

Grappenhall and Thelwall Neighbourhood Plan

Basic Conditions Statement

2026 – 2039

Contents

1. Introduction 2
2. Legal Requirements 3
3. Basic Conditions 6
3.1 Having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State, it is appropriate to make the Neighbourhood Plan 6
Plan making 6
Delivering a sufficient supply of homes 8
Building a strong competitive economy 10
Ensuring the vitality of town centres 10
Promoting healthy and safe communities 10
Promoting sustainable transport 11
Achieving well-designed places 12
Protecting Green Belt land 13
Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change 13
Conserving and enhancing the natural environment 14
Conserving and enhancing the historic environment 15
3.2 Contribution to the Achievement of Sustainable Development 16
3.3 The making of the Neighbourhood Plan would not result in the development plan for the area of the authority proposing that less housing is provided by means of development taking place in that area than if the Neighbourhood Plan were not to be made 17
3.4 Compatibility with EU Legislation 18
Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) 18
Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) 19
Equality Impact Assessment 20
European Convention on Human Rights 20
3.5 Prescribed Conditions 21
Conclusion 22

1. Introduction

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)[1] indicates that only a draft Neighbourhood Plan or Order that meets each of a set of basic conditions can be put to a referendum and be made[2].

The basic conditions are set out in paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as applied to Neighbourhood Plans by section 38A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

The basic conditions as applied to Neighbourhood Plans are:

a) having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State, it is appropriate to make the Neighbourhood Plan;
b) the making of the Plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development;
c) the making of the Neighbourhood Plan would not result in the development plan for the area of the authority proposing that less housing is provided by means of development taking place in that area than if the Neighbourhood Plan were not to be made[3];
d) the making of the Neighbourhood Plan does not breach and is otherwise compatible with European Union (EU) obligations; and
e) prescribed conditions are met in relation to the Plan and prescribed matters have been complied with in connection with the proposal for the Neighbourhood Plan.

A further basic condition relating to the new environmental assessment came into effect on 25 March 2026[4] through the provisions of the Levelling -up and Regeneration Act 2023. However, until such time as the Government has produced a completed framework for the implementation of environmental assessment reports to replace current Environmental Impact Assessments compliance with this basic condition cannot be assessed.

In addition to each of the basic conditions a Neighbourhood Plan must meet other legal requirements.

This statement explains how the proposed Grappenhall and Thelwall Neighbourhood Plan (the Plan) has been prepared in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General Regulations 2012 (as amended)). It explains how the Plan meets the legal requirements and the basic conditions of Neighbourhood Planning and other

[1] Planning Practice Guidance
[2] Paragraph: 065 Reference ID: 41-065-20140306
[3] This basic condition came into force on 25 March 2026 through the provisions of the Levelling -up and Regeneration Act 2023 (Commencement No.11 and Saving and Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2026. It replaces the previous basic condition requiring conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for the area.
[4] Paragraph 8 (2fe) of Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990

considerations as prescribed by Paragraph 8 of Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

2. Legal Requirements

The Plan is submitted by Grappenhall and Thelwall Parish Council, which, as a qualifying body, is entitled to submit a Neighbourhood Plan for its own parish.

The whole parish of Grappenhall and Thelwall has been formally designated as a Neighbourhood Area through an application made on 17 November 2016 under the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 (part 2 S6) and approved by Warrington Borough Council on 6 March 2017. The designated Neighbourhood Area is shown at Figure 1.

The Plan contains policies relating to the development and use of land within the neighbourhood area.

Proposals relating to planning matters (the use and development of land) have been prepared in accordance with the statutory requirements and processes set out in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011) and the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012.

The Plan also complies with the additional requirements resulting from section 98 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act which came into force on 25 March 2026. These require that so far as the qualifying body considers appropriate, and having regard to the subject matter of the plan, the plan must be designed to secure that the development and use of land in the neighbourhood area contribute to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change; and be designed to take account of any Local Nature Recovery Strategy under section 104 of the Environment Act 2021 that relates to all or part of the neighbourhood plan area.

The Cheshire and Warrington Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) is relevant in this respect[5].The Vision of the Plan has regard to the LNRS, particularly in seeking to protect, maintain and enhance habitats, strengthen ecological connectivity, support nature-based solutions and improve people's access to nature within and around the Neighbourhood Area. Furthermore, taken as a whole, the themes and policies of the Plan have been prepared, so far as appropriate and having regard to the subject matter of the Plan, to contribute to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change through the protection and enhancement of green and blue infrastructure, the promotion of active travel, the encouragement of nature-based solutions and the support given to sustainable design and carbon reduction.

In having regard to the LNRS, the policies within the Green and Blue Spaces chapter of the Plan seek to protect and enhance the Parish's network of habitats and

[5] LNRS - Local Nature Recovery Strategy

landscape features, strengthen ecological connectivity, support biodiversity net gain and nature-based solutions, and improve access to nature for local communities.

Policy D5 of the Plan relates to Sustainable Residential Development and Carbon Reduction. It is aligned with the broader objectives of reducing carbon emissions, fostering resilient communities, and meeting national and local climate targets. It is also in line with the Parish Council's declaration of a climate emergency. The policy is consistent with relevant strategic policies of the Local Plan, including Policies DC6 and ENV7. It is not considered necessary to repeat the requirements of Policy ENV7 of the Local Plan in relation to the requirements for residential developments to include renewable and low carbon technologies. The policy also helps the Plan to have regard to the LNRS by encouraging nature-based solutions, including landscape design, trees, green roofs and walls, ponds, SuDs, rain gardens and swales, which can assist both climate adaptation and biodiversity recovery where appropriate to the development proposed.

The Plan identifies the period to which it relates as 2026 - 2039. The period has been chosen to align with the dates of the Warrington Local Plan (Local Plan) adopted December 2023.

The local planning authority has indicated that it is commencing an update to its Local Plan in line with the new plan making system regulations[6]. Therefore, it is acknowledged that there may need to be an early review of the Neighbourhood Plan.

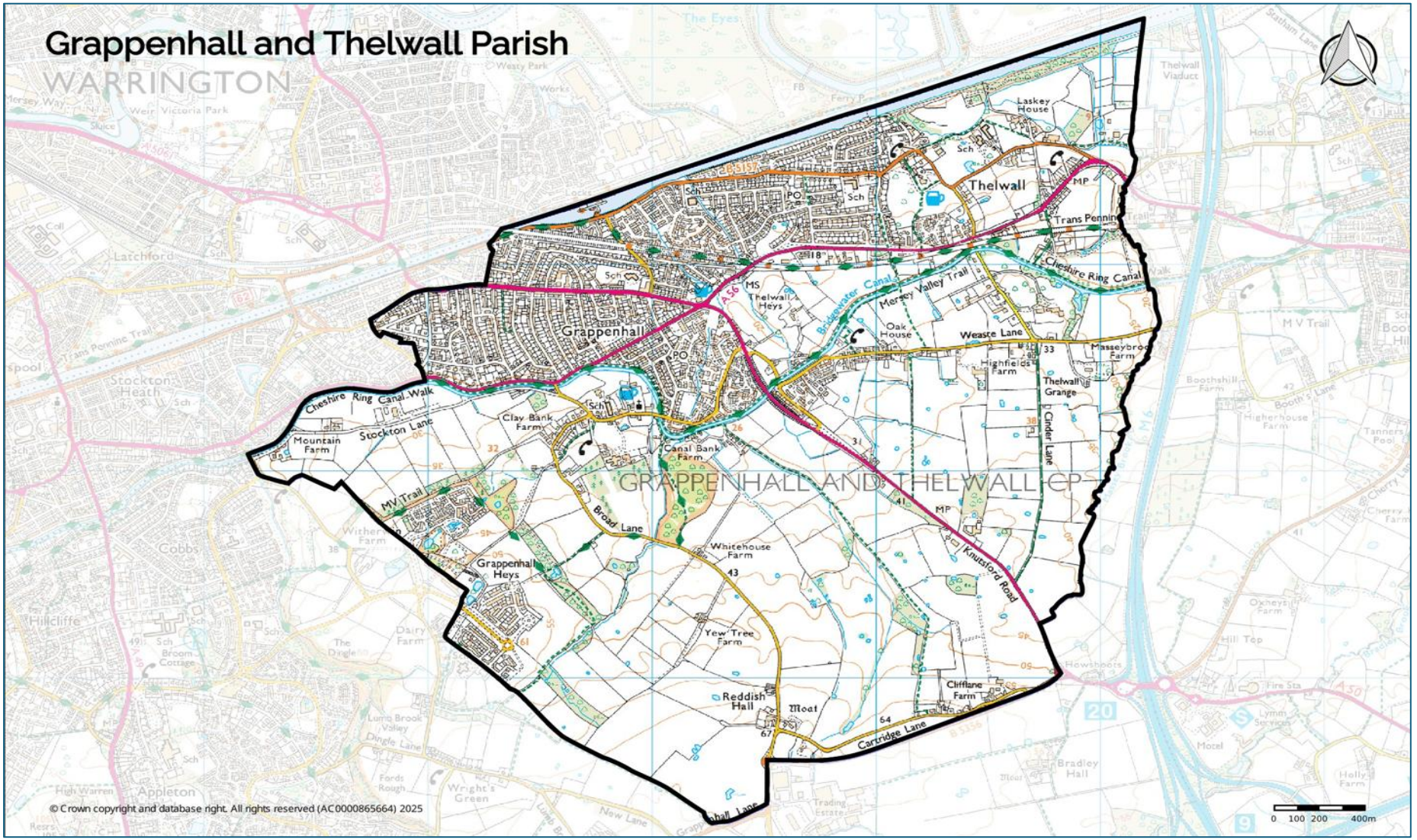
The Plan does not deal with county matters (mineral extraction and waste development), nationally significant infrastructure or any other matters set out in Section 61K of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

The Plan relates only to the parish of Grappenhall and Thelwall. It does not relate to more than one neighbourhood area. There are no other neighbourhood development plans in place within the neighbourhood area.

.

[6] Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026

Figure 1 – Designated Neighbourhood Plan Area



3. Basic Conditions

3.1 Having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State, it is appropriate to make the Neighbourhood Plan

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. The Government published a revised version of the NPPF in December 2024[7].

Paragraph 239 of the NPPF indicates that for neighbourhood plans, the policies in this version of the NPPF will apply for the purpose of preparing neighbourhood plans from 12 March 2025 unless the neighbourhood plan proposal had been submitted to the local planning authority under Regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) on or before the 12 March 2025. Accordingly, the Grappenhall and Thelwall Neighbourhood Plan will be examined against the December 2024 version of the NPPF.

Paragraph 29 of the NPPF states that non - strategic policies should be used by local planning authorities and communities to set out more detailed policies for specific areas, neighbourhoods or types of development. It goes on to state, at paragraph 30, that neighbourhood planning gives communities the power to develop a shared vision for their area and that it can shape, direct and help to deliver sustainable development, by influencing local planning decisions as part of the statutory development plan.

The PPG indicates that in relation to this basic condition, a neighbourhood plan must not constrain the delivery of important national policy objectives and that the NPPF is the main document setting out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. Accordingly, the Plan has been prepared having regard to the policies set out in the NPPF and the PPG. Only those sections of the NPPF and PPG that are relevant to the Plan are addressed below.

Plan making

At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. This is explained in relation to plan making at paragraph 11 of the NPPF and states that:

a) all plans should promote a sustainable pattern of development that seeks to: meet the development needs of their area; align growth and infrastructure; improve the environment; mitigate climate change (including by making effective use of land in urban areas) and adapt to its effects;

[7] National Planning Policy Framework December 2024

b) strategic policies should, as a minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses, as well as any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas, unless:

> i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development in the plan area; or
>
> ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

Paragraph 13 of the NPPF explains that the application of the presumption has implications for the way communities engage in neighbourhood planning. It states that neighbourhood plans should support the delivery of strategic policies contained in local plans or spatial development strategies; and should shape and direct development that is outside of these strategic policies.

The strategic policies of the Local Plan allocate land for a minimum of 2,710 new homes in South Warrington (Grappenhall, Thelwall, Appleton and Stretton) within the plan period (2021/22-2038/39) and a further 1,800 thereafter. Within Grappenhall and Thelwall Parish this comprises Thelwall Heys and part of the South East Warrington Urban Expansion (SEWUE). Accordingly, Grappenhall and Thelwall Parish will undergo significant change, especially in terms of the loss of green space and the pressures arising from increased development. The Plan sets out a positive framework to influence and shape the significant housing growth proposed in the neighbourhood area as a result of the strategic policies of the Local Plan whilst also protecting, maintaining and enhancing the area's green and blue spaces, identifying its most important green spaces and strengthening the new Green Belt boundary resulting from the Local Plan. It also contains policies and proposals to shape and direct development that is outside the Local Plan's strategic policies guiding smaller, incremental change and adding local detail and value.

Having listened to local people the Grappenhall and Thelwall Neighbourhood Plan sets out the following vision for the neighbourhood 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.

To deliver on the vision for the neighbourhood area the Plan identifies five themes around which its policies are structured.

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.

The following paragraphs illustrate how the Plan reflects the key policy areas within the NPPF.

Delivering a sufficient supply of homes

The NPPF indicates that in order to support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay (paragraph 61). It goes on to state that the overall aim should be to meet an area's identified housing need, including with an appropriate mix of housing types for the local community.

In paragraph 62 the NPPF states that to determine the minimum number of homes needed, strategic policies should be informed by a local housing need assessment, conducted using the standard method in national planning practice guidance. In addition to the local housing need figure, any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas should also be taken into account in establishing the amount of housing to be planned for.

At paragraph 69 the NPPF states that strategic policy-making authorities should establish a housing requirement figure for their whole area, which shows the extent to which their identified housing need (and any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas) can be met over the plan period. It goes on to state that within this overall requirement, strategic policies should also set out a housing requirement for designated neighbourhood areas which reflects the overall strategy for the pattern and scale of development and any relevant allocations. Once the strategic policies have been adopted, these figures should not need re-testing at the neighbourhood plan examination, unless there has been a significant change in circumstances that affects the requirement.

The housing requirement and provision for Warrington Borough is set out in the Local Plan. The Local Plan does not distribute the total number of houses between the designated neighbourhood areas of the Borough; the examining Inspectors having found that, in relation to the neighbourhood area of Grappenhall and Thelwall, to do so prior to the development of a comprehensive development framework for the SEWUE allocation would be premature and prejudice the process. In the light of the significant housing allocations within the Local Plan in the neighbourhood area the Plan does not seek to allocate any further sites for housing albeit the provisions of policies HG1 (Grappenhall Hall), HG2 (Former Grappenhall Rectory) and D6 (Re-use of agricultural buildings) of the Plan would provide for the possibility of additional housing being provided to that which is allocated in the Local Plan.

The strategic policies of the Local Plan indicate that residential development should provide a mix of different housing sizes and types and should be informed by the Borough-wide housing mix monitoring target as set out in the Council's most up to date Local Housing Needs Assessment; and any local target set by a Neighbourhood Plan, taking into account site specific considerations.

Policy H1 of the Plan (New development to meet local housing need), informed by the evidence within the Grappenhall and Thelwall Housing Needs Assessment (February 2025) and the Local Housing Needs Survey (December 2024), seeks to ensure that residential development in the neighbourhood area provides a mix of different housing sizes, types and tenure to meet identified local housing need and provide a more diversified and affordable housing stock.

Paragraph 84 of the NPPF indicates that planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless one or more of a set of criteria apply. One such criteria is where the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and enhance its immediate setting.

Policy D6 of the Plan (Re-use of agricultural buildings) expands upon the NPPF and provides a structured framework for managing the re-use of agricultural buildings in the Green Belt and open countryside, ensuring such developments respect both the rural environment and the broader goals of sustainable development.

The policy would apply to the re-use of agricultural buildings for various alternative uses. However, from experience it is anticipated that most such proposals in the neighbourhood area would be for residential use.

Building a strong competitive economy

In the context of rural areas, the NPPF indicates, at paragraph 88, that planning policies should, amongst other things, enable the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed, new buildings and the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses.

Policy D6 of the Plan (Re-use of agricultural buildings) reflects national policy as set out in paragraph 88 in so far as it supports the re-use of agricultural buildings in the Green Belt or open countryside provided certain criteria are met.

Ensuring the vitality of town centres

Paragraph 90 of the NPPF indicates that planning policies should define a network and hierarchy of town centres and promote their long-term vitality and viability – by allowing them to grow and diversify in a way that can respond to rapid changes in the retail and leisure industries, allows a suitable mix of uses and reflects their distinctive characters.

There are two Local Centres (Barley Road, Thelwall and Knutsford Road, Grappenhall) within the neighbourhood area. Informed by the Grappenhall and Thelwall Design Study (March 2025) policy D7 of the Plan (Commercial Areas) supports the regeneration of the Knutsford Road Local Centre and sets out a series of guiding principles to be applied to any redevelopment proposals on a specific part of that local centre. It also supports improvements to the public realm at both local centres in order to make the centres more attractive, accessible and comfortable for all users.

Promoting healthy and safe communities

The NPPF indicates, at paragraph 96, that planning policies should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which promote social interaction, are safe and accessible and enable and support healthy lives. In paragraph 98 it indicates that planning policies should plan positively for the provision of community facilities and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments; take into account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all sections of the community; guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services; ensure that established shops, facilities and services are able to develop and modernise, and are retained for the benefit of the community; and ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services.

Under this theme the NPPF also includes the provision and protection of open space. At paragraph 104 it indicates that existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields and formal play spaces, should not be built on unless one of three criteria are met.

Policy INF2 of the Plan (Protecting, improving and providing facilities for health, education, sports and recreation and other community uses) seeks to protect, enhance and ensure the future provision of essential community, health, education, sports and recreational facilities in recognition of the fact that such facilities play a critical role in maintaining the social fabric of the neighbourhood and promoting sustainable, inclusive and healthy communities.

Informed by the evidence within the Green Space Report (August 2025) policy GBS1 of the Plan (Green and Blue Infrastructure Network) establishes a clear and robust framework for the protection, maintenance and enhancement of the green and blue infrastructure network within the neighbourhood area.

Paragraph 106 of the NPPF states that the designation of land as Local Green Space through neighbourhood plans allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them providing the criteria at paragraph 107 are satisfied.

The Green Space Report (August 2025) also provides the evidence base for policy GBS3 of the Plan (Local Green Space) which identifies key open spaces for designation as Local Green Space where development will need to be consistent with national policy relating to Green Belt.

Promoting sustainable transport

Paragraph 109 of the NPPF indicates that transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making, using a vision-led approach to identify transport solutions that deliver well-designed, sustainable and popular places. It indicates that, amongst other things, this should involve:

- ensuring patterns of movement, streets, parking and other transport considerations are integral to the design of schemes, and contribute to making high quality places; and
- identifying and pursuing opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use.

In addition, paragraph 111 of the NPPF indicates that, amongst other things, planning policies should provide for attractive and well-designed walking and cycling networks with supporting facilities such as secure cycle parking (drawing on Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans).

Policy INF1 of the Plan (Footpaths and Cycle Paths) seeks the integration of new development into the neighbourhood area through a matrix of safe and attractive walking, wheeling and cycling routes thereby ensuring that new development is seamlessly integrated with existing residential areas and key amenities. The policy

supports the key policy aim of promoting sustainable transport in the NPPF by identifying specific routes for two new footpaths/cycleways and the locations where other footways/cycleways should be incorporated into development sites resulting from the allocations for residential development identified in the Local Plan to provide important connections. In addition, policy HG4 of the Plan (Protecting Heritage Transport Routes in Grappenhall) seeks to ensure that the new development resulting from the residential allocations in the Local Plan do not contribute to increased traffic pressures to the detriment of the areas heritage, character and safety.

Achieving well-designed places

Paragraph 131 of the NPPF indicates that the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. It states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. It goes on to indicate that being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this.

At paragraph 132 of the NPPF it states that plans should, at the most appropriate level, set out a clear design vision and expectations, so that applicants have as much certainty as possible about what is likely to be acceptable. It indicates that design policies should be developed with local communities, so they reflect local aspirations, and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area's defining characteristics. It also states that neighbourhood planning groups can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in development, both through their own plans and by engaging in the production of design policy, guidance and codes by local planning authorities and developers.

The Grappenhall and Thelwall Character and Design Study (March 2025) provides the evidence base for policies D1 (General Residential Design Principles), D2 (South East Warrington Urban Extension Broad Lane Area: Design Strategy), D3 (South East Warrington Urban Extension Stockton Lane Area: Design Strategy) and D4 (Thelwall Heys: Design Strategy) of the Plan.

Policy D1 of the Plan (General Residential Design Principles) seeks to ensure that new residential development contributes positively to the existing character and architectural heritage of the neighbourhood area. By integrating distinctive features, materials, and building forms that reflect the local vernacular, the policy supports a coherent and aesthetically appropriate built environment while allowing for modern design innovations and recognising the importance of avoiding pastiche or excessive historic replication that may result in inauthentic or discordant design.

Policies D2 (South East Warrington Urban Extension Broad Lane Area: Design Strategy), D3 (South East Warrington Urban Extension Stockton Lane Area: Design Strategy) and D4 (Thelwall Heys: Design Strategy) of the Plan set out design principles

for the housing allocations identified within the Local Plan which are within the neighbourhood area. This approach accords with the advice set out at paragraph 132 of the NPPF. The policies, developed with the local community, reflect local aspirations and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area's defining characteristics. The policies seek to ensure that the new development has regard to the special qualities of each area and its surroundings and set out how this should be reflected in the new housing developments.

Policies HG1 and HG2 of the Plan, respectively relate to Grappenhall Hall and the Former Grappenhall Rectory. Amongst other things, the policies set out the design requirements to be applied to any future proposals relating to both these heritage assets.

Protecting Green Belt land

The NPPF, at paragraph 145 indicates that once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified through the preparation or updating of plans. It goes on to state that strategic policies should establish the need for any changes to Green Belt boundaries, having regard to their intended permanence in the long term, so they can endure beyond the plan period. Where a need for changes to Green Belt boundaries has been established through strategic policies, detailed amendments to those boundaries may be made through non-strategic policies, including neighbourhood plans.

Paragraph 149 of the NPPF indicates that when defining Green Belt boundaries, plans should, amongst other things, define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.

The Local Plan removed two sites from the Green Belt within the neighbourhood area to allocate them for residential development. These are Thelwall Heys and the South East Warrington Urban Extension, although only a part of the latter lies within the neighbourhood area. The Local Plan policies for both these sites include provisions for the strengthening of the newly created Green Belt boundaries to create new recognisable and permanent edges. This is to be done by such methods as providing landscape schemes to retain and enhance trees and hedgerows where there are existing field or other physical features.

In accordance with the advice at paragraph 149 of the NPPF policy GBS2 of the Plan (Green Belt Boundary Strengthening) identifies those field boundaries which need to be strengthened or where a new defensible boundary needs to be established to create a new and recognisable boundary when considering development proposals on the Local Plan allocated sites.

Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

Paragraph 162 of the NPPF indicates that plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change. It goes on to state, at paragraph 164, that

new development should be planned for in ways that avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change and help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, such as through its location, orientation and design. It also states that any local requirements for the sustainability of buildings in plans should reflect the Government's policy for national technical standards

Policy D5 of the Plan (Sustainable Residential Development and Carbon Reduction) is aligned with the broader objectives of reducing carbon emissions, fostering resilient communities and meeting national and local climate targets. In accordance with the advice in the Written Ministerial Statement made on 13 December 2023[8] the policy does not set local energy efficiency standards but rather states that the design and construction of residential developments must include measures to reduce carbon emissions across the entire lifespan of each dwelling and that these measures should aim to exceed the minimum requirements outlined in Part L of the Building Regulations 2023 and SAP10 regarding energy performance and carbon emissions reduction, unless proven to be not feasible or unviable. This approach provides greater flexibility in the consideration of planning applications than would be the case if a specific local energy efficiency standard were to be set.

In addition, in so far as policy GBS1 of the Plan (Green and Blue Infrastructure Network) establishes a clear and robust framework for the protection, maintenance, and enhancement of green and blue infrastructure within the neighbourhood area, it recognises that green and blue infrastructure plays a key role in climate change mitigation and adaptation. Trees, vegetation, and water bodies help regulate temperature, reduce urban heat island effects and manage surface water through sustainable drainage. The policy requirement to "maximise opportunities to mitigate, adapt and improve resilience to climate change" is aligned with national carbon reduction targets and adaptation strategies. Furthermore, incorporating nature-based solutions, such as expanded tree planting and pond restoration, helps reduce the impact of extreme weather events, particularly flooding and overheating, and contributes to meeting statutory obligations under the Climate Change Act 2008.

Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Paragraph 187 of the NPPF indicates that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by, amongst other things, protecting and enhancing valued landscapes; recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services; minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity.

Paragraph 192 of the NPPF indicates that to protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should, amongst other things, identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.

[8] Planning – Local Energy Efficiency Standards Update Statement UIN HCWS123

PPG[9] indicates that plan-makers should be aware of the statutory framework for biodiversity net gain. It goes on to explain the biodiversity gain hierarchy and how it relates to the mitigation hierarchy for planning decisions where there is significant harm to biodiversity[10].

Policy GBS1 (Green and Blue Infrastructure Network) prioritises the conservation and strengthening of ecological networks, particularly existing features such as woodlands, hedgerows, water bodies and open spaces. These habitats are essential for supporting local biodiversity and ecological resilience. By maintaining ecological corridors and natural habitats, the policy enables species migration, genetic exchange, and long-term viability of ecosystems. The policy also indicates that the green and blue infrastructure network provides a resource for the location of biodiversity mitigation or compensation where it does not prove possible to secure a demonstrable biodiversity net gain within the site.

The approach set out in the policy directly supports the aims of the Environment Act 2021 and the NPPF which advocate for achieving a measurable biodiversity net gain in development and accords with the PPG in relation to the biodiversity gain hierarchy. By identifying the green and blue infrastructure network as a resource for biodiversity mitigation and compensation, the policy ensures that development contributes positively to the natural environment.

Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Paragraph 202 of the NPPF recognises that heritage assets range from sites and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest significance, such as World Heritage Sites. It indicates that these assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.

At paragraph 203, the NPPF indicates that plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. It states that this strategy should take into account: the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation; the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring; the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.

Policy HG3 of the Plan (Sites and Buildings of Local Historic Value) recognises the local historic value of two sites (Grappenhall Hall site and the Gardens of Massey Hall, Thelwall) and identifies them as non-designated heritage assets. Grappenhall Hall has

[9] Paragraph: 006 Reference ID: 74-006-20240214

[10] Paragraph: 008 Reference ID: 74-008-20240214

been allowed to deteriorate and is currently in a very poor condition. Accordingly, policy HG1 of the Plan (Grappenhall Hall) sets out the requirements that should be applied to proposals for the redevelopment of this non-designated heritage asset.

Policy HG2 of the Plan (Former Grappenhall Rectory) sets out the specific requirements that should be applied to proposals for the Grade II listed Former Grappenhall Rectory, situated within the Grappenhall Conservation Area, and which has also been allowed to fall into a state of disrepair. The policy reflects both statutory duties under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the advice in paragraph 202 of the NPPF that heritage assets be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.

Policy HG4 of the Plan (Protecting Heritage Transport Routes in Grappenhall) seeks to ensure that traffic from the new development resulting from the residential allocations in the Local Plan preserve Grappenhall's historic character in particular the two humpback bridges including the Grade II listed Bridgewater Canal Bridge on Church Lane and the cobbled road outside the Grade I listed St Wilfrid's Church.

3.2 Contribution to the Achievement of Sustainable Development

The NPPF indicates at paragraph 7 that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, including the provision of homes, commercial development, and supporting infrastructure in a sustainable manner. It goes on to state that, at a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. At a similarly high level, members of the United Nations – including the United Kingdom have agreed to pursue the 17 Global Goals for Sustainable Development in the period to 2030. These address social progress, economic well-being and environmental protection.

The planning system has three overarching objectives to achieve sustainable development: economic, social and environmental

- an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;
- a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and

- an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment, including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

The NPPF, at paragraph 9, indicates that these objectives should be delivered through the preparation and implementation of plans.

The Plan includes various policies which, together, will deliver sustainable development by:

- Planning positively for housing to meet the needs of present and future generations (Policy H1)
- Supporting the regeneration of local centres and supporting the local economy (Policy D7)
- Promoting sustainable transport and active travel (Policy GBS1 and INF1)
- Protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment (Policy GBS1, GBS2, GBS3, HG1, HG2, HG3 and HG4)
- Promoting high quality and sustainable design (Policies D1, D2, D3, D4, D5 and D6)
- Promoting healthy communities (Policy INF1)
- Supporting the local communities' health, social and cultural well-being (Policies GBS3 and INF2)

3.3 The making of the Neighbourhood Plan would not result in the development plan for the area of the authority proposing that less housing is provided by means of development taking place in that area than if the Neighbourhood Plan were not to be made.

The housing requirement and provision for Warrington Borough is set out in the Local Plan. It allocates land for a minimum of 2,710 new homes in South Warrington (Grappenhall, Thelwall, Appleton and Stretton) within the plan period (2021/22-2038/39) and a further 1,800 thereafter. Within Grappenhall and Thelwall Parish this comprises the Thelwall Heys allocation and part of the SEWUE allocation.

As indicated above the Local Plan does not distribute the total number of houses between the designated neighbourhood areas of the Borough; the examining Inspectors having found that, in relation to the neighbourhood area of Grappenhall and Thelwall, to do so prior to the development of a comprehensive development framework for the SEWUE allocation would be premature and prejudice the process.

In the light of the significant housing allocations within the Local Plan in the neighbourhood area the Plan does not seek to allocate any further sites for housing

rather it sets out a positive framework to influence and shape the significant housing growth proposed in the neighbourhood area as a result of the Local Plan. It also seeks to ensure that new homes meet the needs of local people.

The Plan has been prepared to guide the type, tenure, mix, design and accessibility of new housing coming forward in the Neighbourhood Area and is not intended to reduce the level of housing provided through the development plan for Warrington or the delivery of the allocations already made in the Warrington Local Plan.

The Plan also contains policies and proposals to shape and direct development that is outside the Local Plan's strategic policies guiding smaller, incremental change and adding local detail and value. In particular, the provisions of policies HG1 (Grappenhall Hall), HG2 (Former Grappenhall Rectory) and D6 (Re-use of agricultural buildings) of the Plan would provide for the possibility of additional housing being provided to that which is allocated in the Local Plan.

3.4 Compatibility with EU Legislation

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

A 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.

The requirement for 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. 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". 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).

The Parish Council, as the qualifying body, sought a determination from WBC, as the Responsible Authority, regarding the need for a SEA for the Plan, in accordance with Regulation 9 (3) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 and European Directive 2001/42/EC.

The Regulations require that the results of this process are set out in a Screening Determination Statement which must be publicly available.

A screening process was carried out by WBC to determine whether a SEA would be required to support the Plan. Its initial Screening Determination Statement concluded that it was not necessary to carry out a full SA/SEA on the Plan. However, 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.

A 5-week consultation period on WBC's initial Screening Determination conclusions was undertaken between 05 September 2025 and 13 October 2025, where the Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England were given the opportunity to comment on WBC's initial conclusions. As part of the iterative screening process and taking into account the initial screening determination consultation responses received from the Environment Agency and Natural England (no consultation response was received from Historic England), final screening has confirmed that the initial conclusions of WBC were still relevant and that the Plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects over and above those already assessed through the Local Plan SA/SEA, and therefore SEA is not required.

A copy of the Grappenhall and Thelwall Neighbourhood Plan Strategic Environmental Assessment Final Screening Determination Statement (October 2025) is submitted with the Plan.

Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA)

The requirement for a 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).

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

The Parish Council also sought a determination from WBC, regarding the need for a HRA for the Plan, 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).

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.

WBC's initial Screening Determination Statement concluded it is not necessary to carry out a full HRA on the Plan. However, it sought to review its screening conclusions in the light of any recommendations made by the statutory consultee (Natural England) during the 5-week consultation period referred to above.

As part of the iterative screening process and taking into account the initial screening determination consultation response received from Natural England, final screening has confirmed that the initial conclusions of WBC were still relevant and that the Plan can be screened out from further stages of assessment because significant effects are unlikely to occur, either alone or in combination.

A copy of the Grappenhall and Thelwall Neighbourhood Plan Habitats Regulation Assessment Final Screening Determination Statement (October 2025) is submitted with the Plan.

Equality Impact Assessment

The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. The Public Sector Equality Duty contained in the Equality Act 2010 places a duty on all public authorities in the exercise of their functions to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act, to advance equality of opportunity and to foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.

Protected characteristics are defined as age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Equality Impact Assessment is an analysis of policy or policies, in order to identify the potential for an adverse impact on a particular group or community, particularly those with a protected characteristic. It is a method of assessing and recording the likely differential and/or adverse impact of a policy on people from different groups so that, if a policy results in unfairness or discrimination then changes to eliminate or lessen the impact can be considered.

A copy of the Grappenhall and Thelwall Neighbourhood Plan Equality Impact Assessment is submitted with the Plan.

European Convention on Human Rights

The Human Rights Act 1998 incorporated into UK law the European Convention on Human Rights ('The Convention'). The Convention includes provision in the form of Articles, the aim of which is to protect the rights of the individual.

The Act[11] prohibits public bodies from acting in a way which is incompatible with a Convention right. Various rights outlined in the Convention and its First Protocol are to be considered in the process of making and considering planning decisions.

Article 1 of the First Protocol protects the right of everyone to the peaceful enjoyment of possessions. No one can be deprived of possessions except in the public interest and subject to the conditions provided by law and by the general principles of international law. The Plan is fully compatible with the rights outlined in this Article.

[11] Section 6 Human Rights Act 1998

Although the Plan includes policies that would restrict development rights to some extent, this does not have a greater impact than the general restrictions on development rights provided for in national law, namely the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the Localism Act 2011. The restriction of development rights inherent in the UK's statutory planning system is demonstrably in the public interest by ensuring that land is used in the most sustainable way, avoiding or mitigating adverse impacts on the environment, community and economy.

Article 6 protects the right to a fair and public hearing before an independent tribunal in determination of an individual's rights and obligations. The process for the preparation of the Plan is fully compatible with this Article, allowing for extensive consultation on its proposals at various stages, and an independent examination process to consider representations received.

Article 14 prohibits discrimination in the enjoyment of all other convention rights. It ensures rights are secured without discrimination based on sex, race, colour, language, religion, political opinion, national origin, association with a minority, property, birth, or other status. The Plan has been prepared in consultation with the community and wider stakeholders to produce as inclusive a document as possible. In general, its policies and proposals will not have a discriminatory impact on any particular group of individuals.

To conclude, therefore the Plan has had regard to the fundamental rights and freedoms enshrined under the European Convention on Human Rights and complies with the Human Rights Act 1998.

3.5 Prescribed Conditions

There are no other prescribed matters.

Conclusion

Having regard to the above it is considered that the Basic Conditions set out in paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as applied to Neighbourhood Plans by section 38A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 have been met within the Plan.