

# **Broxton and District Neighbourhood Plan**

## **Evidence Base Summary**



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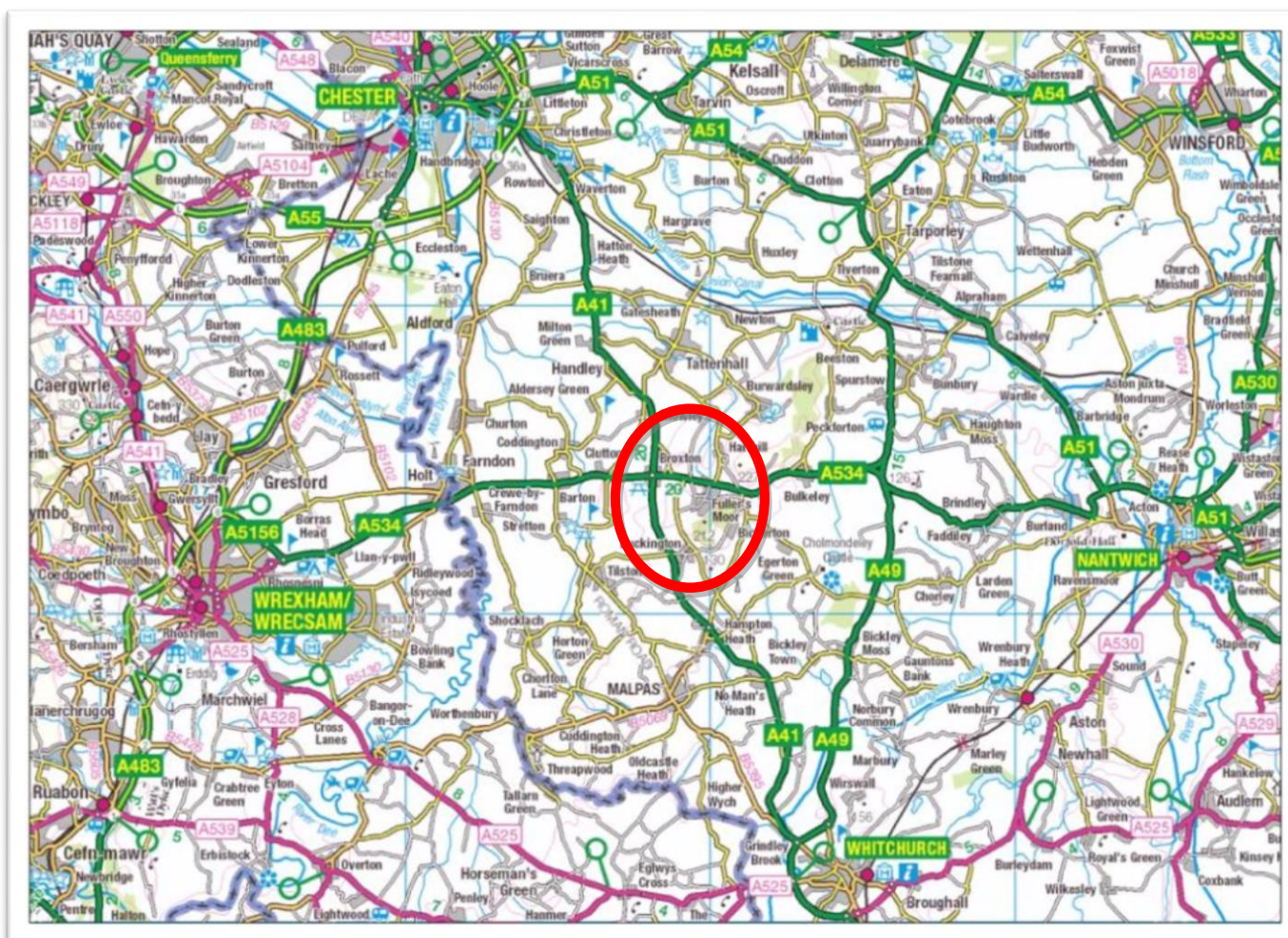
  

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## 1. Introduction

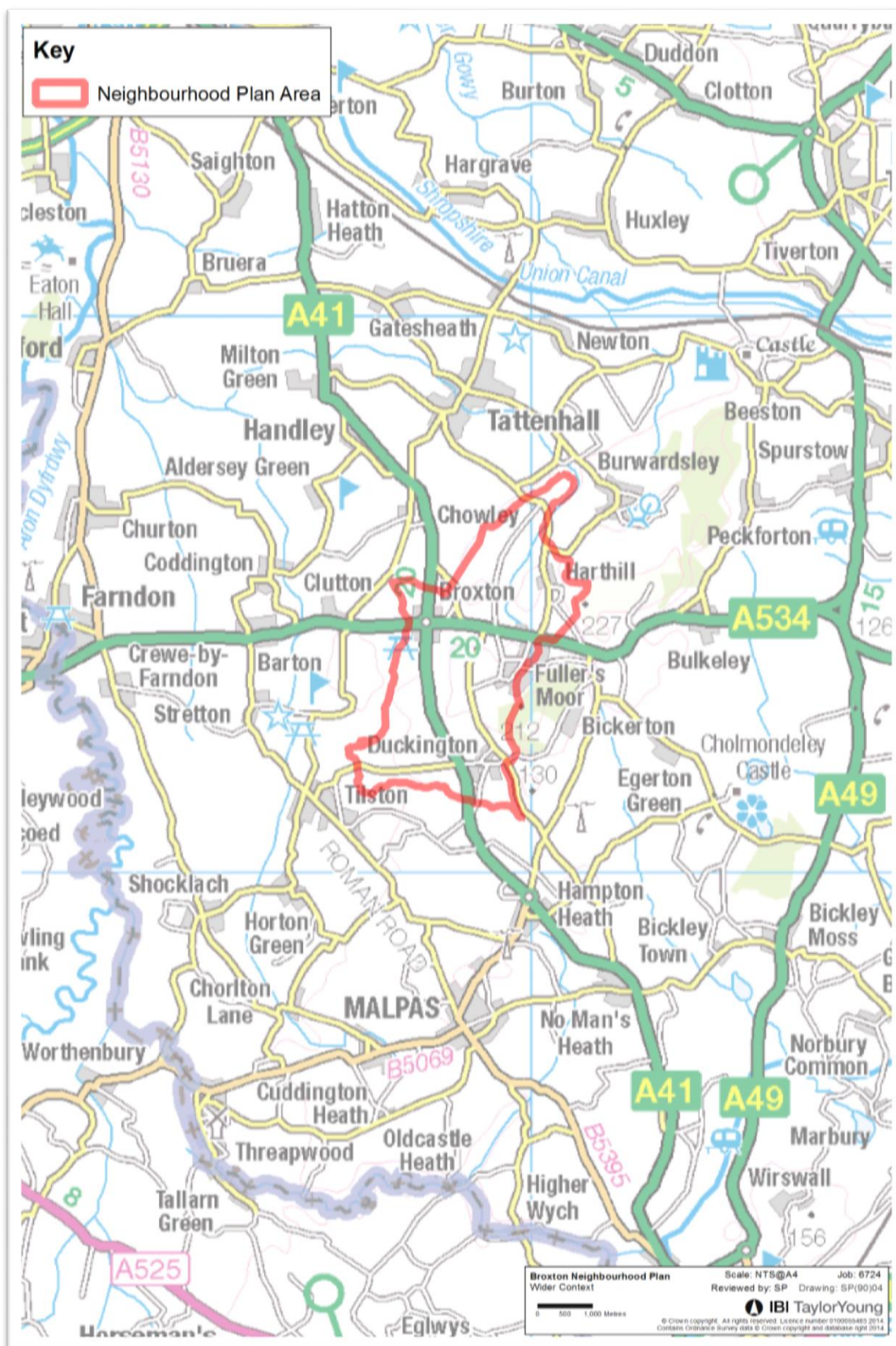
The Broxton and District Neighbourhood Plan is an opportunity to plan for the area's future. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires that neighbourhood plans ensure that development is based on an understanding and evaluation of an area's defining characteristics and should establish a strong sense of place.

**Figure 1.1: Wider Context** (Source: Ordnance Survey 2013)





**Figure 1.2: Neighbourhood Plan Area Boundary** (Source: Ordnance Survey, 2013)



The Neighbourhood Plan boundary, which has been confirmed by CWaC corresponds exactly with the Parishes of Broxton, Harthill and Duckington (see Figure 1.2).

The main road connections through the area are the east-west A534, connecting Wrexham to Nantwich; and the A41, north-south Chester to Whitchurch road; (see Figure 1.2). These main roads cross at Broxton crossroads (now a roundabout), creating a focal point within the area.

The county boundary between Cheshire and Shropshire is 8.2 miles to the south-east of the Neighbourhood Plan area, and that between Cheshire and North Wales is 4.3 miles to the west.

Many people within the Neighbourhood Plan area commute to surrounding towns for jobs and local services. Table 1.1 shows distances travelled from Broxton to key centres.

Key employment /service centre	Distances from Broxton
Farndon	4.8 miles west
Tattenhall	3.3 miles north
Malpas	5.4 miles south
Chester	11 miles north
Wrexham	10 miles west
Nantwich	12.2 miles east
Whitchurch	10.0 miles south

*Table 1.1: Distances from Broxton to key employment centres (Source: AA Route Planner)*

## 1.2. Data Sources

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has calculated Parish results from the 2011 Census by summing the results for output areas (OA). These are small geographical areas that ONS originally set up for statistical purposes. This Evidence Base uses the 'Broxton' Output Area, which includes the Broxton, Harthill and Duckington Parishes, making it an exact match for the Neighbourhood Plan Area. Hereafter this is referred to as 'Broxton and District' (or shortened to 'Broxton'). Therefore, the figures available correspond exactly with the Neighbourhood Plan boundary (see Figure 1.3).

Cheshire West and Cheshire (CWaC) and England & Wales are used as data comparators (see Figure 1.5 for the CWaC map).

This overview also includes evidence from other data sources and primary research.,



## Guidance note on small numbers

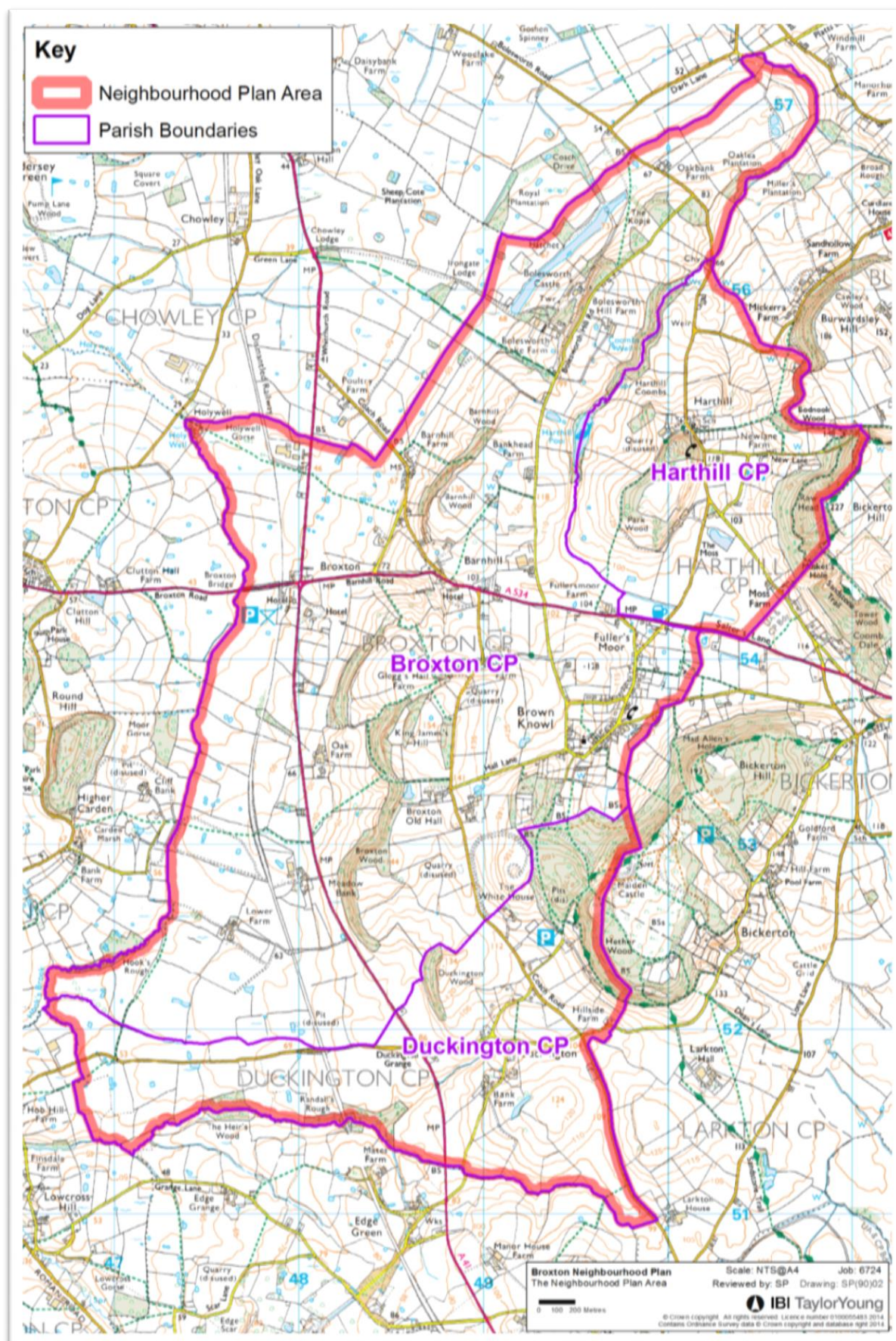
The Office for National Statistics (ONS) used a process called statistical disclosure control to ensure no individuals could be identified in any published 2011 Census tables. ONS swapped some Census records between different areas to protect information supplied by individuals. In practice, this means where a result is a small number, there is an uncertainty as to whether this is a true value.

**Figure 1.3: Broxton Output Area (Source 2011 Census , Nomis)**



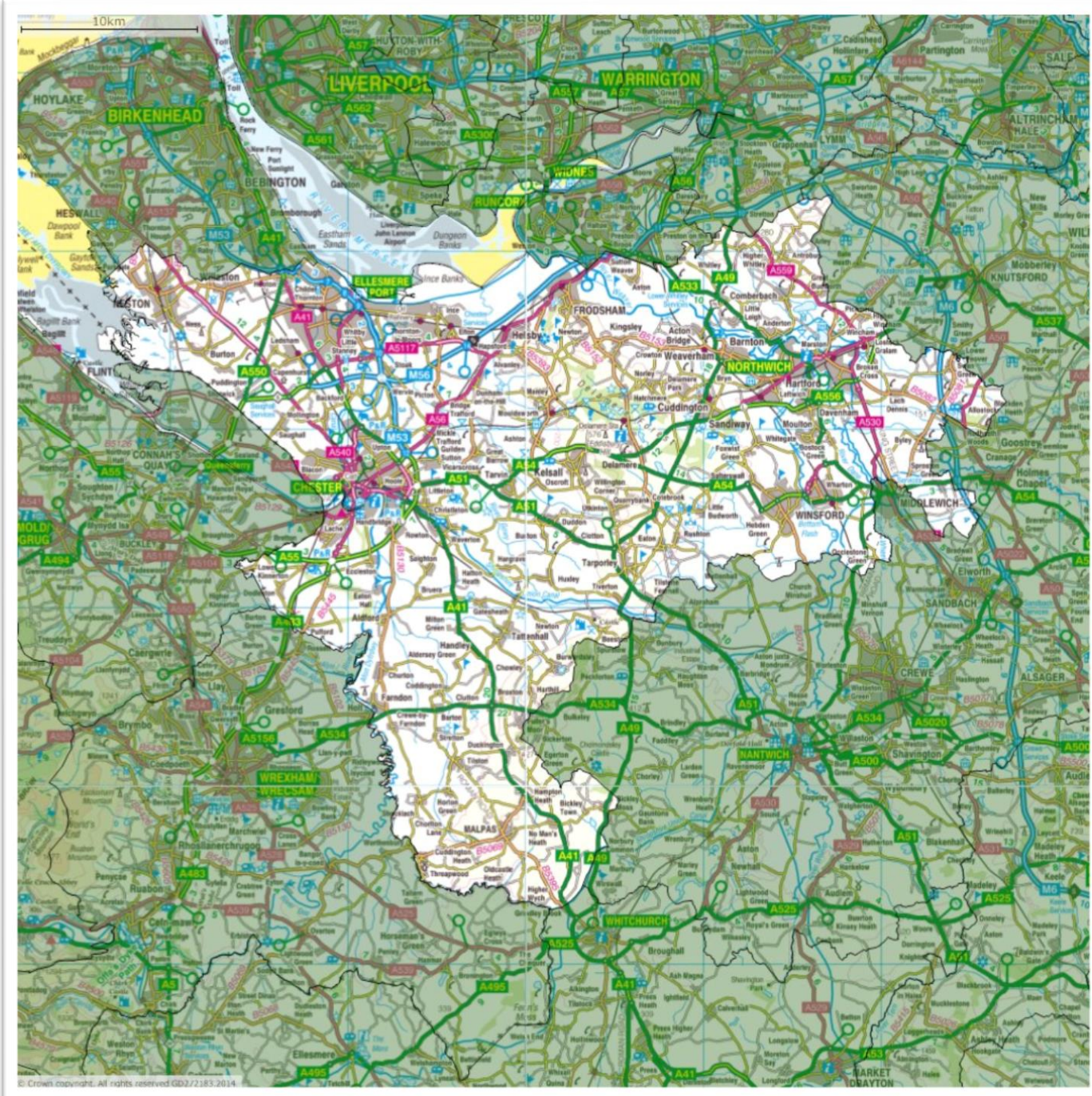


**Figure 1.4: Parishes within the Neighbourhood Plan boundary (Source: IBI Taylor Young)**





**Figure 1.5: Cheshire West and Chester** (Source: 2011 Census, Nomis)





## 2. Overview: Community Profile

This section includes a short summary of the key characteristics of Broxton and District. The subsequent sections of this document expand on this by providing further detail on each theme covered here.

A wide range of issues have been considered in producing the Neighbourhood Plan. These have been grouped under five themes:

- Rural Character
- Local Economy
- Local Tourism
- New Homes
- Infrastructure and Facilities

These five themes are covered by relevant sections within this section.

### 2.1 Demographics

Population density in Broxton and District is 0.3 persons per hectare on average, compared to the CWaC: 3.6; and England & Wales: 4.1 (2011 Census - Population Density Tables: QS102EW- Broxton; QS102EW – Cheshire West and Chester; QS102EW – England). This substantially lower number reflects the rural nature of the area. There are 461 people living in Broxton and District, this is 0.13 % of the Cheshire West and Cheshire (CWaC) population. The population in Broxton and District has increased by 71 between 2001 and 2011. The CWaC population increased by 2.3% over the same period (using 2001 Mid Year Estimate (MYE) as comparator which follows ONS guidelines).

Within the local community 47.28% (218) are male and 52.71% (243) are female (2011 Census Table QS104EW – All usual residents). 2011 Census data indicates that there are not many ethnic minority residents in Broxton and District. There are 1.5% of people from Black or minority ethnic groups compared to the CWaC figure of 2.5% (2011 Census Table QS201EW – Ethnic Group). There were 4.1% of people born outside the UK living in Broxton and District (13.8% nationally) (2011 Census Table KS204EW - Country of birth).

Table 2.1 below shows Broxton and District population breakdown by age. It indicates that number of over 65 year olds (i.e. normal retirement age) in Broxton is significantly higher than the national average. The number of working age adults is similar to Cheshire West and Chester and to England & Wales. However, the proportion of children is lower in Broxton.

Although the proportion of working age people is typical, in Broxton and District 52.71% (243) of people are aged 50 years or older compared to 34.4% nationally (2011 Census Table QS103EW – Age by single

year). This indicates that the area has an older age structure than England. This could indicate that Broxton is likely to experience a greater proportion of retired residents within the next 10-20 years (although many of the 50-64 year olds could already be retired).

	<b>People aged 65 or above</b>	<b>People of working age (16 to 64)</b>	<b>Children aged under 16</b>
Broxton	104 (22%)	301 (65%)	56 (12%)
CWaC	61,100(18%)	210,373 (63.8%)	58,135 (17%)
England & Wales	16%	64%	18%

*Table 2.1: Population breakdown by age (Source: 2011 Census table QS103EW - Age by single year. 2011 Census © Crown Copyright, Office for National Statistics licensed under the Open Government Licence v1.0)*

## 2.2 Rural Character

The Neighbourhood Plan area is located within rural Cheshire, close to Shropshire and the Welsh border, and between Chester, Wrexham, Malpas and Nantwich. It comprises the rural parishes of Broxton, Harthill and Duckington, which lie approximately 11 miles south of Chester and 10 miles east of Wrexham, and cover 1,333 hectares. The parishes include the small settlements of Broxton, Duckington, Harthill Barnhill, Brown Knowl and Fullersmoor.

The area is consistently rural in character, with most of the land within the parish used as pasture or arable land and the steeper slopes, for woodland. Pastures are enclosed by hawthorn hedgerows and sandstone walls in the south.

The landscape is made up of a patchwork of fields surrounded by long established hedgerows, many of which contain mature trees. The land rises from just under 40 metres to the west of the A41, to 227 metres at Rawhead on the Sandstone Ridge.

There are a number of statutory designations, defined on the Chester District Local Plan (2006), within the area. These include Areas of Special County Value, Features of Local Importance, Sites of National Important and Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

The Broxton & District Character Assessment (IBI Taylor Young, 2014) identified a series of character areas, local architectural styles, character buildings, local green spaces and significant views within the area. These all help to define the distinctive elements of local character in the area.

Key local landscape characteristics include the following points:

- The special character of the area includes both man-made and natural features.



- The area is positioned at the interface of two of the National Character Areas: (61: Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain and 62: Cheshire Sandstone Ridge). It includes parts of the Sandstone Ridge that dramatically overlook the Cheshire Plain.
- The Neighbourhood Plan Area includes three unique (Cheshire Landscape Character Assessment, 2008) landscape character areas: Beeston-Duckington, Peckforton and Maiden Castle.
- Maiden Castle is an important survival from the Iron Age, referred to as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSI) and a Scheduled Monument (SM)
- Changing topography is a key characteristic. The topography of the Sandstone Ridge, smaller rolling hills and open valley floors forms the landscape context.
- Dense woodland on the western slopes of hillsides play a large role in the landscape character.
- There are several small ponds in the area.
- Landmark buildings and structures have identified, which reflect use of traditional materials and historic architectural styles.
- Several distinct building types in the Village Core: surviving vernacular cottages, Georgian properties, simple Victorian properties and planned houses of Bolesworth Estate and other large landholdings. These all offer cues for new development.

## 2.3 Local Economy

Within Broxton and District, 66% of the population aged 16 to 74 were economically active at the time of the 2011 Census (2011 Census Economic Activity Table QS601EW). In the 2011 Census economic activity is defined as people who are either in employment or actively looking for employment. At the time of the 2011 Census, Broxton and District had the following employment characteristics:

- 21% of all economically active people were self-employed on part time and full time basis or had employees (compared with 14.2% in CWaC). 50% of those were full time, self-employed, without employees.
- 3.5% of those in work were employed in elementary occupations (compared with 11.1% in CWaC).

6.8% of those in work are employed in agriculture (compared with 2.0% in CWaC). *Source: 2011 Census Table QS601EW - Economic activity by sex, KS608EW - Occupation by sex, QS606EW - Occupation (Minor Groups).*

Employment within the Neighbourhood Plan Area is provided by farms, the Bolesworth Estate, public houses (e.g. The Sandstone) and Broxton petrol station. There is a vehicle repair centre at Harthill. Outside the Neighbourhood Plan boundary but close to the area are a small light industrial/office development at Chowley Oak and larger light industrial/offices units at Malpas and Tattenhall.

A significant proportion of the working population of Broxton work mainly at or from home (27.5% of the working age population) (*Source: 2011 Census, Table QS702EW Distance Travelled to work*).

A review of travel patterns in Broxton highlights that people commuted significant distances to work. At the time of the 2011 Census, 28% commuted 10km to 20km; 7% commuted 20km to 30km; 5.2% commuted 60km and over and 27% worked from home. Due to the severe limitations of the current bus services most commuting appears to be by car.

## 2.4 Local Tourism

There are 25 million visitors to Cheshire annually with £1.2bn income generated and 14,000 jobs in the tourism sector (CWaC Publication Draft Local Plan (Part One), 2013). The Broxton and District area draws many walkers to the Sandstone Trail, where dramatic views are offered over the surrounding landscape. The Sandstone Trail, a long-distance footpath between Frodsham and Whitchurch, runs over the top of two hills, and there are several other public footpaths and network of waymarked permissive paths. A total of 8500 walkers on the Sandstone Trail were recorded by the National Trust between January and March 2006, and the Trust has estimated that 8000 dog walks occur annually within the Bickerton Hill SSSI (National Trust, 2008).

Cycling and horse riding are also popular in the area. Bolesworth Estate host a major annual show-jumping event and Broxton Hall has its own training gallops. There are 3 public houses that serve hot food in the area. Other important attractions are the Mountain Board Centre and Cookery School at Harthill.

## 2.5 New Homes

In 2011, in Broxton and District there were 461 residents living in 201 households, and 214 dwellings.

13% of households in Broxton and District were one person households aged, 65 or above. 13% (26) are one person households aged under 65 (*Source: 2011 Census Table QS112EW - Household composition*). These figures are relatively high compared with the Cheshire West figure (13.2% of one person households age 65 and over and 16.4% of one person households under 65).

2011 Census data reveals that dwellings in the area are predominantly a mix of detached houses or bungalows (66.6%) and semi-detached and (24.3%) with fewer terraced houses than the local authority average (7.6%) and fewer flats and apartments (1.5%). Most households in Broxton Parish live in owner-occupied accommodation (70%).

In terms of housing need, the recommended Strategic Housing Market Assessment annual affordable housing requirement for Tattenhall Ward (which includes Broxton & District) is for a total of 15 units based on the SHMA 2013:



For under 65 years old:

- 5x1 bed dwellings,
- 2x2 bed dwellings, and
- 1x3 bed dwelling.

For 65 years old and above:

- 7x1 bed dwelling.

CW&C have stated to the Parish Council that Broxton & District will likely be designated “ open countryside” which will mean that there not be any new housing development in the Area other than that supported under Strat9

## 2.6 Infrastructure and Facilities

The Broxton and District area is a rural community, with no railway line and very limited public transport. It has only one small shop at the petrol station, three public houses and one church. It relies on the adjacent centres of Malpas, Farndon and Tattenhall for shops and services (including schools and GP surgeries). Larger shopping centres and a wider range of services can be found in Chester, Nantwich, Whitchurch and Wrexham.

### Roads and Traffic

The A534 connects Broxton and District to Wrexham and Nantwich, and runs east-west through the Neighbourhood Plan area. The north-south A41 bisects the A534 at Broxton and connects the area with Whitchurch and Chester. The A49 runs on the eastern side of the Neighbourhood Plan boundary and provides connectivity between Whitchurch and Warrington.

Smaller roads, including designated B-roads, provide local connectivity and link the area with key service centres (Malpas, Tattenhall and Farndon).

A significant amount of through traffic passes through the area. The main traffic congestion points are at Broxton roundabout especially at peak times.

- 1 Generally access roads to the settlements are single track , this is specifically the case for access to Brown Knowl and Fullers Moor

### Footpaths, Cycleways and Bridleways

As mentioned above, roads in the Neighbourhood Plan area are often narrow and have poor provision for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders. There are many roads that have no pavements and there are no segregated cycleways on roads. There are a few dedicated footpaths that provide shortcuts and access for pedestrian to villages, for example Barnhill Road. However, many of these lack lighting, are poorly maintained and are not wide enough for wheelchairs or pushchairs.

In the rural area there are good links with wider routes including Cheshire Cycle Way and a good network of bridleways, both of which are well used. However, these tend to be used for recreation rather than accessibility.

## **Public Transport**

Bus services are limited in Broxton and District. CWaC provides a Community Transport Scheme, PlusBus for registered users with mobility difficulties. There are three bus services operating in the Neighbourhood Plan area namely:

- 41/41A service, the bus stops are located on the edge of the Area
- Route 89

These are detailed in section 8.4

The nearest train stations are in Nantwich (12.2 miles), Wrexham (10 miles), Whitchurch (10 miles) Chester (11 miles).

The reliance on the private car is not surprising given the limitations of bus services and the fact that there is no railway station nearby Broxton and District.

## **Digital Communications**

There is high speed broadband available in the area. Parts of the Broxton Parish currently have poor or no mobile telephone reception.

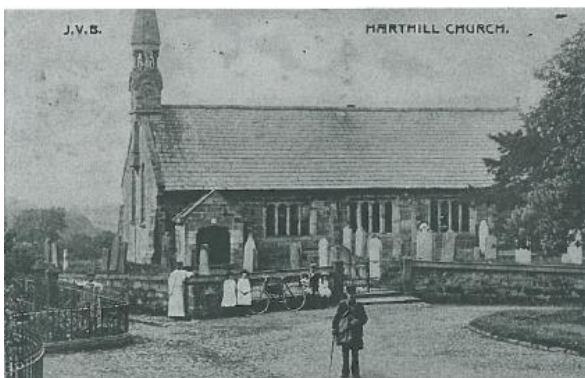


## 3. Local History

The earliest known settlement in the area is the Iron Age hill fort at Maiden Castle (though there are caves in the area which may have been used as prehistoric shelters). Maiden Castle was excavated in 1934-5. Evidence suggests there may have been three building phases: an early freestanding timber palisade, possibly from around 900 BC; a timber-laced and stone-faced inner rampart around 470 BC; and a stone faced outer rampart from around 400 BC.

Archaeological finds in the area have also included potential Bronze Age barrows and Roman/Romano-British metalwork and coins. The concentration of finds suggest that this may have been the site of a contemporary settlement. There is also evidence of post-medieval mining, quarrying and smelting. There are many disused sandstone quarries in the area. Copper mining was first recorded in Bickerton in 1696.

The urban form of the area has not significantly changed over recent centuries, remaining largely unaffected by urbanisation and industrialisation and the dispersed settlement form remains. The 1841 census recorded a population of 458 for Broxton. The 1901 census shows only a slight increase and in the 2011 census the population was only 461 [ONS, 2011]. The historical hamlets and villages of Broxton, Barnhill, Harthill, Duckington, Fullersmoor and Brown Knowl remain the focus for development, with more remote farmsteads and cottages in the surrounding rural area. These villages once formed the basis for local shops and services, most of which have now been closed. The Police Station and Magistrates Court was located at Broxton crossroads. The historic role of these settlements in providing community services and business, remains important to local character, and can be seen in the surviving buildings, for example churches (All Saints Church, Brown Knowl Methodist Church), school houses (e.g. Harthill School) and the clustered settlement form that still exists around these historic centres. Many of these buildings remain vitally important to the character of each place, even if they do not accommodate their original function.



*All Saints Church, Harthill 1909*



*Harthill houses, built in 1844*

Transport through the area has been a defining feature in its history. A causeway through the area was recorded in 1791 (Adam Watkins, Observations), as the only route through Lancashire and Cheshire up to the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. This north-south route can be seen on the 1735 Estate Map of Bickerton (Coston's History of Lancashire). An ancient causeway, Saltersway, also ran east-west and its alignment is now part of the A534. From 1750 the A41 turnpike road was gradually created, leading to present alignment passing through the Broxton area in 1821. A railway line was built through the area, opening in 1872, with a station at Broxton. This closed in the Beeching reforms of the 1960s.

There have also long been public houses in the area, acting as coaching inns for travellers. References to inns date from 1650. Several of these have since been converted to residential use. When the A41 was built in 1821 'The Feathers' on Old Coach Road became redundant and the inn closed. It is now the farmhouse for Barnhill Farm. The survival of the coaching inns in the area are the public houses now known as the Egerton Arms, the Sandstone and the Durham Heifer, on Nantwich Road (the A534).

The local economy is today characterised by agriculture, and equine businesses. Agriculture has historically been the dominant source of employment. Cheese production was an important local industry. In the Inter-war period there was a cheese factory located close to Broxton station.

Agricultural buildings are arranged in a familiar pattern in the area, with farm buildings located around a rectangular yard which contains the midden. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century Dutch barns and silos have been added, alongside modern dairies and tractor sheds.

There have historically been a number of small businesses in the area, dispersed across the villages in the area. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century this included shoemakers, tailors, coal merchants, butchers and blacksmiths. None of these businesses survive today, although several of the buildings still stand, for example the Old Bakery in Brown Knowl.

There are several old houses in the area, dating back to the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, for example Broxton Old Hall. These display construction methods of the time, such as timber framing and wattle and daub panels. Use of local sandstone is prevalent in many buildings, especially in smaller, domestic buildings, for example Bay Bush, which dates from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The sandstone is often painted or rendered now but many exposed sandstone buildings remain. Roofs would have originally been thatched. Most have been replaced by slate but a number of thatched cottages remain. In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries a number of grander stone and brick houses were built for wealthier families, for example Glegg Hall (now demolished), Bankhead and Duckington Grange.

Broxton Old Hall, was owned by the Egerton family and was a major landholding in the area, with its own tenant farms. Bolesworth Estate has been held by the Barbour family since 1856 and is the major landowner in the area. Bolesworth Castle was built in 1826, on the site of a former gothic house dating from the 1750s. The current lake, with its bridge and boathouse, are surviving features from the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

## 4. Rural Character

Broxton and District has a unique character, enhanced with important factors such as its topography, panoramic views, farmland landscape and traditional buildings. The following principal points emerge from the Character Study of Broxton and District, undertaken by IBI Taylor Young (2014):

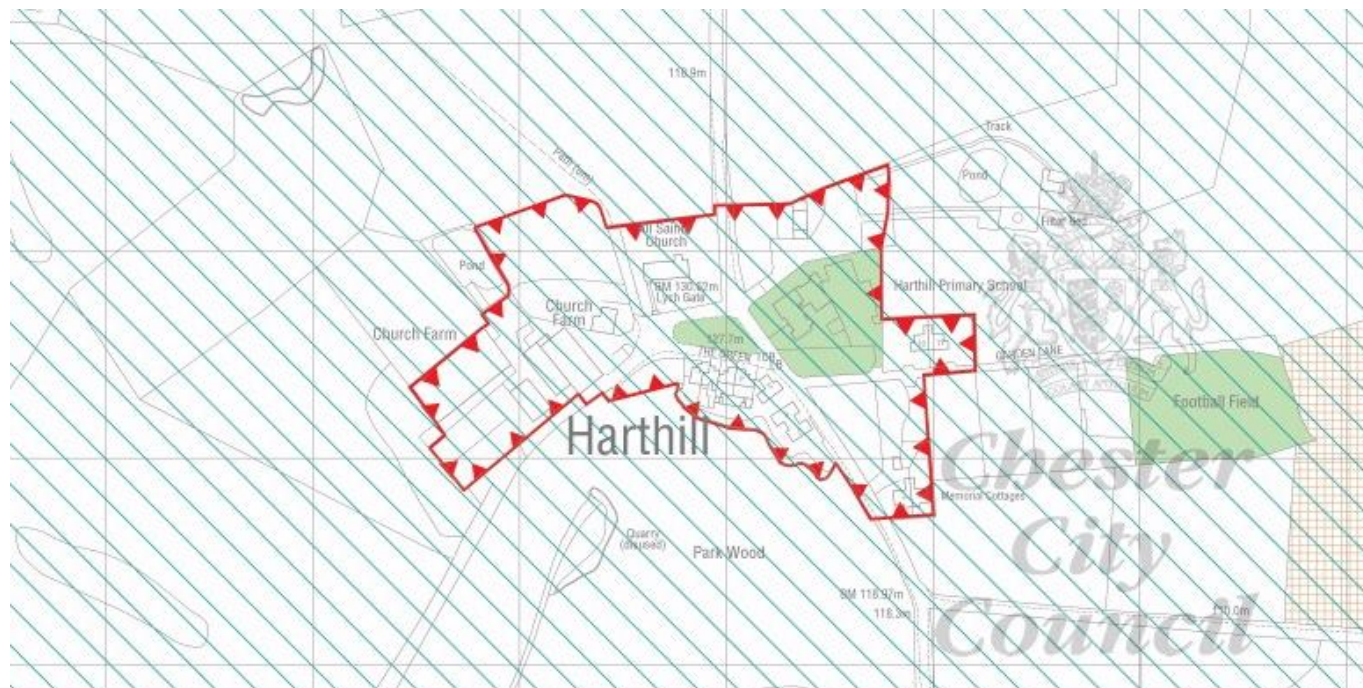
- The special character of the area includes both man-made and natural features.
- The area is positioned at the interface of two of the National Character Areas: (61: Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain and 62: Cheshire Sandstone Ridge). It includes parts of the Sandstone Ridge that dramatically overlook the Cheshire Plain.
- The Neighbourhood Plan Area includes three unique (Cheshire Landscape Character Assessment, 2008) landscape character areas: Beeston-Duckington, Peckforton and Maiden Castle.
- Maiden Castle is an important survival from the Iron Age.
- Changing topography is a key characteristic. The topography of the Sandstone Ridge, smaller rolling hills and open valley floors forms the landscape context.
- Dense woodland on the western slopes of hillsides play a large role in the landscape character.
- There are several small ponds in the area.
- Landmark buildings and structures have identified, which reflect use of traditional materials and historic architectural styles.
- Several distinct building types in the Village Core: surviving vernacular cottages, Georgian properties, simple Victorian properties and planned houses of Bolesworth Estate and other large landholdings. These all offer cues for new development.

Within the Neighbourhood Plan area only Harthill is designated as a Conservation Area (see Figure 4.1). There are 38 listed buildings. The Broxton and District Character Study identified a distinctive local character that derives from both listed and unlisted buildings and from. This character is not uniform and varies by 'character area'.

The surrounding landscape character also plays an important role in the distinctive identity. This includes strong field patterns with mature hedgerows and a settlement pattern of dispersed and isolated farmsteads, individual cottages and small hamlets spread along narrow and curved hedged roads. Many of these are ancient fieldscapes with historic importance (Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation).



**Figure 4.1 Harthill Conservation Area** (Source: Ordnance Survey 2013 and National Heritage 2013)



(Broxton and District Character Study, IBI Taylor Young, 2014)

## 4.1 Character Areas



The Neighbourhood Plan area contains a number of discernible 'character areas' of distinct identity and characteristics. More in depth analysis has been undertaken of all 9 character areas in Broxton and District:


- Broxton
- Bolesworth
- Harthill
- Barnhill
- Brown Knowl
- Fullersmoor
- Duckington
- Tower Wood
- Maiden Castle

Broxton	Bolesworth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The prevailing character here is of regular, medium-sized-clustered farms sitting in an open landscape, bypassed by modern, straighter and wider roads including A-roads (the A41 and A534) and Hob Hill Road.</li> <li>A key landscape feature is the disused railway line that passes north-south through the area and is bisected by Hob Hill.</li> <li>The natural focal point for the character area is the crossroads of the A41 and A534. However, instead of forming the basis for a significant settlement, this is marked by only a handful of buildings. These nevertheless include a public house (the Egerton Arms) and a petrol filling station that also includes a small shop.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This area is dominated by the Bolesworth Estate, which owns most of the land. This includes both formal grounds and working agricultural land. Bolesworth Castle, a 19<sup>th</sup> century manor and Grade II* listed building, is now home to the Barbour family, the holders of the Estate.</li> <li>There are also a number of other listed features on the Estate. The attractive formal lawns include an ornamental lake.</li> <li>Buildings, other than around Bolesworth Castle, are isolated cottages and farm buildings, generally 19<sup>th</sup> century and of more substantial form than the smaller vernacular buildings of other character areas.</li> </ul>
Harthill	Barnhill
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Harthill has a long history as a settlement. The first chapel was recorded here in 1280. The present All Saints Church was built in 1607, and restored in 1862.</li> <li>The Schoolhouse (now a cookery school) was built by Robert Barbour of Bolesworth Castle in 1868, and rebuilt in 1923 following a fire.</li> <li>The buildings here are stone and have a more substantial scale and feel to the other buildings in the area. The elevated position on the hilltop also creates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Barnhill is a dispersed area of settlement, with small houses located on the narrow winding lanes of Withy Lane, Old Coach Road and Barnhill Road.</li> <li>The historic focus of Barnhill Road (now part of the A534) can be seen by the presence of the Durham Heifer, which was once a coaching inn. Now the area is characterised by individual houses and farm buildings on narrow lanes with tall hedgerows and mature trees, giving it a close, intimate feel.</li> </ul>

<p>a distinctive feel. This is reflected in the designation of Harthill as a Conservation Area, the only conservation area within the Neighbourhood Plan area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Although the overall identity of Barnhill as a settlement is weak, the character here is distinct from the more open character of Bolesworth and Broxton.</li> </ul>
Brown Knowl	Fullersmoor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brown Knowl is characterised by a nucleated group of buildings clustered around narrow lanes. The tall hedgerows and abundance of trees give this area an intimate character.</li> <li>The settlement has grown from small timber and sandstone farm dwellings that have been accompanied by infill houses along the intervening lanes.</li> <li>The settlement retains a close relationship with farming and equine businesses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fullersmoor adjoins with the neighbouring Brown Knowl and is also characterised by a series of domestic buildings along narrow lanes, edged with mature hedges and trees.</li> <li>Brown Knowl and Fullersmoor now flow into one settlement with no obvious separation point.</li> <li>The Sandstone public house (previously known as the Royal Oak and the Copper Mine) has long been a focal building in the area.</li> </ul>
Duckington	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Duckington is a much more dispersed area of development than either Brown Knowl or Fullersmoor.</li> <li>There are few buildings, which are either</li> </ul>	



<p>individual or grouped into a few units, with no larger hamlet formed. In 1840 Duckington was part of the Drake Estate, with most land owned by the Marquis of Cholmondeley.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most houses here are now privately owned. It remains predominantly an area of farms and farm land.</li> </ul>	
<h2>Tower Wood</h2>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This small character area has a distinct landscape character that differs from its surroundings. It forms part of the Sandstone Ridge and is the only part of part of the Neighbourhood Plan area to sit within the Peckforton character area, as defined in CWaC's Cheshire Landscape Character Assessment. It is also defined as an Area of Nature Conservation Value.</li> <li>• The area comprises a densely wooded, rolling hillside. The topography gives this area a prominent position, widely visible over the surrounding area and contributing to the wider local character. The woodland here has been replanted and is not ancient. Low lying land is grassland with hedgerows forming field boundaries and lining New Lane. There are no buildings in this area.</li> </ul>	  <p><i>Tower Wood</i></p>
<h2>Maiden Castle</h2>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This character area sits at the southern end of the Sandstone Ridge and is a separate character area within CWaC's Cheshire Landscape Character Assessment.</li><li>• The topography makes this area a prominent feature in the landscape. It forms a distinctive skyline in views from elsewhere in the Neighbourhood Plan area, and itself offers impressive long range panoramic views.</li></ul>	 <p><i>Woodland below Maiden Castle (Bickerton Woods)</i></p>
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## 4.2 Landscape Character

The topography of the Sandstone Ridge, smaller rolling hills and open valley floors forms the landscape context. Within this, the local landscape character is defined by medium-scale farmland, hedgerows in various condition and many mature trees along field boundaries. The field pattern dates from the enclosures of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and more modern interventions.

There are several areas of dense woodland, particularly on the western slopes of hillsides. Some of these are ancient woodlands: Walker's Wood, Broxton Wood and Barnhill Wood; others are much younger and have developed from neglected heath or grassland.

Views form a key part of the landscape character. These include views of the Sandstone Ridge, and its skyline, to the east and panoramic views from elevated points in the area (including from the Sandstone Ridge). These long ridge views extend in all directions, but noticeably reach westward to include the Welsh hills and the skyline of Liverpool.

The significant views that contribute most strongly to landscape character are described on Figure 4.5 (page 6). It is locally agreed that these views should be protected and development assessed with regards to its impact upon them. There are several types of view:

- Major panoramic views
- Medium range views across the open fields
- Views from the lowland to the Sandstone Ridge and other hillsides
- Vistas

A selection of most significant views are illustrated below. For more details please refer to the Broxton and District Character Assessment.



*View west from Harthill*



*Views west from Burwardsley Hill*



## 4.3 Listed buildings and features

There are 38 listed buildings and structures in the area. These are all Grade II listed with the exception of Bolesworth Castle and the Church of All Saints, which are both Grade II\* listed. A selection of the listed buildings are illustrated below, for more information please refer to the Broxton and District Character Assessment.



*The Green, Harthill*



*Bay Bush, Brown Knowl*



*Old Coach House, Old Coach Road*



*Bolesworth Castle*



*School at Harthill*



*Bankhead Lodge*

## 4.5 Local Architectural Styles

The most locally distinctive style is the vernacular architecture that is rooted in the informal, traditional historical style of the local area, and makes a good use of local materials.

Some of the key vernacular architectural features identified in the Broxton and District Character Assessment are:



- Low window-to-wall ratio with relatively large expanses of blank walls
- Local red sandstone-rough cut stones, large stones
- Large stone lintels over doors and windows
- Properties often have wide frontages and shallow depth, rather than narrow frontages and deep plot depth.

Mixed with this vernacular style, often in the same properties, one can see the prevalent architectural styles of the era in which properties were built. The Broxton and District Character Assessment, highlights following important architectural styles in Broxton:.




***The Sandstone PH – a good quality building that provides a link to the coaching inn heritage of the area.***



Vernacular	
<p>Vernacular style can be seen in smaller, domestic properties throughout the area. Agricultural buildings, stables and workshops are also important examples of vernacular architecture, many of which have now been converted to residential or other uses.</p> <p>Key vernacular architectural features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low window-to-wall ratio with relatively large expanses of blank walls</li> <li>• Local red sandstone – rough cut, large stones</li> <li>• White or cream render</li> </ul>	 <p><i>Vernacular features</i></p>
Georgian	
<p>The earliest examples of these wider trends are traditional Georgian properties, with their simple, classically-proportioned front elevations (see below). There are relatively few of these and the best examples have been identified as Character Buildings.</p>	

	<i>Georgian style property</i>
<b>Victorian</b>	
<p>Victorian style is often found in large farmhouses and the planned houses of the Bolesworth Estate and other large landholdings. There were many different architectural styles during this era but there are some common characteristics visible on Victorian properties in the area.</p> <p>Key Victorian architectural features are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of red brick, sometimes painted white</li> <li>• Decorative brickworks and stringcourses</li> <li>• Steep roof pitches and a complex roof form, including gables and dormers</li> <li>• Vertical proportioned windows in wimple wooden frames</li> <li>• Tall brick chimneystacks</li> <li>• Slate roofs</li> <li>• Buildings are generally much taller than in other styles</li> <li>• Properties are detached or semi detached and set within their own grounds</li> <li>• Farmhouses are rather, grand and individual and distinct from the functional farm buildings around them</li> </ul>	 <p><i>Victorian style properties</i></p>
<b>Post War</b>	

<p>5.49 Post War . Buildings characterised by a mixture of styles but using traditional materials There are relatively few newer buildings in the area but there are some good examples of high quality, sensitive design that responds positively to the distinctive styles of the area (see below). In following this approach it is important to pay attention to detail and follow a complete approach to a particular historical or vernacular style, otherwise a crude ‘pastiche’ form can result.</p>	 <p><i>Post war property</i></p>
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## 4.6 Archaeology

### Maiden Castle

Maiden Castle is a promontory fort on Bickerton Hill 700m west of Hill Farm. It is recognised as a Site of National Importance (SSI) in the Policy ENV 31 (Chester District Local Plan - adopted in 2006) and is also a Scheduled Monument. The policy explains that *archaeological sites are an important part of the cultural heritage of the nation and the local area; those considered most important are legally protected by inclusion in the Secretary of State's Schedule of Ancient Monuments.*

The earliest known settlement in the area is the Iron Age hill fort at Maiden Castle. Maiden Castle is the southernmost of the hillforts on Cheshire's sandstone, with commanding views to the south, east and west. It occupies an outcrop that rises gently from the southeast with steep sandstone bluffs to the west. The hillfort makes the most of these cliffs, enclosing three acres of the hill within twin, curved ramparts and an intervening ditch. Excavations in 1934-5 uncovered an in-turned entrance with possible guard chambers at the northern end of the defences. Further evidence suggests there may have been three building phases at Maiden Castle: an early freestanding timber palisade, possibly from around 900 BC; a timber-laced and stone-faced inner rampart around 470 BC; and a stone faced outer rampart from around 400 BC. In 1742 Land around Maiden Castle reclaimed for agriculture under the Enclosure Act, then in 1900s the Maiden Castle area was used for army training



*Maiden Castle*

### Broxton Old Hall

When the Hall was restored and enlarged in 1873 for the Egerton family, the following incomplete inscription was discovered under stuccowork on the old gables:

*"T.D K.D A.D. This house was bvilded by Jhon Bithel vpon the \*\*\*"*

The initials were of the Dod family who owned Broxton Old Hall from 1338 to 1604. All that remains of the original building is the stone cellar, which is thought to be medieval and is also thought to be ground

floor of the original manor house. Remains of the Elizabethian hall were discovered hidden under plaster during reconstruction in 1960.

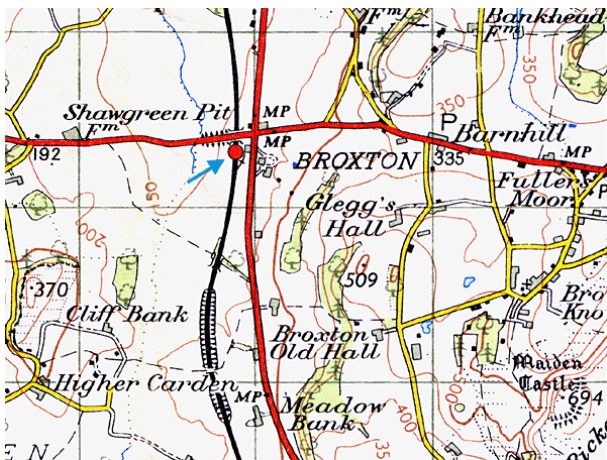
Broxton Old Hall is recognised as a locally important site in the Policy ENV 48 (Chester District Local Plan adopted in 2006). The policy states that *the presence of a locally important site will be a material consideration when assessing any proposals which could affect it.*



*Broxton Old Hall*

## Broxton Railway Station

In 1871 a Railway Station was opened at Broxton and two carriers provided transport to Crewe and Chester. Passenger train services were mostly of a local nature running between Chester and Whitchurch. It had a station building and two side platforms. The building provided booking facilities, waiting rooms and a two storey house for the stationmaster. It was located behind the Egerton Arms Hotel on the A41. Broxton in particular benefited from the arrival of the railway and the station soon became the centre for transportation of fresh vegetables, fruit and livestock to places such as Manchester and Liverpool.



*Location of the Broxton Railway Station (OS, 1899)*

The branch declined rapidly after the Second World War with more and more commuters abandoning railways in favour of more convenient road transport while an ever increasing amount of goods traffic switched over from cars to lorries. The station closed on 16 September 1957. The site is now the Broxton Picnic Area.



*Broxton Train Station*

## Mines and Quarries

19<sup>th</sup> century disused quarries and small natural and man-made caves exist all around the Broxton area.

There are many disused sandstone quarries in the area. Copper mining was first recorded in Bickerton in 1696. They form a fascinating tapestry showing man's impact on the landscape.

## Sources:

- Archaeology of Maiden Castle: Habitats and Hillforts Project (Chester Chronicle July 10, 2014)
- Bawn, W.; Dakin, R. And Shadbolt, C. *A local history of Broxton, Duckington & Harthill* (Peckforton & Beeston Village Hall, Barnhill; 2004)
- Bevan, R.M. *Down the Line* (C.C. Publishing, Chester; 2007)
- Building for Life 12, Design Council, 2012
- Broxton and District Character Assessment, IBI Taylor Young (2014)
- Chester District Local Plan (2006)
- Davies, L. *Urban Design Compendium I and II* (2007)
- Disused Stations: Broxton by Paul Wright (2013)
- Notification of SSSIs. Natural England (2006)
- Rivet, A.L.F. and Smith, C, *The Place-Names of Roman Britain* (London 1979), pp. 157-160
- Thompson, F.H. *Roman Cheshire* (Chester 1965), p. 104
- The National Heritage List for England (including listings and Conservation Area designations), English Heritage



## 4.7 Landscape Character and the Natural Environment

The landscape character of the Neighbourhood Plan area reflects that of the defined 'landscape character areas' in which it lies. These have been defined and explained in respective documents. The summary of these key features can be seen below. For more detailed information please refer to the Broxton and District Character Assessment.

### National Character Areas

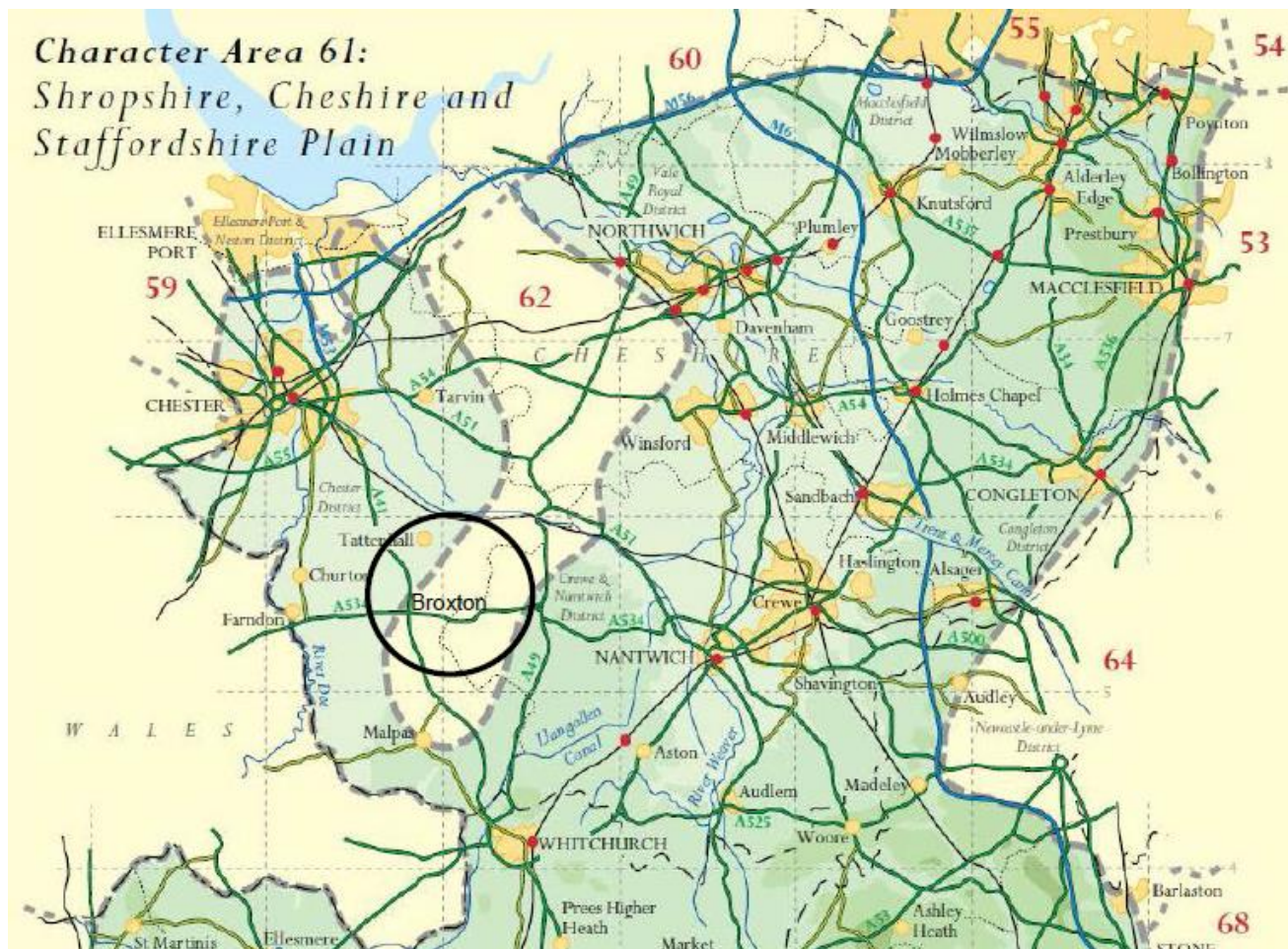
The Broxton Neighbourhood Plan area sits at the interface of two of the National Character Areas:

- **61. Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain**
- **62: Cheshire Sandstone Ridge**

The map below shows the position of the Sandstone Ridge, which passes through the eastern point of the Neighbourhood Plan area; resulting in dramatic views across the surrounding plains.

**Figure 4.2: Landscape character areas at Broxton**

(Source: Natural England, 2011, [www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk))



## Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain

This region is a wide expanse of flat or gently undulating farmland which rarely rises above 100 meters in elevation. Despite intensive agricultural use, diverse wetland habitats survive including mosses (bogs), swamps, fens, meres and several ponds. Flashes, originating in subsidence after salt extraction, contain examples of inland salt marsh, an extremely rare habitat internationally.

Following, are some of the general characteristics:

- Lowland character
- Widespread fertile and productive clay soils
- Generally low woodland cover – small broadleaved or mixed woodland on slopes of Sandstone Ridges or along watercourses
- Strong field patterns defined by hedgerows, often with dense mature hedgerow trees. These are often in neglected condition.
- Cheshire Sandstone Ridge

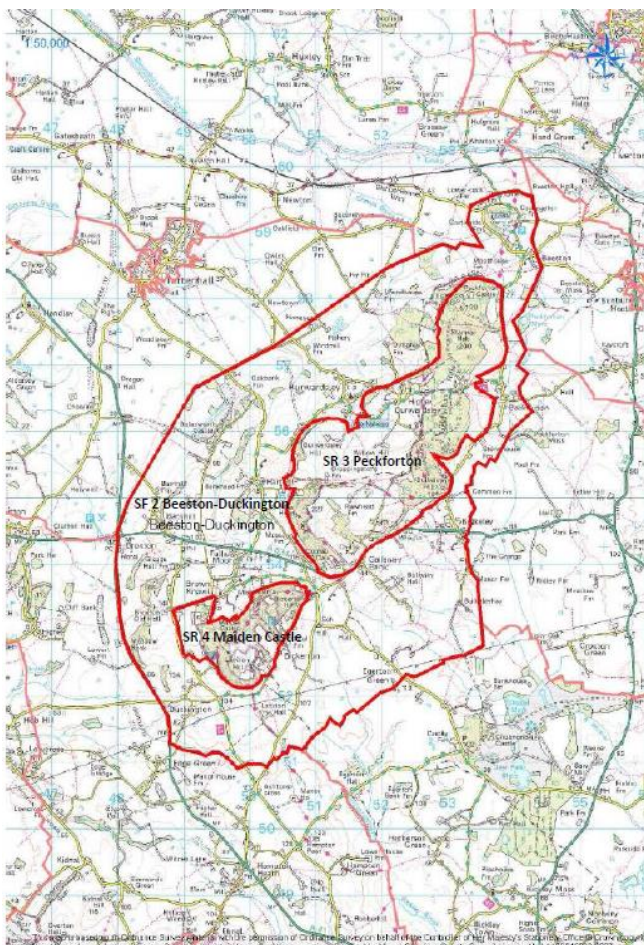
- Steep-sided sandstone ridge, to the east the lower slopes are cloaked in deposits of glacial sand and gravel.
- Soils are free draining, thin, sandy and generally infertile.
- A pattern of hedged fields with scattered mature hedgerow trees. Field sizes are irregular in pattern. Hedgerows are well maintained.
- Dispersed pattern of scattered farms and small villages.

## Cheshire Landscape Character Assessment (2008)

CWac's Landscape Character Assessment includes three landscape character areas:

- SF2: Beeston-Duckington Character Areas
- SR 3: Peckforton Character Area
- SR 4: Maiden Castle Character Area

*Figure 4.3 Cheshire Landscape Character Assessment (2008)*





## **SF 2: Beeston-Duckington Character Area**

This character area is undulating with a maximum elevation of 130m AOD. It extends from Beeston Castle in the north to Larkton Hall in the south. The visual characteristics of this area are determined by its location at the transition between different landscapes types, the more elevated Sandstone Ridge and the lower lying areas of Cheshire Plain and Rolling Farmland. The medium-scale farmland is divided by weak hedgerows with mature hedgerow oaks. The River Weaver issues just below Hillside Farm, to the south of Peckforton. At some locations the more undulating ground form can provide a strong element of enclosure and the scale of the landscape is much reduced where narrow lanes rise and fall, flanked by high hedges. In the west the A534 passes through a particularly complex landform with prominent ridges and hidden valleys. Where the undulation is less marked the increasing reliance upon arable crops tends to be associated with larger fields with trimmed hedges. There is a consequential increase in the apparent scale of the landscape. This is particularly noticeable in the south of the area between Duckington and Bulkeley.

## **SR 3: Peckforton Character Area**

SR 3 includes Peckforton Hill, Bulkely Hill and Rawhead. This upland character area forms a very prominent ridge of steep-sided wooded hills which appear to rise abruptly out of the surrounding flat or undulating farmland. The ridge forms a distinctive skyline in views from adjacent areas and the more distant parts of the Lowland Plain to both east and west. The abundant woodland is especially noticeable as it is in marked contrast to the scarcity of woodland cover over much of the surrounding farmland. These extend in all directions to the very distant horizons of higher ground, such as the Peak District to the east and the Clwydian Hills to the west.

## **SR4: Maiden Castle Character Area**

SR4 includes Maiden Castle, Bickerton Hill and heathland. This is the most southerly of the Sandstone Ridge character areas, separated from the Peckforton Character Area by a strip of low land through which the A534 passes. Settlement is limited and mainly sits on the lower slopes of the neighbouring character areas. For more details and general characteristics of these areas please refer to the Broxton and District Character Assessment.

## **Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)**

LWS is the name given to non-statutory sites designated for their nature conservation value in Cheshire West. They complement the nationally designated series of statutory sites, Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA), Ramsar Sites and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) found in the borough, and receive protection through the Local Plan policies and local planning documents. There are currently 443 LWS in Cheshire West and new sites will be added or removed from register and boundaries may be reduced or extended.

Within the Neighbourhood Plan area there are 15 no of LWS:

Site name	LWS code	Area in ha
Harthill Coombs and Pool	140	10.43
Cawley's Wood and Bodnick Wood	429	10.92
Walker's Wood	423	4.87
Wood North of Broxton Old Hall	488	1.53
Broxton Wood	233	15.43
Duckington Wood	420	2.8
Hether Wood	330	9.19
Brown Knowl Wood	546	0.37
Heirs Wood and Pastures and Randall's Rough	67	15.95
Meadow by Tilston Methodist Church	413	0.81
Edge Green Grassland	292	0.07
Hooks Rough and Brook	74	25.01
Moor Gorse	542	3.1
Carden Marsh and Meadows	65	27.33

## Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Sites (RIGS)

RIGS are non-statutory sites currently not identified in the documents. RIGS complement the series of statutorily designated SSSIs, but do not receive any statutory protection other than through the policies contained in the Former District Development Plans. There are two RIGS sites within the Neighbourhood Plan area: Raw Head and Bickerton Hill.

## 4.8 Biodiversity and Habitat

### Ancient Woodland

Ancient woodland is sparse throughout the area, but is found on the slopes and river valleys of the SF 2 Beeston–Duckington Character Area and within the SR 3 Peckforton Character Area.

Within the SF 2 area, original ancient woodland exists. This is located on the west-facing slopes on the western side of the Character Area. These blocks of woodland provide a very strong visual image when approached from the flatter land to the west. Examples of ancient woodland include Pennsylvania Wood, Broxton Wood, Walkers. Wood, Barnhill Wood and Burwardsley Hill Wood. Some of the woodland has been replanted and now comprises even-aged oak, bench, sycamore and larch over bramble, bluebell and bracken.



*Ancient Woodland in Broxton*

Within the SR 3 area the steeper slopes are planted with regular blocks of coniferous or mixed woodland. Significant areas of ancient woodland were replanted with mixed woodland in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Oak, both sessile and English, is dominant with birch, rowan and holly in support and a poor ground flora of wavy hair-grass, soft grass or bracken and bramble.



*Ancient Woodland in Peckforton*

### Caves

Caves naturally occur within the sandstone of the ridge and Mad Allen's Hole is an example of a possible prehistoric cave shelter as well as the former home of an 18<sup>th</sup> Century recluse. There is also the Iron Age hill-fort of Maiden Castle which is situated on the edge of a cliff with its outer edge protected by a double rampart (bivallate).

## Ponds

There are several ponds within the Neighbourhood Plan area, many ponds in the area are small and often the side-effect of historic quarrying and have little value in terms of the local character.

There are two ponds marked on the map: Harthill Pool and The Moss. These two ponds are somewhat larger and more established, reflected in the fact that they are named on maps. As such, these water bodies and their immediate settings should be protected.

## Soil

Within the SF 2 area the predominantly soils are described as being 'brown sands and earths'. These support arable farming and grassland. The underlying geology comprises Wilmslow Sandstone and Tarporley Siltstone, which is overlain by glacial till and glacio-fluvial deposits. The principal arable crop is potatoes. Fragments of acid grassland, which support fauna such as fescue and sheep sorrel, are also found in this character type.

## Flora

The woodland floor in spring or early summer is likely to be carpeted with lesser celandines, primroses and wild garlic, followed by bluebells, wood sorrel and wood anemones.



*Wood anemones*

Within the heathland areas, the predominant community types are *Calluna vulgaris* (common heather); *Deschampsia flexuosa* (wavy hair grass) (H9) and heather *Ulex galli* (western gorse) (H8). Billberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) is also widespread, with some patches of bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*), and less frequently bell heather (*Erica cinerea*), cross leaved heath (*Erica tetralix*) and broom (*Cytisus scoparius*).

The woodland is dominated by silver birch, with aspen, holly, rowan, sessile oak and wild cherry also present. The undergrowth includes heather and bilberry, with patches of broad buckler-fern (*Dryopteris dilatata*). Over two hundred plants of the naturally rare fern, Lobed Maidenhair Spleenwort, were discovered in 1997, growing on calcareous sandstone at two different locations, this is possibly the largest population of the subspecies in Britain. A few plants have since been recorded at Rawhead.



## Fauna

The area is rich in wildlife. Insects found here that are scarce in the UK include the bleached pug (*Eupithecia expallitada*) and alder kitten (*Furcula bicuspis*) moths, as well as the soldier beetle species *Malthus frontalis*. Locally scarce insects include the green hairstreak butterfly (*Callophrys rubi*) and the common glow-worm (*Lampyrus noctiluca*). The site provides a habitat for butterflies, with common species including the comma, gatekeeper, red admiral, speckled wood and tortoiseshell.

It is also notable as one of the breeding sites in Cheshire for pied flycatcher.



*Pied flycatcher*

Other birds commonly observed here include the jay, long-tailed tit, magpie, nuthatch, raven, treecreeper, and great spotted and green woodpeckers. The buzzard, kestrel and sparrowhawk are common raptors, while merlin and peregrine falcon have been observed more rarely.

The reptile populations within SR 4 are of particular importance. It is one of five sites in the county where the adder has been recorded since 1995. Other reptiles here include slow-worm and common lizard.

## 4.9 Planning Designations

There are number of the Chester District Local Plan (2006) designations affecting the Neighbourhood Plan area. These are shown on Figure 4.4.

Most of the Broxton Neighbourhood Plan area is affected by Policy **ENV 25 Areas of Special County Value** (ASCV). ASCV identifies the combined significance of features of historic, landscape, archaeological and nature conservation value present in Broxton Neighbourhood Plan Area (see Figure 4.4).

Broxton Neighbourhood Plan area includes **Features of Local Importance** (FLI) and is affected by Policy **ENV 29**. The policy states that residents should have the opportunity to enjoy natural features close to where they live and work. In Broxton Neighbourhood Local Plan area local sites and areas of importance can contribute to this and the conservation of a rich and diverse countryside.

Broxton Neighbourhood Plan area is also affected by Policy **ENV 31 Sites of National Importance (SNI)**. The policy recognises archaeological sites as an important part of the cultural heritage of the nation and the local area. Within Broxton Neighbourhood Plan area there a number of SNI's.

Fullersmoor includes a **Site of Regional or Country Importance (Grade A Sites) (SRCI)** covered in Policy **ENV 33**. SRCI recognises the importance of historic landscapes and buildings as these will contain irreplaceable information about the past as well as making a major contribution to the distinctive character of the District.

The Broxton Neighbourhood Plan area is also affected by Policy **ENV 28 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSI)**.

## **Sites of Special Scientific Interest**

Much of the SR 4: Maiden Castle Character Area is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) this includes: Harthill, Rawhead and Bickerton Hill. These areas are recognised as SSSIs for its heathland communities and assemblage of reptiles.

### **SR 4: Maiden Castle**

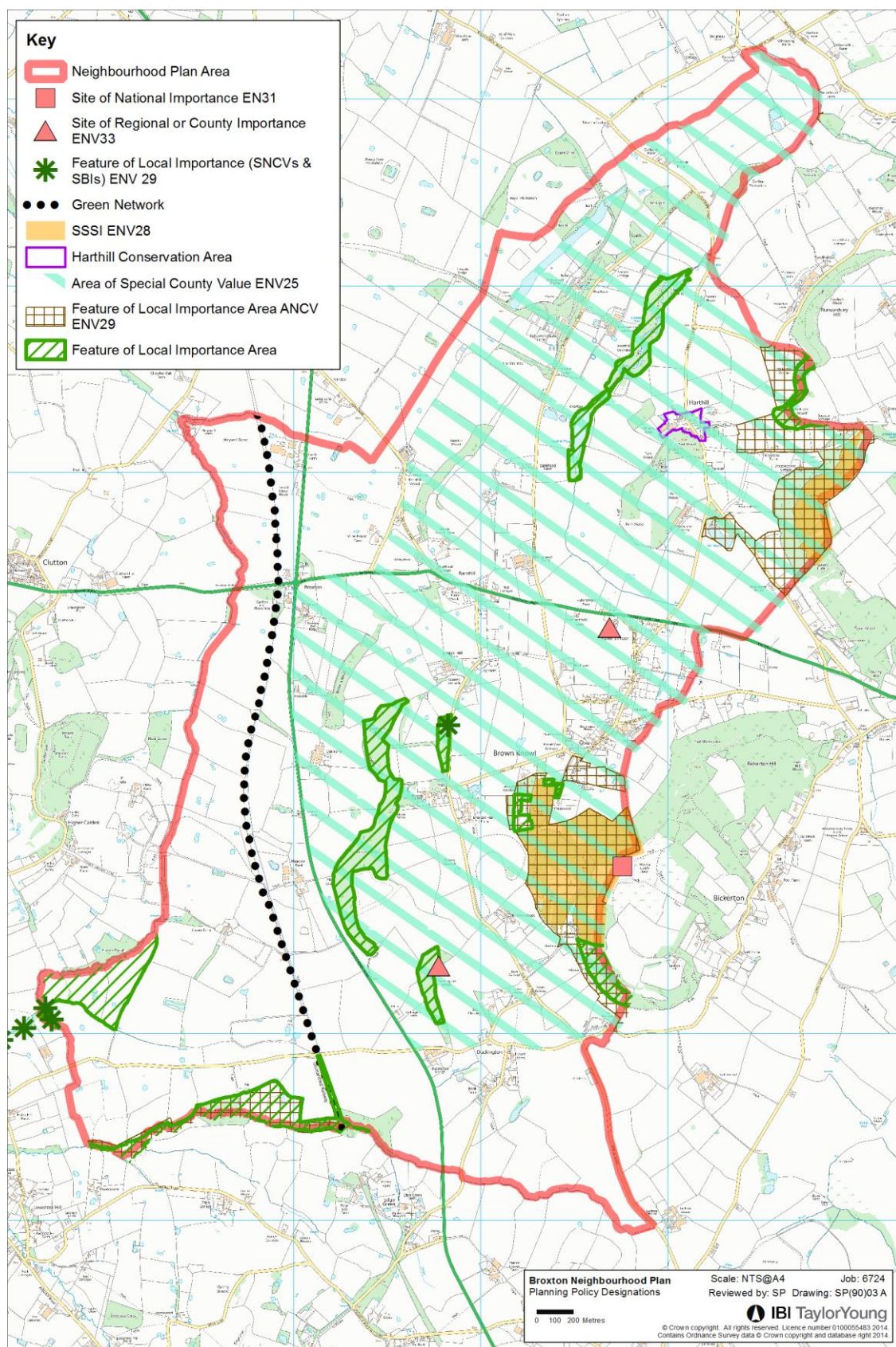
#### **1. Bickerton Hill**

- An area of 91hectares (225 acres) of the birch woods and heathland of the southerly hill has been designated as a SSSI. With the exception of several areas of farmland and former quarries, the SSSI covers the northmost (Kitty Stone) high point and the Maiden Castle area of the southern high point.
- The lowland heath habitat (heathland below 300m elevation) of Bickerton Hill is considered particularly valuable. Lowland heath is internationally scarce habitat that is rare within Cheshire.

#### **2. Rawhead**

- A total of 13.51 hectares (33.4 acres) of the northerly Bickerton Hill has been designated a geological SSSI for its exposed sandstones, which provide important insight into the conditions present during the Triassic period. The SSSI encompasses the hill's western escarpment, stretching from immediately west of Droppingstone Well, through Rawhead and Musket's Hole, and into Tower Wood.

**Figure 4.4 Planning Policy Designations within the Neighbourhood Plan Area**  
(Source: IBI Taylor Young, (c) Crown Copyright and Database Rights 2014)



## Sources:

Bate, K. Walking Guide to the Natural History of the Peckforton Hills, pp. 4-5 (Local Heritage Initiative) (last updated 2014)

Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland, Cheshire VC58: County Rare Plant Register (2008)

Cheshire East Council and Cheshire West and Chester Council: Interactive Mapping: Beeston/Peckforton/ Bolesworth/ Bickerton Hills Area of Special Country Value (last updated 2014)

Cheshire City Council: The Sandstone Trail (2008)

Cheshire Region Biodiversity Partnership: Habitat Action Plans: Heathland (2008)

CWaC, Bickerton Hill – SSSI (National Trust notice)

English Nature: Meres and Mosses RAMSAR (2010)

English Nature: SSSI units for Bickerton Hill

English Nature: Natural Areas 27: Meres and Mosses (1908)

English Nature: Lowland heathland SSSIs: Guidance on conservation objectives setting and condition monitoring

English Nature: A strategy for the conservation of the Meres and Moses of Cheshire, Shropshire and Staffordshire (1998)

Habitats and Hillforts: Archaeological management issues: Maiden Castle




Sites of Special Scientific Interest: Cheshire, Natural England (2010)



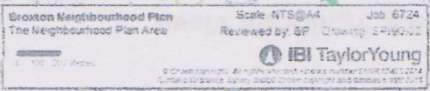
## 4.10 Community Green Spaces and Significant Views

Most of the area is open space, which contributes significantly to its character. There are also many national and local designations in the area which relate to nature conservation.

There is, however value in identifying a series of ‘Community Green Spaces’. These are undesignated green spaces that play a role in the local landscape character or have value, or potential value of community, recreational or amenity resources.

1. Disused Railway Line	
This alignment can clearly be seen in the landscape either side of the bridge on Hobb Hill. The line offers potential for a pedestrian/cycle recreational route.	
2. The Green, Harthill	
This community green space plays a major role in defining the character of the conservation area. It is located in the heart of the village and forms the centrepiece setting for the surrounding listed buildings.	
3. Brown Knowl Green	
This small, informal amenity space serves as an informal village green – providing a setting for the surrounding built form and a perceptual focal point for Brown Knowl, and is where the telephone box and bus shelter is located.	

4. Duckington Green	
<p>In a similar manner to no. 7 (above), green space in Duckington provides amenity for local residents and a focal point for this dispersed parish, reflect by the fact that this is where the parish notice board is situated.</p>	
5. 'Football Field' (at the end of Sandy Lane)	
<p>Although this small, uneven clearing is a far from ideal space for playing football on, it provides an informal sports and recreation space that is well known and valued by the local community.</p>	





## 5. Local Economy

### 5.1 Economic Activity

Within Broxton and District, 66% (241) of the population aged 16 to 74 were economically active at the time of the 2011 Census (2011 Census Economic Activity Table QS601EW). In the 2011 Census economic activity is defined as people who are either in employment or actively looking for employment.

The rate of unemployment in Broxton and District, at 2.75% was significantly lower than that of England 4.4% (NB. this only includes economically active residents who are unemployed). However, the economic inactivity rate in Broxton, at 33%, was significantly higher than that in CWaC (19.7%) (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1

Economic Activity	Broxton	CWaC	North West	England & Wales
Economically inactive	33% (122)	19.7%	24.6%	22.6%
Student	20 (5.5%)	14.4%	24.5%	25.8%
Looking after home/family	3.8% (14)	31.5%	23.1%	25.6%
Long term sick or disabled	1.1% (4)	19.6%	26.2%	21.8%
Retired	29.7% (79)	20.4%	15.9%	15.4%
Other	1.3% (5)	10.5%	7.6%	8.8%

*Table 5.1 Economic inactivity in Broxton and District (Source: Table QS601EW Economic Activity. 2011 Census© Crown Copyright, Office for National Statistics licensed under the Open Government Licence v1.0)*

*NB. Economic inactivity data comes from the ONS annual population survey from October 2012 to September 2013, available on the Nomis website. Economic inactivity data is for those aged 16 to 74.*

<b>All people in work by occupation group</b>						
	Broxton and District		CWaC		North West	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
All Usual Residents aged 16-74 in employment the week before the census	229	100	160,138	100	3,228,744	100
Managers, directors and senior officials.	46	20.1	29,045	18.1	527,222	16.3
Professional occupations	54	23.6	30,076	12.4	678,759	13.1
Associate professional and technical occupations.	23	10	19,767	12.3	372,198	11.5
Administrative and secretarial occupations	13	5.7	16,853	10.5	379,397	11.8
Skilled traders occupations	47	20.5	17,003	10.6	364,515	11.3
Caring, leisure and other	16	7	14,320	8.9	325,284	10.1
Sales and customer service	8	3.5	14,739	9.2	304,477	9.4
Process plant and machine operations	9	3.9	11,906	7.4	260,431	8.1
Elementary occupations	13	5.7	17,833	11.1	375,823	11.6

*percentage is a proportion of those economically inactive, except for the total, which is a proportion of those aged 16 to 64*

## 5.2 Employment by Type

At the time of the 2011 Census, Broxton and District had the following employment characteristics:

- 78 (21%) of all economically active people were self-employed on part time and full time basis or had employees (compared with 14.2% in CWaC). 50% of those were full time, self-employed, without employees.
- 13 are employed in elementary occupations, (3.5% of those in work, compared with 11.1% in CWaC).
- 25 are employed in agriculture (6.8% of those in work, compared with 2.0% in CWaC).

*(2011 Census Table QS601EW - Economic activity by sex, KS608EW - Occupation by sex, QS606EW - Occupation (Minor Groups)).*

Table 5.2 provides a more comprehensive breakdown of employment by type in Broxton and District, with comparators.

These figures suggest that Broxton has a culture of entrepreneurship with some small businesses; and a reliance on the professional jobs, senior positions, skilled trading and agriculture. Figures in Table 5.2 show that the presence of these occupations is significantly higher in comparison with CWaC and the North West.

**Table 5.2: Employment by Type**

<b>All people in work by occupation group</b>						
	Broxton and District		CWaC		North West	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
All Usual Residents aged 16-74 in employment the week before the census	229	100	160,138	100	3,228,744	100
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Process plant and machine operations	9	3.9	11,906	7.4	260,431	8.1
Elementary occupations	13	5.7	17,833	11.1	375,823	11.6

*Table 5.2: Occupations in Broxton and District, CWaC and NW (2011 Census Table KS610EW – Occupation by sex. 2011 Census © Crown Copyright)*

## 5.3 Local Employers

Employment within the Neighbourhood Plan Area is provided by farms, the Bolesworth Estate, public houses (e.g. The Sandstone) and Broxton petrol station. There is a vehicle repair centre at Harthill.



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Outside the Neighbourhood Plan boundary but close to the area are a small light industrial/office development at Chowley Oak and larger light industrial/offices units at Malpas and Tattenhall.

There are other examples of small businesses in the area, often using adapted buildings or representing rural diversification, for example in Harthill: where one of the houses is being used as office accommodation by a specialist lawyer; the former school is being used as premises for a cookery school; and former farm land is used for a skateboarding and mountain biking park.

There are number of horse riding and horse breeding businesses within the Neighbourhood Plan area. FXC & Farm Ride in Harthill provides employment and attracts visitors and businessmen to the area.

The Rural Workspace Study (BE Group, 2009) identified a number of locally available industrial units and small scale workshops close to the Neighbourhood Plan area. The Employment Land Study Update (CWaC, 2013) identifies a limited amount of land remaining for employment development in the rural area for local office/industrial use, primarily at Chowley Oak, Tattenhall and Hampton Heath.

## 5.4 Bolesworth Estate

Bolesworth Estate, partially located in the north of the Neighbourhood Plan area, makes a significant contribution to the local economy through an efficient management of commercial property, attracting tourists and letting properties.

In addition to the dairy farming which is the core land use on the estate, the Estate has a number of other important aspects to its business. It provides modern working accommodation with 170 commercial lettings. The Estate's tenants employ over 1000 people. The profile of the tenants located at the Bolesworth embraces all sectors of business, from food production to renewable energy. Their portfolio is presently 98% occupied.



*Bolesworth Castle*

### Commercial Property

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At approximately 6,000 acres, the Estate is one of the largest land holdings owned and managed by a single entity in the Cheshire West and Chester Council area. The Bolesworth Estate provides opportunities for rural, commercial and residential rental. The Estate has over 250,000 sq ft of commercial business space ranging from individual storage units to bespoke office buildings. Currently business spaces are rented by sole traders, family businesses, SMEs and multinational corporations. Additionally, the Estate let workshop spaces to food manufacturers, metal fabricators, joiners, upholsterers, motor and agricultural engineers.

Most recently the Estate appointed a developer contractor to carry out a £2.6m expansion of its business park. New development will be located in Chowley, 0.5 miles from the Neighbourhood Plan boundary. This new expansion consists of: 7,000 sq ft equine veterinary centre for Cheshire Equine Clinic and a two storey 12,000 sq ft distribution store for Cogent Breeding

## **Housing**

The Estate is also a housing provider; it owns approximately 160 residential properties. The houses are of all types and sizes (from five bedroom farmhouses to two bedroom cottages) and make an important contribution to the private rental market. A third of these properties are subsidised by the Estate and let below market rent and Bolesworth Estate always endeavours to ensure that people have a local connection to the area when they are letting property.

## **5.5 Travel to Work**

At the time of the 2011 Census 72.5% of the employed residents aged 16 to 74 migrated out of the Broxton and District to work. This is slightly lower than in CWaC (89%).

Broxton and District is close to several employment locations, which lie outside of the Neighbourhood Plan area. The nearest employment/businesses parks to the Neighbourhood Plan area (distance measured from Broxton crossroads) are:

- Hampton Heath Industrial Estate (3.9 miles from Broxton)
- Wrexham Industrial Estate (8.5 miles)
- Whitchurch Business Park (12.2 miles) (Source: AA Route Planner)

Hampton Heath offers capacity for small-scale growth and further employment opportunities locally.

However, most residents work further away. At the time of the 2011 Census all usual Broxton residents aged 16 to 74 in employment commuted to work on average 31.3km. This is almost a double commute distance than in CWaC (17.4km) and in North West (14.0) (see Figure 6.2). 28% commuted 10km to 20km; 7% commuted 20km to 30km; 5.2% commuted 60km and over.

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Additionally, a significant proportion of the working population of Broxton work mainly at, or from, home (27.5% of the working age population) (*Source: 2011 Census, Table QS702EW Distance Travelled to work*).

Due to the severe limitations of the current bus services most commuting appears to be by car. Data from 2011 Census shows that most of the Broxton residents aged 16 to 74 travelled to work by car or van (41.5%). A similar number of people travelled by car to work when compared to CWaC (45%) and the North West (39%).

8.4% of households here do not have access to a car or van (*2011 Census, ONS; Table: QS416EW – Car or van availability*).

Sustainable modes of travel were less common in Broxton: 4.4% people walked to work, 0.8% used motorcycle, 0.5% travelled by train or 0.27% by bicycle. This is no doubt related to the distance commuted and the limited public transport available. Bus services are very limited and restricted in the Neighbourhood Plan area. See Section 9.4 for further details.

## 6. Local Tourism

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There are 25 million visitors to Cheshire annually with £1.2bn income generated and 14,000 jobs in the tourism sector (CWaC Publication Draft Local Plan (Part One), 2013). The Broxton and District area draws many walkers to the Sandstone Trail, where dramatic views are offered over the surrounding landscape. The Sandstone Trail, a long-distance footpath between Frodsham and Whitchurch, runs over the top of two hills, and there are several other public footpaths and network of waymarked permissive paths. A total of 8,500 walkers on the Sandstone Trail were recorded by the National Trust between January and March 2006, and the Trust has estimated that 8000 dog walks occur annually within the Bickerton Hill SSSI (National Trust, 2008).

Cycling and horse riding are also popular in the area. Bolesworth Estate host a major annual show-jumping event and Broxton Hall has its own training gallops. There are two public houses that serve hot food in the area. Other important attractions are the Mountain Board Centre and Cookery School at Harthill.



*View north to wooded hillside from the A534*

## **6.1 Bolesworth Estate**

Bolesworth Estate has a significant tourism sector, attracting visitors by hosting and organising various events. This significantly includes one of the UK's largest annual showjumping events: The Bolesworth International Event. In 2013 this attracted 30,000 visitors over its 4-day period (British Show Jumping, 2015).

## **6.2 Walking**

The attractive countryside of the Broxton and District area attracts many visitors. The Sandstone Trail Walker's Guide prepared by the Cheshire West and Chester Council, refers to a 55km (34 mile) trail from Frodsham to Whitchurch (Figure 6.1). The part of the trail from Bickerton Church to No Man's Heath is 5.5 miles long (2-3 hours walk) and it crosses the Neighbourhood Plan area. Recently Harthill benefited from a £30,000 funding to improve access to its footpath network. The Harthill Hub project incorporates



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local paths and the Sandstone Trail. It will involve replacing stiles with 'kissing' or wicket gates, improve footpath surfacing and signage, and developing the overall visual appearance of access routes.

### **6.3 Cycling**

The National Cycling Route (see Figure 6.2) crosses the Neighbourhood Plan Area and cycling is a popular activity here. Within the Neighbourhood Plan area, the route runs through Harthill, Bickerton and Duckington.

The National Trust does not provide cycle access off the marked paths and cycling on the path is prohibited.

### **6.4 Accessibility to Recreation**

Limited access by public road is available to the north of the Rawhead hill: Coppermine Lane climbs from the A534 to the east of the summit plateau, and New Lane runs from Harthill under the Rawhead ridge to Droppingstone Farm. Goldford Lane, Old Coach Road, Hall Lane, Brown Knowl Lane and Reading Room Lane run around the Murkot's Hole hill (to the south); Sandy Lane runs from Brown Knowl to the edge of the Cockoo Rock area. Two free car parks at Pool Lane, off Goldford Lane, near Bickerton) and off Old Coach Road, near Duckington), are open during daylight hours. A small additional parking area for the disabled is located off Goldford Lane which requires advance permission. An easy access footpath suitable for people of limited mobility runs from this parking area to Maiden Castle. The majority of paths have wicket gates or 'kissing' gates, but there are some stiles.

### **6.5 Horse Riding**

Broxton Hall Gallops is a one-way racing track located in Broxton. The racing track (8 furlongs) is an all-weather gallop with a gradual incline of 140 feet. There are electric automated gates, CCTV cameras, seated garden area and others. The Broxton Hall Gallops are open 7 days a week all year round. Another horse riding facility is provided by the FXC & Farm Ride in Harthill.

### **6.6 National Trust**

The National Trust own and manage Bickerton Hill, one of few remaining areas of lowland heath in Cheshire that serves as a popular location for walkers. Bickerton Hill has a quite distinctive character with light birch woodland and lots of bilberry. The scattered patches of surviving lowland heath support a

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range of increasingly scarce plants and animals: from round-leaved sundews and tree pipits, to common lizards and green hairstreak butterflies.

Management of the area by the National Trust has aimed, since 1992, to promote heathland regeneration by preventing encroachment by birches, scrub and bracken. Strategies used include bracken rolling, clearing birch scrub and removing some older trees from heathland areas. Grazing with ponies is employed in summer. Woodland areas are managed to encourage the development of trees of a wide range of ages by halo thinning around older trees, thinning in denser woodland and planting new trees.

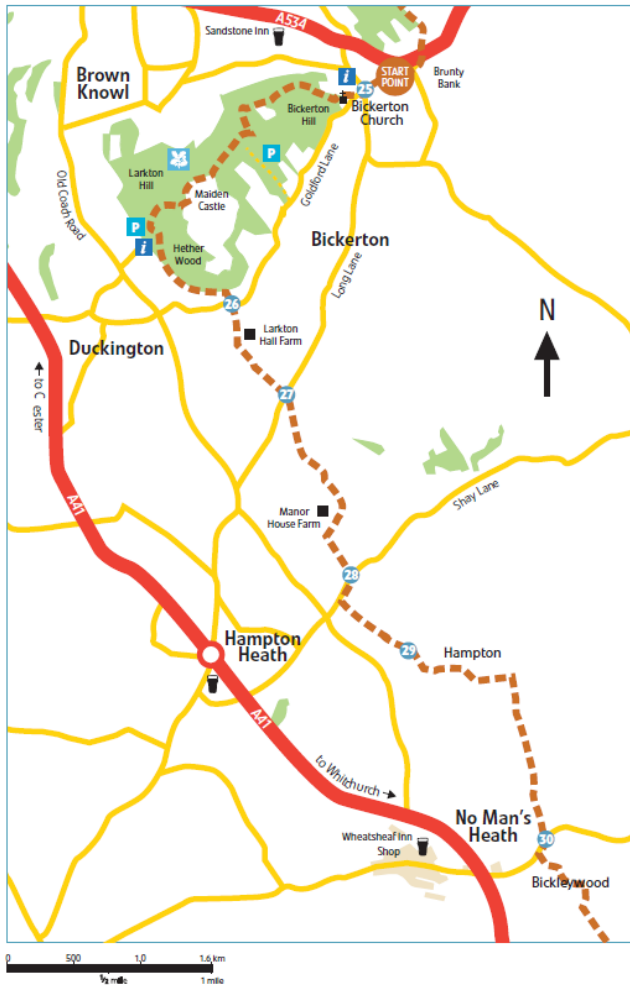


*Green hairstreak butterfly*

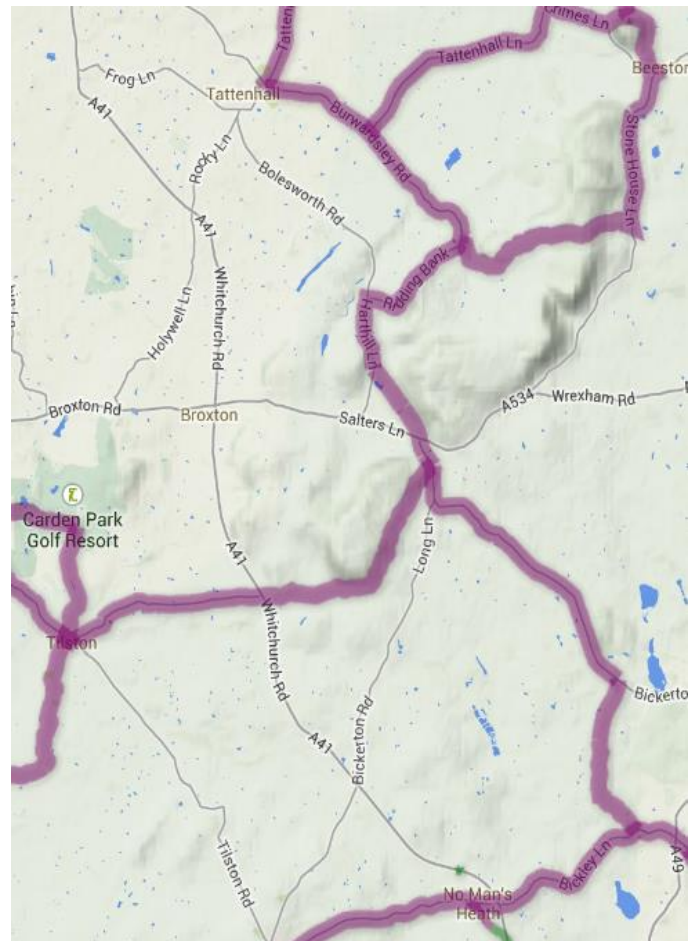
The lowland heath is the last elevated section of the Trail and it crosses through the Maiden Castle hillfort which existed there over 2000 years ago.

## **6.7 Other Tourist Facilities**

Other tourist facilities in the area include the Harthill Mountain Board Centre, Harthill Cookery School and the two public houses.



*Figure 6.1: Sandstone Trail Walk crossing the Neighbourhood Plan area (Source: CWaC)*



*Figure 6.2: National Cycling Route within Neighbourhood Plan area (Source: Sustrans, 2014)*

## Sources

CWaC Publication Draft Local Plan (Part One) CWaC Publication Draft Local Plan (Part One) (December 2013) 'Landscape Character Type 5: Rolling Farmland', Cheshire Landscape Character Assessment, Cheshire County Council (now CWaC) (2008) National Trust (2008) Sandstone Trail Walker's Guide (CWaC, 2009) National Cycling Routes (2014)

## 7. New Homes

### 7.1 Households

In 2011, in Broxton and District there were 461 residents living in 201 households, and 214 dwellings. None of the dwellings in Broxton and district were shared by more than one household. Table 7.1 shows the household breakdown by type.

Dwelling occupancy	Broxton	CWaC
1 person (aged 65 or over)	26 (13%)	13.2%
1 person (under 65)	26 (13%)	16.4%
2 people	86 (42.7%)	36.1%
3-4 people	55 (27.4%)	28.8%
5+ people	8 (4%)	5.5%
<i>Total</i>	<i>201</i>	

*Table 7.1: Household Composition in Broxton Parish and hamlets (Source: 2011 Census tables: QS406EW - Household Size; QS112EW – Household composition - people. 2011 Census © Crown Copyright, Office for National Statistics licensed under the Open Government Licence v1.0)*

## 7.2 Housing Type and Tenure

The 2011 Census data reveals that dwellings in the area are predominantly a mix of detached houses or bungalows (66.6%) and semi-detached and detached dwellings (24.3%) with fewer terraced houses than the local authority average (7.6%) and fewer flats and apartments (1.5%). Most households in Broxton Parish live in owner-occupied accommodation (70%).

Dwelling type	Broxton	CWaC
Detached house or bungalow	307 (66.6%)	30.0%
Semi-detached house or bungalow	112 (24.3%)	36.4%
Terraced (including end terrace) house	35 (7.6%)	21.5%
Flat, maisonette or apartment	7 (1.5%)	11.3%

*Table 7.2: Dwelling type in Broxton Parish and hamlets (Source: 2011 Census Table QS401EW - Accommodation type – people. 2011 Census © Crown Copyright, Office for National Statistics licensed under the Open Government Licence v1.0).*

	Owner Occup.	Private Rented	Social Rented	Shared Ownership.
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Broxton Parish	323 (70%)	116 (25.2%)	9 (2%)	6 (0.8%)
CWaC	70.8%	12.5%	14.7%	0.8%
England	63.3%	16.8%	17.7%	0.9%

*Table 7.3: Tenure profile in Broxton Parish and hamlets and CWaC (Source: 2011 Census Table: QS403EW Tenure - people. 2011 Census © Crown Copyright, Office for National Statistics licensed under the Open Government Licence v1.0)*

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) provides regularly updated figures for housing need for each local authority area. This Evidence Base uses the SHMA (CWaC, 2013). The smallest scale of data within the SHMA is at Ward level. Broxton is within the Tattenhall Ward and so these figures are used here. Recent house prices in Tattenhall Ward have been significantly higher than the local authority average. The average house price was £250,000 (Land Registry Price Paid, 1 Feb 2012 to 25 March 2013) compared to the median house price for Cheshire West and Cheshire of £157,750 in 2012 (SHMA, 2013).

Housing quality in Broxton and District is good. The number of households that lack central heating is 7(1.5%), this is lower than the local authority average (2.1%) (Source: 2011 Census Table QS415EW - Central heating).

### 7.3 Projected Housing Supply

The need or requirement for affordable housing is principally and primarily determined and assessed through the borough's Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). This research is a requirement of the planning system whereby the Department of Communities and Local Government published guidance (2007) with which, all SHMA's undertaken by local councils, must comply. Cheshire West and Chester's SHMA was published in 2009, up-dated in 2010 and 2013, has been accepted by the Council's Local Development Framework Panel.

SHMAs are required to produce a number of core outputs including estimates of current households in housing need and estimates of future households requiring affordable housing.

In doing so, SHMAs consider factors such as local house prices (especially local purchase entry points), local rents, accessibility to the local housing market, relative affordability against local incomes, migration trends, the rate of household formation, and the amount or number of existing properties by type/size/cost and the turnover of such housing. Both the 2009 SHMA and 2012 and 2013 up-dates provide information at ward level.

The projected numbers of housing supply for Broxton is merged with data for other parishes under the Tattenhall Ward. Projected housing potential for the Tattenhall Ward is 373 (SHMA 2013). The most

recent update of the SHMA (2013) suggests a gross annual requirement for 1,382 affordable units across the borough between 2013/14 to 2017/18 (without a reduction in backlog) as well as detailing a local need to the administrative ward of Tattenhall which has an annual net shortfall of 23 units. A net figure takes into account surplus accommodation relative to need.

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) identifies a current shortage of smaller dwellings and older person's accommodation. The recommended annual affordable housing requirement for Tattenhall Ward is for a total of 15 units:

For under 65 years old:

- 5x1 bed dwellings,
- 2x2 bed dwellings, and
- 1x3 bed dwelling.

For 65 years old and above:

- 7x1 bed dwelling (SHMA 2013).

The SHMA identifies households that are under-occupied, where there are more bedrooms than needed. In the Tattenhall Ward the number of households with 3+ spare bedrooms is 482 (25.1%). The under occupation in Tattenhall is relatively high however the situation is similar across the local authority where overall there are around 112,868 households (79.8%).

CW&C have advised the Parish Council that Broxton and District will likely be designated as "open countryside" which prohibit any new housing development other than that detailed in Strat 9

## 8. Infrastructure and Facilities

### 8.1 Local Facilities

The Broxton and District area is a rural community, with no railway line and very limited public transport. It has only one small shop at the petrol station and relies on the adjacent centres of Malpas, Farndon and Tattenhall for shops and services. Larger shopping centres and a wider range of services can be found in Chester, Nantwich, Whitchurch and Wrexham. There are two public houses offering food in Broxton:

- The Sandstone is located on Nantwich Road. It is a pub and restaurant with a car park.
- The Egerton Arms, located on Whitchurch Road, is a pub and restaurant with a car park.

There are no hotels within the Neighbourhood Plan area. There are number of hotels, spa's and golf resorts located near the Neighbourhood Plan boundary. For example, Carden Park in Clutton (2.3 miles from Broxton) and Peckforton Castle (5.6 miles from Broxton).

There are no schools within the area but there is a primary school in the neighbouring Parish of Bickerton and a secondary school (Bishop Heber High School) at Malpas for which a school bus is provided. Additionally, there is a Cookery School in Harthill - representing an excellent example of a finding a new use for a former school building.



*Harthill Cookery School*

There are no post office services in the Neighbourhood plan area. The nearest local community activities and groups take place in Bickerton Village Hall (0.5 miles from the eastern edge of the Neighbourhood Plan area). The Village Hall is used for a tennis club, private parties, theatre, fitness classes, watercolour classes, film screenings and exhibitions.

There are no health services available within the Neighbourhood Plan area. The nearest General Practice (GP) is about 3.5 miles away from Broxton, located in Tattenhall. There are also GPs available in Farndon (4.5 miles away) and in Malpas (5.4 miles away) and Bunbury (5.8 miles away). The nearest on call/part time fire station is in Malpas. The nearest library is in Tattenhall, as is the nearest recycling centre.

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Until the 1990s there was a Police Station in Broxton. The building has now been converted to a number of private dwellings. The nearest police station is at Dragon Hall on the A41 approximately 1 mile from the original Police Station.



*Former Police Station in Broxton*

There is high speed broadband available in the area. Parts of the Broxton Parish currently have poor or no mobile telephone reception.

## **8.2 Roads and Traffic**

The A534 connects Broxton and District to Wrexham and Nantwich, and runs east-west through the Neighbourhood Plan area. The north-south A41 bisects the A534 at Broxton and connects the area with Whitchurch and Chester. The A49 runs on the eastern side of the Neighbourhood Plan boundary and provides connectivity between Whitchurch and Warrington.

Smaller roads, including designated B-roads, provide local connectivity and link the area with key service centres (Malpas, Tattenhall and Farndon).

A significant amount of through traffic passes through the area. The main traffic congestion points are at Broxton roundabout especially at peak times.

The narrowness of roads is an issue, especially for pedestrians and cyclists. There are no pavements on many roads and this creates issues with safety, especially on the two main busy roads.

Narrow country lanes are prevalent throughout the area. These are often single-track, and are bounded by tall hedgerows and without verges on both sides of the road, and are frequently winding with several blind bends.

The issues of narrow roads, lack of pavements and heavy traffic passing through the village (including tractors) combine on A534, A41. Providing for the competing demands of, cycle accessibility and an attractive pedestrian environment is therefore a challenge in Broxton and District.



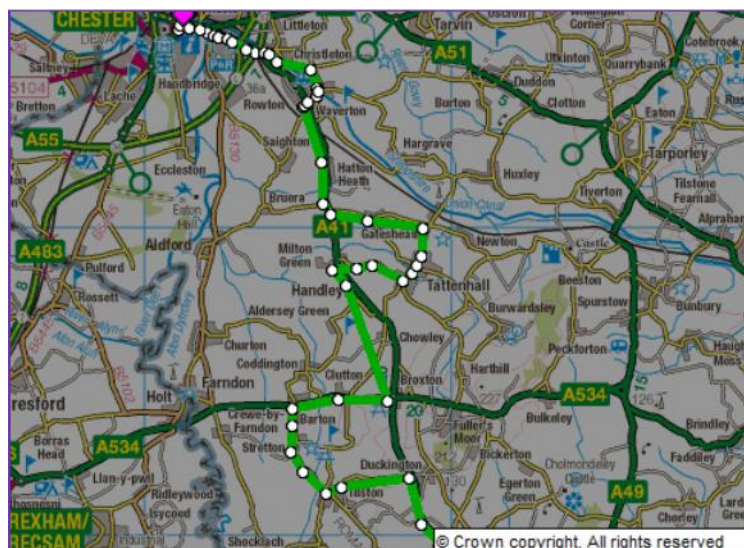
## 8.3 Car Parking

Within and adjacent to the Neighbourhood Plan Area, there are two free car parks, primarily serving walkers - at Pool Lane, off Goldford Lane near Bickerton; and (outside the Neighbourhood Plan area) off Old Coach Road near Duckington. These car parks are open during daylight hours. A small additional parking area for the disabled is located off Goldford Lane, but this requires advance permission.

## 8.4 Public Transport

Bus services are limited in Broxton and District. CWaC provides a Community Transport Scheme, PlusBus for registered users with mobility difficulties. There are three bus services 41 ,41Aand Route 89 operating in the Neighbourhood Plan area

Directions	Service number	Frequency	Bus stops
Whitchurch –Malpas- Tattenhall-Chester	41 and 41A	Every 1h (peak time) 2hrs off peak time Monday to Friday	Broxton, Picnic Area and in Duckington Crossroads
Nantwich - Wrexham	Route 89	Once a week	



*Bus 41 and 41A route (Source: [traveline-northwest.co.uk](http://traveline-northwest.co.uk))*

Within the Neighbourhood Plan area, buses stop at just two bus stops for 41/41A

- at the Broxton Picnic Area bus stop situated at the Broxton Road
- at the Duckington Crossroads situated at the Whitchurch Road

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Although there are few more bus stops situated within the Neighbourhood Plan area - they are now disused.

The nearest train stations are in Nantwich (12.2 miles), Wrexham (10 miles), Whitchurch (10 miles) Chester (11 miles).

The reliance on the private car is not surprising given the limitations of bus services and the fact that there is no railway station nearby Broxton and District.

Nantwich train station is served by the Arriva Trains Wales connecting Nantwich with Crewe, Shrewsbury, Manchester Piccadilly, Cardiff Central, Swansea and Carmarthen. The station has no car parking or cycle storage facilities.

Wrexham train station is served by two companies: Arriva Trains Wales and Virgin Trains. Train services connect Wrexham with Holyhead, Birmingham International, Cardiff Central, London Euston, Manchester Piccadilly and Liverpool. There are 68 car parking spaces, accessible car park equipment and cycle storage facilities.

Whitchurch train station is served by the Arriva Trains Wales connecting Whitchurch with Shrewsbury, Crewe, Manchester Piccadilly and Cardiff Central. There is a small car park here but there is no accessible parking or cycle storage facilities.

Chester train station is served by four main operating companies: Arriva Trains Wales, Virgin Trains, Merseyrail Electrics and Northern Rail. Train services connect Chester with: Llandudno, Holyhead, Wrexham, Manchester Piccadilly, Crewe, Cardiff Central, London Euston, Bangor and Liverpool. In Chester station there are 113 car parking spaces with 6 accessible spaces available. There are a cycle storage facilities available on both stations.

## 8.5 Footpaths, Cycleways and Bridleways

As mentioned above, roads in the Neighbourhood Plan area are often narrow and have poor provision for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders. There are many roads that have no pavements and there are no segregated cycleways on roads. There are a few dedicated footpaths that provide shortcuts and access for pedestrian to villages, for example Barnhill Road. However, many of these lack lighting, are poorly maintained and are not wide enough for wheelchairs or pushchairs.

In the rural area there are good links with wider routes including Cheshire Cycle Way and a good network of bridleways, both of which are well used. However, these tend to be used for recreation rather than accessibility.

## 8.6 Digital Communications

The rural location and limited public transport services mean that virtual and digital communication is an important priority. This provides a sustainable alternative which will help to reduce the need to travel. This is reflected in CWaC's aspiration to roll out the provision of superfast broadband to rural parts of West Cheshire (CWaC Rural Regeneration Strategy, 2011).

Superfast broadband (2Mbps) has been installed within the Neighbourhood Plan Area. Mobile telephone signal is also weak within the area and not present on all networks throughout.

### Sources:

AA Route Planner

2011 Census Data (ONS), Nomis

Bickerton Hill National Trust (sign, Bickerton Hill car park)

CWaC Rural Regeneration Strategy, Local Transport Plan

Cheshire Retail Study, Update, CWaC (2011)

Key Service Centres Background Paper, CWaC (2012)

National Rail Enquiries - online

Integrated Transport Study Baseline Report, WSP (2009)

Local Transport Plan 2011-2026, CWaC, 2011. Ordnance Survey: Explorer Map 257: Crewe and Nantwich: Whitchurch and Tattenhall

## 9. Planning Policy Summary

This chapter summarises the most current planning policies that are of relevance to the Broxton and District Neighbourhood Plan. It is a statutory requirement for the Neighbourhood Plan to be in general conformity with strategic planning policies. The Neighbourhood Plan will add value to the existing (and emerging) local policies by providing further guidance on how they should be applied locally.

The structure of this chapter responds to local issues recognised in the Neighbourhood Planning process. The planning policy summary responds to the key national and local planning policy documents:

- National Planning Policy Framework (2012) - the NPPF (2012) sets out the relevant policies, supported by the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG, 2014).
- CWaC Local Plan Part One: Strategic Policies –Submission Version (December 2013). At the time of writing Local Plan was close to adoption.
- Chester & District Local Plan (2006) Retained Policies – this was adopted 12<sup>th</sup> May 2006 and the policies within the plan were saved for a period of 3 years from the date of adoption. Policies that will be replaced by Local Plan policies are not included.
- The Cheshire Replacement Minerals Local Plan (2007)
- CWaC Local Plan Employment Land Study (2013)

### 9.1 Conserving the rural and landscape character

#### National Planning Policy Framework

**Para 109** of the **NPPF** reinforces that planning should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment, through protecting existing landscapes and minimising impacts on biodiversity. Brownfield development should be encouraged, providing the land is not of high environmental value.

The **NPPF** sets out 12 core land-use planning principles that should underpin plan-making and decision-taking. These are that planning should:

- *Be genuinely plan-led, empowering local people to shape their surroundings, with succinct local and neighbourhood plans setting out a positive vision for the future of the area.*
- *Always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings.*
- *Take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas, protecting the Green Belts around them, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving communities within it.*



- *Contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution.*
- *Conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance.*
- *Take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing.*

**Para 76** of the **NPPF** allows for *Neighbourhood Development Plans* to designate land as *Local Green Space* which prevents development other than in special circumstances. *Local Green Space* designation should only be permitted where the area is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves, and where it can be demonstrated to hold a particular local significance. *Local Green Spaces* in the *Neighbourhood Plan Area* are designated as having either amenity value, sports and recreation value, nature conservation value, or general community value.

**Para 126** states that *LPA's* should have a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment.

*Proposals that preserve historic elements and character of the setting, which make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the historic asset should be treated favourably. The NPPF recognise the importance of both designated and non-designated heritage assets.*

The **NPPF** states that *the aim of conserving and enhancing the natural environment should be to minimise pollution and other adverse effects on the local and natural environment.*

### **Saved Policies of the Chester District Local Plan (2006)**

**Policy ENV 5** states that *development adjoining public spaces or thoroughfares which provides positive and attractive built frontages and respects the scale of the space will be permitted.*

**Policy ENV 6** requires new development to contribute to the legibility of the area, through its form, layout and detailing.

**Policy ENV 15** states that *the development which would adversely affect the character, quality or scale of the open spaces will be refused.*

**Policy ENV 16** states that *the development adjacent to the areas of strategic open space will only be permitted where a high quality boundary and/or frontage treatment is provided to the boundary of the open space and where the scale or type of such development would not dominate or impede the enjoyment of the open space.*

**Policy ENV 22** requires from new development a high quality of design and implementation of hard and soft landscape works.

**Policy ENV 25** designated *Areas of Special Country Value: Beeston, Peckforton and Bolesworth.*

**Policy ENV 27** states that *development likely to adversely affect, directly or indirectly, features of identified nature conservation value will be permitted only where:*

- *there is an adequate mitigation to conserve the features of value,*
- *there is an adequate compensation, management and enhancement of the nature conservation source.*

**Policy ENV 28** states that *development proposals within internationally important sites and Sites of Special Scientific Interest, within their spheres of influence and consultation zones or within sites proposed for such designation, will be refused unless it clearly demonstrated that the site would not be either directly or indirectly adversely affected, or where potential adverse effects are identified, mitigation measures would overcome them.*

**Policy ENV 29** states that *development in sites or areas of local nature conservation value will only be permitted where it clearly demonstrated that features of nature conservation value or the public's enjoyment of them will not be adversely affected, directly or indirectly, or where compensatory features of equal value are provided.*

**Policy EN 31** states that *development proposals which would adversely affect the site or setting of an existing or proposed Scheduled Ancient Monument or other nationally important sites and monuments will be refused.*

**Policy ENV 32** states that *when the development proposals affect sites of known or potential archaeological interest, the City Council will require an archaeological assessment/evaluation to be submitted as part of the planning application.*

**Policy ENV 33** requires *proposals affecting the site of regional or county importance to secure the integrity of the archaeological remains.*

**Policy ENV 37** requires *development in conservation areas or affecting the setting of such an area to preserve and enhance its character and appearance.*

**Policy ENV 38** states that *planning permission will not be granted for new development that will obstruct important views within, or views in or out of conservation areas.*

**Policy ENV 45** states that *planning permission will be refused for proposals that fail to have regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.*

#### **Local Plan Part One: Strategic Policies (Submission Document, December 2013)**

Relevant Environmental Strategic Objectives are:

**SO 10** aims to *protect the environmental quality and character of Cheshire West and Chester through maintaining the general extent and character of the North Cheshire Green Belt and Cheshire countryside.*

**SO 13** aims to *manage, expand and improve green infrastructure and waterways networks, recognising their importance in delivering local environmental, social, economic and health benefits.*

**STRAT 1** seeks to:

- *protect, enhance and improve the natural and historic environment whilst enhancing and restoring degraded and despoiled land, seeking opportunities for habitat creation.*
- *Minimise the loss of Greenfield land and high grade agricultural land.*

**STRAT 8** states that *the development should be appropriate in scale and design to conserve each settlement's character and setting.*

**STRAT 9** states that *the intrinsic character and beauty of the Cheshire countryside will be protected by restricting development to that which requires a countryside location and cannot be accommodated within identified settlements.*

The Policy requires *the development to be of an appropriate scale and design to not harm the character of the countryside.*

**Policy ENV 2** states that *the local plan will protect and, wherever possible, enhance landscape character and local distinctiveness.*

**Policy ENV 5** states that *the Local Plan will protect the borough's unique and significant heritage assets through the protection and identification of designated and non-designated heritage assets.*

**Policy ENV 6** requires *development to be sympathetic to heritage, environmental and landscape assets and meet applicable nationally described standards for design and construction.*

**Heritage assets** are defined as: *a building, monument, site, place, structure, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage assets include designated heritage assets and non-designated heritage assets identified in the Cheshire Historic Record, including local assets.*

**SOC 1** states that *market and affordable homes on sites should be indistinguishable and achieve the same high quality design.*

## **9.2 Supporting the Local Economy**

### **National Planning Policy Framework**

**The NPPF Para 28** states that *sustainable growth and expansion of all business types will be supported along with the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages, such as shops, meeting places, sports venues and cultural facilities.*

## **Saved Policies of the Chester District Local Plan (2006)**

**Policy EC 2** allocates sites for employment land. Within the Neighbourhood Plan area there is no land allocated for employment, however remaining parts of Chester Road in Farndon - about 2 miles from the Neighbourhood Plan boundary, has been allocated for Class B1 use.

**Policy EC 11** states that *the proposals for the re-use of rural buildings for employment purposes will be permitted subject to the policy criteria being met.*

**Policy EC 18** states that *proposals for new camping and caravan sites will be permitted subject to the policy criteria.*

## **Local Plan Part One: Strategic Policies (Submission Document, December 2013)**

**STRAT 8** states that *within the rural area the Council will support development that serves local needs in the most accessible and sustainable locations to sustain vibrant rural communities. Within the rural area provision will be made for in the region of 4,200 new dwellings and 10ha of additional land for employment development.*

The Policy requires *the development to be appropriate in scale and design to conserve each settlement's character and setting.*

The Policy states that *smaller rural settlements which act as local service centres and that have an appropriate level of services; facilities and access to public transport have the potential to accommodate development to meet local needs.*

*It indicates that local communities, through neighbourhood plans and other mechanisms, will be able to facilitate appropriate levels of development to meet local needs subject to any additional restrictions in the Green Belt. In the region of 10ha of land for business and industrial development in the rural area will enable small scale expansion of existing employment sites, and new sites within or on the edge of key service centres outside of Green Belt locations.*

*The Policy states that development should not exceed the capacity of existing services and infrastructure unless the required improvements can be made.*

**ECON 1** states that *the Council will promote sustainable economic growth in the borough and wider sub-region, supporting existing businesses, encouraging indigenous business growth and attracting new inward investment. The creation of new job opportunities across a range of sectors will be supported.*

**ENV 7** supports *renewable and low carbon energy proposals where there are no unacceptable impacts on:*

- *Landscape, visual or residential amenity*
- *Noise, air, water, highways or health*
- *Radar, telecommunications or the safety of aircraft operations*



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**ENV 9** requires the *prudent use of natural finite resources. It supports environmentally acceptable proposals which enable the use of locally sourced building stone for architectural and heritage purposes. ENV 9 requires all proposals for minerals development to include high quality restoration and aftercare proposals in keeping with surrounding land uses.*

#### **The Cheshire Replacement Minerals Local Plan (2007)**

**Policy 1** requires from *exploration, winning and working of minerals to conserve minerals as far as possible whilst ensuring an adequate supply to meet needs; preserve or enhance environmental quality.*

**Policy 17** requires from *the exploration and/or winning and working of minerals developments to be appropriately screened from public view; where it would not have an unacceptable impact on the visual amenities of sensitive properties.*

**ENV 2** states that *the Local Plan will protect and, wherever possible, enhance landscape character and local distinctiveness.* It requires development:

- *to take full account of the characteristics of the development site, its relationship with its surroundings and where appropriate views into, and out of the site*
- *to recognise, retain and incorporate features of landscape quality into the design.*

#### **CWaC Local Plan Employment Land Study (2013)**

**Para 1.30** states that *in the rural area the supply is dominated by the major sites. There is limited land available for employment development, aside from Chowley Oak and Hampton Heath. The continuation of employment development on major sites in rural areas should be supported.*

### **9.3 Supporting Local Tourism**

#### **National Planning Policy Framework**

**Para 3 of the NPPF** reinforces that local and neighbourhood plans should:

- *support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit businesses in rural areas, communities and visitors, and which respect the character of the countryside,*
- *include supporting the provision and expansion of tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate locations where identified needs are not met by existing facilities in rural service centres.*

#### **Saved Policies of the Chester District Local Plan (2006)**

**Policy EC 18** supports *proposals for new and caravan sites given that the location of the proposed site is acceptable having regard to neighbouring land uses and the provision of facilities appropriate to the use.*

#### **Local Plan Part One: Strategic Policies (Submission Document, December 2013)**

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**ECON 3** supports the expansion of existing tourism assets to benefit the local economy and be of a suitable scale and type for its location.

## 9.4 Providing New Homes

### National Planning Policy Framework

**Para 54** states that *in rural areas, exercising the duty to cooperate with neighbouring authorities, local planning authorities should be responsive to local circumstances and plan housing development to reflect local needs.*

**Para 55** reinforces sustainable development in rural areas, it states that housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. For example, where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby. Local planning authorities should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside.

**Para 56-62** explain how plan making should promote high quality design. It states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. Developments should ensure that they add to the overall quality of the area for the lifetime of the development, establishing a strong sense of place responding to local character, and are safe yet attractive.

### Saved Policies of the Chester District Local Plan (2006)

**Policy ENV 18** states that *proposals for development involving the loss of amenity space in residential areas will only be permitted where:*

- *The loss of the space will not be detrimental to the quality of the street scene;*
- *The loss of the space will not significantly exacerbate or create a shortfall in the availability of amenity land in the locality.*

**ENV 24** requires new development in the rural area to respect the key features of the landscape and not be detrimental to its character.

### Local Plan Part One: Strategic Policies (Submission Document, December 2013)

**SO2** states that *in rural areas, it will support farming, agriculture and diversification of the rural economy whilst ensuring development is of an appropriate scale and character.*

**STRAT 1** encourages locating of new housing, wherever possible within 1.6km (1mile) of existing or proposed local shops, community facilities and primary schools and be well connected to public transport.

**STRAT 2**, Par 2 requires to maintain the vitality and viability of rural areas, an appropriate level of new development will be brought forward to support new homes and economic and social development.

**Para 3** encourage and support *local communities to shape and manage development in their local areas.*

**STRAT 8** states that within the rural area *the Council will support development that serves local needs in the most accessible and sustainable locations to sustain vibrant rural communities.*

**Infilling** is defined here as the filling of a small gap (up to 2 dwellings) in an otherwise built-up frontage in a recognised settlement.

**SOC 1** states that *affordable homes must be provided within all new residential development, including as part of mixed use schemes on sites that:*

*In the rural areas have a capacity of three or more dwellings or comprise an area of 0.1 ha or more.*

**Objective 8:** *Support sustainable development and urban regeneration by maximising the use of suitably located previously developed land and buildings; and by locating the majority of development within and on the edge of the main urban areas and the rural key centres.*

## **9.5 Improving Infrastructure and Facilities**

### **National Planning Policy Framework**

**The NPPF Para 5** supports *a provision of a high quality communications infrastructure, the development of high speed broadband technology and other communications networks.*

**Para 42** specifically refers to *the development of high speed broadband technology which plays a vital role in the provision of local community facilities and services*

**Para 70 point 1** encourage *planning positively for the provision and use of shared space, community facilities (such as shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services.*

**Para 70 point 4** supports *an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services.*

**Para 162 of the NPPF**, refers to *infrastructure and specifically the provision of telecommunication infrastructure.*

### **Local Plan Part One: Strategic Policies (Submission Document, December 2013)**

**SO 5** aims to *ensure that all development is supported by the necessary provision of, or improvements to infrastructure, services and facilities in an effective and timely manner to make development sustainable and minimise its effect upon existing communities.*

**STRAT 10** requires *new development to be located so as they are accessible to local services and facilities by a range of transport modes.*

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**STRAT 11** supports *measures to protect, enhance or improve access to existing facilities, services and amenities that contribute to the quality of life of residents, businesses and visitors, including access to information and communication technologies.*

**Objective 3:** *Provide and develop reliable efficient transport networks that support sustainable growth and improve accessibility to jobs and services.*

**Objective 4:** *Ensure all development is supported by the necessary provision of, or improvements to, infrastructure, services and facilities in an effective and timely manner to make development sustainable and minimise its effect upon existing communities.*

**Objective 15:** *Achieve sustainable waste management; use sustainable modes of transport and travel; and prudent use of natural resources including water and minerals reserves.*

## 10. Conclusion

The evidence base has revealed a series of key points that can be drawn upon for policy making. These have been taken into account in the development of the Neighbourhood Plan



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## References

This full list of references includes every document that has been referred to and that has informed the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan. This list represents the evidence base for the Plan. The list structured around the six policy themes, illustrating the documents that have informed policies in each section.

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- Chester & District Local Plan (2006) Retained Policies
- Cheshire Replacement Minerals Local Plan (2007)
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- Building for Life 12, Design Council (2012)
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