



## **Neston Neighbourhood Plan 2010 - 2030**

Submission  
Version  
July 2015





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NNH2: Housing Type and Mix

NNH3: Rural Exception Sites

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NNE2: Retaining Employment Uses in Neston Town Centre

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NNE4: High Quality Communications Infrastructure

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29 Policies

# Acronyms

CIC	Community Interest Company
CIL	Community Infrastructure Levy
CSG	Community Steering Group
CWaC	Cheshire West and Chester
CWaCLPSP	Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies
DAS	Design and Access Statement
EPNBC	Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Council
EPNBLP	Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Local Plan
GI	Green Infrastructure
HRA	Habitat Regulations Assessment
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IMD	Index of Multiple Deprivation
LPA	Local Planning Authority
LRA	Local Retail Area
LSOA	Lower Super Output Area
NHS	National Health Service
NNP	Neston Neighbourhood Plan
NPA	Neighbourhood Plan Area
NPIERS	Neighbourhood Planning Independent Examiner Referral Service
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
NWR	North West Region
ONS	Office for National Statistics
P&E	Planning and Environment
PPG	Planning Practice Guidance
RSL	Registered Social Landlords
SA	Sustainability Appraisal
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SHLAA	Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment
SHMA	Strategic Housing Market Assessment
TFWG	Task and Finish Working Group

# 1 Introduction

## Neighbourhood Planning

1.1 The Neston Neighbourhood Plan (the NNP) is a new type of planning document. It is part of the Government's new approach to land use planning. The neighbourhood plan process enables communities to better shape their area, inform how development takes place and helps to influence the type, quality and location of that development, ensuring that change brings with it local benefit. The statutory requirements of neighbourhood planning is set out in the Localism Act 2011 that came into force in April 2012.

1.2 The Government's intention through neighbourhood planning is for local people to have a greater say on what goes on in their area. However, the Localism Act sets out some important parameters. One of these is that all neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity with higher level planning policy. As such they must be in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and local policy. In this case the local policy consists of the following:

- Cheshire West and Chester (CWaC) Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies (CWaCLPSP) (adopted 29 January 2015).
- The saved policies of the Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Local Plan (EPNBLP) (adopted 2002). The policies within this document were saved in 2007 with the exception of Policy H8.
- Cheshire Replacement Minerals Local Plan (adopted 1999 and saved in 2007).
- Cheshire Replacement Waste Local Plan (adopted 2007 and saved in 2010).

1.3 The latter two are not relevant as they deal with matters not within the remit of neighbourhood planning, namely minerals and waste.

1.4 The NNP, when made (adopted) by CWaC, will form part of the statutory development plan for the Neighbourhood Plan Area (NPA) (ie. the Civil Parish of Neston). Decisions by the Local Planning Authority (CWaC) on planning applications within the NPA will have to be made in accordance with the NNP, other parts of the statutory development plan and other material considerations.

1.5 It is therefore important that the NNP has followed due process and that it meets the statutory tests known as the 'basic conditions'. The basic conditions for neighbourhood plans are:

- They must have appropriate regard to national policy.
- They must contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.
- They must be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan for the local area.
- Must be compatible with European Union (EU) obligations, including human rights requirements.

1.6 The above will be tested through the independent examination and checked by CWaC prior to proceeding to a referendum.

1.7 A neighbourhood plan should be produced following proportionate community engagement and evidence base gathering. This is to make sure that it is based on a proper understanding of the local area and of the views, aspirations, wants and needs of local people.

1.8 Following an Examination of a neighbourhood plan, the Examiner will provide their assessment as to whether it meets the basic conditions and whether it needs any modifications to enable it to do so. The Examiner will also provide a recommendation on whether to proceed to a public referendum. It is necessary to gain more than a 50% 'Yes' vote of those voting in the referendum for a neighbourhood plan to be brought into force.



The Cross of Remembrance, High Street, Neston



## Developing the Neston Neighbourhood Plan

1.9 The NNP has been some three years in the making. The Town Council successfully applied as one of the Government's Neighbourhood Planning Front Runners in May 2012. In June 2012 the Town Council organised an initial event at Neston Town Hall to obtain and ascertain people's initial views on life in Neston now and how best to achieve the sustainable future for the town.

1.10 A Community Steering Group (CSG) was founded in September 2012 with the task of overseeing the neighbourhood plan process and producing the NNP on behalf of the community and the Town Council. The CSG consists of around 10 local residents and three local Town Councillors.

1.11 The CSG established three Task and Finish Working Groups (TFWG) to look at specific aspects of the NNP, gather evidence and consult with key stakeholders. The three TFWGs are:

- 1) Housing
- 2) Economic Development/Retailing
- 3) Transport/Quality of Life Issues.

1.12 These groups produced a series of papers and notes that form part of the evidence base supporting the NNP.

1.13 In April 2013 the CSG organised an opinion survey where residents and visitors were canvassed on their opinions in Neston Town Hall and Neston Market Square.

1.14 In July 2013 the CSG produced a questionnaire that was sent to over 7,000 addresses in the area. The questionnaire contained a series of 25 draft proposals on issues around housing, leisure, retail and the local economy. It also asked for suggestions for the future of the area over the next 15 to 20 years. Over 350 questionnaires were returned.

1.15 In early 2014 the Town Council agreed a set of draft policies that the Draft NNP could include. These were listed under the three themes of TFWGs.

1.16 In early 2015 the Town Council consulted on the Draft NNP. A total of 183 responses were received from statutory consultees, non-statutory consultees and local residents providing 279 comments on the draft plan. The draft NNP was also sent to Planning Aid England and the Neighbourhood Planning Independent Examiner

Referral Service (NPIERS) for their comments. Following the responses to this consultation the Submission Version of the NNP has been drafted in close collaboration with Officers from CWaC.

1.17 The Consultation Statement submitted with the Submission NNP provides further detail on the consultation responses and the changes that have been made to the draft NNP.

1.18 CWaC have provided, in consultation with statutory consultees, a Screening Opinion of the Draft NNP. This considered whether the Draft NNP would formally require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA). The Opinion indicates that the NNP would not require a SEA or a HRA. A Draft Sustainability Assessment (SA) has been produced and was submitted with the Screening Opinion. This was also subject to public consultation at the same time as the Draft NNP.

1.19 The next key steps of the NNP include:

- Submission and consultation by CWaC
- Independent examination
- Referendum and adoption.

1.20 The NNP covers the civil parish of Neston. This includes the communities within Neston, Parkgate, Little Neston, Ness and Hinderton. The Neighbourhood Plan Area (the NPA) is shown at Figure 1.1.

1.21 The NNP provides a Vision for the NPA for the period of 2010 – 2030. It covers these years to align with the CWaCLPSP period. It sets out planning policies to help realise this Vision. These policies are in general conformity with higher level planning policy, as required by the Localism Act, and the NPPF.

1.22 The NNP has been developed through extensive consultation with the people of Neston and others with an interest in the Area. It is based on sound research and analysis of the available evidence. It meets the statutory tests as set out in the 'Basic Conditions Statement' submitted with the NNP as supporting evidence for the Examination.

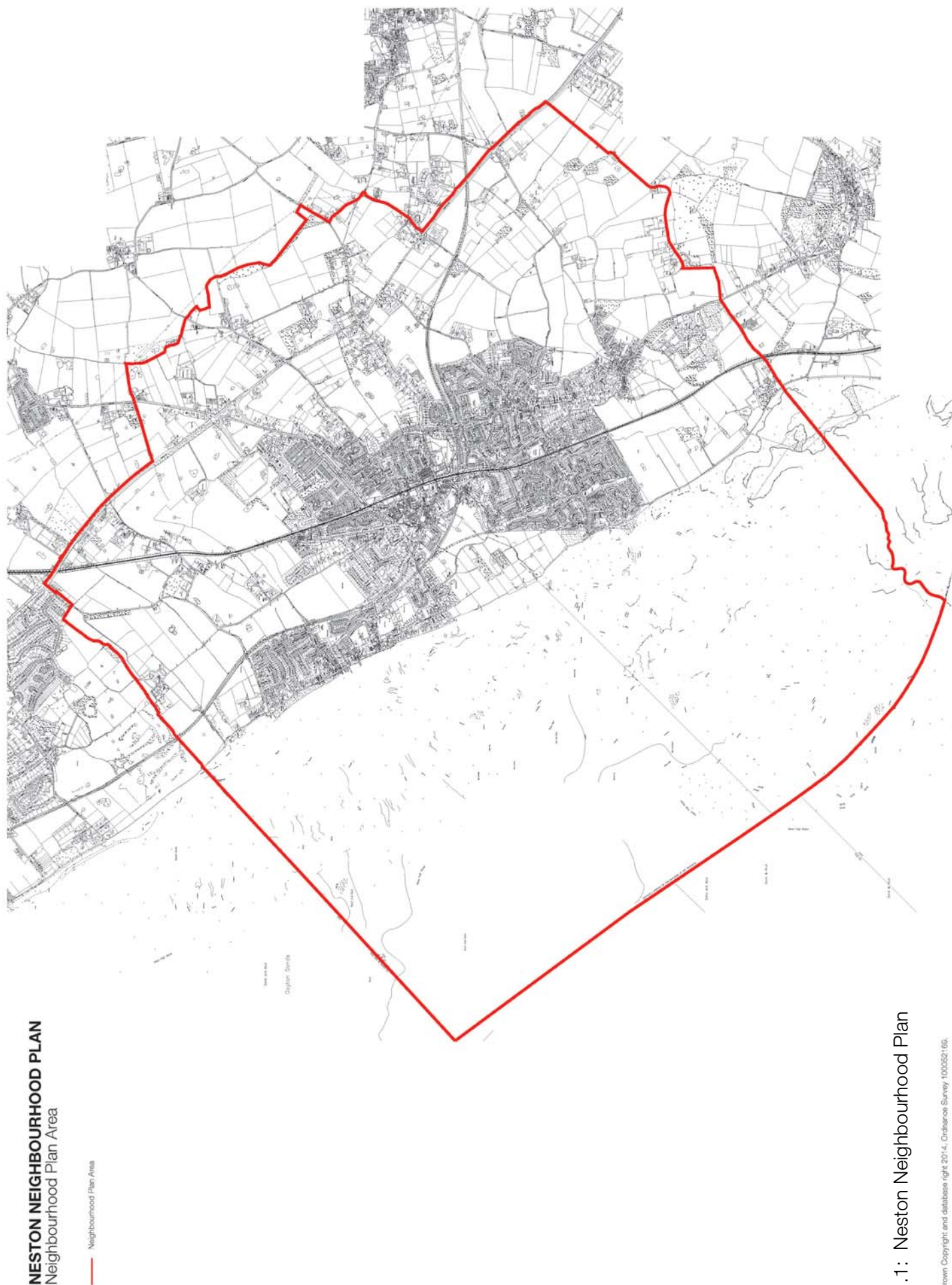


Figure 1.1: Neston Neighbourhood Plan

# 2 The Planning Policy Context

## National Planning Policy Framework

2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and associated Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) set out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. They set out the Government's requirement for the planning system only to the extent that it is relevant, proportionate and necessary to do so. It provides a framework within which local people can produce their own and distinctive neighbourhood plans, which reflect the needs and priorities of their communities.

2.2 Fundamental to the Government's planning policy is the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The NPPF identifies three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles:

- an economic role – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation, and by identifying and co-ordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;
- a social role – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations, and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural wellbeing; and
- an environmental role – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.

2.3 According to the NPPF these roles cannot be undertaken in isolation because they are mutually dependent. Economic growth can secure higher social and environmental standards, and well-designed buildings and places can improve the lives of people and communities. Therefore, to achieve sustainable development economic, social and environmental gains should be sought jointly and simultaneously through the planning system. The planning system should play an active role in guiding development to sustainable

solutions.

2.4 Pursuing sustainable development involves seeking positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural and historic environment, as well as in people's quality of life, including:

- Making it easier for local jobs to be created
- Achieving net gains for nature
- Ensuring better design
- Improving the conditions in which people live, work, travel and take leisure, and
- Widening the choice of high quality homes.

## Neighbourhood Plans

2.5 A neighbourhood plan must endeavour to support the strategic development needs set out in the local plan which in itself has to take account of the national policies, and plan positively to support local development.

2.6 Critically, this means that Neston's community must:

- Develop a neighbourhood plan that supports the strategic development needs set out in CWaCLPSP document including policies for the Green Belt, housing and economic development.
- Beyond the strategic elements of the above, plan positively to support local development, shaping and directing sustainable development in the area.

2.7 A neighbourhood plan's policies, once brought into force, will take precedence over existing non-strategic policies in a local plan for the NPA where there may be a conflict.

## Strategic Policies

2.8 The strategic policies for the NPA are set out in the adopted CWaCLPSP document. This was adopted on 29 January 2015 following an Inquiry undertaken by a Secretary of State appointed Planning Inspector.

2.9 There are a number of policies within the Local Plan that are relevant to the NPA. The policies within the NNP have to be in general conformity with these Local Plan policies.



## Spatial Strategy

### STRAT1: Sustainable Development

2.10 The Local Plan seeks to enable development that improves and meets the economic, social and environmental objectives of the Borough in line with the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

### STRAT2: Strategic Development

2.11 To maintain the vitality and viability of Rural Areas, an appropriate level of new development will be brought forward to support new homes and economic and social development. Development will be focused in Key Service Centres such as Neston and Parkgate which represent the most sustainable rural locations.

### STRAT8: Rural Area

2.12 Within the Rural Area CWaC will support development that serves local needs in the most accessible and sustainable locations to sustain vibrant rural communities. Within the Rural Area provision will be made for at least 4,200 new dwellings (at least 200 of which will be within Neston and Parkgate) and 10ha of additional land for employment development. The retention of rural shops and community facilities, and the provision of new facilities at an appropriate scale to the settlement, will be supported. Development should not exceed the capacity of existing services and infrastructure unless the required improvements can be made.

### STRAT9: Green Belt and Countryside

2.13 The intrinsic character and beauty of the Cheshire countryside will be protected by restricting development to that which requires a countryside location and cannot be accommodated within identified settlements. The general extent of the North Cheshire Green Belt will be maintained. In settlements (with the exception of Chester) and areas of the countryside that are within the Green Belt, additional restrictions will apply to development in line with the NPPF.

### STRAT10: Transport and Accessibility

2.14 Development and associated transport infrastructure should:

- Provide and develop reliable and efficient transport networks.

- Contribute to safer transport and promote forms of transport that are beneficial to health.
- Improve accessibility to jobs and key services.
- Reduce carbon emissions.
- Ensure that transport helps improve quality of life and enhances the local environment.

2.15 New development will be required to demonstrate that:

- Additional traffic can be accommodated safely and satisfactorily.
- Appropriate provision is made for access to public transport and other non-car modes.
- Measures have been incorporated to improve physical accessibility and remove barriers to mobility.

2.16 New development will also be expected to provide adequate levels of car and cycle parking in accordance with CWaC's parking standards.

### STRAT11: Infrastructure

2.17 Ensure the delivery of infrastructure improvements (including ICT) to secure the future of sustainable communities and meet wider sustainability objectives of the Borough.

## Economic

### ECON1: Economic Growth, Employment and Enterprise

2.18 CWaC will support sustainable economic growth in the Borough providing a flexible supply of land for industry and business use, promote competitive town centre environments bringing forward sites to meet a range of town centre uses and the refurbishment and enhancement of existing sites and premises for continued employment use. CWaC will support the delivery of high speed broadband across the Borough, particularly in the rural area, and the provision of adequate telecommunications. Redevelopment to non-employment uses will be permitted where the proposed use is compatible with existing retained employment uses in the area and where:

- The proposal would not limit the range of choice and quality of employment sites available to meet future employment needs; or

- It can be demonstrated that the continuation of employment use is no longer commercially viable or environmentally acceptable.

## ECON2: Town centres – Retail, Leisure and Other Town centre Uses

2.19 Within Neston proposals should support the town centre in meeting local shopping and service needs, enabling it to remain a healthy, competitive centre. Within local centres, shops and other community facilities should be retained where they remain viable and new uses allowed where they are important in meeting the day to day needs of the local community. In relation to development outside town centres a sequential test will be applied to proposals and where the development is greater than 500 sq m floorspace an impact assessment will be required.

## ECON3: Visitor Economy

2.20 The expansion of existing tourism assets or the creation of new tourism opportunities will be supported where this would enhance the existing tourism offer, benefit the local economy and be of a suitable scale and type for its location.

## Social

### SOC1: Delivering Affordable Housing

2.21 Seeks the provision of affordable homes on all residential developments over a certain threshold.

### SOC2: Rural Exception Sites

2.22 Permits 100% affordable housing schemes on small sites adjacent to Key Service Centres including within the Green Belt. The policy does allow for a small element of market housing on such sites should it enable the delivery of affordable housing.

### SOC3: Housing Mix and Type

2.23 Seeks to provide a mix of housing types, tenures, sizes of both market and affordable housing to meet the needs of that local area.

### SOC5: Health and Wellbeing

2.24 Seeks to provide relevant facilities that meet the health and wellbeing needs of residents and prevent

development that would adversely impact on health and quality of life.

## SOC6: Open Space, Sport and Recreation

2.25 This policy seeks to protect, manage and enhance existing open spaces, sport and recreation facilities.

## Environmental

### ENV1: Flood Risk and Water Management

2.26 Seeks to reduce flood risk, promote water efficiency measures and protect and enhance water quality.

### ENV2: Landscape

2.27 Seeks to protect and enhance landscape character and local distinctiveness.

### ENV3: Green Infrastructure

2.28 Supports the creation, enhancement and management of a network of high quality multi-functional GI.

### ENV4: Biodiversity and Geodiversity

2.29 Seeks to safeguard and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity through the identification and protection of sites.

### ENV5: Historic Environment

2.30 Seeks to protect and enhance the Borough's heritage assets.

### ENV6: High Quality Design and Sustainable Construction

2.31 Seeks high quality design and sustainable construction.

## Non-Strategic Policies

2.32 There are also a number of non-strategic policies within the EPNBLP (2002) that have been retained following the adoption of the CWaCLPSP document. Some of these policies are relevant to the NPA:

- GEN7: Development by Telecommunications Code Systems Operators
- H5: Conversion to Flats

- H6: House Extensions
- GB5: Extensions and Alterations to dwellings in the Green Belt
- ENV4: The Protection of Sites of Local Importance for Nature Conservation – Sites of Nature Conservation Value
- ENV5: Ecological Interest
- ENV6: Area of Special County Value for Landscape
- ENV7: Agricultural Buildings and Structures
- ENV8: Urban Green Network
- ENV9: Landscape and Habitat Features
- ENV12: Coastal Zones
- ENV13: Development in Conservation Areas
- ENV14: Parkgate Conservation Area
- ENV15: Conservation of Listed Buildings
- ENV16: Non-Listed Buildings and Structures
- ENV17: Sites of Special Archaeological Interest
- REC2: Open Space Provision
- REC7: Recreational Routeways
- SHOP1: Primary Shopping Areas
- SHOP3: Small Shopping Areas
- SHOP6: Shop Fronts
- TRANS5: Car Parking in Residential Areas
- TRANS6: Car Parking Standards.

2.33 Appendix A provides a schedule of where policies within the NNP will replace in whole or in part these non-strategic policies. In some cases the NNP is silent on matters and the retained policies will remain material considerations in decision taking until they are replaced in the adopted CWaC Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations document.





# 3 Understanding the Neston Neighbourhood Plan

## Introduction

3.1 The Neston NPA, which is coterminous with the Neston civil parish area, lies on the edge of a sandstone ridge on the Wirral peninsula at the north-west tip of Cheshire. To the west of the NPA 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 in Flintshire. To the north and east is the Metropolitan Borough of Wirral with road, rail and ferry links to Liverpool across the River Mersey. The town of Ellesmere Port and the industries of the Mersey Valley lie to the south east. The city of Chester is ten miles to the south.

3.2 Since the 1974 local government and National Health Service (NHS) reorganisations, Neston lost its 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.



Figure 3.1: Neston NPA and its Context

3.3 Administratively, Neston was divided in 1974 from that part of the peninsula which lies in Merseyside to the north and grouped with the very different industrial and overspill town of Ellesmere Port across the peninsula. Since the 2009 local government reorganisation it sits within the Rural Area of Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWaC). In the same year Neston Town Council was established to administer the civil parish of Neston which had been formed in 2008.

3.4 The NHS Western Cheshire Clinical 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.

3.5 Local Authority education provision also crosses the border with children attending grammar schools in Wirral Metropolitan Borough. Conversely, many Wirral children and children from further afield, eg. Ellesmere Port, attend Neston High School. Slightly less than half the students at the school currently come from out of the area. The school is the sole provider of secondary education including post-sixteen education in the Neston area. Other post-sixteen education, training and work experience is remotely provided in surrounding urban areas.

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

## Key Indicators

3.7 The sections below provide data and background on the NPA that have helped to inform the issues and themes included within the NNP. The NPA is the same as the Neston civil parish area and information from the Census 2011 has been used for this spatial area.

## Population Profile

3.8 The total population within the NPA is 15,221 (Census 2011). Table B1 in Appendix B provides data on the population profile in the NPA, CWaC and the North West Region NWR. There has been little change in population since the 2001 Census which recorded a resident population of 15,163. This represents an increase of less than half a percent. This is in contrast to CWaC where the population increased by 2.3% in the same period. In the NWR there was a higher increase in population of 4% between 2001 – 2011.

3.9 The relatively stable population size masks some significant changes in the age distribution within the NPA between the period 2001 – 2011.

3.10 There has been a significant reduction in the population of children whilst there has been a commensurate rise in the pensionable adult population. The loss in the child population may in part be explained by the fall in the 25 – 59 age group during the period. This age group contains most families and therefore if there has been a loss in this population there will be a knock-on effect on the child population within the NPA.

3.11 A key question that has arisen out of the analysis of this data is why has there been a marked reduction in the child population and the family aged adult population. Two principal reasons have been postulated; the first is there is a lack of suitable housing accommodation at affordable prices and the second is there is a lack of appropriate employment opportunities in the NPA.

3.12 Whatever the core reasons behind this trend over the last 10 years if it were to continue to 2021 and 2031 it would have a significant social, economic and cultural effect on the community within the NPA. There would be a reduction in the need for child care and primary and secondary education. There would need to be a restructuring of the provision of public services specifically around health and social services but also for transport, leisure and shopping. The result would be an unbalanced and unsustainable community.

3.13 The NNP seeks, through the land use planning process, to provide a counterbalance to this trend and ensure that the NPA is a sustainable place to live, work and visit. However, the Town Council realise that there are a range of factors beyond the town planning process that will need to be employed to help fulfil this objective. It will work with all the stakeholders to enable these changes within the NPA.

## Ethnic Group

3.14 In terms of ethnicity Neston has a largely white British population with 96% classified within the 2011 Census. The remainder is a mix of ethnicities, white non-British, mixed-race, Asian, black and other ethnic groups. Table B2 in Appendix B provides data on the ethnic group profile of residents in the NPA.

## Housing: Household Composition

3.15 In 2011 there were 6,777 households<sup>1</sup> within the NPA. Table B3 in Appendix B shows the composition of these households and compares them with CWaC and the NWR.

3.16 Analysis of the figures shows that 28.5% of households are pensioners compared with 23% for CWaC and 20% for the NWR. Of the pensioner households in the NPA over half (58%) are single households. Adding these to other single person households (which may include unmarried, divorced or separated persons) and lone parent households, single person households make up over 39% of all households in the NPA.

3.17 This significant proportion of single households may suggest that under-occupancy is an issue within the area and will need some further consideration in relation to looking at household spaces and accommodation type. It also points to a need for smaller sized housing to provide accommodation for smaller household sizes.

3.18 The largest increase in household type between 2001 to 2011 has been in one person and single parent households. There has been a large decrease in married households between the same period. See Table B4 in Appendix B. This change will put additional pressure on the existing housing stock and may change the demand for accommodation type.

## Housing: Household Spaces and Accommodation Type

3.19 There were 7,097 dwellings within the NPA according to the 2011 Census. Table B5 in Appendix B provides a breakdown of the dwelling types and a comparison with CWaC and NWR.

3.20 The most striking feature of the data is the relatively high proportion of detached dwellings compared with CWaC and the NWR. There is a significantly lower proportion of terraced housing in Neston. There is a marginally lower proportion of flats and semi-detached houses. The data shows 30% in semi-detached houses within Neston compared with 36% in CWaC. 30% of households within the NWR live in terraces, flats or maisonettes compared with 9.5% for Neston.

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1 A household is defined as:

- one person living alone, or
- a group of people (not necessarily related) living at the same address who share cooking facilities and share a living room or sitting room or dining area.



3.21 The analysis of this data tends to corroborate the concern around high levels of under-occupancy within the NPA with high levels of single households and high levels of detached dwellings.

### Housing: Under-Occupancy

3.22 Information from the 2013 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) identifies that 15.6% of households in Neston have 3+ spare bedrooms. This is higher than the CWaC average of 12.4%. Within CWaC as a whole, (the data is not available for Neston), couples only (one or both over 60) and couples only (under 60), ie. no children at home, make up 53.7% of the under-occupancy by household type.

3.23 Table B6 in Appendix B further corroborates the high levels of under-occupancy in Neston. This shows that 46% of households have 2 or more spare bedrooms and 35% have 1 spare bedroom. Therefore over 80% of households have some level of under-occupancy.

### Housing: Tenure

3.24 Table B7 in Appendix B illustrates the tenure of households within the NPA, CWaC and the NWR (ie. the legal arrangement under which a household space is occupied).

3.25 Neston's tenure pattern is heavily skewed towards owner occupation with relatively low levels of renting. 42% of households own their property as compared with 34.7% in CWaC and 31% in the NWR. The rental sector makes up 22.5% of households in Neston compared with 27% and 34% in CWaC and the NWR respectively. The social rented sector within the NWR accounts for 18% of all households whilst in Neston it is just over 13%.

### Economic Activity: Economical Active and Inactive

3.26 Table B8 in Appendix B shows how many people work and don't work as a proportion of the 16 – 74 resident population within the NPA (11,279 persons), CWaC and the NWR.

3.27 A higher proportion of residents within Neston are economically inactive than in CWaC and the NWR. A large percentage of the economical inactive is made up of retired persons. This follows the picture of the higher proportion of pensionable adults and pensioner households in the previous sections.

3.28 In terms of the economically active population a higher proportion work part time or are self-employed within Neston than work full time as compared to CWaC and the NWR.

### Economic Activity: Occupation

3.29 Table B9 in Appendix B shows that there is a higher proportion of Neston residents within the professional and managerial categories of employment as compared with CWaC and the NWR. Some 45% of residents fall within this category as compared with 42% in CWaC and 38% in the NWR.

3.30 Conversely, the proportion of residents in non-skilled jobs is lower in Neston 14.6% than in CWaC 18.5% and the NWR 19.7%.

3.31 An important issue around sustainability is where the jobs for these occupation types are located. With the relative high levels of managerial and professional professions living in the area it will be interesting to note the travel to work distance for Neston residents as there are limited opportunities for this level of employment within the NPA.

### Economic Activity: Employment Sector

3.32 Table B10 in Appendix B provides a breakdown of employment by sector. It shows that Neston is over-represented in education, public administration, professional, science and technological industries and health and social work compared with CWaC and to some extent the NWR. It is under-represented in retail, manufacturing, accommodation and food and administrative and support services.

3.33 Although the retail sector in Neston is lower in proportional terms compared with CWaC and the NWR it has the most amount of residents working within it. This may in part explain the relatively high levels of part time employment.

3.34 A key sustainability issue for the NPA is access to jobs. There are limited employment opportunities within the NPA relative to its population with the majority at Clayhill Business Park, Neston town centre and Parkgate. Neston High School and Aldi Distribution are the largest single employers in the NPA although the majority of staff live outside the NPA. Leahurst Veterinary School is located just outside the area but again it is thought that only a small number of staff come from within the NPA.

## Travel to Work

3.35 Table B11 in Appendix B shows a higher proportion of residents travelling between 10 – 30km to work than for CWaC and the NWR. In terms of Neston this would cover Chester, and cities and towns such as Birkenhead, Liverpool, St Helens and Warrington.

3.36 Conversely, a lower proportion of residents travel less than 10km than CWaC and the North West Region. This corroborates the issue of a lack of employment opportunities within the NPA and immediate area.

3.37 It is a very different profile to CWaC and the NWR and shows how dependent residents within the NPA are on a good reliable transport system and infrastructure to access jobs and employment. This is substantiated when analysing the method of travel to work for Neston from the 2011 Census for those residents in work.

## Method of Travel to Work

3.38 A significant proportion (almost 77%) of residents use a private motor vehicle to travel to work. Journeys on train are higher than that for CWaC but are similar to the NWR average. (See Table B12 in Appendix B). It is believed that journeys by train could be higher if the services on the Borderlands line had direct connections to Liverpool and Chester. Considering the popularity of cycling over recent years and the location of a number of cycle routes within the NPA it is disappointing that cycling as a method of travel is so low.

## Deprivation

3.39 Deprivation means more than just financial poverty. It measures a whole range of circumstances which grant or deny people access to opportunity. The Census uses a range of data to calculate a series of indicators which measure the extent to which low income, employment problems, health and disability, education and training, barriers to housing and other services, crime and environmental issues like pollution combine together to impact on people's lives.

3.40 The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) combines all of these indicators to provide an idea of whether a locality and its population can take advantage of the best life has to offer or whether the odds are, to varying extents, stacked against them. On this basis, Neston as a

whole presents a place offering considerable advantages. Indeed over 60% of the population are classified amongst the least deprived in the country, far exceeding the rate for CWaC as a whole.

3.41 However a closer look at the IMD reveals another cohort comprising 38% of the population, which is not doing so well on a range of measures. Planning for Neston needs to take account of these two groups and their needs.

3.42 There is a geographical component to be considered here too because the IMD impacts differentially on different parts of the NPA. Figure 3.3 maps the IMD by Lower level Super Output Area (LSOA) . It can be seen that parts of north and east Neston and, to a lesser extent, Little Neston, show some levels of deprivation. This is a national comparison and, by that standard, no part of the NPA falls within the most deprived categories. However, compared with the 212 LSOAs in West Cheshire, we find in the case of several indicators that LSOAs in Neston occupy positions of between 30 – 40, where 1 is most deprived. This indicates that in some areas there is a level of need.

Number of people in each deprivation decile, Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010

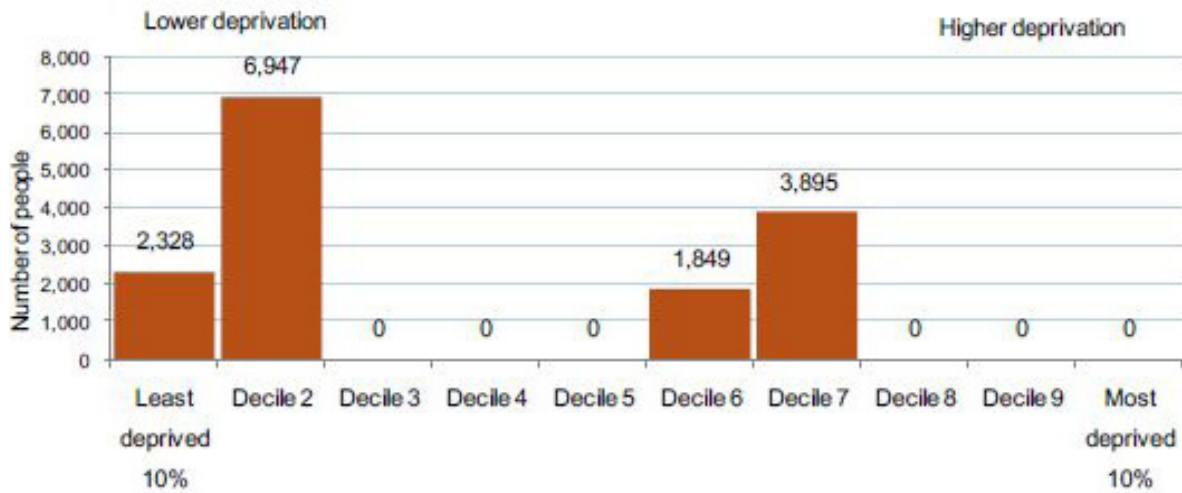


Figure 3.2: Number of People in Each Deprivation Decile, IMD 2010

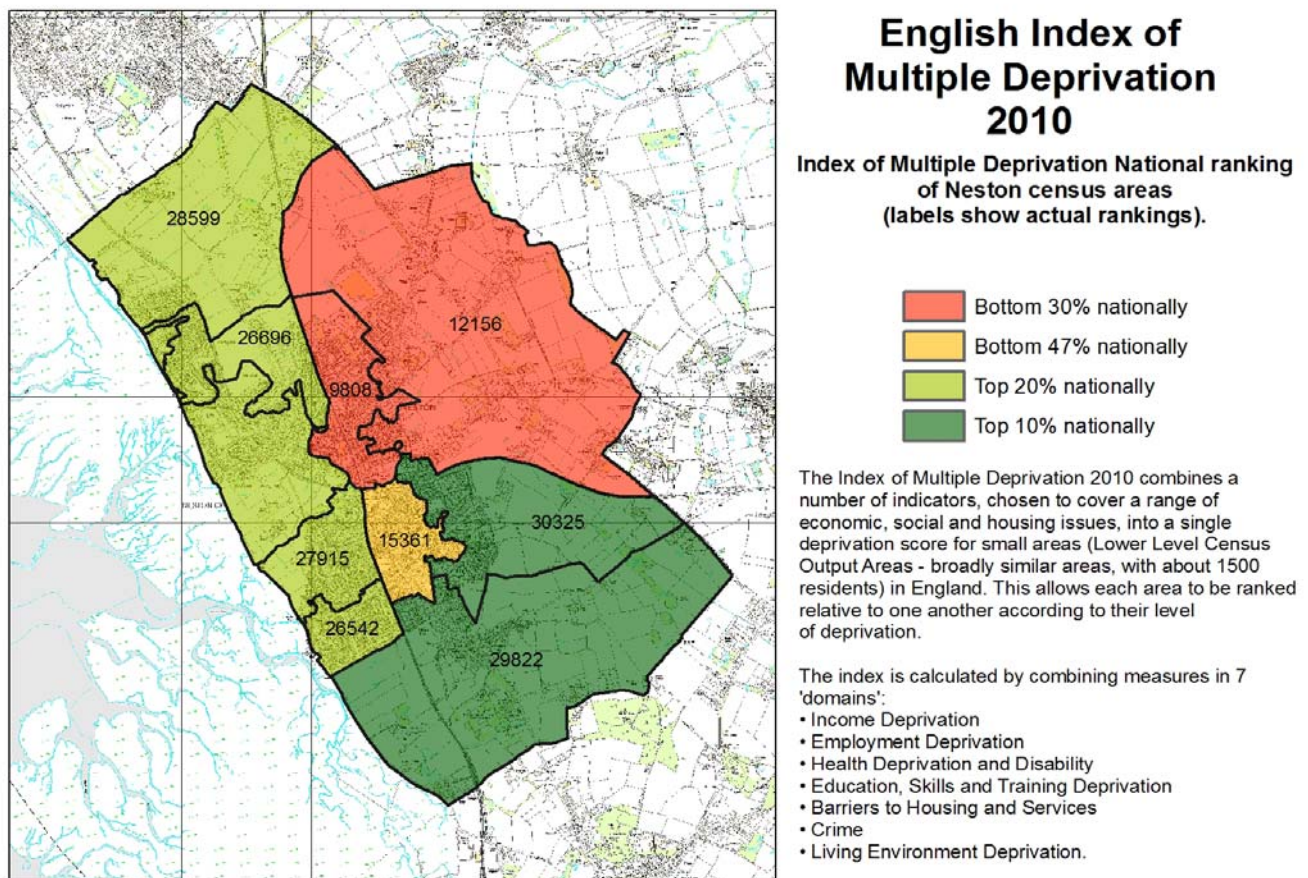


Figure 3.3: Index of Multiple Deprivation National Ranking of Neston Census Areas



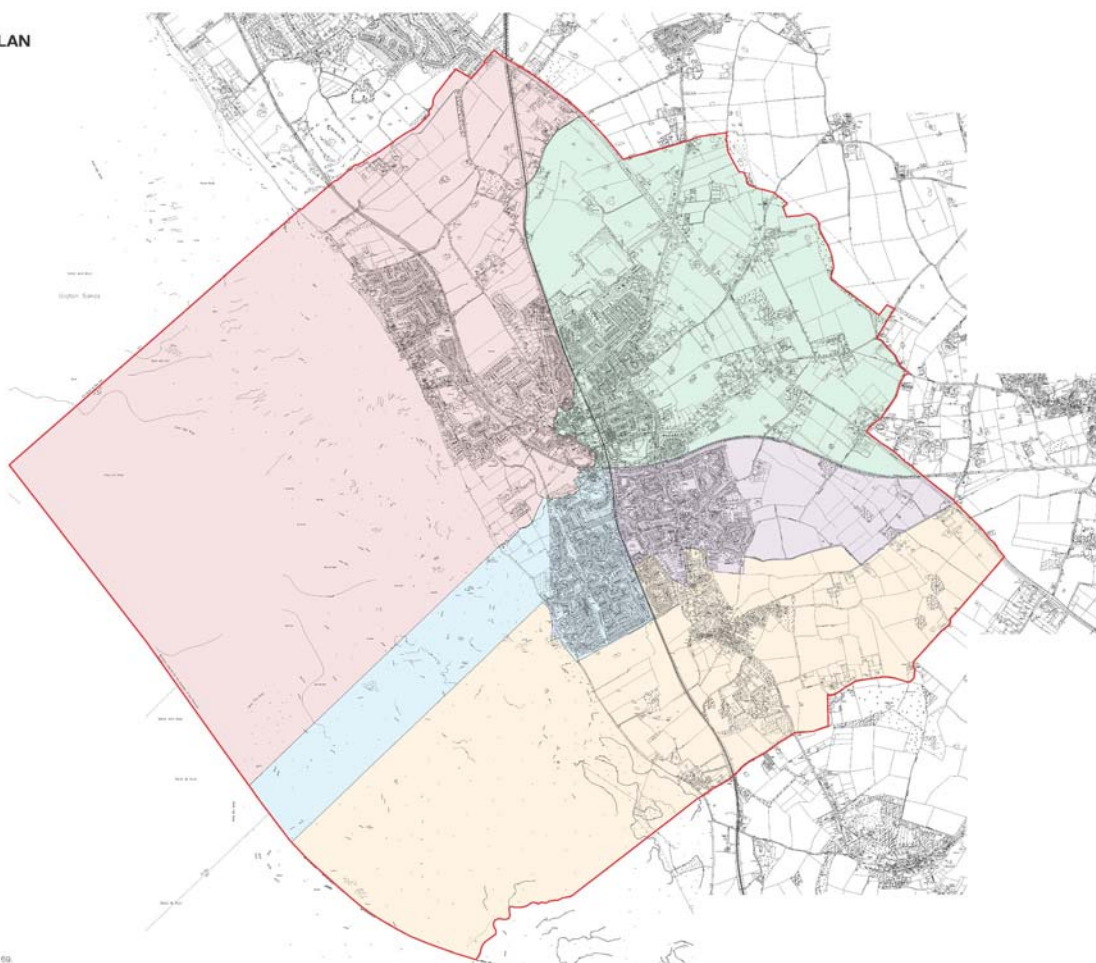
## Summary

3.43 From the above analysis there are a number of issues and questions that the NNP needs to consider:

- The changing demographic with a fall in the population of young people and the rise in older persons. What does this mean for service provision and for housing type in the future? And how can the NNP help to reverse this trend?
- The rise in single person households between 2001 – 2011. What does this mean for housing type in the future?
- The high levels of detached housing relative to terraced and flat properties. What does this mean for young people (first time buyers) wishing to stay or move to the area and for the population profile in the future?
- The high levels of under-occupancy in the area. What does this mean for the older and younger population in the future?
- The relatively low level of social rented properties in Neston. What does this mean for lower income families wishing to stay or move into the area?
- How will the high levels of retired people in the area impact on the sustainability and viability of Neston in the future? Will it mean an increase in provision of services and facilities that are currently available in the NPA?
- There is a need to provide additional employment opportunities within the area to reduce the distance people need to travel to work and reduce the outmigration of young people.
- There is a need to improve public transport facilities and services and other non-car modes of transport to reduce people's reliance on motor vehicles to travel to work.
- Although the NPA ranks relatively well within the IMD there are areas that show some levels of disadvantage which need to be addressed to ensure the NPA is an equitable and sustainable place to live.



## NESTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN Wards



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Figure 3.4: Town Council Wards

## Neston NPA Character

3.44 From its early origins, Neston has a long and rich history. 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 laid the foundations for the Industrial Revolution in the area with early large scale employment. Parkgate was a major port with sailings from England to Ireland.

3.45 Neston sits within high quality countryside. The older settlements, with the exception of Parkgate, are 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.

3.46 The proximity of Neston to open countryside, of high visual and ecological value, is a key asset. This countryside provides an important green lung and valuable recreational resource for this compact collection of settlements. The high quality and varied green space provision of Stanney Fields Park, Park Fields, Ness Botanic Gardens, 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 and the Burton Marsh Greenway that links through to North Wales make the countryside easy to access.

## Built Environment

3.47 There are three conservation areas, each with detailed character appraisals carried out by the former Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Council; Neston in 2001, Ness in 2007 and Parkgate in 2008.

3.48 There are a significant number of listed buildings in the NPA. A full list can be found at Appendix C. In the main, listed buildings are either public buildings, houses or buildings 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 carrying a disused railway (The Wirral Way) and a telephone kiosk.

3.49 Older buildings in the NPA as a whole have some core 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.

3.50 The NPA has a wide range of housing types, of varying ages and sizes. What is noteworthy of the area 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.

3.51 The NPA is principally located to the west of the A540 (The Chester High Road) and is centred on Neston. Neston links to other localities 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.

3.52 An appraisal of the character of the NPA is structured around the five Town Council wards that constitute the NPA (see Figure 3.4).



## Neston Ward

3.53 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. More recent additions to the centre in the 1970s are unsympathetic to the historic fabric of the town.

3.54 A second residential area evolved in the 18th 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 houses, separated from the centre by the railway line.

3.55 The organic growth of the town has created a 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 lanes and alleys, known as weints, that provide shortcuts and links to courts and small areas of open space. Railway bridges are important features in the town and form strong gateways to the centre.



3.56 Moving away from the historic core there are further suburban areas. Clayhill to the north east was part of the 20th century expansion of the town, and includes the only employment zone in the NPA. It is a relatively large development with some older industrial buildings of poor quality design. Either side of Liverpool Road, are relatively large, post-war social housing estates: The Ringway and Hawkins Road.

3.57 Hinderton is slightly further from the centre, to the east, along the Chester High Road (A540) 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 Hinderton Road there is a mixture of housing, from large Edwardian villas set in spacious grounds to late 20th Century detached houses and bungalows. Leighton Road is a route into Neston from the north, it is again a mixture of housing types, from 17th Century Leighton Hall to late 20th Century detached houses and bungalows and more recent in-fill developments.

### Parkgate Ward

3.58 Parkgate is unique as the only settlement located on the Cheshire coastline. It is a linear settlement, evolved from a single carriageway aligned with the River Dee. This was transformed into The Parade, as a promenade for visitors in the 19th Century. 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 panoramic views of marshes and the Clwydian 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.

3.59 Buildings immediately inland to the east of 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. Further to the east towards the Wirral Way there are semi-detached dwellings and bungalows, dating from 1960s. North and south of The Parade the houses are mostly from the 20th Century, with a mixture of bungalows, semi-detached houses and detached dwellings set in relatively large 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

3.60 Ness is a small village centred around a compact village green. Ness was primarily a working farming village until the late 20th 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 more densely developed 1970s housing.

3.61 The high ridge location means people benefit from panoramic 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.

3.62 The countryside includes large agricultural fields and the Ness Botanic Gardens with its Grade II listed historic landscaped gardens, glasshouses and buildings.

### Little Neston Ward

3.63 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

3.64 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, had a significant influence on the early development of the area. The remains of Denhall Quay, Old Quay, landscaped spoil heaps and rows of colliery workers houses are all physical remnants of the coal mining industry.

3.65 The area was developed progressively in the 20th Century, with extensive and relatively high density housing built between the 1960s and the 1980s in the areas between and around West Vale and Marshlands Road.



## 4 Key Spatial Issues

4.1 The Town Council's CSG and the three TFWGs (Housing, Economic Development/Retailing and Quality of Life/Transport) have undertaken extensive research and consultation with the local community to identify key spatial issues within the NPA. This work alongside an analysis of the relevant evidence base for the CWaCLPSP, has identified the following key spatial issues that the NNP must address.

### Neston NPA and the North Cheshire Green Belt

4.2 The importance of the North Cheshire Green Belt in checking urban sprawl, in protecting the identity of settlements and in safeguarding the countryside is underlined in the CWaCLPSP. Reflecting this policy, the Green Belt is also highly valued by Neston residents. This was clearly evidenced in 2013 by an overwhelming community majority vote opposed to development within the Green Belt.

4.3 In the Neston NPA, the Green Belt designation is the essential element to the north of the settlements in maintaining the narrow strategic gap between Neston/Parkgate and Gayton/Heswall in the Metropolitan Borough of Wirral. To the south it maintains the distinction between the villages of Ness and Burton. To the east it provides the important gap between Neston and Willaston.

4.4 Additionally, the Green Belt ensures the maintenance of the rural landscape and the rural environment surrounding the conservation areas of Parkgate and Neston, the Wirral Country Park and the numerous footpaths and national cycleways that cross the NPA. The integrity of these areas of the Green Belt is assigned the highest priority for retention within the NNP.

4.5 The view of the community is that the current extent of the Green Belt within the NPA should be preserved due to its importance as a strategic gap between the nearby settlements of Heswall/Gayton, Willaston and Burton.

4.6 Alongside this, the community recognise that this position limits the extent and amount of development that can come forward. In this regard they will seek to maximise opportunities within the existing settlement area whilst ensuring that it is appropriate in terms of its impacts on its immediate locality.



### Housing

4.7 There is concern amongst the community that future housing should meet local need. The evidence points to a need for houses with less bed spaces (bedrooms) for emerging and concealed households and for elderly households to downsize. However, analysis shows that the past and current provision has predominantly been towards higher bed spaced properties (see Appendix D).

4.8 The limited housing provision for Neston, as a result of the Green Belt, set by the CWaCLPSP has already been exceeded and there is concern about the ability of the local community to have any influence over future housing provision.

4.9 The affordability of housing within the NPA is a key concern resulting in young families having to move away. The provision of affordable market and social housing is a key objective for the NNP.

4.10 Notwithstanding this objective, there is significant concern amongst the community regarding any potential release of Green Belt sites for affordable housing as is proposed within the CWaCLPSP (Rural Exception Sites). The community believe that in the first instance all available efforts should be made to bring forward potential sites within the urban area. And following that, Green Belt sites should only be brought forward after a strategic assessment of suitable sites across the Borough has been carried out.

4.11 There is concern around the impact of the student population from Leahurst Veterinary School renting properties within the NPA. The key impact is the limited supply of rentable properties which means that local

residents are being squeezed out and are having to move away. However, there is little support within the community for providing purpose-built student accommodation within the NPA. Additionally, there is limited capacity within the settlement area to accommodate student housing.

4.12 There is concern about the impact of new housing development at whatever scale on the infrastructure and services within the NPA. It is important to ensure that the NPA has adequate infrastructure to accommodate further development. There is also a concern about ensuring that the design of new housing development helps to enhance the character of the NPA.



Clayhill Business Park

## Employment

4.13 There is concern about the increasing extent of non-traditional employment businesses such as retail locating to Clayhill Business Park. This has a potential to affect the health of Neston town centre as well as altering the nature and function of the Business Park.

4.14 With around 4ha of undeveloped employment land available plus additional refurbished or redeveloped space at Clayhill Business Park, Neston is in a strong position to provide business space and jobs. However, it will require improvements to the site and to the infrastructure around it to enable it to come forward.

4.15 There is a recognition that Clayhill Business Park requires some investment in its building stock and to its public realm. This will make it more attractive to potential businesses. It will require the involvement of a number of stakeholders that have landholding interests in the Business Park.

4.16 There is a need to create a more balanced employment base across the sectors to help provide for and retain people of working age within the NPA and reduce the dependence on car commuting.

4.17 There are other significant employment opportunities within the NPA including within the Town centre, Parkgate, Ness Gardens and other locations. It is important that the NNP retains and enhances employment through allowing appropriate development in these areas.

4.18 There is a recognition that employment provision in the future may be more home-based and mobile. Technology is allowing us to work from any location and not have to be office-based. This results in a need for flexible and small-scale accommodation space with the requisite ICT. High speed broadband delivered both to mobile devices and non-hard-wired systems and associated ICT infrastructure will be needed to create the right environment for this to happen.



High Street, Neston

## Shopping

4.19 Similar to national trends with changes to people's shopping habitats there has been an impact on the character and function of Neston town centre. There is a recognition that the function of the town centre needs to change so that it is not solely a place for people to do their daily shop but a place to live and visit.

4.20 There is an aspiration to build on Neston town centre as the focus of Neston as a historic market town. In this context there is significant support for improvements and enhancements to the provision of the market(s) within Neston town centre.

4.21 There is a view that the boundary of the town centre, established within the EPNBLP, needs to be reviewed to reflect the core retail area. Outside this core area there should be a presumption in favour of converting established vacant retail units to residential use.

4.22 There is a high level of vacancy within the town centre (higher than comparable centres) which impacts on confidence and vitality. The NNP should seek to reduce and remove vacant units.

4.23 Although the introduction of the Sainsbury's supermarket has increased the amount of convenience goods floorspace in the town centre there has been a loss in number of independent convenience retailers over recent years.

4.24 Improvements to the town centre are ongoing and being led by the Town Centre Manager. The NNP needs to provide a framework for these improvements where they have a spatial dimension.

4.25 A distinct competitive advantage of Neston town centre over some of its competitors is its free long-stay car parking. This asset is supported by businesses, residents and visitors alike. The NNP should seek to retain, maintain and enhance this asset.



The Parade, Parkgate

## Visitor Economy

4.26 The NPA has some significant attractions – Ness Gardens, Parkgate, Neston Market, the Wirral Way, Burton Marsh Greenway and a concentration of garden centres – which bring in visitors providing employment and business opportunities. There is a strong desire to build on these assets to create a sustainable visitor economy whilst at the same time recognising and managing the impacts that visitors can make on the local environment.

4.27 There are a number of specific ideas that have been raised by the community regarding improving the visitor asset base including:

- decked viewing platforms or the provision of a green beach (ie. a publicly accessible zone for picnics, walks and informal recreation that runs parallel with The Parade) adjacent to the seawall at Parkgate;
- a visitor centre and cycle hub based alongside the Wirral Way;
- a bridge over Station Road to connect two separated sections of the Wirral Way; and
- improved parking facilities.

4.28 The NNP needs to provide the spatial framework and land use policy basis for further detailed investigation as to the feasibility of these ideas.

4.29 The area's location colloquially known as the 'Cheshire Riviera' is unique within the Borough. The NPA is one of the few areas within CWaC that has an accessible coastline and faces the sea/estuary. This is a unique attraction and ensuring its long term future is a key objective within the NNP.



Neston Rail Station

## Transport and Travel

4.30 Neston residents depend on cars to travel to access services and facilities. Its rural and somewhat isolated location alongside an inadequate public transport infrastructure results in people being dependant on cars. People without a car find access to employment, education and training opportunities, as well as to hospitals and for social purposes, constrained. Young people who cannot drive or who do not have a car are greatly inconvenienced and unable to travel out of the NPA due to inadequate public transport provision, particularly



in the evenings and weekends.

4.31 In relation to rail infrastructure and services there is an aspiration for the Borderlands railway to be electrified and for there to be continuous services through to Liverpool rather than having to stop and change at Bidston in the Wirral and to Chester.

4.32 In relation to bus infrastructure and services there is an aspiration for a combined public transport hub based around the rail station with a central bus terminus. Additionally, improvements to bus shelters, seating, services and timetables are also identified as necessary to help people move around within and beyond the NPA.

4.33 The Wirral Way and the Burton Marsh Greenway provide excellent off-road facilities for recreational cyclists. There are some concerns over cyclist and pedestrian conflict along these routes which needs to be addressed through management and education to change attitudes and behaviours. However, there is also a need to provide better and safer on-road cycle facilities within the settlement so that cycling can become a transport mode of choice. There are key routes between important nodes within the NPA that should be created as cycle corridors with reduced speed limits.

4.34 Traffic generation associated with new development and its impact on highway capacity and safety is a major concern for existing residents. The community through the NNP want to ensure that the necessary information is provided to allow these impacts to be investigated and assessed in an open and transparent manner.

4.35 Neston town centre has extensive car parking facilities much of which is free. This is seen as a key advantage for Neston businesses. However, there are major concerns around parking provision in Parkgate particularly at weekends, evenings and during special events. The growth of Parkgate as a visitor destination needs to be sensitive to the interests of the established residential community. The NNP needs to provide the spatial framework to investigate the provision of additional parking and alternative modes of travel within Parkgate.



Park Fields, Parkgate

## Environment

4.36 The NPA has some important heritage assets including listed buildings, Conservation Areas and a Registered Park and Garden. There is also recognition that there are local historical and architectural assets that need identifying and protecting through the completion of a Local List. The Plan will provide the policy framework for this.

4.37 The heritage value of the NPA including Neston's 'Historic Market Town', Parkgate Parade and Ness Gardens will be used as an opportunity to grow the economic base of the area.

4.38 Local greenspaces should be protected from development. Opportunities to improve recreational activities on suitable sites will be explored. Additional allotment provision alongside the protection of existing allotments should be included within the NNP.

4.39 Access to the Green Belt adjacent to the urban area should be encouraged to provide additional recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.

4.40 The network of greenspaces and countryside provide an important element of the NPA's Green Infrastructure (GI). This and the benefits of GI, needs to be reflected within the Plan.

4.41 The nature conservation value of the Dee Estuary is well-recognised and there is international and national legislation protecting it including Special Protection Area, Special Area for Conservation and the RAMSAR site designations. There are also sites of local importance for nature conservation which need to be recognised and protected.



Neston Community and Youth Centre

## Community Assets

4.42 The community values facilities such as its schools, doctor's surgeries, dental practices, the Recreation Centre, the Neston Community and Youth Centre, halls, scout/guides huts and playing fields. The NNP should provide the policy framework to protect these facilities and the nomination of these as Assets of Community Value as appropriate.

4.43 The redevelopment of Neston High School will be one of the most significant developments within the NPA. It provides opportunities for improved education and recreational provision. It also, should there be any surplus land, potentially provides an opportunity for additional community benefits including land made available for affordable housing. The NNP needs to reflect this aspiration.

4.44 The community would also wish to see the improvement of the Neston Recreation Centre as the key leisure facility in the NPA. Again, the NNP needs to reflect this aspiration.

# 5 Vision and Objectives

5.1 The Vision and Objectives are based on the key spatial issues identified in the preceding sections. They form the foundation of the NNP, its policies and proposals.

## Vision

5.2 There are a number of key attributes and strengths within the NPA that have been identified by the community which provide the principles underpinning the Vision for the NNP. These are:

- The close inter-relationships and inter-dependencies the various settlements have with one another.
- Neston's traditional role as a historic market town providing a centre for the local community as well as the wider area.
- The importance of the visitor economy to the area's prosperity.
- The importance of the quality of the area's historic and natural environment.
- The close relationship the settlements have with the countryside and the estuary.

5.3 Following from these principles the Vision for the NPA is as follows:

'A diverse and thriving settlement with the historic market town at its centre around which other key economic, historic and environmental assets will evolve and expand whilst retaining and reflecting the Area's unique and distinctive character to provide an outstanding quality of life for current and future residents'.

## Objectives

5.4 To achieve this Vision the Town Council has identified the following objectives for the NNP:

- 1 Support the CWaCLPSP Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies retention of the existing Green Belt boundaries and protect the Green Belt from inappropriate development.
- 2 Accommodate future housing provision within the existing settlement limits and ensure that provision meets local housing need for both the market and social sectors.
- 3 Strengthen and support economic activity in the traditional employment, information technology and visitor economy sectors including the provision and enhancement of infrastructure and facilities.

- 4 Enhance Neston town centre's role as the retail, social and cultural hub for the area and strengthen and support retail provision to meet local need.
- 5 Make improvements to cycling provision, public transport services and transport infrastructure.
- 6 Promote sustainability and reduce carbon-dependent activities.
- 7 Ensure new development and alterations to existing properties protect and enrich the existing townscape and landscape within the built and natural environments.
- 8 Protect and enhance the area's coastline, its nature conservation assets and local green areas.
- 9 Protect and enhance health and wellbeing amongst the community.
- 10 Sustain and improve local facilities and services.



The Tower, Parkgate Road, Neston



## 6 Strategy

6.1 The Plan's strategy is based on incremental, sustainable and beneficial change to the environment and the community. Underpinning this strategy is the protection of the Green Belt from inappropriate development. The North Cheshire Green Belt has been and continues to be an important planning mechanism for maintaining the high quality countryside around which the NPA's settlements sit. The retention of the Green Belt is seen as a key priority for the community and the NNP reflects this in attempting to ensure the majority of development is accommodated within the existing settlements.

6.2 The historic market town will be at the heart of the NPA as a thriving centre for living, shopping and socialising. There are opportunities to transform parts of the town centre through regeneration and redevelopment and this is a key priority of the NNP.

6.3 Linked to the historic market town are the key visitor attractions of Parkgate Parade, Ness Botanic Gardens, the Burton Marsh Greenway and the Wirral Way. The latter two assets provide the arteries that will help link these assets and others together to help create a dynamic, prosperous and sustainable place. Additional visitor facilities will be supported.

6.4 Housing growth is to be accommodated within the settlement boundaries. This is primarily based on small and modest scale developments from windfall sites, an existing allocation and identified potential sites. New housing development should provide for identified local need in both the market and social sectors. The NPA can meet the requirements and more identified within the CWaCLPSP.

6.5 Employment growth within the traditional employment sectors will be directed towards Clayhill Business Park. The strategy also seeks to diversify the employment base by supporting the visitor economy and making provision for small scale businesses within the knowledge-based and e-business sectors.

6.6 Improvements to the transport infrastructure as a whole is promoted along with enhancements to public transport services. The strategy seeks to build on its off-road cycling and walking routes by creating a network of safe walking and cycling connections throughout the NPA. Existing car parks are to be protected from development and extended where possible within and adjacent to Parkgate Parade.

6.7 The NNP seeks to ensure high quality and sustainable design for new development and extensions. A number of key transport corridors are identified for landscape and public realm improvements.

6.8 Important green spaces are to be protected and opportunities for new green space will be investigated. Trees and woodland of local importance will be protected. Should there be a loss of trees or woodland policies will seek appropriate mitigation. Non-designated heritage assets will be protected through the identification of these assets in a local list and an associated policy.

6.9 Local community facilities will be supported and protected through policy. The provision of a new high quality High School and Recreation Centre is a key aspiration for the local community. The NNP seeks to ensure that all development takes account of the health and wellbeing of the community.



The Parade, Parkgate



Wirral Way at Station Road, Parkgate

# 7 Policies and Proposals

## STRATEGY

### Objectives

- 1 Support the CWaCLPSP retention of the existing Green Belt boundaries and protect the Green Belt from inappropriate development.
- 2 Accommodate future housing provision within the existing settlement limits and ensure that provision meets local housing need.
- 4 Enhance Neston town centre's role as the retail, social and cultural hub for the area and strengthen and support retail provision to meet local need.

### Rationale

7.1 The North East Cheshire Green Belt within the NPA is considered essential in terms of checking urban sprawl and maintaining the important strategic gaps between its settlements and Gayton/Heswall, Willaston and Burton. Additionally, the Green Belt around the settlements provides a high value landscape setting to the conservation areas of Parkgate and Neston, Ness Botanical Gardens, the Wirral Country Park and the recreational routes that cross through the area. The Key Diagram shows the extent of the Green Belt within the NPA and the existing settlement limits.

7.2 As such, development to meet local needs will be concentrated within the existing settlement limits. This will be provided through a mix of windfall and infill development, an existing housing allocation, conversions and redevelopment opportunities.

7.3 Over the Plan period the NPA will accommodate at least 200 dwellings in line with CWaCLPSP Policy STRAT8 'Rural Area' and provide land for business and industrial development.

7.4 Development for retail, tourism and community facilities will be of an appropriate scale to ensure the NPA continues to be a sustainable and viable place to shop, visit and live.

### Community Views

7.5 The community are overwhelmingly in favour of protecting the Green Belt. 80% agree that development in the Green Belt should not be proposed within the NNP.

- The community are also in favour of ensuring that new housing development should meet the needs of the local area with 77% agreeing.
- In addition there was significant support for improvements to Neston town centre with 76% agreeing that the weekly market should be improved and extended and 87% agreeing that incentives should be provided to promote and develop niche shops and bespoke businesses.

## Policy

### NNDS1: Neston Development Strategy

Proposals for new development, change of use and redevelopment must:

- (1) Meet local needs;
- (2) Be located within the existing settlement limits unless it can be justified that it is appropriate in the Green Belt;
- (3) Be appropriate in scale and design to its local context;
- (4) Be accessible by a variety of means of transport; and
- (5) Demonstrate that it contributes to the principles of sustainable development.

### Local Plan Compliance

7.6 The Strategy policy complies with the following relevant strategic Local Plan policies:

- STRAT1: Sustainable Development
- STRAT2: Strategic Development
- STRAT8: Rural Area
- STRAT9: Green Belt and the Countryside
- STRAT10: Transport and Accessibility.



## HOUSING

### Objectives

2 Accommodate future housing provision within the existing settlement limits and ensure that provision meets local housing need for both the market and social sectors.

### Rationale

#### Housing Provision

7.7 The CWaCLPSP makes provision for at least 200 dwellings within Neston during the period 2010 – 2030 (Policy STRAT8). There is no proposed Green Belt release around Neston and therefore these additional dwellings are to be accommodated within the existing settlement boundaries.

7.8 New residential development will be a mix of existing allocations (from within the EPNBLP), existing permissions, completions (since April 2010) and windfalls within the existing settlement limits.

7.9 As at 31 March 2014 the existing housing supply provision within Neston equated to 211 dwellings. Appendix D provides a breakdown of the components of this supply. In summary it is made up of the following:

Completions 01.04.10 – 31.03.14 (net) = 47  
Extant permissions as at 31.03.14 (net) = 139  
Existing allocations (net) = 25  
Total dwellings = 211

7.10 In line with the presumption in favour of sustainable development and growth the community will support further housing development within the existing settlement limits provided that proposals satisfy the policy requirements within the NNP.

7.11 In this context, the Housing TFWG has undertaken an assessment of potential sites within the settlement. These sites are shown at Appendix E. Further work will be undertaken by this group to ascertain how deliverable housing is on these sites.

#### Housing Mix and Type

7.12 There has been a marked decline in the number of young adults and middle aged adults within Neston between 2001–2011. During that period there has also been a significant increase in the older adults and elderly

population. Should this trend continue it could have a significant impact on the amenities, facilities and services within the NPA.

7.13 It is important for the future of the NPA that young people can continue to live in the area and that there is a more sustainable and viable population distribution within the area. There are significant benefits to the wider community in having families living and moving into the area. It is also important that there is appropriate accommodation for elderly people so that they can continue to live in the area where they have a network of family, friends and support.

7.14 The change in population distribution is considered in part due to a lack of appropriate housing for newly forming households from either within the NPA or beyond and for appropriate housing for the elderly population to downsize and stay within the area. There is a need for smaller dwelling sizes to help deal with the under-occupation of existing larger houses (over 80% of households have some level of under-occupancy. See Paragraph 3.23) and for new or concealed households. All future proposals for residential development should demonstrate how they meet local needs.

7.15 The above issues are recognised within the CWaCLPSP. Policy SOC3 'Housing mix and type' seeks to ensure a mix of house types, tenures and sizes are provided in the future. Proposals for new housing should take account of the needs in the area and especially of the provision of small family homes to assist households into home ownership and for older people who may wish to downsize.

#### Affordable Housing

7.16 The CWaC SHMA identifies a requirement for 29 affordable homes per annum 2013/14 – 2018/19. This equates to 145 dwellings over the 5 year period. The SHMA identifies that the most significant need (90% of the affordable housing need) is for 1 bed dwellings for both the under and over 65 age groups. There is also a need for 3+ bed dwellings for the under 65 age group.

7.17 Since April 2010 records indicate there has been no new affordable housing provision within the area. The definition of affordable housing from the NPPF is provided in Appendix F. The community consider the need for affordable housing is a key issue for the NPA. However, they do not consider there is a need for an additional policy beyond the CWaC Policy SOC1 'Delivering Affordable Housing'. This policy seeks affordable housing provision

on residential development of three or more dwellings or on site of 0.1ha or more in rural areas such as Neston.

7.18 The type, tenure and size of future affordable housing provision will be subject to the most up-to-date housing needs assessment, evidence of need from the local Registered Social Landlords (RSL) and CWaC. Plus Dane and Adactus are the main RSLs in the area. The Town Council will work with them and other RSLs working in the area to look at the provision of new affordable housing and the continued maintenance of the existing affordable housing stock.

7.19 The community is keen to ensure the provision of the maximum requirement of 30%. If developers are to provide less than this it will need to be substantiated through a development appraisal. This will detail the values and costs of the development, the profit to be derived from the development and the assumptions that have been made.

## Rural Exception Sites

7.20 The importance of the North Cheshire Green Belt in checking urban sprawl, in protecting the identity of settlements and in safeguarding the countryside is underlined in the CWaCLPSP. The community recognise the need for affordable housing and acknowledge the Rural Exception Sites policy within the CWaC Local Plan. Additionally, the community view the importance of preserving the Green Belt and resisting any extension, however small, beyond the existing settlement as a key priority for the NNP.

7.21 In the NPA, the Green Belt designation is the essential element to the north of the town in maintaining the narrow strategic gap between the settlements of Neston/Parkgate and Gayton/Heswall in the Borough of Wirral. To the south it maintains the distinction between the villages of Ness and Burton. To the east it provides the important gap between Neston and Willaston.

7.22 Additionally, it ensures the maintenance of the rural landscape and the rural environment surrounding the conservation areas of Parkgate and Neston, Ness Botanical Gardens, the Wirral Country Park and the numerous footpaths and national cycleways that cross the area. The integrity of these areas of Green Belt is assigned the highest priority for retention within the NNP.

7.23 In this context the community's view regarding Rural Exception Sites is that sites for affordable housing within the settlement area should be examined first. The

Housing TFWG, one of the Town Council's Neighbourhood Plan's working groups, has undertaken an assessment of potential sites within the settlement area. These sites are listed at Appendix E. Further work will be undertaken by this Group on behalf of the Town Council to ascertain the deliverability of affordable housing on these sites. They will work closely with Adactus and Plus Dane and other RSLs operating in the area, to bring about affordable housing within the settlement area. Once identified the priority should be to bring these sites forward. Only after these sites have been developed should sites in the Green Belt be considered.

7.24 The community feel that the CWaCLPSP SOC 2 'Rural Exception Sites' needs to reflect local circumstances, and to ensure that issues around development in the Green Belt that they consider important are addressed.

7.25 The policy on Rural Exception Sites within the NNP provides a set of Green Belt criteria that will need to be addressed to determine whether the site is appropriate for development in relation to the aims and purposes of including land within the Green Belt.

7.26 The NPPF states that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open (Paragraph 79). The NPPF also states at Paragraph 80 the five purposes that Green Belt serves:

- To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

7.27 Criteria 1 – 4 of the NNP policy essentially provide the tests to assess the degree of impact on the above. It is accepted that any Rural Exception Site will encroach into the countryside and as such this is not part of the assessment criteria. Applicants will need to demonstrate how the site measures against these criteria and the impact that any development on the site would have on these criteria.

7.28 In addition to the specific Green Belt considerations

there are a number of design and development criteria that the proposal will need to be judged against. The development should be within a sustainable location and should be of a design that reinforces the settlement's character and incorporates landscape elements that create a strong and permanent edge. Proposals will need to satisfy all six criteria.

7.29 The final criteria provides some clarity over small sites in the context of Neston. The NNP proposes that sites should be no more than 1 hectare in area and provide no more than 30 dwellings. This is considered appropriate in terms of the viability of affordable housing schemes.

## Community Views

7.30 The community are overwhelmingly in favour of supporting the NNP identifying sites within the urban area (not in the Green Belt) for housing development with 81% agreeing.

- 77% agree that new housing development should meet the needs of the local area which will require a sustainable mix of owner-occupied and rented properties.
- 68% agree that the CWaC affordable housing target should be applied to Neston as a whole and not to each site individually.
- 64% agreed that affordable housing should be promoted.

## Policy

### NNH1: New Residential Development

New residential development will be permitted providing it meets all of the following criteria:

- 1 It is in a sustainable location and has good access to public transport and other local amenities;
- 2 It is a mix, tenure and style that meets local need;
- 3 It is appropriate in scale and design to its local context and adjacent properties;
- 4 It can be adequately serviced by the existing infrastructure and utilities network; and
- 5 It provides adequate vehicular and non-vehicular access arrangements.

### NNH2: Housing Mix and Type

In order to support a balanced and sustainable community within the NPA proposals for new market and affordable housing, should take account of the needs in the area including the provision of:

- 1 Small family and non-family homes to assist households to stay or move into the area; and
- 2 Smaller sized housing for older people to allow them to downsize and stay in the area.

### NNH3: Rural Exception Sites

If a Rural Exception Site is brought forward within the NPA, proposals must meet all of the following criteria:

- (1) There should be no deliverable sites within the settlement boundary to meet the affordable housing needs;
- (2) The site will be located on the immediate edge of the settlement boundary and well-contained in relation to the existing settlement area;
- (3) The development should preserve the integrity of the essential gap provided by the Green Belt between neighbouring settlements;
- (4) The development should not detract from the site's contribution to the setting and special character of the settlement;
- (5) The development will be appropriate in terms of landscape and visual amenity of the area and include structural landscaping to assist its integration with the adjacent countryside;
- (6) The site will have good access to public transport and other local amenities; and
- (7) The development will be limited to 30 dwellings in up to 1ha of land.

## Local Plan Compliance

7.31 The Housing policies comply with the following relevant strategic Local Plan policies:

- STRAT1: Sustainable Development

- STRAT2: Strategic Development
- STRAT8: Rural Area
- STRAT9: Green Belt and the Countryside
- SOC1: Delivering Affordable Housing
- SOC2: Housing Mix and Type
- SOC3: Rural Exception Sites



## EMPLOYMENT

### Objectives

3 Strengthen and support economic activity in the traditional employment, information technology and the visitor economy sectors.

### Rationale

#### Clayhill Business Park

7.31 Clayhill Business Park is located to the north-east of Neston as shown on the Key Diagram. It is accessed off Liverpool Road and is some 15.8ha in area which along with the Aldi Distribution Centre (12.6ha) provides over 28ha of employment land in the NPA. It incorporates a variety of traditional employment uses within the Use Classes B1(c), B2 and B8 (light industrial, general industrial and storage and distribution). Over recent years other businesses have begun to operate from the Business Park that would fall more into retail and professional services uses (Use Class A1 and A2) and sui generis (no use class). As well as changing the nature of the Business Park this could, if it is allowed to go unchecked, have an impact on retail and professional services provision within Neston town centre.

7.32 There are a number of vacant sites within the Clayhill Business Park that could be developed for employment uses over the plan period. These are identified in the CWaC Employment Land Study Update 2013 and shown on the Key Diagram:

- a. NES/001/E Clayhill 1, Water Tower Road (SWE) – 0.57ha
- b. NES/002/E Clayhill 2, Buildwas Road/Long Acres Road – 0.53ha
- c. NES/003/E Clayhill 3, Long Acres Road (North) – 0.92ha
- d. NES/004/E Clayhill 4, Long Acres Road (West) – 0.64ha
- e. NES/005/E Clayhill 5, Water Tower Road (West) – 1.13ha

7.33 The total amount of employment land potentially available at Clayhill Business Park is 3.79ha.

7.34 The Clayhill Business Park is the only employment area within the NPA. As such the community is keen to

protect the existing and future land within it for employment uses only. The CWaCLPSP document also highlights a need for employment land provision in the Rural Areas. As one of the largest settlements within the Rural Areas of the Borough it is considered that the employment land within Neston should be protected and promoted for employment use. The policy seeks to safeguard the land within Clayhill Business Park for employment use unless stringent pre-conditions have been met that demonstrate that the unit is no longer required for that use and that changing its use will not have an impact on the Business Park or Neston town centre.

7.35 An equally important issue for employment provision within NPA is the need for qualitative improvements to the Clayhill Business Park. A number of the units do not meet modern specifications and standards. There are opportunities within the Business Park to upgrade the existing stock to ensure that there is a greater range of modern accommodation to meet user needs and requirements. The Town Council will therefore support proposals that seek to upgrade and/or redevelop older parts of the Business Park for continued employment uses.

7.36 These qualitative improvements also include schemes that will enhance the Business Park through:

- Environmental and landscape improvements.
- Pedestrian and cyclist provision, including routes and parking.
- Improved bus services, routes and stops to enable greater access.

#### Neston Town Centre

7.37 The community recognise that there are a number of small professional services and other businesses operating within the town centre – banks, building societies, accountants, solicitors, estate agents and others – that help the vitality and viability of the Centre and provide employment opportunities.

7.38 The community wish to use the NNP to place stringent tests on proposals that would mean a loss of these uses in the town centre. They recognise that restricting this change of use is only part of a solution to prevent this move away from the town centre and that other measures are required such as fiscal incentives and investment in infrastructure and the public realm to create



the right environment for businesses to stay within the town centre.

7.39 The NNP includes a policy that seeks to safeguard land for employment use at Clayhill Business Park. In addition, the plan also seeks to protect business uses in Neston town centre. Applicants will need to demonstrate that proposals for a change of use satisfy pre-conditions around the lack of demand for the current use.

Developing the Local Economy

7.40 There is a need to diversify the local economy to enable the NPA to become a more sustainable place to live and work. The provision of workspace within converted rural buildings such as Oaktree Court Business Centre on Mill Lane or within residential buildings and new build development within the settlement will provide opportunities for knowledge-based and e-businesses that do not need large sized accommodation. This will also reduce out commuting and the associated problems of air quality and high carbon footprints that these journeys create.

Information and Communications Technology Infrastructure

7.41 Broadband internet connections are slow in the NPA. This affects the ability of residents to access information and the performance of businesses that rely on broadband as a key means of communication in a rural area. High speed broadband serving mobile devices as well as hard-wired systems will help to address these issues and bring with it a range of new opportunities, such as better remote and home working and access to more online applications and services and the rapid transmission of high volumes of data. In a time when the internet and digital media is continuing to grow as an important means of communication the provision of fast broadband is a key asset to attract new businesses into the NPA and improve the wellbeing of its residents.

7.42 Mobile phone coverage within the parts of the NPA is considered to be variable. This affects local businesses and residents alike. The infrastructure provision for telecommunications should be the minimum consistent with the efficient operation of the network. Existing masts, buildings and other structures should be used first before the provision of new facilities. Additional provision will need to be justified and it will need to be demonstrated that the relevant guidelines on exposure of non-ionising radiation have been met.

Community Views

7.43 There is significant community support for the aspirations and objectives set out in the NNP:

- 91% agreed that there is a need to maximise the potential of Clayhill by enhancing the appearance of the Business Park and infrastructure and provide encouragement to new start-up businesses.
- 86% agreed that suitable business premises should be provided throughout the town catering for different types of businesses.
- 62% agreed that there is a need to promote the expansion of communications and technology-based businesses in the area.

Policy

NNE1: Clayhill Business Park

A. Proposals for employment development and redevelopment within the Clayhill Business Park will be permitted providing that it meets all of the following criteria:

1

Is for development within Use Classes B1, B2 and B8 unless the criteria for part B of this policy can be met;

2

Is of a high quality sustainable design and of a scale compatible with the Business Park;

3

Is appropriate in terms of its impact on the capacity and road safety of the local highway network;

4

Promotes opportunities to travel by non-car modes for visitors and employees; and

5

Does not adversely impact on the amenity of neighbouring residents and occupiers.

B. Development for non-B1, B2 and B8 Use Classes at Clayhill Business Park will only be allowed in exceptional circumstances where it can be demonstrated that the proposal meets all of the following criteria:

1

The continued use of the premises or site for employment use is no longer commercially viable and that the site or premises has been marketed for at least 12 months for that or any other suitable employment use;

2

Would be compatible with existing retained employment uses;

- 3 Would not limit the range, choice and quality of employment land available to meet future employment needs;
- 4 If for A1 – A5 Use Classes the proposal will not impact on the vitality and viability of Neston town centre as defined on Figure 7.1.

C. The Town Council will support proposals to upgrade or redevelop parts of the Clayhill Business Park to include:

- 1 Provision of landscape and environmental improvements;
- 2 Enhancement of access to and within the site by public transport, cycling and walking including the provision of bus shelters and real time information;
- 3 Enhancement to safety and security for occupiers and users.

There should be no net loss of employment provision as a result of the proposals. Additionally, any proposals must not have an adverse impact on the amenities of neighbouring properties.

## NNE2: Retaining Employment Uses in Neston Town Centre

Within Neston town centre, as defined in Figure 7.1, proposals for the redevelopment or change of use of buildings or sites currently or previously in office or light industrial (Use Class B1) or Financial or Professional Services (Use Class A2) to other uses (with the exception of Use Classes A1, A3 – A5 (Shops, Restaurants and Cafes, Drinking Establishments and Hot Food Takeaways)) will only be permitted if the existing use is no longer economically viable and it can be demonstrated that the property or site has been marketed for at least 12 months for employment use.

## NNE3: Promoting Local Employment Growth

Proposals for new build development and the conversion and/or extension of existing buildings for employment uses will be supported provided it meets all of the following criteria:

- 1 It is appropriate in scale and design to its

surroundings and context;

- 2 It is acceptable in terms of highway safety and capacity; and
- 3 It does not harm the amenity of neighbouring residents or occupiers.

In addition proposals for conversions and extensions of existing buildings in rural areas will need to meet the requirements of Green Belt policy within the NPPF and the CWaC Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies.

## NNE4: High Quality Communications Infrastructure

Development of high speed broadband infrastructure to serve the Parish will be supported by the Town Council.

New infrastructure to support telecommunications installations will be permitted provided that the proposal meets all of the following criteria:

- 1 The need for the new site and/or facility is justified;
- 2 The equipment is sympathetically designed and does not detract from the character of its surroundings and context; and
- 3 The equipment does not cause harm to the health, wellbeing and amenity of local residents.

## Local Plan Compliance

7.44 The employment policies comply with the following relevant strategic Local Plan policies:

- STRAT11: Infrastructure
- ECON1: Economic Growth, Employment and Enterprise
- ECON2: Town Centres.



Cheshire Spa and Pools, Clayhill Business Park

## Objectives

4 Enhance Neston town centre's role as the retail, social and cultural hub for the area and strengthen and support retail provision to meet local need.

## Rationale

### Neston Town Centre

7.45 The development of the Sainsbury's food store (1,710 sq m) and multi-storey car park has increased the convenience goods<sup>3</sup> floorspace within the town centre. It has also provided qualitative improvements to the town centre including the market square. However, it is questionable as to whether it has increased the footfall within the town centre as was anticipated. Alongside the Aldi (1,000sq m) and the other smaller multiple outlets of Tesco Express, Iceland, McColls and Gerrards it is considered that Neston town centre has sufficient convenience goods floorspace. The CWaC Retail Study Update (June 2013) also concludes there is no requirement to consider allocating new convenience goods floorspace based on existing market share.

7.46 Although there has been an increase in floorspace in convenience goods there has been a decline in the number of convenience goods units since 2008. These include the closure of a butcher, baker, greengrocer, specialist foods outlet and off-licence.

7.47 Comparison goods<sup>4</sup> retail represent the majority of retail units alongside retail service sectors (for example hairdressers) within the town centre. However, the comparison goods sector has seen a fall of around 15% between 2008 and 2014 whilst the retail service sector has increased by the same percentage. The CWaC Retail Study Update (June 2013) concluded there is no requirement to consider allocating new comparison goods floorspace based on existing market share. However, the Study did identify a need for qualitative improvements in comparison goods of an appropriate scale to Neston's role and function.

7.48 The town centre also includes a significant proportion of units within the Financial and Professional Services (Estate Agents, Accountants, Banks) and within the Leisure Industry (restaurants and cafes, drinking establishments, and hot food takeaways – Use Classes A3, A4 and A5). Since 2008 there has been a fall in the number of Leisure Service units and an increase in the

number of units within the Financial and Professional Services. In 2014 Action for Market Towns (AMT) carried out a Town Benchmarking exercise to measure the performance of the town centre. The performance is measured against similar towns nationally, in the North West and within a similar typology to Neston. The main outcomes from this study include:

- A2 Use Class (Financial and Professional Services) in Neston are higher than the National Small Towns average.
- The types of trader within Neston generally reflect the regional and national pattern.
- Although there is a relatively large amount of convenience goods floorspace within Neston the majority (two-thirds) of units sell mainly comparison goods.
- 65% of users visited Neston for convenience shopping which is 23% higher than the National Small Towns average.
- 64% of users want to see a new weekend market introduced with 75% stating a Farmers Market and 60% a Continental Market.

7.49 The exercise also identified positive and negative aspects of the town centre. The market and car parking were considered positives. However, empty units and low footfall and high car parking vacancy on non-market days were considered negatives.

7.50 The overall financial performance of businesses was lower in 2013 with 58% of businesses reporting a decrease in turnover as compared to 2012 (more than double the National Small Towns average). In addition 50% of traders reported their profitability had decreased over the last 12 months and expected their turnover to decrease over the next year.

7.51 The change in the type and function of units within the town centre is reflective of the changing nature of shopping habits within the country. More shopping is done online and car-based shopping trips to edge of and out-of-town centres accounts for a higher proportion of shopping. The size of convenience goods stores within the town centre will be adequate for a number of residents with the NPA. However, many people will continue to do their bulk purchase in larger retail units outside of the NPA and use the convenience stores within Neston for top-up shopping.

<sup>3</sup> Convenience goods are generally every day essential items such as food

<sup>4</sup> Comparison goods are retail items not bought on a frequent basis such as televisions and white goods (fridges, dishwashers, etc)



## Town Centre Boundary

7.52 There is a recognition that the boundary of the town centre needs to be reviewed. The current town centre boundary within the EPNBLP dates back to 2002. There have been some changes in the town centre in the intervening 13 years which needs to be reflected in the NNP.

7.53 Around the fringes of the town centre there have been changes in the role and function of various units and land. In many instances these areas are primarily residential in nature rather than retail, commercial or mixed use.

7.54 The town centre boundary has been redrawn to reflect the reality of the core shopping area within Neston which also includes some community and commercial facilities. Non-core retail uses have been removed from within the previous town centre boundary. Appendix G shows the EPNBLP Neston Town Centre boundary annotated with the proposed changes. Figure 7.1 shows the proposed new town centre boundary.

## Neston Town Centre Action Plan

7.55 The Neston Town Centre Action Plan (December 2013) was produced by the Town Centre Manager. Its key objective is to create a vibrant town centre which generates economic prosperity as well as make the centre a safe, inclusive and accessible place for people to live, work, shop and visit.

7.56 To achieve these objectives the Action Plan includes a number of initiatives and actions. Some of these have a development and land use planning component.

1 The town hall and market square should be the town centre's core for commercial, social and cultural activity. Signage and improvements to the Town Hall in terms of accessibility and more efficient use of space are identified as being physical measures to assist this.

2 Reduce the negative impact of empty commercial shop units by bringing them back into use by encouraging more flexible accommodation use.

3 Provide a better offer including small independent and larger national retailers.

4 Provide cycle facilities to encourage cyclists to visit the town centre.

5 Promote the town centre as a business location.

7.57 Retail uses will be acceptable in principle within the town centre area. There is a recognition that with the changing nature of shopping and leisure time that the town centre should also have accommodation for social, cultural and service activities. The objective is to create a town centre for living, working and visiting rather than just a place to do the daily or weekly shop. Opportunities for mixed use developments with residential, employment and leisure components will be supported provided they do not have a detrimental impact on the vitality and viability of the town centre.

7.58 An important component of Neston town centre is the free car parking available off Brook Street and Chester Road. There are also more restrictive car parks associated with the food stores at Sainsbury's, Aldi and Tesco. Neston Rail Station car park is free for rail travellers and Viscount House car park is for staff only. The free car parking provision is seen by businesses as a key advantage for Neston over other comparable shopping centres in the area.

## Town Centre Development Opportunity

7.59 The buildings at 8 – 30 Brook Street include a number of groundfloor and first floor units. The ground floor units have a history of both high vacancy rates and long-term vacancies. It is of a modern brick construction and does not reflect the aesthetic of the town centre. Due to these factors it is considered that the site provides an ideal development opportunity for a variety of uses appropriate to the town centre including housing development. This opportunity will also bring improvements to the aesthetic of the built environment and public realm of this part of the town centre. There are also opportunities to improve and enhance the main car park as part of these proposals. Proposals should conform with the Neston Town Centre Public Realm Design Guide 2011.

7.60 Every opportunity will be made to either retain existing tenants and businesses within the site or relocate them to a suitable site within the town centre.

## Local Retail Areas

7.61 Town Lane Local Retail Area (LRA) is located at the intersection of Town Lane, Mellock Lane and Ivy Farm Drive within Little Neston. It consists of a purpose-built parade of 5 no. retail units with residential above and a garage/MOT station. Adjacent to the parade are older

properties that include a post office, a hairdressers, hot food takeaway and a newsagent.

7.62 West Vale LRA is located in Little Neston. It consists of a purpose built parade of 8 groundfloor retail units with residential above and the Lady Hamilton public house.



Sainsburys and Market Square, Neston



8 - 30 Brook Street, Neston



West Vale Shopping Parade, Little Neston

7.63 These LRAs provide useful facilities and services for the local community. They allow local residents to walk or cycle to meet day-to-day shopping needs or other services such as hairdressers.

7.64 It is important for these local communities that they have access to these local facilities. These units also provide local employment opportunities as many are owned and run by people from the local community.

7.65 Applications for non-A1 uses (shops) will need to demonstrate that there is no need for retail provision in the area and that a change in use will not impact on the amenity of nearby residents and the vitality and viability of the LRA.

## Community Views

7.66 There is significant community support for the aspirations and objectives of the NNP in relation to retail:

- 87% agree that incentives should be provided to promote and develop niche shops and bespoke businesses.
- 76% agree that the existing weekly market should be improved and extended.

## Policies

### NNR1: Neston Town Centre

A. Permission will be granted for new town centre uses (Use Classes A1 – A5) and social, cultural and service uses (Use Classes D1 and D2 Non-Residential Institutions and Assembly and Leisure Uses) of an appropriate scale within the Neston Town Centre boundary as shown in Figure 7.1 provided that they do not have a detrimental impact on the amenities of residents living within or adjacent to the town centre.

Development, including change of use, should assist where possible in achieving the objectives for improvements for the town centre as identified in Part B of this policy.

B. The Town Council will support initiatives to improve the environment within the town centre including:

- 1 Improvements to the market square to enable enhancements to and the possible extension of the retail market;
- 2 Continued programme of public realm improvements;

- 3 Improved signage and interpretation;
- 4 Retention and enhancement of car parking;
- 5 Improved transport facilities including cycle provision and a public transport hub.

## Local Plan Compliance

7.67 The retail policies comply with the following relevant local plan policies:

- ECON2: Town Centres.

## NNR2: Neston Town Centre Development Opportunity

Proposals for single or mixed use development including retail, leisure, commercial and residential uses at the Development Opportunity Site identified on Figure 7.1 will be supported provided it meets all of the following criteria:

- 1 It is of an appropriate scale to the town centre;
- 2 It is of a high quality and sustainable design providing improvements to the public realm and townscape within this part of the town centre;
- 3 Retains, and where possible provides enhancements to the existing Chester Road car park;
- 4 Provides access for non-car modes of travel and links with existing pedestrian and cycle routes;
- 5 Provides adequate and appropriate servicing and refuse zones; and
- 6 Does not detrimentally impact the amenity of nearby residents.

## NNR3: Town Lane and West Vale Local Retail Areas











Proposals for the change of use of units in Use Class A1 (shops) within the Local Retail Areas (LRA) as identified on the Key Diagram to non-A1 uses will be permitted provided it meets all of the following criteria:

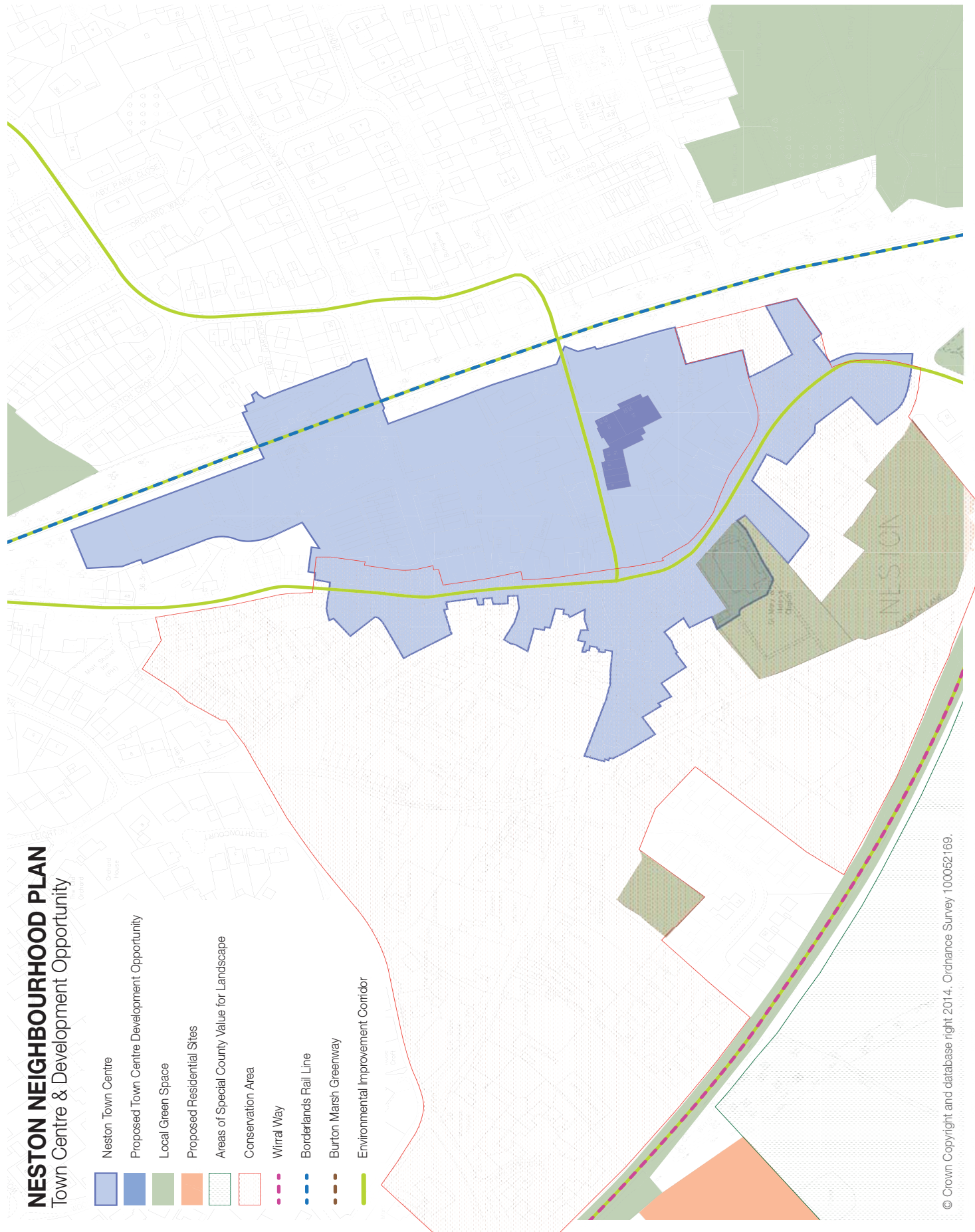
- 1 The shop use is no longer commercially viable and that it has been demonstrated that the premises have been marketed for that or any other suitable retail use for at least 12 months;
- 2 It will not have a detrimental impact on the vitality and viability of the LRA; and
- 3 It will not have a detrimental impact on the amenities of residents living within or adjacent to the LRA.



# NESTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

## Town Centre & Development Opportunity

-  Neston Town Centre
-  Proposed Town Centre Development Opportunity
-  Local Green Space
-  Proposed Residential Sites
-  Areas of Special County Value for Landscape
-  Conservation Area
-  Wirral Way
-  Borderlands Rail Line
-  Burton Marsh Greenway
-  Environmental Improvement Corridor



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Figure 7.1: Neston Town Centre



## TOURISM

### Objectives

3 Strengthen and support economic activity in the traditional employment, information technology and visitor economy sectors including the provision and enhancement of infrastructure and facilities.

### Rationale

#### Parkgate Parade

7.68 Parkgate has been an important visitor attraction for many years. During the 18th Century it was an important port with passenger services sailing to Ireland. However, by the end of the 19th Century the Dee had silted up and the port became unusable. It did remain a popular seaside resort with bathers but this diminished during the later part of the 19th Century.

7.69 It remains an important visitor attraction for bird watching, cyclists, walkers and others visiting the restaurants, cafes and ice cream parlours. The community recognise the importance that The Parade and its environs, together with the marshland, makes to the local economy and businesses.

7.70 However, it is also acknowledged that its popularity causes tensions particularly around car parking and traffic congestion that may have an impact on the amenities of residents living within and nearby the area. In recognition of its importance to the local visitor economy the community has identified the core visitor offer within Parkgate as the Parkgate Parade. Figure 7.2 shows the identified area. The community wish to promote and enhance the visitor facilities within this area whilst ensuring that any new development does not detrimentally impact the amenity of nearby local residents.



The Parade, Parkgate

### Visitor Economy

7.71 The NPA already has some notable attractions that bring people, jobs and prosperity from afar. Ness Botanic Gardens is the tenth most visited attraction in Cheshire (2013) and Gordale Nurseries (Garden Retailer of the Year 2012/13) is just outside the NPA.

7.72 Outdoor pursuits including walking, cycling and bird watching, the latter actively promoted by the RSPB, are increasingly prominent. The Dee Estuary is a major attraction for wildfowl and other bird watchers. The RSPB has developed a visitor centre nearby in Burton. They also hold events in Parkgate during high tides and in the winter.

7.73 The Wirral Way, part of the Wirral Country Park, is a significant draw for cyclists and walkers. Parkgate itself is a popular destination for visitors either associated with the marshlands, the Wirral Way or the restaurants, cafes and ice cream parlours that are located along The Parade. Neston town centre as the core to the historic market town is a draw to visitors and the Friday market regularly brings visitors to the area.

7.74 The NPA has an enviable location, in the context of Cheshire, as one of the only areas with a stretch of coastline. Referred to by some as the 'Cheshire Riviera' the local community wish to build on this unique location and its attractions. As such the community will support proposals that enhance the existing visitor attractions and provides new visitor facilities within the NPA. A key element of this is a visitor centre with ancillary retail and café outlets for cyclists, walkers, horseriders and other visitors to the Area.

7.75 Research has identified that visitors to Neston primarily on bicycle but also using different forms of transport need somewhere attractive to stop, obtain information, use conveniences and use as a base for a short look around the town centre.

7.76 The car park at Station Road, Neston is located adjacent to Stanney Fields Park and Bridson's Ravine. It is also on the Wirral Way and within walking distance of the town centre. There is an opportunity to create a stopping place for visitors within an extended area which could take in part of the Park and the Bridson's Ravine. It could include a small visitor hub with essential information, secure cycle parking, information boards and signage and conveniences. As well as links to the town centre there are also footpath links to the Town Trail, Lees Lane Ponds and the Old Quay.

## Community Views

7.77 There is community support for the aspirations and objectives for the visitor economy within the plan:

- 52% agree that a Visitor Centre would be desirable to help promote and encourage the visitor economy.
- 63% agree that a cycle hub with café and cycle hire should be located on the Wirral Way and that a bridge should be built over Station Road in Parkgate to connect Wirral Way.
- 81% agree that the Parkgate Old Baths and Station Road car parks should be extended.

## Policies

### NNT1: Parkgate Parade

Permission will be granted for development and change of use that maintains and enhances the visitor function of the Parkgate Parade area, as shown on Figure 7.2, provided that it meets all of the following criteria:

- 1 It preserves and enhances the character and appearance of the Parkgate Conservation Area;
- 2 It does not have a detrimental impact on the nature conservation interests of the Dee Estuary Special Area for Conservation and Special Protection Area;
- 3 It makes appropriate provision for parking and travel to and from the site or premises; and
- 4 It does not have a detrimental impact on the amenities of residents living within or adjacent to the area.

### NNT2: Visitor Economy

A. Proposals to enhance the existing tourism assets and the creation of new tourism opportunities within the NPA will be supported where it meets all of the following criteria:

- 1 The proposal will enhance the role of the NPA as a tourist and visitor destination;
- 2 It is of a suitable scale and design to its surroundings and context;
- 3 It is in a sustainable location and accessible by a variety of modes of travel;

4 It does not have a detrimental impact on nature conservation interests on the site or adjacent sites; and

5 It does not have a detrimental impact on the amenities of residents living within or adjacent to the proposal.

Development, including change of use, should assist where possible in achieving the objectives for enhancing the Visitor Economy as identified in Part B of this policy.

B. The Town Council will support the following initiatives to enhance and develop tourism assets within the NPA including:

1 Proposals for improvements to Ness Botanic Gardens including improved transport and access arrangements to the facility;

2 Proposals for a Visitor Centre on an appropriate site within the NPA that would have potential links with the Wirral Way, Neston town centre and Parkgate Parade;

3 Proposals for improvements to the visitor experience at Parkgate Parade including:

- i) Enhancements to The Parade to improve pedestrian and cycle access and reduce vehicle and parking congestion;
- ii) Enhancements to the existing car parks and opportunities for additional car parking;
- iii) The provision of dedicated cycle routes from the Wirral Way.

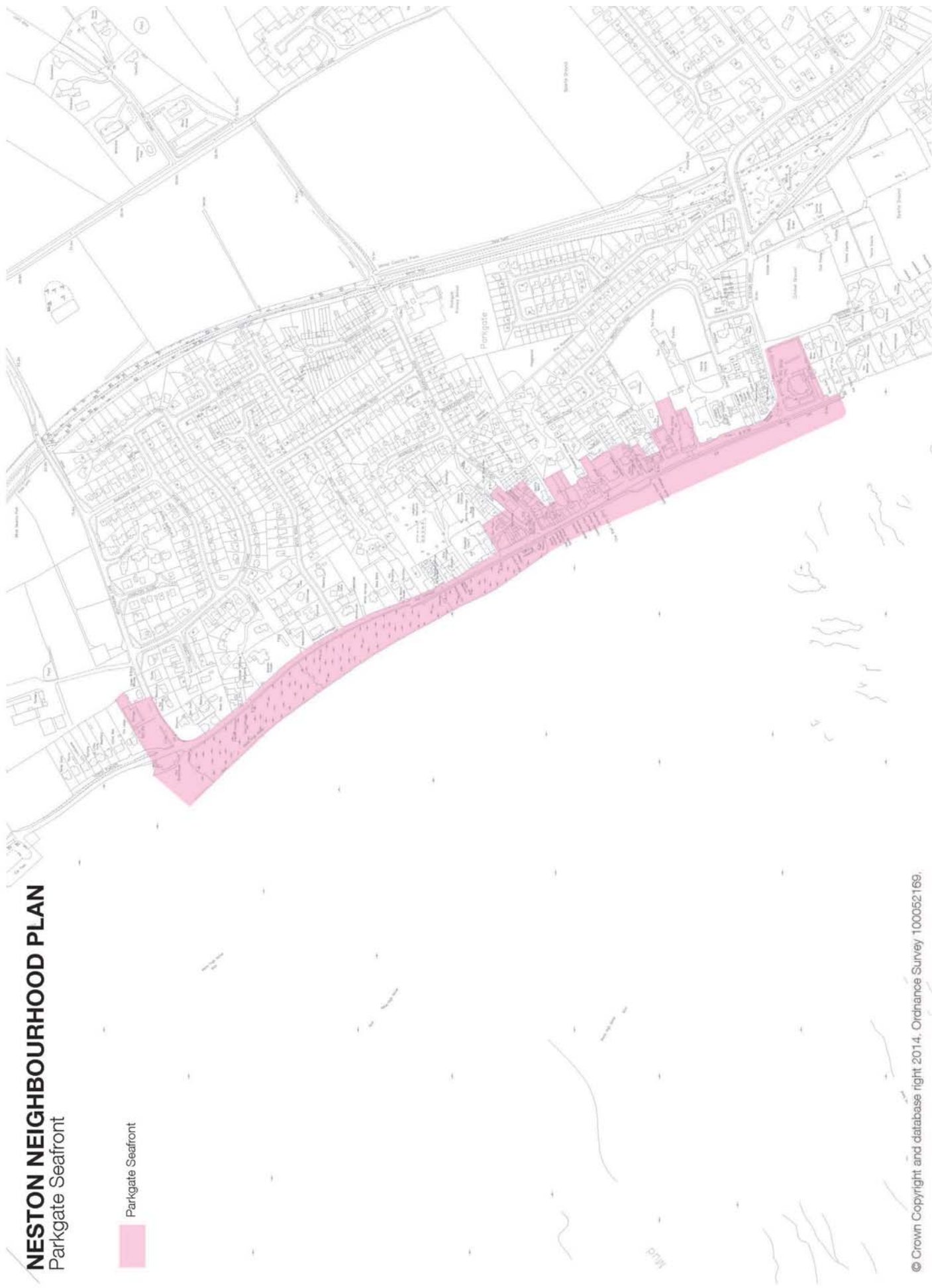
4 Proposals for a small scale visitor cycle hub adjacent to the Wirral Way and in close proximity to Neston town centre;

5 The provision of visitor information kiosks and/or interpretative panels and maps within Neston town centre, Parkgate Parade, Ness Botanic Gardens, and along the Wirral Way and Burton Marsh Greenway.

## Local Plan Compliance

7.78 The visitor economy policies comply with the following relevant strategic Local Plan policies:

- ECON3: Visitor Economy.



# NESTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Parkgate Seafront

Parkgate Seafront

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Figure 7.2 Parkgate Seafront

## MOVEMENT AND TRAVEL

### Objectives

5 Make improvements to cycling provision, public transport services and transport infrastructure.

### Rationale

### Transport and Development

7.79 Neston Town Council recognise that the transport impacts associated with new development cause a significant amount of concern for local residents. It is important that proposals demonstrate in a clear and objective way the impact that new development will have on the local highway network. Where the network will be detrimentally impacted, proposals will need to demonstrate how they will be mitigated in order to reduce this impact so that there is no detrimental harm caused to local residents.

7.80 Proposals should also demonstrate how they have incorporated sustainable transport measures. In particular, the integration of pedestrian and cycle provision will be seen as an important contributor to sustainability and accessibility. In addition proposals will need to demonstrate that the development is or can be appropriately accessed by public transport.

7.81 Proposals will need to demonstrate that they have provided safe and efficient access arrangements for all highway users. Parking should be provided as per CWaC's standards within its 'Cycling Strategy' and the parking standards set out in the North West of England Plan Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021 (Table 8.1) currently used by CWaC.

### Walking and Cycling

7.82 At present the off-road Wirral Way route joins Station Road in Parkgate. Users have to meander for a short section on the road before joining the off-road route again. Although it is a short section it is located on a sharp bend which has visibility problems for users. There was previously a bridge over the road carrying trains along the former railway line. The community's aspiration is to reinstate the bridge over the road to provide a continuous section of the Wirral Way through Parkgate but with access onto the road for users who wish to go into Parkgate or Neston.

7.83 There are a number of off and on-road pedestrian and cycle routes within the NPA:

- Sustrans National Route 56: Chester to Wallasey – goes through Parkgate, Neston and Willaston along part of the Wirral Way.
- Wirral Way – off-road track connecting West Kirby in the Wirral to Hooton.
- Wirral Circular Trail – off and on-road route around the Wirral Peninsula linking to Hooton and Eastham from Neston.
- Cheshire Regional Route 70: Cheshire Cycleway – goes through Neston, Willaston and Burton.
- Cheshire Regional Route 71: Parkgate to Taggs Nose Country Park.
- National Route 568: Burton Marsh Greenway – connects Neston to Deeside Industrial Park with links to Chester and North Wales.

7.84 These routes are mostly off-road although there are parts of the routes which are on-road. These routes are also used by walkers and as such there can sometimes be a conflict between the two user groups.

7.85 A key issue for the NPA is to ensure that there are safe routes linking residential areas to these cycle routes and that there are opportunities to provide additional access points to the routes.

7.86 An additional issue is to create safer on-road pedestrian and cycle routes between key nodes of activity within the NPA. The Town Council will support proposals for on-road routes as identified in the policy.

7.87 Neston Town Council was awarded funding by CWaC through the Local Sustainable Transport fund to promote cycling within Neston. The Neston Cycle Town project seeks to develop a variety of cycling events and initiatives with the objective of promoting cycling and encouraging visitors and residents to cycle to and within the town.

7.88 A report undertaken by AM Partners in August 2014 looked at the local cycling economy and its contribution to sustainable transport. This research confirmed the strong support for cycling in the town and a wish to see safer routes and options available to cyclists. A major factor reducing the uptake of cycling was the level of traffic and the behaviour of motorists towards cyclists. There is also a conflict between cyclists and other road and pathway users. Although the reported incidents of



poor cycle behaviour is rare it has a very high impact on public perception of cyclists and cycling. There is a need to encourage behaviour change and promote more tolerance and awareness amongst all highway and pathway users. The Survey found that Neston currently does not provide a reason for cyclists to stop or encourage new/unconfident riders.

7.89 The Report provided a series of recommendations some of which have a land use planning/development component:

- Support development of Neston Cycle Hub.
- Continue to invest in cycle-friendly road furniture.

## Public Transport

7.90 The community recognise that a key constraint for residents, businesses and visitors to the NPA is public transport provision. Although Neston is on the Borderlands rail line this only provides non-electrified services between Wrexham and Bidston. Services are hourly during weekdays and Saturdays and less often in the evenings and on Sundays. This limits the accessibility of the NPA to the wider catchment populations of the Liverpool City Region and Chester.

7.91 Merseytravel published the Liverpool City Region Long Term Rail Strategy in August 2014. One of the proposals within the strategy includes the electrification of the Wrexham – Bidston line and direct connectivity and integration with the Merseyrail Wirral Line. This will provide significant benefits in terms of sustainable travel to work opportunities for residents in the NPA as well as more sustainable visitor travel opportunities.

7.92 As Neston is located in a rural area there are certain constraints relating to bus service provision and facilities. The Town Council will work with operators in relation to ensuring appropriate levels of services to and from and within the NPA. To aid public transport use within the NPA the community will support proposals for creating a multi-modal public transport hub around the existing Neston rail station with bus and cycle parking facilities. Pedestrian access and routes to the public transport hub may need to be enhanced to assist movement and accessibility within the town centre.

## Car Parking

7.93 Neston town centre benefits from a significant amount of free car parking accessed off Brook Street and Chester Road. There are also other car parks within the town centre with more restricted access such as the multi-storey car park at Sainsbury's and the car park at Aldi which is limited to three and one and half hours free parking respectively. Signage to and the public realm around the Chester Road car park could also be improved which would make this part of the town centre more visually attractive.

7.94 There is a recognition that car parking at peak periods is insufficient in Parkgate. On-street parking along The Parade can often cause congestion along the highway. Although there are car parks at either end of The Parade these do not have the capacity to accommodate the demand at peak times.

7.95 There is a need therefore to investigate additional car park facilities through the provision of new car parks should there be land available or use of existing underused car parks. The evidence suggests that the problems exist at peak periods – weekends and holidays – and therefore it may be that temporary uses of land for car parking during these periods would help to reduce the parking problems.

## Community Views

7.96 There is significant public support for the movement and travel aspirations and objectives of the NNP:

- 80% agree that there is much scope to connect the Wirral Way and the Burton Marsh Greenway and to increase cycleways within the area.
- 87% agree there is a need to rationalise the bus and rail transport in Neston with the provision of a central bus station.
- 81% agree that car parking facilities in Parkgate should be extended.

## Policies

### NNM1: Transport and Development

Proposals for all new development, including change of use, that create 10 or more dwellings, are over 1,000 sq m of floorspace or are on sites over 0.3ha in area must meet all the following criteria:

- 1 It has adequate vehicular access arrangements onto the highway;
- 2 It is appropriate in terms of its impact on the local highway network in terms of capacity and road safety;
- 3 It provides adequate vehicular and cycle parking in accordance with standards adopted by Cheshire West and Chester;
- 4 It is, or can be, appropriately accessed by public transport; and
- 5 It makes provision for the safe and efficient movement of the mobility impaired, pedestrians and cyclists.

Relevant planning applications will be supported by a Statement, either within the Design and Access Statement or a Transport Statement depending on the scale of development, that sets out how the proposal meets the above requirements.

### NNM2: Enhancing Pedestrian and Cycle Routes

A. Proposals to provide a dedicated pedestrian and cycle route to link the existing Wirral Way at Station Road and proposals to provide, improve and extend cycle routes across the NPA will be supported provided that it meets all of the following criteria:

- 1 It provides a safe and efficient route for all highway users;
- 2 It is appropriate in terms of the existing landscape and provides adequate mitigation for the loss of any existing planting as part of the works;
- 3 It brings improvements to the route's Green Infrastructure through bio-diversity and flood risk management enhancements; and

- 4 It does not have a detrimental impact on the amenity of adjacent residents.

B. The Town Council will support proposals to provide, improve and extend pedestrian and cycle routes across the NPA including:

- 1 An off-road connection between the Burton Marsh Greenway and the Wirral Way;
- 2 Dedicated on-road cycle route between Neston town centre and Parkgate Parade;
- 3 Dedicated on and off-road cycle route between the Wirral Way and Neston town centre;
- 4 An off-road connection between the Wirral Way and Ness Botanic Gardens;
- 5 An off-road connection between the Burton Marsh Greenway and Ness Botanic Gardens;
- 6 Dedicated on-road connections between Neston High School and Neston Recreation Centre to Neston town centre, Parkgate Parade, Little Neston and Ness.

The Town Council will support proposals to create Home Zone environments to provide a safer environment for local residents, cyclists and pedestrians on the above on-road routes.

### NNM3: Public Transport Improvements

A. Proposals to enhance bus and rail services and associated infrastructure will be supported provided that it meets all of the following criteria:

- 1 It would bring travel benefits to the NPA and encourage greater public transport passenger numbers;
- 2 It would provide safe and efficient travel for all transport users;
- 3 It is appropriate in terms of its scale and design to its surroundings;
- 4 It provides improvements to the landscape and public realm; and
- 5 It does not have a detrimental impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties.

B. The Town Council will support proposals to improve public transport provision within the NPA including:

- 1 The electrification of the Borderlands railway line which passes through the NPA route between Bidston and Wrexham;
- 2 The provision of a public transport hub located around the rail station within Neston town centre for rail, bus and cycle provision;
- 3 Improving and enhancing bus services through the provision of bus shelters, real time information, increased routes and more frequent services.



Neston Rail Station

#### NNM4: Car parking

A. Land used for car parking within Neston town centre and within and adjacent to Parkgate Parade will be retained for car parking in order to support the vitality and viability of the town centre and the Area's tourism function. Applications for development on land used for car parking will not be permitted unless proposals include provision for replacement parking on an equivalent basis in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility.

B. Proposals to increase the amount of car parking within Parkgate will be supported provided they do not have a detrimental impact on:

- 1 The nature conservation interest of the Dee Estuary;
- 2 Highway safety; and
- 3 Amenity of neighbouring properties.



Chester Road Car Park

#### Local Plan Compliance

7.99 The movement and travel policies accord with the following strategic Local Plan policy:

- STRAT10: Transport and Accessibility.

## DESIGN

### Objectives

6 Promote sustainability and reduce carbon-dependent activities.

7 Ensure new development and alterations to existing properties protect and enrich the existing townscape and landscape within the built and natural environments.

### Rationale

#### Good Quality Design

7.100 The physical environment of the NPA is important on many levels. It can generate a sense of belonging and pride amongst the local community, attract new residents and visitors into the area and encourage investment from landowners and businesses.

7.101 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 the local character and history and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation.

7.102 The Town Council in partnership with CWaC produced the 'Neston Town Centre Public Realm Design Guide' in 2011. This provides a framework and design guidance for the public realm within and around the town centre. It also includes details on shop front design, public art, signage and lighting. The document also includes a masterplan for the town centre and detailed designs for specific areas within the centre. This document should be consulted on for proposals within the town centre.

7.103 Applicants should also consult Cheshire Constabulary regarding advice and guidance for designing out crime, the production of crime impact statements and secured by design accreditation. This impact would assist in helping to make new development safe, secure and accessible.

7.104 Applicants must provide and demonstrate in a Design and Access Statement (DAS) how their proposed development reinforces the character of Neston. The DAS and accompanying drawings must provide sufficient details for proposals to be understood.

### Environmental Improvement Corridors

7.105 Key transport corridors within the NPA should be attractive and interesting for those who regularly pass through or live adjacent to them. Certain cycle, rail and road routes carry large volumes of traffic and their immediate environment has a major impact on the image of the NPA to visitors and residents.

7.106 The corridors listed in the policy have been identified as they are the main routes into and out of the NPA and they are areas where there are opportunities for improving the landscape and general environment.

#### Sustainable Design

7.107 It is essential that full consideration is given to achieving sustainable development and mitigating against climate change over the lifetime of a new building or development. Reducing the demand for energy and improving energy efficiency are important factors in achieving sustainable design.

7.108 Designs should incorporate and maximise the use of sources of renewable energy and include energy-efficient methods of heating, lighting and ventilation. The choice of location, materials and design are also important considerations.

7.109 All applications for new development and change of use should demonstrate how it meets the Government's zero carbon buildings policy. If these requirements have an effect on viability and deliverability then applicants need to demonstrate this through the submission of a development appraisal.

### Community Views

7.110 There is widespread community support for the design aspirations and objectives of the NNP:

- 91% agree that all new homes should be built to the highest possible architectural and design standards.



## Policies

### NND1: Development and Design Principles

Proposals must demonstrate that they achieve high quality and inclusive design by meeting all of the following criteria:

- 1 The development responds to and reflects the local character;
- 2 It integrates positive attributes within the area into their design;
- 3 Is of an appropriate scale and mass to its surroundings;
- 4 Makes efficient use of land whilst ensuring that the amenity of the area and neighbouring residents are not detrimentally impacted;
- 5 Creates a safe and accessible environment that integrates into the existing environment; and
- 6 Provides a visually attractive architecture, landscaping and public realm that reinforces and promotes the NPA's aesthetic.

### NND2: Environmental Improvement Corridors.

A. Proposals for landscape and public realm improvements along identified transport corridors will be permitted providing that all the following criteria are met:

- 1 It does not have a detrimental impact on traffic capacity and highway safety along the route;
- 2 It makes provision to ensure the safe and efficient movement of all highway users including motorists, cyclists and pedestrians;
- 3 The works respond to and reinforce the character and landscape of the local area;
- 4 It brings improvements to the corridor's Green Infrastructure through bio-diversity and flood risk management enhancements; and
- 5 It does not have a detrimental impact on the amenity of neighbouring residents.

B. The Town Council will support proposals for innovative landscape and public realm improvements along the following corridors within the NPA:

- 1 The Borderlands railway line
- 2 Liverpool Road
- 3 Burton Road
- 4 Boathouse Lane
- 5 Raby Park Road
- 6 The Wirral Way
- 7 Burton Marsh Greenway

### NND3: Sustainable Design.

All new developments, including change of use, will incorporate measures that improve energy efficiency of existing and proposed buildings consistent with the Government's zero carbon buildings policy.

Proposals for renewable energy generation, including micro-generation on dwellings and other smaller scale buildings will be permitted providing it meets the following criteria:

- 1 It does not in itself or cumulatively have an adverse visual impact on the character of the local area;
- 2 It does not in itself or cumulatively have an adverse impact on the amenity of neighbouring residents and occupiers.

## Local Plan Compliance

The design policies accord with the following strategic Local Plan policy:

- Policy ENV6: High Quality Design and Sustainable Construction.



New Housing at the Former Mostyn School, Parkgate

## LANDSCAPE AND ENVIRONMENT

### Objectives

7 Ensure new development and alterations to existing properties protect and enrich the existing townscape and landscape within the built and natural environments.

8 Protect and enhance the area's coastline, its nature conservation assets and local green areas.

### Rationale

#### Local and Amenity Green Space

7.109 The NPA is located within a rural part of Cheshire and is surrounded on three sides by open countryside and the Dee Estuary on the fourth. However, the historic settlement of Neston and Parkgate followed by the more recent developments at Little Neston and Ness gives the area an urban character. Within the built environment there are a number of green spaces that contribute to the character of the area, provide opportunities for informal and formal recreation, for growing food and have ecological and biodiversity value.

7.110 The community wishes to see the most important of these protected for future generations. Accordingly, they will be afforded protection from new development unless exceptional circumstances demonstrate that the proposals should go ahead. A list of 'Local Green Space' (LGS) designated sites is provided at Appendix H.

7.111 In addition, there are other green areas that the community also wish to see protected such as school playing fields, play areas, allotments, amenity open spaces, church yards and semi-natural greenspaces. The NNP sets out a criteria-based policy to seek the protection and enhancement of these areas. These areas are listed in Appendix I 'Amenity Green Space (AGS) Sites'. The location of LGS and AGS sites are shown on the map at Appendix L.

7.112 The community will support opportunities to expand the network of green areas and in particular where they can be linked to create a robust GI network within the NPA. In particular the community would like to see additional provision of allotment gardens.



Stanney Fields Park, Neston



Park Fields, Parkgate



Neston Town Hall

Trees and Woodlands

7.113 Trees are integral and valuable components of the natural and built environment that deliver significant benefits in respect of landscape and townscape character, GI networks, ecological biodiversity, climate change, tackling social inequalities and promoting economic development. The retention of existing trees and the provision of additional tree planting within new development is therefore important to the local community within the NPA.

7.114 The policy seeks to protect the existing trees, woodland and hedges of local value and where there is to be loss of these assets there should be sufficient compensatory measures to result in a net gain to the local environment.

Local Heritage Assets

7.115 The NPA includes a number of designated heritage assets including 5 Grade II\* and 69 Grade II listed buildings (see Appendix C for the full list of sites) and a Registered Park and Garden at Ness Botanic Gardens. There are also three designated Conservation Areas: Neston, Ness and Parkgate. Designated heritage assets are afforded significant protection under national planning policy within the NPPF and local planning policy with CWaCLPSP ENV5 ‘Historic Environment’.

7.116 The community consider there are a number of buildings within the NPA that have local heritage value which may not be appropriate for national listing. There is an existing list of locally listed buildings which is shown at Appendix J. The Town Council will facilitate an exercise in identifying further appropriate buildings and structures within the NPA to add to this list.

7.117 As non-designated heritage assets these buildings will be afforded some protection from national and local planning policy. The above policy seeks to provide a localised policy for the locally identified heritage assets.

Local Nature Conservation Assets

7.118 A list of Local Wildlife Sites, taken from EPNBC’s Nature Conservation Supplementary Planning Guidance Note (October 1998), is provided at Appendix K. The location of the sites is shown on the map in Appendix L. The relevant policies within the CWaCLPSP (Policy ENV4) and the EPNBLP and saved policies ENV4 and ENV5 provide policy guidance and the NNP does not duplicate

these policies.

Community Views

7.119 There is significant support for the landscape and environment aspirations and objectives of the NNP.

- 93% agreed that public green spaces should be protected from development that would damage natural features such as small woodlands, trees, hedgerows, ponds and streams.
- 68% agreed that there is a need for more allotment spaces of varying sizes and at reasonable rates.

Policies

NNLE1: Local Green Space

Development on sites designated as Local Green Spaces on the Key Diagram will not be permitted unless it is considered appropriate to its function as a special area of greenspace within the NPA or there are very special circumstances that demonstrate that the harm to the Local Green Space is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

Development considered appropriate on a Local Green Space would be:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | Provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and for cemeteries providing it preserves the function and value of the Local Green Space;  |
| 2 | The extension or alteration of an existing building providing it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building and does not have an adverse impact on the function and value of the Local Green Space; |
| 3 | The replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use, not materially larger than the one it replaces and does not have an adverse impact on the function and value of the Local Green Space.                                     |

## NNLE2: Amenity Green Space

Proposals for development on Amenity Green Space sites as identified on the Key Diagram will only be permitted providing the following criteria, where relevant, are met:

- 1 It can be demonstrated by the applicant there is a surplus of green space provision in the area;
- 2 The recreational function of the site is retained on site or provided off-site and is of an equivalent quantity, quality and accessibility to the existing recreation function;
- 3 The visual, landscape and nature conservation value of the site is retained or improvements are made through the development either on any retained Amenity Green Space or at a nearby Amenity Green Space site; and
- 4 It does not have an adverse impact on a physical link with another Amenity Green Space, Local Green Space or the wider countryside.

## NNLE4: Heritage Assets

Designated and non-designated heritage assets enhance local distinctiveness and should be preserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. All development should seek to protect and, where possible enhance, both designated and non-designated heritage assets (above and below ground) and historic landscape character, and put in place measures to avoid, minimise or mitigate any impact that may be caused.

## Local Plan Compliance

7.120 The landscape and environment policies accord with the following strategic Local Plan policies:

- SOC6: Open Space, Sport and Recreation
- ENV2: Landscape
- ENV3: Green Infrastructure
- ENV5: Historic Environment.

## NNLE3: Trees and Woodland and Development

Developments which involve the loss of woodlands, individual trees or significant lengths of boundary hedges will not be allowed unless adequate compensatory measures are put in place which results in a net gain to the overall quality of the environment.

Adequate tree survey information should be provided to assess the value of the existing trees and the impact of the proposals on the trees.

Trees not to be retained as a result of the development are to be replaced on a two-for-one basis. Additionally, new trees should be planted at a minimum of:

- 3 trees for each dwelling for residential development;
- 1 tree per 50 sq m floorspace for non-residential development;
- 1 tree per 5 car parking spaces for all developments.

Where it is not possible to secure this new or replacement tree planting on site, trees should be planted at a suitable location outside the site. Planning conditions or legal agreements will be used to secure the above requirements.



## COMMUNITY

### Objectives

9 Protect and enhance health and wellbeing amongst the community.

10 Sustain and improve local facilities and services.

### Rationale

#### Community Infrastructure

7.121 Paragraph 70 of the NPPF advises that policies should plan positively for the provision and use of community facilities and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services.

7.122 There are a wide variety of clubs and societies within the NPA alongside community facilities, local leisure facilities, church halls and other community assets. To promote the ongoing social and cultural activities of the NPA it is essential that it retains and provides local services that will sustain the vitality of the community.

7.123 The Town Council will support and facilitate applications to designate such facilities as Assets of Community Value. Additionally, receipts from the New Homes Bonus, the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and S106 obligations may be used to deliver improvements to existing community facilities or to deliver new community infrastructure. The Town Council will work with the local community to identify the additional need for community facilities.

#### Neston High School

7.124 NPPF places great importance on the planning system to ensure that there is sufficient choice of school places within communities and that LPAs should give great weight to the need to expand or alter schools and work with school promoters to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted (Paragraph 72).

7.125 Neston High School provides the NPA's only secondary, including post-sixteen, education. It is included within the Government's latest Priority Schools Building Programme. It is earmarked for £25m redevelopment funding to build a new school and associated facilities. Public consultation of the proposals was carried out in September 2014. It is anticipated that construction of

the school will start in January 2016 with the demolition of the existing school buildings in late 2017. Planning permission for the new school was granted in February 2015.

7.126 The community support the principle of improving the education, recreation and community provision at the High School through the redevelopment of the site. There are currently problems over congestion and conflict between various road users. This also includes problems with parking used by staff and pupils and for users of the recreation centre. This is exacerbated in the morning and afternoon by buses, coaches and by cars transporting pupils which impedes traffic flow on a through route in a residential area.

7.127 Issues around traffic and vehicular access, noise and lighting, impact on neighbouring properties and access by non-car modes of transport are all important considerations. Additionally, the design of the new school is a key consideration. The building should be innovative in design, and of high architectural quality and visual appearance, particularly to Raby Park Road. This will create a landmark statement at a key gateway into and out of Neston.

7.128 The community also consider that, as the site is in public ownership, there is an opportunity to provide wider public benefits from the redevelopment of the High School. Should there be any surplus land arising from the redevelopment the community's aspirations are for this land to be redeveloped for affordable housing.

#### Neston Recreation Centre

#### Health and Wellbeing

7.129 There are a number of health care facilities within Neston:

- Neston Medical Centre, Liverpool Road
- Neston Surgery, Mellock Lane
- Neston Dental Care, Park Street
- Raby Road Dental Centre
- Radcliffe Dental Practice, Parkgate Road.

7.130 As mentioned in earlier sections of the NNP there is an increasingly aged population within the NPA. This will have a consequential impact on the level and type of health provision that should be available within the area.

7.131 The impact of proposals on primary, secondary and community care will need to be assessed. Applicants should contact the Cheshire West and Chester Health and Wellbeing Board to understand the current provision of health care and how it may be affected by their proposals.

7.132 NPPF states that the planning system can play an important role in facilitating social interaction and creating healthy, inclusive communities (Paragraph 69).

7.133 Development has the potential to impact on human health and wellbeing. This is because a wide range of social and environmental factors affect the health of local communities. Good health and wellbeing is related to good quality housing and developments, well designed streets, well laid out neighbourhoods, quality and efficiency in transport systems, opportunities to experience leisure and cultural activities and green and open space. These factors are known as the 'wider determinants of health'.

## Community Infrastructure

7.134 The community have identified a series of projects and initiatives that will make the NPA a more sustainable and viable place to live, work and visit. Many of these are identified within individual policies in the NNP. These aspirations also have a land use and/or development implication.

7.135 The Town Council will utilise CIL and/or S106 Agreements to seek to bring forward these aspirations where it can be demonstrated that the development meets the tests for CIL and planning obligations.

## Community Views

7.136 There was widespread support for the community aspirations and objectives of the NNP:

- 85% agree to redevelop a high quality leisure centre on the existing site and ensure that it meets the needs of the population.
- 89% agree that there is a need to encourage and protect the continuation of clubs and societies within Neston and ensure that they have adequate premises.
- 61% agree to promote childcare facilities to encourage young families into the area.

## Policies

### NNC1: Community Infrastructure

The loss of important and valued facilities for the local community, such as those registered (but not exclusively) as an Asset of Community Value, will be resisted unless it can be demonstrated that the continued use of the premises or site for community use is no longer commercially viable and that the site or premises has been marketed for at least 12 months for that or any other suitable community use.

### NNC2: Neston High School

A. Proposals for the redevelopment of Neston High School for continued education use will be permitted provided that all the following criteria are met:

- 1 The new development is visually attractive with good architectural, landscape and public realm design;
- 2 Provides adequate access arrangements for all modes of transport (vehicle, cycle and foot) and sufficient car parking and servicing areas;
- 3 Promotes public transport, walking and cycling for all users of the school;
- 4 Provides replacement playing field and recreational open space of at least the equivalent of the existing facility; and
- 5 Does not adversely impact on the amenity of neighbouring residents and occupiers.

B. Where there is surplus land resulting from the redevelopment, proposals for affordable housing on such land will be supported provided that it does not adversely impact on:

- 1 Land and premises needed for education and recreation provision;
- 2 The local highway and traffic safety; and
- 3 The amenity of neighbouring residents.

### NNC3: Neston Recreation Centre

Proposals to refurbish, extend and/or redevelop the Recreation Centre for continued recreation and leisure use will be permitted provided all the following criteria are met:

- 1 It improves and enhances recreation provision within the NPA;
- 2 It does not adversely impact on the adjacent High School and land required for education provision;
- 3 It provides adequate access arrangements for all modes of transport (vehicles, cycles and foot) and has sufficient car parking and servicing areas;
- 4 Promotes public transport, walking and cycling for all users of the Recreation Centre; and
- 5 Does not adversely impact on the amenity of neighbouring residents and occupiers.

### NNC4: Healthy Communities

Proposals for new residential development must demonstrate that there is sufficient capacity within local community health care provision and that it provides opportunities to improve health and wellbeing in the NPA.

### NNC5: Infrastructure Provision

The local community have identified a series of projects and initiatives that will assist in the NPA becoming a more sustainable and viable place to live, work and visit. These are identified in Appendix M.

New development, where appropriate will be required subject to the requirements of the relevant Regulations, to contribute towards the CWaC Community Infrastructure Levy and/or S106 Agreements. A proportion of this funding will go towards the delivery of some of these projects and initiatives.

### Local Plan Compliance

7.137 The Community policies accord with the following relevant strategic Local Plan policies:

- STRAT11: Infrastructure
- SOC5: Health and Wellbeing
- SOC6: Open Space, Sport and Recreation.



# 8 Plan Delivery and Implementation

8.1 The NNP will be delivered and implemented over a 15 year period by different stakeholders and partners. It is not, nor can it be, a rigid 'blue print'. It is instead a spatial framework and set of policies that will help guide incremental and sustainable growth within the NPA. The NNP provides an indication of the hopes and aspirations of today's community. New challenges and opportunities will arise over the NNP period and it needs to be flexible enough to respond to these.

8.2 There will be three principal sectors of activity which will direct delivery of the NNP. These do not act in isolation and for the NNP to succeed and the NPA to prosper these sectors need to work together.

- 1 Investment in, and management of, public services, assets and facilities to support the provision of local services. This will provide and maintain the appropriate environment and circumstances for investment from other sectors. Within the existing economic and public sector budgetary position this is and will continue to be a challenging proposition.
- 2 Investment and sustainable development from the private sector will help the NPA prosper and deliver the objectives of the NNP. The NNP will provide, as part of the statutory planning process, the framework to guide development of an appropriate scale, design and use to the right locations within the NPA.
- 3 The third sector (voluntary and community) has a strong role to play in delivery. They have already made a significant contribution to the realisation of this NNP. Their continued involvement will be necessary to realise the aims and objectives of the NNP. In many respects it will be difficult to achieve this without their continued support.

8.3 The following summarises the Town Council's approach to delivery and implementation of each of the key issues and policy themes identified within the NNP.

Neston Development Strategy (Policy NNDS1)

8.4 The Town Council will protect the Green Belt from inappropriate development and work with all stakeholders to deliver development within the existing settlement limits.

## Housing (Policies NNH1 – NNH2)

8.5 The Town Council will work with all those in the housing industry (including RSLs, housebuilders,

developers and CWaC) and the local community to deliver incremental housing growth to meet identified need.

## Employment (Policies NNE1 – NNE4)

8.6 The Town Council will work with local businesses, landowners and relevant economic development agencies to improve local employment opportunities. The continued development and improvement of Clayhill Business Park will be a key objective.

## Retail (Policies NNR1 – NNR3)

8.7 The Town Council will work with the Town Centre Manager, local retailers, market stall holders and landowners to maximise the market operation and improve and widen the offer within the town centre. The town centre will become the focus for social and community activity within the NPA.

## Tourism (Policies NNT1 – NNT2B)

8.8 The Town Council will work with local businesses, landowners and tourism agencies to enhance and develop the NPA's key visitor attractions. A key aspect of this is to improve access to and parking at these attractions.

## Movement (Policies NNM1 – NNM4)

8.9 The Town Council will work with the Local Highways Authority, public transport infrastructure and service providers and developers to improve road safety and capacity and address issues around the NPA's poor public transport provision. The Town Council will seek to build on the NPA's leisure cycle network to create more local networks for use by residents and work with the appropriate authorities to improve footpaths and bridleways in the Area.

## Design (Policies NND1 – NND3)

8.10 The Town Council will work with developers and owners of land and buildings to ensure that new and existing development makes a positive contribution to the character of the NPA and is sustainable.

## Landscape and Environment (Policies NNLE1 – NNLE4)

8.11 The Town Council will work with landowners and land managers to ensure that the NPA's heritage assets, open spaces, countryside and wildlife are protected and enhanced.



## Community (Policies NNC1 – NNC5)

8.12 The Town Council will work with local organisations and CWaC to improve facilities and services for local people. The Town Council will work with the primary care providers and public health services to improve the health and wellbeing of the community.

## Project Delivery

8.13 The Town Council has identified a range of projects that will help to make the NPA a more sustainable place to live, work and visit. These projects, which are identified at Appendix I, will in part be delivered through policies within the NNP.

## Project Implementation

8.14 The Town Council's Planning and Environment (P&E) Committee will review the list of projects and identify possible resources, a programme for implementation and those with responsibility for leading the project within the Town Council on an annual basis.



## 9 Plan Monitoring and Review

9.1 The Town Council will ensure that the NNP is pro-actively monitored and reviewed over its lifetime. The NNP will be monitored and reviewed on an annual basis following its adoption by the Council's Planning and Environment (P&E) Committee.

9.2 The results of this review will be reported annually at a meeting of the Town Council. This will monitor the progress of the aims and objectives of the NNP, the success or otherwise of the various policies and progress with implementation of the projects identified within the NNP.

9.3 The NNP will also be monitored on a monthly basis by the Town Council's P&E Committee. This Group currently monitors and makes representations on planning applications submitted to CWaC. It will continue to do this but with the benefit of applying the policies within the NNP to its responses. The CWaC Officer's reports in relation to the application of the NNP policies, the decisions by the LPA and any appeal decisions will be monitored and reviewed on a monthly basis by this Committee. This information will provide the key data to be included in the report to the meeting.

9.4 Additionally, it is proposed to establish a Neighbourhood Design Review Panel for large scale applications that come forward in the NPA. The Panel will consist of a couple of Town Councillors and members of the community who have a professional background in planning, urban design, architecture, landscape architecture, engineering, surveying and environmental fields. These members would provide their time and expertise on a voluntary basis. This Panel will provide comments on the design of large scale applications to be used by the Town Council on its representations to CWaC on the planning application. The Panel will also monitor the changes resulting from its review of proposals and report on an annual basis to the P&E Committee. This will be included in the review reported at the meeting.

9.5 In 2020 a thorough 5 year review will take place with reporting to the local community. The purpose of these reviews will be to guide the Town Council on its stewardship of the NNP and to consider the need for a partial review or full review of the NNP.

9.6 Within 5 years of the end of the NNP period the Town Council will start the process of a full review of the NNP with the intention to produce a new NNP for the following 20 – 30 years to coincide with the review of the CWaC Local Plan.

9.7 Should there be changes in legislation affecting the planning process and system, the Town Council will undertake, in liaison with CWaC, a review of the implications of these changes and make any necessary amendments to the NNP. This may necessitate consultation and further examination of the revised NNP.



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