WARRINGTON
Borough Council

Grappenhall and Thelwall Neighbourhood Plan

Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA)

Initial Screening Determination Statement

September 2025

1. Strategic Environmental Assessment Introduction

1.1 A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is required for all Neighbourhood Plans which may result in likely significant environmental effects. Any Neighbourhood Plan must be accompanied by either a statement of reasons as to why SEA was not required, or an environmental report as part of the SEA process.

1.2 This statement sets out Warrington Borough Council's initial determination of the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with Regulation 9 (3) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 and European Directive 2001/42/EC for the Grappenhall and Thelwall Neighbourhood Plan.

2. Strategic Environmental Assessment Context

2.1 The requirement for a SEA is set out in the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the Regulations), which implements the requirements of the European Directive 2001/42/EC.

2.2 The SEA Directive (2001/42/EC) identifies the purpose of SEA as "to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development".

2.3 Plans and programmes are defined under Article 2 (a) of the Directive as being:

- Subject to preparation and/or adoption by an authority at national, regional or local level or which are prepared by an authority for adoption, through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government; and
- Required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions (administrative provisions include publicly available documents involving consultation, prepared formally which requires a plan or programme to be prepared).

2.4 The Responsible Authority (in this instance Warrington Borough Council) must determine whether the plan or programme under assessment is likely to have significant environmental effects, taking account of the criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the Regulations. The Regulations require that the results of this process are set out in a Screening Determination Statement (this document), which must be publicly available.

2.5 Before the Responsible Authority makes a formal determination in relation to SEA, there is a requirement to consult the three statutory consultation bodies designated in the Regulations (the Environment Agency, Historic England, and Natural England) on whether an environmental assessment is required.

3. Warrington Borough Council Local Plan 2021/22 – 2038/39

3.1 The basic conditions require Neighbourhood Plans to be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the Development Plan for the area of the authority. In this instance the adopted Development Plan for the area is the Warrington Local Plan 2021/22 – 2038/39.

3.2 Warrington's Local Plan was adopted on 04 December 2023 and sets the strategic approach to development across the Borough, with all the Local Plan policies being strategic.

3.3 The adopted Local Plan has already been subject to a full and iterative SA/SEA and HRA through the Local Plan process, as well as extensive public consultation and an Examination in Public by the Planning Inspectorate.

3.4 The adopted Warrington Local Plan can be viewed from the link below:

Warrington local plan - 2021-22 - 2038-39 - Adopted December 2023

3.5 Within the Neighbourhood Plan designated area boundary there are 2 Local Plan residential allocations. Policy MD3 – Thelwall Heyes and Policy MD2 – South East Warrington Urban Extension of the adopted Local Plan.

3.6 The SEWUE is by far the most significant allocation in the local Plan and in part of the Neighbourhood Plan area and also covers neighbouring Parish areas of Stretton and Appleton.

3.7 To ensure a coordinated sustainable approach to new development across the allocation site, part 6 of policy MD3 sets out that the Development Framework will provide:

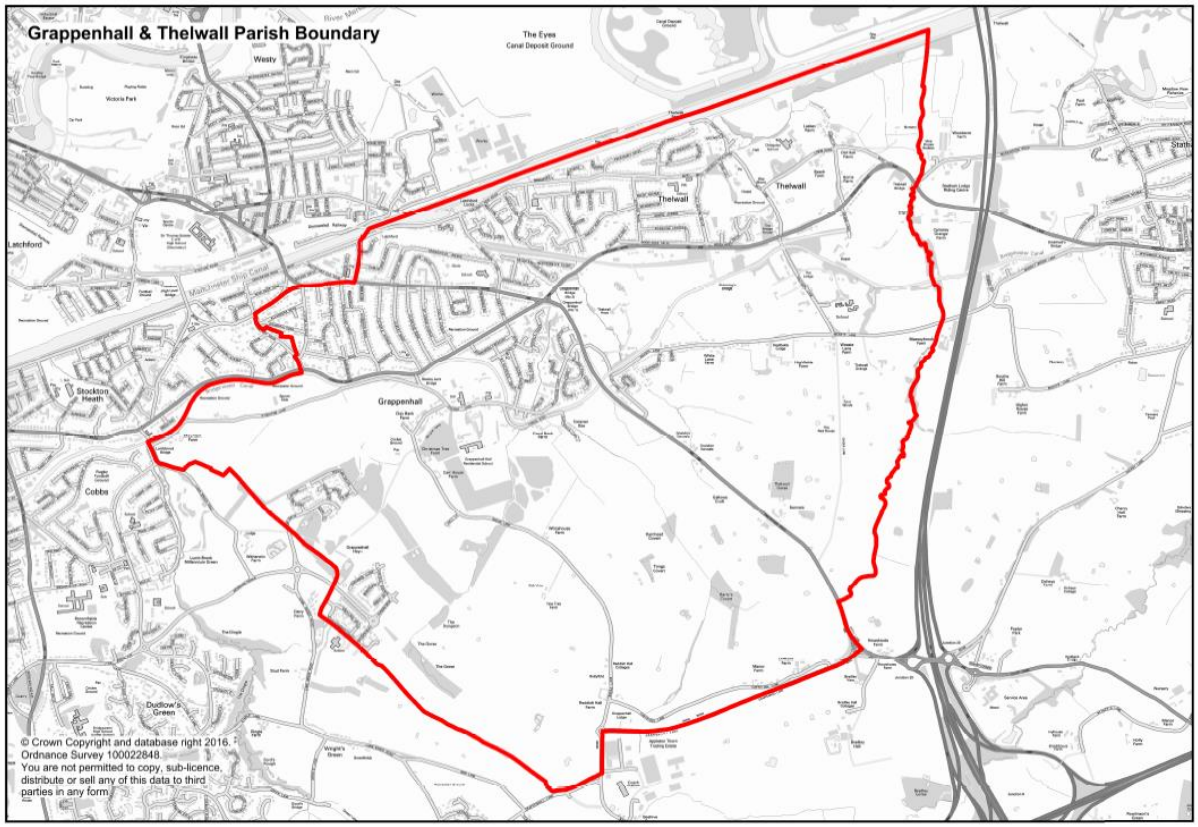
- A comprehensive spatial masterplan for the entire development site, based on the principles and requirements set out in this policy and reflecting site opportunities and constraints;
- A comprehensive infrastructure delivery strategy for the development site with details on phasing, delivery triggers and delivery responsibilities; and
- An allocation wide approach to infrastructure funding, including planning obligations.

3.8 In accordance with adopted Local Plan policy MD3, the draft Development Framework will also need to be subject to public consultation and approved by the Council's Cabinet. It will also be subjected to a further SEA/HRA Screening Assessment as it evolves.

4. Grappenhall and Thelwall Neighbourhood Plan

4.1 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.



4.2 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 SEA 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.

4.3 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.

4.4 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.

5. SEA Screening Assessment

5.1 Assessment 1 sets out how the Government's guidance provided in the 'Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive' has been applied to the Grappenhall and Thelwall Neighbourhood Plan. The Government's Guidance suggests a flowchart of questions to determine whether SEA is required.

Assessment 1: Does the Neighbourhood Plan require a SEA?

Question	Commentary	Conclusion
1. Is the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority, OR prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by	The preparation of and adoption of the G&TNP is facilitated through the provision of The Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended by the Localism Act.	

Parliament or Government? (Art. 2(a))	The G&TNP has been led and produced by Grappenhall and Thelwall Parish Council, along with a number of local volunteer residents (as the 'relevant body') and will be 'made' by Warrington Borough Council (as the Local Authority), if successful at referendum.	Yes-go to Q2
2. Is the NP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	There is no statutory requirements for Neighbour hood Plans to be part of the statutory Development Plan for the Borough. However, it is optional under the provisions of The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011, and, if 'made', will form part of the Development Plan alongside the Warrington Local Plan for the Neighbourhood Plan area.	Yes- go to Q3
3. Is the NP prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, AND does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II (see Appendix 2) to the EIA Directive? (Art 3.2(a))	The G&TNP does not set the framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II of the EIA Directive.	No - go to Q4
4. Will the NP, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment for future development under Article 6 or 7	An assessment is not required as there is no SPA, SAC or Ramsar site that will be impacted by the Neighbourhood Plan.	No – go to Q6

of the Habitats Directive? (Art. 3.2 (b))	It is acknowledged that a very limited area of the Neighbourhood Plan area to the north is in the Woolston Eyes SSSI 500M Buffer Zone, however; this is a national designation and has not been designated as SPA or SAC under European legislation.	
5. Does the NP determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a PP subject to Art. 3.2? (Art. 3.3)	N/A	N/A
6. Does the NP set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Art 3.4)	Once made the Neighbourhood Plan will form part of the statutory Development Plan for the designated area.	Yes – go to Q8
7. Is the NP's sole purpose to serve the national defence or civil emergency, OR is it a financial or budget PP, OR is it co-financed by structural funds or EAFF programmes 2000 to 2006/7? (Art 3.8, 3.9)	N/A	N/A
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)	Based on the information and assessments at paragraph 5 of this initial Screening Determination Statement, it is not considered that the G&TNP will have a significant effect on the environment, or on designated sites, therefore, SEA is not required.	See assessment 2. Likely significant effects on the environment.

Assessment 2: Is the Neighbourhood Plan likely to have a Significant Effect on the Environment? (Schedule 1: Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects on the environment)

SEA Directive Criteria	Summary of Environments effects	Likely Significant Effects?
1. Characteristics of the Neighbourhood Plan having particular regard to:		
a) The degree to which the plan or programme sets out a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size or operating conditions or by allocating resources.	If made, the Neighbourhood Plan would become part of the statutory Development Plan for the designated area and would therefore contribute to the development framework for future development requiring planning permission in the designated area. It would sit alongside the wider planning policy framework including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2024) and the adopted Warrington Local Plan 2021/22 – 2038/39. It does not, however, allocate sites for future development in the designated area over and above the two allocated sites in the adopted Warrington Local Plan than fall within the Neighbourhood Plan area. It will not cause any significant environmental effects over and above those already assessed through the Local Plan SA/SEA	No
b) The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy.	The Neighbourhood Plan must be in conformity with the NPPF. The policies within the Neighbourhood Plan also need to be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the adopted Warrington Local Plan 2021/22 – 2038/39. Therefore, the Neighbourhood Plan will not influence other plans or programmes as it forms a lower tier of the existing planning policy hierarchy for a limited defined area and consequently will not cause any significant environmental	No

	effects over and above those already assessed through the Local Plan SA/SEA.	
c) The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.	The Neighbourhood Plan policies will protect and enhance the natural environment of the designated area, addressing various environmental issues. As such, the Neighbourhood Plan aligns with the promotion of sustainable development, as set out in the adopted Local Plan polices and is unlikely to give rise to significant effects over and above those already assessed through the Local Plan SA/SEA.	No
d) Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme.	The Local Plan SEA and HRA both identified environmental constraints within the Borough and across the proposed site allocations for development. In this context, the Neighbourhood Plan will not introduce or exacerbate any environmental problems and give rise to significant effects over and above those already assessed through the Local Plan SA/SEA.	No
e) The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes related to waste management or water).	The Neighbourhood Plan is not directly relevant to the implementation of European Legislation but will help support the implementation of other plans and programmes related to legislation on the environment through supporting the delivery of the Local Plan 2021/22 – 2038/39 polices. It will not cause any significant environmental effects over and above those already assessed through the Local Plan SA/SEA	No

2. Characteristics of the effects and area likely to be affected having particular regard to:		**Likely Significant Effect?**
a) The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects	The Neighbourhood Plan does not identify development sites but does introduce criteria-based policies to manage development; but relies on higher tier plans and policies to deliver mitigation measures. The Neighbourhood Plan is therefore considered unlikely to give rise to significant effects over and above those already assessed through the Local Plan SA/SEA.	No
b) The cumulative nature of the effects	Cumulative effects have been considered within the SA for the Warrington Local Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate sites for development and seeks to guide development and reduce adverse effects in a way that is consistent with Local Plan policy. The Neighbourhood Plan is considered unlikely to give rise to significant effects over and above those already assessed in detail through the Local Plan SA/SEA.	No
c) The trans-boundary nature of the effects	The geographical area of the Neighbourhood Plan is limited and so the policies are localised and seek to manage change rather than allocate sites for development. Therefore, there are not considered to be any significant trans-boundary effects.	No
d) The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accident)	It is not envisaged that there will be any risks to human health or the environment arising from the Neighbourhood Plan, as it is only adding detail to existing policies in the adopted Warrington Local Plan 2021/22 – 2028/39.	No

	The Neighbourhood Plan is considered unlikely to give rise to significant effects over and above those already assessed in detail through the Local Plan SA/SEA.	
e) The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographic area and size of the population likely to be affected)	The Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate land for development that has not already been considered through the adopted Warrington Local Plan 2021/22 -2038/39 and the associated iterative SA/SEA and HRA process. Therefore, the Neighbourhood Plan is considered unlikely to give rise to significant effects over and above those already assessed through the Local Plan SA/SEA.	No
f) The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: i) Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage ii) Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values iii) Intensive land use	There are policies in the adopted Warrington Local Plan 2021/22 – 2038/39 that seek to protect these areas, and any impacts have been assessed through the Local Plan SA/SEA (and Heritage Impact Assessments). The Neighbourhood Plan will not lead to significant effects on the value or vulnerability of the designated area over and above those already assessed through the Local Plan SA/SEA.	No
g) The effects on areas or landscapes which have recognised national, Community or international protected status	The Neighbourhood Plan does not influence the location of development, this has already been established in the Local Plan, so will not cause effects on protected landscape sites. The effects on areas or landscapes which have recognised national, community or international protected status have already been assessed and addressed as part of the Local Plan process. The Neighbourhood Plan is considered unlikely to give rise to significant effects over and above those already assessed in detail through the Local Plan SA/SEA.	No

	Any planning applications for development will be required to satisfy the relevant policies for protection of the character of the area, as set out in the adopted Warrington Local Plan 2021/22 – 2038/39, before permission is granted.	

6. Initial SEA Screening Determination Conclusion

6.1 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 SA/SEA and HRA through the Local Plan process, as well as extensive public consultation and an Examination in Public by the Planning Inspectorate.

6.2 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.

6.3 It should also be noted that any Planning applications that come forward following the approval of the Neighbourhood Plan, where required, will be subject to screening for the need for Environmental Impact Assessment.

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

6.5 The results of the Council's initial SEA screening assessment for the Neighbourhood Plan are set out in full in section 5 above of this statement, which confirm that the Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects.

6.6 However, the Council will review the screening conclusions reached in light of any recommendations made by the statutory three consultees, and consult with the Parish Council, before confirming its final SEA conclusion.