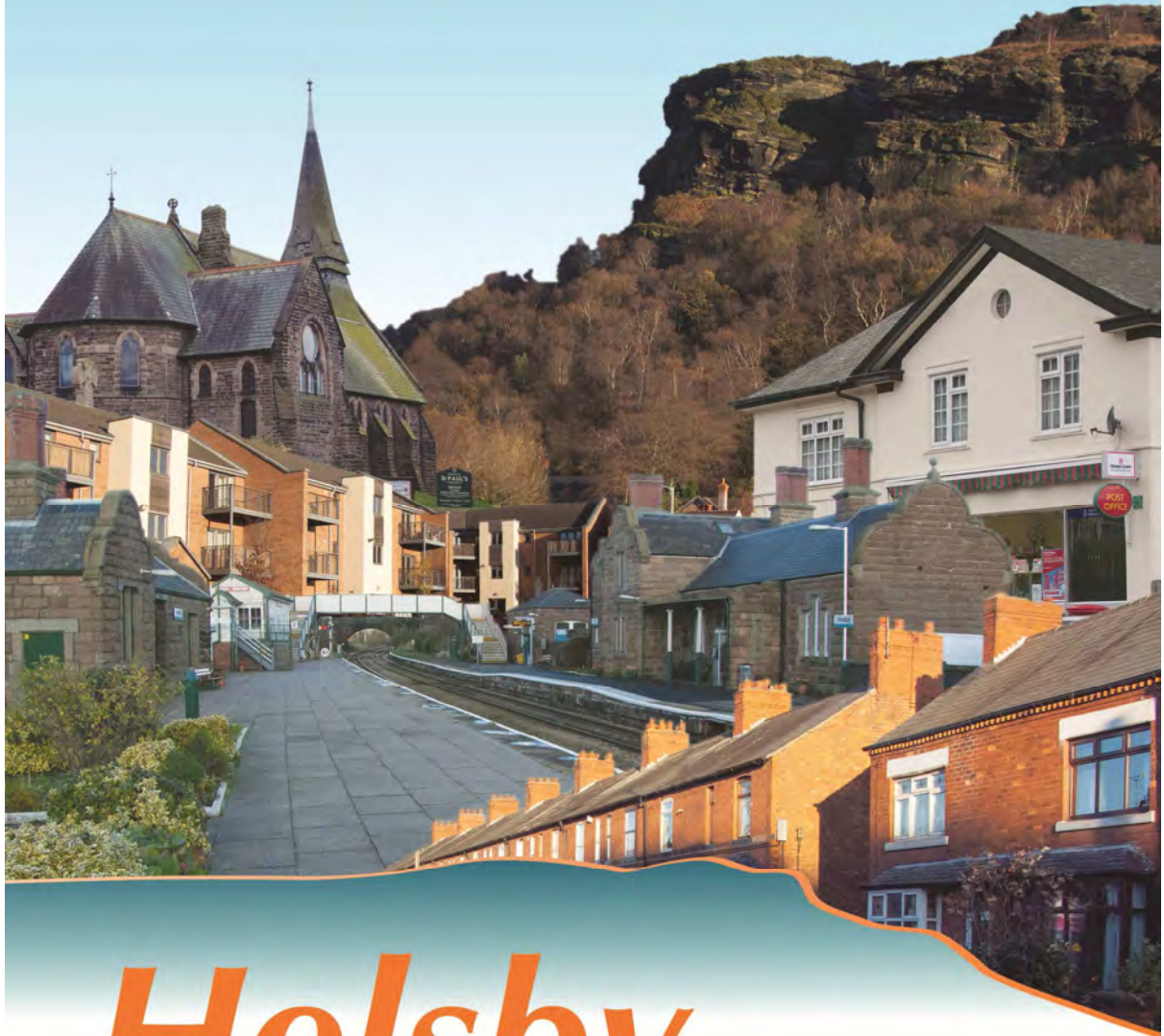


H E L S B Y P A R I S H C O U N C I L



Helsby

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Environmental Assessment
- Statement of Reasons

2015 - 2030

HELSEBY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2015-2030

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT: STATEMENT OF REASONS July 2015

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1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this statement is to show that the proposed Helsby Neighbourhood Plan 2015-2030 is unlikely to have significant environmental effects and accordingly does not require an environmental assessment

2. THE LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

Regulation 15(1)(e) of the Neighbourhood Planning General Regulations 2012 (as amended by the Neighbourhood Planning (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2015) requires a proposal for a Neighbourhood Plan to include-

- “(e) (i) *an environmental report prepared in accordance with paragraphs (2) and (3) of regulation 12 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004; or*
- (ii) *Where it has been determined under regulation 9(1) of those Regulations that the plan proposal is unlikely to have significant environmental effects (and accordingly, does not require an environmental assessment), a statement of reasons for the determination”*

3. MEETING THE REQUIREMENTS

The Submission Draft Helsby Neighbourhood Plan 2015-2030 has been considered under regulation 9(1) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, and it has been concluded that it is unlikely to have significant environmental effects. This conclusion was reached after the completion of a screening assessment by Cheshire West and Chester Council on behalf of Helsby Parish Council and the Helsby Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, and consultation thereon. A statement of reasons is included within the screening statement which is attached as Annex 1.

ANNEX 1

SCREENING STATEMENT

Strategic Environmental Assessment,
Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats
Regulations Assessment Screening Opinion
for the Helsby Neighbourhood Plan
(updated July 2015)

Prepared on behalf of the Helsby Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group by Cheshire
West and Chester Council

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1.0 Introduction

In accordance with European Directive 2001/42/EC and 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 Helsby Neighbourhood Plan. This document also sets out the decision on whether separate screening and a Habitats Regulations Assessment is required under European Directive 92/43/EEC and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended).

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 projects listed in Annex I or II of Council Directive 83/337/EEC. 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.

A draft screening opinion was produced in February 2015. The Council has a duty to consult four specified environmental organisations – Countryside Agency, English Nature, English Heritage (now known as Historic England) and the Environment Agency. The Countryside Agency and English Nature have now merged to form Natural England. The statutory environmental bodies were consulted on 13 February 2015. Details of the bodies consulted and the responses received are provided in Appendix 2. Responses were received from Natural England and English Heritage.

Location and geographical scope of the Helsby Neighbourhood Plan

The Helsby Neighbourhood Plan covers the Helsby Parish Council area as shown on Map 1. Helsby is identified in the Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies as a key service centre in the north of the borough. It has a population of 4,972 residing in 2,143 households (2011 Census). The settlement provides key services including two primary schools, a secondary school, community health centre, library and community centre. It acts as a rural centre providing higher order services to the surrounding villages. Helsby has three local wildlife sites and one local nature reserve. There are a large number of heritage assets including a number of listed buildings, scheduled monument and locally listed buildings.

The community has identified the following issues and priorities in the 'Strategy for Helsby':

- Allowing sustainable growth whilst maintaining the character, facilities and atmosphere of the village.
- Accommodating housing growth in a sensitive way in small scale developments across the Parish.
- Sustaining local businesses and improving local facilities.
- Supporting local shops, services and community facilities.
- Protecting green spaces and views and natural and historic assets.
- Promotion of improved walking and cycling connections.
- Safeguarding the disused Helsby to Mouldsworth railway line.

Relationship to other plans and programmes

Once made the Neighbourhood Plan will form part of the 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 the Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies and the retained policies of the Vale Royal Borough Local Plan. The Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan is being developed in two parts; the adopted Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies, and the Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies. The Local Plan (Part One)

Strategic Policies sets out the overall vision, strategic objectives, spatial strategy and strategic planning policies for the borough to 2030. Several of the Vale Royal Borough Local Plan policies are retained alongside the Local Plan (Part One) until such time as they are replaced by policies in the Local Plan (Part Two). Preparation of the Local Plan (Part Two) began in early 2014 when the Council consulted on and Issues and additional call for sites.

The policies in the Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies which are applicable to Helsby are policy STRAT 1 Sustainable Development, STRAT 2 Strategic development, STRAT 8 Rural area and the suite of economic, social and environmental policies.

The Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies was subject to a Sustainability Appraisal incorporating the requirements of the Strategic Assessment Directive and a screening exercise under the Habitats Directive. This screening exercise has considered the effects of the Neighbourhood Plan in this context.

The Local Plan policy framework has been taken into account in the carrying out of 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) Strategic Policies and retained Vale Royal Borough Local Plan policies.

Scope of Neighbourhood Plan

The Helsby Neighbourhood Plan seeks to build upon the policy framework set out in the Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies through the identification of four key issues and objectives:

- To protect and enhance Helsby's environment, including its natural and heritage assets, so as to retain the character of village, and hand it on to future generations in a better state than it is now.
- To provide employment opportunities for residents by retaining existing employment and encouraging new employment of an appropriate scale. Sustainable methods of commuting will be supported. The range of shopping provision will be retained or enhanced where economically viable.
- To meet the housing needs of Helsby residents in an environmentally sustainable way, and ensure that there are adequate health facilities, schools, roads and drainage to serve new developments. Before large scale development is approved, consideration must be given to the existing infrastructure's capacity to cope with additional residents.
- To provide a single modern facility at Mere's Edge for a range of sporting and social activities, and to identify further opportunities and sties to enhance local sports provision for all ages and abilities. To retain and extend buildings and

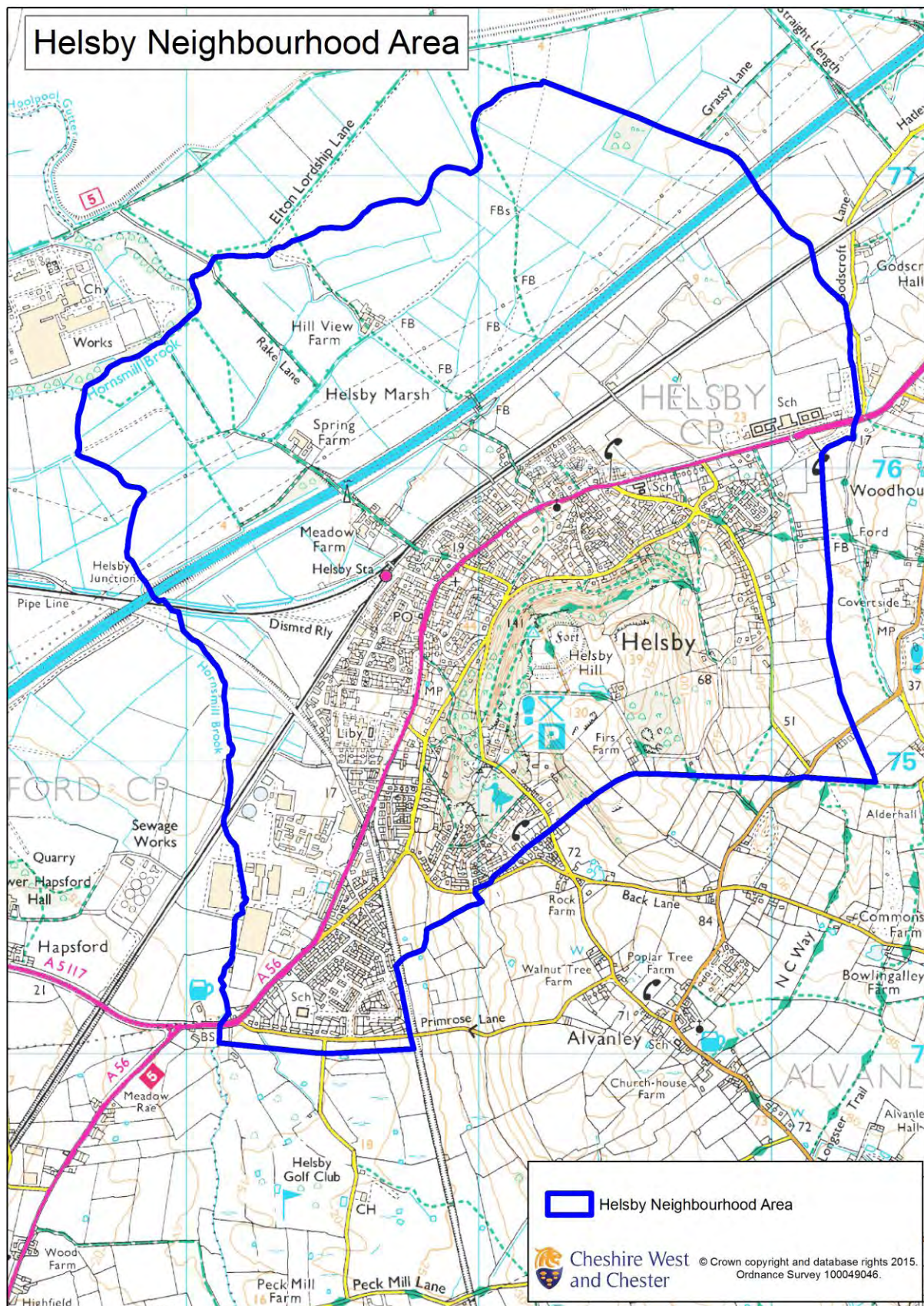
outside areas so that residents have a wide range of leisure and recreation options.

The draft Helsby Neighbourhood Plan includes a suite of 31 policies covering the following topic areas:

- The environment
- Employment, transport and shopping
- Housing and infrastructure
- Sport and leisure

These policies function within the strategic policy framework set by the Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies. The draft policies of the Helsby Neighbourhood Plan do not propose a level of development outside the levels set out in policy STRAT 8 Rural area of the Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies. Nor do they significantly alter the planning policy position for the area. The draft Neighbourhood Plan provides local level guidance on how the community wishes future development set out in the Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies to come forward.

Map 1 Helsby Neighbourhood Area



2.0 Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening

Legislative Background and Methodology

European Directive 2001/42/EC requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA Directive) 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.

Neighbourhood Development Plans fall within the scope of this legislation. They are a plan as defined by Article 3(2) of the SEA regulations and Regulation 5 paragraph 2 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. However, Neighbourhood Plans are land use planning documents prepared at the local level to determine land use in a small area.

Under Article 3(2) of the SEA Directive and Regulation 5 paragraph 6 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is only required for documents that determine land use in small areas at the local level where it is considered that they are likely to have 'significant environmental effects'. This is carried out through a screening determination.

Screening methodology

The role of the screening exercise is to determine whether the effect of 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 Annex II of the SEA Directive and Schedule 2 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.

The first step for carrying out the screening is to work out the relationship of the proposed elements of the Neighbourhood Plan and their interactions with the environment (and sustainability). The second step is to determine whether the effects of the impacts identified will be significant. For the purposes of this screening exercise significant is defined as:

"Something that is sufficiently large or important and is of greater scale than the neighbourhood level"

The assessment of the draft Helsby Neighbourhood Plan against these criteria is set out in Table 1.

A key part of the Neighbourhood Plan screening has been to consider the context of its preparation and interaction with the Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies. In order to inform the assessment a review of the anticipated effects of the draft policies and their relationship to policies at the Local Plan level was carried out as set out in Appendix 1 to this report. Table 1 sets out the exact nature of the draft Helsby Neighbourhood Plan policies and how they interact with the Local Plan. In summary the characteristics of the draft Helsby Neighbourhood Plan policies mean that:

- Any effects of them are likely to be small scale and local at a neighbourhood level.
- They do not allocate sites for housing or employment development and many of the policies seek to minimise and control impacts of new development.
- The plan does not set the level of development for the area. The strategic context of the Helsby Neighbourhood Plan has been set at the Local Plan level.

Conclusion

As a result of the screening assessment, whilst potential environmental effects have been predicted as a result of the Helsby Neighbourhood Plan policies these are not considered to be significant. The screening has concluded that it is unlikely that there will be any significant environmental effects arising from the Helsby Neighbourhood Plan. A Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Helsby Neighbourhood Plan is therefore not required.

However, it is acknowledged that the strategic planning policies for the Helsby area as set out in the adopted Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies may have the potential for significant environmental effects. However, these policies have been subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment as set out in the Sustainability Appraisal of the Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies and therefore no further assessment is required.

Table 1: Assessment of the significant environmental effects of the Helsby Neighbourhood Plan		
Characteristics of the Plan		Significant Environmental Effect?
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>The Neighbourhood Plan is a local level land-use planning document, the purpose of which is to guide land-use decisions in a small area. Once made the Neighbourhood Plan will work within the planning policy framework of the Local Plan for Cheshire West and Chester.</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan will provide a local planning policy framework for the Helsby Neighbourhood Area 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 (Part One) Strategic Policies. The Helsby Neighbourhood Plan will have no greater 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, once made by the Local Authority, will be used to determine planning applications within the Helsby Neighbourhood Area. The Helsby Neighbourhood Plan does not contain any specific land-use allocations, although areas of local green space, natural and historic assets, existing employment land and the Helsby to Mouldsworth Rail Corridor are protected.</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan will provide local level guidance within the strategic planning framework on how the nature of development in the Helsby Neighbourhood Area should be brought forward and the mitigation and enhancement measures required in order to minimise impacts of new development. The Helsby Neighbourhood Plan policies will work alongside the strategic policies in the development plan, other development management measures and environmental protection legislation.</p>	No
The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy.	The Helsby Neighbourhood Plan, once made by the Local Authority will form part of the development plan for the borough setting planning policy for the Helsby Neighbourhood Area. It must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the adopted Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies and must contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.	No
The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.	Legislation requires the Neighbourhood Plan to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. This forms one of the basic conditions tests. 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 (NPPF) and the policies of the adopted Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies and the retained policies of the Vale Royal Borough Local Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan will have limited influence over changing the strategic sustainable development policies in plans and policies at the higher strategic level.	No
What are the environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme?	<p>The Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies Submission Sustainability Appraisal provides a comprehensive overview of the issues in Cheshire West and Chester. There are no additional specific environmental problems identified for the Helsby Neighbourhood Area.</p> <p>The environmental issues identified specific to Helsby within the Submission Sustainability Appraisal are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity of wastewater treatment facilities within Helsby • Scale and type of new housing, including affordable housing and those for specific groups (i.e. an ageing population) 	No

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An ageing population • Development pressure as a popular place to live • Need to conserve, preserve and enhance landscape and the historic and cultural environment • High dependence on the use of the car • Provision of local employment opportunities and support for local businesses • Access to public transport • Provision and access to local services and community facilities <p>The Helsby Neighbourhood Plan, in the wider context of the strategic policies of the adopted Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies and retained policies of the Vale Royal Borough Local Plan, will seek to positively address some of the environmental issues at the local level.</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 Helsby Neighbourhood Plan will have no direct role in the delivery of community legislation on the environment. The Neighbourhood Plan has been subject to Habitats Regulation Assessment screening as set out in Part 2 of this document.	No

Table 2: Characteristics of the plan's effect and of the area likely to be affected.										
Identified effects of the proposed policies.	The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects.	The cumulative nature of the effects.	The transboundary nature of the effects.	The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents).	The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).	Effect on special natural characteristics or cultural heritage.	Effect on environmental quality standards or limit values.	Effect on intensity of land-use.	The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.	Significance of the effects?
Biodiversity loss	Low probability and infrequent as Helsby Neighbourhood Plan policies seek to protect biodiversity and minimise biodiversity loss.	Cumulative effects are dependent upon the precise nature and location of new development coming forward.	None	None	Local and small scale at the Neighbourhood Area level.	None	None	None	None	No
Enhancement and protection of biodiversity	High probability as new development comes forward. Helsby Neighbourhood Plan policies seek to protect biodiversity.	None	None	None	Local and small scale at the Neighbourhood Area level.	None	None	None	None	No
Loss of greenfield land and associated soil impacts	High probability of greenfield loss as a result of policy in Helsby Neighbourhood Plan. Effect would be long-term and irreversible.	Each new development has the potential to add to greenfield loss in the borough as set by policies STRAT 2 and STRAT 8 of the adopted Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies.	None	None	Local and small scale at the Neighbourhood Area level.	None	None	None	None	No

Table 2: Characteristics of the plan's effect and of the area likely to be affected.										
Identified effects of the proposed policies.	The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects.	The cumulative nature of the effects.	The transboundary nature of the effects.	The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents).	The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).	Effect on special natural characteristics or cultural heritage.	Effect on environmental quality standards or limit values.	Effect on intensity of land-use.	The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.	Significance of the effects?
Loss or harm to cultural heritage and landscape	Low probability as the Neighbourhood Plan and Local Plan policies seek to enhance and protect cultural heritage and landscape. However, loss of cultural heritage and landscape would be long-term and irreversible.	Each new development has the potential to add harm to overall heritage and landscape. Potential cumulative effect with other development within the borough.	None	None	Local and small scale at the Neighbourhood Area level.	Policies aim to protect and enhance cultural heritage and settings of historic buildings and landscape in the area.	None	None	None	No
Enhancement and protection of cultural heritage assets and landscape	High probability as Neighbourhood Plan and Local Plan policies seek to enhance and protect cultural heritage and landscape. Effect would be long-term and irreversible.	Each new development has the potential to add harm to overall heritage and landscape. Potential cumulative effect with other development within the borough.	None	None	Local and small scale at the Neighbourhood Area level.	None	None	None	None	No

Table 2: Characteristics of the plan's effect and of the area likely to be affected.										
Identified effects of the proposed policies.	The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects.	The cumulative nature of the effects.	The transboundary nature of the effects.	The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents).	The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).	Effect on special natural characteristics or cultural heritage.	Effect on environmental quality standards or limit values.	Effect on intensity of land-use.	The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.	Significance of the effects?
Environmental impacts of new development e.g. flooding, water consumption, air quality	Low probability as Neighbourhood Plan and Local Plan policies include measures to ensure the environmental impacts of new development are controlled and mitigated. However any impacts would be long-term and some would be irreversible.	Each new development has the potential to have environmental impacts. Potential cumulative effect with other development in the borough.	None	None	Local and small scale at the Neighbourhood Area level.	None	None	None	None	No
Benefits to population and human health of new housing and economic development including new homes, employment and amenities.	Possibility is difficult to assess as depends on proposals coming forward and on the scale and nature of development. Impacts would be long-term and irreversible.	Each new development has the potential to benefit the local population and health but would depend upon the nature and scale of the development. Cumulatively several developments may be able to bring about community benefit that isolated development may not.	None	None	Local and small scale at the Neighbourhood Area level.	None	None	None	None	No

Table 2: Characteristics of the plan's effect and of the area likely to be affected.										
Identified effects of the proposed policies.	The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects.	The cumulative nature of the effects.	The transboundary nature of the effects.	The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents).	The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).	Effect on special natural characteristics or cultural heritage.	Effect on environmental quality standards or limit values.	Effect on intensity of land-use.	The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.	Significance of the effects?
New renewable energy development	Probability is difficult to assess as it depends on proposals coming forward and the scale and nature of development. Development that is not permanent can be reversed. Neighbourhood Plan includes policy preventing new wind turbine development.	Potential cumulative impact of increasing the borough's contribution to delivery renewable energy supply if more than one renewable energy development comes forward either in the Neighbourhood Area or elsewhere in the borough.	None	None	Local and small scale at the Neighbourhood Area level with potential effects at the borough level.	None	None	None	None	No
Protection and enhancement of community assets and village centre	Possibility is difficult to assess as it depends on proposals coming forward. Impacts could be seen in the short, medium or long term and could be reversed.	New development has the potential to strengthen and enhance community assets and the village more.	None	None	Local and small scale at the Neighbourhood Area level.	None	None	None	None	No
Increased traffic	High probability but Neighbourhood Plan includes policies to manage and mitigate traffic. Impacts could be seen in the short, medium and long term and could be reversed.	Cumulative impact increases as each development comes forward unless managed and mitigated.	None	None	Local and small scale at the Neighbourhood Area level.	None	None	None	None	No

Table 2: Characteristics of the plan's effect and of the area likely to be affected.										
Identified effects of the proposed policies.	The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects.	The cumulative nature of the effects.	The transboundary nature of the effects.	The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents).	The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).	Effect on special natural characteristics or cultural heritage.	Effect on environmental quality standards or limit values.	Effect on intensity of land-use.	The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.	Significance of the effects?
Management and mitigation of traffic impacts	Possibility is difficult to assess as it depends on proposals coming forward. Impacts could be seen in the short, medium or long term and could be reversed.	There are no identified potential cumulative impacts as the effect should be to reduce and manage cumulative traffic impact as a result of new development.	None	None	Local and small scale at the Neighbourhood Area level.	None	None	None	None	No
Effect of climatic factors	Low infrequent probability. Neighbourhood Plan policies support high quality sustainable design and construction to incorporate energy efficiency and generation measures. Effects would be long-term.	Cumulative effects are dependent upon the nature, scale and location of new developments coming forward.	None	None	Local and small scale at the Neighbourhood Area level.	None	None	None	None	No

Conclusion

As a result of the screening assessment, Cheshire West and Chester Council consider that it is unlikely there will be any significant environmental effects arising from the Helsby Neighbourhood Plan. As such, a Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Helsby Neighbourhood Plan is not required.

3.0 Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening

Legislative Background

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended in 2012) transpose 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.

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive states: 'Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans and projects, shall 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 Natura 2000 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 Local Plan has already been through the Habitats Regulations Assessment process, and the results are detailed in the Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening report. Each of the sites within 15km of Helsby were assessed at the Local Plan level. This appraisal forms the baseline for the HRA screening assessment of the Helsby Neighbourhood Plan with the prime consideration being the potential effects of the Neighbourhood Plan over and above those of the already assessed Local Plan. The Local Plan was screened out through this process, as not leading to a likely significant effect on European Sites.

It is considered that as long as the proposed policies of a Neighbourhood Plan do not alter the strategic policy framework of the Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies assessed in the Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report then an additional separate full screening exercise on the Neighbourhood Plan will not be required. However, if the Neighbourhood Plan does change the strategic policy framework then a separate Habitats Regulation Assessment Screening Report to assess the effect on European Sites would be required.

Context

There are ten European designated sites identified within a 15km buffer from the boundaries of the Helsby Neighbourhood Area. There are six Ramsar sites split between the Mersey Estuary, two Midland Meres and Mosses Phase 1 sites and three Phase 2 sites. There are also three SAC's, and one SPA.

These are shown in Map 2.

Outcome of high level screening

1. Is the Neighbourhood Plan directly connected with, or necessary to the management of a European site for nature conservation?

No

2. Does the Neighbourhood Plan propose new development or allocate sites for development?

The Helsby Neighbourhood Plan sets out how new development should come forward. It does not set a quantum of development or allocate sites for development. The Neighbourhood Plan supports the quantum of development set out in policy STRAT 8 of the adopted Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies.

3. Are there any other projects or plans that together with the Neighbourhood Plan that could impact on the integrity of a European Site?

Yes, the adopted Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies and retained policies of the Vale Royal Borough Local Plan.

4. Are there any potential impacts on the integrity of a European Site?

The Neighbourhood Plan will not work in isolation and will be used alongside other development plan policies including the Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies and retained policies in the existing Vale Royal Borough Local Plan for determining planning applications for new development. The quantum of development to come forward in Helsby in the future is set by policy STRAT 8 of the Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies. The Neighbourhood Plan will guide how this should come forward locally.

Whether the Neighbourhood Plan alters the policy position for the area is set out in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Screening of policies for altering Local Plan Policy

Policy	Change in policy position in adopted Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies and retained policies of the Vale Royal Borough Local Plan? Y/N
HNP ENV1 Green Belt	No
HNP ENV2 Helsby Hill	No
HNP ENV3 Local materials	No
HNP ENV4 Green Spaces	No
HNP ENV5 Heritage assets	No
HNP ENV6 Trees and woodland	No
HNP ENV7 Natural assets	No
HNP ENV8 Wind turbines	No
HNP ETS1 Business development	No
HNP ETS2 Retention of existing employment sites	No
HNP ETS3 Helsby Station	No
HNP ETS4 Walking, cycling and parking provision	No
HNP ETS5 Cycleways	No
HNP H1 New housing development	No
HNP H2 Provide a mix of housing types	No
HNP H3 Affordable housing	No
HNP H4 Green Belt exceptions for 100% affordable housing	No
HNP H5 Lifetime Homes	No
HNP H6 Design criteria	No
HNP H7 Backland housing development	No
HNP H8 Residential parking	No
HNP H9 Protection of verges	No
HNP H10 Infrastructure capacity	No
HNP SL1 Creation of play areas and open spaces	No
HNP SL2 Helsby to Mouldsworth Rail Corridor	No
HNP SL3 Public Rights of Way	No
HNP SL4 Linking development to footpaths	No
HNP SL5 Allotments	No
HNP SL6 Community buildings	No
HNP SL7 Cafes and restaurants	No

There are no specific issues highlighted in the Habitats Regulations Assessment of the adopted Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies in relation to Helsby, although there are other more general potential impacts highlighted as a result of the quantum and location of development proposed for the borough as a whole in the Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies. However, it is considered there are sufficient mitigation and control measures in the policy framework of the Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies to avoid and mitigate any of these adverse effects on the integrity of European designated sites.

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

Conclusion

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

[illegible]

Appendix 1: Overview of policies and identified effects of the Helsby Neighbourhood Plan

Plan elements	Summary of policy	Identified potential effects of policy (taking into account SEA topics of Biodiversity, flora and fauna; Population; Human health; Soil; Water; Air; Climatic factors; Material Assets; Cultural Heritage; Landscape.	Relationship to Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies and policies to be retained in the Vale Royal Borough Local Plan
HNP ENV1 Green Belt	Protects the Green Belt and supports policy STRAT 9 of the Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies stating that development in the Green Belt will not be allowed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection of biodiversity, flora and fauna • Protection of soils • Protection of the landscape and Green Belt 	The policy reiterates policy STRAT 9 'Green Belt and countryside' of the Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies in relation to the protection of the Green Belt surrounding Helsby.
HNP ENV2 Helsby Hill	Protects views of and from Helsby Hill.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection of the landscape 	The policy supports policy ENV 2 'Landscape' of the Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies and retained policy BE1 'Safeguarding and improving the quality of the environment' of the Vale Royal Borough Local Plan in relation to views.
HNP ENV3 Local materials	Requires development to reflect local character through the use of local materials and landscaping.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits to population and human health • Benefits to landscape • Benefits to cultural heritage 	The policy supports policy ENV 6 'High quality design and sustainable construction' of the Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies and retained policy BE1 'Safeguarding and improving the quality of the environment' of the Vale Royal Borough Local Plan, providing local level detail.
HNP ENV4 Green spaces	Policy seeks protection of identified Local Green Spaces and the provision of recreational open space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits to population and human health • Protection of cultural heritage and landscape • Protection and enhancement of biodiversity 	The policy supports policies SOC 5 'Health and well-being' and ENV 2 'Landscape' of the Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies through the allocation of Local Green Spaces and policy RT2 'Sports facilities and open spaces' of the Vale Royal Borough Local Plan.
HNP ENV5 Heritage assets	Policy seeks protection and enhancement of heritage assets and their settings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection of cultural heritage • Protection of landscape 	The policy supports policy ENV 5 'Historic environment' of the Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies and policy BE 22 'Locally important buildings' of the Vale Royal Borough Local Plan.
HNP ENV6 Trees and woodland	Policy seeks protection and replacement/provision of trees in new developments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection of landscape • Benefits to air • Benefits to human health and population 	The policy supports policy ENV 3 'Green Infrastructure' of the Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies and policies NE 7 'Protection and enhancement of landscape features', NE 9 'Trees and woodland'; and RT2 'Sport facilities and open space' of the Vale Royal Borough Local Plan.

Plan elements	Summary of policy	Identified potential effects of policy (taking into account SEA topics of Biodiversity, flora and fauna; Population; Human health; Soil; Water; Air; Climatic factors; Material Assets; Cultural Heritage; Landscape.	Relationship to Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies and policies to be retained in the Vale Royal Borough Local Plan
HNP EN7 Natural assets	Policy seeks protection and enhancement of natural landscape assets including LNR and RIGS.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection and benefit to landscape • Protection of soils • Protection of cultural heritage • Protection of biodiversity, flora and fauna 	The policy supports policies ENV 2 'Landscape', ENV 3 'Green Infrastructure' and ENV 4 'Biodiversity and geodiversity' of the Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies and policies NE 1 'Protection of the nature conservation resource' and NE 2 'Designated sites of international and national nature conservation importance' of the Vale Royal Borough Local Plan.
HNP ENV8 Wind turbines	Policy prevents wind turbine development in Helsby.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection and benefit to landscape • Benefit to population 	The policy is in line with policy ENV 7 'Alternative energy supplies' of the Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies and policy BE 21 'Renewable energy' of the Vale Royal Borough Local Plan.
HNP ETS1 Business development	Supports the delivery of employment development in Helsby through the conversion of existing buildings, expansion and erection of new buildings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits to population and human health • Loss of greenfield land and soil loss • Environmental impacts of new development e.g. water resources, air quality 	The policy supports policy ECON 1 'Economic growth, employment and enterprise' of the Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies.
HNP ETS2 Retention of existing employment sites	Seeks protection and enhancement of existing employment sites.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits to population and human health 	The policy supports policy ECON 1 'Economic growth, employment and enterprise' of the Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies.
HNP ETS3 Helsby Station	Seeks the development and enhancement of rail services alongside increased parking provision. Supports the use of sustainable transport modes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits to population and human health • Promotion of sustainable travel • Benefits to climate change 	The policy supports policy STRAT 10 'Transport and accessibility' of the Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies and policies T4 'Railways' and T20 'Travel plans' of the Vale Royal Borough Local Plan.
HNP ETS4 Walking, cycling and parking provision	Seeks the provision of pedestrian, bus and cycle connections as part of new development. Seeks car parking and cycle parking.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits to population and human health • Promotion of sustainable travel • Benefits to climatic factors 	The policy supports policies STRAT 10 'Transport and accessibility', SOC 5 'Health and well-being' and SOC 6 'Open space, sport and recreation' of the Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies.
HNP ETS5 Cycleways	Sets out support for a network of recreational cycleways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits to population and human health • Benefits to landscape • Benefits to climatic factors • Promotion of sustainable travel 	The policy supports policies SOC 5 'Health and well-being' and SOC 6 'Open space, sport and recreation' of the Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies.

Plan elements	Summary of policy	Identified potential effects of policy (taking into account SEA topics of Biodiversity, flora and fauna; Population; Human health; Soil; Water; Air; Climatic factors; Material Assets; Cultural Heritage; Landscape.	Relationship to Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies and policies to be retained in the Vale Royal Borough Local Plan
HNP H1 New housing development	Sets out support for the delivery of new sustainable housing development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits to population and human health • Biodiversity loss • Loss of greenfield land and soil loss • Positive or negative impact on landscape and cultural heritage • Environmental impacts of development including water consumption, air quality, flooding 	The policy supports policies STRAT 1 'Sustainable development', STRAT 2 'Strategic development' and STRAT 8 'Rural area' of the Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies.
HNP H2 Provide a mix of housing types	Seeks a mix of dwelling type on developments of six or more dwellings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits to population and human health • Benefit to cultural heritage • Environmental impacts of development including water consumption, air quality, flooding 	The policy supports policy SOC 3 'Housing mix and type' of the Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies.
HNP H3 Affordable housing	Requires the provision of affordable housing within developments in line with the Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies. Provides qualification criteria and priority for the allocation of affordable housing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits to population and human health • Biodiversity loss • Loss of greenfield land and soil loss • Positive or negative impact on landscape and cultural heritage • Environmental impacts of development including water resources, air quality, flooding 	The policy supports policy SOC 1 'Delivering affordable housing' of the Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies.
HNP H4 Green Belt exceptions for 100% affordable housing	Sets out additional criteria for the assessment of proposals for rural exception sites. Provides qualification criteria and priority for the allocation of affordable housing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of Green Belt land • Loss of greenfield land and soil loss • Positive or negative impact on landscape • Environmental impacts of development including water resources, air quality and flooding 	The policy supports policy SOC 2 'Rural exception sites' of the Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies.
HNP H5 Lifetime Homes	Requires 25% of new homes to be Lifetime Homes compliant on developments of four or more dwellings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits to population and human health • Positive impact on climatic factors • Loss of greenfield land and soil loss 	The policy supports policies SOC 3 'Housing mix and type' and ENV 6 'High quality design and construction' of the Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies.

Plan elements	Summary of policy	Identified potential effects of policy (taking into account SEA topics of Biodiversity, flora and fauna; Population; Human health; Soil; Water; Air; Climatic factors; Material Assets; Cultural Heritage; Landscape.	Relationship to Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies and policies to be retained in the Vale Royal Borough Local Plan
HNP H6 Design criteria	Sets out support subject to specific design criteria for new housing development including extensions, change of use and conversions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits to population and human health • Benefit to landscape and cultural heritage • Benefit to environment and climate change through energy efficiency measures 	The policy supports policy ENV 6 'High quality design and sustainable construction' of the Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies.
HNP H7 Backland housing development	Protects residential amenity through the resistance of backland and tandem development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits to population and human health • Benefit to landscape and cultural heritage • Benefits to greenfield land and soils • Benefits to biodiversity 	The policy supports policies STRAT 1 'Sustainable development' and ENV 6 'High quality design and sustainable construction'.
HNP H8 Residential parking	Sets out minimum parking provision for new housing developments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefit to population • Positive or negative impact on climatic factors • Loss of greenfield land and soil loss 	The policy supports policy STRAT 10 'Transport and accessibility' of the Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies and policy T13 'Car parking' of the Vale Royal Borough Local Plan.
HNP H9 Protection of verges	Requires grass verges to be protected in new developments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefit to landscape 	The policy supports policy ENV 6 'High quality design and sustainable construction' of the Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies.
HNP H10 Infrastructure capacity	Seeks to ensure sufficient infrastructure capacity when accommodating new development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits to population and human health • Benefits to environmental factors including water resource and management • Positive or negative impact on landscape 	The policy supports policies STRAT 11 'Infrastructure' and ENV 1 'Flood risk and water management' of the Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies.
HNP SL1 Creation of play areas and open spaces	Seeks provision of play areas and open spaces.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits to population and human health • Positive or negative impact on greenfield land and soils • Positive or negative impact on landscape and cultural heritage • Biodiversity loss 	The policy supports policies STRAT 1 'Sustainable development', SOC 5 'Health and well-being' and SOC 6 'Open space, sport and recreation' of the Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies and policy RT3 'Recreation and open space in new developments' of the Vale Royal Borough Local Plan.
HNP SL2 Helsby to Mouldsworth Rail Corridor	Safeguards the Helsby to Mouldsworth Rail Corridor.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits to population and human health • Positive impact on landscape and cultural heritage • Positive or negative impacts on biodiversity 	The policy supports policy STRAT 10 'Transport and accessibility' of the Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies and policies T7 'Safeguarded rail lines' and RT2 'Sports facilities and open spaces' of the Vale Royal Borough Local Plan.

Plan elements	Summary of policy	Identified potential effects of policy (taking into account SEA topics of Biodiversity, flora and fauna; Population; Human health; Soil; Water; Air; Climatic factors; Material Assets; Cultural Heritage; Landscape.	Relationship to Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies and policies to be retained in the Vale Royal Borough Local Plan
HNP SL3 Public Rights of Way	Requires development affecting a PRow to maintain its character.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits to population and human health • Benefits to biodiversity • Benefits to landscape and cultural heritage 	The policy supports policy STRAT 10 'Transport and accessibility' of the Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies.
HNP SL4 Linking development to footpaths	Requires new development to link to footpath network and green spaces.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits to population and human health • Positive or negative impact on greenfield land and soils • Positive or negative impact on biodiversity • Positive or negative impact on landscape and cultural heritage 	The policy supports policies STRAT 1 'Sustainable development', STRAT 10 'Transport and accessibility', SOC 5 'Health and well-being and 'SOC 6 'Open space, sport and recreation'.
HNP SL5 Allotments	Safeguards allotments at Queens Drive and Old Chester Road.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits to landscape and cultural heritage • Benefits to biodiversity, flora and fauna • Benefits to soils and climatic factors 	The policy supports policy SOC 6 'Open space, sport and recreation' of the Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies.
HNP SL6 Community buildings	Seeks to protect community buildings from alternative development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits to human health and population • Protection of community assets 	The policy supports policies STRAT 1 'Sustainable development' and SOC 5 'Health and well-being' of the Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies.
HNP SL7 Cafes and restaurants	Supports the change of use of buildings to cafes and restaurants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefit to population 	The policy supports policy ECON 2 'Town centres' of the Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies.

Appendix 2: Comments received during consultation on draft Screening Report – February 2015

Environmental body	Date consulted	Response
Environment Agency	13 February 2015	No response
Natural England	13 February 2015	See correspondence below
English Heritage	13 February 2015	See correspondence below

Date: 18 March 2015
Our ref: 144898
Your ref: planning policy



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BY EMAIL ONLY

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CW1 6GJ

T 0300 060 3900

Dear Natalie Durney-Knight,

Helsby Neighbourhood Plan – Draft Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Statement

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 18 March 2015 which was received by Natural England on the same date.

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

Natural England is in agreement with the Screening Statement, as long as the proposed policies of the Neighbourhood Plan do not alter the strategic policy framework assessed in the Local Plan Part One Habitats Regulation Assessment Screening Report and Strategic Environmental Assessment Report then a separate HRA and SEA will not be required.

If this situation changes then a separate SEA and HRA Screening will be required and Natural England would wish to be consulted.

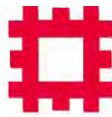
We would be happy to comment further should the need arise but if in the meantime you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact us.

For any queries relating to the specific advice in this letter only please contact Janet Baguley using the contact details below. For any new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation please send your correspondences to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

Yours sincerely

Janet Baguley
Tel - 03006001772
Janet.baguley@naturalengland.org.uk





ENGLISH HERITAGE
NORTH WEST

By email: Natalie.durney-
knight@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Our ref: 1632

Your ref:

Date: 23/2/15

□

Dear Sirs,

Helsby Neighbourhood Plan SEA/HRA Screening Report

Thank you for consulting English Heritage about the above document.

Draft SA Screening Report

Thank you for consulting English Heritage, on this occasion we have no comment to make on the Draft SA screening reports, we do not wish to be consulted at future stages unless the developing plan proposes significant impacts or changes in relation to designated heritage assets or their setting that would require statutory notification to English Heritage by virtue of government notification procedures, See

<http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/conserving-and-enhancing-the-historic-environment/consultation-and-notification-requirements-for-heritage-related-applications/>

We have attached a list of heritage assets in this area for your information.

By way of guidance:

English Heritage has produced a document, which you might find helpful in providing guidance on the effective assessment of the historic environment in Strategic Environmental Assessments. This can be found at <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/strategic-environ-assessment-sustainability-appraisal-historic-environment/>.

English Heritage recommends that a scoping report should:

- Review the objectives of relevant policies, plans and programmes;
- Establish the baseline for the historic environment, including any trends and targets and gaps in the existing information;
- Identify sustainability issues and opportunities for the historic environment and heritage assets;
- Develop sustainability appraisal objectives;
- Identify indicators and targets;
- Consider how alternatives will be assessed;
- Provide sufficient information on the proposed methodology for the appraisal to assess whether effects upon the historic environment will be properly addressed.

English Heritage suggests that scoping reports are tailored to the type, purpose and level of plan under consideration. This accords with the NPPF, which requires that local plans are based on adequate, up-to-date and relevant evidence about the economic, social and environmental characteristics and prospects of the area.

Context

The report should identify the built environment and its character and distinctiveness and refer to the historic environment. There is the potential for undesignated assets and archaeology on some sites, and these should be referred to within the baseline information.

Relevant Plans, Programmes and Policies

In terms of the plans and policies identified, this needs to cover all those relevant at an international, national and local level that would have a direct bearing for the historic environment. Page 5 and 6 of our guidance provides a list of the most relevant ones and the Scoping Report should be amended to include these.

Baseline information

Baseline information should describe the current and future state of the historic environment, providing the basis for identifying sustainability issues, predicting and monitoring effects and alternative ways of dealing with them. It can use both quantitative and qualitative information and should be kept up to date. It is important that meaningful conclusions can be drawn from the baseline information; what it means for the Local Plan and how the historic environment is to be dealt with.

The baseline information in the scoping report on the historic environment should include all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged. This not only involves undesignated (or local heritage assets) but the potential for unrecorded archaeology, and historic landscape character areas for example. Appendix 1 of our guidance provides a list of other data sources available, which covers a wide variety of the historic environment and Page 8 provides a list of the recommendations that should be used to determine the adequacy of the baseline information.

The NPPF recognises the importance of undesignated heritage assets and therefore this should be included within the baseline data. The source of this information should be included within the Scoping Report and reference made to them and recognise the opportunities for their enhancement and contribution to for example, well being, local identity and tourism.

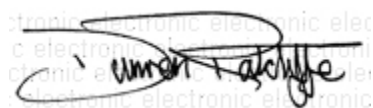
The importance of local character and identity including the landscape and townscape of an area is an important consideration. The Scoping Report should recognise the importance of this and the source of this information should be included within the Scoping Report and reference made to them in key issues and opportunities.

SEA Objectives

It is important that the role the historic environment plays in sustainable development and the contribution it makes to delivering social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits is recognised. The historic environment underpins sustainable development and therefore, it may warrant including in other objectives including the need for specific reference to landscape character. Our guidance provides further assistance in the various ways the historic environment can be incorporated into the objectives in the scoping report.

English Heritage strongly advises that you engage conservation, archaeology and urban design colleagues at the local and county level to ensure you are aware of all the relevant features of the historic environment and that the historic environment is effectively and efficiently considered as part of the Local Plan, the allocation of any site and in the preparation of the SEA. They are also best placed to advise on local historic environment issues and priorities, including access to data held in the HER (formerly SMR). They will be able to provide you with the Historic Environment Records for the area including any relevant studies, and ensure a joined-up and robust approach is undertaken.

Yours sincerely,



Darren Ratcliffe

Historic Places Adviser (North West)

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