Grappenhall and Thelwall Parish Neighbourhood Plan

Green Space Report

August 2025

Table of Contents

1. Green belt....3
2. Ecology....7
3. Accessible Green Space....10
4. Provision for Children and Young People....11
5. Allotments / Community Orchard....12
6. Green Infrastructure....12
7. Proposed Local Green Space....14
References....17

Maps

Figure 1: Green belt land and site allocations....3
Figure 2: New boundary to Green Belt at the SEWUE and the Mersey Valley (MV)Trail....4
Figure 3: Fragmented woodland and paths near SEWUE....5
Figure 4: New boundary to Green Belt by Thelwall Heys site allocation....6
Figure 5: Natural England Priority Habitat....7
Figure 6: Many ponds across the parish have existed for over 100 years....8
Figure 7: Historical map of 1897 showing old ponds and field boundaries....8
Figure 8: Tree canopy near Thelwall Heys....9
Figure 9: Publicly accessible parks, woodland and green space over 0.5 Hectares....11
Figure 10: Green Infrastructure, west....12
Figure 11: Green Infrastructure, east....13
Figure 12: Footpaths and Dual Use Paths (cycle / pedestrian)....13
Figure 13: Proposed areas to get protection of Local Green Space designation, Grappenhall....15
Figure 14: Proposed areas to get protection of Local Green Space designation, Thelwall....16

1. Green belt

About 63% of the parish is Green Belt following release of land for development at Thelwall Heys and for the South East Warrington Urban Extension (SEWUE).

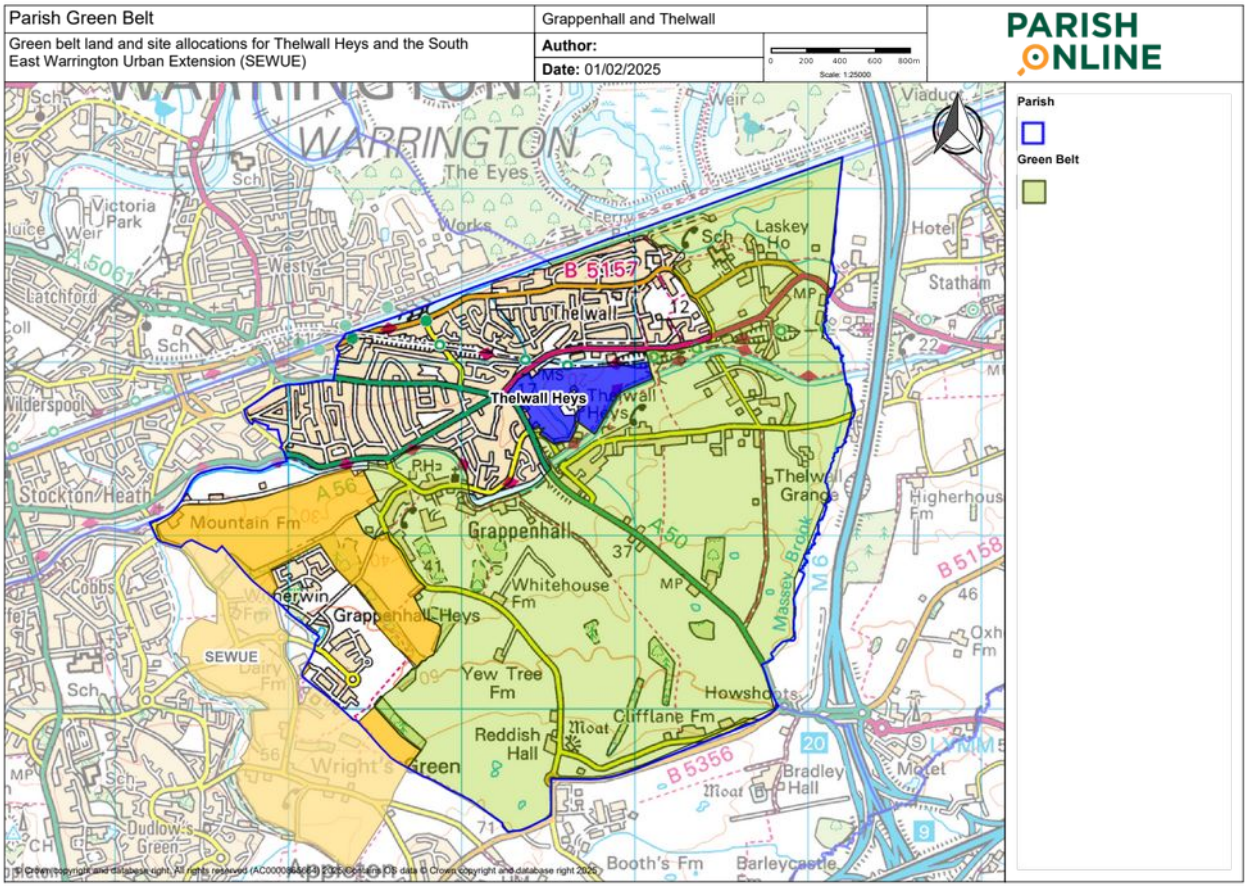


Figure 1: Green belt land and site allocations

The site allocations for the SEWUE and Thelwall Heys have resulted in a new boundary to the Green Belt.

According to policy MD2 of the Local Plan in reference to the SEWUE, where the Green Belt boundary '**consists of field boundaries, these will need to be strengthened to create a new recognisable and permanent Green Belt boundary.'**

The Local Plan Site Specific Requirements state that '**A scheme of compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of land remaining in the Green Belt will be required**. **In the first instance, the improvements should be made in the immediate vicinity of the site and delivered by the developer.** '

SEWUE

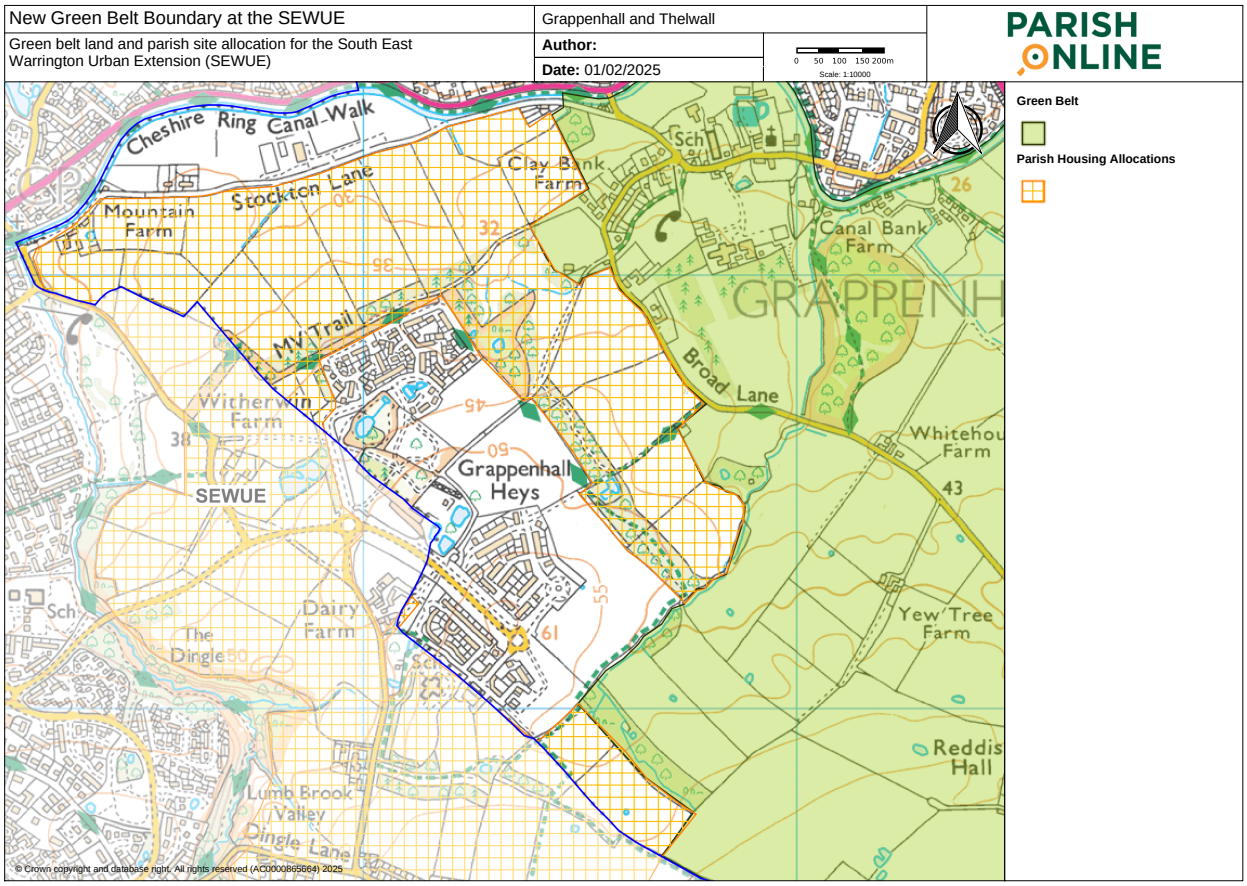


Figure 2: New boundary to Green Belt at the SEWUE and the Mersey Valley (MV)Trail

In the vicinity of the SEWUE Green Belt strengthening and compensatory improvements could include tree planting and enhanced hedgerows to connect fragmented woodland areas. This has the additional benefit of strengthening ecological networks.

'***More, bigger, better and joined up wildlife rich woodlands networks across the landscape.*** ' is one of the priorities of Cheshire and Warrington's Draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

This also aligns with policy DC3 of the Local Plan which states that '*The Council will work with partners to* ***restore, enhance and expand the network of core ecological sites, wildlife corridors, stepping stone habitats and restoration areas*** *in order to: …* **expand tree cover …** and to **support the retention of underused farmland for habitat creation and management**.'

Improved access to the Green Belt could be provided by creating a new footpath between the Grappenhall Wood and the SEWUE, perhaps behind the hedge along Broad Lane.

The Mersey Valley Trail follows Broad Lane between Grappenhall Wood and Hall Lane. Broad Lane is a narrow country lane with a 50mph speed limit, limited visibility due to bends and has no footpath on this stretch. It is dangerous for pedestrians and a barrier to access.

Increased traffic from new development will exacerbate the problem. A new footpath could make the community forest of Grappenhall Wood accessible for new residents and decrease pressure on other woodland paths.

Additionally the lane running from Chichester Close in Grappenhall Heys toward the woodland is in poor condition and should be improved to make Green Belt more accessible.

A public footpath through the grounds of Grappenhall Hall parkland could also connect through to Grappenhall Wood and improve access to green space.

Other suggested new routes for active travel include the length of Stockton Lane and Broad Lane, neither of which have footpaths.

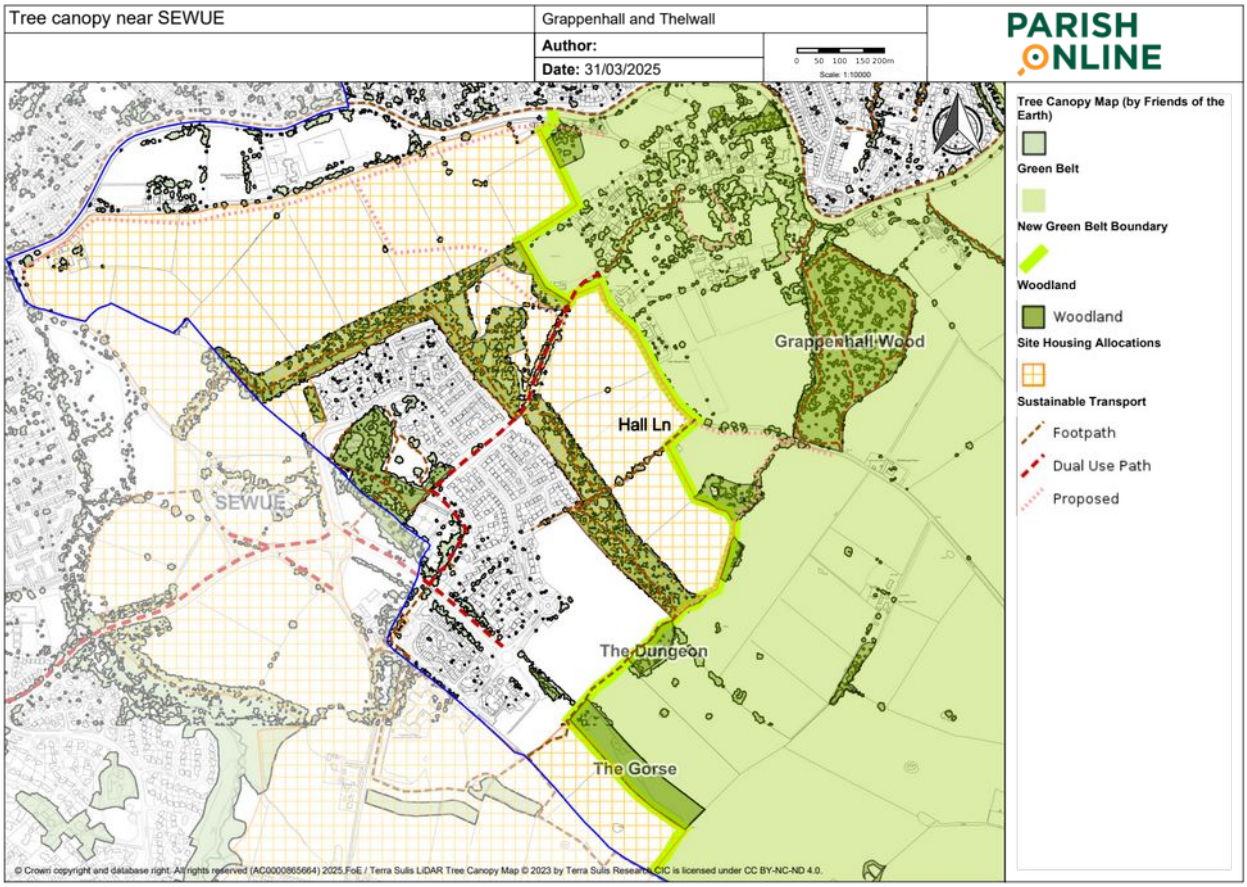


Figure 3: Fragmented woodland and paths near SEWUE.

Thelwall Heys

In the region of Thelwall Heys the Bridgewater Canal forms part of the new Green Belt boundary.

In Policy MD4 of the Local Plan it is noted that ***'The Bridgewater Canal runs along part of the southern border of the site. This is a Green Infrastructure opportunity and development proposals should integrate and support measures that maximise and reinforce the environmental and socio-economic benefits of linkage to the canal corridor and its environs for both current and future residents.'***

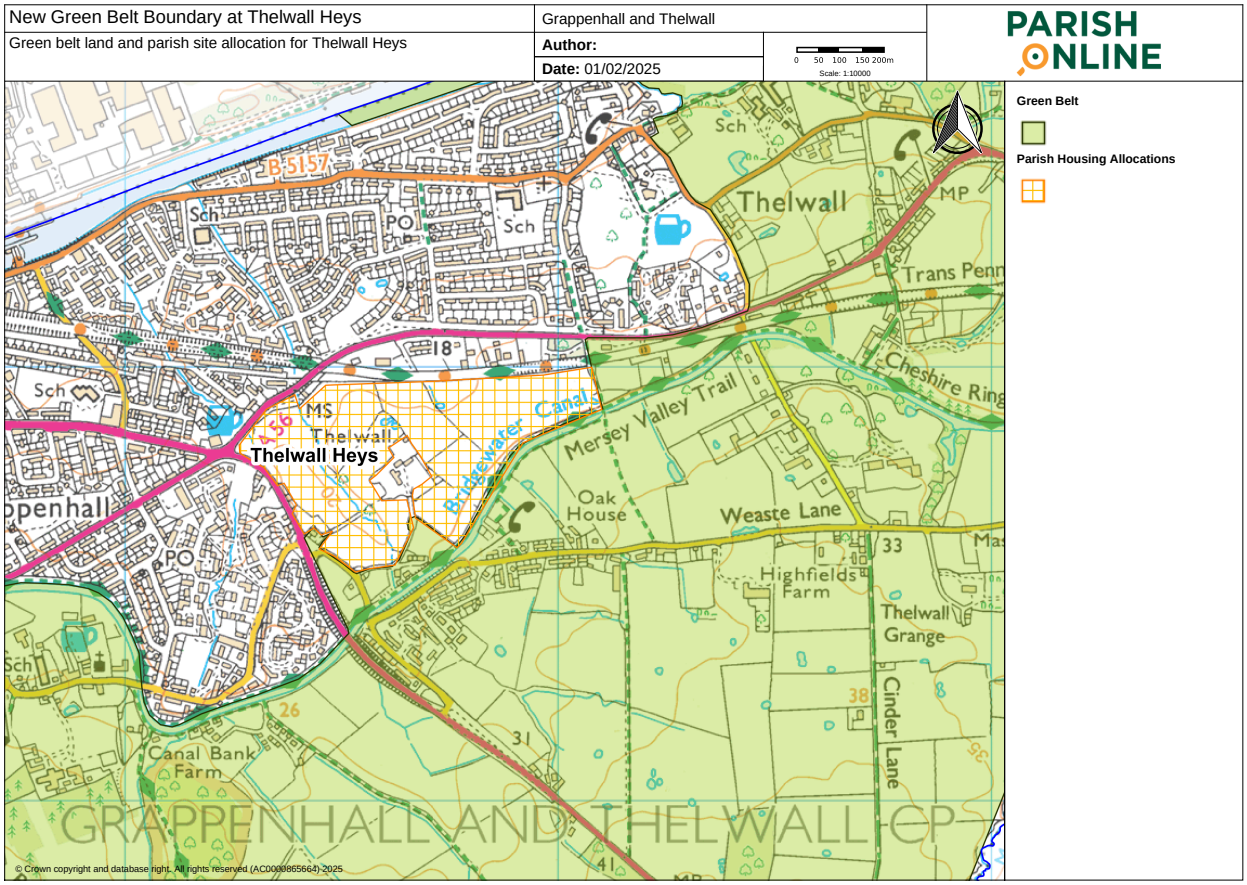


Figure 4: New boundary to Green Belt by Thelwall Heys site allocation

The Cheshire Wildlife Trust included the following when commenting on the proposed Thelwall Heys site allocation in the Local Plan 2021:

*'The **Bridgewater Canal** is located immediately adjacent the allocation. This is highly likely to support a variety of foraging and commuting protected and priority species including bats and otter. **We recommend a minimum undeveloped buffer of 15m from this important wildlife corridor** (inside the allocation red line boundary) is secured in line with the standing advice provided by Natural England to ensure the allocation complies with WLP Policies DC3 and DC4 and NPPF (2021) Paragraphs 174d, 179a, 179b and 180a.'*

2. Ecology

The parish contains areas of floodplain grazing marsh (CFGPM) and deciduous woodland (DWOOD) identified as priority habitat by Natural England.

Three local wildlife sites are noted in the Local Plan. These are Thelwall Meadow and the areas of woodland and ponds at Grappenhall Heys.

Woolston Eyes, a site of special scientific interest (SSSI) is located just across the Manchester Ship Canal from Thelwall Meadow to the north of the parish and is an important wetland habitat.

The Dingle, to the south west of the parish has been recognised as ancient woodland by Natural England.

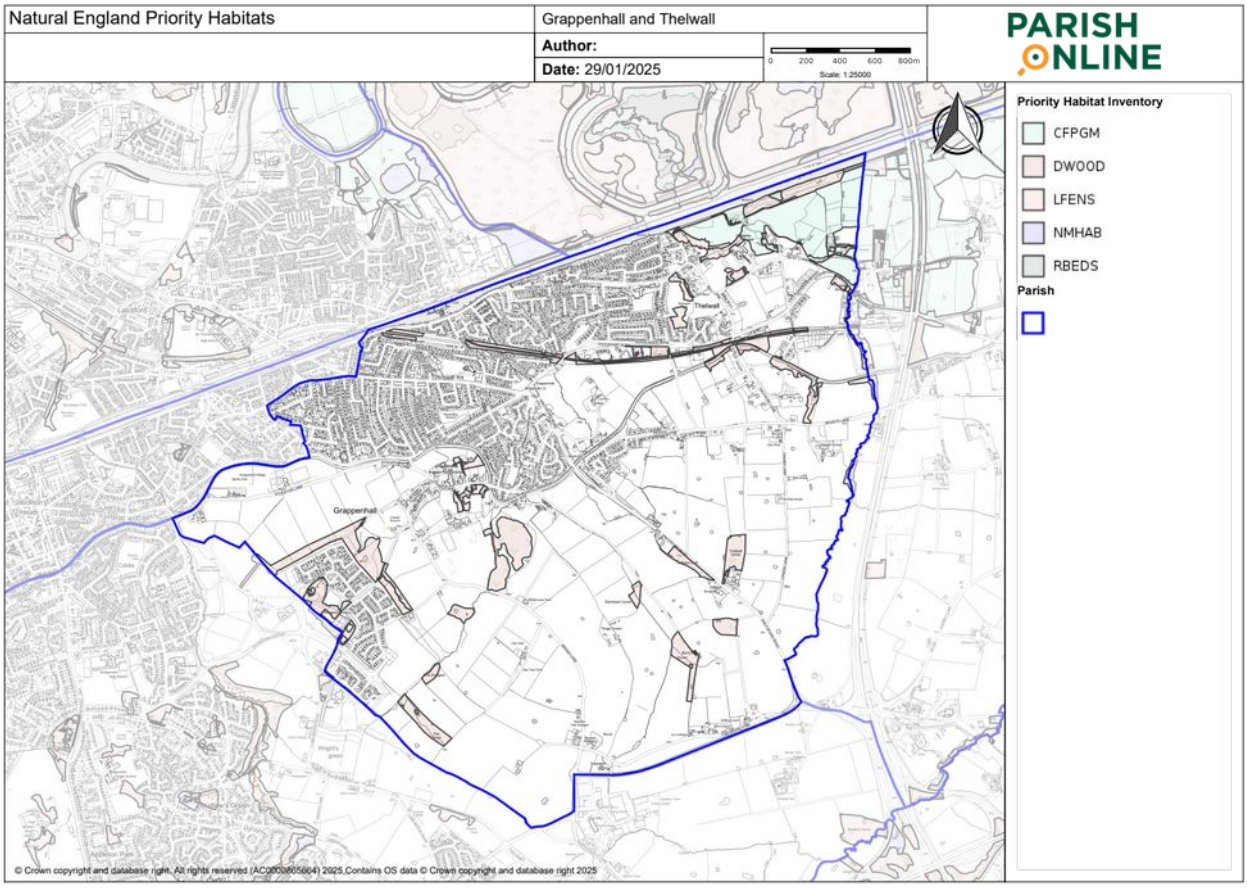


Figure 5: Natural England Priority Habitat

The parish contains numerous ponds that have been around for at least 100 years. For example the ponds at Chaigley School, behind Wilson Close and in Thelwall Heys marked below are present on the historical map from 1897.

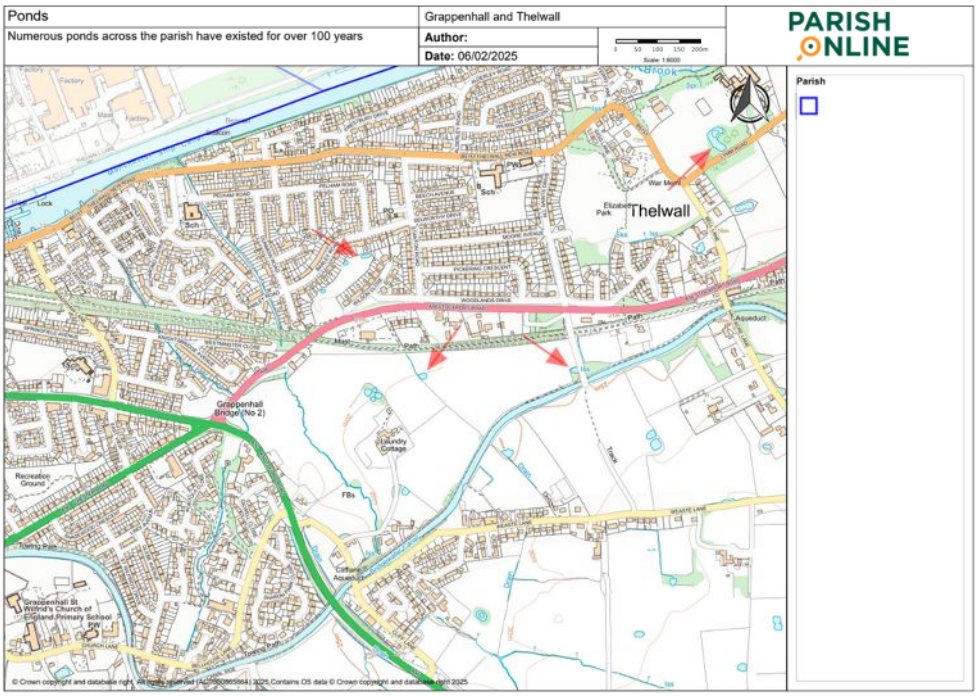


Figure 6: Many ponds across the parish have existed for over 100 years

Ponds in poor condition may be suitable for improvements to enhance biodiversity as part of new development.

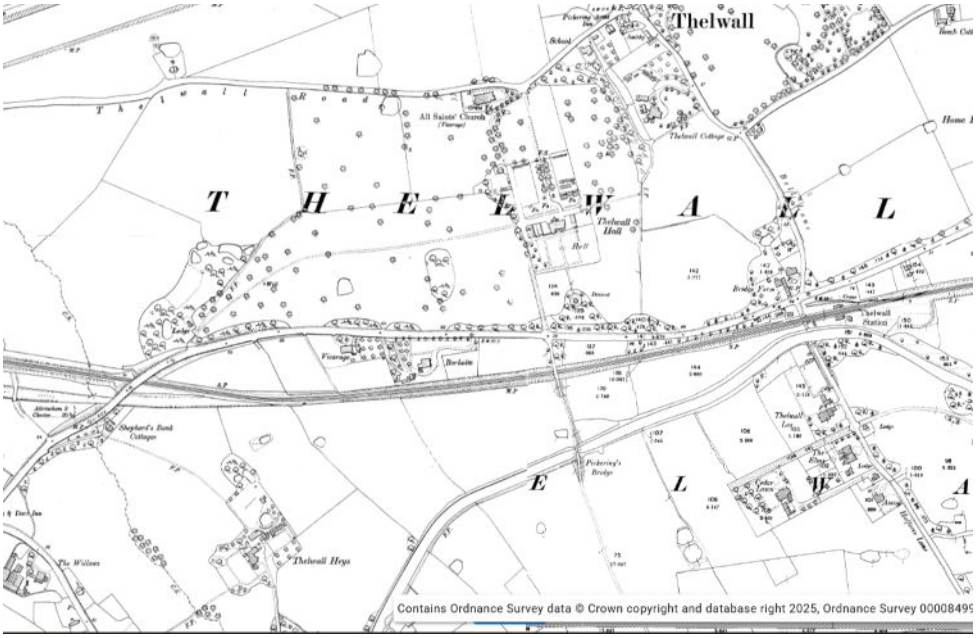


Figure 7: Historical map of 1897 showing old ponds and field boundaries

There are many hedgerows following ancient field boundaries at both site allocations. These may provide important habitat and wildlife corridors and should be preserved where possible. Cheshire and Warrington's Draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy priorities include ' ***More, bigger, better and more joined up hedgerow networks***'.

There are lines of mature trees close to the Thelwall Heys site allocation, for example along the Bridgewater Canal and the Trans Pennine Trail. These may also form wildlife corridors and should be protected and strengthened where possible.

Cheshire and Warrington's Draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy suggests removing or mitigating light pollution, particularly along the river and canal network in order to improve biodiversity and support bat species.

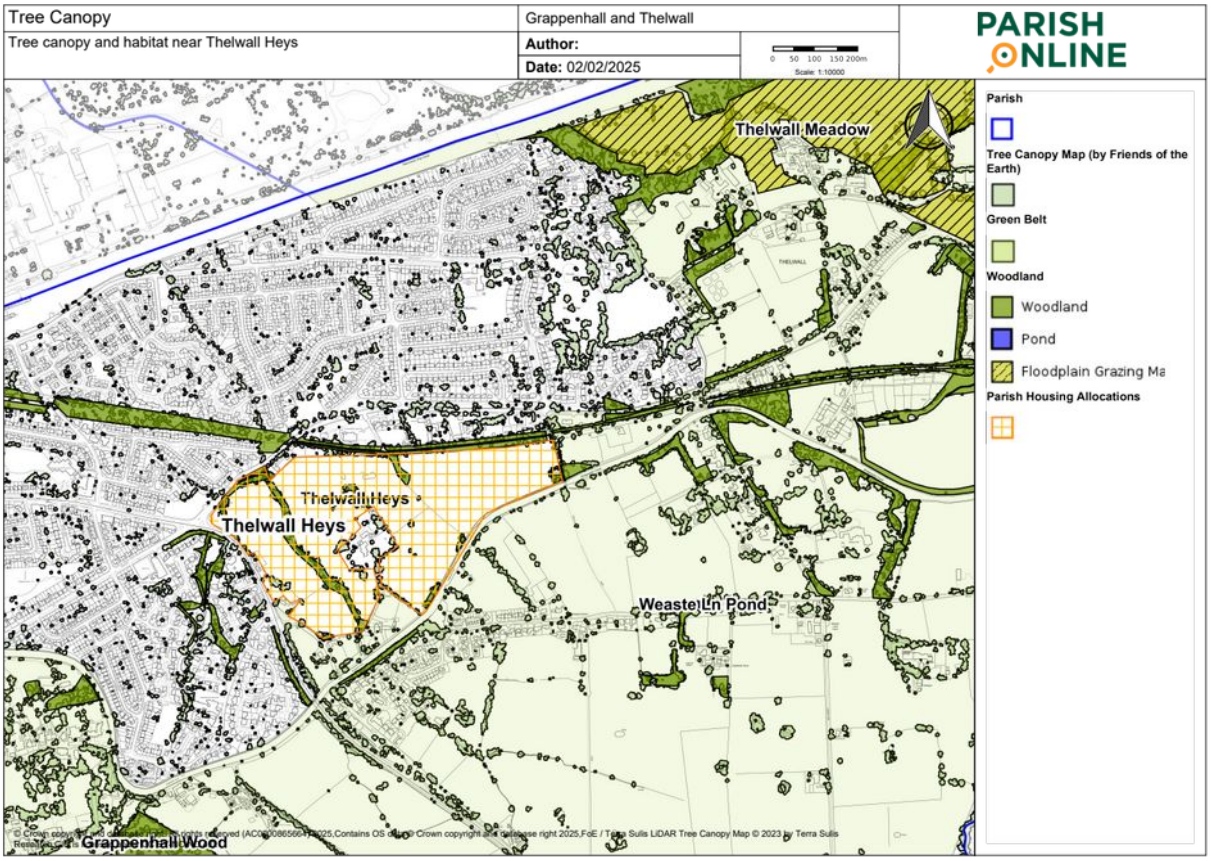


Figure 8: Tree canopy near Thelwall Heys

A project has been created on Inaturalist to aggregate nature observations made in the parish. To date (6/8/25) over five hundred different species have been identified with records from 70 observers. These include 46 species of bird; over 100 species of moth and 43 fungi species.

3. Accessible Green Space

Although there are currently many open views in the parish, much of the green space is accessible only via linear and often unsurfaced paths around field edges, or is part of private sports clubs and school grounds. For example the Bridgewater Canal provides views across farmland; The extensive area at Grappenhall Football and Tennis Club on Stockton Lane is fenced off from walkers and the grass and mature trees of Grappenhall Hall School are not publicly accessible.

In contrast Elizabeth Park in Thelwall provides pleasant areas of grass and mature trees for recreation and a children's playground. Jubilee Park, Morris Brook Park, Grappenhall Heys Walled Garden and village green provide other areas of publicly accessible green space within the Parish. The formal Walled Garden has limited hours of opening.

Natural England Accessible Space Standards:

Within 15 minutes' walk:

• A doorstep greenspace of at least 0.5ha within 200 metres, OR

• A local natural greenspace of at least 2ha within 300 metres walk from home.

AND

• A medium sized neighbourhood natural greenspace (10ha) within 1km.

Accessible Green Space over 0.5Ha within parish

Name	Description	Size (Ha)
Elizabeth Park	Sweeping parkland views, mature trees, playground (LEAP), sports pitch	5.6
Morris Brook Park (Bellhouse Ln/ Portola Close; Glebe Ave/ Laurel Bank)	Small playground, seating, stream and mature trees, areas of rough grass, sometimes waterlogged	2.6
Grappenhall Heys	Formal parkland and walled garden with limited hours of opening and cafe; publicly accessible woodland, ponds and village green	5.9
Jubilee Park (Euclid Avenue)	Informal recreation and playground (LEAP)	1.3
Water Woods (Wilson Close)	Semi natural, grass, trees and ponds	1.2
Parrs Wood (G. Heys Long Woodland)	Semi natural woodland and ponds	4.2
Grappenhall Plantation	Semi natural woodland and pond	4.3
Grappenhall Wood	Deciduous woodland planted for the millenium	8.1

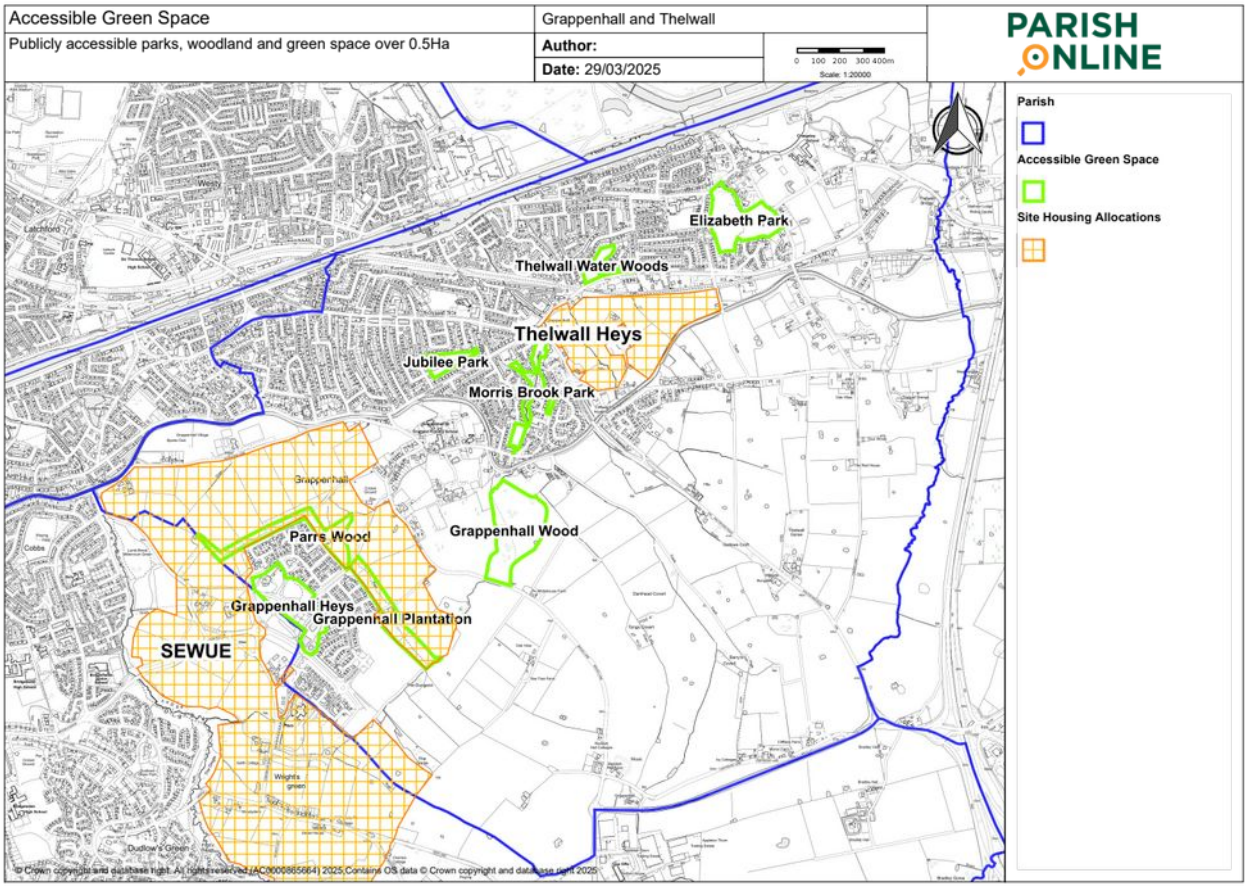


Figure 9: Publicly accessible parks, woodland and green space over 0.5 Hectares

4. Provision for Children and Young People

There are currently five equipped play areas in the parish:

Diamond Park (Barley Road) play area	LEAP
Morris Brook Park Play Area	LEAP
Bretland Drive / Stansfield Drive Play Area	LEAP
Elizabeth Park Play area	LEAP
Jubilee Park (Euclid Avenue) play area	LEAP

There are no equipped sites for young people such as skate parks, BMX, a multi use games area (MUGA) or youth shelters in the parish. The nearest NEAPs are currently at Ridgeway Grundy Memorial Park in Lymm and at Victoria Park in Latchford.

Further equipped play areas are planned as part of new development at Grappenhall Heys.

5. Allotments / Community Orchard

There are no allotments within the parish.

It is noted in Cheshire and Warrington's Draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy that Traditional Orchards are our rarest priority habitat.

New development provides the opportunity to incorporate a community orchard and/or allotments.

According to the WBC Open Space Report of March 2023 "***Allotments should generally be considered as highly valued as they are often important forms of open space provision recognised for their social opportunities as well as the broad range of community members they can service. Allotments can be used by families, as well as the older generation.*** "

It is also noted in this report that provision in Warrington is "significantly below" the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG) suggested standard of 20 allotments per 1,000 households.

6. Green Infrastructure

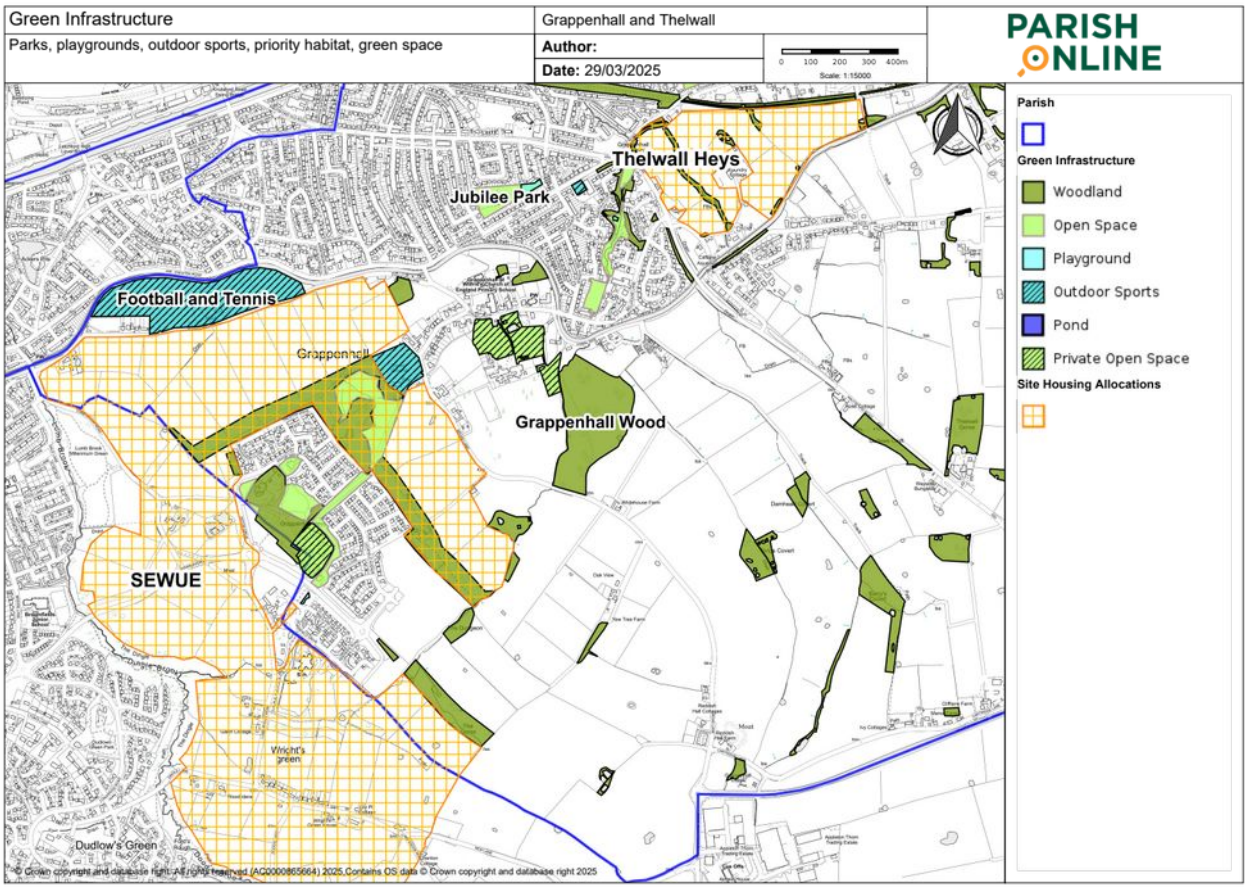


Figure 10: Green Infrastructure, west

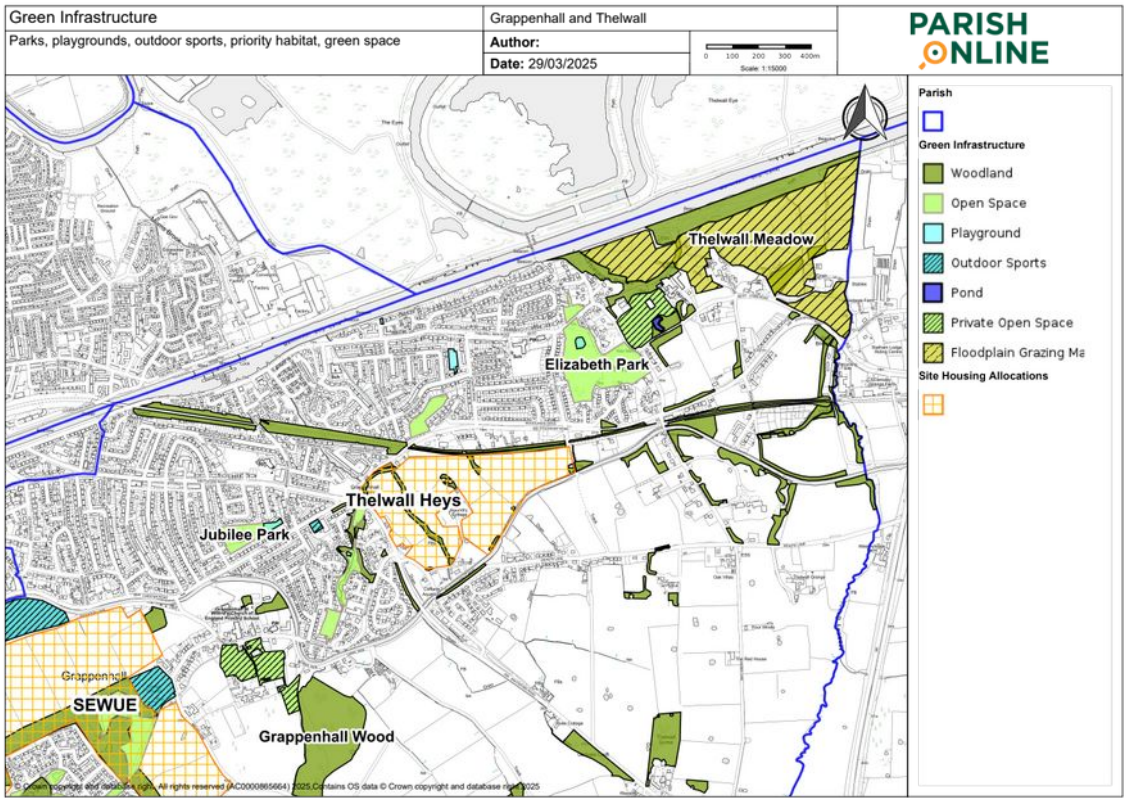


Figure 11: Green Infrastructure, east

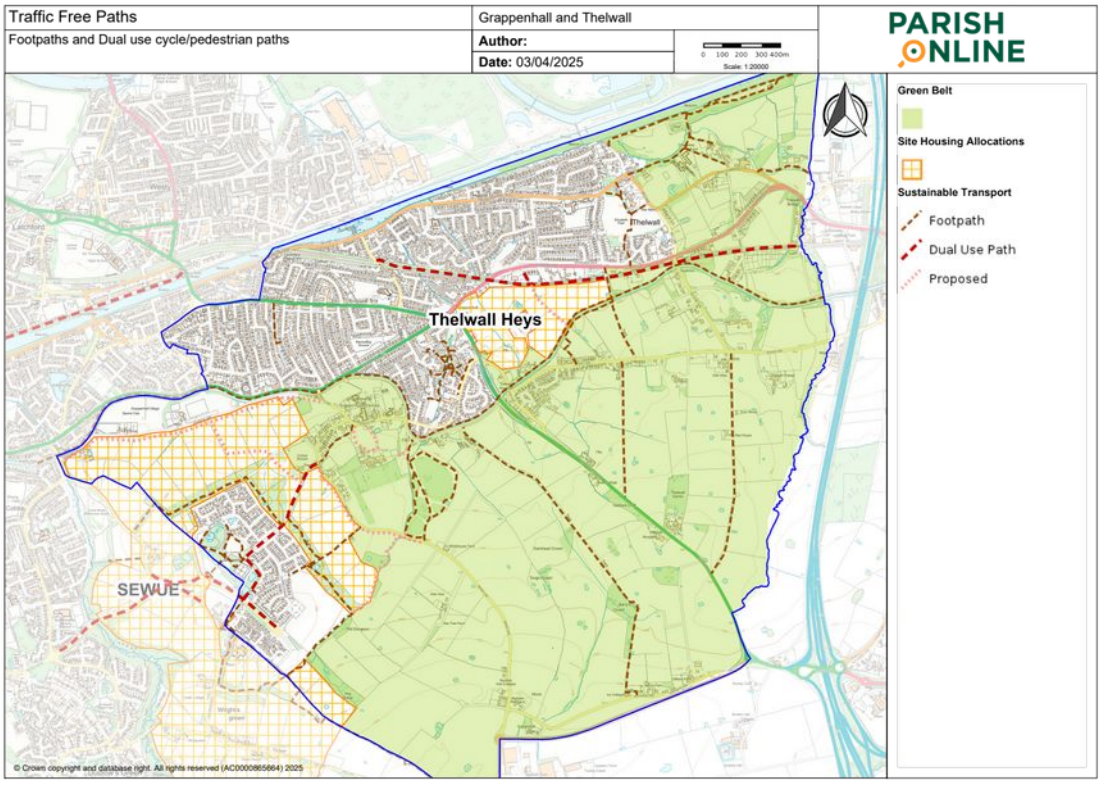


Figure 12: Footpaths and Dual Use Paths (cycle / pedestrian)

7. Proposed Local Green Space

The following table lists proposed areas to receive the protection of Local Green Space designation:

Name	Description	Designations	Location	Value	Size (Ha)
The Dungeon	Woodland bordering SEWUE	Priority Habitat	Adjacent SEWUE	Old woodland present on historical map from 1897; wildlife value	0.6
Grappenhall Heys plantation	Woodland and ponds	Contains Priority Habitat	Within SEWUE	Popular footpath; Mersey Valley Trail, wildlife value	4.3
Parrs Wood	Mixed woodland, ponds and semi-natural open space.up to cricket club boundary.	Contains Local Wildlife Site, Priority Habitat and Community forest	Within SEWUE	Old woodland and pond present on historical map from 1897; popular with leisure walkers; Mersey Valley Trail; wildlife value, heronry	10.5
Grappenhall Wood	Deciduous woodland and ponds	Priority Habitat; Community forest	Adjacent Grappenhall Conservation Area	Tranquil area with wildlife and recreation value	8.1
Grappenhall Heys	Woodland, ponds and village green (excluding walled garden)	Local Wildlife Site, Priority Habitat; Community forest	Bordering housing developments	Contains woods and ponds present on historical map of 1897; recreation and wildlife value	4.3
Grappenhall Hall parkland	Mature trees, pond and open space. grounds of former School	Within Grappenhall Conservation Area and Green Belt	Church Lane, Grappenhall Village	Heritage, landscape character; potential high amenity value if opened to public as within village, opposite primary school	2.9
Elizabeth Park	Mature trees, public open space, grass sports pitch	Within Thelwall Conservation Area	Thelwall Village, adjacent pub	Popular public park with sweeping views; recreation value and landscape character	5.6
Village Green	Open space, mature trees and new fruit trees	Within Thelwall Conservation Area	Thelwall Village, opposite Gigg Lane	Amenity value and landscape character.	0.4
Thelwall Meadow	Floodplain Grazing Marsh bordering Manchester Ship Canal	Local Wildlife Site, Priority Habitat, part within Thelwall Conservation Area	Adjacent Thelwall Village, opposite SSI (Woolston Eyes)	Wildlife value; historical route of The Mersey cut off by Ship Canal; recreation value	7.3

Water Woods	Open space, mature trees and ponds		Within Thelwall residential area and very close to Thelwall Heys site allocation	Amenity value, current and potential wildlife value	1.2

It is also considered important that new areas of communal green space created within the SEWUE and Thelwall Heys receive protection from future development. In Thelwall Heys this is expected to be the central area and is marked as such on figure 14.

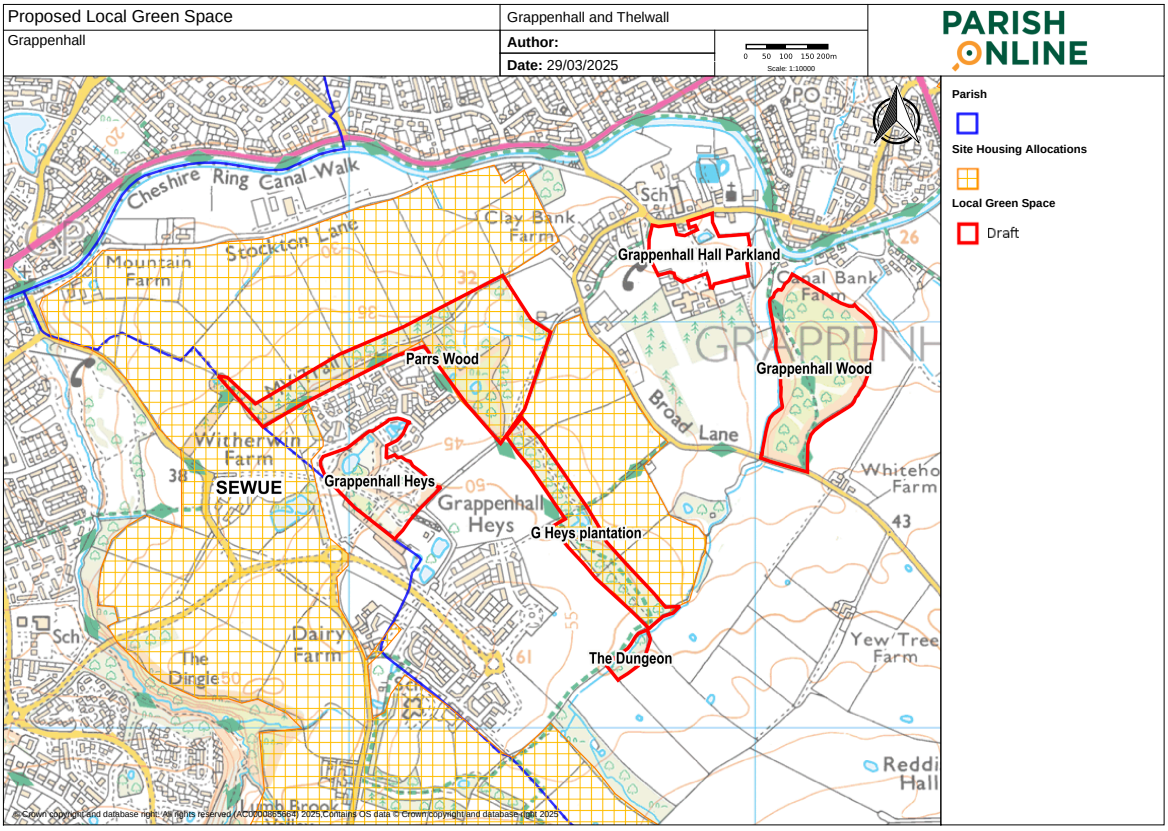


Figure 13: Proposed areas to get protection of Local Green Space designation, Grappenhall

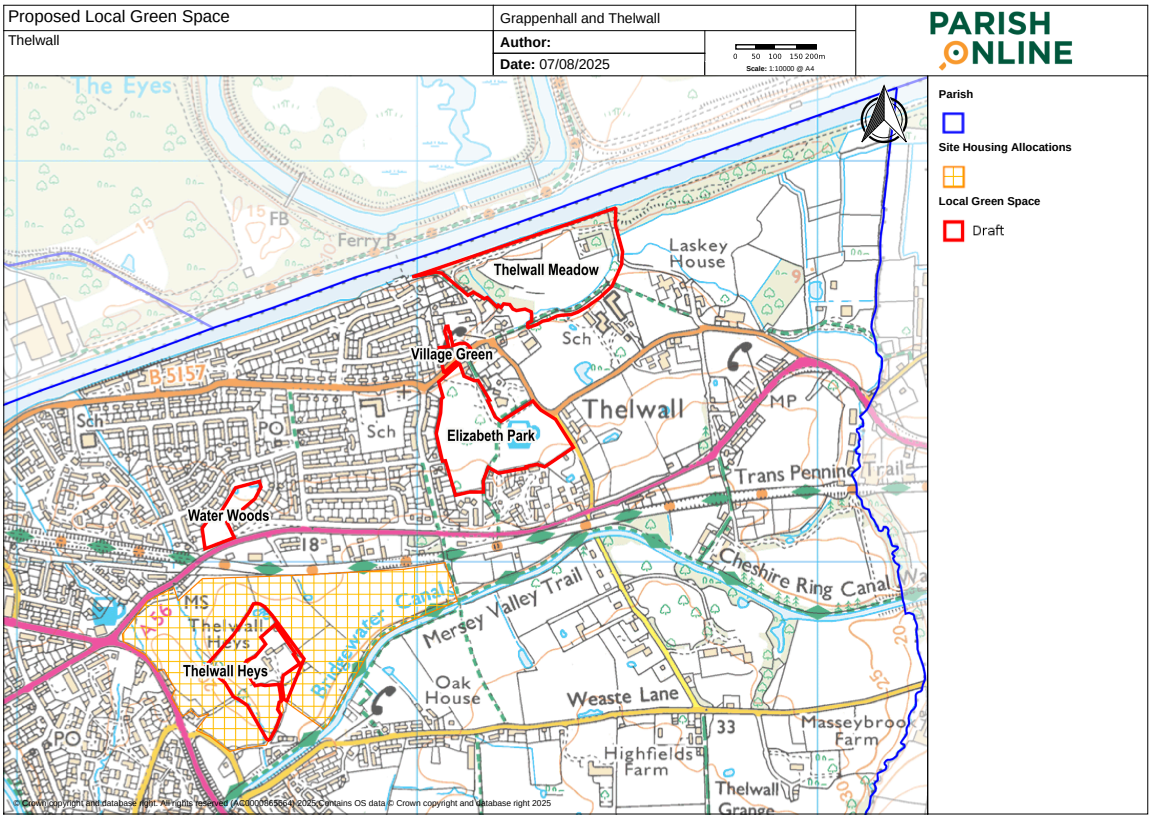


Figure 14: Proposed areas to get protection of Local Green Space designation, Thelwall

References

1. Warrington local plan - 2021-22 - 2038-39 - Adopted December 2023
2. Inaturalist observations in Grappenhall and Thelwall [https://www.inaturalist.org/observations?place_id=211629]
3. Cheshire and Warrington's Draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy
4. WARRINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL OPEN SPACE REPORT MARCH 2023
5. Cheshire Wildlife Trust, comments on Warrington Local Plan Nov 2021 [https://www.warrington.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022/localplan/UPSVLP-0421-Attachment-Redacted.pdf]
6. Village Design Statement, Grappenhall & Thelwall Parish Council, 2003
7. Green Infrastructure Standards for England – Summary, January 2023
8. Woodland Trust Grappenhall Heys Management Plan 2017-2022
9. Woodland Trust Grappenhall Wood Management Plan 2015 - 2020