ownership to deliver a freer flowing road network and associated economic and quality of life benefits. The delivery of a second Mersey crossing is recognised as an important means of addressing localised road congestion, alongside traffic management, public transport improvements, walking and cycling, and travel planning/smarter choices.
- *Delivering Accessibility* – the ability of people to access places of work, learning, healthcare, shopping, leisure and exercise can significantly enhance the quality of life. Schemes and initiatives to improve accessibility to important services and amenities are encouraged in the Local Transport Plan.
- *Safer Roads* – a key Government target is to reduce the number of annual road casualties across UK roads. The provision of a safe environment and reducing the impact of traffic on local communities is a key ambition, delivered through a range of traffic safety, traffic calming and speed management measures.
- *Better Air Quality* – reducing the environmental impact of road-based transportation is a driving ambition of European policy, adopted at local level through the Local Transport Plan. Opportunities to promote alternative transport modes are encouraged, notably walking, cycling, and public transport.

4.67 Helping to ensure that people can access the services which 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 at more accessible times. In addition, good access is a crucial element in attracting new businesses to relocate to the area or to establish themselves. The LTP is aimed at meeting the targets in the SCS - clearly this demonstrates that both this SPD and the LTP are ultimately trying to achieve the same goals and each will benefit the other.

Halton's Biodiversity Action Plan

- 4.68 The Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) process is the current system for the protection, conservation and enhancement of wildlife in the United Kingdom. As part of the Cheshire Wildlife Trust, Halton's BAP – of relevance to the Southern Widnes area - focuses on Action Areas for People and Nature.
- 4.69 Development proposals within the defined Southern Widnes area will be required to have regard to these policy provisions.

5. VISION AND OBJECTIVES

- 5.1 The purpose of this SPD is to guide the regeneration of Southern Widnes in accordance with the vision and objectives for the area as set out in the Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy (2008).

Opportunities

- 5.2 The key opportunities for the regeneration of the area stem from its position within the route corridor of the Mersey Gateway Project, a catalyst towards the renaissance of Halton Borough and the regeneration of Southern Widnes. The site also lies in close proximity to key regional transport routes, including the M56 and M62, providing access to the national highway network. The location of the area also provides for national and global multi-modal movements, including via Liverpool John Lennon Airport, Manchester International Airport, the Port of Garston, and the Port of Weston.
- 5.3 At a local level, the strategic location of the area offers the opportunity to exploit its position between Runcorn and Widnes, and location close to the highway network, to create a high-quality mixed-use environment which will play a significant role in the regeneration of Southern Widnes. Furthermore, the regeneration of the area offers the potential to reduce the severance of West Bank from Widnes Town Centre by improving the public realm and pedestrian and cycle environment along Victoria Road and introducing a new commercial development (site 8, figure 8.1) to form a safe and lively physical linkage between the two areas.

Priority Regeneration Objectives

- 5.4 A number of priority regeneration objectives for Southern Widnes have emerged from both the existing context, and the proposals of the Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy. Care will be taken to ensure integration between these objectives and the emerging Spike Island Masterplan. These objectives are as follows:

Priority Regeneration Objective 1 – Image and Place-Making

- To significantly lift perceptions of Widnes and Runcorn to meet the visionary aspirations held by the Council, as embodied in the Mersey Gateway Project, and ensure any new

development, attributable to the catalytic effect of the Bridge, makes a positive enhancement to the character of the locality in terms of design quality and resource use.

- To build on the strong local sense of community, and place, deliver the considerable regeneration opportunities presented by the Mersey Gateway, enhancing and promoting key assets in each of the localities (physical and community).

Priority Regeneration Objective 2 – Accessibility and Sustainable Movement

- To increase the catchment area for labour, goods and markets, such that the Mersey Gateway opens up new opportunities for employment in the Liverpool City Region for Halton's residents and increases the ability to access markets and customers for Halton's businesses.
- To facilitate enhanced sustainable movements by pedestrians, cyclists and local vehicular travellers (particularly by public transport patronage) through the de-linking of unnecessary infrastructure, the down-grading and removal of unnecessary expressway infrastructure and improved access to the expressway / highway system where appropriate in accordance with the Halton Sustainable Transport Strategy proposals.
- To build on the positive impacts for all user-groups attributable to the Mersey Gateway and maximise opportunities for further local connectivity and accessibility for existing communities in promoting ease of movement throughout the area and beyond, particularly by public transport modes but also through greater opportunities for walking and cycling linked to health benefits in accordance with the Halton Sustainable Transport Strategy proposals.

Priority Regeneration Objective 3 – Development and Economic Prosperity

- To significantly improve the commercial, and residential, accommodation in the area having particular regard to local needs, and providing good quality, affordable and resource efficient accommodation to meet contemporary and future market requirements and aspirations, through key redevelopment proposals attributable to the scheme.
- To bring land back into use for new development that is currently occupied by highways infrastructure deemed unnecessary following the completion of the Mersey Gateway, with a particular focus on bringing contaminated land back into use in the West Bank area of Southern Widnes, for new uses.
- To develop land, energy and water resources prudently, minimising the production of waste and increasing reuse, recycling and recovery of waste.

- To encourage development which, where possible, fully mitigates all environmental constraints including landscaping, contamination, noise, air quality, water quality, flooding, and visual impacts.

5.5 In addition to these Priority Regeneration Objectives, a number of direct key objectives have been prepared relating specifically to the Southern Widnes Action Area. These have been prepared following extensive consultation with local residents and businesses, and reflect the responses which were received during this process;

- **Objective 1:** To re-brand Southern Widnes through the creation of high-quality gateway locations with excellent access to the regions principal conurbations and population – inherent in this is the development of high-quality, aspirational and affordable housing and services. To enable the labour supply to meet, and facilitate, further demand within the local economy, Southern Widnes provides a significant opportunity to encourage skilled workers to permanently reside within Halton.
- **Objective 2:** To facilitate the development of resource efficient high-quality business accommodation, providing mixed-use leisure and recreational facilities, providing resource efficient and affordable housing and upgrading the standard of the public realm including access to high quality greenspace.
- **Objective 3:** To enable local residents to share directly in the wider investment benefits of regeneration working with initiatives such as the Liverpool City Region Employment Strategy (LCRES) to develop local skills and capacity, increase local employment opportunities and reduce worklessness in West Bank. It is important that local employment opportunities must remain, and be further encouraged into the area.
- **Objective 4:** To provide investment to support, and develop, training facilities for local sporting provision, incorporating flood lights and changing rooms.
- **Objective 5:** To provide an additional access route, served by public transport through the Sustainable Transport Strategy in particular, but also serving new walking and cycling routes. This waterside boulevard along the Sankey Canal should enhance access into Southern Widnes to negate the existing bottleneck situation, improve east-west connectivity, and upgrade links to Widnes Town Centre and the River Mersey. The de-linking of redundant expressways arising from these works should be utilised to unlock new development opportunities and reduce the severance and isolation experienced by local communities.

- **Objective 6:** To improve safety (incorporating Secured by Design principles), and local physical amenities, by upgrading street lighting and the wider public realm within West Bank and the links from this area to Widnes Town Centre.
- **Objective 7:** to create a new heart for Southern Widnes with the consolidation of local retail, services and improved education and health provision.

6. STRATEGIC PRINCIPLES

- 6.1 This section of the SPD comprises a number of key principles and overarching development principles which will apply to the redevelopment of Southern Widnes.
- 6.2 Southern Widnes is an area which will be subject to considerable long-term change not least associated with the Mersey Gateway and the delinking of a redundant road infrastructure but also with the subsequent regeneration and redevelopment opportunities that the Mersey Gateway proposal creates. Currently Southern Widnes exhibits a unique blend of natural and manmade place-specific assets which need to be protected and enhanced. To deliver the objectives for the area it is essential that all future developments within Southern Widnes are of the highest design quality, taking into account the character of the area. These development principles expand on the saved policies contained within the UDP.

Creating a Sustainable Mixed Use Quarter

- 6.3 The SPD area offers an excellent opportunity to ensure that future development within Widnes can be concentrated within the built up area of the town where existing and future physical and social infrastructure is concentrated. While the area currently contains a mix of uses, the predominance of employment activities, particularly in the northwest, sit uncomfortably with the residential area ensuring that this edge of centre location is underutilised. As a result, West Bank is isolated from the Town Centre and existing retail and service provision within the area is severely limited. The area does provide an important local employment role, however there is potential to improve the quality of the environment in which it is delivered.
- 6.4 The SPD seeks to establish a new 'walkable' neighbourhood within Southern Widnes. A permeable movement network is promoted with walking and cycling particularly encouraged (see Fig. 8.1b). While a range of housing will be provided the new neighbourhood will be predominately focused toward providing family accommodation and new affordable housing. A neighbourhood centre is proposed which will seek to improve the retail and service offer within Southern Widnes. To support the existing and proposed communities this centre could include a small food store, smaller shops and services and new community uses including education, training and health facilities.
- 6.5 In addition, future development within the area will seek to improve the quality of employment provision. The SPD area given its excellent strategic highway links has the potential to attract larger office and commercial occupiers. The area also offers the potential to address the

current shortage of smaller office and light industrial accommodation within Widnes Town Centre to meet the growing number of small to medium sized businesses in the borough.

Creating a Sense of Place

- 6.6 Southern Widnes currently suffers from a poor image and perception, a major challenge for the SPD is to substantially improve the profile of the area. Despite this, West Bank has a number of place specific assets which should be enhanced by future high quality development. These include the Victoria Promenade, Spike Island, the Catalyst Museum and Sankey Canal.
- 6.7 Furthermore, the area offers excellent views of the Mersey Estuary, the Silver Jubilee Bridge, the Sankey Canal, Spike Island, Runcorn Promenade and Wigg Island and will provide future views of the Mersey Gateway Bridge. Development proposals should ensure that these important view corridors are maintained.
- 6.8 It is essential that the road infrastructure associated with the Mersey Gateway is integrated within the urban fabric of Southern Widnes. Public realm and landscaping improvements are proposed at key points to achieve this. Collectively these create a series of focal points helping to create a sense of place. The future redevelopment of Southern Widnes should tackle the physical and functional severance of the area from the town centre and seek to establish a finer urban grain encouraging well connected active streets.

Encouraging Local Accessibility

- 6.9 In line with the above, the SPD seeks to rationalise existing excessive road infrastructure to the benefit of place making, local accessibility and sustainable modes of transport. Currently the Silver Jubilee Bridge and associated highways connects the M56 with the M62 and results in heavy traffic flows through Runcorn and Southern Widnes. The Mersey Gateway proposal seeks to separate strategic traffic from local traffic resulting in a significant decrease in traffic volumes through both towns. The SPD responds to this opportunity proactively by defining a clear hierarchy of routes within Southern Widnes which improves local links to key destinations and facilitates the opportunity to encourage public transport connections, walking and cycling (See Fig 8.1b).

Sustainability

- 6.10 Where possible flexible development will be encouraged which can sustain a variety of uses over time ensuring that buildings can respond to changing social, technological and economic

conditions. Proposals should also seek to minimise the total environmental impact resulting from new development.

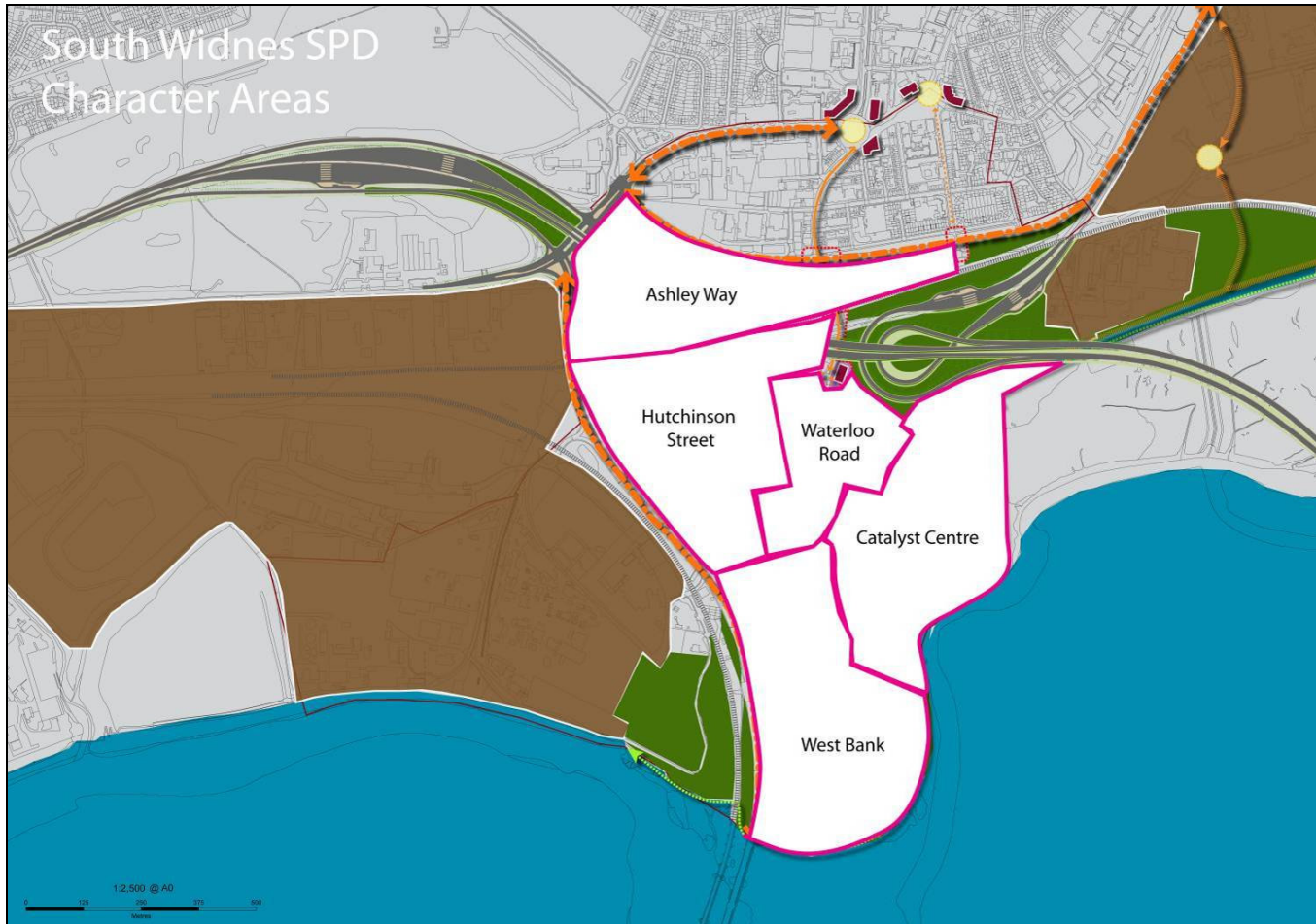
7. SUB-AREA POLICIES

7.1 This section of the SPD sets out a number of key principles and overarching development principles which will apply to the redevelopment of Southern Widnes. It comprises detailed SPD policy, outlining the development proposals for a number of sub-areas (Figure 7.1 overleaf³ provides a visual overview), including:

- Catalyst Centre;
- Hutchinson Street;
- Ashley Way;
- Waterloo Road;
- West Bank residential neighbourhood.

³ Note: The boundaries illustrated in Figure 7.1 are for illustrative purposes and are indicative of the Mersey Gateway proposals.

Figure 7.1: Southern Widnes Sub-Areas



Catalyst Centre

Overview and Existing Character

- 7.2 The original building, which now houses the Catalyst Science Discovery Centre dates from around 1860. It is rendered with slate roof above four storeys, with a two storey wing containing various classical features. The building was originally constructed for the chemical firm of Hutchinson & Co and later used by Gossage's. More recently, the building was converted into a museum with additional fifth glass-surrounded storey and a glass external lift to the east.
- 7.3 The Catalyst Science Discovery Centre stands apart from the grain of residential streets marking an important corner and junction between the neighbourhood of West Bank and the open spaces of the Mersey Corridor. Today it is used as a museum celebrating the Town's historic associations with the Chemical Industry providing an exciting display of interactive and educational facilities. The building is listed and contains four interactive galleries with over 100 different exhibits and a glass observatory at the roof level, which provides panoramic views across Cheshire. The museum also offers free car parking, a shop and the 'Elements Cafe'.
- 7.4 Open space surrounds the building and it provides excellent views of the Sankey Canal, Spike Island and the Mersey Estuary. The Waterside Development Strategy for Halton (March 2005) sets out a number of aims and aspirations for the Sankey Canal Waterfront, which aim to attract development and support an expanded range of leisure uses, which are to date unrealised. These aims are reflected in current policy - South Widnes Action Area RG1 - which promotes mixed use and redevelopment of the waterfront areas.
- 7.5 The Sankey Canal also forms an access point to the Trans Pennine Trail and forms an important access point to the wider estuary for anglers, walkers, cyclists, and pedestrians.
- 7.6 In the immediate vicinity of the Museum, the Sankey Canal now has restored lock gates, joining the River Mersey at Spike Island. The Grade II listed lock gates date from 1833 with later alterations and repairs and control a difference in water level of 12 feet (3.6 m) between the canal and the river level.
- 7.7 It is important to note that the regeneration of Spike Island is currently being considered through a Masterplan process undertaken by Halton Borough Council, which is aligned with the proposals of this SPD.

*Policy**Spatial Strategy and Interventions*

- CC1: A new neighbourhood centre is proposed for Southern Widnes and should primarily seek to improve the convenience goods offer of the area, as well as other community amenities. The centre should include A1, A3, A4, limited A5 uses and D1 (non-residential uses).
- CC2: Residential development will be encouraged within the area, particularly where this addresses the new Sankey Square (public space), but retaining the local employment function of the area will remain an important priority, with investment that will positively enhance and contribute to the overall improved image and environment of the area.
- CC3: Recreational and leisure activity associated with existing open space, the Sankey Canal and Spike Island should be encouraged.
- CC4: Protect and enhance the estuary's habitats.

Layout and Design

- CC5: All development should seek to enhance key view corridors of the Sankey Canal, Spike Island, the Mersey Estuary and the new Mersey Gateway Bridge.
- CC6: A new Sankey Square is proposed within this location and the area will be a focus for public realm improvements acting as a viewing platform for the Mersey Estuary. Any development proposals will need to have regard to servicing and junction arrangements agreed through liaison with the local highways authority.
- CC7: The neighbourhood centre should provide ground floor frontage and active uses addressing Sankey Square and fronting along the associated new link road.
- CC8: Elsewhere along the Sankey Canal and Spike Island green infrastructure and landscaping improvements are encouraged where supportive of the Spike Island Masterplan. These improvements should enhance the ecological performance of the area and screen the Mersey Gateway highway proposal.
- CC9: Buildings within the area should enhance the setting of the Catalyst Science Discovery Centre and should not exceed 5 storeys. All development will allow pedestrian movement along the waterfront.

Transport and Movement

- CC10: Developments should align with the street hierarchy set out in the Southern Widnes Opportunity Plan (Figure 8.1b). All development should maintain and improve pedestrian and cycle connections along the waterfront.
- CC11: The West Bank promenade should be extended northward along the Sankey Canal/Trans Pennine Trail and will provide for pedestrian and cycle movement. Pedestrian and Cycle access to Spike Island will be improved as part of the wider Halton Sustainable Transport Strategy.
- CC12: North of the square, a new waterside boulevard (Widnes Boulevard) is proposed which will establish a new vehicle link between West Bank and Widnes Waterfront. The boulevard will prioritise public transport, cycle and pedestrian connections. The alignment of the proposed waterside boulevard is to be protected from redevelopment proposals that may prejudice this opportunity.
- CC13: Development proposals should not prejudice the implementation of these infrastructure proposals.

Justification

- 7.8 Approximately 1,200 people live in the Southern Widnes area. However, current retail provision is limited to two small convenience stores. There is potential to accommodate an additional 560 dwellings within the area. The policy above seeks to ensure that the quality and range of retail provision within the area is significantly improved to serve existing and future communities. It seeks to establish a more sustainable distribution of retail provision within Widnes to ensure that the day-to-day shopping requirements of residents are accessible on foot and by cycling. Improvements should also be made to enhance pedestrian and cycle linkages to the new local centre from West Bank.
- 7.9 The policy also seeks to improve and extend the waterfront promenade helping to unlock waterside development opportunities which are arranged around the key focal points such as Sankey Square while also protecting environmental assets. The policy encourages a direct connection between Southern Widnes to the major employment area Widnes Waterfront which has the potential to create a significant number of new jobs with over eighty hectares of land being redeveloped for commercial, office and light industrial uses.

- 7.10 The importance of the area in providing locally accessible employment is also recognised within the above policy. However, the policy seeks to maximise opportunities adjacent to canal and establish higher value uses which enhance the character of Sankey Canal and Spike Island.

Hutchinson Street

Overview and Existing Character

- 7.11 This area comprises of industrial land lying between Wandsworth Way and the A533. It currently contains a recreational area (sports pitches), storage yards and builders merchants forming part of a low quality gateway into the Southern Widnes area with convoluted access off the A533 and into the core of the area via Hutchinson Street. Unsurprisingly given the predominance of secondary employment uses a coarse urban grain typifies the area leading to limited east-west movement.
- 7.12 Despite this industrial legacy, the area has been the focus for investment and regeneration. An area of contaminated land, the former coal stockyard area has through public sector investment been transformed into the Ted Gleave Fields, an all weather rugby pitch.
- 7.13 The Victoria Road area will be subject to considerable change through the Mersey Gateway proposal. Demolition and relocation of the Catalyst Trade Park will make way for a new junction link with the Mersey Gateway and the A557 Widnes Eastern Bypass. A new bridge is proposed spanning from Widnes, looping over Victoria Road on a high level structure raised 17metres above the existing road at a height which should allow clear visibility and excellent sight lines for pedestrians and motorists, whilst also allowing for high quality development and public realm to be achieved at this important junction.
- 7.14 Directly to the west of the SPD area a new rail/road freight handling and logistics park (3MG) is proposed which has the potential to create 5,000 jobs.

Policy

Spatial Strategy and Interventions

- HS1: A new neighbourhood should be created within the area. New development proposals should meet a range of housing requirements in particular, housing of three or more bedrooms designed for families, and other affordable housing. Other uses should be encouraged to support this neighbourhood, including small scale local retail, leisure and service provision.
- HS2: Mixed use development including commercial and office uses are encouraged within the Victoria Road area, where this acts as a buffer to the existing employment area.

Layout and Design

- HS3: Residential development should front onto Ted Gleave Fields. Strong and attractive frontages should be established along Wandsworth Way and Hutchinson Street. Residential development should not exceed three storeys.
- HS4: Victoria Road will be the main focus for public realm improvements and major development proposals should be targeted toward improving the image of such key routes and gateways.
- HS5: Landscaping proposals, particularly on the eastern side of Queensway should seek to screen future developments associated with 3MG.

Transport and Movement

- HS6: Developments should align with the street hierarchy set out in the West Bank Opportunity Plan (Figure 8.1b).
- HS7: Queensway should be downgraded to a two-way inter town corridor to the benefit of local Accessibility. Simplified junctions at grade level should be established on Queensway to allow easy access to Southern Widnes.
- HS8: Both pedestrian and vehicle links should be established to existing neighbourhoods and key destinations.
- HS9: Links to 3MG should be encouraged and promoted.

Justification

- 7.15 The census indicates that just over 80% of the housing stock within the SPD area is terraced housing. This is significantly above the stock profile for Halton as a whole which is set at 37%. Detached properties within Southern Widnes are substantially unrepresented.
- 7.16 The Halton Housing Needs Study (2005) has indicated that future demand for housing is predominately for larger dwellings. It indicates that almost 60% of private sector demand is for three or more bedrooms. Demand in the social rented sector does favour smaller properties, yet the study concluded that much of this demand can be met by turnover of existing stock and that there was actually a shortage of accommodation for families requiring four bedroom properties.

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- 7.17 Another key issue facing Halton Borough Council as outlined in the Core Strategy Issues and Options Report is where to accommodate future housing growth in the light of the increasing need for additional dwellings as outlined in the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West.
- 7.18 Therefore the policy above seeks to meet a number of strategic housing objectives. Residential development proposals should seek to prioritise the provision of family housing within the area, improve the quality of housing available within the area, and maximise the use of previously developed land within the urban area of Widnes. The creation of a new neighbourhood within Southern Widnes will help to increase the spend capacity of the area and support improved facilities and services.
- 7.19 In design terms the new neighbourhood for Southern Widnes will be centred around the leisure and recreational resource of the Ted Gleave Fields and the layout and landscaping proposals associated with future development will seek to reinforce the character of the area.
- 7.20 Integration of the Mersey Gateway proposal into the area remains a priority. The southern part of Victoria Road connects Southern Widnes with the Town Centre. The removal of the existing overhead road bridge of the A568 Widnes Eastern Relief Road clears the way for a prominent mixed-use development forming an important threshold at the gateway location. This area is the most prominent location where the new Mersey Gateway proposal interacts with Southern Widnes and should therefore be a priority for public realm improvements. There is an opportunity to create active street frontage and a quality public realm scheme that creates a feature of the overhead bridge and its supporting pillars.
- 7.21 Finally, the policy seeks to simplify the existing highway infrastructure within the character area to the benefit of place making, local accessibility and sustainable modes of transport. Queensway should be downgraded to an inter town corridor. To encourage local accessibility by all modes the elevated section of Queensway should be replaced with an at-grade section of highway with two simplified junctions.

Ashley Way

Overview and Existing Character

- 7.22 This area is affected by the Mersey Gateway proposals, with land required to deliver the preferred route alignment. It currently contains a number of older industrial premises of low quality located on land fragmented by Ashley Way West, Ditton Road and the railway, which runs east to west along its southern boundary. Current uses detract from the character of this important corridor and include a very visible scrap merchant and numerous low quality storage yards and a mix of under utilised buildings. Pedestrian and cycle crossing is difficult at present and requires substantial improvement. Clearly the area will be subject to considerable change through the Mersey Gateway proposal. It has the potential to meet the requirements of economic sectors which are projected to grow in Halton.

Policy

Spatial Strategy and Interventions

- AW1: The area will encourage a mix of B1/B2 employment development opportunities. Provision along Ashley Way will be focused toward encouraging small to medium sized local enterprises as well as larger floorplate uses.
- AW2: Larger scale employment development should be concentrated around the Ditton Road junction. More mixed use development will be encouraged closer to Victoria Road.
- AW3: Development within the area will be expected to demonstrate its contribution to local employment for residents of Widnes as well as wider Borough and regional objectives.

Layout and Design

- AW4: New two / three storey buildings will present active fronts onto Ashley Way and Victoria Road and have their principal entrances facing these streets. Development should seek to improve the Ditton road junction as a key gateway location to the town.
- AW5: Public realm investment and development should seek to strengthen key north south crossing points along Ashley Way particularly Victoria Road.

Transport and Movement

- AW6: Developments should align with the street hierarchy set out in the Southern Widnes Opportunity Plan (Figure 8.1b).
- AW7: Public transport connections between the area and the Town Centre should be facilitated.
- AW8: Where possible communal car parking should be encouraged and parking should be accommodated in less visible locations.
- AW9: Pedestrian and cycle crossing facilities should be upgraded at Ashley Way to facilitate improved connectivity and movement between Southern Widnes and Widnes town centre.

Justification

- 7.23 Halton's Commercial Property Review (2007) emphasise that the majority of employment land is focused toward regional investment sites with specialist uses likely to be the outcome. Most firms in Runcorn and Widnes are small, 80 percent employ less than ten people and 90 percent less than 50 people. The reduction in business sizes is expected to continue along with a growth in self-employment. Of the total available employment land in the borough, only 90ha is dedicated to local businesses needs. The report indicates that only 19.79 ha is available for local companies, which is approximately a two years supply. Demand is demonstrated for very small space up to 5000 sq ft for offices and up to 10,000 sq ft or smaller for industrial with an overall need for better quality property.
- 7.24 Finally, the Business Survey as set out in the Issues Report for the Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy (2007) has indicated that businesses in Runcorn and Widnes highly value the close proximity of the motorway network. The Issues Report also indicated that between 2006 and 2020 major employment growth sectors will be associated in the computing, professional and other business services.
- 7.25 The policy above provides a range of employment development opportunities within the area which account for approximately 20 hectares. It seeks to address the limited supply of employment land in Widnes targeted toward the encouragement of local employment and business creation. The focus of future development can address the demand for smaller business space. It also seeks to meet the development needs of the projected growth in

identified economic sectors. Ashley Way is located on the edge of the town centre but will also benefit from direct access to the Mersey Gateway.

Waterloo Road

Overview and Existing Character

- 7.26 Despite the isolation and lack of permeability this area continues to support a mix of uses, comprising a garage showroom and workshop surrounded by small industrial units, providing a mix of employment opportunities and valued local employment uses, which are located in a mix of accommodation of varying quality and design. Storage areas and compounds are often arranged in locations that are visible from the adjoining residential streets reinforcing the areas traditional industrial image as an area known for its mix of ageing, moderate quality buildings close to Widnes Town Centre. Trafalgar Court houses a number of workshops and lock up premises.
- 7.27 To the west of the character area the Catalyst Trade Park was developed over the last ten years and houses a mix of employment uses including car hire and leasing businesses, a cleaning company, and a plumbers merchant. The area is affected by the Mersey Gateway proposals, with the land required to deliver the preferred route. Development along the waterfront may include residential uses. Any development should be of a quality that reflects the development of the Widnes Waterfront Area further along the Canal.

Policy

Spatial Strategy

- WR1: Future development should support the general employment focus of the area west of Victoria Road. Targeted investment in public realm priorities and environmental improvements will be made over time. Any future redevelopment of this area, whilst respecting the employment land use, will be of a higher design quality respecting the overall objective in enhancing the image and environment of Southern Widnes.
- WR2: Development along the waterfront could be primarily concentrated on providing a mix of B1/B2 uses.

Layout and Design

- WR3: All development should seek to enhance key view corridors of the Sankey Canal, Spike Island, the Mersey Estuary and the new Mersey Gateway Bridge.
- WR4: Buildings within the area should not exceed 5 storeys. All development will allow

pedestrian/cycle movement along the waterfront.

Transport and Movement

- WR5: Developments should align with the street hierarchy set out in the Southern Widnes Opportunity Plan (Figure 8.1b).
- WR6: Where possible communal car parking should be encouraged and parking should be provided within development plots in less visible locations.

Justification

7.28 The policy above recognises the important role of this area in providing local employment opportunities and seeks to retain the general employment focus of the area west of Waterloo Road. As a latter phase of development this character area will seek to extend higher quality development along the waterside. Waterfront development will be concentrated toward office and commercial development.

West Bank Existing Residential

Overview and Existing Character

- 7.29 The residential community of West Bank is located around a collection of terraced streets, which are predominantly arranged north to south. Older terraced properties are arranged to the east and west of Mersey Road. The condition and quality of the properties appears generally poor with the area inadequately served by shops and facilities.
- 7.30 The permeable housing grid, which characterises the industrial period is disrupted by later infill developments. Inward looking developments such as Davies Close and James Close are typical and restrict access east to west. These newer estates have disrupted the original grid of streets. North to south the links remain largely in tact. However, movement east to west is severely restricted leaving the potential of the Mersey Estuary inaccessible and an unrealised asset.
- 7.31 Key streets face towards the estuary, with the main ones being Irwell Street and Mersey Road linking to either end of a promenade park. Both streets are terminated by a number of expansive views across the Mersey containing many fine views of the Silver Jubilee Bridge and across to Runcorn Old Town, where the new Deck Development takes on a new prominence. A key site (formerly an office building) at the end of Irwell Street (at its junction with Terrace Road) has planning permission for re-use for residential development. Importantly the development brief established for the site considers the importance of keeping the waterside route open in line with policy objectives.
- 7.32 Parts of the area are permeable and legible - that is easy to walk through, with clearly identified routes, streets, squares, parks etc. However in other areas, the urban form is weak and fragmented (or shattered). Locations where these conditions are found can be described as 'Shatter Zones'.
- 7.33 Shatter Zones are typically created where lines of infrastructure (roads and railways) have been threaded through existing neighbourhoods. For example: The proximity of the A533 (and the alignment of the expressway) which runs close to the west, prematurely severs the street pattern and impacts upon the quality of the existing public realm, which impedes permeability through the area making it less clear as to the route to take. Links for example to bus stops on either side of the A533 are poor being accessible only by subways and indirect routes.
- 7.34 In other locations (such as Terrace Road and St Mary's Road) the older street pattern is more legible. However, the character of the street is poor – being aligned by newer, two storey

properties of low architectural merit. Few of the streets are connected to the foreshore areas and the opportunities to present and frame the dramatic views of the Mersey have been ignored.

Policy

Spatial Strategy and Interventions

- WBR1: Reinforce the West Bank neighbourhood through the addition of some higher quality residential development, where possible.
- WBR2: Support the continued investment within existing residential stock and seek investment in the existing private sector stock, particularly along Mersey Road and other principal frontages.

Layout and Design

- WBR3: Residential developments on the waterfront should be set back from the waterfront to enable public access to the waterfront itself, and the Trans Pennine Trail to follow the waterfront.
- WBR4: Buildings should not exceed 3/4 storeys in order to preserve views of St. Mary's Church.
- WBR5: All development should seek to enhance the key view of the Silver Jubilee Bridge the Mersey Estuary and St Mary's church.

Transport and Movement

- WBR6: Developments should align with the street hierarchy set out in the Southern Widnes Opportunity Plan (Figure 8.1b).
- WBR7: Improve pedestrian, cycle and bus routes within the existing residential areas, and along the waterfront.

Justification

- 7.35 As identified above, the housing profile within West Bank is characterised by a high concentration of terraced housing. Halton Housing Trust (HHT) owns a number of properties in this character area, parts of which have been designated as a Housing Investment Area. The comprehensive improvement proposed by the Trust under the initiative aims to replenish the fabric and interiors of the houses to improve their long-term sustainability.
- 7.36 The policy seeks to diversify the current housing offer through new residential development proposals which attract residents to the area. Development will effectively create a high quality edge to the neighbourhood along the line of the Silver Jubilee Bridge and A533. Simplified highway junctions at grade level, allows direct access from West Bank to the A533/Queensway and the Silver Jubilee Bridge and dramatically improves east-west permeability. Effectively a new gateway is created to West Bank.

8. DELIVERY AND DEVELOPMENT CONTROL MATTERS

- 8.1 The vision for Southern Widnes, like the aspiration established for the wider Regeneration Strategy, is bold and challenging, but intentionally so, as the vision is about changing perceptions and setting a new agenda for investment in delivering a place that people can be proud of and that people aspire to live and work in, invest and spend time.
- 8.2 It is also a vision that will not be delivered in the matter of a few years but represents a sustained programme of investment, of at least fifteen years, that is timed with the construction and operation of the Mersey Gateway. This is illustrated in an Opportunity Plan (Figure 8.1) located overleaf. Further to this, an appropriate street hierarchy (Figure 8.1b⁴) and Phasing Strategy has been determined.

⁴ Note: Waterloo Road will remain as a distributor roads with surface improvements made.

Figure 8.1: Southern Widnes Opportunity Plan



Figure 8.1b: Southern Widnes Opportunity Plan – Proposed Street Hierarchy



Phasing of Development

- 8.3 Development of Southern Widnes is proposed to take place within three distinct phases proceeding in 2011 and completing in 2026. The diagrams below show the estimated phasing programme for the regeneration of Southern Widnes and its five character areas in detail.
- 8.4 The first Phase of development (Phase 1 – figure 8.2) is scheduled to take place simultaneously to the scheduled commencement of construction of the Mersey Gateway in 2011, and will continue beyond completion of the Mersey Gateway until 2016. This Phase will include the introduction of new highway infrastructure associated with the Mersey Gateway crossing and the removal of redundant existing highway sections. This process will result in a number of opportunity sites being brought forward for redevelopment.
- 8.5 Phase 2 (figure 8.3) is proposed to occur from 2016 until 2021 with the majority of opportunity sites, arising from infrastructure alterations during Phase 1, to be brought forward for regenerative development during this period. A new high quality public realm ‘gateway’ is to be introduced to the Victoria Road Bridge area, improving linkages for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists from Southern Widnes to Widnes town centre. A large mixed-use opportunity incorporating retail and leisure services will be brought forward at Site 10, providing a cornerstone to the fore mentioned Victoria Road Gateway.
- 8.6 As Widnes moves away from its industrial legacy, and encourages inward migration through increased employment opportunities and uplift in the character of this waterfront environment, there may be a requirement for increased, high quality residential provision. In this respect, an initial scoping of residential sites are proposed at sites 5A, 5B, 6A and 6B.
- 8.7 During this Phase sites 14 and 15 will come forward for mixed-use development incorporating local retail, leisure and key services within a new neighbourhood centre for West Bank, joining the existing, and new, residential communities within the area. This development will also incorporate the New Sankey Square located on the waterfront beside the Sankey Canal, which is to provide a high quality landscaped waterside public realm environment for social and recreational uses. Access junction and servicing arrangements will need to be agreed through liaison with the local highways authority.

Figure 8.2: Southern Widnes Phase 1 (2011-2016)



Figure 8.3: Southern Widnes Phase 2 (2016-2021)

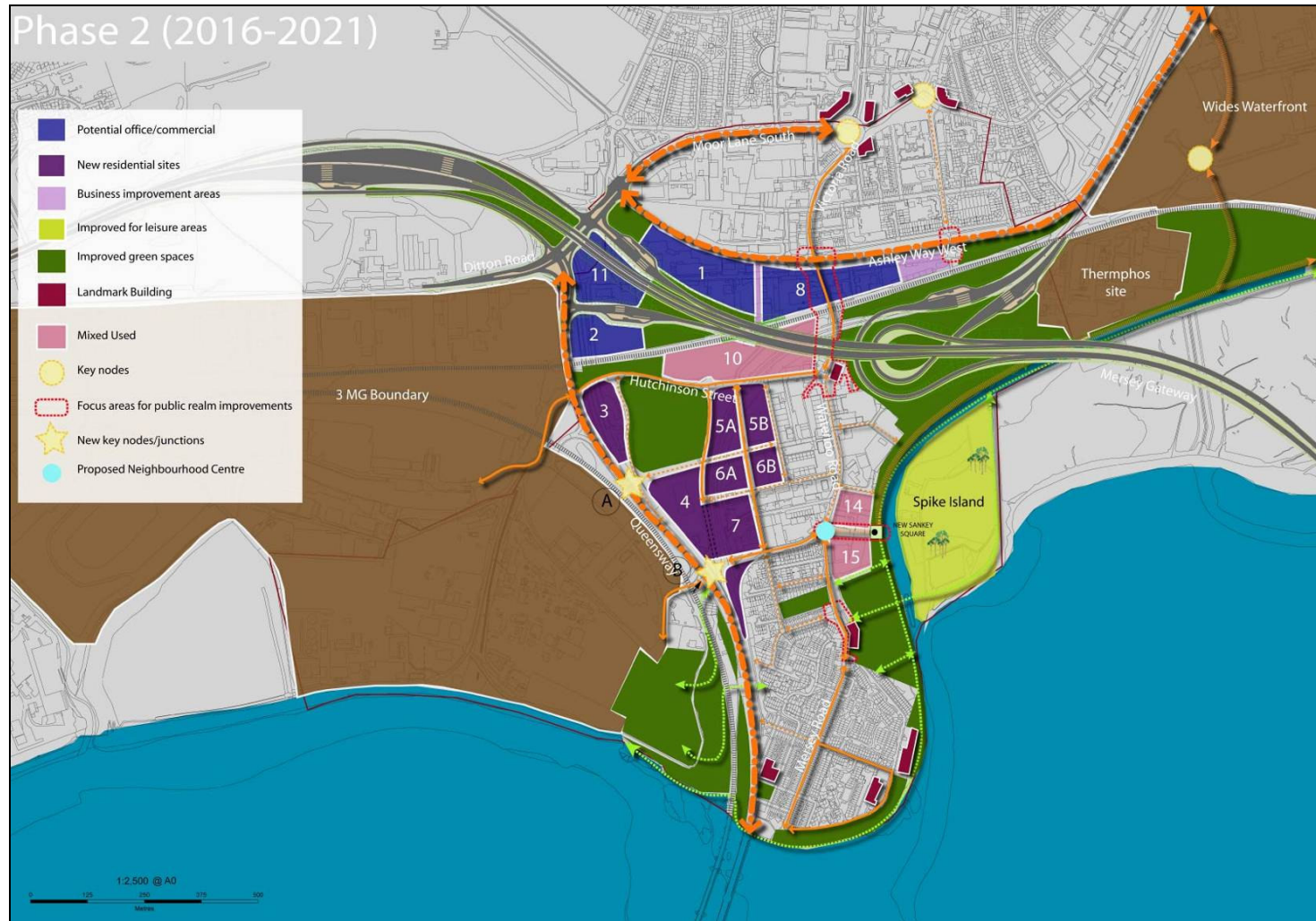
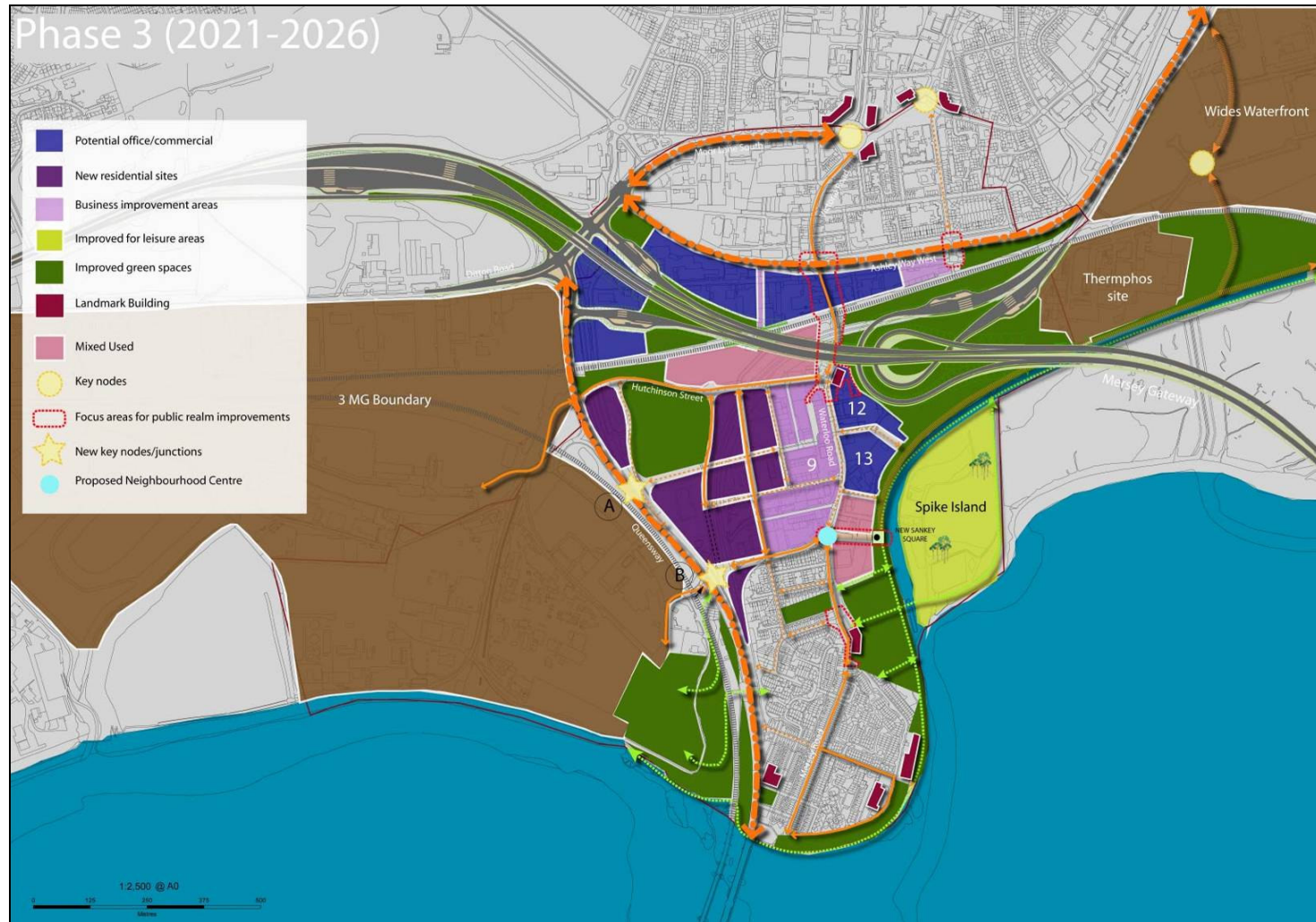


Figure 8.4: Southern Widnes Phase 3: 2021-2026



- 8.8 In the latter part of Phase 2 a new waterside boulevard incorporating a canal-side vehicular, pedestrian and cycle link through to Widnes Waterfront is proposed leading from Sankey Square. The design characteristics of this boulevard are to strongly reflect the surrounding landscape character of this area to embrace the existing canal-side sense of place, views of greenspace located on Spike Island and across the Mersey Estuary to ensure this access route provides a distinctive recreational leisure facility in addition to a transport connection promoting sustainable modes of movement. This sense of place is to be reflected through usage of the following to a precedent standard:
- a design philosophy that embraces the surrounding landscape characteristics and prioritises sustainable transport modes;
 - appropriate hard surfacing;
 - selection of appropriate plant species;
 - street furniture, signage and lighting; and also
 - gateway features and public art.
- 8.9 New road infrastructure will also be introduced towards the latter part of Phase 2 to provide improved accessibility into Southern Widnes from the A533. This will involve the downgrading of the existing highway to a single-lane carriageway, and the introduction of two new at-grade junctions to enable access into opportunity sites 2, 3, 4, 7 and 11, and the existing business and residential areas (figure 8.3). The ambition for Sites 2 and 11 in urban design terms is to create a contemporary flagship quarter of high quality office and commercial development located at the gateway to Widnes and benefiting substantially from the strategic city-regional transport links offered by this position beside the Mersey Gateway.
- 8.10 Sites 2 and 11 would be accessed from the A533 Queensway through modification of the Mersey Gateway off-slip facilitating partial two-way access. This will be followed by the release of sites 1 and 8 for further phased development of the office and commercial quarter.
- 8.11 Sites 3, 4 and 7 will form a final phase of residential development and will flank the eastern carriageway of Queensway (A533).
- 8.12 It is important that any proposals for new residential development in the meantime are to be considered according to the constraints of land contamination, air and noise pollution, risk associated with nearby COMAH sites and flooding, and compatibility with existing or proposal uses. Hence, proposals would also be assessed against the appropriate UDP policies.

- 8.13 Phase 3 (figure 8.4) is proposed to take place from 2021 until 2026 and will form the final segment of development and infrastructure proposed through the SPD.
- 8.14 There is a need to upgrade the quality of local light industrial accommodation within West Bank to bolster local employment opportunities and provide strong support for SME businesses. Hence, Site 9 is to be designated a business improvement area, with investment targeted at raising the standard of accommodation within this area to meet the business requirements of companies at this time and going forward.
- 8.15 In addition, sites 12 and 13 will form a final phase of employment land provision, earmarked for commercial and office uses.

Development Control Matters

- 8.16 The determination of proposals within the Southern Widnes Action Area will be in accordance with the saved policies set out in the Halton UDP and the contents of this SPD. The contents of the SPD are summarised here in order to set out clearly what the Council will expect in terms of the type of development that will be permitted. This section is however by no means exhaustive. It is recommended that applicants hold pre-application discussions with Halton Borough Council prior to submission of any planning application.
- 8.17 The overall strategy for the Southern Widnes Regeneration Action Area starts with UDP Policy RG1, and is described in section 3 of this SPD.

General Requirements for all Development Proposals

- 8.18 Development proposals within the Southern Widnes Regeneration Action Area are required to:
- Comply with all appropriate UDP policies;
 - Identify any environmental constraint issues such as contamination, noise, air quality, flooding, landscaping, and visual impacts, and provide suitable improvements, solutions or mitigation measures;
 - Contribute to the identified highway and traffic management improvements, and cycle, pedestrian and bus links;
 - Meet appropriate car parking standards for parking, as set out in the UDP, RSS and the Council's SPD on transportation and accessibility;
 - Facilitate and improve access to public transport services, including cross-river;

- Facilitate appropriate public access to greenspace and movements through the area and cross-river by foot or bicycle;
- Provide landscaping that will make a positive contribution to improving the visual appearance of the Southern Widnes Regeneration Action Area;
- Adopt appropriate building design and layout in accordance with the requirements of this SPD and the Halton UDP, creating an attractive environment, and protecting existing environmental assets and mitigate against environmental constraint issues;
- Incorporate tree and woodland planting in accordance with the objectives of the Mersey Forest.
- Allow for the retention wherever possible of any existing trees of good quality, in accordance with the principles of British Standard 5837.

Employment Proposals

- 8.19 Proposals for new employment uses will normally be acceptable for B1 / B2 uses, particularly where this respects and serves a local catchment population.
- 8.20 It is also anticipated that the new neighbourhood centre should allow for provision for a new skills and training centre.
- 8.21 Proposals for redevelopment, development, alteration or extension to existing employment activity will be required to:
- Adhere to the overall vision and objectives for the Southern Widnes area and conform with design policies and environmental standards adopted by Halton council;
 - Incorporate the principles of manual for streets and secured by design into layout and design where appropriate;
 - Have regard to the council's design of new industrial and commercial development SPD and the north west best practice design guide; and
 - New commercial developments should seek to achieve a very good BREEAM rating and concurrently provide the opportunity for and encourage renewable energy generation through building design.

Residential Development

- 8.22 Proposals for new housing development within Southern Widnes will be required to:

- Increase the variety of housing available in Southern Widnes to increase choice – mixed tenure and type including the provision of additional affordable housing;
- Densities will be consistent with the objective of providing a mixed tenure and type but as a general principle will not be below 40 dwellings per hectare;
- Incorporate the principles of Home Zones, Secured by Design and Manual for Streets into layout and design;
- All new homes will be required to achieve Code for Sustainable Homes 3 and higher;
- Have regard to the Council's Design of New Residential Development SPD and the North West Best Practice Design Guide ;
- Provide greenspace provision within any residential proposals in accordance with UDP Policy H3 and the Council's Provision of Open Space SPD.

8.23 The release of individual sites for development will be in accordance with a scheme of works intended to ensure that development does not proceed ahead of the infrastructure works required and necessary to support it.

Transport Proposals

8.24 All development proposals will respect the street hierarchy proposed as part of this SPD. All development proposals will be required to enable safe and convenient pedestrian, cycle and bus routes throughout the area and beyond.

8.25 All proposals should provide car parking at suitable locations in accordance with Halton Council's adopted parking standards.

Retail Development

8.26 Proposals for new employment uses will normally be acceptable for A1, A3, A4 and a restricted proportion of A5 uses and only where they support improved and enhanced local services and where they provide for an improved visitor experience, particularly around the new neighbourhood centre.

Flood Risk

8.27 Applicants seeking planning permission should carry out a flood risk assessment on sites in excess of 1 hectare, and for those sites situated in flood zones 2 and 3 in accordance with the provisions of PPS25 *Development and Flood Risk*. Applications should refer to the Halton Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (October 2007) to assess whether their site is location with

in area of flood-risk. Developers will need to consider any advice from the Environment Agency concerning flooding issues in the design of their development. Wherever possible, appropriate mitigation measures should be proposed which should include Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems to restrict run-off to existing rates or better. Surface water run-off rates from any greenfield sites should also be restricted to greenfield rates (including making allowances for climate change).

- 8.28 Table D.2 of PPS25 recognises residential development as more vulnerable to flood risk. Thus, in accordance with Table D.3 of PPS25, the applicant will need to demonstrate a positive exception test for any residential schemes. With regard to mixed use development proposals, a sequential approach should be made whereby only part of the site is located within flood zone 2 & 3, thus ensuring more vulnerable classes of development are steered away from areas of higher risk of flooding.

Contamination

- 8.29 The developers should however, carry out their own site investigations in accordance with Policy PR14 (Contaminated Land) of the Halton UDP before any planning application for development is determined.

Waste

- 8.30 Conforming to the adopted policies of Halton Borough Council, for all new development, Site Waste Management Plans are required to maximise the re-use and recycling of construction waste. As part of any scheme development, there should be provision included for recycling facilities.

Archaeology

- 8.31 An Archaeological Assessment should be undertaken and submitted with all planning applications affecting known or potential areas of archaeological interest. Where potential impacts are identified, appropriate mitigation measures should be proposed and subject to the agreement of the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of development.
- 8.32 The completion of an archaeological assessment and, if appropriate, a programme of field evaluation prior to the determination of a planning application will be required to allow for any further archaeological mitigation to be established at any early stage. Further archaeological mitigation (excavation, watching brief, etc) may then be secured through planning condition.

The Council's Responsibilities

- 8.33 In order to achieve its vision for the regeneration of Southern Widnes, the Council will enter into negotiation with developers to secure the environmental and physical improvements described in this SPD through appropriate planning conditions and planning obligations where necessary.

APPENDIX A: CONTACTS AND USEFUL 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 4, or for further general planning information, visit the Communities and Local Government (CLG) website at www.communities.gov.uk or for a hard copy contact 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 Communities and Local Government website at www.communities.gov.uk. Manual for Streets can be purchased from the Department for Transport at a cost of £22.50, quoting ISBN 9780727735010, or downloaded from www.dft.gov.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 (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

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

Tel: 0303 333 4300

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, Transportation and Logistics
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: 0303 333 4300

Email: building.control@halton.gov.uk

Website: www.halton.gov.uk