



**Neston  
Neighbourhood  
Plan  
2010 - 2030**  
Evidence Base Report  
July 2015



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## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 Neston Town Council initiated a community lead Neighbourhood Plan (NP) group to develop the NP for Neston (NNP). This initiative started in June 2012 when the initial proposal was launched and developed through the formation of a Community Steering Group (CSG) formed in September 2012 and three Task and Finish Working Groups (TFWGs):
- 1 Housing
  - 2 Economic Development and Retail
  - 3 Transport and Quality of Life.
- 1.2 The TFWGs have met on a regular basis since 2012 and have collected data and facts from a variety of sources to form the basis of policies in the NNP. Draft policies have been tested by reference to the community through regular publications, meetings, open day sessions and events over the last two plus years. The CSG has contacted all the residential and business premises in Neston through regular mail drops to give feedback on the development of the NNP and to seek continual input to the development of the NNP. The response from the community has been excellent and has provided much evidential data to support the proposals in the NNP.

## 2 Evidence Base

The NNP is consistent and in compliance with the National Planning Policy Framework and, importantly, with the Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan (CWaC Local Plan Part One Strategic Policies). Since this Plan has a substantial background of supporting evidence the policies within the NNP relies heavily on that evidence. This Evidence Base Report will not repeat the CWaC evidence data but in the development of the NNP further supporting evidence has been obtained and is presented herewith. Also it is noteworthy to show the evidence from the community in their support for the policies of the NNP and this is illustrated within this document. Relevant documents supporting the evidence base are listed at Appendix A attached to this report.

### 2.1 Neston Development Strategy

- 2.1.1 Neston is set on a peninsular in a rural area and is the only place in Cheshire West and Cheshire with a coastline towards the sea. With this exception Neston contains and is surrounded by Green Belt and evidence from the community shows that 80% wish to retain this Green Belt in compliance with the policies of the Local Plan. The attraction of Neston is demonstrated through tourism and the fact that resident numbers shown in census data have not changed much in the last ten years. Residents enjoy living in the area and express the view that development should be controlled within the urban area.
- 2.1.2 The CSG prepared a discussion paper entitled 'Understanding Neston' in October 2012 which was revised and updated in April 2014. This paper provides a summary of some of the key spatial and non-spatial issues for the NPA. It also provides a view on the possible interventions required to deal with some of the issues identified. The paper is shown at Appendix B.

### 2.2 Housing

- 2.2.1 Evidence from CWaC for the Neston area shows that future housing development is limited because of the surrounding Green Belt area and the consequential CWaC policy relating to Green Belt. The proposal by CWaC for 200 new properties up to 2030 has already been exceeded in terms of completions, permissions and allocations. This will continue to grow in number where suitable sites within the settlement area are identified.
- 2.2.2 Of the current 7,179 properties in Neston nearly 76% are owner occupied with 11% private rental and 13% affordable social rental. It should be noted that since 2010 no new affordable housing has been approved or built within the area. Also it should be noted that the CWaC evidence base for the area shows a need for 145 affordable properties over a 5 year period between 2013/14 and 2018.

- 2.2.3 The two main Housing Associations who have properties in the area, Adactus and Plus Dane, advise that they have a number of people registered on their lists seeking accommodation. Adactus have a Marketing List which has 195 people registered for properties in Neston (See Appendix A1). Through Plus Dane CWaC provided the following data:

Area	Number of applicants with connection to Neston	1 bed need	2 bed need	3 bed need	4 bed need
Neston	65	34	18	8	5
Little Neston	13	7	2	2	2
Parkgate	7	4	1	1	4

- 2.2.4 Also the community response evidence confirms a 77% support for new housing development to meet these local needs and, particularly, the development of affordable homes.
- 2.2.5 The National Planning Policy Frameworks states that local planning authorities should:
- 'identify the size, type, tenure and range of housing that is required in particular locations, reflecting local demand; and where they have identified that affordable housing is needed set policies for meeting this need on site' (See Appendix A2).*
- 2.2.6 The Neston NP reflects this evidence. Census evidence shows that the population of Neston has changed from 15,162 in 2001 to 15,221 in 2011. Importantly, over the next few decades, the age profile of residents is expected to change. In 2001 in Neston there were 2,439 residents aged above pensionable age. In 2011 this had increased to 2,946 and this is expected to increase further throughout the period on the NNP (See Appendix A3).
- 2.2.7 An important message from this analysis is that although there are some trends in household type and dwelling expectation (for instance older singles considering smaller dwellings) there remains a great diversity in the range of dwellings different household types would wish to move into. Significantly, household size does not necessarily correlate with bedroom requirements. Therefore future housing development should ensure a broad range of new dwellings to satisfy a broad range of requirements (See Appendix A4).
- 2.2.8 In particular for Neston the community wish to ensure that new housing meets local requirements for smaller dwelling types to help older residents downsize and new households enter into the housing market.
- 2.2.9 Evidence for potential future housing locations within the NNP urban area are included with reference to the Cheshire West and Chester Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (See Appendix A5). However these will need to be tested through the planning process and meet the requirements of the NNP, the Local Plan and the NNP.
- 2.2.10 In 2103 the Housing TFG met with two local estate agents (See Appendix A6). They confirmed that, at the time, there were over 260 properties on the market in the Neston area with the vast majority priced at well over £200,000.

## 2.3 Employment

- 2.3.1 There are no major employers in the Neston area and according to the 2001 census more than 65% of workers travel over 5km outside the area to their employment. The largest employers in the area are Neston High School and Aldi distribution depot. Neston has a significant Business Park called Clayhill and CWaC categorise this as 'A Key Local Area site that offers employment opportunities within a specific local area' (See Appendix A7).

- 2.3.2 CWaC also recognises that for future growth, sectors which are likely to generate employment growth (e.g IT services, software, media, energy and pharmaceuticals) are relatively poorly represented within the Borough. Development at Clayhill could provide some of this need. Maximising the potential of Clayhill is supported by 91% of the community.
- 2.3.3 The CWaC Rural Regeneration Strategy provides a framework over the next 10 years, influencing the way that the Council invests and supports its Rural Area, and its businesses, people and places. The Strategy has an economic focus and aims to create suitable conditions for enterprises to thrive (See Appendix A8). It suggests that the Rural Area has been making a disproportionate contribution to CWaC's economic growth over recent years. It seeks a growth of 7% in the number of jobs available in the Rural Area and it also aspires to growth in economic output by 50%, making it necessary to significantly increase the value of economic output created by each job. Demand and supply analysis for the past three years indicates that there remains demand for smaller units across industrial and office sectors. Neston continues to have an important role locally to provide new employment opportunities.
- 2.3.4 The Economic Development and Retail TFWG produced two key papers relating to employment which can be found at Appendix C:
- Economic Strategy ii: Clayhill Business Park
  - Economic Strategy iii: SoHo Businesses

## 2.4 Retail

- 2.4.1 The CWaC Local Plan confirms that proposals should support meeting local shopping and service needs enabling Neston to remain a healthy competitive centre. However, a 1998 Retail Study by MVM Planning Ltd which supported the Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Local Plan showed that only 51% of residents did their main food shopping in Neston. In 2003 this had dropped to 30% according to 'Neston Town Centre Study – A Review of Retail Issues Concerning the Potential of a New Food Superstore' by WYG Planning in 2003. Currently some 18% of retail premises in the town are vacant units.
- 2.4.2 Since 2010, a new Sainsbury's foodstore has been built at Brook Street in Neston. It is estimated that in 2015, the 1,710 sq.m net convenience floorspace will generate a turnover of £16.0m. Existing comparison goods retailers in Neston retain £10.2m of available comparison goods (See Appendix A9).
- 2.4.3 The appointment in 2013 of a Town Centre Manager and the publishing of the Neston Town Centre Plan has provided supportive evidence for the development of the Neston NP Retail policies.
- 2.4.4 The community supports the development of shops throughout the town catering for different types of businesses. Some 86% of residents agreed with this idea. In addition 76% agreed with extension of the existing weekly market and 87% supported the concept of incentives to develop niche shops and bespoke businesses.
- 2.4.5 The potential to utilise vacant retail premises for residential purposes can be promoted by a review of the town centre boundary and a reclassification of uses. A review of the existing Town Centre boundary within the Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Local Plan was carried out. This has led to some proposed amendments as shown on the plan at Appendix D.
- 2.4.6 The Economic Development and Retail TFWG produced a key paper relating to Neston Town Centre 'Economic Strategy i: Town Centre' which can be found at Appendix E. In addition the Group produced a paper entitled 'Diversity of Retail Uses in Neston Town Centre 2013: A Brief Synopsis'. This is shown at Appendix F.
- 2.4.7 A further reference document relating to the Town Centre is the Town Benchmarking exercise carried out by Action for Market Towns (AMT) in 2014. The report can be found at [www.nestontowncouncil.org.uk/wp-](http://www.nestontowncouncil.org.uk/wp-)

[content/uploads/2015/07/Neston-AMT-Benchmarking-Report-July-2014.pdf](#). The report is referenced at Paragraphs 7.48 – 7.50 of the NNP.

## 2.5 Tourism

- 2.5.1 The geography of Neston being the only coastal resort in CWaC together with its history and heritage lend the area to a thriving and expanding visitor economy. This is further enhanced by the location of a local and significant RSPB nature reserve, the internationally renowned University Botanic Gardens at Ness and Burton Mere Wetlands. Neston also has the advantage of a number of attractive cycle trails that link the area with off road cycle ways towards Chester and North Wales in the South and Hoylake and Liverpool in the North.
- 2.5.2 Further tourism development of the area including a visitor centre, improved free parking facilities, cafes and enhancement of Parkgate sea front builds on an ongoing visitor economy. Proposals to develop cycle ways in the area are supported by 80% of the community.
- 2.5.3 The Economic Development and Retailing TFWG produced a paper entitled 'Economic Strategy iv: Visitors' which addressed the tourism economy. A copy of this paper is included at Appendix G.

## 2.6 Movement and Travel

- 2.6.1 Public transport provision is regularly reported by the community as inadequate. A non-electrified rail route creates difficulties for travel outside the area to either Chester or Liverpool. Also evening bus services to these locations are inadequate preventing the use of public transport for leisure and recreational purposes. Community responses at open days and through surveys have majored on criticisms of a poor public transport system. The community gave an 87% support to the possibility of a centralised bus station and improvement to timetables, bus shelters and seating provision.
- 2.6.2 Development of cycle ways including a crossing for the Wirral Way cycle route at Station Road Parkgate has met with substantial support from the community. Some 63% of the community support the provision of a crossing and development of a cycle hub and cafe facility.
- 2.6.3 Car parking in Parkgate is often at a premium and again through local knowledge and by looking at parking provision on the maps it was proposed that more car parking can be identified.
- 2.6.4 The location of all bus stops, cycle routes, station etc. were identified and maps of the local area provided evidence of gaps in the cycle routes and were used in identifying new possible routes.

## 2.7 Design

- 2.7.1 Planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development. Developments should establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit, optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development, create and sustain an appropriate mix of uses (including incorporation of green and other public space as part of developments) and support local facilities and transport networks.
- 2.7.2 A significant number of the community, some 91%, agreed that all new homes should be built to the highest possible architectural and environmental standards.
- 2.7.3 An appraisal of the character of Neston was undertaken by members of the CSG. The appraisal sought to identify the key characteristics of the area that were important for design of future developments within the NPA. A copy of the appraisal is provided at Appendix H.
- 2.7.4 The CSG also produced a paper entitled 'Neston Design and Environmental Standards'. A copy is shown at Appendix I. This helped to formulate the design policies within the NNP.

## 2.8 Landscape and Environment

- 2.8.1 Neston benefits from being surrounded on the west by the RSPB nature reserve and the coastal area and on the other three sides by Green Belt. This creates the environment much cherished by the community. In order to maintain this environment and to preserve the character of the area the NNP proposes Local and Amenity Green Spaces along with the protection of woodland, trees and hedges. An analysis of the existing open spaces within the area against the criteria within NPPF and Planning Practice Guidance is shown at Appendix J.
- 2.8.2 The European Landscape Convention requires '*landscape to be integrated into regional and town planning policies and in cultural, environmental, agricultural, social and economic policies, as well as any other policies with possible direct or indirect impacts on landscape*'. The NNP is in compliance with Cheshire West and Cheshire policies on Landscaping and the Environment.
- 2.8.3 Over 93% of the community agreed that green spaces are a significant component in making the Neston area special. Also the community supports any development in the vicinity of public green spaces to be such that natural features such as small woodlands, trees, hedgerows, ponds and streams are fully protected.

## 2.9 Community

- 2.9.1 To deliver the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should plan positively for the provision and use of shared space, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments. Policies should guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs. Also to ensure that established shops, facilities and services are able to develop and modernise in a way that is sustainable, and retained for the benefit of the community and ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services.
- 2.9.2 Discussions with Neston High School have centred on the potential for the new school development to include the provision of land for affordable housing development on any surplus land following the redevelopment and importantly, to make provision for use of the new school premises after school hours for community use.
- 2.9.3 Local maps were used to identify usage of amenities and the general spread throughout the Neston area. The location of clubs, bus stops, cycle routes, station etc. were identified.
- 2.9.4 Existing allotments were identified from Neston Town council papers and local knowledge and maps provided the evidence for the new privately run ones. The length of the waiting list for allotments was the evidence of need in the area, as well as local knowledge.
- 2.9.5 Neston Recreational Centre was studied at length and meetings held with BRIO, the company contracted by CWaC to operate the Centre. The evidence from these meetings is that the building and services it provides are outdated and do not meet modern requirements. This helped formulate policy relating to this facility. Potential redevelopment of a high quality leisure centre on the existing site ensuring that it meets the needs of the community is supported by 85% of that community.

## **APPENDIX A: REFERENCES**

- 1 Adactus and Plus Dane Email Correspondence July 2014
- 2 Cheshire West and Chester 2013 Strategic Housing Market Assessment
- 3 ONS Census Community Profiles for Neston 2001 and 2011 by ACRE
- 4 Cheshire West and Chester 2013 Strategic Housing Market Assessment
- 5 Cheshire West and Chester Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment 2013
- 6 Minutes of Housing TFG January 2013
- 7 Cheshire West and Chester Employment Land Study 2013
- 8 Cheshire West and Chester Employment Land Study 2013
- 9 Cheshire West and Chester Retail Study 2010



## **APPENDIX B: UNDERSTANDING NESTON**

## UNDERSTANDING NESTON

Neston lies on the edge of a sandstone ridge on the Wirral peninsular at the north-west tip of Cheshire. To the west of the civil parish lie the tidal salt marshes of the Dee estuary, largely owned by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. Beyond that is the Welsh border and, to the south-west, the Deeside industrial area<sup>1</sup> in Flintshire. To the north and east is the Metropolitan Borough of Wirral with road, rail and ferry links to Liverpool, across the Mersey river. The town of Ellesmere Port and the industries of the Mersey Valley lie to the south-east. The county town of Chester is ten miles to the south.

Neston is close to the centre of the mediaeval Wirral Hundred and retains that heritage, a fact often overshadowed by the exclusive 'Welcome to Wirral (Borough Council)' signs on Neston's northern boundary.

Since the 1974 local government and NHS reorganisations, when it lost urban district council status and public services such as magistrates' courts and police headquarters were moved away, **Neston has sometimes been referred to as a place on the edge in the sense that it looks in different directions and is at the centre of none.**

Administratively, Neston was divided in 1974 from that part of the peninsular which lies in Merseyside to the north and grouped with the very-different industrial and overspill town of Ellesmere Port (with which we still share an MP) across the peninsular. Since the 2009 reorganisation it sits within the Rural Area of Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council.

The NHS Western Cheshire Commissioning Group (including Ellesmere Port and Chester) is now responsible for health care but provision continues to straddle the boundary with many services coming from Wirral NHS rather than Chester.

Secondary education provision also crosses the border with children attending grammar schools in Wirral Borough while, conversely, many Wirral Borough children and children from further afield eg Ellesmere Port, attend Neston High School which is the sole provider of secondary education in the Neston area. Post-sixteen education, training and work experience is remotely provided in surrounding urban areas.

Social and cultural links and voluntary service often find their expression in Wirral and Liverpool-based provision as much as Cheshire at least for Neston residents who are car-mobile.

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**There are no major employers in the Neston area and a high proportion of people of working age travel by car.** The retail and hospitality sectors are most visible; the actual largest single employers are probably Neston High School and the University of Liverpool veterinary hospital, Leahurst, just outside the parish boundary, although most professional and teaching staff in both cases are thought to be inward commuters. **Tourism is of increasing economic importance** with Parkgate village as the centre, popularly visited by motorists, where a growing variety of pubs and restaurants meet their needs. As well as Parkgate, the natural beauty and scientific interest of the area, the marsh and its birds, perhaps viewed from the linear Wirral Country Park, first of its kind in the country, is outstanding. Ness Botanic Gardens and several garden centres including one just outside the parish boundary, winner of national awards, create a solid horticultural offer. The network of cycle and walking routes funnel people in and through the area.

Economic regeneration has been predicated on the assumption that the building of a medium-size Sainsbury's supermarket (2009) would increase the footfall<sup>2</sup> to benefit other traders. While Sainsbury's has brought benefits there is no evidence that the trickle-down has come about. Food and other shops, cafés and pubs were closing before Sainsbury's and the opening of the supermarket and the apparent success of the Aldi supermarket, has not reversed the trend. Nor has the Friday market thrived in its new location and efforts to sustain a monthly Farmers' Market have not succeeded.

A programme of work started by the Neston Market Town Initiative (2005-2009), now led by the Town Council (2009) and local civic societies, to improve the appearance of the town and its communities and support community-building activities is having an impact but, of itself, is unlikely to provide the economic driver that is required. At the time of this revision, in April 2014, steps are being taken, including the appointment of a Town Centre Manager, to revitalise the market and the retail offer but **Neston still lacks a pull-factor that will bring people to the centre to spend money.**

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**Neston is an attractive area of great antiquity, interest and opportunity.** Once a strategically-important port, a springboard for invasions of Wales and Ireland, the largest town and administrative centre in Wirral, the main maritime

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from *Neston Market Town Initiative Business Plan 2005-2008*

<sup>2</sup> Committee Report; Ellesmere Port & Neston Borough Council

trading outlet for Chester, later a regency bathing resort, then a fishing and coal-mining community, with many listed buildings, Neston's past reflects the changing importance of the Dee.

The present depends to a great extent on the economic health of our urban and industrial neighbours in Merseyside to the north, in the Mersey Valley, in Chester and in North Wales.

**The future may depend on achieving a better balance between local employment and self-sustainability, the parish's function as a residential base for commuters and as a retirement area.**

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Although residents almost all define themselves as 'white, British', **there is a mixed economic, social and cultural demographic which prevents the parish becoming a monoculture.** Prominent in local media are those who identify strongly with the town and distinguish themselves from later arrivals, often tracing themselves back to historic employments as farm-workers, miners or fishing people or, latterly, the manufacturing industries of the Mersey corridor and North Wales. A characteristic manner of speech can be distinguished and some refer to themselves as 'yowsers'.

The coming of the railway in 1866 made it possible for Liverpool commercial and industrial people to commute and they built big houses on the outskirts. Then there was an influx in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century when a lot of land was released for development, both social and private.

**Community surveys report that people like living here and try to stay if they can.** If they do leave they may try to return at a different stage in their life and may not succeed for the same reasons that they left in the first place.

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However, averages tend to conceal significant differences. **The distribution of deprivation indicators is not normative; there are two clearly-identifiable and separated cohorts** with no-one in the middle deciles. Most of the population, approximately 60 per cent in the higher deciles, does reasonably, in some cases very, well with high average incomes, good health, good school performance, very high levels of car ownership and low levels of reported crime. On the other hand, while the parish is without extremes of deprivation, parts of the area, specifically the social housing areas, and owner-occupiers in the more densely populated parts of Neston, comprising approximately 40 per cent of the population in the lower deciles, display higher levels of social and economic need and stress. They are less mobile, more likely to depend on town centre services and their needs require specific consideration. **The two-Nestons hypothesis** is further evidenced by a rise in social class A/B, relatively few people in D/E, and a higher than average proportion in C1.

The population has remained almost exactly static over the last decade (2001-2011) although, again, that conceals underlying change. **Neston's community is becoming unbalanced. The proportion of 60-84 year olds has risen over the period and the proportion of 25-59 year-olds has fallen, while there has been a 15 per cent reduction in the number of children, equivalent in number to a whole primary school.**<sup>3</sup>

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Much more detail is provided in 'Data Review 2013' by Robin Hughes, also produced to support the neighbourhood planning process.

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**Housing is a mix of owner-occupation, with an above-average stock of large, paid-up detached properties, plus social housing and, increasingly, rental properties. There is a lower-than average proportion of smaller, lower priced housing** which is, therefore, in demand and a hypothesised factor influencing out-migration of younger adults and their families. Students from Leahurst are a factor in the lower-price end. The local housing market, while showing a slight upturn in an otherwise flat period, is not reflecting national optimism.<sup>4</sup> Retirement flats have been slow to sell. There are few nursing and care homes; people have to move outside the parish for that.

The fact that the area is closely invested by the North Cheshire Greenbelt and by the Dee Marshes which are of international scientific interest (Ramsar; SSSI) means that little or no land is available for development, whether residential or industrial, and regardless of need, apart from small sites and infill windfalls. This obviously limits options and is reflected in the very low house-building target set for the parish in the Cheshire West and Chester draft Local Plan.

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<sup>3</sup> Census, 2011

<sup>4</sup> UK Land Registry Feb 2014; data for Cheshire West and Chester

**Neston depends on cars (and is in an area of above-average nitrogen dioxide levels) but public transport is frequently identified as a problem**, it being difficult if not impossible to reach some localities at some times of day including hospitals, shopping and social centres or for education, employment and training purposes. Fifteen per cent do not have access to a vehicle. For example there are no direct evening services to and from Chester and bus services to Arrowe Park hospital have been curtailed. There are frequent calls for the rail link to Liverpool to be electrified but, as Neston is the only station on the line in Cheshire West and Chester, it seems unlikely without support from Flintshire and Wirral Borough.

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**Surrounding the town are six distinctive village communities that have traditionally looked to Neston as the centre of civic life and for services: Burton, Willaston, Parkgate, Little Neston and Ness.** The first two lie outside the Town Council area and are not part of the Neighbourhood Plan. The Neston Market Town Initiative (NMTI) speaks<sup>5</sup> of the town's unique location in a rural 'pocket' and the retention of much of its character which gives it a clear identity and makes its existence vital to the villages it serves. A study of Cheshire towns for the old County Council described it as having a 'quirky history' and an unusual geographical position that could be exploited to boost the local economy<sup>6,7</sup>.

**The Neston area is difficult to classify.** Attempts at generalisation which do not take account of the diversity of the population can mislead. For example, Neston is often seen as an affluent town with few problems. However the reality is somewhat different; the town centre has been in decline since the 1980s and local shops are continuing to close.

The NW Coastal Towns Forum (sponsored by the North West Development Agency) categorises Neston as a coastal 'Settlement of Choice'<sup>8</sup>. Settlements of Choice are popular places to live but common characteristics such as an unbalanced population and a business stock which requires people to travel to work risks prejudicing sustainability and aspirations for low carbon living.

Typically, the NW Coastal Forum goes on to say that Neston does not entirely fit the classification. It speculates that it may be more akin to some of the other small Cheshire towns looking south and west to Chester rather than north to Liverpool. On the other hand, the Cheshire and Warrington Market Towns Investment Prospectus<sup>9</sup> produced for Cheshire County Council in 2008/9 says Neston is under the strong influence of Liverpool and Birkenhead and to a lesser extent has a relationship with Chester. Part of the confusion is because of location, not quite part of the City Region, not quite part of the Cheshire West and Chester heartland. Part is because demographic, social and economic data are often not sufficiently local for the complexity and diversity of the social structure to become immediately apparent. Identity matters for Neston because the area does not sit comfortably within the standard classifications used by planners and is sometimes seen as too small to justify separate attention in larger schemes<sup>10</sup>.

It also matters because residents have different visions for the future. For example, the increasingly elderly population suggests we are becoming a seaside retirement area while the high proportion of commuters in the population suggests a dormitory suburb. The emerging preference amongst those who express a view appears to be that of an historic market town which attracts visitors<sup>11</sup>, a view which is not always supported and may or may not mesh with the demographic reality of a retirement/commuter area.

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<sup>5</sup> NMTI Ibid

<sup>6</sup> *Local Distinctiveness of Cheshire Towns - building on common themes to strengthen branding*; commissioned by Cheshire County Council; Boyle, D, Lorenz, M, Raymond, P April 2005

<sup>7</sup> See also *Creating a Destination Brand for Neston*; Hilary Berg Consulting for Cheshire West and Chester Council and Neston Town Council, April 2011.

<sup>8</sup> *Understanding the Coastal Communities of the North West*; North West Coastal Forum, June 2009

<sup>9</sup> *Cheshire and Warrington Market Towns Investment Prospectus, Final Report*, Roger Tym & Partners, March 2009

<sup>10</sup> See for example: *Market Towns Investment Prospectus*; Roger Tym & Partners for Cheshire County Council and Cheshire & Warrington Economic Alliance, April 2009, which puts development plans forward for all the market towns in Cheshire except Neston.

<sup>11</sup> *Creating a Destination Brand for Neston*; Ibid

## **COMMENT**

**All this suggests three things. First, we need a much stronger consensus about the way forward. Secondly, there needs to be a better sense of direction if we are not to drift. Thirdly, Neston needs to assert itself by interjecting its vision forcibly into the various decision-making processes; otherwise it will continue to be overlooked.**

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End

Robin Hughes

17 October 2012

Revised 25<sup>th</sup> April 2014

**APPENDIX C:**  
**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND RETAIL TFWG PAPERS:**  
**C1: ECONOMIC STRATEGY ii: CLAYHILL BUSINESS PARK**

## Economy Strategy ii: Clayhill Business Park

### Context

**The main aim of our economic strategy is to shift the balance towards more local and preferably higher value jobs to ensure a sustainable future for everyone.** We need to do it in order to provide for and retain people of working age especially younger people, to counter the loss of local industrial jobs and consequent dependence on car-commuting, and the increasing proportion of economically-inactive residents.

The NP economic strategy proposal has four main strands which are (i) improving and modernising the town centre offer, (ii) maximising Clayhill industrial park, (iii) promoting modern knowledge and technology-based businesses (known by the acronym *SOHO* – small office home office) and, (iv) building the visitor economy.

The first, *modernising the town centre*, the third, *promoting SOHO businesses*, and the fourth, *building the visitor economy*, are the subject of separate papers. This paper deals with *the Clayhill Business Park*. Clayhill is important because it is the only area designated for business use in the parish and has a major part to play in retaining and growing local jobs.

### Background

#### Clayhill Industrial Park


Clayhill Industrial Park is situated approximately 10 miles from the M56 and 1/2 mile from the A540 Chester High Road. The Park is also within close proximity to Neston town centre and the railway station.

Neston is situated centrally within the Wirral peninsula, enjoying easy access to Chester, Liverpool, Birkenhead and North Wales.

#### Major Occupiers

Duncan Boxwell and Co Ltd, Liferrafts and Inflatables Ltd, Rovers Equipment Co Ltd, D B K Construction Ltd, Cheshire Spas and Pools and Borries (UK) Ltd.

<b>Planning Uses:</b>	B1: Business, B2: General Industrial B8: Warehousing and Distribution
<b>Nearest Town:</b>	Neston
<b>Distance to Airports:</b>	John Lennon (Liverpool) Airport - 20 miles Manchester International Airport - 40 miles
<b>Distance to Motorways:</b>	Junction 15, M56 - 10 miles
<b>Nearest Train Station:</b>	Neston - 0.5 mile
<b>Broadband:</b>	ADSL, SDSL, LLU Services and Cable enabled area
<b>Postcode:</b>	CH64 3RU



This is how the Clay Hill Business Park is currently (Mar 2014) advertised by CwaC. The estate has developed incrementally over the years; only part of the site is owned and managed by CwaC. CwaC is responsible for highways, lighting and other services. Site owners, lessees or tenants are responsible for maintaining their own property.

Overall occupancy rates are high but there are a number of vacant units. There is additional land [about 3 hectares] allocated for employment purposes, but not consented.

Over the years a number of retail/commercial uses have been allowed which would have been more appropriate to the town centre.

No-one has overall responsibility for marketing the site. Each owner, including CwaC itself, markets its own. There is no coordination.

The Town Council has attempted to promote improvements since 2010 when limited responses to an occupier survey discovered a number of concerns including general dilapidation, untidiness and overnight parking by lorries bearing supplies for the adjacent Aldi distribution centre. An apparent increase in retail outlets on what was supposed to be an industrial site also raised questions for then-current occupiers. There have been concerns about travellers and about street racing. The Town Council is handicapped because CwaC is the Highways Authority and because ownership is divided so that, in contrast to other business parks where owner/local authority partnerships are being established for purposes of management and marketing, there is no means of collective engagement. Since 2010, the Town Council has continued to press CwaC to improve roads, footpaths and signs and to secure CCTV surveillance. Some signs have been

installed within the estate and the 2013 Community Pride assessment noted some tidy areas but found 'plenty of weeds'. We might note that the Town Council's request for the site to be known as the Clayhill Business Park, repeated in 2012, has met with partial success.

### **Clayhill Development Potential**

It is noted that the CW&C Employment and Land Study, 2012 demonstrates that there is an imbalance in business premise provision between B2 and B1, to the point that B1 office sites identified are not in Neston itself.

Sites for office development in Neston score low as they are on existing industrial estates. This position should be amended through infrastructure and environmental improvements in order to attract and retain high value B1 development to support the sustainable development of Neston in its key service centre role.

### **Rebalancing Neston's Economy**

The RRS&AP notes that Neston has the lowest job to location ratio and highest public sector job dependency within the CW&C rural area. Targeted economic development policies are required to address this position in order to deliver on government direction to rebalance the economy.

We consider that policies, actions and support are required to achieve a rebalancing of the current prevalence of B2 employment provision towards B1 development. Such an approach is needed for Neston in order to achieve:

- Local employment opportunities commensurate to Neston's skill profile
- Scope for increase in GVA outputs
- Higher level of employment density

### **Areas for action**

- 1 The CW&C Employment and Land Study, 2012 identifies that 17,756 sq ft of industrial space and 10,263 sq ft of office space was available in 2012. This suggests that there is significant capacity of industrial and office space in Neston. However, this gives a misleading picture. No evaluation of the quality of this floor space has been undertaken and it is likely that much of this capacity is unattractive and/or unsuitable for market needs.
- 2 The CW&C Employment and Land Study, 2012 proposes that an additional 11 hectares of employment land is required within the Rural Area. However, no indication is given of the suggested spatial location of this land. Although a further 3 hectares of employment land is currently allocated at Clayhill 1-4 this is insufficient and a substantial proportion of the additional 11 hectares should be allocated to Clayhill.
- 3 A coordinated programme of infrastructure, environmental and marketing actions should be implemented.
- 4 New Clayhill development sites should be identified for a focus for B1 classes
- 5 Consequently, the Employment Area Hierarchy of Clayhill should be amended from a Key Local Area to a Key Employment Area.
- 6 Clayhill should be named, branded and marketed as a Business Park.



### **Neighbourhood Plan considerations**

The following policies have been agreed by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group:

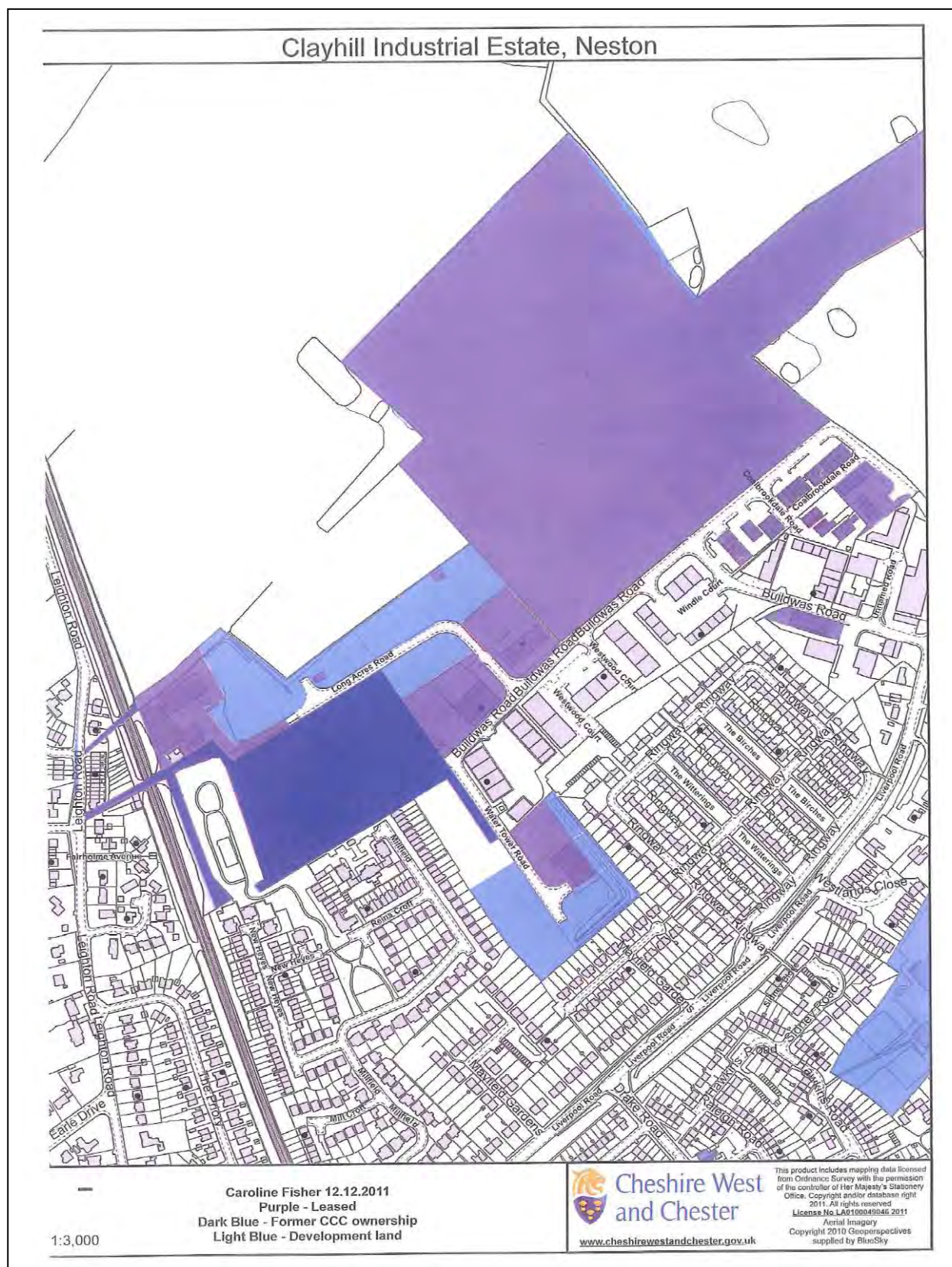
- We need to maximise the potential of Clayhill by enhancing the appearance of and infrastructure within the business park and provide encouragement to new business start-ups.
- The local planning authority should not grant consent at Clayhill Business Park for any uses other than B1, B2, and B8. Any applications for these uses should include robust landscaping conditions.

### **Non-Neighbourhood Plan considerations**

- Whilst Clayhill will never realistically be regarded as a major strategic site within CWaC the site performs a vital function locally and enhanced efforts should be undertaken to market the opportunities it offers.

End

Appendix



**APPENDIX C:**  
**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND RETAIL TFWG PAPERS:**  
**C2: ECONOMIC STRATEGY iii: SOHO BUSINESSES**

## Economy Strategy iii: SOHO Businesses

### Context

**The main aim of our economic strategy is to shift the balance towards more local and preferably higher value jobs to ensure a sustainable future for everyone.** We need to do it in order to provide for and retain people of working age especially younger people, to counter the loss of local industrial jobs and consequent dependence on car-commuting, and the increasing proportion of economically-inactive residents.

The NP economic strategy proposal has four main strands which are (i) improving and modernising the town centre offer, (ii) maximising Clayhill industrial park, (iii) promoting modern knowledge and technology-based businesses (known by the acronym *SOHO* – small office home office) and, (iv) building the visitor economy.

The first, *modernising the town centre*, the second, *maximising Clayhill*, and the fourth, *building the visitor economy*, are the subject of separate papers. This paper deals with *promoting SOHO businesses*. It is a new idea for Neston which seems, particularly, to suit our circumstances and there are signs that this kind of economic activity is becoming a feature in the area. Making the town centre more attractive for small businesses is one of the objectives of the Town Centre Action Plan.

### What do we mean?

The acronym **SOHO** stands for *small office/home office* and generally refers to small businesses involving 1-5 workers operating from a small base or their own home or a combination of the two. We stretch it a little to include other small businesses with customer-facing premises operating in the same spirit. Think of the growing number of on-line traders and professionals with world-wide market potential, some of whom are based locally. Think also of the growth in self-employment as people with professional and practical skills and knowledge break free of the notion that you need a big office base; many of have no office at all even working in networks. Think too of the way that small entrepreneurs are driving change in the hospitality business, especially in this area; bringing a distinctive, creative energy which contrasts with the chains.

Internet-based technologies that allow individuals to work from home and on the move using email, Web, Voice over internet Protocol (VoIP), video-calling and conferencing services and remote access software to communicate with potentially global consumers are increasingly the way business is done. Furthermore, while it may seem on the face of it less-important for businesses that require face-to-face contact, eg shops and hospitality, the huge significance of the Web for marketing and home-delivery is an opportunity to be exploited.

It makes it possible for people who might otherwise have been compelled to commute to and from city and town centres and business parks (Neston has a high proportion of car commuters) to work from home or from small offices near home; many are choosing so to do. For them, the switch means lower overheads, greater productivity (eg no travel time) and a different lifestyle. For the community, jobs are created locally, money is spent locally and emissions from car exhausts are reduced (Neston's emission levels are higher than you might think given its airy location.)

Government and local authorities recognise the potential of SOHO small businesses generally and offer advice and incentives. Private companies are also springing up to provide help and support, for example, with office services and accommodation. This is not the place to go into detail on any of that. The point is that it is a rising tide.

Of course, the picture is not static. Some small businesses grow beyond the dining table and if you want to be really fanciful you can think of Google and Facebook, both of which started in someone's home.

### **The case for:**

This kind of approach suits Neston very well. It holds out the prospect of more, higher-value jobs without making many demands on the infrastructure. It draws upon the potential of a well-educated population, many with capital, looking for somewhere to make things happen. It provides opportunities for women at home seeking business outlets or those whose children have fled the nest wanting to become economically active. It is good for a semi-rural area with poor local public transport because it often doesn't matter much where you are and you don't have to travel. SOHO reduces carbon emissions. SOHO is good if it combines with education and training initiatives which we know interest Neston High School. And Neston has considerable advantages because people say it's a good place to live anyway.

And, actually, it's already happening. '*Neston Means Business*', 7<sup>th</sup> February 2014, the first Business Awards for the CH64 area featured at least seven firms operating all or partly on-line and another seven newish small firms recognised for their innovation and service in the food, hospitality, health and beauty sectors and in professional services. There is anecdotal evidence of a considerable number of Neston residents earning their living in this manner, but no firm data. Nationally there is evidence to demonstrate that this is a substantial sector likely to experience significant growth in the future.

### **What to do?**

A local canvas and some research bring out features of a potential strategy.

#### **1. Culture.**

Support and networking are important in making Neston a SOHO-friendly environment. While a hard-nosed business plan may be essential, finding a new way of life is the motivation for many SOHO-ers. There is a sense in which SOHO has become a movement and, like all movements, community becomes a need especially in an occupation that can feel very solitary especially at the beginning.

We have evidence, from our visits to other small towns, that the welcome and guidance would-be SOHO-ers receive on initial contact can be material in their choice of a location. Who does it is up for discussion; we encountered a town clerk adopting a key role. We may also wish to note the appointment of a social enterprise officer in Blacon with part European, part local authority funding.

#### **2. Social**

Factors like schooling, the availability of quality child care and good facilities for recreation and leisure have been proposed to us as significant. So, by extension, is good health provision.

A good local hospitality network is also important. Working from home or small premises is not always conducive to receiving suppliers or customers or holding meetings so SOHO-ers sometimes use local hotels, restaurants, cafés and the like.

### **3. Communications.**

Businesses need internet access which can handle quantities of data consistently and reliably 24/7 at speeds which, according to those canvassed, exceed what is generally available in the Neston area and will continue to do so even after fibre optics are fully rolled-out.

Similarly, good mobile communications are essential including quality smart-phone reception over the whole area. That means 4G quality at least to handle data transfer and video adequately. It also means public wi-fi access especially in the town centre.

### **Accommodation and services.**

People who work from home need a supportive regulatory regime if part of where they live is to serve as an office or workshop.

Whether based at home or in separate premises, entrepreneurs need help setting themselves up and advice on insurance, tax and rates as well as business-planning, legal, accounting, mail and technology services.

The extent to which local banking of the right kind affects things locally is unknown but CwaC says it is an essential feature of key service centres. The retention of bank branches in the town is a factor for consideration.

Running a business entirely from home is convenient and cheap, especially for those with other responsibilities such as child care, but it is not always possible or suitable. As they develop, businesses may grow requirements that cannot be met by domestic premises. In those cases they rely on suitable separate office, workshop, storage or distribution accommodation nearby and we would like that to be in Neston. It might be purpose-built or a converted shed or even a shipping container, expectations can be very different, but cost is a major factor.

Varying degrees of support attaching to the premises including reception, telephone and message-taking, a post box, office services, meeting rooms, support and advice can be helpful. At least two private firms provide accommodation and some services in the Neston area and one, at least, provides start-up accommodation without services. There may be scope for more.

### **4. Incentives and stimulating growth.**

Neston combines the benefits of living in the country with proximity to urban pleasures without actually living in the city, providing, that is, you have a car. We know that people like living in here. It scores highly on many quality of life issues and, practically, on things like access to good schools. It also scores well on access to sport, culture and leisure opportunities (car again). It is connected by fast roads to two international airports and to the West Coast main line and routes to North Wales and Ireland. It is a firm basis for the promotion of Neston as a good place to live and to run a SOHO business.

We have been told that being able to park all day, free of charge, in the town centre, close to workplaces is an incentive.

The question of financial incentives is complicated and requires more research than has been possible in the time. It is however important to understand what they are and how they work to complete the

picture of what might be done to make Neston more attractive to small businesses. In this regard we note the just-introduced (April 2014) fifty per cent reduction in business rate for up to 18 months where premises vacant for more than one year are brought into use. We also note that retail, food and drink businesses in Ness, which is part of this parish, are potentially eligible for rural rate relief, a discount of up to £1,000 for up to two years.

As well as encouraging SOHO businesses we need to consider how we help them grow (if appropriate) to the next level and stay in Neston to ensure that our community benefits from this economic growth. This will require a range of interventions including the provision of “easy in/easy out” premises. Some of these could be provided in the town centre by imaginative use of vacant retail space

### **Neighbourhood Plan Considerations**

- The Plan should include recognition of their specific needs as a priority for Neston.
- As earlier remarked, specific planning and regulatory conditions should do the same.
- Consideration should be given to enhanced provision of start-up offices, storage facilities and small workshops on available sites including on Clayhill Business Park.
- Insofar as it applies, the physical infrastructure necessary for effective business-grade telecommunications including very high speed internet, public Wi-Fi and consistent 4G mobile networks, is essential.

### **Non-Neighbourhood Plan Considerations**

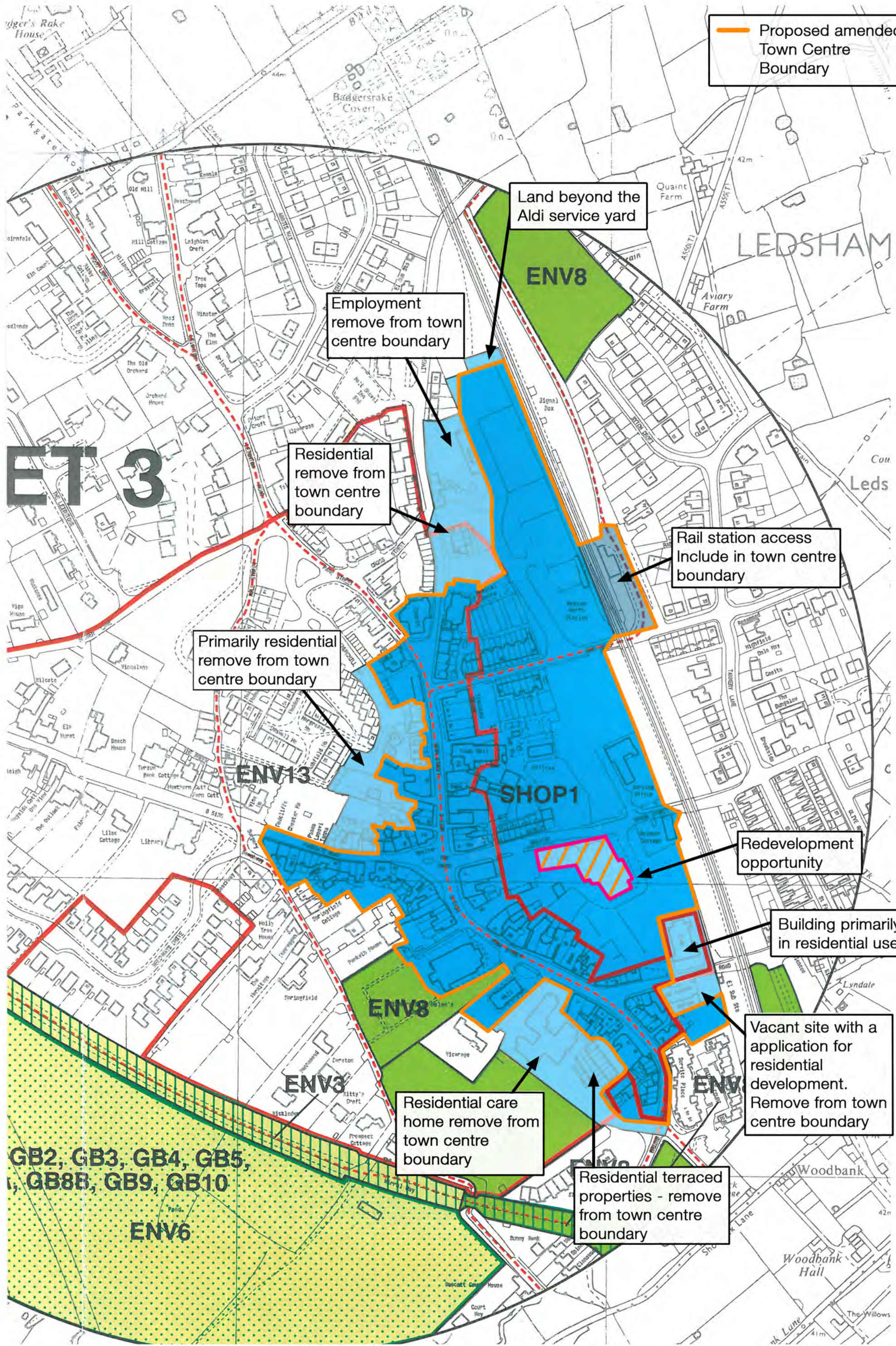
- Marketing Neston as a good place for small (including SOHO) businesses, whether through private or public agencies or other initiatives, so that the area benefits from this emerging trend.
- The encouragement, support and servicing of small businesses so that they succeed, grow and stay local.
- Recognise the relevance of social, educational and cultural provision for the attraction, facilitation and retention of entrepreneurs.
- The introduction of business rates relief is welcome; consideration should be given as to what criteria might specifically benefit small market towns and Neston specifically.
- The availability of rural rate relief in one village of our parish is also welcome. However, it is probably the least likely locality in this area to be able to benefit. Given that Neston is part of the Rural Area of CwaC and given that the local economic strategy depends a good deal on improving the visitor economy, the possibility of extending the relief to other parts of this parish should be considered.

End

**APPENDIX D:**  
**REVIEW OF NESTON TOWN CENTRE BOUNDARY**



Proposed amended  
Town Centre  
Boundary



GB2, GB3, GB4, GB5,  
GB8B, GB9, GB10

# PROPOSED AMENDED TOWN CENTRE BOUNDARY





**APPENDIX E:**  
**ECONOMIC STRATEGY i: NESTON TOWN CENTRE**

## Economy Strategy i: Town Centre

### Context

**The main aim of our economic strategy is to shift the balance towards more local and preferably higher value jobs to ensure a sustainable future for everyone.** We need to do it in order to provide for and retain people of working age especially younger people, to counter the loss of local industrial jobs and consequent dependence on car-commuting, and the increasing proportion of economically-inactive residents.

The NP economic strategy proposal has four main strands which are (i) improving and modernising the town centre offer, (ii) maximising Clayhill industrial park, (iii) promoting modern knowledge and technology-based businesses (known by the acronym *SOHO* – small office home office) and, (iv) building the visitor economy.

The second, *maximising Clayhill*, the third, *promoting SOHO business* and the fourth, *building the visitor economy*, are the subject of separate papers. This paper, deals with *modernising the town centre offer*. It is an affirmation and extension of existing Town Council policy including the public realm improvements now in hand and the town centre plan being developed by the Town Centre Manager. Creating a unique space for citizenship, enabling residents to mingle, share and feel part of the community, will also make the centre more attractive for visitors and reference should be had to that paper for the specifics.

### What constitutes a viable town centre?

CwaC's draft Local Plan assigns Neston the function of '*key service centre*'. A key service centre is defined: as a concentration of locally accessible services in the Rural Area of the Borough. For a key service area to remain 'sustainable' it has to deliver and continue to deliver services proportionate to the size and needs of its catchment which, in Neston's case, is bigger than the parish (and therefore bigger than the Neighbourhood Plan area).

The attached appendix contains a detailed study of existing uses in the town centre. Any projected weakening of the offer threatens the town's status. CwaC uses the following indicators to measure performance:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Secondary or primary school</li> <li>○ General store</li> <li>○ GP facility</li> <li>○ Post office</li> <li>○ Community building</li> <li>○ Supermarket</li> <li>○ Newsagent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Bank</li> <li>○ Place of worship</li> <li>○ Leisure centre</li> <li>○ Public house</li> <li>○ Library</li> <li>○ Dentist</li> <li>○ Sports pitches/children's play area.</li> </ul>
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The Borough Council places greater significance on some aspects than others. It says that access to education, groceries, finance and healthcare are key requirements. So are secondary schools, primary schools, post offices, banking facilities, community buildings, GP practices and convenience stores.

To that one might add direct access to public services of all kinds including those provided by the Borough Council, the emergency services, NHS and social services for adults and children.

CwaC goes on to say that community buildings are essential because they serve as venues for education (children and adults), health and well-being events, meetings and social activities. For communities to form and be sustained such buildings promote social interaction. Key service centres need a good stock of community assets if they are to accommodate change and remain vital.

The NP Steering Group would include, for the same reasons, outdoor areas where people can congregate, socialise and linger as well as the means of getting about for reasons of socialising, for education and work. That includes accessible and convenient public transport facilities connecting the centre to the outskirts and car and cycle parking.

The NP Steering Group placed Neston Library, Neston Town Hall and Neston Recreation and Leisure Centre at the top of its list of significant community assets and included the Neston Youth & Community Centre and the cluster of NHS facilities in Mellock Lane.

The Steering Group would also assert the necessity, for a sustainable key service centre, of access to employment and training with a better balance that we have now between local opportunities and those that involve travelling.

Not all of these are town-centre issues in the narrow sense. They are relevant in the context of the Neighbourhood Plan as a whole but this paper is about the town centre itself where retail provision, services and accessibility are the main issues.

#### The case for:

It has been recognised for many years the town centre needs to attract more spend and more social and cultural footfall. The first survey on record, in 1998, reported that only 51 per cent of residents did their main food shop in the town, and the second, in 2003, reported that the figure had dropped to 30%. That triggered the first public consultation on record and led, eventually and inter alia, to the 2005-2008 Market Town Initiative programme of government funding (which included NCYC) and to Sainsbury's supermarket and the Town Square. A separate paper, *Retail Uses 2014*, describes how things are now.

Over the last sixteen years there have been at least six public consultations saying more or less the same thing (1998, 2003, 2008, 2009, 2012 and 2013). There have also been as many plans of which these are a few examples: Cheshire Local Distinctiveness Study (2005) ; Market Town Initiative Business Plan (NMTI), EPNBC Local Development Framework, NMTI Business Plan, NMTI Evaluation report, CwaC Key Service Centres Report, CwaC Local Plan (draft), Neston Town Council Town Centre Action Plan. From all that we derive two conclusions.

1. **There has been a remarkable consistency in public opinion over the years.** Most people accept the need for change and remain pretty clear about what kind of change. The findings of the 2013 consultation for the Neston Neighbourhood Plan reflect, almost to the word, the priorities of ten years before.
2. **What matters now is determined, coordinated action** if Neston town centre is to remain at the heart of a sustainable key service centre. We can be confident that the provenance of this strategy put forward here is sound; it is time now to actually do something.

It has been observed many times that change needs to be locally-driven. People locally must take responsibility for the future and, for the first time in forty years, a mechanism exists in the form of the Town Council set up in 2006. CwaC's strategies understandably deal almost entirely with larger urban and business priorities. They touch only lightly if at all on the potential contribution to the general good of places like Neston (which actually is the largest town in CwaC's Rural Area). Development and pursuit of ambitions for small towns is left largely to those who live there.

The main vehicle for coordinating and driving change in the centre is the Town Council's Town Centre Action Plan, the version current at the time of writing is appended

Some changes are coming to pass. The Chamber of Trade is encouraging businesses to adopt a forward posture; there are encouraging signs that small firms, including e-businesses, are investing. There is a better food offer than there used to be. We have a central public open space. Work is being done to improve the look of the place and to tackle the pedestrian/traffic conflict. Organisations, public, private and voluntary, are cooperating, often via the CH64 Events Group, to animate the Town Centre. There is a Town Centre Manager, first called for in 2003.

The Neighbourhood Plan is not a duplication of the Town Centre Plan. It has a specific purpose which is the establishment in law of certain planning policies to guide and direct local development. In doing that, it contributes to our understanding of the broader agenda by reviewing and analysing key themes while reinforcing and emphasising key issues.

For Neighbourhood Planning purposes we affirm the Town Centre Plan as the principle statement of aims in that respect.

There are, however, three specific points to be made.

1. Our visitor economy paper draws attention to the changing nature of high streets generally and a need for realistic expectations. Firstly, evidence is that successful modern high streets will be different from the traditional with an emphasis on social, cultural and service activities aiming to create a space for living in rather than a place to do the daily shop. It is not how it works any more. Planning policies need to reflect that approach.
2. Secondly, analysis reveals there are different potential constituencies which need to be born in mind. The town centre model being developed needs to strike a balance.
  - Residents, probably less well-off, elderly, or young, who are more dependent on the town centre for their daily requirements and recreation. Fifteen per cent of residents do not have access to a car.
  - Residents of the whole area (CH64), probably better off and highly mobile, who do not do their main shop in the town centre and do not use it for recreation.
  - Non-residents, attracted to the town for what it has to offer or for tourism who, by increasing the overall spend, increase the viability of town centre businesses.
3. Thirdly, prompted by the extent of unsightly empty properties, some of which, we are told, are in poor condition and do not easily adapt to current usage, we believe that the core area for development needs to be drawn more tightly round the centre. Within that space, planning policy should for preference defend, protect and encourage business use. Outside it, on the fringes of the town centre, planning policy should give preference to residential uses allowing empty properties to be converted and bringing more people into the centre. We would expect that the appointed consultants will give detailed consideration to what the boundary of such a core retail area might be.
4. While considering the core area, town centre assets need further evaluation to assess the extent to which size, layout and general condition, especially where non-retail premises have lain empty for some time, could be made more marketable in the modern environment. It has been put to us that the unsuitability of some town centre premises by virtue of their small size, layout or general condition, has been one reason for the emergence of retail outlets at Clayhill, for relocation elsewhere and for empty premises.

End



## NESTON TOWN CENTRE ACTION PLAN

This action plan aims to identify and address the economic and social objectives for the centre of Neston. It sets out the aspirations of Neston Town Council its town centre, its constituents and local businesses and the actions required to deliver the Council's Vision for Neston Town Centre. It is a working document and is subject to change.

### **Our Vision for Neston Town Centre**

There are two main themes:

#### **Economic**

A vibrant town centre in which to live, work, shop, do business and visit with diversity of choice thus promoting economic prosperity.

To achieve this vision we will:

- Raise the profile of Neston Town Centre
- Make Neston Town Centre more attractive
- Improve the vitality and vibrancy of the town centre by diversifying its offer
- Attract quality and specialist retailers in order to encourage more customers
- Support existing businesses and encourage more SMEs by promoting the town as a business location

#### **Social**

A safe, inclusive and accessible place for people to live, work, shop and visit providing for a vibrant town centre and cultural experience.

To achieve this vision we will:

- Build upon the natural, historic, cultural and community assets of the Neston
- Improve the vitality of the town centre by introducing a programme of events
- Promote Neston as a cycle friendly town and as a sustainable option for transport and leisure

This action plan considers both the assets (soon to be) managed by the Town Council, ie, the Town Hall, Market Square and Market in Section 1, as well as the Town Centre more generally in Section 2. Section 3 considers marketing and promotion, and Section 4 reviews funding options. The plan sets out a number of objectives as well as actions for success. Highlighted areas are TCM's current priorities.

### **Section 1: Neston Market Square and Market**

The town hall and market square should be Neston's centre for commercial, social and cultural activity. It is important that we celebrate these assets, be proud of them and promote them to Neston's community in order that they adopt them as their own. This action plan puts these assets firmly at its heart and proposes a number of ways in which these assets can be better used.

#### **OBJECTIVE 1**

##### **Build on the existing Friday market**

Neston market is royal chartered and well established Cheshire and Wirral market. Sadly, footfall has declined as well as the market offer. It is important to sustain and enhance our historic Friday markets, working with existing and potential traders to ensure a sustainable future that serves the needs of our community and attracts visitors. To do this we must:

Promote to different target markets including:

- Local people who might have forgotten about Neston market

- Day trippers, particularly west Wirral

Introduce a considered campaign to rebrand the market that can promote the market as it is now but will also extend to cover future ambitions.

- Consider artwork provided by Kaleidoscope and review other sources eg, CWaC in-house design
- Agree rebranding strategy

Extend length of market day. Extend opening hours so that market runs until 3pm.

- Hold lunchtime events or entertainment in late morning early afternoon to keep footfall high. Aim at families and after school trade. Local groups to perform.
- Rewrite contracts to commit traders to staying later in the day. See Mold market for template.
- Incentivise local producers. Try to keep stall holders local if possible to stop £ leakage.
- Increase the number and variety of stalls by inviting new traders.
- Promote through marketing campaign.

Improve signage. Permanent signage is to be introduced as part of the Street Scene works in spring 2014 but temporary signage will be needed until this point.

- Introduce temporary signs on Sainsbury's Brook Street aspect and access point from High Street adjacent to Iceland and town hall.
- Introduce posters in notice boards and in town hall window. Use rebranding artwork.
- Town map and/or directional signage at train station.
- Review opportunities for permanent signage at Town Hall and High Street/Brook Street as part of art project and street scene works and ensure they are included.
- Consider temporary signage from Chester Road on market morning. Investigate planning/legal implications.

The market is made up of two parts including the market square outdoor market and the basement indoor market. The basement holds a number of food related stalls. However, use is limited due to steep public access point and visibility. To improve this we need to:

- Improve access to indoor market by making alternative route available for mobility impaired.
- Introduce additional signage at the rear of the town hall
- Volunteer shoppers for those that can't access basement, consider options for veg boxes etc
- Promote use of town hall main room for additional (specialist) market stalls.

The market would benefit from a number of promotional shopping events and measures that would enhance the shopping experience and differentiate it from shopping elsewhere. These include:

- Market trader of the month – A5 including photo and write up. Trader offers promotional product at near cost price.
- Youth enterprise market – provide 1 market stall a week at no cost for young people to use.
- Recipe cards. Recipes would be prepared by traders promoting them and a particular produce/s. Discount given on this product if shopper has the recipe card with them and buys x amount. Shoppers to pick these up from free. Lists products from different stalls and where to buy. Recipes all under £5. Request endorsement from Sainsbury's.
- Veg boxes. List different types of veg boxes available and offer discount or freebie. Volunteer shoppers to collect these on request. Mixed veg and meat/fish/cheese boxes to be available also.

- Change people's perception of discount goods market via publicity. Bring in a professional photographer to 'stage set' stalls eg, Frank local artisan bread, WI cakes, Tinsley's fruit and veg, Liz rare plants, Rich coffee, Nick cheese.

The market place is a natural venue for events, particularly when the market is running. To capitalise on the footfall on market day and to increase activity and enhance the ambiance the following could be considered:

- Regular musician busker spot. Promote artist with mention in flyer/local press.
- Explore options for monthly road closure to extend market into Brook Street or High Street.
- Fashion show - Use local drama or theatre club/school and invite press.
- Regular promotion in local free Neston Guide on two pages and AMA. Full page advert as well as 'what's on' guide and market trader of the month. Replicate using flyers in shops etc

## **OBJECTIVE 2**

### **Introduce Specialist Weekend Market Day**

Neston is an historical market town and should therefore have regular markets. It is felt that the market offer should be extended and this should complement rather than compete with the existing market and shops. The variety and quality of products available is seen as essential to their success. There is support from traders for a specialist market on at the weekend.

Start with one per month on second weekend:

Gardeners' market – March, June, September

Family fun day market – Summer and October half term holiday

Christmas Market – mid December (franchised)

Specialist food market (franchised) throughout the year

Markets can be set up and run by NTC directly, or specialist market operators can be invited to rent out the market spaces and run their own market. There are pros and cons for both. See separate report for Gardeners' Market and Family Fun day. Other proposals include real ale trail (or festival), Sausage Saturday, wedding and antique/vintage fairs.

## **OBJECTIVE 3**

### **Intensify use of the Town Hall and Market Square**

The town hall and market square will be a flag-ship service for the Town Council. It is a major asset which is currently underused and poorly marketed. Diversity of use and promotion of the town hall and market square will act as a stimulus for town centre activity and catalyst for change. In order to provide a high quality community hall and square that is available and accessible to the local community these assets must generate sufficient income to maintain and improve them. To do this we must:

- Promote the facility
- Develop business plan
- Make the facility the best it can be using the resource available, making improvements where necessary
- Review and cost option to redevelop rear toilet facilities to create green room and stage access
- Be flexible to demands of users (where possible)
- Review local competition and introduce competitive pricing policies and promotions
- Better understanding of the current and recent users needs and expectations



- Make booking easier by offering online booking and payment
- Use front reception creatively to stimulate footfall and offer incentive to visit the town centre
- Proactively identify uses for front reception office and develop for commercial (part or full) use.

Consider space for:

- i. Sale of local farmers/artisan market style goods
  - ii. support for small local businesses currently without high street platform
  - iii. Co-operative use
  - iv. Local history project
  - v. Hub for services and promotion of Neston
- Enliven the market square by developing a diary of events and activities that can spill out in to the town centre more generally.
  - Explore option to introduce temporary ice rink on market square
  - Grant funding for temporary stage
  - Screen at Civic Hall (currently unused and funded by EP&NBC) to be relocated to town hall.



## **Section 2: Neston Town Centre**

Neston town centre is a small commercial centre with a mixed retail and service offer. There is a high predominance of professional service outlets eg banks, building societies and estate agents, as well as personal services including hair and beauty salons. There are a small number of empty units as well as a number of specialist thriving independent retail businesses.

### **OBJECTIVE 4**

#### **A healthy balance**

- In order to meet the requirements of local people and minimise the need for them to travel outside Neston for shopping as well as providing an offer to draw people from further afield to it is necessary to redress the balance of the offer. A good mix of shops including both small independent and larger national retailers needs to be provided to improve the vitality and vibrancy of the town centre and meet the needs and aspirations of the local community.

To achieve this we must:

- Promote free-parking facilities within close proximity to the town centre.
- Create greater awareness and encourage more use of Neston based marketing media such as websites, community radio stations, town and parish magazines and other local media to promote businesses, special events and attractions in the town centre.
- Develop and implement a marketing strategy to influence a wider range of independent retailers to locate to the town centre and try to avoid saturation by one particular type of business.
- Develop the hospitality offer available.
- Promote confidence in Neston Town Centre by working in partnership.
- Facilitate change to local businesses' operations where required and help businesses promote themselves. Investigate the benefits of changing opening hours to reflect modern lifestyles.

- Reduce the negative impact of empty commercial shop units by bringing them back in to use. Encourage landlords to be more flexible in their approach to letting units.
- Explore options for pop-up shops or provide window display space for local groups and individuals to contribute to the positive appearance of the town. This could include business studies students at local schools to showcase projects, Burton Manor, Clay Hill and local home-based companies to rent shelf space to showcase material, commercial or otherwise.
- Use front reception of Town Hall creatively to stimulate footfall and offer incentive to visit the town centre.
- Attract quality and specialist retailers in order to encourage more customers.

## OBJECTIVE 5

### Flexible accommodation

Neston had a variety of property types available for let. There are opportunities for these units to be brought back into use and stimulate activity in the town centre. To do this we must:

- Target landlords to investigate barriers for bringing premises back in to use and ensure all is being done to overcome this.
- Photograph empty premise frontages and send details to landlords
- Encourage landlords to be more flexible in letting empty premises. Encourage short term leases to allow start-up companies to take town centre units with fewer risks. For longer term leases encourage rent free or peppercorn rent year 1-2 followed by market rent year 3-5 (or similar).
- Promoted premises in singular place (TCM webpage) for small businesses to review options available
- Inflexible vacant property arrangement is a hindrance to smaller companies leasing property in Neston. Facilitate the separation into multiple units by using:
  - i. Affordable housing contributions to convert upper commercial units to affordable residential.
  - ii. External grant funding to self-contain upper and ground floor units to meet the needs of smaller businesses. Particularly ones that need town centre location but not necessarily shop front.



## Section 3: Promotion and Marketing

A Communications and Marketing Opportunities report has been produced by the TCM and should be reviewed for more detail. In summary two main strands have been identified and are summarised here.

- Promoting local identity
- Specialist promotional campaigns

## OBJECTIVE 6

### Promote Local Identity

The town centre and market continues to be distinctive and it is this local identity which needs to be promoted. However, it is important to differentiate Neston from other market towns whilst still capitalising on and promoting its historic attributes. To achieve this we need to:

- Produce promotional literature to highlight Neston's attributes as a market town which provides a specialist shopping experience (when we have this). PR and publicity material to be distributed to targeted audiences of:
  - i. Local people who might have forgotten about Neston catering for local day to day needs,
  - ii. West Wirral and beyond, promoting 'Cheshire market town' day-out attributes,Explore opportunity and cost of using external PR specialist for this.
- Destination branding the wider area capitalising on Neston's location as a coastal market town situated close to local honey pot attractions eg, Parkgate, Ness Gardens
- Confirm brand identity and develop range of high quality, useful, cost effective promotional goods.
- TCM blog

## OBJECTIVE 7

### Specialist Marketing and Promotional Campaigns

Neston is much more than a historic market town. Promoting its attributes of historic market town in an already saturated and competitive market will always be challenging and it is important to consider re-branding Neston and running promotional campaigns promoting those of its assets that might complement its historic market town status.

Two promotional campaigns have been identified for the Town Centre. They do not focus on promoting Neston as a market town but capitalise on well-established advantages of Neston which are currently overlooked.

#### (i) Cycling Campaign

Cycling has enjoyed a renaissance in recent years with a number of positive factors encouraging an increasing number of cycle journeys. Neston is fortunate to be sited close to the Wirral Way, a natural cycling and walking route. The Neston to Deeside cycle link has also recently been opened. It is proposed to enhance the cycle offer in Neston to promote it as a destination for cycling, generate local opportunities and employment. To do this we must:

- Ensure Neston promoted through this opening the various cycle organisations eg, Sustrans, and leisure publications eg, Wirral Circular Trail publications. Promote cycling in Neston within 'Neston Connections' publication. Raise awareness of Neston for leisure cycle destination as well as more serious cycle clubs.
- Ensure cycle facilities are included as part of the streetscene works.
- Put pressure on Merseyrail to introduce 'Bike and Go' at Neston station
- Explore grant options with CWaC Local Sustainable Transport Manager
- Look at options for introducing cycle friendly cafe. Discuss with Eureka Cafe. Consider pop-up shop option for temporary bike cafe.
- Tie biking proposals in to market day activities eg, invite bike doctor etc
- Consider other event options involving cycling eg Bicycle Bingo, cycle powered cinema

Refer to 'Neston as a Cycle Hub' Insight Research Proposal for produced by AM Partnership. Consider engaging consultant to establish demand and opportunities.

#### (ii) Work Neston Campaign

Neston has strong basis of professional services that could be support the promotion and development of Neston as a suitable location for new and expanding businesses. Neston can promote itself as a serious and attractive place to set up a new business and it should aim to attract innovative, high-tech, Small to Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) to take-up the use of town centre offices and local employment to Neston. Start up

companies and pop up shops might be the only viable tenant in the current market and Neston could take advantage of this. To do this we must:

- Promote 'Business Friendly Neston' initiative
- Create an environment which provides modern resources in an historic setting.
- Lobby providers and investigate avenues for the introduction of high-speed data access and area-wide networks to facilitate the requirements of Small to Medium-sized Enterprises.
- Conduct a needs analysis of available office space and infrastructure to facilitate new and growing businesses
- Encourage businesses to introduce wireless web-access to the town centre, allowing them and individuals to communicate with each other more efficiently, saving travel time and energy resources
- Promote the roll out of superfast broadband
- Review and promote options for mentoring
- Co-ordinate Government grant offers and assist in applications

#### **Section 4: Funding**

Options include:

- NTC budget (undisclosed but limited). KP to make proposals for consideration.
- Town Hall and market revenue (from April 2014)
- CWaC grant of £110k-£250 for local infrastructure improvements. Ewan McHenry to advise.
- S106 planning obligation circa £20k available for local community benefit and mitigation of development impact
- Local member budget
- CWaC Rural Support Grants 50/50 match funding. Chris Capes to advise.
- For business support consider asking local businesses to pay into a collective pot, or
- List projects relating to key objectives and request associated sponsorship. These projects will provide opportunities for private companies to cherry pick and support (financial or in kind).
- Investigate other.

**Katy Pierce**  
**Town Centre Manager**  
**10<sup>th</sup> October 2013**



### Objectives and Priority Actions summary table

Following review by the Town Centre Advisory Group a number of priorities for action have been identified. There priority are still to be ratified by the Finance & Town Centre Committee.

<b>Neston Market Square and Town Hall objectives</b>		<b>Priority Actions</b> (agreed in consultation with Town Centre Advisory Group)
1	Build on existing Friday market	Focus on signage
2	Introduce specialist weekend market day	Progress Gardeners' Market proposal
3	Intensify use of Town Hall and Market Square	Develop proposals for commercial (and other) uses of front reception
<b>Neston Town Centre Priorities</b>		
4	Develop a healthy balance of shops and services	Target landlords
5	Flexible accommodation	Target landlords
<b>Promotion and Marketing Priorities</b>		
6	Promote local identity	Introduce 'shop local' themes into Neston Works marketing campaign. Cost branded goods and make proposal of how budget might be used
7	Specialist Marketing and Promotional Campaigns	Develop Neston Works and Cycle Neston campaigns
8	Any other priorities to add?	Ensure signage included in PR tender Develop town map/directional signage at station Make proposals for budget

**APPENDIX F:**  
**DIVERSITY OF RETAIL USES IN NESTON TOWN CENTRE 2013:**  
**A BRIEF SYNOPSIS**



# DIVERSITY OF RETAIL USES IN NESTON TOWN CENTRE 2013

A BRIEF SYNOPSIS



**Neston Town Centre** is situated in Cheshire West between Chester, Ellesmere Port and Birkenhead.

It stretches from The Cross to the North via High Street, South along Bridge Street; to the West Parkgate Road and East along Brook Street.

There is also a small number of outlets on Chester Road.

Within the CWAC Region Neston serves an important convenience shopping role but also has a secondary comparison goods retailing function in the area.

Pavement frontages are generally good towards the South of the cross but quite narrow towards the north. This problem is being addressed at present with extended paving and a slight narrowing of the road. This will enhance pedestrian movement, improve visual impact, and harmonise with highway characteristics.

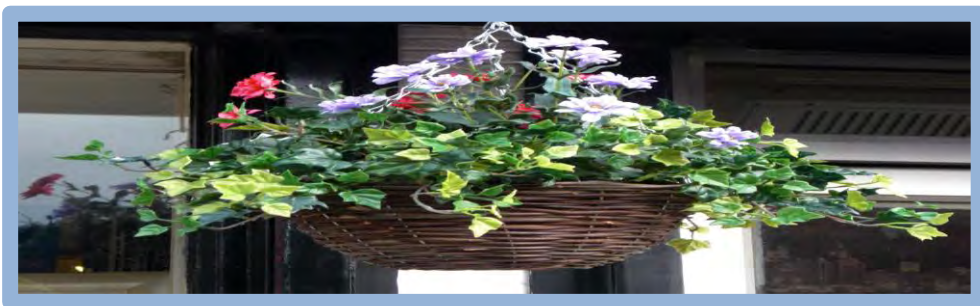
The under-used Town Hall sits at a strategic position on the High Street providing a key focus within the street-scene and opportunities for anchoring complimentary uses to the town centre.







Most of the premises have rear servicing and have an excellent visibility to the customer as well as being adjacent to free parking. However, some of the back areas of the town would benefit from an uplift. The main town square is to be found behind the Town Hall and accessed by 3 block paved Weints from the High Street, Brook Street and Raby Road. This hosts the historical market on Fridays. Heritage - style street furniture and lighting is a consistent and appropriate feature and adds to the attractiveness together with the hanging baskets throughout the town, creating "The Neston Ambience"



## A1

The **Convenience** sector is dominated by Sainsburys' (1710 Sq metres) and Aldi (1000 Sq metres) together with smaller multiple outlets Tesco Express (155 Sq metres). This has recently been enlarged. Iceland, McColl's and Gerrards. There is only one independent Tracey's which offers complementary goods. Five convenience stores have closed since 2009. These include a butcher, baker, greengrocer, specialist foods and off licence.

The National retailers of Iceland, Boots, Tesco, Sainsbury's and Mc Coll's are situated in the primary shopping area of High Street/ Brook Street whereas Aldi is positioned on Ladies Walk.

If we look at the chart it can be seen that the largest sectors are in **Retail Service** which has 23 outlets; twelve of these being involved in the beauty industry, with an increase of 15% in its offer over the 5 years and **Comparison retail** with 23 units, the latter includes 5 charity shops. This represents a 14.8% decline over the same period.



### A3 ,A4, A5

In relation to food and drink, there are no national chain food stores within the town centre and only the public houses are owned by major breweries.

In the 10/11 **Leisure services** on offer there are now three public house in Neston Town centre; The Brewers, The Brown Horse and the Greenland Fishery Hotel. The Malt Shovel, which is to be found on the Liverpool Road approach is not included in the assessment. This has recently had an external improvement. There are two takeaways and two restaurant /take-ways and one cafe (two if we include the integral cafe at Sainsbury's.) Ladbroke's and the Church Hall accounting for the remainder. Four facilities have closed since 2008 representing a 28.5% decline

The Malt Shovel



The Greenland Fishery



The Brown Horse



The Brewers



## A2

There is a strong and reasonably static **Financial and Business Services** offer at 18 in number with an additional 4 businesses above the shop street level. On the first floor we have one hairdresser, one accountant, one solicitor, one training and consultancy service and one insurance business. These have not been included in the current quantitative figures as they were not included in previous studies therefore a true comparison would be flawed.

All of the banks and building Societies HSBC, Nat West, Barclays and Cheshire are situated on the High Street.

All the estate agents are to be found near or around The Cross area.



There were 12 **vacant** units in 2008 mainly on Bridge street/ High Street This has now increased to 18 vacant units which are dispersed throughout the shopping area. Four are to be found on Bridge Street, 5 on High Street ,4 along Parkgate Road including one new construction, 4 on Brook Street and 1 on Chester Road. Vacancy levels in the town centre retail outlets have increased by 50% over the 5 year period.

If we examine the 2014 vacancy chart we can see that Neston is above the National average of 14% at 18.18% and also above the small centre and medium centre figures of 9% and 12% respectively. We were below the average North west figure of 17 % but with the recent closures we are now above that figure.



## BROOK STREET

Whilst the centre now benefits from strong and stable convenience goods presentation, the centre has a limited comparison goods offering, which reflects its limited role in the wider hierarchy.

Since 2008, Neston's comparison goods market at 27 has slightly reduced in number to 23 and there has been a minor change in the complexion and variety. There may therefore be a qualitative need to improve comparison goods retailing.

Many smaller-scale solutions are emerging and often the successful smaller centres are those which recognise the need to enhance local distinctiveness. There are strong retail and financial and business service sectors but a limited leisure service offer. The high level of vacant units may suggest that they are either undesirable or lack the desired size

Increasingly, consumers are looking for a leisure 'experience' and a greater sense of destination, where once they would have been simply visiting a range of shops.

This reflects a wider shift from a purely retail function to a wider emphasis on the visitor economy. The historic environment can often provide a "character-enriched" and distinctive backdrop to this type of end-use.

***From the Grimsey Report:-***

*1. Town centre/high street plans must encompass a complete community hub solution incorporating health, housing, education, arts, entertainment, business/office space, manufacturing and leisure, whilst developing day time, evening time and night time cultures where shops are just a part of the total plan.*

### **Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Local Plan (EPNLP)**

3.40 **Saved Policy SHOP1** of the EPNLP relates to Ellesmere Port and Neston's Primary Shopping Areas as defined on the proposals map. It is stated that in the Primary Shopping Areas, the development and redevelopment of existing shops and empty shops for uses appropriate to the town centre including Use Classes A1, A2, A3, D1 and D2 will be allowed subject to Policy SHOP5.

3.41 **Saved Policy SHOP2** states that shopping development will be allowed in local shopping centres provided that the development is consistent with the centre's scale and function.

3.42 **Saved Policy SHOP3** explains that where there is a need for new retail development in the borough which cannot be met on sites within the Primary Shopping Area, the first consideration will be given to sites on the edge of the Primary Shopping Areas, and in Local Shopping Centres, followed by other sites in the urban areas which are the most accessible. It is stated that proposals for larger retail developments outside Primary Shopping Area and Local Shopping Centres will only be permitted if they assist in sustaining and enhancing and do not undermine the vitality and viability of these centres.

3.44 Since the retail policies contained within the EPNLP were drafted, national planning policy has moved on due to the publication of the NPPF. It is therefore clearly necessary for the policies in the EPNLP to be reviewed and updated in accordance with the NPPF.

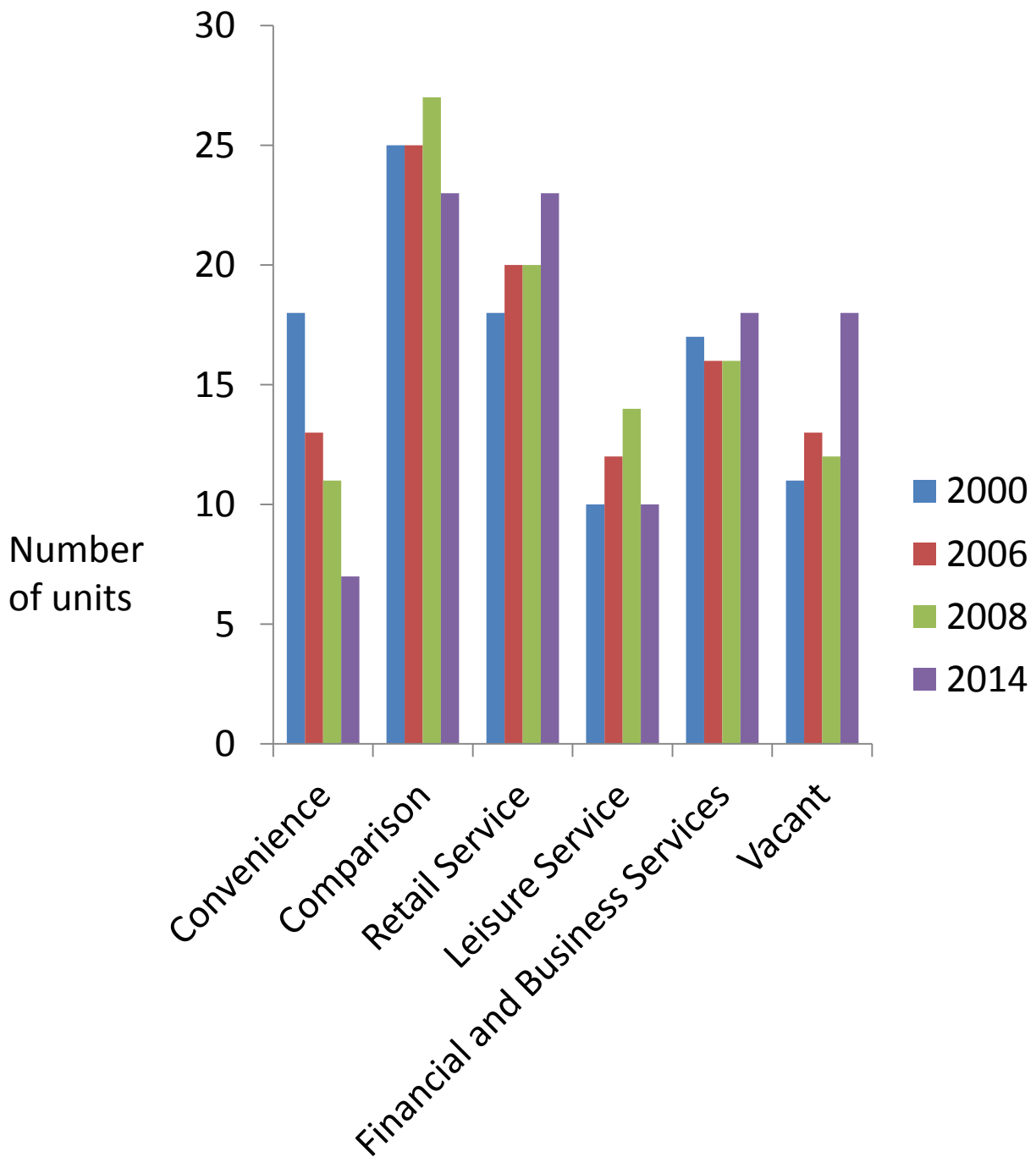
### **7.0 Future Retail Planning Policy Recommendations**

7.01 The NPPF requires LPAs as part of their Local Plan to set out a strategy for the management and growth of centres over the plan period. As part of their strategy, LPAs should, inter alia:

- Recognise town centres as the heart of their communities and pursue policies to support the viability and vitality;
- Define a network and hierarchy of centres resilient to change to anticipated future economic changes;
- Define the extent of town centres and primary shopping areas, based on clear definition of primary and secondary frontages in designated centres, and set policies that make clear which uses will be permitted in such locations;
- Promote competitive town centres that provide customer choice and a diverse retail offer and which reflect the individuality of town centres;
- Retain and enhance existing markets and, where appropriate, re-introduce or create new ones, ensuring that markets remain attractive and competitive;
- Allocate a range of suitable sites to meet the scale and type of retail, leisure, commercial, office, tourism, cultural, community and residential development needed in town centres;
- Allocate appropriate edge of centre sites for main town centre that are well connected to the town centre where suitable and viable town centre sites are not available. If sufficient edge of centre sites cannot be identified, set policies for meeting the identified needs in other accessible locations that are well connected to the town centre; and
- Set policies for the consideration of proposals for main town centre uses which cannot be accommodated in or adjacent to town centres.

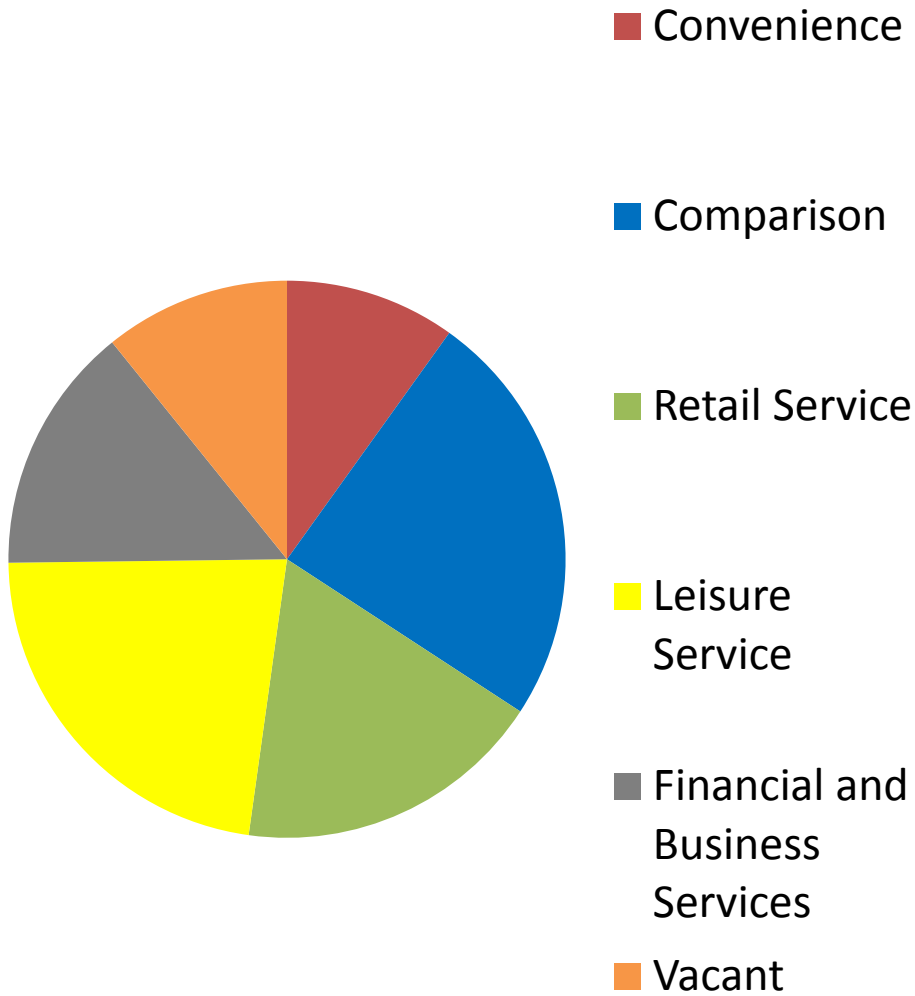
7.02 In relation to the future Part 1 of the emerging Local Plan, each of the above requirements is considered in relation to the Council's city and town centres.

## DIVERSITY OF RETAIL USES IN NESTON TOWN CENTRE

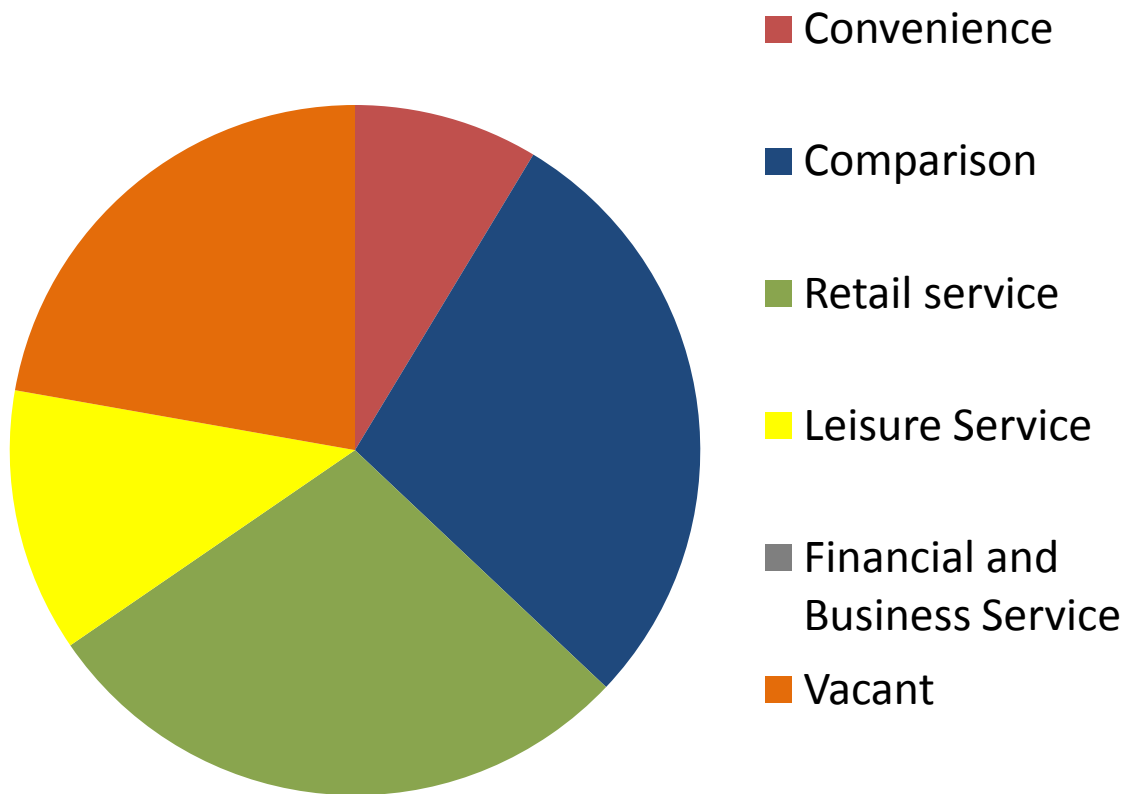




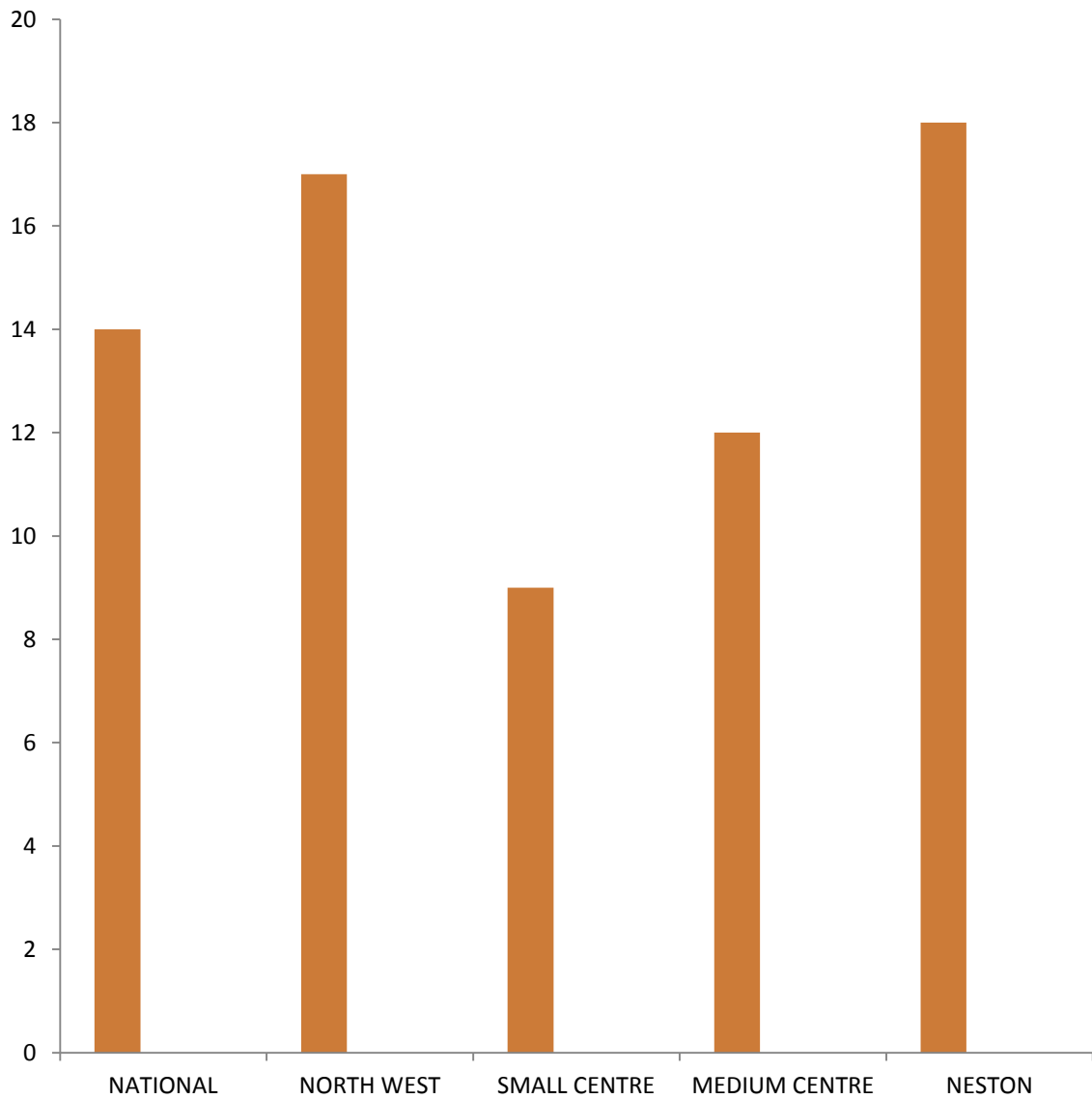
## RETAIL SECTOR PROFILE 2008



## RETAIL SECTOR PROFILE 2014

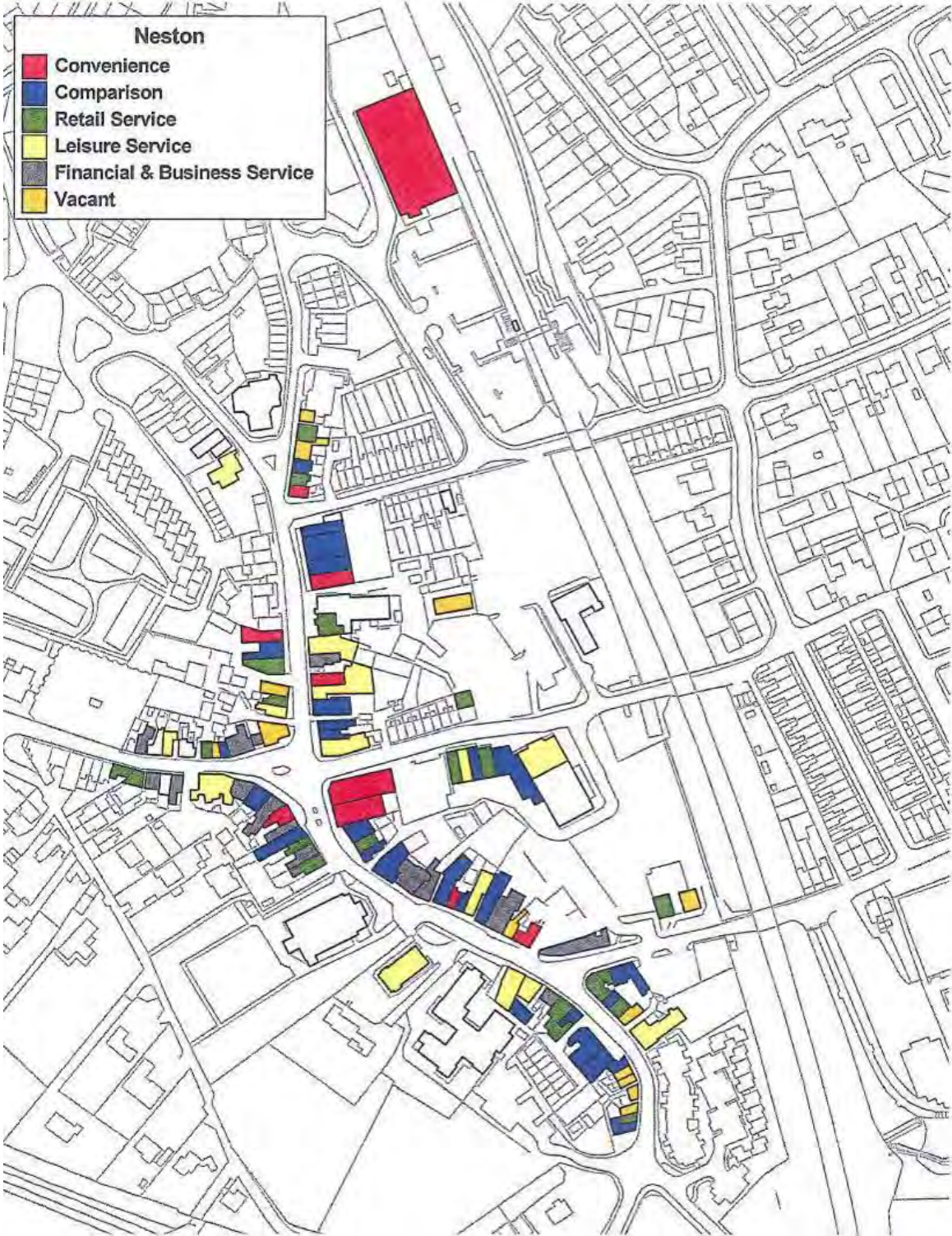


## RATIO PERCENTAGE VACANCY RATES IN 2014



Figures LDC and L Little

Source: Experian Goad Plan (2008)  
WYG note that GOAD town centre definition is not necessarily comparable to the Development Plan





Updated 2014 L Little  
Use same colour key  
as 2008

Cheshire West  
and Chester

Cheshire West & Chester, Planning & Transport,  
Gulden Sutton Depot, Chester, Cheshire CH3 7EX

Project:

Town centre  
Neston



No part of this map shall be used for any purpose other than that for which it was prepared. The user of this map shall be responsible for its use and for any errors or omissions. The user shall indemnify and hold the author harmless from and against all claims, damages, costs and expenses, including reasonable legal fees, in connection with the use of this map.

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Sheet 1 of 1

Phase/Rev:  
D/A



**APPENDIX G:**  
**ECONOMIC STRATEGY iv: VISITORS**



## Economy Strategy iv: Visitors

### Context

**The main aim of our economic strategy is to shift the balance towards more local and preferably higher value jobs to ensure a sustainable future for everyone.** We need to do it in order to provide for and retain people of working age especially younger people, to counter the loss of local industrial jobs and consequent dependence on car-commuting, and the increasing proportion of economically-inactive residents.

The NP economic strategy proposal has four main strands which are (i) improving and modernising the town centre offer, (ii) maximising Clay Hill industrial park, (iii) promoting modern knowledge and technology-based businesses (known by the acronym *SOHO* – small office home office) and, (iv) building the visitor economy.

The first, *modernising the town centre offer*, is an affirmation and extension of existing Town Council policy including the public realm improvements now in hand and the town centre plan being developed by the Town Centre Manager. Creating a unique space for citizenship, enabling residents to mingle, share and feel part of the community, will also make the centre more attractive for visitors and this paper makes some suggestions in that regard. The second, *maximising Clay Hill*, and the third, *promoting SOHO business*, will be the subject of separate papers, to come. This paper, one of three, deals with *building the visitor economy*.

### The case for

Neston parish already successfully attracts visitors with some notable honey pots that bring people, jobs and prosperity from afar. Parkgate itself is a very popular destination although it tends to be overlooked in tourist policies which lead on large commercial attractions and locations. So is Ness Gardens, the fourth most-visited attraction in Cheshire (2009) and Gordale Nurseries (Garden Retailer of the Year 2012/13), just outside the parish boundary. Outdoor pursuits including walking, cycling and bird-watching, the latter actively promoted by the RSPB, are increasingly prominent. There are also places barely on the visitor itinerary of which the actual town centre is the most significant although the historic market has in the past drawn people in and could again. Only slightly tongue-in-cheek, we can characterise the unique attraction of the area as *The Cheshire Riviera*. What we need to do is build on the success of the better-known attractions while deepening and extending opportunities for visitors to explore further, visit more often and stay longer.

Doing this provides scope for entrepreneurs of all kinds to invest without putting undue pressure on land availability; indeed enhancing the visitor economy may well itself generate funds to improve and support heritage and the natural environment through sponsorships, partnerships and philanthropy. If we can do that, while maintaining the essential character of the area, it will grow business, replacing revenue and jobs lost and it holds the promise of more of both.

This paper deals chiefly with proposals relevant to the Neighbourhood Plan but they sit within a proposed developmental strategy aimed at creating a holistic, inclusive approach to packaging and marketing, linking attractions together thematically and geographically, creating appropriate infrastructure and building up a critical mass to the extent that 'CH64' (or the '*Cheshire Riviera*') becomes an attractive brand.

### The aims

1. *Build on Parkgate's success;*
2. *Create a visitor-friendly town centre;*
3. *Diversify and integrate the tourism offer;*
4. *Create a visitor-supportive infrastructure;*

5. *Safeguard and improve heritage and environment.*

Each is discussed in more detail in what follows.

**1. Build on Parkgate's Success**

Parkgate already has many visitors and recent retail and café developments suggest investor confidence. Infrastructure development and management is the priority. Objectives might include better parking and enforcement, public lavatories, improved accessibility, information boards and signage, footpath and cycle route signage and maintenance, picnic and barbeque areas appropriately located as well as extending the Rope Walk play area and providing facilities there.

A number of measures would increase capacity and ease congestion on The Parade including:

- a) Building decked viewing platforms on the seaward side of the wall to provide safe refuges away from traffic for pedestrians, birdwatchers, ice cream eaters and the like. Sizes are yet to be determined and they could take different forms, perhaps projecting like the Donkey Stand at intervals, perhaps projecting seaward like a small jetty. Or they could run parallel to The Parade especially at the pinch points, allowing people to stroll along freely without navigating bins, lamp posts and picnickers on the wall and without the risk of inadvertently stepping into traffic.
- b) Creating a green 'beach': essentially a raised grassed area on the seaward side of the wall serving the same purposes although it risks being less accessible for wheelchairs, push chairs and others with poor mobility. Again, its location and extent is for discussion.

Either could be combined with a project to conserve the Parade wall of the kind currently being planned by CwaC.

- c) Encouraging and extending use of the car parks at either end and improving quality. See details further on.

Some of this is already being tackled by CwaC with the Town Council and the Parkgate Society. To follow-up current plans and pursue it further *a Parkgate management plan is indicated*, produced in partnership with local stakeholders including businesses and the RSPB as the dominant land-owner.

Commercial visitor facilities should generally be constrained within The Parade, Mostyn Square and Station Road while residential areas, paths and countryside behind should be protected from inappropriate incursions. Parks Field potentially represents a significant asset for visitors to enjoy views and the natural history of the area. Its protection and improvement by The Friends should remain a priority.

**2. A visitor-friendly town centre**

Action is already being taken by CwaC, the Town Council, the Chamber of Trade, Neston Civic Society and other organisations to ensure that the heart of the parish continues to be a sustainable 'key service centre' providing for the needs of those who live here.

As well as that, this paper proposes that the town centre can add to the tourist offer and prosperity of the area by encouraging and providing for visitors to a greater degree than it does at present. Some things, like free parking, the way the town looks as well as restaurants and pubs please residents and visitor alike. Others, like access to public services, every-day facilities like banks and post-offices and day-to-day food shopping are more likely to concern residents than visitors who, driving through, have different priorities.

Robin Hughes

They are all important for viability but this paper deals primarily with the factors that might specifically encourage visitors to stop, enjoy and spend.

- a) Develop the market: While a priority for residents, the market or markets also have a special role in attracting visitors. A survey for *the Market Town Initiative* showed (2008) they travelled from North Wales, the rest of Cheshire and Merseyside. Future market viability may depend on balancing the shopping requirements of residents with the interests of potential visitors to create a critical mass and a return to growth. Protecting and improving the market square and market infrastructure, including considerations of expansion and development, are planning issues.
- b) Modernise and improve the high street: We read a good deal about what needs to be done to bring back successful high streets and note the replacement of traditional everyday shops by on-line shopping, supermarkets and other chains. In their place, we are advised by researchers, social and cultural facilities, services and attractive specialist shops are at the heart of things. Some evidence of that is provided by the local café and restaurant scene. These kinds of ideas are potentially attractive to visitors as well as residents. Visitor footfall added to local footfall can make viable facilities which may otherwise struggle if dependent solely on local people. Planning policy needs to take this into account.

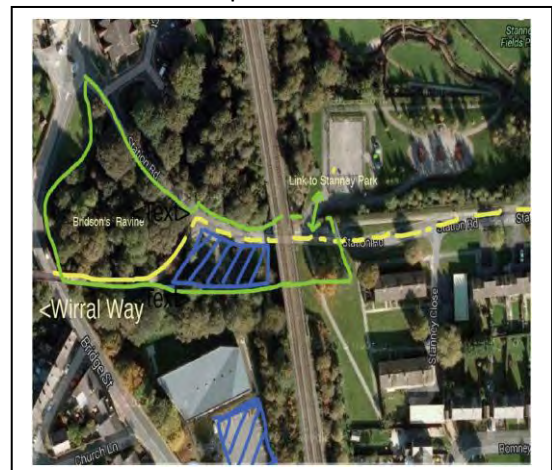
Of course, much of this lies outwith the Neighbourhood Plan but there are aspects of the physical infrastructure that are relevant; some which needs protection and some which need to be reflected in conservation and land use strategies.

That includes the continuing public realm improvements. Making the place more attractive, interesting and distinctive is important from a visitor perspective and further opportunities should be sought including implementation of the Neston Public Realm Design Guide (CwaC). Visitors have an idea in their minds of what an historic market town should look like so the Plan should reinforce the importance of preserving and protecting historical frontages, the need to overcome or mitigate the impact of poor-quality design and lack of maintenance and policies that aim to bring empty properties into use. For example, the roller shutters that present such a hostile aspect at bank holidays and during evenings and weekends should be replaced with more modern security and more of the same should be vigorously prevented.

Visitor-relevant infrastructure priorities include: *planters, seats and bicycle racks; signage and linked interpretive plaques reinforcing walking, cycling and driving routes to and from the town centre, improving the appearance and utility of the Chester Road car park; identifying parking for minibuses and coaches.*

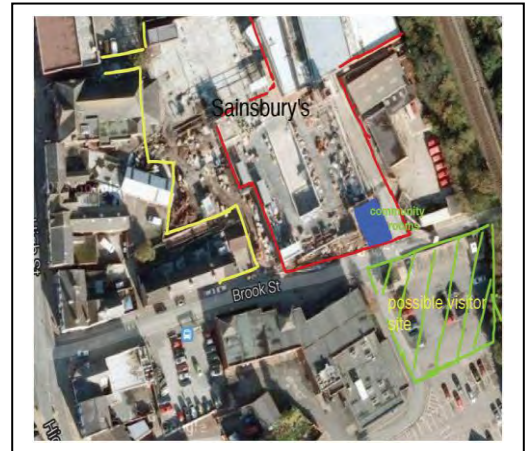
- c) Create a designated stopping place for visitors: Casual visitors of all ages and capabilities, using different forms of transport, need somewhere attractive to stop, get information and refreshments, use the lavatory, look around, stretch their legs and perhaps picnic. Often it will be a spur-of-the-moment decision based on what the motorist, walker or cyclist can see as they pass through. None of the existing car parking areas deliver against those criteria.

***The preferred option***: Link the Station Road car park to an extended Stanney Park (which is virtually invisible to casual visitors travelling the main roads and has no dedicated car park) across what is now the Station Road cul-de-sac. It could be grassed and landscaped including the rough ground under the railway bridge, provided



with facilities such as picnic tables and information boards and signage. The town centre including the market square can be easily reached on foot. There could be links to the NCYC facilities and a more accessible Bridson's Ravine (paths, seats and picnic tables perhaps). This location also provides excellent access to the Town Trail and the Wirral Country Park. In one direction lies the Neston Rock Cutting and Lees Lane ponds; in the other direction lies paths to the Old Quay across delightful meadowland with wonderful views.

**A less-satisfactory alternative:** Although we note that the Chester Road car park is used for all-day parking during the working week it is less pressured at evenings, bank holidays and weekends. Part of it could be designated as a visitor car park and made more attractive with grass, trees and shrubs, public art, picnic tables and information boards. If it is at the north end, opposite Sainsbury's, it could be linked to the Market Square (perhaps across a levelled Brook Street, see above). The community offices at the corner of the Sainsbury's car park might be brought into use in support. If land now occupied by the empty pub and job centre became available something more comprehensive might be achieved.



### 3. Diversify and integrate the offer

- a) Weave together a network of interconnecting, signed driving, walking, riding and cycling routes, emphasising their relationship with village centres and visitor attractions including refreshment, accommodation and public transport reaching the area and within it.
- b) Ensure dispersed or stand-alone attractions (see lists appended) are integrated with all the others through mechanisms such as branded information boards at key points. They could be thematic (eg I am in one garden centre, how do I get to another or connective (how to get to another location on foot, by horse, on a bike or in a car) or needs-based (finding somewhere to eat/use the lavatory/buy food/picnic/hire a bike/).
- c) Install similar boards at key gateways to the parish, whether in lay-bys on roads, footpaths or cycleways.
- d) Serving the same purpose as above, set up a network of electronic information points using QR codes scannable with mobile devices.
- e) Ensure the main dispersed locations are fit for visitors while minimising environmental friction. Depending on where, that might involve landscaping, treatment of car parking, seats, cycle parking or public lavatories. As well as the town centre visitor location, the Old Baths car park and Station Road car park in Parkgate, existing and potential dispersed locations include Lees Lane ponds, the NE corner of Park Fields, the bottom of Denhall Lane, the bottom of Marshlands Road, and the bottom of Moorside Lane. Each is already used by visitors.
- f) Taking that idea further is a suggestion for the development of the B5135 Station Road intersection with the Wirral Country Park to create another destination. There are already two mostly under-used car parks located here; they are on the main motoring,



cycling and walking routes and close to Park Fields which is being developed for outdoor recreation. A new, well-designed, pedestrian/equestrian bridge over the main road and car park improvements have the potential to increase capacity, reduce pressure on the Parkgate honey pot and improve road safety. Subject to investment funds becoming available, consideration might also be given to a café, information point and small, outdoor orientated outlets eg cycle hire. Low rise, possibly part-subterranean construction would minimise visual impact and reduce land-take.

#### **4. Visitor-supportive infrastructure**

Implicit in the above proposals is the expectation that the needs of visitors will be taken into account in planning the infrastructure as well as the needs local residents. The interests of visitors and residents are not necessarily the same; living together needs foresight and planning.

- a) Visitors want to be able to park near the relevant point of interest. If they cannot, they need to be able to walk there safely, especially disabled people, people with limited mobility and those with push chairs. That includes going to restaurants and pubs after dark. Car and coach park planning needs to bear that in mind; peripheral car parks need to be linked by suitably-surfaced and signed pedestrian routes.
- b) Public transport policy and infrastructure must bear that in mind too so buses and trains go where they want when they want. Public transport can also play a part in local connectivity, making it possible to, say, walk along Parkgate Parade in the morning and tour Ness Gardens in the afternoon.
- c) Increasing the supply of accommodation will keep visitors in the area longer, perhaps for short breaks. Planning policy should encourage the provision of bed and breakfast and self-catering accommodation. Consideration might be given to a caravan and camping site.

#### **5. Safeguard and improve heritage and environment**

People come here to enjoy unique, unspoilt beauty, stunning views, historical interest, natural history and opportunities for outdoor recreation without equal in Cheshire West and beyond. The townscape of Neston, Little Neston, Ness and Parkgate is part of that attraction.

Among the key features that should be protected and taken into account in planning decisions are:

- sandstone walls
- the weints
- Cheshire black and white
- frontages of older buildings in the town and village centres
- the footpath network
- the marsh frontage and access to it
- vantage points and open views, agricultural, estuarial and mountainous.

It makes sense to ensure that the inventory is maintained and improved. Here and in the attached appendices are some of the features that make the parish so attractive, organised geographically and thematically. As part of a visitor strategy they need to be monitored, maintained and protected.

## 6. Action points

This report is written with the following in mind:

1. To provide context for the Neighbourhood Plan by outlining what a comprehensive visitor strategy might look like.
2. To identify those aspects of the strategy which might be reflected in the Neighbourhood Plan.
3. To identify those aspects of the strategy which, while not directly within the Neighbourhood Plan remit, might be reflected in the envisaged accompanying report setting out non-Plan options for development.
4. To inform the work of consultants drafting the Plan.

Clearly, we are being aspirational; some would say we need to lift our eyes to the wider horizon in any case, and the NP 30-year window probably dictates it. Of course this paper begs many questions, not the least of which is commitment and resources. However, one needs to start somewhere and a framework like this can become a statement of intent which, if generally adopted, influences decisions by the many and creates not so much a dirigiste top-down managed approach as a direction of travel which, through an accumulation of separate decisions by diverse parties, moves us in the direction we want to go.

## 7. Neighbourhood Plan Considerations

The action points arising from this paper in the short term are largely implied in the text. Some of them are already covered by existing policies (eg Neston Town Council and Section 106 sub-committee street scene improvements, the town centre plan being developed by the Town Centre Manager and the Parkgate improvements).

- Feasibility studies are needed for the stopping place options suggested for Neston town centre, for the proposed B5135 destination in Parkgate and for the congestion-reduction proposals there.
- The proposed 'dispersed locations' should be formally identified and protected.
- The Parkgate Management Plan proposed above.
- Relevant aspects of the Neston Town Centre Action Plan.
- The NP Transport strategy needs to be revisited to ensure that visitor needs are taken into account.
- Much of the strategy regarding protecting and developing heritage and environment requires an inventory to identify what is out there and what needs to be done. So does the network of footpaths, bridleways and cycle routes.
- In the meantime, sites of natural beauty and interest, geological, historical, scientific, including townscapes, and sites with potential for the above proposals need to be protected from inappropriate development.

## **8. Non-Neighbourhood Plan Considerations**

- A development and marketing strategy as discussed on page 1. It would take a holistic, inclusive approach to packaging, marketing and promotion, building up a critical mass so that *the Cheshire Riviera* becomes an attractive, competitive brand.
- Proposals to install and improve information points and signage need to identify locations and seek involvement from independently-owned attractions where appropriate.
- The proposed dispersed locations need evaluation to see how they might be established as a network, connected to each other and improved appropriately.
- Proposals for publicity including guides, maps and routes, building on what already exists, need to be taken forward in a coordinated fashion, reflecting the local brand.
- Establishment of an appropriate body, involving relevant stakeholders, to lead the initiative.

End; appendices follow



## **Appendix 1: Neston's Potential: a thematic approach**

Coastal interest : Parkgate; the Moorside and its reed bed, via Old/New Quay to Denhall;

Industry and commerce: Chester trading; Welsh ferries, Irish packets and the Royal Yachts; slavery; sea-bathing; mining; fishing; agriculture;

The estuary: Romans, Vikings, invasions of Wales and Ireland; Chester Trading; the wartime marsh;

Famous people: *Regency days*: Mrs Fitzherbert, J M W Turner, Georg Frideric Handel, Emma Hart, John Wesley, the Mostyn Family, *19/20<sup>th</sup> century revival*: A S Grenfell, Wilfrid Grenfell of Labrador, Christopher Bushell; his grandson Lt Col Christopher Bushell VC DSO, Sir Percy Bates, Sir John Stanley, R A McFie, Arthur Bulley; Ernestine Gladstone, *21<sup>st</sup> century*: Edwina Grosvenor;

Natural history: birds and animals: several coastal viewing points, Lees Lane Nature Reserve, Parks Field wildflower meadow, Bluebell Wood, Neston Rock Cutting Nature Trail; several Local Wildlife Sites, see below.

Horticulture: Ness Gardens, several garden centres, national gardens scheme;

Recreation: Livery, horse-riding, paint-balling, sports facilities

Townscapes: the old centres of character; listed buildings;

Historical Interest: Saxons and Vikings; the biggest town in Wirral; Neston Female Friendly Society; Parkgate Sea-bathing Charity; horse racing, boat races and theatre at Parkgate;

## Appendix 2: Getting here and moving around

1. The parish is well-located, sitting astride the A540 trunk road, with easy access from the M53, M56 and A55 bringing visitors from Merseyside, the remainder of Cheshire and North Wales. As part of the visitor strategy, *access to specified attractions from the A540 needs to be signed at all appropriate points, perhaps indicating scenic drives.*
2. The railway has potential. A better service and perhaps another station at the south end of the parish could be popular with visitors. A new station where the line crosses the A540 at Leighton has also been suggested. Even as things stand, *an information point at Neston Station is necessary.*
3. The parish is criss-crossed with footpaths and bridleways which must be well-maintained and way-marked. It is also well-placed for long-distance footpaths such as the Wirral Circular Trail, the Wirral Country Park itself and the Burton Greenway that links to the Welsh Coastal Path. *A stile-elimination policy would be helpful and more paths could be made fit for wheelchairs.*
4. It has long been popular with cyclists but the proliferation of Sustrans-promoted cycle routes through the parish is taking them off the A540 and bringing more into the area. National Route 56 Chester to Liverpool links to Transpennine Route 62, eventually reaching the East Coast. The Burton Greenway, Route 568, connects with Deeside (becoming a commuter route) then Welsh National Route 5, Chester to Holyhead.

### Appendix 3: Special or designated environmental locations and listed buildings:

Large parts of the Dee Estuary lie within the parish boundary.

- The Dee estuary is a Special Protection Area under Article 4.1 and 4.2 of European Directive 79/409/EEC as a wetland of international importance.
- The Dee Estuary is designated by the UK government under the Ramsar Convention on wetlands.
- The Dee Estuary is designated as a Special Area for Conservation (of plants).
- The Dee Estuary is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (specifically littoral sediment) under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.
- The Neston coast provides outstanding views of the Clwyd Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- The English Heritage NW Rapid Coastal Zone Erosion Survey 2012 identifies archaeological remains around Neston Old Quay as threatened by erosion and damaged by stone robbing.
- The English Heritage Review of retail and town centre issues (2013) cites the development of Sainsbury's with housing and the creation of the market square with access to the High Street in Neston as a positive example of integrated development.
- Natural England locates Neston within NCA 59 Wirral Character Assessment Profile.
- The Nature Conservancy Council notes that Neston Rock Cutting is a regionally important geological site (RIGS). (*The Wirral Country Park Nature Trail and booklet could be revived*).
- Local Wildlife Sites designated by CWaC include:
  - Lloyd's Hay Meadow
  - Backwood Hall Farm
  - Wirral Way West
  - Moorside Meadow
  - Church Lane Meadow
  - Neston Sewage Farm
  - Neston Colliery Tip
  - Ness Gardens
  - Snab Wood
  - Cherry Tree Wood
  - Ness Woods
  - Poultry House Ponds
- Much of the old town centre is designated an Area of Archaeological Potential.
- The parish has a rich built environment. There are 75 national listings, including three Grade II\*, some of them encompass more than one property, as well as a number of local listings. There are groupings which significantly define the character of the area in question, in Parkgate, the town centre, Little Neston and Ness, and potential overall impact on the group should be taken into account when considering proposals for any of them separately.

**APPENDIX H:**  
**NESTON CHARACTER APPRAISAL**

# Neston Character Appraisal

Version 2 - 27<sup>th</sup> September 2014

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From its early origins, probably in Saxon times, the Neston area has a long and rich history.<sup>1</sup> Neston was the largest settlement on the Wirral peninsula until the late 19th century. The settlement of Neston was, and remains, an active market town. The colliery was where the Industrial Revolution started in the area with early large scale employment. Parkgate was a major port with sailings from England to Ireland.

Neston sits within high quality open space with the older settlements, with the exception of Parkgate, built on a sandstone ridge. To the west of Neston is a large area of salt marsh that has developed as the Dee estuary has silted up. The surrounding landscape of the Wirral peninsula comprises largely agricultural fields that form gently undulating grassland, broken up by hedges and woodlands.

The proximity of the town centre to open countryside, of high visual and ecological value, is a key asset. It provides an important green lung and valuable recreational resource for the compact town centre. The high quality and varied green space provision of Stanney Fields Park, Comrades Field, Wirral Country Park, the Wirral Way and accessible estuarial margins contribute to making Neston a pleasant place in which to live. Cycle and pedestrian routes such as the Wirral Way that runs through central Neston and links to Heswall and Willaston, the Burton Green Way that links through to North Wales and Cuckoo Lane are examples of interesting pathways which make the countryside easy to access.

## **Built Environment**

There are three conservation areas, each with detailed character appraisals carried out by the former Ellesmere and Neston Borough Council: Neston, in 2001, Parkgate in 2008 and Ness in 2007. For more information refer to the Local Authority website<sup>2</sup>.

There are a significant number of listed buildings in the NPA [Neighbourhood Plan Area], a full list can be found on Wikipedia<sup>3</sup>. In the main, listed buildings are either public realm buildings, houses or related to farming. The other listed buildings include churches and associated structures, a public house, a converted windmill, a former school and its chapel, a bridge over a disused railway and a telephone kiosk.

Older buildings in the NPA as a whole have a core of distinguishing features, they tend to be constructed of local Triassic red sandstone, local dark red brick, pressed red brick, lime render or pebbledash with Welsh slate roofing. It is rare for buildings to be more than three stories high. Roofscapes are significant, often complex with chimneys, gables, dormers and a variety of planes. Boundary features such as traditional red sandstone walls and hedgerows and hedgerow trees characterise the landscape. Cheshire railings, originally extensively installed to improve visibility at road junctions, feature outside the town centre.

The NPA has a wide range of housing types, of varying ages and sizes. What is noteworthy of the conurbation is how in general these types are mixed and integrated. Examples of social housing, older terraces, bungalows, semi-detached houses and large detached dwellings can all be found in close proximity to each other.

Great Neston, is located to the east of the A540 (The Chester High Road) and is centred on Neston. Neston links through to other the hamlets/suburban localities/suburbs/villages that coalesce along or near arterial transport routes: Clayhill - located off the B5136 (Liverpool Road), Hinderton - linked by the B5134 (Hinderton Road), Leighton - running along the Leighton Road, Moorside and Parkgate - located along or off the B5135 (The Parade and Parkgate Road) and Little Neston, Riverside, Nessholt and Ness

- located off Burton/Neston Road. This document is structured around the 5 Town Council wards that constitute the NPA.

### **Neston Ward**

The architecture of the centre of Neston is small scale, simple and vernacular with Georgian, Victorian and modern properties following the original medieval street pattern. Neston has a varied public realm that contributes to the image and character of the town. Some are historic, such as the Cross which once formed the market square and others are more recent such as the new market square. Architectural details tend to be small scale, such as windows with Georgian panes. Quirky features, such as sun dials and date stones can be found adorning buildings. Sadly, more recent additions to the centre in the 1970s are unsympathetic to the historic fabric of the town.

A second residential area evolved in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century to the West of the centre around Mill Street, consisting of substantial properties set within their own grounds with mature planting and curved sandstone boundary walls. To the East the character is again different with residential properties, Victorian and Edwardian terraced and semi-detached, separated from the town centre by the railway line.

The organic growth of the town has created a spiders web of roads leading out from the centre. Many of the roads are narrow, often crooked and without footpaths. A distinctive feature of the town is a network of narrow pedestrian paths (weints) that provide shortcuts and links to courts and small areas of open space. Railway bridges are important feature in the town and form strong gateways to the town centre.

Moving away from the historic core there are further suburban areas. Clayhill to the north east was part of the twentieth century expansion of the town, with the only Employment zone in the town. It is a large development of poor quality industrial buildings. The Ringway, located off Liverpool Road, is a large, post-war social housing development. Hinderton is slightly further from the centre, to the east, along the Chester High Road and linked to Neston via Hinderton Road. The area contains the large houses of Hinderton Hall, Windle Hill and farms on the other side of the A540. Along the Hinderton Road there is a mixture of housing, from large Edwardian villas set in spacious grounds to late twentieth century detached houses and bungalows. Leighton Road is a route into Neston from the north, it is again a mixture of housing types, from seventeenth century Leighton Hall to late twentieth century detached houses and bungalows and more current in-fill developments.

### **Parkgate Ward**

Parkgate is unique as the only piece of Cheshire coastline. It is a linear settlement, evolved from a single carriageway aligned with the River Dee, called the Parade. Parkgate evolved from an anchorage to a port to serve the city of Chester and was once a major departure point for sailings to Ireland. The view across the river from the Parade is a defining characteristic with vistas of marshes and the Welsh hills. There are high-density vertical Georgian buildings along the Parade, often tall, situated on long thin plots with narrow weints between buildings. They are in the main white render with black detailing, Georgian style windows, tall chimneys and Welsh slate roofs.

Buildings immediately inland to the east from the Parade, are less densely planned, with small mews-like terraces, with gardens, built from red brick or sandstone masonry and red clay tile roofs. Slightly further out towards the Wirral Way there are semi-detached or bungalows, dating from 1960s. North and south of the Parade the houses are mostly from the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with a mixture of bungalows, semi-detached houses and detached dwellings set in largish gardens. There are a number of recent in-fill developments; most notable is the insertion of new terraced and detached dwellings into the grounds of the now closed Mostyn House School.

## **Ness Ward**

The Ness Ward includes the village of Burton however Burton is not included in the NPA. Ness is a small village centred around a very small village green area. Ness was primarily a working farming village until the late twentieth century when many of the buildings were converted to housing. Buildings are of differing periods and scales, including farm buildings, terraced cottages and post-war social housing. The central village area is united by boundary walls mainly of red sandstone. Red sandstone, old brick and some pebbledash, painted render and slate roofing are the main housing construction materials. The village has a relatively dense core with buildings becoming increasingly dispersed towards the edge, reflecting the organic growth of development. Later peripheral expansion has tended to be in the form of more spacious detached dwellings set in spacious grounds and seventies housing.

The high ridge location means people benefit from stunning views of the River Dee throughout. Sunken lanes and their sandstone and hedge boundaries around medium sized fields are indicative of an historic Wirral landscape. The Burton/Neston Road runs through the village and links it to Little Neston at Nessholt along a winding, tree-lined route from Burton to the south. Nessholt contains a number of Edwardian villas set in spacious grounds, built in the Arts and Crafts style, typical of other developments on the Wirral at this time.

## **Little Neston Ward**

Little Neston, a suburb between Neston and Ness, is centred on a triangular green space with some listed Victorian terraced cottages. There is a small run of shops and a public House, the Royal Oak. Twentieth century housing has merged Little Neston into the surrounding settlements, many built in the 1960s, with a range of bungalows, semi-detached and detached dwellings.

## **Riverside Ward**

The Riverside ward, along with Parkgate, has a significant edge to the marshland around the River Dee, with an industrial history. Although there are some farm buildings, the presence of the Colliery, opened in the 1759, has had a significant influence on the early development of the area. The remains of Denhall Quay, Little Neston Quay, landscaped spoil heaps and rows of colliery workers houses are all physical remnants of the coal mining industry.

The area was developed progressively in the twentieth century, with extensive and relatively high density housing built between the sixties and the eighties in the areas between and around West Vale and Marshlands Road.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://neston.org.uk/local-history/timeline-for-ch64/>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/planning\\_and\\_building\\_control/specialist\\_environmental\\_servi/conservation\\_areas.aspx](http://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/planning_and_building_control/specialist_environmental_servi/conservation_areas.aspx)

<sup>3</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Listed\\_buildings\\_in\\_Neston](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Listed_buildings_in_Neston)



**APPENDIX I:**  
**NESTON DESIGN & ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS**

## General design - physical environment of Neston

Objective – To maintain and enhance the physical environment of Neston

The physical environment of Neston is important on many levels, it can: generate a sense of belonging and pride amongst the local population, attract new residents and visitors into our town and encourage retailer and employment endeavours.

The key areas on which to focus attention are:

- encouraging and supporting appropriate new commercial and domestic developments
- improving major thoroughfares and gateways
- improving the quality of, and access to, open spaces
- protecting and restoring historic buildings and features.

## Housing design

Objective “All new homes should be built to high design and environmental standards.”

Good quality design is not just about what buildings look like, it is also about how new development is designed to relate to nearby buildings and spaces. New buildings should respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation. This policy does not seek to impose a particular architectural style, additional costs or discourage appropriate innovation. Instead, it aims to ensure that new development relates with sensitivity to the specific local character of Neston.

There are many policy guidance documents on good design already in place to which developers can refer, and this includes: policies within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)<sup>1</sup>, Building for Life<sup>2</sup>, Good design: the fundamentals (CABE)<sup>3</sup> and Lifetime Homes<sup>4</sup>

### 1. Development should reinforce the character and quality of Neston

Developers must provide and demonstrate in a *Design and Access Statement* how their proposed development reinforces the character of Neston. The *Design and Access Statement* and accompanying drawings must provide sufficient detail for proposals to be properly understood.

The *Design and Access Statement* must include an appraisal of the site in its surroundings that:

- identifies the opportunities and constraints for development
- describes the design context and character.

The *Design and Access Statement* should address how the new development is designed to:

- relate to nearby buildings and spaces in terms of scale, massing, fenestration and materials
- connects with the countryside, if appropriate

- provide good quality private outdoor space
- provide for pedestrian access
- provide for car access and parking that fits in with the character of the proposed development

The 'forgotten' elements should be included from the start of the design process. The following items must be considered early in the design process with appropriate space provided and integrated into the overall scheme:

- bin stores and recycling facilities
- cycle stores
- meter boxes
- lighting
- flues and ventilation ducts
- gutters and pipes
- satellite dishes and telephone lines.

## **2. Development in conservation areas**

Ideally the design of new buildings should reflect the design principles of their time so that the richness of varied character continues and is extended into the future. However, the quality of design must ensure that new buildings contribute positively to the historic character of the area. Listed Buildings and their settings; and Conservation Areas and their settings, will be conserved and enhanced to reinforce the quality and character of Neston.

Development proposals in historic character areas must include the following information:

- drawings showing the proposals in relation to their surroundings. This will include a street elevation and sections across the street
- three-dimensional drawings from at least two viewpoints
- rendered elevations, clearly indicating the proposed palette of materials
- details of how window openings relate to the elevation (i.e. are they flush or set back?).

## **3. Integration of windfall sites**

Permission will be granted for small residential developments on infill and redevelopment sites within Neston, subject to proposals being well designed as set out above.

Development must achieve the best use of land in a manner that does not adversely impact on other policies within the Plan, particularly those that relate to environmental and design quality. The density of development should create a character that is appropriate to the site's context.

The development of previously developed land will be positively supported. Residential development can play an important role in ensuring the vitality of town and neighbourhood centres. Neston Town Council will actively pursue opportunities to support the development of previously developed 'brownfield' land.

## **4. Sustainability - drainage**

Applications for new development should provide a drainage strategy, with new development proposals incorporating a Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS). The system should effectively

mitigate any adverse effects from surface water run-off and flooding onto people, property and the ecological value of the local environment.

## **5. Sustainability – energy in homes**

Energy use in buildings accounts for almost half of all CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Government policy recognises that there is an opportunity for new dwellings to be designed to reduce energy use and - where possible - generate some energy from renewable sources. Whilst other Neighbourhood plans refer to the *Code for Sustainable Homes*, very recent government policy indicates that this will not be updated and will be deprecated in favour of a “Building Regulations only” approach in the run up to the implementation of the zero carbon homes policy for new homes from 2016<sup>5</sup>. Assuming this policy is adopted; all new dwellings will be energy future-proofed. However, retro-fitting energy conservation measures to existing dwellings will be a significant and much larger challenge.

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## **Additional information about the character of the area**

Developments should ensure the preservation of sandstone walls and weints which are an essential feature of the character of the area.

Where openings are made in sandstone walls or walls are otherwise altered it should be for the minimum necessary. Walls should be made good to high standard using lime mortar unless otherwise permitted.

Where the development is on a weint special regard should be had for the characteristics of the weint, including the surface and street furniture and the design should fit in with other properties.

Particular considerations apply to developments in the Town Centre because of its essential character as an historic market town and the village communities of Ness, Parkgate and the centre of Little Neston. It is important that developments do not detract from these sensitive areas unlike some earlier developments. Indeed, it may be that good quality new development replacing poor quality older stuff may provide an opportunity to retrieve the situation.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/sites/default/files/our-work/building\\_for\\_life\\_12.pdf](http://www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/sites/default/files/our-work/building_for_life_12.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/asset/document/good-design.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.lifetimehomes.org.uk/>

<sup>5</sup>

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/291796/140313\\_Building\\_Regulations.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/291796/140313_Building_Regulations.pdf)

**APPENDIX J:  
GREENSPACE SITES**

# NESTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN: GREENSPACE SITES

## LOCAL GREEN SPACE DESIGNATION CRITERIA

Paragraphs 76 – 78 of NPPF introduced a new Local Green Space designation (LGS) to protect local green areas of particular importance to local communities. This will enable communities, in certain circumstances, to identify and protect green areas that are of value to them through local and neighbourhood plans. Once designated, the LGS is subject to the same strong development restrictions as Green Belt, and new development on LGS is ruled out other than in special circumstances.

Paragraph 77 states that the LGS will not be appropriate for most green areas or open space and that the designation should only be used:

- where the green space is in reasonably close to proximity to the community it serves;
- where the green area is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and
- where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

Neither the NPPF nor the Planning Practice Guidance provides the necessary detail to support the above criteria. However, some local planning authorities (Cotswold District Council, South Gloucestershire Council and Leicester and Leicestershire Councils) and other organisations, such as the Open Spaces Society, have provided guidance and checklists to help those who are wishing to designate green areas as LGS.

Having read through these, the criteria below were used to assess whether green areas and open spaces within the Neston NPA could be proposed for designation as LGS within the Neighbourhood Plan.

- 1 What is the existing land use designation of the site within the Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Local Plan? Does the existing designation provide the same protection as that of the LGS designation. If so, is there a need to include a LGS designation?
- 2 Does the site have planning permission or proposals for development or is it allocated for development that would not be compatible with a LGS designation?
- 3 Is the site located within the community it serves? Can it be easily accessed and is it within a reasonable walking distance from the local community? Are there any physical barriers to the local community accessing the site?
- 4 Is there any evidence to show that the green space is 'demonstrably special to the local community'? An example is a friends' group for the green area.
- 5 The significance of the green area to the local community is split into five sub-criteria essentially taken from Paragraph 77 of NPPF.
  - i) Beauty – the site should provide a significant and exceptional contribution to the visual attractiveness and character of the local area. Is the site covered by any landscape or similar designations?
  - ii) Historic – are there any known heritage assets on or below the site and does the green area provide a positive contribution to the setting of a nearby heritage asset?
  - iii) Recreational value – is the site used for sport or informal recreation and are there public rights of way across it?
  - iv) Tranquillity – does the site provide opportunities for calmness, tranquillity and quiet reflection within the settlement? Is it away from sources of man-made noise such as traffic and industry?



- v) Richness of wildlife – is the site designated as a wildlife site and are there any important habitats/species on the site?
- 6 Does the site feel as though it is part of the local area and is it well-connected physically, visually and socially to its context?
- 7 The site should be well-contained with clearly defined edges and should be proportionate in size to its context.

Following an analysis of each of the green areas sites the following are proposed to be designated as LGS:

- i) Stanney Fields Park
- ii) Playing fields adjacent to Neston Recreation Centre
- iii) Neston Cricket Club
- iv) Park Fields
- v) Ness Village Hall playing fields
- vi) Wirral Way
- vii) Burton Marsh Greenway

The remainder of the green areas within the NPA are proposed to be designated as Amenity Green Space within the NP. The following table provides a summary of the analysis for each site.

On 3 September Neston Town Council approved a document that sets out the rationale for the selection of the 7 sites identified for Local Green Space designation. This report and supporting information follows the table of 'Greenspace Sites'.

GREENSPACE SITES

	1	2	3	4	5 Significance to the local community					6	7	8
Site Name and address	Existing land use designation EP&NBLP	Planning permission / development proposals / allocated for development	Close proximity to its local community	Demonstrably special to local community	Beauty	Historic	Recreational value	Tranquillity	Richness of wildlife	Local in character	Not an extensive tract of land	Local Green Space (LGS) designation or Amenity Green Space (AGS) designation
Parks and Gardens												
Millfield Park, Millfield, Neston	None		✓				✓			✓	✓	AGS
Stanney Fields Park, Neston	Urban Green Network		✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	LGS
Outdoor Sport and Recreation												
Neston County Primary School Playing Fields, Burton Road, Neston	None		✓				✓			✓	✓	AGS
Neston High School playing fields, Raby Park Road, Neston	None		✓				✓			✓	✓	AGS
Parkgate Primary School Playing Fields, Brooklands Road, Parkgate	Urban Green Network		✓				✓			✓	✓	AGS
St Winifride’s Catholic Primary School Playing Fields, Mellock Lane, Neston	None		✓				✓			✓	✓	AGS
Woodfall Primary School playing fields, Woodfall Lane, Little Neston	Urban Green Network		✓				✓			✓	✓	AGS
Neston Recreation Centre, Raby Park Road, Neston	None		✓				✓			✓	✓	AGS
Playing fields adjacent to Neston Recreation Centre, Raby Park Road, Neston	Green Belt		✓	✓			✓			✓	✓	LGS
Neston Cricket Club, Station Road, Neston	Urban Green Network		✓	✓			✓			✓	✓	LGS
Park Fields playing fields, Parkgate	Green Belt		✓	✓			✓			✓	✓	LGS
Ness Village Hall playing fields, Ness	Urban Green Network		✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	LGS
Neston Bowling Green, Hinderton Road, Neston	Urban Green Network		✓				✓			✓	✓	AGS
Play Areas												
Marshlands Road play area and amenity greenspace, Little Neston	Urban Green Network		✓				✓			✓	✓	AGS
Ringway play area and amenity greenspace, Ringway, Neston	Urban Green Network		✓				✓			✓	✓	AGS
Ropewalk play area and amenity greenspace, Ropewalk, Parkgate	Urban Green Network		✓				✓			✓	✓	AGS
Stych Croft play area and amenity greenspace, Stych Croft, Neston	None		✓				✓			✓	✓	AGS
West Vale play area and amenity greenspace, West Vale, Little Neston	Urban Green Network		✓				✓			✓	✓	AGS
Woodfall Lane play area and amenity greenspace, Little Neston	Urban Green Network		✓				✓				✓	AGS

	1	2	3	4	5 Significance to the local community					6	7	8
Site Name and address	Existing land use designation EP&NBLP	Planning permission / development proposals / allocated for development	Close proximity to its local community	Demonstrably special to local community	Beauty	Historic	Recreational value	Tranquillity	Richness of wildlife	Local in character	Not an extensive tract of land	Local Green Space (LGS) designation or Amenity Green Space (AGS) designation
<b>Amenity Greenspace</b>												
Beechways Drive AGS, Neston	None		✓							✓	✓	AGS
Church Lane AGS, Neston	Urban Green Network		✓							✓	✓	AGS
Greenfields Drive AGS, Little Neston	None	✓	✓							✓	✓	AGS
Mellock Lane AGS, Little Neston	Urban Green Network		✓							✓	✓	AGS
Romney Close AGS, Little Neston	None		✓							✓	✓	AGS
<b>Green Corridors Within the Settlement Limits</b>												
Wirral Way	Green Belt, Site of Biological Importance and Cycleways		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	LGS
Burton Marsh Greenway	Green Belt, Cycleways and None		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	LGS
<b>Allotments and Community Gardens</b>												
Burton Road Allotments, Little Neston	None		✓				✓			✓	✓	AGS
Hinderton Road Allotments, Neston	Green Belt						✓			✓	✓	AGS
Marshlands Road Allotments, Little Neston	None		✓				✓			✓	✓	AGS
Raby Park Road Allotments, Neston	Green Belt		✓				✓			✓	✓	AGS
Ropewalk Allotments, Parkgate	Urban Green Network		✓				✓			✓	✓	AGS
<b>Cemeteries and Church Yards</b>												
Church Lane Cemetery, Neston	Urban Green Network		✓			✓		✓		✓	✓	AGS
Neston Cemetery, Breezehill Road, Neston	Urban Green Network		✓			✓		✓		✓	✓	AGS
St Winifride's Church Cemetery, Little Neston	None		✓			✓		✓		✓	✓	AGS
<b>Natural and Semi-Natural Greenspace</b>												
Allan's Meadow/Flint Drive Greenspace, Little Neston	Urban Green Network		✓						✓	✓	✓	AGS
Brook Meadow, Neston	Urban Green Network and None		✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	AGS
Flashes Lane Greenspace, Ness	Green Belt and Area of Special County Value for Landscape		✓		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	AGS
Park Fields, Wood Lane, Parkgate	Green Belt		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	LGS
Station Road/Steeple Court Greenspace, Neston	Urban Green Network		✓						✓	✓	✓	AGS
Station Road Greenspace, Parkgate	Urban Green Network		✓						✓	✓	✓	AGS

Town Clerk: Mrs A J Kunaj

Mr Graham Bench  
LDF Planning Officer  
Cheshire West & Chester Council

Graham.Bench@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Sent via CASS Associates



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Ref: NP/NTC/JW/AK

10 September 2015

Dear Graham,

At its meeting held on 3rd September 2015, Neston Town Council resolved to approve documents relating to the rationale for the designation of local green spaces as referenced FC3/60 and that the documents be submitted in a letter to Cheshire West and Chester Council.

I am therefore attaching the approved proposal document along with the documents that were tabled and approved at that meeting.

I trust that you are the correct person to whom these should be submitted and that you will ensure that these are duly considered.

Yours sincerely

Mrs A Kunaj  
Town Clerk



*Meeting (No)*     **Council (3)**

*Date*                **3 September 2015**

*Document*        **Green Spaces Rationale**

**Ref No**  
**FC/3/60**

**Stanney Fields Park** is the main public open space close to Neston Town centre accessible from large residential areas including social housing. It provides informal gardens including an attractive dell through which runs a stream, recreational children's play spaces including bmx/skateboard facilities, an enclosed kickabout area, a children's playground and a bowling green and general amenity open space for residents and visitors to the area. A group of volunteers helps with maintenance. The Park has received the Green Flag Award for seven consecutive years.

**Playing fields adjacent to Neston Recreation Centre** - playing pitches used by the local football club Neston Nomads which have a number of teams of various age groups. Neston Nomads is the largest youth organisation in Neston involving approximately 400 children and young people playing in local leagues as well as many volunteers. Sustaining operations on this scale requires extensive facilities to a standard appropriate for competition soccer so preserving this facility is vital.

**Neston Cricket Club** is a key sports club with a range of quality outdoor sports facilities including cricket, tennis and hockey (grass and artificial surface) available for youth and adult age groups. Teams play at County and, in the case of hockey, national levels. As well as attracting visitors to the village, the club provides a significant local social and cultural resource providing holiday schemes, extensive junior coaching and encouraging older people to play social tennis and bowls. It holds charitable events and a cultural week when concerts and other events take place in marquees. It also includes squash courts and a function room used by local organisations. This is a valuable resource and the site needs protection from further erosion due to development nibbling at the edge.

**Park Fields** is recognised by Fields in Trust as a covenanted site and designated as one of the fields designated for protection in celebration of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. There is a commemorative stone. Park Fields, measuring 41 acres, was purchased in 1937 for recreational purposes by the then Local Authority, under provisions within the Public Health Act 1875. It is understood that the sale was subject to covenant. During WW2, and beyond, some 29 acres was leased for agricultural purposes and only reverted to recreational use in 2005. The 12-acre balance - the 'sports ground' - has been in community use for organised games and informal leisure activities since 1937. The extended site provides magnificent uninterrupted views of the estuary and North Wales which W J Turner painted. The field is bounded on one side by the Wirral Country Park and on the other by Wood Lane and by cycle routes. Main access points have recently been improved to assist disabled users and the site provides a valued, safe and attractive resource for the local and wider community. Three football pitches, used by local youth and adult teams, are maintained on the sports area. Its other uses include gymkhanas, cadet training (Army Cadets have premises on the Field), jogging, exercising, dog-walking, kite-flying, bird-watching, family games and socialising. The former leased area is

now given over to passive recreational use and is being converted from grazing land to a large wild flower meadow which involves deep ploughing and reseeded. Hedges are being replanted and layered. The Field is also being developed in conjunction with Parkgate Primary School to enhance its potential for education; part of the site has been designated for this purpose and has been fenced off to exclude dogs.

Part of the QE II Diamond Jubilee Field, it is a major public open space and ecological resource. The Friends of Park Fields have established a Management Plan (see attached) for the site and have obtained funding including an 'Awards for All' lottery grant to undertake enhancement and management of the site. [Further details are contained in the attached paper submitted by the Friends of Parks Field]

**Ness Village Hall playing fields** are recognised by Fields in Trust as a covenanted site. It has space for outdoor sport and recreation and accommodates the Village Hall. It has been a focal point for community activity for over thirty years including scouts and guides and a second building which is home to The Wirral Theatre School and other activities. The Field is host to local football clubs including Neston Town, Neston Vets, Wirral Athletic and Neston Nomads. The Hall and other facilities are well supported by the community.

**The Wirral Linear Country Park**, known colloquially as the Wirral Way, was the first of its kind in the country, turning 12 miles of a disused railway into a heavily-used multi-function outdoor recreational and off-road communications route for walkers, cyclists and horse riders. It is the spine from which linked paths, bridleways and nationally designated cycle tracks diverge and has a number of features, especially within the NPA area, which extend its value (Neston Rock Cutting, Lees Lane Ponds, Parkgate Station Road Car Park, Parkgate Old Baths) and require protection. It affords links to the surrounding countryside and provides a biodiversity and ecological resource within the NPA.

**Burton Marsh Greenway** is a strategic off-road commuter cycle route and recreational footpath connecting to the North Wales Coastal Path and Chester to the south, through the heart of the NPA to the Wirral Circular Trail through high quality estuarial margins which require protection. It provides links to the surrounding countryside and providing a biodiversity and ecological resource within the NPA.

Sustrans have advised that a counter has been installed on the Denham Lane Cycle path coming onto the Greenway between Nets Café and Burton Marsh. This recorded between February and July 2015 a total of 34214 cycle movements, an average of 228 per day. [A spreadsheet showing this data is attached as is a document containing graphs showing pedestrian and cycle movements through Deeside Industrial Park Zone 4]



## **PARK FIELDS, PARKGATE**

### **Synopsis for Neighbourhood Plan – August 2015**

The greenspace entitled Park Fields, lying behind the village of Parkgate, was originally purchased by the then Neston Urban District Council in 1937 under the Public Health Act 1875 for “*public walks and pleasure grounds*” that is to say for public recreational purposes. The land measures 41 acres and is divided into a 12-acre Sports Ground for more organised sporting activities, and a larger 29-acre field – known locally as “The Cowfield” - for passive recreational pursuits. The former is maintained by Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWaC), the principal users of the three football pitches being local youth football teams for their matches, training sessions and football-orientated family sports days; and more recently, in succession to the large but now defunct Neston Riding Club, the British Horse Riding Association for several spectacular gymkhanas per annum, and the Wirral Endurance Ride group. In former times, the field was occasionally given over to house an annual travelling Fairground, a travelling Circus, a Fireworks Display, and as a starting and finishing venue for Wirral Charity Marathon events.

The Cowfield, so named because during the Second World War this area of land was given over to agriculture, returned for full public recreational use in 2005. Shortly afterwards, a voluntary organisation entitled the “*Friends of Park Fields*” emerged: this 120-strong group currently manages the field on behalf of CWaC under a renewable 10-year Management Agreement. Under this Agreement, the land has been sympathetically developed for passive recreational uses – principally for walkers of any age and disposition, the exercising of dogs, some gentle horse-riding, the flying of kites and model aircraft, the playing of informal games and other individual or group activities. The field is constantly in use from dawn to dusk, 365 days per year. It is particularly attractive to young and old female visitors because of its openness and non-threatening character, and to them especially it is preferable to the adjacent Wirral Country Park (an ex-railway line) which is tree-lined and somewhat intimidating.

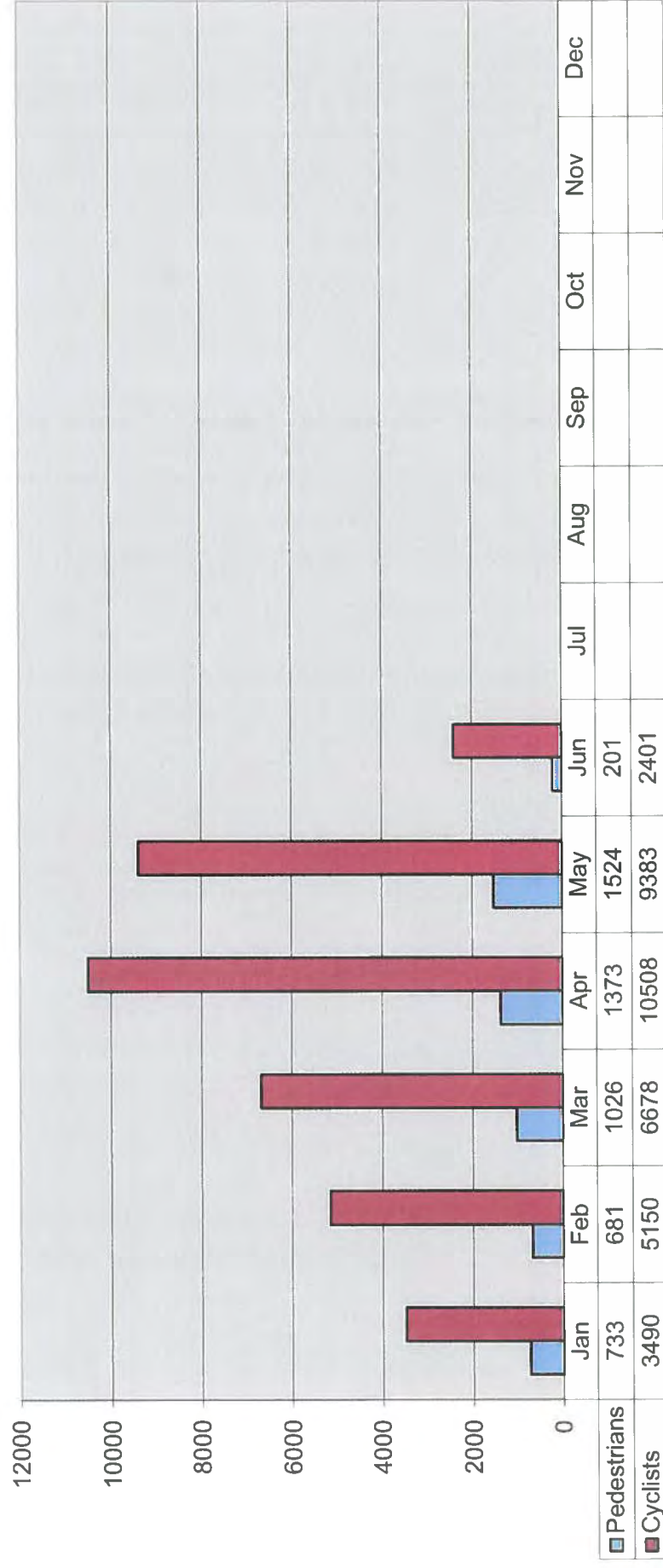
Under the same Agreement, the *Friends* have raised funding for a number of projects, including restoration of bordering hedges, improved access points for all people and for disabled persons, provision of benches on which people can rest to admire the spectacular views across the Dee Estuary to North Wales and, most significantly, for the creation of a 20-acre traditional Cheshire wetlands Wildflower/Hay Meadow now in its fourth year of development. In total the *Friends* have so far raised over £45,000 for these projects. In addition, an area of about 5000 square metres has been fenced off within the field as an “Educational Area” for all local schools to use for environmental studies, which are part of the National Curriculum. Overall, a principal aim of the Council is to increase the biodiversity of the land, and to provide habitats for many more species of birds, insects, invertebrates and for other types of wildlife and botanical specimens.

Park Fields gained the prestigious “Green Flag Award” some four years ago, and has since successfully renewed this accolade year on year. Whilst enjoying some protection under Green Belt criteria, and from legal clauses and earlier covenants referenced within the 1937 Conveyance, an Application for Village Green status in 2006 was unsuccessful on (questionable) legal grounds. However, in 2011 the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Award scheme was announced to celebrate the Jubilee in 2012: the scheme was aimed at collecting two thousand and twelve fields, open spaces, recreation grounds and playing fields across the whole of the United Kingdom. Local Authorities were asked to nominate to *Fields in Trust* (FiT) fields that they were prepared to Dedicate to this cause. The *Friends of Park Fields* were hugely influential in persuading CWaC to put forward Park Fields for dedication; the Council also selected some seven other sites in Cheshire for inclusion in the QE II initiative.

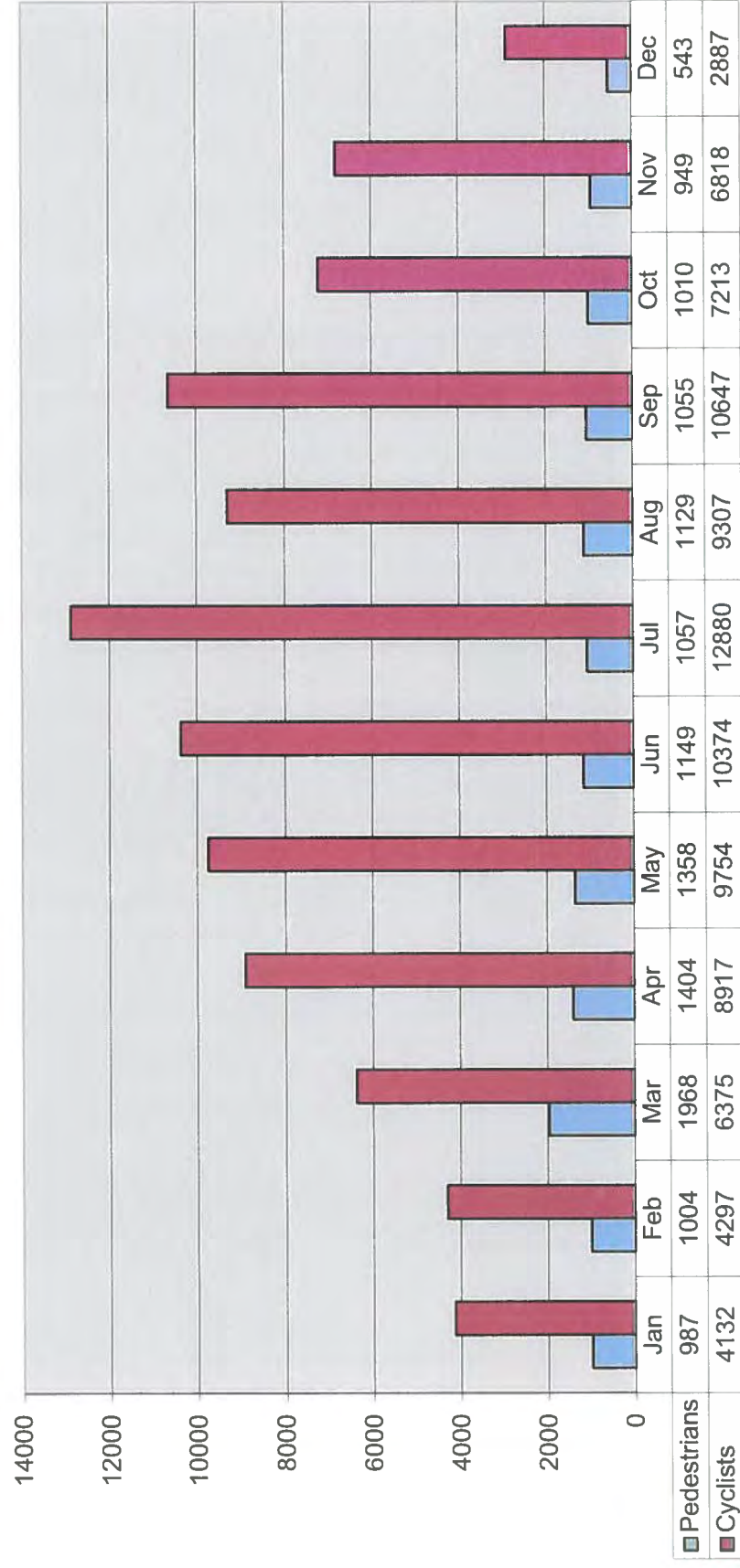
Importantly, the ***Deed of Dedication*** protects the Open Space from change of use or disposal by the Council **in perpetuity** (unless land of equivalent size, characteristics and location within the local catchment area is offered up for Dedication in legal substitution). The replacement of Park Fields with land meeting stringent legal criteria, and acceptable to FiT, is almost impossible to envisage and thus the community regards Park Fields as protected indefinitely. A stone Monument reflecting the status of the entire 41-acre site as a “***Queen's Diamond Jubilee Site***” lies at the geometric centre of the land.

Historically, some 34 separate activities have been identified as taking place on Park Fields. The residents of Parkgate and Neston have enjoyed using this open space for almost 60 years, albeit with some restrictions during WW 2 and in subsequent years, but the community regards Park Fields as a vitally important and treasured recreational resource now enjoying privileged status as a “QE II field.”

Deeside Industrial Park - Zone 4  
Jan 2015 -



# Deeside Industrial Park - Zone 4 Jan 2014 - Dec 2014



Date	Denhall Lane cycle path
Sat 14 Feb 2015	226
Sun 15 Feb 2015	376
Mon 16 Feb 2015	72
Tue 17 Feb 2015	191
Wed 18 Feb 2015	138
Thu 19 Feb 2015	79
Fri 20 Feb 2015	141
Sat 21 Feb 2015	196
Sun 22 Feb 2015	97
Mon 23 Feb 2015	58
Tue 24 Feb 2015	67
Wed 25 Feb 2015	120
Thu 26 Feb 2015	55
Fri 27 Feb 2015	150
Sat 28 Feb 2015	191
Sun 1 Mar 2015	175
Mon 2 Mar 2015	70
Tue 3 Mar 2015	105
Wed 4 Mar 2015	105
Thu 5 Mar 2015	100
Fri 6 Mar 2015	151
Sat 7 Mar 2015	224
Sun 8 Mar 2015	161
Mon 9 Mar 2015	68
Tue 10 Mar 2015	278
Wed 11 Mar 2015	80
Thu 12 Mar 2015	77
Fri 13 Mar 2015	41
Sat 14 Mar 2015	238
Sun 15 Mar 2015	236
Mon 16 Mar 2015	93
Tue 17 Mar 2015	83
Wed 18 Mar 2015	252
Thu 19 Mar 2015	157
Fri 20 Mar 2015	128
Sat 21 Mar 2015	314
Sun 22 Mar 2015	551
Mon 23 Mar 2015	94
Tue 24 Mar 2015	66
Wed 25 Mar 2015	228
Thu 26 Mar 2015	70
Fri 27 Mar 2015	158
Sat 28 Mar 2015	104
Sun 29 Mar 2015	63
Mon 30 Mar 2015	82
Tue 31 Mar 2015	36
Wed 1 Apr 2015	55
Thu 2 Apr 2015	169
Fri 3 Apr 2015	89

Sat 4 Apr 2015	418
Sun 5 Apr 2015	409
Mon 6 Apr 2015	466
Tue 7 Apr 2015	270
Wed 8 Apr 2015	330
Thu 9 Apr 2015	348
Fri 10 Apr 2015	309
Sat 11 Apr 2015	256
Sun 12 Apr 2015	141
Mon 13 Apr 2015	177
Tue 14 Apr 2015	260
Wed 15 Apr 2015	200
Thu 16 Apr 2015	239
Fri 17 Apr 2015	185
Sat 18 Apr 2015	459
Sun 19 Apr 2015	385
Mon 20 Apr 2015	249
Tue 21 Apr 2015	274
Wed 22 Apr 2015	334
Thu 23 Apr 2015	310
Fri 24 Apr 2015	173
Sat 25 Apr 2015	188
Sun 26 Apr 2015	475
Mon 27 Apr 2015	181
Tue 28 Apr 2015	140
Wed 29 Apr 2015	158
Thu 30 Apr 2015	109
Fri 1 May 2015	216
Sat 2 May 2015	118
Sun 3 May 2015	255
Mon 4 May 2015	826
Tue 5 May 2015	79
Wed 6 May 2015	45
Thu 7 May 2015	176
Fri 8 May 2015	93
Sat 9 May 2015	198
Sun 10 May 2015	504
Mon 11 May 2015	160
Tue 12 May 2015	103
Wed 13 May 2015	363
Thu 14 May 2015	121
Fri 15 May 2015	248
Sat 16 May 2015	283
Sun 17 May 2015	440
Mon 18 May 2015	50
Tue 19 May 2015	73
Wed 20 May 2015	127
Thu 21 May 2015	213
Fri 22 May 2015	171
Sat 23 May 2015	466

Sun 24 May 2015	196
Mon 25 May 2015	405
Tue 26 May 2015	195
Wed 27 May 2015	273
Thu 28 May 2015	179
Fri 29 May 2015	91
Sat 30 May 2015	415
Sun 31 May 2015	166
Mon 1 Jun 2015	88
Tue 2 Jun 2015	104
Wed 3 Jun 2015	245
Thu 4 Jun 2015	331
Fri 5 Jun 2015	239
Sat 6 Jun 2015	313
Sun 7 Jun 2015	605
Mon 8 Jun 2015	225
Tue 9 Jun 2015	277
Wed 10 Jun 2015	377
Thu 11 Jun 2015	381
Fri 12 Jun 2015	297
Sat 13 Jun 2015	279
Sun 14 Jun 2015	409
Mon 15 Jun 2015	219
Tue 16 Jun 2015	328
Wed 17 Jun 2015	169
Thu 18 Jun 2015	229
Fri 19 Jun 2015	185
Sat 20 Jun 2015	208
Sun 21 Jun 2015	416
Mon 22 Jun 2015	144
Tue 23 Jun 2015	425
Wed 24 Jun 2015	263
Thu 25 Jun 2015	257
Fri 26 Jun 2015	172
Sat 27 Jun 2015	475
Sun 28 Jun 2015	392
Mon 29 Jun 2015	300
Tue 30 Jun 2015	396
Wed 1 Jul 2015	303
Thu 2 Jul 2015	231
Fri 3 Jul 2015	334
Sat 4 Jul 2015	423
Sun 5 Jul 2015	411
Mon 6 Jul 2015	105
Tue 7 Jul 2015	169
Wed 8 Jul 2015	145
Thu 9 Jul 2015	353
Fri 10 Jul 2015	305
Sat 11 Jul 2015	376
Sun 12 Jul 2015	445



Mon 13 Jul 2015

100

Tue 14 Jul 2015

17

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