WARRINGTON
Borough Council

Grappenhall and Thelwall Neighbourhood Plan

Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA)

Final Screening Determination Statement

October 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 and final 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:

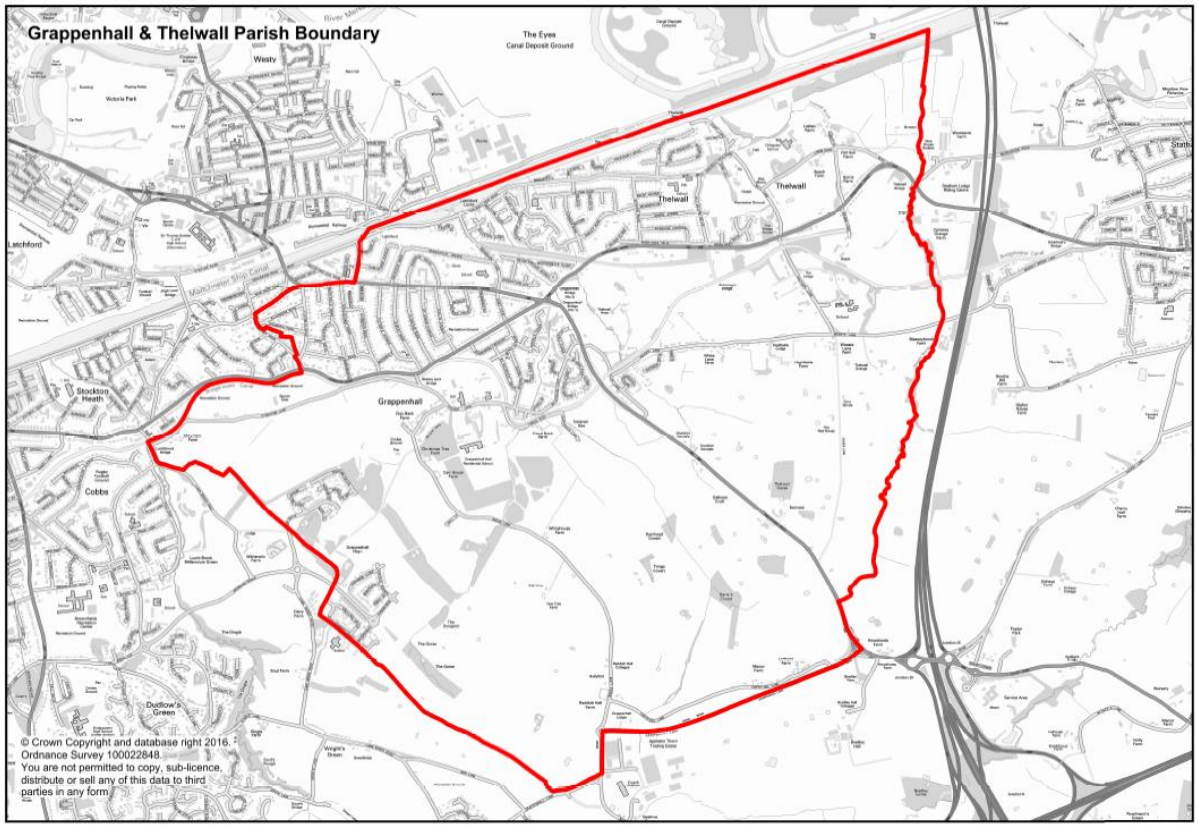
- A comprehensive spatial masterplan for the entire development site, based on the principles and requirements set out in this policy and reflecting site opportunities and constraints;
- A comprehensive infrastructure delivery strategy for the development site with details on phasing, delivery triggers 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.

7. Final SEA Screening Determination Conclusion

7.1 A 5-week consultation period on the Council'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 the Council's initial conclusions.

7.2 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 received from Historic England), final screening has confirmed the initial conclusions reached in section 5 of this

statement, are still relevant and that the Neighbourhood 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.

7.4 The consultation responses received by the Council from the Environment Agency and Natural England are contained in Appendix 1 of this statement.

Appendix 1: Initial Screening Determination responses from the Environment Agency and Natural England.

Neighbourhood Plan Advice Note

Updated: June 2025

Neighbourhood Plans provide a unique opportunity to deliver enhancements to the natural environment at the local level. This document sets out the key environmental issues, within our remit, which should be considered.

We have had to prioritise our limited resource and focus on strategic plans where the environmental risks and opportunities are highest. This advice note sets out our substantive response to Neighbourhood Plan consultations including Strategic Environmental Assessment screening and scoping.

Together with Natural England, English Heritage and Forestry Commission we have published joint advice on neighbourhood planning which sets out sources of environmental information and ideas on incorporating the environment into plans. This is available at: https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/toolkits-and- guidance/consider-environment-neighbourhood-plans/

Drawing up a neighbourhood plan is a fantastic opportunity to build community resilience to climate change and make the local natural environment better. Opportunities include:

- New green spaces and improvements to public space through new development. This could include planting trees, creating rainwater gardens or enhancing local waterways for water quality and biodiversity.

- Recognising the value of certain environmental features within a plan area, e.g. a floodplain, wetland habitat or rivers. Identify these features and outline how you intend to protect them and improve them.

- Helping a community to manage and adapt to the risk of flooding and climate change by incorporating natural features and green space to manage and store water, and supporting the use of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS).

- Promoting energy and water efficiency measures for new builds. These measures will reduce the cost of construction for developers and help to reduce utility bills for future occupiers. This will also help reduce unsustainable water consumption and carbon emissions.

We also recommend your Plan takes account of relevant Local Planning Authority's policies, plans and strategies including Local Planning Authority's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, flood risk strategies (https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/flood-risk-management-current-schemes-and-strategies), and your local River Basin Management Plan (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/river-basin-management-plans-updated-2022) as appropriate.

The information below explains the key issues we would consider in reviewing your Plan. We aim to reduce flood risk, while protecting and enhancing the water environment.

Infrastructure Delivery

We recommend that environmental infrastructure, including habitat enhancements, water storage areas, and green space, is taken into account if the Plan looks to fund local infrastructure.

Flood risk

Development must be safe and should not increase the risk of flooding.

Neighbourhood Plans should conform to national and local policies on flood risk:
If a Neighbourhood Plan is proposing sites for development please check whether there are any areas of Flood Zones 2 or 3 within the proposed site allocations. You can view a site's flood zone on the Flood Map for Planning on our website: https://flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk/

If the proposed allocation is located within Flood Zone 2 or 3 you should consult the Flood Risk and Coastal Change pages of the National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG): http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/guidance/flood-risk-and-coastal-change/.

Here you can determine whether the flood risk vulnerability of the proposed development and the flood zone are compatible. In accordance with national planning policy the Sequential Test should be undertaken to ensure development is directed to the areas of lowest flood risk taking into account climate change. This should be informed by the Environment Agency's Flood Map for Planning and the Local Planning Authority's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA), if they have one. We recommend you contact the Local Planning Authority to discuss this requirement further.

If the Neighbourhood Plan proposes development in flood risk areas, any Strategic Environmental Assessment should include baseline information about the flood risks, and include it as a key sustainability issue and as an objective.

We would have concerns if development is allocated in this high risk flood zone without the Sequential Test being undertaken. It is important that your Plan also considers whether the flood risk issues associated with these sites can be safely managed to ensure development can come forward.

We can provide any flooding information which we have available – such as predicted flood levels and historical flood data. Please note that there may be a charge for this information. Please contact our Customers and Engagement Team at inforequests.gmmc@environment-agency.gov.uk for further details.

In addition to the above you should also check with the Local Planning Authority's Neighbourhood Planning team with regards to other sources of flooding (such as surface water, groundwater, sewers and historic flooding) as detailed in their Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA). The Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), now has responsibility for local flood risk management and may hold flooding information that is not identified on our Flood Map.

Climate Change Allowances

The Local Authority's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment should indicate the extent of flood zones with likely climate change. On 19 February 2016, we published new guidance for planners and developers on how to use climate change allowances: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-risk-assessments-climate-change- allowances

Flood Defences

Areas of your Neighbourhood Plan area, or proposed sites, may be given protection by a flood defence/alleviation scheme. Where this is the case the Plan should acknowledge this and identify the level of protection provided (including any climate change allowance). It should be noted that flood defences are intended to protect existing properties and are not to facilitate new development in areas that would otherwise be impacted by flooding. Any assessment of development behind flood defences should consider the impacts of a breach or overtopping. Where it is determined that new development should be behind a flood defence financial contributions may be sought to maintain or improve the structure.

Ecology and Water Management

Proximity to watercourse/ Ecology

Main rivers can be viewed on the Environment Agency's map: https://environment.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=17cd53dfc524433980cc333726a5 6386

The neighbourhood plan should draw upon evidence of designated or non-designated sites of nature conservation sites of international, national or local importance, and seek to ensure these sites are safeguarded and there is no degradation to these sites. The mitigation hierarchy of avoid mitigate and compensate should be followed to ensure this.

In accordance with national policy, any development proposal should avoid significant harm to biodiversity and seek to protect and enhance it; delivering **biodiversity net gain**. The Environment Act 2021 requires major developments from 12 February 2024 to demonstrate a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain using the Defra Biodiversity Metric 4.0, even where development proposals do not result in biodiversity loss. The Neighbourhood Plan could identify opportunities to incorporate requirements for achieving biodiversity and wider environmental net gains.

The provision of green infrastructure, particularly along rivers, can bring about benefits for people and wildlife. Creating networks of green space and habitats can also ensure wildlife are able to migrate and move across sites more easily enabling recovery and resilience of different wildlife species. The Neighbourhood Plan could play a role in helping to preserve, safeguard and establish green buffer zones along rivers by including policies or design guidance for their area. Even where buffer zones do not currently exist it is becoming more vital that we create them not just for the benefit of biodiversity but to reduce flood risk and increase our resilience to climate change.

This is a key way in which we can carry out our legal duty to further and promote the ecological and landscape value of rivers and land associated with them. In urban areas, in particular, rivers have often been degraded by past development, and we expect that any new development should go some way to redress the balance.

Neighbourhood Plans provide an opportunity to promote river restoration and enhancements helping us all to achieve the targets to improve waterbodies as part of the Water Framework Directive (WFD). There should be no deterioration in water quality and development should bring about improvements to the ecological status of any water body. Local WFD catchment data for the rivers in your area can be obtained from: http://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/RiverBasinDistrict/. We have identified WFD action measures for specific locations or whole reaches of watercourse (e.g. river bank restoration, improving fish passage, etc) and can be obtained from inforequests.gmmc@environment-agency.gov.uk on request.

Objectives to achieve WFD improvements across all sectors are outlined in the North West River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/river-basin-management-plans-updated-2022-current-condition-and-environmental-objectives).

An assessment of the potential impacts of the Neighbourhood Plan on watercourses under WFD should be included within the SEA/SA appraisal, making use of the datasets available above.

Groundwater Quality

Development must not cause pollution to the water environment.

Aquifers and Source Protection Zones

Some of your local area, and specific potential site allocations, may be located upon or within aquifers and Source Protection Zones (link below). SPZ 1 is especially sensitive. You might consider these within your Plan and when allocating sites. The relevance of the designation and the potential implication upon development proposals should be seen with reference to our Groundwater Protection guidance: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/groundwater-protection

To see if a proposed development is located within a Source Protection Zone, please use our online map: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/groundwater-source-protection-zones-spzs

Land Contamination

You must consider land contamination when preparing your plan. Managing it during development is key to addressing past contamination and preventing further impacts during development.

You can establish if a site may be contaminated in several ways. Your Local Authority may hold a register of sites it knows to be contaminated. A list of potentially contaminated sites can be accessed on the following link: https://www.claire.co.uk/useful-government-legislation-and-guidance-by-country/76-key-documents/198- doe-industry-profiles

We recommend you contact your Local Authority's Environmental Health team who may hold records on known/potential land contamination. Please note our primary concern is with regards to water quality. Your Local Authority's Environmental Health team will advise you on issues related to human health.

Your plan may include areas which are located on aquifers and Source Protection Zones. These areas represent the most sensitive and highest risk in terms of potential pollution to protected groundwater supplies, some of which are used for drinking water. These should be considered within your plan if growth or development is proposed here. Further information can be accessed on the following links:

Guiding principles for the Land Contamination:
https://www.claire.co.uk/useful-government-legislation-and-guidance-by-country/192-guiding-principles-for- land-contamination-gplc

Approach to Groundwater Protection:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/692989/ Envirnment-Agency-approach-to-groundwater-protection.pdf

Water supply and foul drainage

When allocating sites in you Plan, you will need to consider if the water supply and foul drainage infrastructure can accommodate the development. Your local water company can provide further information about water supply and sewerage capacity. The Neighbourhood Plan should consider what further measures could help the local area achieve water sustainability that are not already in the Local Plan, water efficiency standards and measures including the retrofitting of existing buildings.

Surface water drainage

The inclusion of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS) should always be a consideration within any development to reduce the risk of surface water flooding on and off site. The Lead Local Flood Authority, is the main contact for SUDS issues. However, we have interest in SUDS from a groundwater protection perspective and improving water quality.

The collection and dispersal of clean surface water to ground to recharge aquifer units and prevent localised drainage or surface systems flooding in heavy rainfall is encouraged. However, dispersal into the ground through soakaways or other infiltration systems requires a site-specific investigation and risk assessment. Generally, we would accept roof drainage going to soakaway (or other systems), but other surface drainage may need to go through treatment systems or to foul main, for instance vehicle parking. Infiltrating water has the potential to cause mobilisation of contaminants present in shallow soil/made ground which could ultimately cause pollution of underlying groundwater resources. Where contamination is known or suspected, remedial or other mitigating measures will likely be required so that it can be demonstrated that there is no resultant unacceptable risk to Controlled Waters.

We advise applicants to follow our guidance – Groundwater Protection. This is a report that highlights the importance of groundwater and encourages industry and other organisations to act responsibly and improve their practices. This can be found at: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/groundwater- protection

The design of the drainage systems should be in line with G1, G9, G12 and G13 position statements: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/groundwater-protection-position-statements

Please note

This document is a response to a Neighbourhood Plan consultation and does not represent our final view in relation to any future planning application made in relation to any site. You should seek your own expert advice in relation to technical matters relevant to your neighbourhood plan before submission.

If you have any questions, please contact the Greater Manchester, Merseyside, and Cheshire Sustainable Places team: spplanning.rfh@environment-agency.gov.uk

Date: 13 October 2025
Our ref: 526037
Your ref: Grappenhall & Thelwall Neighbourhood Plan

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Electra Way
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T 0300 060 3900

Warrington Borough Council

BY EMAIL ONLY
dacton@warrington.gov.uk

Dear Sir/Madam

Grappenhall & Thelwall Neighbourhood Plan - SEA/HRA Screening Opinion Consultation

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 05 September 2025.

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

Natural England is a statutory consultee in neighbourhood planning and must be consulted on draft neighbourhood development plans by the Parish/Town Councils or Neighbourhood Forums where they consider our interests would be affected by the proposals made.

Natural England does not have any specific comments on this draft neighbourhood plan.

However, we refer you to the attached annex which covers the issues and opportunities that should be considered when preparing a Neighbourhood Plan and to the following information.

Natural England does not hold information on the location of significant populations of protected species, so is unable to advise whether this plan is likely to affect protected species to such an extent as to require a Strategic Environmental Assessment. Further information on protected species and development is included in Natural England's Standing Advice on protected species .

Furthermore, Natural England does not routinely maintain locally specific data on all environmental assets. The plan may have environmental impacts on priority species and/or habitats, local wildlife sites, soils and best and most versatile agricultural land, or on local landscape character that may be sufficient to warrant a Strategic Environmental Assessment. Information on ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees is set out in Natural England/Forestry Commission standing advice.

We therefore recommend that advice is sought from your ecological, landscape and soils advisers, local record centre, recording society or wildlife body on the local soils, best and most versatile agricultural land, landscape, geodiversity and biodiversity receptors that may be affected by the plan before determining whether a Strategic Environmental Assessment is necessary.

Natural England reserves the right to provide further advice on the environmental assessment of the plan. This includes any third party appeal against any screening decision you may make. If an Strategic Environmental Assessment is required, Natural England must be consulted at the scoping and environmental report stages.

For any further consultations on your plan, please contact: consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

Yours faithfully
Sally Wintle
Consultations Team

Annex 1 - Neighbourhood planning and the natural environment: information, issues and opportunities

Natural environment information sources

The Magic[1] website will provide you with much of the nationally held natural environment data for your plan area. The most relevant layers for you to consider are: **Agricultural Land Classification, Ancient Woodland, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Local Nature Reserves, National Parks (England), National Trails, Priority Habitat Inventory, public rights of way (on the Ordnance Survey base map)** and **Sites of Special Scientific Interest (including their impact risk zones)**. Local environmental record centres may hold a range of additional information on the natural environment. A list of local record centres is available from the Association of Local Environmental Records Centres .

Priority habitats are those habitats of particular importance for nature conservation, and the list of them can be found here[2]. Most of these will be mapped either as **Sites of Special Scientific Interest**, on the Magic website or as **Local Wildlife Sites**. Your local planning authority should be able to supply you with the locations of Local Wildlife Sites.

National Character Areas (NCAs) divide England into 159 distinct natural areas. Each character area is defined by a unique combination of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity and cultural and economic activity. NCA profiles contain descriptions of the area and statements of environmental opportunity, which may be useful to inform proposals in your plan. NCA information can be found here[3].

There may also be a local **landscape character assessment** covering your area. This is a tool to help understand the character and local distinctiveness of the landscape and identify the features that give it a sense of place. It can help to inform, plan and manage change in the area. Your local planning authority should be able to help you access these if you can't find them online.

If your neighbourhood planning area is within or adjacent to a **National Park** or **Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty** (AONB), the relevant National Park/AONB Management Plan for the area will set out useful information about the protected landscape. You can access the plans on from the relevant National Park Authority or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty website.

General mapped information on **soil types** and **Agricultural Land Classification** is available (under 'landscape') on the Magic[4] website and also from the LandIS website[5], which contains more information about obtaining soil data.

Natural environment issues to consider

The National Planning Policy Framework[6] sets out national planning policy on protecting and enhancing the natural environment. Planning Practice Guidance[7] sets out supporting guidance.

Your local planning authority should be able to provide you with further advice on the potential impacts of your plan or order on the natural environment and the need for any environmental assessments.

Landscape

Your plans or orders may present opportunities to protect and enhance locally valued landscapes. You may want to consider identifying distinctive local landscape features or characteristics such as ponds, woodland or dry stone walls and think about how any new development proposals can respect and enhance local landscape character and distinctiveness.

If you are proposing development within or close to a protected landscape (National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) or other sensitive location, we recommend that you carry out a landscape assessment of the proposal. Landscape assessments can help you to choose the most appropriate sites for development and help to avoid or minimise impacts of development on the landscape through careful siting, design and landscaping.

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[1] http://magic.defra.gov.uk/
[2] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/habitats-and-species-of-principal-importance-in-england
[3] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making
[4] http://magic.defra.gov.uk/
[5] http://www.landis.org.uk/index.cfm
[6] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2
[7] http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/natural-environment/

Wildlife habitats

Some proposals can have adverse impacts on designated wildlife sites or other priority habitats (listed here[8]), such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest or Ancient woodland[9]. If there are likely to be any adverse impacts you'll need to think about how such impacts can be avoided, mitigated or, as a last resort, compensated for.

Priority and protected species

You'll also want to consider whether any proposals might affect priority species (listed here [10]) or protected species. To help you do this, Natural England has produced advice here[11] to help understand the impact of particular developments on protected species.

Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land

Soil is a finite resource that fulfils many important functions and services for society. It is a growing medium for food, timber and other crops, a store for carbon and water, a reservoir of biodiversity and a buffer against pollution. If you are proposing development, you should seek to use areas of poorer quality agricultural land in preference to that of a higher quality in line with National Planning Policy Framework para 112. For more information, see Guide to assessing development proposals on agricultural land [12].

Improving your natural environment

Your plan or order can offer exciting opportunities to enhance your local environment and should provide net gains for biodiversity in line with the National Planning Policy Framework. If you are setting out policies on new development or proposing sites for development, you should follow the biodiversity mitigation hierarchy and seek to ensure impacts on habitats are avoided or minimised before considering opportunities for biodiversity enhancement. You may wish to consider identifying what environmental features you want to be retained or enhanced or new features you would like to see created as part of any new development and how these could contribute to biodiversity net gain and wider environmental goals.

Opportunities for environmental enhancement might include:

- Restoring a neglected hedgerow.
- Creating a new pond as an attractive feature on the site.
- Planting trees characteristic to the local area to make a positive contribution to the local landscape.
- Using native plants in landscaping schemes for better nectar and seed sources for bees and birds.
- Incorporating swift boxes or bat boxes into the design of new buildings.
- Think about how lighting can be best managed to reduce impacts on wildlife.
- Adding a green roof to new buildings.
- Providing a new footpath through the new development to link into existing rights of way.

Site allocations should be supported by a baseline assessment of biodiversity value. The statutory Biodiversity Metric may be used to understand the number of biodiversity units present on allocated sites. For small development allocations the Small Sites Metric may be used. This is a simplified version of the statutory Biodiversity Metric and is designed for use where certain criteria are met. Further information on biodiversity net gain including planning practice guidance can be found here

You may also want to consider enhancing your local area in other ways, for example by:

- Setting out in your plan how you would like to implement elements of a wider Green Infrastructure Strategy (if one exists) in your community.
- Assessing needs for accessible greenspace and setting out proposals to address any deficiencies or enhance provision. Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework sets out further information on green infrastructure standards and principles
- Identifying green areas of particular importance for special protection through Local Green Space designation (see Planning Practice Guidance[13]).
- Managing existing (and new) public spaces to be more wildlife friendly (e.g. by sowing wild flower strips in less used parts of parks or on verges, changing hedge cutting timings and frequency).

[8] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/habitats-and-species-of-principal-importance-in-england
[9] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ancient-woodland-and-veteran-trees-protection-surveys-licences
[10] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/habitats-and-species-of-principal-importance-in-england
[11] https://www.gov.uk/protected-species-and-sites-how-to-review-planning-proposals
[12] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/agricultural-land-assess-proposals-for-development/guide-to-assessing-development-proposals-on-agricultural-land
[13] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/open-space-sports-and-recreation-facilities-public-rights-of-way-and-local-green-space

- Planting additional street trees.
- Identifying any improvements to the existing public right of way network, e.g. cutting back hedges, improving the surface, clearing litter or installing kissing gates) or extending the network to create missing links.
- Restoring neglected environmental features (e.g. coppicing a prominent hedge that is in poor condition, or clearing away an eyesore).

Natural England's Environmental Benefits from Nature tool may be used to identify opportunities to enhance wider benefits from nature and to avoid and minimise any negative impacts. It is designed to work alongside the statutory Biodiversity Metric and is available as a beta test version.