

**Strategic Environmental Assessment, Habitats
Regulations Assessment and Marine Plan
Screening Determination for Handbridge
Neighbourhood Plan**

Prepared on behalf of Handbridge Neighbourhood Forum by

Cheshire West and Chester Council

December 2024

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1 Introduction

In accordance with the requirements of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (as amended), this document is the screening determination of the need for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Handbridge Neighbourhood Plan. This document also sets out the findings of the Habitats Regulations Assessment screening and identifies whether Appropriate Assessment is required under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). It also identifies whether further work is required to ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan takes full account of the relevant Marine Plans.

Under the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, the responsible authority (i.e. the Local Planning Authority) must carry out an environmental assessment for any plan or programme that is prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, which sets the framework for future development consents of certain projects. It is likely that Development Plan Documents (DPDs), such as the Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies and Neighbourhood Plans will require SEA as they will contain planning policies that influence the above list of topics, and which will be used to determine planning applications.

However, the regulations state that an environmental assessment need not be carried out for a plan or programme which determines the use of a small area at a local level unless it has been determined that the plan is likely to have significant environmental effects.

The regulations advise that a screening process is used to determine whether or not a plan is likely to have a significant effect on the environment. This process should use a specified set of criteria (set out in Schedule 1 of the regulations). The results of this process must be summarised in a SEA screening opinion, which is then sent to the statutory consultation bodies for comment. Once comments have been taken into account a screening determination is prepared setting out whether SEA is required and reasons for the decision and this must be made publicly available.

Please note that under the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023, SEA is likely to be replaced by Environmental Outcomes Reports (EOR). The Regulations relating to EOR have not yet been introduced and as such, the existing SEA process has been followed in this document and will continue to be used until further Regulations and guidance are issued.

This screening opinion has been based upon the policies set out in the Regulation 15 Submission Version of the Handbridge Neighbourhood Plan November 2024.

A draft screening opinion was produced in April 2024. The Council has a duty to consult Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency. The

statutory environmental bodies were consulted on 26 April 2024. Details of the bodies consulted and the responses received on SEA and HRA are provided in Appendix 7. Responses were received from Natural England, Environment Agency and Historic England, the latter two agreed with the outcome of the initial screening exercise, that SEA is not required.

Historic England advised that the conservation and archaeological staff at Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWaC) are closely involved in the development of the plan. These teams have been consulted on the Plan at several stages in the process and their comments have fed into the development of the Plan.

Natural England have strongly recommended that the HRA screening in appendix 5 should make it clear that the policies HNP4, HNP5, HNP6 and HNP13 do not allocate or include new areas of proposed development and therefore a conclusion of no Likely Significant Effects (LSE) to statutory designated site can be made.

Policy HNP13 is now policy HNP12 (as the previous policy HNP12 relating to land east of Queen's Park High School has now been deleted). Natural England also provided specific advice relating to the original policy HNP12 (land east of Queen's Park High School), but as this policy has now been deleted, the advice is no longer relevant.

Natural England recommend consulting the Marine Management Organisation and Natural Resources Wales. This was done at draft (screening opinion) stage and these two organisations will also be provided with a copy of this screening determination.

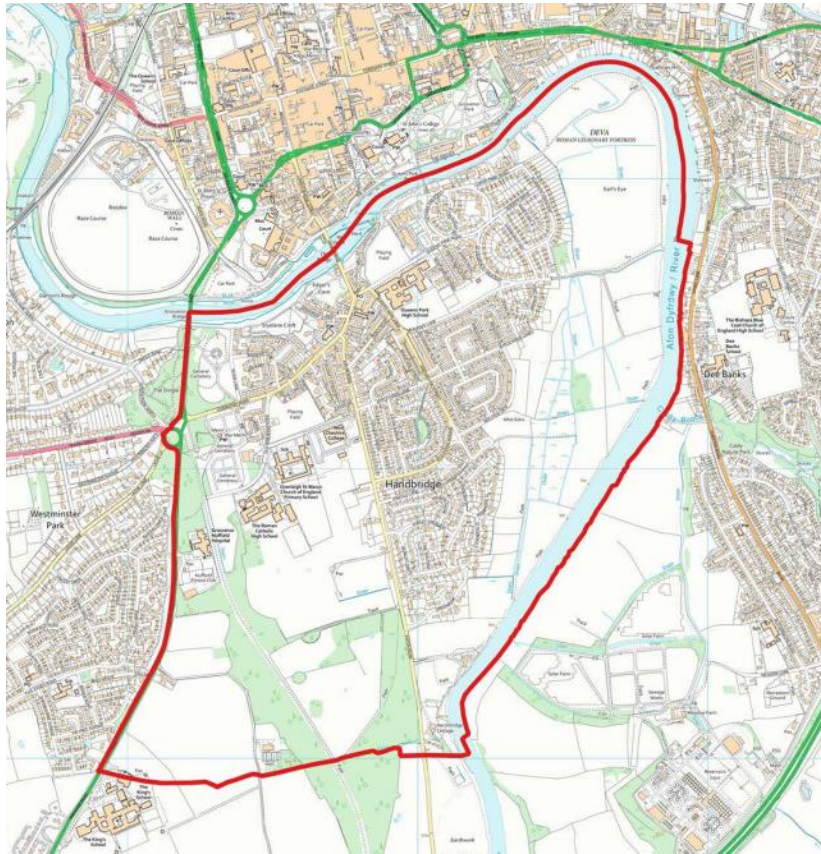
This final screening statement addresses comments made during the consultation.

Location and geographical scope of the Handbridge Neighbourhood Plan

Handbridge Neighbourhood Area has been designated by Handbridge Neighbourhood Forum as this is an unparished area on the edge of Chester city centre. The designated area of Handbridge has a population of 4,600 in the latest census (2021) with 2200 residential properties. This is predominantly a residential area, close to the city of Chester and alongside the river Dee.

The Neighbourhood Area concentrates on the existing built-up areas but does include the green belt land at The Meadows and Dukes Drive, which are popular recreation green spaces for Chester. Given its proximity to Chester, there are several heritage assets within the neighbourhood area.

The area contains predominantly an older population, with significantly more residents aged 45+ than the England average.



Relationship to other plans and programmes

Once made the Neighbourhood Plan will form part of development plan for Cheshire West and Chester. The policy framework once made will not work in isolation. The Neighbourhood Plan will work alongside the adopted Local Plan policies in place at the time it is made.

The Neighbourhood Plan must have regard to national policy; be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the adopted Local Plan; must contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and meet EU obligations and human rights requirements.

The current adopted Local Plan for the area is Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies (adopted January 2015) and the Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies (adopted July 2019). The Part One plan sets out the overall vision, strategic objectives, spatial strategy and strategic planning policies for the borough to 2030, with supporting policies in Part Two.

The Local Plan policy framework has been taken into account when carrying out the screening exercise. This forms the baseline for the SEA and HRA screening assessment. It has considered the potential effects of the Neighbourhood Plan over and above the current adopted Local Plan (Part One) and the Local Plan (Part Two).

Scope of Neighbourhood Plan

The vision for Handbridge Neighbourhood Plan is:

“In 2040, Handbridge will be a place where residents of all ages enjoy an excellent quality of life with robust planning policies contributing to that experience by:

- Protecting local green spaces, riverside landscapes and heritage;*
- Encouraging businesses to thrive with an offer that serves local residents, neighbouring areas and attracting visitors from Chester’s city centre; and*
- Ensuring that new developments are sustainable and designed to conserve and enhance the local character of Handbridge.”*

The objectives of the plan are:

- To conserve and enhance Handbridge’s natural environment, biodiversity, and local landscape character.*
- To protect local green spaces and enhance access to them.*
- To mitigate existing parking problems and encourage and support safe and sustainable transport.*
- To ensure that new development is well designed, sustainable, and in keeping with local character and the designated conservation areas.*
- To conserve and enhance Handbridge’s heritage assets.*
- To protect and enhance local amenities and community facilities.*
- To maintain a diverse retail and hospitality offer to serve the residents of Handbridge and neighbouring areas, and to attract visitors from Chester City Centre.*

The proposed policies provide local level guidance on how the community wishes future development, as set by the Local Plan, to come forward.

Policy HNP12: Land East of Queen’s Park High School identified a site that could come forward for community housing or a new medical centre. This policy has now been deleted from the current version of the Neighbourhood Plan.

2 Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening

Legislative background and methodology

European Directive 2001/42/EC (the SEA Directive) required a Strategic Environmental Assessment to be carried out for certain plans and programmes to assess their effects on the environment. This Directive was transposed in law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

The Handbridge Neighbourhood Plans fall within the scope of this legislation as it is a plan prepared for town and country planning or land use and will set the framework for future development consent of projects, in accordance with Part 3(2) of the SEA Directive. However, Neighbourhood Plans are land use planning documents prepared at the local level to determine land use in a small area.

Under Part 5(6) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, SEA is only required for documents that determine land use of a small area at local level and minor modifications to plans and programmes where it is considered that it is likely to have significant environmental effects. Assessment of whether the plan is likely to have significant environmental effects is carried out through the screening process.

If SEA is required, the assessment is usually incorporated into a Sustainability Appraisal, which includes environmental factors as required under the SEA Directive, along with social and economic factors.

Screening methodology

The role of the screening exercise is to determine whether the implementation of a plan or programme is likely to have a significant effect on the environment.

The criteria for assessing whether a plan or programme is likely to have a significant environmental effect are set out in Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

The assessment criteria used to determine whether a plan or programme will have significant environmental effects are separated into two categories:

- those relating to the characteristics of the plan; and
- those relating to the characteristics of the plan's effects and of the area likely to be affected.

In order to undertake the identification of the likely significance of effects, an assessment has been undertaken of each policy of the Neighbourhood Plan, its potential effects and its relationship to Local Plan (Part One) strategic policies and

the policies in the Local Plan (Part Two). This helps to assess the impact that the Neighbourhood Plan will have above and beyond the impact of existing Local Plan policies. This assessment is set out in the table in Appendix 1.

The assessment of the significant environmental effects of the draft Neighbourhood Plan is set out in Appendix 2. The characteristics of the plans effects and the area likely to be affected are set out in Appendix 3.

Conclusion

In accordance with Part 2(9) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations, as a result of the SEA screening assessment, CWaC consider that it is unlikely there will be any significant environmental effects arising from the Handbridge Neighbourhood Plan. As such, a Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Handbridge Neighbourhood Plan is not required.

3 Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening

Legislative background

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 transposed the requirements of the European Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC into UK law. The Habitats Directive and Regulations afford protection to plants, animals and habitats that are rare and vulnerable in a European context.

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) is a systematic process through which the performance of a plan or project can be assessed for its likely impact on the integrity of a European Site. European sites, also referred to as Natura 2000 sites, consist of Special Protection Areas (SPA), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC); Potential Special Protection Areas and candidate Special Areas of Conservation (pSPA and cSAC); and listed or proposed Ramsar sites.

Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect on it, either individually or in combination with other plans and projects, should be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives.

The first stage of HRA is to screen a plan or programme to identify if there are likely to be any significant effects on the European sites. This will indicate whether a full Appropriate Assessment is required. The regulations require that the impacts and effects of any land use plan being assessed, are considered in combination with other plans and projects that may also be affecting the relevant European site(s).

Inter-relationship with the Local Plan HRA

The CWaC Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies has already been through the HRA process, and the results detailed in the CWaC Chester Local Plan Publication Draft (Part 1) Strategic Policies Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Report.

The HRA for the Local Plan (Part One) identified 12 European sites to include within the HRA:

- Oak Mere SAC;
- Midlands Meres and Mosses Ramsar site;
- West Midlands Mosses SAC;
- River Dee and Bala Lake SAC;
- Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar;
- Dee Estuary SAC, SPA and Ramsar;
- Liverpool Bay SPA;
- Berwyn and South Clwyd Mountains SAC;
- Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore Ramsar and SPA;
- Sefton Coast SAC;
- Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar site; and
- River Eden SAC.

Information about all of these sites, the reasons for designation, pressures and pathways of impacts are provided in the HRA for the Local Plan (Part One and Part Two). Information about sites relevant to the Neighbourhood Plan is summarised in Appendix 4.

Map 2 shows the European sites that are within 15km of the Neighbourhood Plan area. All of the other European sites have been screened out from this assessment as impacts would not occur due to the distance or would be so small and insignificant in scale that they would not have a Likely Significant Effect (LSE), even when combined with other plans or projects.

The following sites have been screened out as they are outside the 15km radius for the Handbridge Neighbourhood Area:

- West Midlands Mosses SAC;

- Liverpool Bay SPA;
- Berwyn and South Clwyd Mountains SAC;
- Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore Ramsar and SPA;
- Sefton Coast SAC;
- Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar site; and
- River Eden SAC.

Due to the distance and scale of anticipated development proposed through the Neighbourhood Plan, it is not considered relevant to include these sites in the HRA Screening of the Handbridge Neighbourhood Plan.

Oak Mere SAC is just outside the 15km radius but has been screened in for further assessment due to the close proximity to the boundary.

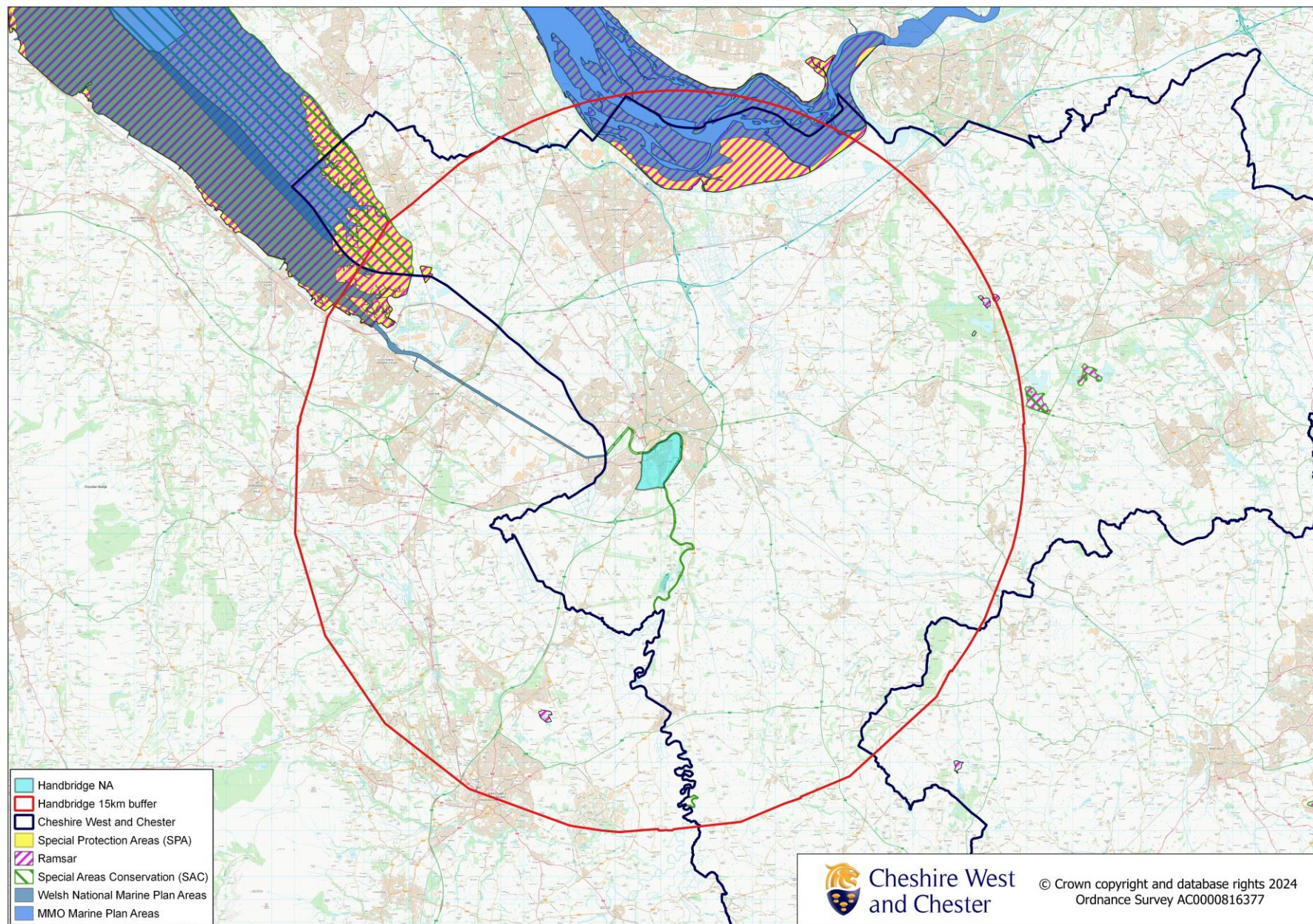
The European protected sites that fall within a 15km radius of the Neighbourhood Area (as shown on Map 2) are included within the HRA Screening. Due to the pathways of impact on these sites, the scale and location of the Neighbourhood Plan area and the scale of potential future developments means that some of the European sites can be screened out and do not require further assessment.

Appendix 4 identifies whether there could be potential impacts arising from the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan, on the European protected site and their reasons for designation. Oak Mere and the Midlands Meres and Mosses have been screened out and are not subject to further assessment. This is because the distance to the Neighbourhood Area (around 15km) means that it is very unlikely that the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan would have a significant influence on existing pressures and potential impacts. There is no direct pathway for water pollution or hydrological changes and development within the Handbridge area is unlikely to affect the level of pollution on roads close to these protected sites.

The conservation objectives of the European sites will be taken into account. These include maintaining or restoring:

- The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species
- The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats
- The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species
- The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely
- The populations of qualifying species
- The distribution of qualifying species within the site.

The HRA undertaken for the Local Plan (Part One) and (Part Two) forms part of the baseline for the HRA screening assessment of the Handbridge Neighbourhood Plan. The potential effects of the Neighbourhood Plan over and above those already assessed for the Local Plan have been considered. The Local Plan (Part One) was identified through the HRA process, as not leading to a Likely Significant Effect on European Sites. The HRA of the Local Plan (Part Two) concluded that, in the context of the over-arching strategic policies contained within the Local Plan (Part One) comprises a sufficient policy framework to enable the subsequent delivery of necessary measures that would avoid or adequately mitigate adverse effects on internationally designated sites and thus enable a conclusion of no adverse effect on integrity.



The European sites are also subject to certain pressures that are outside the scope of the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plans and therefore have not been included in the table above. Table 1 below identifies the potential pressures (which may be relevant to one or several of the European sites) and explains why it is not considered relevant to the HRA of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Table 1: Potential pressures outside the scope of the HRA

| Pressure | Reasons outside scope of this HRA |
|--|---|
| Disturbance of sediment releasing legacy heavy metal pollution that is bound into the sediment. | The policies within the Neighbourhood Plan relate to land-based uses and operations, which will not disturb sediment within European sites. |
| Pollution via commercial shipping by chemical or noise pollution and dumping of litter at sea | The policies within the Neighbourhood Plan will not have a significant impact on commercial shipping. |
| Navigational / aggregate dredging resulting in physical loss and alteration of coastal processes or damage of marine benthic habitat | The policies within the Neighbourhood Plan will not have a significant impact on navigational or aggregate dredging. |
| Overfishing of particular species | Fishing levels are not controlled through Neighbourhood Plans. |
| Overgrazing of ungrazed / little grazed saltmarsh | Grazing levels are not controlled through Neighbourhood Plans. |
| Damage of marine benthic habitat directly from fishing methods | Commercial fishing methods and levels are not controlled through Neighbourhood Plans. |
| The need to manage continuing coastal erosion at protected sites outside CWaC | Neighbourhood Plans within CWaC will not impact on management of coastal erosion in areas outside CWaC. |
| The need to develop and maintain management practices which sustain the conservation value of the area for protected sites outside CWaC. | Neighbourhood Plans cannot influence management practices for protected sites outside CWaC. |
| Loss or damage of habitat as a result of increasing off-shore exploration and production activity associated with oil and natural gas on protected sites outside CWaC. | Neighbourhood Plans within CWaC cannot control oil and gas exploration and production activity outside CWaC. |
| Coastal squeeze from land reclamation and coastal flood defences and drainage in European sites outside CWaC. | Neighbourhood Plans within CWaC will not have a significant impact on coastal squeeze resulting from land reclamation, coastal flood defences and drainage in areas outside CWaC. |

HRA screening

The Neighbourhood Plan is not directly connected with, or necessary to the management of a European site for nature conservation and therefore needs to be assessed for Likely Significant Effects.

It is considered that as long as the proposed policies of a Neighbourhood Plan do not alter the strategic policy framework assessed in the Local Plan (Part One and Part Two) HRA Screening Report and do not have Likely Significant Effects beyond this, then Appropriate Assessment of the Neighbourhood Plan will not be required. The Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate sites for development, which makes it less likely to have significant effects resulting from specific development supported through the Plan.

In March 2022, Natural England issued advice to Local Authorities about the adverse effect that nutrient pollution is having on habitats sites. Nutrient neutrality advice requires that competent authorities under the Habitats Regulations carefully consider the nutrient impacts of any new plans and projects on habitats sites and whether those impacts may have an adverse effect on the integrity of a protected site. Within CWaC, Oak Mere and the West Midlands Meres and Mosses are identified as potentially affected sites.

Oakmere and the West Midlands Meres and Mosses have been screened out of the HRA as there are unlikely to be any direct impacts due to the distance and scale of anticipated development proposed through the Handbridge Neighbourhood Plan. The Plan does not provide for significant levels of additional development or land allocations and is within overall levels of growth established through the Local Plan. It is unlikely to create a source of water pollution and there is no direct hydrological connectivity between Oak Mere or the West Midlands Meres and Mosses with the Handbridge Neighbourhood Plan. It is therefore not necessary to apply the nutrient neutrality methodology to the Handbridge Neighbourhood Plan.

Natural England provided specific advice relating to policy HNP12: Land East of Queen's Park High School and the need to refer to Site of Special Scientific Interest Impact Risk Zones. This policy has now been deleted, so no further information is required.

Appendix 5 identifies whether the Neighbourhood Plan alters the policy position for the area. It also assesses whether each policy has an LSE alone. If an LSE is identified, the policy would be taken forward for further investigation through Appropriate Assessment. If there is no LSE when considering the policy alone, the final column assesses whether the policy could have an LSE when combined with the effects of other relevant policies, plans or projects.

Conclusion

The Neighbourhood Plan will not work in isolation and will be used alongside other development plan policies including the Local Plan (Part One) and Local Plan (Part Two) for determining planning applications for new development. The quantum of development to come forward in Handbridge in the future will be set by Local Plan policy. The Neighbourhood Plan will guide how this should come forward locally.

There are no specific issues highlighted in the HRA of the emerging Local Plan in relation to Handbridge, although there were other more general potential impacts resulting from the quantum and location of development proposed for the borough as a whole in the Local Plan (Part One and Part Two). However, this was considered within the HRAs for the Local Plan (Part One and Part Two) and the HRAs concluded that there were sufficient mitigation and control measures in the policy framework of the Local Plan (Part One and Part Two) to avoid and mitigate any of these adverse effects on the integrity of a European site in the emerging Local Plan. The policies and proposals within the Neighbourhood Plan will not add significantly to the impacts and will not prevent the mitigation and control measures from avoiding and mitigating the effects sufficiently.

Therefore, it is considered that any proposals coming forward for Handbridge in accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan would not result in a LSE on a European site than already identified and assessed through the Local Plan (Part One and Part Two) Habitats Regulation Assessment Report.

The Screening determination made by Cheshire West and Chester Council is that the Handbridge Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have an adverse effect on a European site (as defined in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (d), alone or in combination with other plans and projects. As such, Appropriate Assessment is not considered to be required.

4 Marine Plan Screening

Marine planning ensures that the right activities happen in the right place, at the right time and in the right way in marine areas.

Marine plans provide guidance on things to promote or avoid in certain marine locations. As the marine planning authority for England, the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) is responsible for preparing marine plans in England for inshore and offshore waters.

The Marine Plans that are potentially relevant to neighbourhood planning in Cheshire West and Chester (CWaC) are the North West Marine Plan (June 2021) and the Welsh National Marine Plan. The diagram below shows the areas covered by these

Marine Plans. Marine plans apply up to the mean high-water springs mark, which includes the tidal extent of any rivers, as shown on the map.

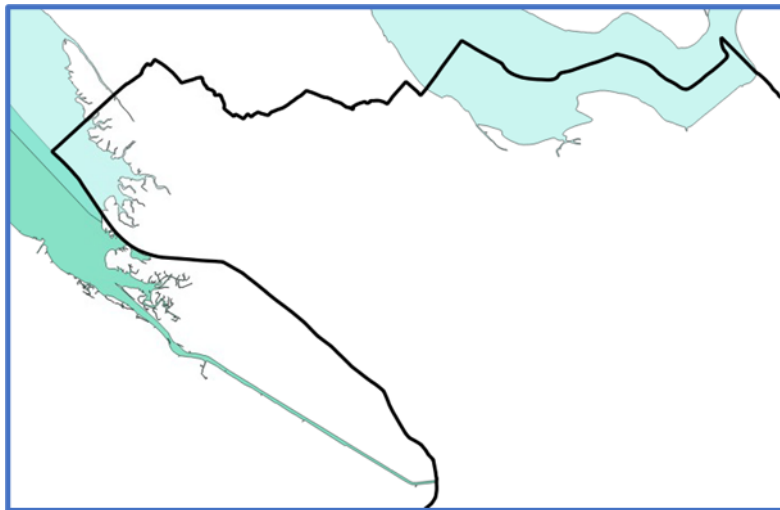
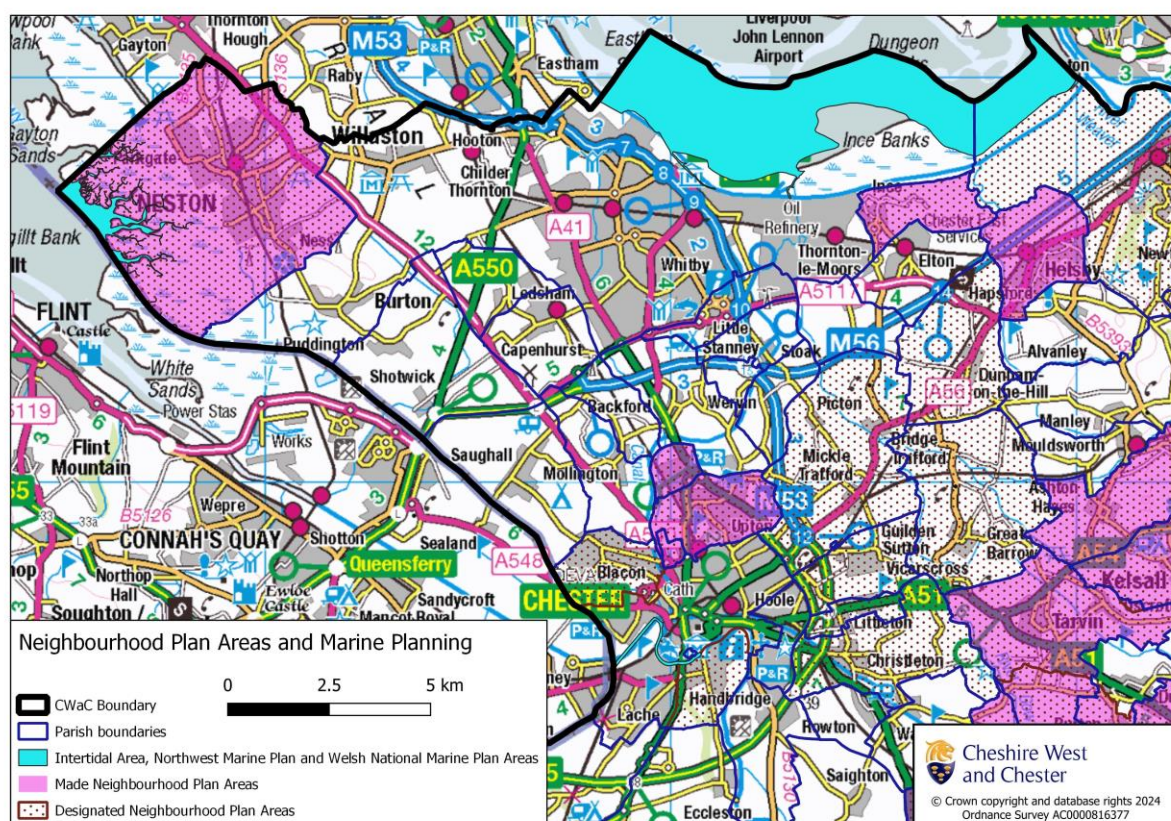


Figure showing CWaC boundary in black. The light blue is the area covered by the North West Marine Plan, and the darker turquoise the area covered by the Welsh National Marine Plan.



It is a legal requirement for marine plans to be considered in all decisions that affect England's marine area, now and into the future. Section 58(3) of the Marine and Coastal Access Act requires that public authorities must have regard to marine plans when taking any decisions which relate to the exercise of any function capable of

affecting the UK marine area. This can include decision making relating to Neighbourhood Plans.

The policies set out in marine plans apply only in their area (i.e. up to the mean high-water springs mark – which includes the tidal extent of any rivers), but if a proposed activity may affect the plan area, this should be acknowledged and considered.

There are not statutory requirements or guidelines for the screening of Neighbourhood Plans to assess likelihood of impacts on the marine plan or marine area. To do this we undertake a three-stage process, with the first stage to assess the distance of the Neighbourhood Plan area from the marine area.

Stage 1

If a Neighbourhood Plan extends into the marine plan area, it will definitely be screened in. If a Neighbourhood Plan is within 1km of a marine plan area it should proceed to the next stage, but it is likely that it will need to be screened in. As the distance from mean high-water springs mark increases, the likelihood of being screened in reduces, however further assessment is required at the next stage.

Handbridge Neighbourhood Plan is 10 km from the mean high-water springs mark for the North West Marine Plan and 1.6 km from the mean high-water springs mark for the Welsh National Marine Plan. Due to the distance from the North West Marine Plan and the fact that there are no major watercourses directly linking the Handbridge Neighbourhood Area and North West Marine Plan area, this is screened out and no further assessment is required. The Welsh National Marine Plan area is located much closer to the Neighbourhood Area and is directly linked via the River Dee, so is screened in for further assessment.

Stage 2

The second stage is to assess whether the plan includes proposed allocations and if so, whether these allocations have the potential to impact on the marine plan area. The potential for impacts will depend upon distance from the marine plan area, potential pathways of impact and scale and nature of the proposed allocation.

The Draft Handbridge Neighbourhood Plan does not include any allocations. Policy HNP12 relates to land east of Queen's Park High School and identifies that proposals for appropriate redevelopment of the land would be supported, subject to certain criteria. The site is allocated as protected open space in policy SOC 6 of the Local Plan and the policy identifies that any development must be compliant with policy SOC 6. This may limit the likelihood of the site coming forward for development. As policy HNP12 is not an allocation, the assessment moves to the next stage.

Stage 3

The final stage is to assess whether the proposed policies have the potential to impact on the marine plan area.

The policies have been checked against the key policies in the marine plan using the [Explore Marine Plans](#) tool. When the tool was used, only the 'land' policies were

relevant, which indicates no direct relationship with the marine plan area. It is possible that there may be indirect impacts via watercourses. As such, further assessment has been undertaken in Appendix 6.

All Welsh Marine Plan policies will need to be considered. However, the nature of the Handbridge area and the policies and allocations that have been screened in through the assessment means that the key Welsh Marine Plan policies that are likely to be most relevant are:

- GEN_01: Planning policy – Presumption in favour of sustainable development
- ECON_01: Sustainable economic growth – Proposals for economically sustainable activities are encouraged.
- SOC_10: Minimising climate changes – Proposals should demonstrate how they avoid emissions of greenhouse gasses, minimise them where they cannot be avoided and / or mitigate them where they cannot be minimised.

Conclusion

The Handbridge Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to impact significantly on the North West Marine Plan or Welsh Marine Plan. The Handbridge Neighbourhood Plan has the potential to have a positive impact on the Welsh Marine Plan in terms of flood risk, runoff and water pollution and biodiversity, through the following policies:

- HNP1: Local Nature Networks
- HNP2: Local Green Spaces
- HNP3: Incidental Open Spaces of Community Value
- HNP7: Design
- HNP 10: Local historic landscapes

Policy HNP12: Commerce, when viewed individually, would have the potential for negative impacts on water, but when the Neighbourhood Plan is viewed as a whole and used alongside the Local Plan, this potential small scale negative impact would be prevented by the requirements in other policies.

The Neighbourhood Plan group will need to consider the impacts of the Neighbourhood Plan on the Welsh National Marine Plan and should specifically consider the impacts of policy HNP12 and whether the potential small scale negative impacts could be reduced further. The impact of the Neighbourhood Plan will also need to be considered as a whole.

Appendix 1: SEA Screening - Overview of policies and identified effects of the Handbridge Neighbourhood Plan.

| Policy reference | Summary of policy | Identified potential effects of policy (taking into account SEA topics of biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage and landscape). | Relationship to Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies and Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|
| POLICY HNP1: LOCAL NATURE NETWORK | Designates a 'Nature Network' that promotes nature recovering and mitigation from climate change. These of blue and green infrastructure. | Protecting landscape and townscape. Protecting local character. Population and human health. Protection and enhancement of biodiversity, flora and fauna. Climatic factors. Water. Soil. Air quality. | Local Plan (Part One) Strategic policies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - STRAT 9 – Greenbelt and countryside - SOC 5 – Health and well-being - ENV 2 – Landscapes - ENV 3 – Green infrastructure - ENV 4 – Biodiversity and geodiversity - ENV 6 – High quality design and sustainable construction Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CH 1 – Chester settlement area - DM 44 Protecting and enhancing the natural environment |
| POLICY HNP2: LOCAL GREEN SPACES | Designates 9 Local Green Spaces and protects them from development. | Protecting landscape and townscape. Protecting local character. Population and human health. Protection and enhancement of biodiversity, flora and fauna. Climatic factors. Water. Soil. | Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - STRAT 9 – Greenbelt and Countryside - SOC6 – Open space, sport and recreation - SOC 5 – Health and wellbeing - ENV 2 – Landscape Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies: |

| Policy reference | Summary of policy | Identified potential effects of policy (taking into account SEA topics of biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage and landscape). | Relationship to Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies and Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies |
|--|---|--|--|
| | | Air quality. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CH 1 – Chester settlement area - DM 35 - Open space and new development - DM 36 - Provision for sport and recreation |
| POLICY HNP3: INCIDENTAL OPEN SPACES OF COMMUNITY VALUE | Designates 14 Incidental Open Spaces of Community Value. These spaces are protected from development and where there is an adverse impact new alternative provision must be provided and harm to the character and green infrastructure must be satisfactorily mitigated. | Protecting landscape and townscape. Protecting local character. Population and human health. Protection and enhancement of biodiversity, flora and fauna. Climatic factors. Water. Soil. Air quality. | Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - STRAT 9 – Greenbelt and Countryside - SOC6 – Open space, sport and recreation - SOC 5 – Health and wellbeing - ENV 2 – Landscape Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CH 1 – Chester settlement area - DM 35 - Open space and new development - DM 36 - Provision for sport and recreation |
| POLICY HNP4: SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT | Requirement for transport assessment where development generates significant amounts of movement. Promotion of sustainable transport that reduces congestion. Support for sustainable transport options for those with disabilities | Population and human health. Air quality. Climatic factors. | Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - STRAT 10 - Transport and accessibility - SOC 5 Health and Well-being - ENV 6 – High quality design and sustainable construction |

| Policy reference | Summary of policy | Identified potential effects of policy (taking into account SEA topics of biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage and landscape). | Relationship to Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies and Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies |
|---|---|--|--|
| | or elderly and space available for cycle storage and mobility scooters. Support for an integrated sustainable transport options. | | <p>Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - T 1 Local road network improvement schemes - T 5 Parking and access |
| POLICY HNP5: SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL NETWORK | Identifies the existing Sustainable Travel Network and opportunities for improvement. Nearby development should sustain or enhance the network and loss needs an appropriate alternative. Connections to the network need to consider a range of users. | <p>Population and human health.</p> <p>Air quality.</p> <p>Climatic factors.</p> | <p>Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - STRAT 10 - Transport and accessibility - SOC 5 Health and Well-being - ENV 6 – High quality design and sustainable construction <p>Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DM 37 Recreational routeways |
| POLICY HNP6: PARKING | On site parking within new development and minimise on-street parking. Loss of parking will only be permitted if it is no longer needed, replacement or an agree alternative is provided. Additional residential off-road car parking will be | <p>Protecting landscape and townscape.</p> <p>Protecting local character.</p> <p>Population and human health.</p> | <p>Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - STRAT 10 - Transport and accessibility <p>Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies:</p> |

| Policy reference | Summary of policy | Identified potential effects of policy (taking into account SEA topics of biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage and landscape). | Relationship to Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies and Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies |
|---------------------|---|---|--|
| | supported. | | - T 5 Parking and access |
| POLICY HNP7: DESIGN | <p>Support where full regard is given to the design guidelines. New development should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - protect and increase local character features, - design in relevant environmental sustainability measures, - incorporate natural features and integrate new green infrastructure networks - contribute to contextually responsive frontage and boundary treatments - contribute to enhancement of the public realm <p>Infill development should have regard to design guidelines. Edge of settlement needs to be sensitive and balance between urban character and landscape character.</p> | <p>Protecting landscape and townscape.</p> <p>Protecting local character.</p> <p>Population and human health.</p> <p>Protection and enhancement of biodiversity, flora and fauna.</p> <p>Climatic factors.</p> <p>Water.</p> <p>Soil.</p> <p>Air quality.</p> | <p>Local Plan (Part One) Strategic policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - STRAT 9 – Greenbelt and countryside - SOC 5 – Health and well-being - ENV 2 – Landscapes - ENV 3 – Green infrastructure - ENV 4 – Biodiversity and geodiversity - ENV 5 Historic environment - ENV 6 – High quality design and sustainable construction <p>Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CH 1 - Chester settlement area - CH 6 - Chester key views, landmarks and gateways and historic skyline - DM 3 - Design, character and visual amenity - DM 4 Sustainable construction - DM 44 Protecting and enhancing the natural environment - DM 45 Trees, woodland and hedgerows - DM 46 Development in conservation areas |

| Policy reference | Summary of policy | Identified potential effects of policy (taking into account SEA topics of biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage and landscape). | Relationship to Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies and Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies |
|---------------------------------|--|---|---|
| POLICY HNP8: KEY VIEWS | Identification of key views that should be preserve or enhance the local character of the landscape. Development that would significantly adversely impact the identified key view will not be supported. | Protecting landscape and townscape. Protecting local character. Cultural heritage. | Local Plan (Part One) Strategic policies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - STRAT 9 – Greenbelt and countryside - ENV 2 – Landscapes - ENV 5 Historic environment - ENV 6 – High quality design and sustainable construction Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CH 6 - Chester key views, landmarks and gateways and historic skyline - DM 3 - Design, character and visual amenity |
| POLICY HNP9: LOCAL LANDMARKS | Identification of local landmarks. Development that preserves and enhances local landmarks and their settings will be supported. Proposals that would adversely impact or lead to the loss or reduction in height of a local landmark will not be supported. | Protecting landscape and townscape. Protecting local character. Cultural heritage. | Local Plan (Part One) Strategic policies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ENV 5 Historic environment - ENV 6 – High quality design and sustainable construction Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DM 3 - Design, character and visual amenity - DM 48 - Non-designated heritage assets |
| POLICY HNP10: LOCAL | Identification of local heritage assets. Development that preserves or enhances | Protecting landscape and townscape. | Local Plan (Part One) Strategic policies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ENV 5 Historic environment |

| Policy reference | Summary of policy | Identified potential effects of policy (taking into account SEA topics of biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage and landscape). | Relationship to Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies and Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies |
|---|---|--|--|
| HERITAGE ASSETS | the significant of a local heritage asset will be supported. Development that would result in harm or loss of the significance of a local heritage asset will only be permitted where the benefits will outweigh the harm. | Protecting local character. Cultural heritage. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ENV 6 – High quality design and sustainable construction <p>Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DM 3 - Design, character and visual amenity - DM 48 - Non-designated heritage assets |
| POLICY HNP11: LOCAL HISTORIC LANDSCAPES | Identification of local historic landscapes. Considerations of visual and historic relationship between the settlement and landscapes. Where there is loss or harm, the benefits need to outweigh this. | Protecting landscape and townscape. Protecting local character. Cultural heritage. | <p>Local Plan (Part One) Strategic policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ENV 2 Landscape - ENV 5 Historic environment - ENV 6 – High quality design and sustainable construction <p>Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CH 1 - Chester settlement area - DM 3 - Design, character and visual amenity |
| POLICY HNP12: COMMERCE | Support for new class E development within the Local Retail Centre, with criteria to protect the retail destination and vitality and viability. Limit the loss of E class or pubs. Promotion of residential on upper floors | Human health Climate factors Cultural heritage Protecting Townscape Supporting the economy (no direct SEA topic) | <p>Local Plan (Part One) Strategic policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - STRAT 11 – Infrastructure - EOCN 1 – Economic growth, employment and enterprise - ECON 2 – Town centres - SOC 3 – Mix and type of housing - SOC 5 – Health and well-being - ENV 5 – Historic environment |

| Policy reference | Summary of policy | Identified potential effects of policy (taking into account SEA topics of biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage and landscape). | Relationship to Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies and Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies |
|------------------|--|--|--|
| | and flexibility on ground floor to allow access. | Material assets. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ENV 6 -High quality design and sustainable construction <p>Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CH 1 - Chester settlement area - CH 5 – Chester conservation areas - DM 2 – Impact on residential amenity - DM 3 - Design, character and visual amenity - DM 5 - Protection and refurbishment of employment land and premises - DM 15 - District and local retail centres - DM 16 – Shopfronts - DM 19 - Proposals for residential development - DM 20 - Mix and type of new housing development - DM 22 - Change of use to dwellinghouses and residential conversions - DM 29 - Health impacts of new development - DM 46 - Development in conservation areas |

Appendix 2: SEA Screening – Assessment of significant environmental effects of the Handbridge Neighbourhood Plan

| SEA Directive | Characteristics of the plan | Significant environmental effect? |
|--|---|-----------------------------------|
| <p>The degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources</p> | <p>The Neighbourhood Plan is a local level land use planning document to determine land use in a small area. Once made, it will work within the planning policy framework of the Local Plan for the borough.</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan will provide a local planning policy framework for Handbridge that will become part of the development plan for Cheshire West and Chester. It is required to be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the adopted Local Plan. The Handbridge Neighbourhood Plan will not impact on the strategic location, nature, size and operating conditions of new development over and above that set by the adopted Local Plan for the borough.</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan policies will work alongside the strategic policies in the development plan; other development management measures and environmental protection legislation.</p> | <p>No</p> |
| <p>The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans</p> | <p>The Neighbourhood Plan has to be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the adopted Local Plan and must contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. It will therefore have limited influence over</p> | <p>No</p> |

| | | |
|--|---|----|
| and programmes including those in a hierarchy | changing the policies in plans at the higher strategic level or lead to the development of further plans below it. | |
| The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development | The Neighbourhood Plan is required, as one of the basic condition tests, to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Whether this basic condition is met will be tested during the examination of the Neighbourhood Plan. However, the framework for the promotion of sustainable development is set by the Government's Strategy for Sustainable Development, the National Planning Policy Framework and the policies in the adopted Local Plan for the borough. The Neighbourhood Plan will have limited influence over changing the sustainable development policies in plans and policies at the higher strategic level. | No |
| Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme | <p>The Sustainability Appraisal scoping reports for the Local Plan (Part One and Part Two) provide a comprehensive overview of the issues in Cheshire West and Chester. There are no specific additional environmental problems identified for the Handbridge area.</p> <p>Some of the environmental issues and problems for Handbridge include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve and enhance Handbridge's natural environment, biodiversity and local landscape character. | No |

| | | |
|---|---|----|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect local green spaces and enhance access to them. • Parking problems and the need to encourage and support safe and sustainable transport. • Achieve high quality, sustainable design that is in keeping with local character. • Conserve and enhance local heritage assets. <p>The Neighbourhood Plan will seek to address these issues.</p> | |
| The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste-management or water protection) | The Neighbourhood Development Plan will have no direct role in the delivery of community legislation on the environment. It does include policies on these matters. The Neighbourhood Plan has been subject to Habitats Regulation Assessment screening as set out in part 2 of this document. | No |

Appendix 3: SEA Screening – Characteristics of the plan’s effects and of the area likely to be affected

| Identified effects of the proposed policies | Probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects | Cumulative nature of the effects | Trans-boundary nature of the effects ¹ | Risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents) | Magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected) | Value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to the effect on special natural characteristics or cultural heritage | Value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to the effect on environmental quality standards or limit values | Value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to the effect on intensity of land-use | Effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status | Significant environmental effect? |
|---|---|---|---|--|---|---|--|---|---|-----------------------------------|
| Protecting landscape and townscape. | High probability as policies support the protection of landscape and townscape character both over the short and long term. | Potential small scale positive cumulative effect. | None | None | Local small-scale impact at the wider than neighbourhood level – as would impact neighbourhood area and views from surrounding areas. | None – policies aim to protect and enhance landscape and townscape. | No relevant quality standards or limit values. | Minor impact only. The Neighbourhood Plan does not increase the intensity of land use above the Local Plan. | Positive effects – policies seek to protect and enhance designated areas. | No |
| Cultural heritage. | High probability as policies identify local assets for enhancement and protection over the short and long term. | Potential small scale positive cumulative effect. | None | None | Local small-scale impact at the neighbourhood level. | None – policies aim to protect the specific local cultural heritage areas and assets. | No relevant quality standards or limit values. | Minor impact only. The Neighbourhood Plan does not increase the intensity of land use above the Local Plan. | Positive effects – policies seek to protect and enhance designated areas. | No |
| Protecting local character. | High probability as policies seek to protect open spaces, the historic environment and the design code based on existing character. | Potential small scale positive cumulative effect. | None | None | Local small-scale impact at the wider than neighbourhood level – as would impact neighbourhood area and views from surrounding areas. | None – policies aim to protect and enhance local character. | No relevant quality standards or limit values. | Minor impact only. The Neighbourhood Plan does not increase the intensity of land use above the Local Plan. | Positive effects – policies seek to protect and enhance designated areas. | No |

¹ The assessment here has considered whether the effect of the policy goes beyond the UK and impacts upon other EU territories. Given scale and nature of Neighbourhood Plan the effects are not considered to be transboundary.

| Identified effects of the proposed policies | Probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects | Cumulative nature of the effects | Trans-boundary nature of the effects ¹ | Risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents) | Magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected) | Value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to the effect on special natural characteristics or cultural heritage | Value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to the effect on environmental quality standards or limit values | Value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to the effect on intensity of land-use | Effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status | Significant environmental effect? |
|---|---|---|---|--|--|---|--|---|---|-----------------------------------|
| Population and human health. | Medium probability as policies could impact on housing delivery by limited development land as well as promotion of housing delivery. Policies promote sustainable travel. Medium to long term. | Potential small scale positive cumulative effect. | None | None | Local small-scale impact. Some wider positive effects on sustainable travel outside the neighbourhood areas. | None | No relevant quality standards or limit values. | Minor impact only. The Neighbourhood Plan does not increase the intensity of land use above the Local Plan. | Positive effects – policies seek to protect and enhance designated areas. | No |
| Protection and enhancement of biodiversity, flora and fauna. | Medium probability as policies refer to biodiversity requirements in very specific locations within the neighbourhood area. Long term, over the plan period. | Potential small scale positive cumulative effect. | None | None | Local small-scale impact at the wider than neighbourhood level, as could connect to neighbouring biodiversity corridors. | None – policies aim to protect and enhance biodiversity. | No relevant quality standards or limit values | Minor impact only. The Neighbourhood Plan does not increase the intensity of land use above the Local Plan. | Positive effects – policies seek to protect and enhance the national environmental designations within the neighbourhood areas. | No |

| Identified effects of the proposed policies | Probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects | Cumulative nature of the effects | Trans-boundary nature of the effects ¹ | Risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents) | Magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected) | Value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to the effect on special natural characteristics or cultural heritage | Value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to the effect on environmental quality standards or limit values | Value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to the effect on intensity of land-use | Effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status | Significant environmental effect? |
|---|--|---|---|--|---|---|--|---|---|-----------------------------------|
| Climatic factors. | Medium probability over medium to long term. Policies promote passive design, renewable energy and biodiversity net gains. The plan protects and enhances the green infrastructure including nature recovery as well as sustainable transport. | Potential small scale positive cumulative effect. | None | None | Local small-scale impact at the wider than neighbourhood level, as could connect to neighbouring biodiversity corridors, energy networks or sustainable transport networks. | None – policies seek to protect open spaces within the neighbourhood area. | No relevant quality standards or limit values. | Minor impact only. Where limited development can take place, climate resilient principles are promoted. | Positive effects – policies seek to protect and enhance designated areas. | No |
| Water. | Low probability. No specific policies relating to water. Some potential for indirect positive impacts, but the level of development is likely to be low. The Local Nature Network runs alongside the River Dee promoting nature recovery. Medium to long term. | Potential small scale positive cumulative effect. | None | None | Minor effects on a wider than neighbourhood level. | None – policies seek to protect the natural environment. | No relevant quality standards or limit values. | Minor impact only. The Neighbourhood Plan does not increase the intensity of land use above the Local Plan. | Positive effects – policies seek to protect and enhance designated areas. | No |
| Soil. | Low probability as no specific policies relating to soil. Some potential indirect impacts, but levels of development likely to be low. Medium to long | Potential small-scale positive cumulative effect. | None | None | Local small-scale impact at the neighbourhood level. | None. | No relevant quality standards or limit values. | None. | None identified. | No. |

| Identified effects of the proposed policies | Probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects | Cumulative nature of the effects | Trans-boundary nature of the effects ¹ | Risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents) | Magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected) | Value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to the effect on special natural characteristics or cultural heritage | Value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to the effect on environmental quality standards or limit values | Value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to the effect on intensity of land-use | Effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status | Significant environmental effect? |
|--|---|---|---|--|--|---|--|---|---|-----------------------------------|
| | term. | | | | | | | | | |
| Air quality. | Low probability. No specific policies relating to air. Some potential for indirect positive impacts, but the level of development is likely to be low. Medium to long term. | Potential small-scale positive cumulative effect. | None | None | Minor small-scale impact at the neighbourhood level. Promotion of sustainable travel networks has the potential to have a positive impact wider than the neighbourhood area. | None. | No relevant quality standards or limit values. | Minor impact only. The Neighbourhood Plan does not increase the intensity of land use above the Local Plan. | None identified. | No. |
| Material assets. | Low probability over medium to long term. The policies mainly promote protection of existing. | Potential small-scale cumulative effect. | None | None | Local small-scale impact at the neighbourhood level. | None. | No relevant quality standards or limit values. | Minor impact only. The Neighbourhood Plan does not increase the intensity of land use above the Local Plan. | None identified. | No. |
| Supporting the economy (no direct SEA topic). | Medium probability over the short to medium term. Policies seek to protect the existing commercial uses. Some positive effects through support to community facilities. | Potential small-scale positive cumulative effect. | None | None | Local small-scale impact at the neighbourhood level. | None – policies seeks to protect the existing commercial units. | No relevant quality standards or limit values. | Minor impact only. The Neighbourhood Plan does not increase the intensity of land use above the Local Plan. | None identified. | No. |

Appendix 4 – HRA Screening - European sites relevant to the Neighbourhood Plan

| European site | Reason for inclusion | Reason for designation | Existing pressures and potential impacts | Relevance to the Neighbourhood Area |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| Oak Mere SAC | Located within Cheshire West and Chester | Water body with clear water of low nutrient status characteristics of oligotrophic waters and a marginal zone of shoreweed (<i>Littorella uniflora</i>). Site supports an assemblage of plants that are rare in the lowlands of England, including bog moss (<i>Sphagnum</i> spp.) and the scarce narrow small-reed (<i>Calamagrostis stricta</i>). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Water pollution / enrichment. - Hydrological changes - reduction in size of the mere due to natural lowering of the local water table caused by successive droughts, resulting in threat to shoreline communities from desiccation and invasion by birch and willow. - Atmospheric pollution from nearby roads. | Due to the distance to the Neighbourhood Area (just over 15km) it is very unlikely that the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan would have a significant influence on existing pressures and potential impacts. There is no direct pathway for water pollution or hydrological changes and development within the Handbridge area is unlikely to affect the level of pollution on nearby roads. Screened out from further assessment. |
| Midlands Meres and Mosses Ramsar site | Located within Cheshire West and Chester | Series of open water and peatland sites supporting a diverse range of habitats from open water to raised bog. This includes natural dystrophic lakes and ponds and transition mires and quaking bogs with floating bog moss. Site supports a number of rare plant species associated with wetlands and an assemblage of rare wetland invertebrates. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Water pollution / enrichment. - Hydrological changes. - Despite number of visitors to some of the meres and mosses, interest features are resilient to recreational pressure and off-track trampling is not a significant issue due to the hazardous nature of the sites away from designated tracks and boardwalks. - Due to distance to major roads, changes in local air quality are not an issue requiring investigation. | Due to the distance to the Neighbourhood Area (just over 15km) it is very unlikely that the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan would have a significant influence on existing pressures and potential impacts. There is no direct pathway for water pollution or hydrological changes and development within the Handbridge area is unlikely to affect the level of pollution on nearby roads. Screened out from further assessment. |
| River Dee | Located partly | The site contains the following Annex 1 habitats: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recreational activities, specifically | Potential impacts assessed in |

| | | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|---|--|---|
| and Bala Lake SAC | within Cheshire West and Chester. Identified as a source of potable water for Cheshire West and Chester and also the receiving watercourse for wastewater treatment works discharge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Renunculum fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitriche-Batrachion</i> vegetation <p>The site contains the following Annex II species:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Atlantic salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>) - Floating water-plaintain (<i>Luronium natans</i>) - Sea lamprey (<i>Petromyzon marinus</i>) - Brook lamprey (<i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>) - Bullhead (<i>Cottus gobio</i>) - Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>) | <p>fishing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Risk of excessive abstraction resulting in a decrease in freshwater flows and an increase in sediment loading of water such that dehydration of interest features may occur. - Fish entrainment associated with abstraction. - Deterioration in water quality and changes in flow rates due to ex-industrial runoff, discharge of treated sewage effluent and agricultural runoff. - Introduction of invasive species. | Appendix 5. |
| Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar | Located partially within Cheshire West and Chester | <p>Designated for over-wintering and on passage birds.</p> <p>Over winter – Golden plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>), Redshank (<i>Tringa tetanus</i>), Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina alpina</i>), Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>), Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>), Eurasian teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>), Wigeon (<i>Anas Penelope</i>), Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>), Grey plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>), Great crested grebe (<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>), Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>).</p> <p>On passage – Ringed plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>).</p> <p>It also contains internationally important populations of Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>), Black-tailed godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>), Redshank (<i>Tringa tetanus</i>), Eurasian teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>), Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>) and Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina alpina</i>).</p> <p>It also has a 5 year peak mean (1998/99-2002/3) of 89,576 waterfowl.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recreational disturbance from abrasion (boating, anchoring, trampling). - Selective extraction of species (harvesting, bait digging, recreational fishing) - Visual presence of recreational activity. - Disturbance to birds from increased recreational pressure and wildfowling. - Coastal squeeze and loss of supporting habitat. - Deterioration in water quality. - Deterioration in air quality. - Introduction of non-native species. | Potential impacts assessed in Appendix 5. |
| Dee Estuary SAC, SPA | Downstream of the River | <p>The site includes the following Annex I habitats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Water courses of plain to montane levels | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recreational disturbance from abrasion from recreational | Potential impacts assessed in Appendix 5. |

| | | | | |
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| and Ramsar | <p>Dee which is identified as a source of potable water for Cheshire West and Chester.</p> <p>Development in the Borough also creates potential water quality pathways.</p> | <p>with the Renunculum Fluitantis and Callitriche-Batrachion vegetation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide. - Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand. - Atlantic salt meadows. <p>The site contains the following Habitats Directive Annex II habitats and species:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Estuaries - Annual vegetation of drift lines - Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts - Embryonic shifting dunes - Shifting dunes along the shoreline with marram - Fixed dunes with herbaceous vegetation - Humid dune slacks - Sea lamprey (<i>Petromyzon marinus</i>) - River lamprey (<i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>) - Petalwort (<i>Petalophyllum ralfsii</i>) <p>It also supports:</p> <p>During the breeding season –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Little tern (<i>Sterna albifrons</i>) - Common tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) <p>On passage –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sandwich tern (<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>) <p>Over winter –</p> <p>Bar-tailed godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>)</p> <p>The site also supports populations of European importance of the following migratory species:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Black-tailed godwit (<i>Limosa limosa islandica</i>) - Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>) - Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina alpina</i>) - Grey plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) - Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>) | <p>pressures on the upper shore, dredging operations and fisheries.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Disturbance from commercial / industrial developments. - Selective extraction of species (bait digging and shellfishing). - Deterioration in water quality. - Coastal squeeze from land reclamation, coastal flood defences and drainage. - Air quality. - Excessive abstraction resulting in decrease in freshwater flows into the estuary. - Introduction of non-native species. | |
|------------|---|---|--|--|

| | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) - Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>) - Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) - Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) - Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) <p>The estuary also regularly supports 130,408 individual waterfowl (5 year peak mean 1995-99). It also meets several Ramsar criteria as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extensive intertidal mud and sand flats with large expanses of saltmarsh towards the head of the estuary. - Supporting an overall bird assemblage of international importance. - Supporting the following species at levels of international importance: Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>), Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>), Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>), Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>), Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>), Pintail (<i>Anas Acuta</i>), Grey plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>), Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>), Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina alpina</i>), Bar-tailed godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>), Black-tailed godwit (<i>Limosa limosa islandica</i>) and Turnstone (<i>Arenaria interpres</i>). | | |
|--|--|---|--|--|

Appendix 5: HRA Screening – Screening of Neighbourhood Plan policies for Likely Significant Effect

| Policy | Comment | Likely Significant Effect (LSE) alone? | LSE in combination? |
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| POLICY HNP1: LOCAL NATURE NETWORK | Nature network identified to promote nature recovery and mitigating climate change. New developments within or near must maintain or improve the functionality of the network and resistance of undermining its integrity. | Nature network includes the River Dee. Generally positive impacts on water quality, hydrology, runoff and air pollution through protection and enhancement of the Nature Network and its functionality. Small-scale impacts due to the relatively small size of the Neighbourhood area. No impacts on abstraction, recreational disturbance or invasive species. No LSE. | No LSE. |
| POLICY HNP2: LOCAL GREEN SPACES | Identification of 9 Local Green Spaces. | Generally positive impacts on water quality, hydrology, runoff and air pollution through protection of Local Green Spaces, some of which are close to the River Dee. Greater use of existing green spaces in the Neighbourhood Area could reduce pressure on other sites including coastal areas and meres. The green spaces already have some protection through the Local Plan and NPPF. No impact on abstraction or invasive species. No LSE. | No LSE. |
| POLICY HNP3: INCIDENTAL OPEN SPACES OF COMMUNITY VALUE | 14 Incidental Open Spaces have been identified protecting them from loss and negative impacts. | Generally positive impacts on water quality, hydrology, runoff and air pollution through protection of Incidental Open Spaces. Small-scale impacts due to the small size of the Incidental Open Spaces. No significant impact on recreational disturbance, abstraction or invasive species. No LSE. | No LSE. |
| POLICY HNP4: SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT | Development that reduces car usage will be supported and significantly increases congestion will not be supported. Criteria | Potential for reduction in car use and associated reduction in air pollution, but due to the distance to the protected sites, this is unlikely to have a significant effect. The policy does not allocate development or include new area of potential development, therefore no LSE to statutory designated sites. | No LSE. |

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| | for when a transport assessment is required and what is included. | No significant impact on water quality, hydrology, runoff, recreational disturbance, abstraction or invasive species. No LSE. | |
| POLICY HNP5: SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL NETWORK | Identification of a Sustainable Travel Network to prioritise active travel and public transport. Development will need to protect and contribute to the network. | Potential for reduction in car use and associated reduction in air pollution, but due to the distance to the protected sites, this is unlikely to have a significant effect. The policy does not allocate development or include new area of potential development, therefore no LSE to statutory designated sites. No significant impact on recreational disturbance, water quality, hydrology, runoff, abstraction or invasive species. No LSE. | No LSE. |
| POLICY HNP6: PARKING | Minimising on street parking and regard to the Councils parking standards. Support for additional off-street parking and loss only where it is longer needed. | Potential for minor impact on car usage and associated change in air pollution, but due to the distance to the protected sites, this is unlikely to have a significant effect. The policy does not allocate development or include new area of potential development, therefore no LSE to statutory designated sites. No significant impact on abstraction, recreational disturbance, water quality, hydrology, runoff or invasive species. No LSE. | No LSE. |
| POLICY HNP7: DESIGN | Support will be given to applications that have full regard to the Handbridge Neighbourhood Area Design Guidelines. The design criteria includes responding to local character & context, environmentally sustainability including green infrastructure and enhancement of the public | Generally positive impacts on water quality, hydrology, runoff and air pollution through protection and enhancement of green infrastructure and biodiversity. No significant impact on abstraction, recreational disturbance or invasive species. No LSE. | No LSE. |

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| | realm. Infill and edge of settlement design is highlighted within the policy. | | |
| POLICY HNP8: KEY VIEWS | The policy identifies Key Views that should be preserved or enhanced. | No links or pathways with water quality, runoff, air pollution, abstraction, recreational disturbance or invasive species. No LSE. | No LSE. |
| POLICY HNP9: LOCAL LANDMARKS | The policy identifies 'local landmarks' and protects them and their setting. | No links or pathways with water quality, runoff, air pollution, abstraction, recreational disturbance or invasive species. No LSE. | No LSE. |
| POLICY HNP10: LOCAL HERITAGE ASSETS | The policy identifies Local Heritage Assets that should be preserved or enhanced. | No links or pathways with water quality, runoff, air pollution, abstraction, recreational disturbance or invasive species. No LSE. | No LSE. |
| POLICY HNP11: LOCAL HISTORIC LANDSCAPES | The policy identifies local historic landscapes that should be preserved and enhanced. | Generally positive impacts on water quality, hydrology, runoff and air pollution through protection of local historic landscapes. No significant impact on recreational disturbance, abstraction or invasive species. No LSE. | No LSE. |
| POLICY HNP13: COMMERCE | The policy protects the retail centre for retail use and existing commercial uses from being lost. Promotion of residential on upper floors. The policy is in line with the strategy of the Local Plan with the protection of town centres and promotion of housing in sustainable locations. | The policy does not allocate development or include new area of potential development, therefore no LSE to statutory designated sites. No impacts on water quality, hydrology, runoff, air pollution, abstraction, recreational disturbance and invasive species. No LSE. | No LSE |

Appendix 6: Marine Plan Screening – Assessment of potential to impact on the Welsh National Marine Plan

| Policy | Key features of the policy | Potential pathways of impact | Assessment of potential to impact on the marine plan area |
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| POLICY HNP1: LOCAL NATURE NETWORK | Nature network identified to promote nature recovery and mitigating climate change. New developments within or near must maintain or improve the functionality of the Network and resistance of undermining its integrity. | Proposed nature network area includes the River Dee and surrounding areas and protects or enhances these areas. Potential positive impacts on flood risk, runoff, water pollution and biodiversity. | Positive, indirect impacts as the area is outside the marine plan area but will impact on and is linked by the River Dee. |
| POLICY HNP2: LOCAL GREEN SPACES | Identification of 9 Local Green Spaces. | Potential indirect positive impacts on flood risk, runoff and water pollution. Potential positive impacts on biodiversity. | Positive, indirect impacts as the proposed Local Green Spaces are outside the marine plan area, but some are adjacent to the River Dee, which links to the marine plan area. |
| POLICY HNP3: INCIDENTAL OPEN SPACES OF COMMUNITY VALUE | 14 Incidental Open Spaces have been identified protecting them from loss and negative impacts. | Potential indirect positive impacts on flood risk, runoff, water pollution and biodiversity. | Small scale, positive, indirect impacts as the proposed Incidental Open Spaces are outside the marine plan area, but some are close to the River Dee, which links to the marine plan area. |
| POLICY HNP4: SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT | Development that reduces car usage will be supported and significantly increases | No significant pathways of impact. | Unlikely to have significant impacts on the marine plan area. |

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| | congestion will not be supported. Criteria for when a transport assessment is required and what is included. | | |
| POLICY HNP5: SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL NETWORK | Identification of a Sustainable Travel Network to prioritise active travel and public transport. Development will need to protect and contribute to the network. | May increase the number of people walking or cycling close to the River Dee, but no significant pathways of impact. | Unlikely to have significant impacts on the marine plan area. |
| POLICY HNP6: PARKING | Minimising on street parking and regard to the Councils parking standards. Support for additional off street parking and loss only where it is longer needed. | No significant pathways of impact. | Unlikely to have significant impacts on the marine plan area. |
| POLICY HNP7: DESIGN | Support will be given to applications that have full regard to the Handbridge Neighbourhood Area Design Guidelines. The design criteria includes responding to local character & context, environmentally sustainability including | Potential indirect positive impacts on flood risk, runoff, water pollution and biodiversity. | Small scale, positive, indirect impacts on the marine plan area. |

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| | green infrastructure and enhancement of the public realm. Infill and edge of settlement design is highlighted within the policy. | | |
| POLICY HNP8: KEY VIEWS | The policy identifies Key Views that should be preserved or enhanced. | No significant pathways of impact. | Unlikely to have significant impacts on the marine plan area. |
| POLICY HNP9: LOCAL LANDMARKS | The policy identifies 'local landmarks' and protects them and their setting. | No significant pathways of impact. | Unlikely to have significant impacts on the marine plan area. |
| POLICY HNP10: LOCAL HERITAGE ASSETS | The policy identifies Local Heritage Assets that should be preserved or enhanced. | No significant pathways of impact. | Unlikely to have significant impacts on the marine plan area. |
| POLICY HNP11: LOCAL HISTORIC LANDSCAPES | The policy identifies local historic landscapes that should be preserved and enhanced. | Potential indirect positive impacts on flood risk, runoff, water pollution and biodiversity. | Small scale, positive, indirect impacts on the marine plan area. |
| POLICY HNP13: COMMERCE | The policy protects the retail centre for retail use and existing commercial uses from being lost. Promotion of residential on upper floors. | Potential indirect negative impacts on flood risk, runoff, water pollution and biodiversity through this policy when viewed individually. However, when viewed alongside other policies in the Neighbourhood Plan and Local Plan, this would ensure that SUDs and other water | Due to the small scale of anticipated commercial developments, the distance from the majority of the retail centre to the marine plan area and the lack of direct links to the River Dee from most commercial areas, the potential to impact the marine plan area is very |

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| | <p>The policy is in line with the strategy of the Local Plan with the protection of town centres and promotion of housing in sustainable locations.</p> | <p>reduction / protection / flood reduction measures and biodiversity enhancement are undertaken.</p> | <p>small.</p> |
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Appendix 7: Comments received during consultation on initial screening opinion

| Statutory environmental consultee | Date Consulted | Response |
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| Environment Agency | 26 April 2024 | <p>Thank you for sending through for consultation the above screening opinion which we received 26 April 2024. Environment Agency position We note and acknowledge the Councils screening decision and have no further comments to make.</p> |
| Historic England | 26 April 2024 | <p>We write in response to your e-mail of 26th April 2024 seeking a formal screening opinion from Historic England on the need to prepare a SEA for Handbridge Neighbourhood Plan.</p> <p>Historic England has produced a document that you might find helpful in providing guidance on the effective assessment of the historic environment in Strategic Environmental Assessments. This can be found at: Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment Historic England</p> <p>For the purposes of this consultation, Historic England will confine the advice given to the question, “Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment?”, in respect to our area of concern, cultural heritage.</p> <p>In the context of the criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 [Annex II of SEA Directive], and on the basis of the information supplied, it is considered that the draft plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects upon the historic environment, and so Historic England concur with your conclusion that SEA is not required.</p> |

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| | | <p>We would like to stress that this opinion is based on the information made available in the email dated 26th April 2024. To avoid any doubt, this decision does not preclude Historic England providing further advice on later stages of the SEA process, should this be required, nor objecting to specific proposals that may subsequently arise (either as a result of this consultation or in later versions of the plan/guidance), where we consider that these would have an adverse effect upon the historic environment. We note that the views of the other statutory consultation bodies should be taken into account before the overall decision on the need for SEA is made.</p> <p>Historic England strongly advises that the conservation and archaeological staff of Cheshire West & Chester and Cheshire Archaeology are closely involved in the development of the plan. They are best placed to advise on: local historic environment issues and priorities, including access to data held in the HER (formerly SMR); how the policies or proposals can be tailored to minimise potential adverse impacts on the historic environment; the nature and design of any required mitigation measures; and opportunities for securing wider benefits for the future conservation and management of historic assets.</p> <p>Thank you for consulting Historic England. We request that you please send us a copy of the determination as required by Reg 11 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.</p> |
| Natural England | 26 April 2024 | <p>Thank you for your consultation on the above dated and received by Natural England on 26 April 2024.</p> <p>Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.</p> <p>Natural England is a statutory consultee in neighbourhood planning and must be consulted on draft neighbourhood development plans by the Parish/Town Councils or Neighbourhood Forums</p> |

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| | | <p>where they consider our interests would be affected by the proposals made.</p> <p><u>Habitats Regulations Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening</u></p> <p>Natural England notes that your authority, as competent authority under the provisions of the Habitats Regulations, has screened the Neighbourhood Plan to check for the likelihood of significant effects. Your assessment concludes that the Neighbourhood Plan can be screened out from further stages of assessment because likely significant effects (LSEs) are unlikely to occur, either alone or in combination.</p> <p>On the basis of the information provided, Natural England concurs with this view, provided amendments are made to the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) to ensure the document is compliant to the principles and process required under this guiding legislation.</p> <p>Our detailed comment can be found below.</p> <p><u>Strategic Environmental Assessment, Habitats Regulations Assessment and Marine Plan Screening Opinion for Handbridge Neighbourhood Plan: April 2024</u></p> <p>We strongly recommend that the following amendments are made within Appendix 5: HRA Screening – Screening of Neighbourhood Plan policies for Likely Significant Effect:</p> <p>Policy HNP4: Sustainable Transport Policy HNP5: Sustainable Travel Network Policy HNP6: Parking Policy HNP13: Commerce</p> <p>It is advised that the Screening stage clearly demonstrates that the above policies do not allocate development or include new area of proposed development. Therefore, a conclusion of no LSE to statutory designated sites can be made. Reference to potential minor impacts can consequently</p> |
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| | | <p>be removed.</p> <p><u>Policy HNP12: Land East of Queen's Park High School</u></p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan identifies a site specific policy that appears to support development within Policy HNP12: Land East of Queen's Park High School. It would be advisable to amend this section to ensure no LSE conclusions are supported by evidence which demonstrates statutory designated sites have been considered through the Screening process.</p> <p>Therefore, reference should be made to Site of Special Scientific Interest Impact Risk Zones (SSSI IRZs) which are a GIS dataset designed to help local planning authorities decide if a proposal or plan is likely to affect a designated site. Magic Maps is another useful tool which utilises SSSI IRZs and guidance on its use is provided here (MAGIC).</p> <p>On review of the SSSI IRZs, Natural England considers that any development coming forward at this location as a result of this policy will unlikely to cause LSEs on nationally or European designated sites but advise that your justification and decision making are clearly documented.</p> <p><u>Other Advice</u></p> <p>Natural England offer the following general advice on the marine plan screening:</p> <p>Marine Plan Screening</p> <p>Natural England notes that the North West Marine Plan has been screened out for further assessment due to the distance of the respective plans from each other and limited pathway for interaction. We are in broad agreement with the rationale for screening out the North West Marine Plan. However, we advise that Cheshire West and Cheshire Council consult with the Marine Management Organisation (MMO). The Neighbourhood Plan must remain compliant with North West Marine Plan where applicable.</p> |
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| | | <p>We also note that the Welsh National Marine Plan area has been screened in for further assessment. We advise that Natural Resources Wales (NRW) are contacted for elements of the Neighbourhood Plan pertaining to designated sites or plans within the Welsh jurisdiction.</p> <p>For any further consultations on your plan, please contact: consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.</p> |
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