WARRINGTON
Borough Council

Grappenhall and Thelwall Neighbourhood Plan

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

Initial Screening Determination Statement

September 2025

1. Habitats Regulations Assessment Introduction

1.1 This statement sets out Warrington Borough Council's initial determination of the need for a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) in accordance with Regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and European Directive 92/43/EEC (the Habitats Directive) for the Grappenhall and Thelwall Neighbourhood Plan.

2. Habitats Regulations Assessment Context

2.1 The requirement for a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) is set out within Regulation 63 the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive. Legislation requires an Appropriate Assessment of any plan or project to be undertaken to assess if it is likely to have significant adverse effects upon the integrity of internationally designated sites of nature conservation importance, now known as the national site network (formerly known as Natura 2000 sites).

2.2 The Habitats Directive is transposed into English legislation through the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

2.3 The Warrington Local Plan 2021/22-2038/39 has been subject to an HRA assessment process undertaken by AECOM. The HRA has been developed over a number of years in parallel to the drafting of the Local Plan and hence has fully assessed the impacts of the Plan. An assessment was undertaken for the first Regulation 19 Local Plan consultation in 2019. An updated assessment was undertaken to accompany the UPSVLP 2021 (The Draft Local Plan).

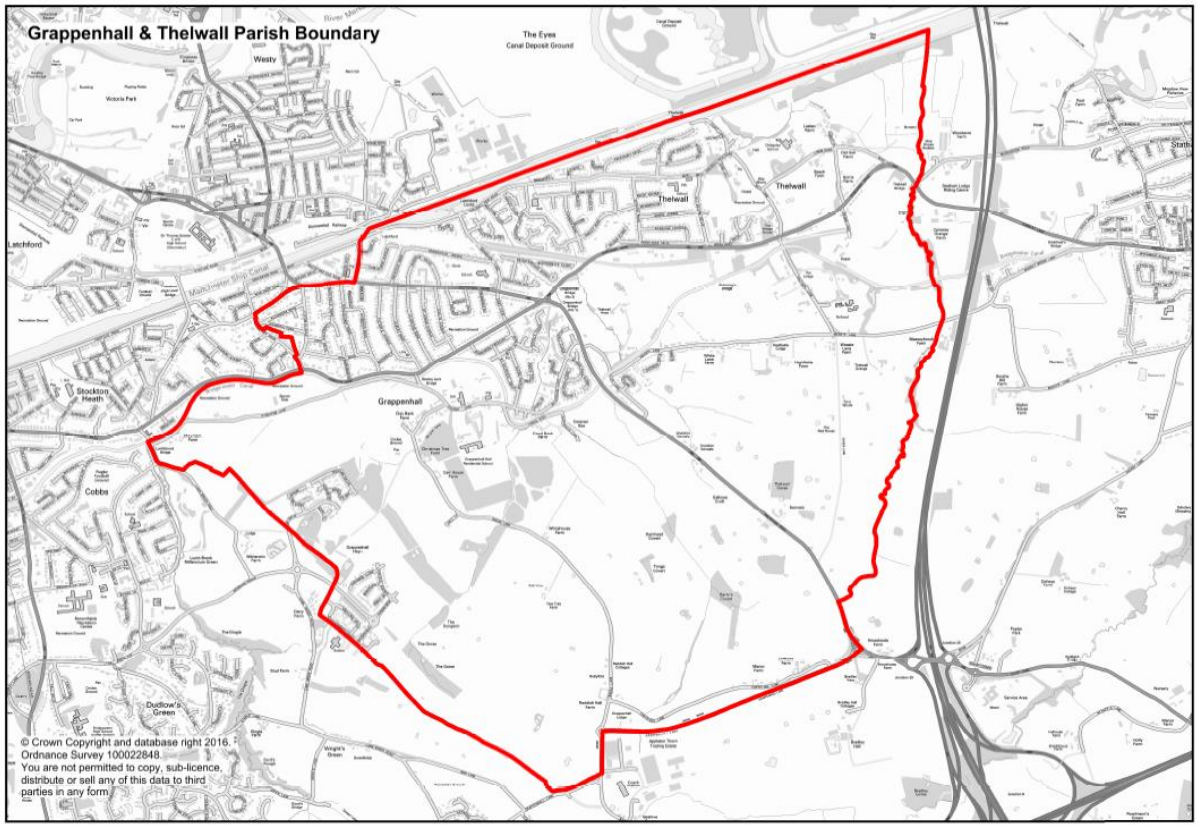
2.4 This assessment included an assessment of in combination effects taking into account other plans and projects as well as Local Plan site allocations, policies and the impact of the plan as a whole. A further updated version of the Warrington Local Plan HRA Report was produced in December 2021 in order to take account of comments made on the HRA during the Regulation 19 consultation on the Draft Local Plan (the UPSVLP 2021). The Warrington Local Plan 2021/22-38/39 was also subject to a final HRA assessment produced by AECOM (March 2023) at the Main Modifications Stage.

2.5 The purpose of a HRA is to assess the impacts of a land-use plan against the conservation objectives of the national network of sites (formerly known as Natura 2000 Sites). The assessment must determine whether the plan would adversely affect the integrity of the site in terms of its nature conservation objectives. Where negative effects are identified other options should be examined to avoid any potential damaging effects.

3. Grappenhall and Thelwall Neighbourhood Plan

3.1 The Grappenhall and Thelwall Neighbourhood Plan has been led and produced by Grappenhall and Thelwall Parish Council, along with a number of local volunteer residents; with the designated Neighbourhood Plan area covering the whole of the Grappenhall and Thelwall Parish area, as shown below in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Designated Neighbourhood Plan area.



3.2 The Grappenhall and Thelwall Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate any sites for development over and above those identified in the Council's adopted Local Plan that have already been through the HRA process at the required Plan making stages. It focuses on a series of criteria-based policies against which development proposals through the planning application process should be assessed against, within the neighbourhood area.

3.3 The Neighbourhood Plan sets out the following vision for the designated area:

Our area will develop in such a way as to provide well-designed housing and infrastructure that meets the needs of the local community and reflects the green setting of the Parish.

Development will maintain and enhance our network of green spaces incorporating trees, hedges, water bodies and wildlife corridors. The development of an integrated system of walking, cycling and public transport will be a priority.

Development will respect and enhance the area's local identity, history and heritage including the sensitive restoration and reuse of vacant or underused buildings and sites.

New housing will comprise a mix of housing type and tenure, build on the area's current sense of community and civic pride and facilitate investment in local infrastructure in terms of transport improvements, community, play, health and educational facilities.

3.4 In order to deliver the Neighbourhood Plan vision, a series of themes are also set out in the Neighbourhood Plan:

- **Theme 1 Green and Blue Spaces**: Protecting, maintaining and enhancing our network of green and blue spaces; identifying our most important green spaces and adding an extra layer of protection by designating them as Local Green Spaces; and strengthening the green belt boundary.

- **Theme 2 Heritage**: Ensuring that new development preserves and enhances the area's heritage, being especially mindful of the Parish's listed buildings, locally listed assets and the three designated conservation areas.

- **Theme 3 Design**: Setting out a series of design principles for all new development, from infill proposals and conversions to large-scale housing developments, to ensure that it contributes positively to the existing character and architectural heritage of the area.

- **Theme 4 Housing Need**: Ensuring that new homes meet the needs of local people.

- **Theme 5 Infrastructure**: Protecting the Parish's existing community facilities and ensuring that, as our area grows, the need for additional infrastructure is addressed and ensuring that footpaths and cycling routes are protected, connected and enhanced.

4. HRA Screening

4.1 The HRA Screening Assessment must determine whether a plan would adversely affect, or is likely to affect, the integrity of a site(s) in terms of its nature conservation objectives.

4.2 As set out in the Grappenhall and Thelwall Neighbourhood Plan Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Determination Statement, there are no Natura 2000 sites within the boundary of the designated Neighbourhood Plan area.

5. Initial HRA Screening Determination Conclusion

5.1 The Local Plan 2021/22-2038/39 was adopted by Full Council on 04 December 2023 and has already been subject to a full and iterative HRA through the Local Plan process, as well as extensive public consultation and an Examination in Public by the Planning Inspectorate.

5.2 The Grappenhall and Thelwall Neighbourhood Plan, if made, will become part of the statutory development plan for the designated Neighbourhood Plan area, alongside the adopted Warrington Local Plan 2021/22 – 2038/39.

5.3 The Grappenhall and Thelwall Neighbourhood Plan has no site allocations but does introduces criteria-based policies (which have yet to be subject to consultation and examination) that address local issues. However, they do not alter the status of land to a degree which would have a significant effect on the environment.

4.4 Based on this initial Screening Determination Statement, the Council therefore concludes it is not necessary to carry out a full HRA on the Grappenhall and Thelwall Neighbourhood Plan.

4.5 However, the Council will review the screening conclusions reached in light of any recommendations made by the statutory consultee, and consult with the Parish Council, before confirming its final HRA conclusion.