

# Winsford

*The only town you'll ever need*

## Sustainability Appraisal Neighbourhood Plan

April 2013



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Cheshire West and Chester Council  
The Weaver Valley Partnership



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# 1. Introduction and background

Tibbalds Planning and Urban Design Ltd have been commissioned by Winsford Town Council in partnership with Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWACC) and The Weaver Valley Partnership to produce a Neighbourhood Plan for the town of Winsford and also to assess the Plan through sustainability appraisal.

The Winsford Neighbourhood Plan will be the main mechanism for allocating land for up to 3,300 new homes and 35ha of new employment land. This reflects the strategic policies which are within the emerging Local Plan.

## The purpose of sustainability appraisal (SA)

The purpose of sustainability appraisal (SA) is to ensure that the principles of sustainable development are considered throughout the plan making process and that the final Winsford Neighbourhood Plan has considered all aspects of economic, social and environmental sustainability in its production.

Strategic Environmental Assessment is a requirement of the EC Directive on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (Directive 2001/42/EC) known as the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive. This is transposed into UK law through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 which applies to plans with significant environmental effects (SEA Regulations). Throughout this document where sustainability appraisal is referred to the requirements of the SEA Directive have been incorporated.

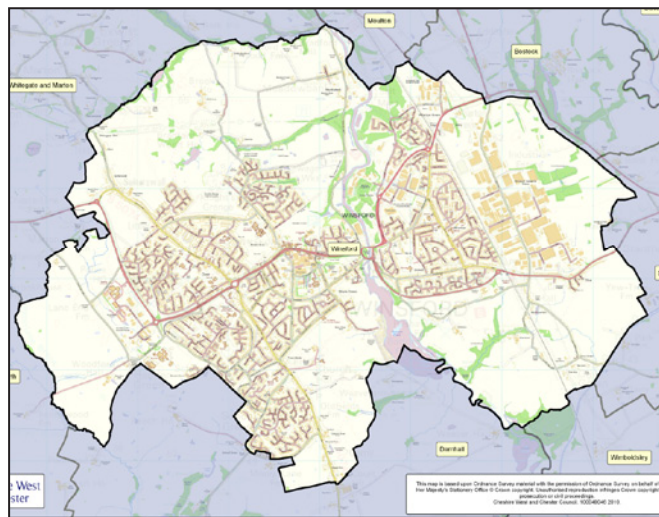


Fig 1.1 Area covered by the Neighbourhood Plan

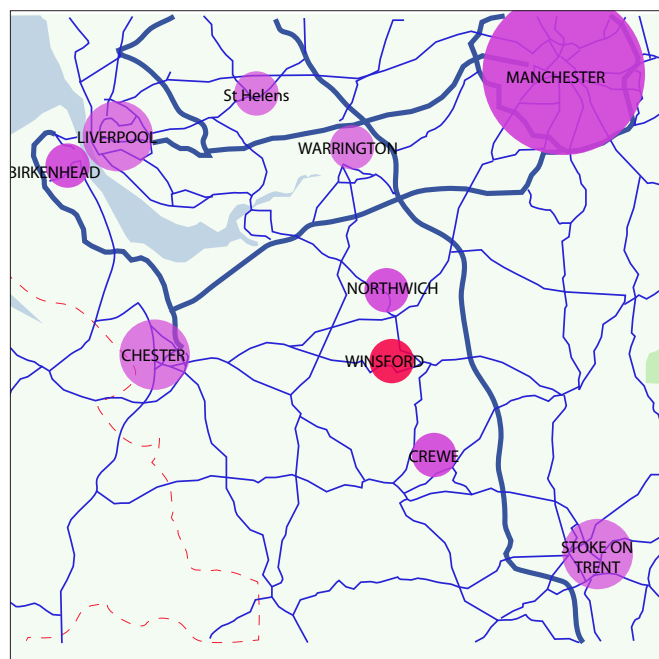


Fig 1.2 Winsford in context

## The Stages of SA

The diagram in Figure 1.4 overleaf describes the different stages in the SA process and how they relate to the stages in the Plan production, Figure 1.3 opposite describes the stages involved in the production of the Neighbourhood Plan. The steps in Stage A culminated with the SA Scoping Report which was consulted on earlier in 2012. This report forms Stages B and C and is known as the 'SA Report'.

## Winsford

Winsford is located in the eastern part of Cheshire West and Chester, and is surrounded by rural farmland and smaller settlements. Winsford is the major town in the area, providing shops and services for people in the town and surrounding settlements.

Winsford expanded as a result of the salt industry during the 19th century, becoming the largest centre for salt mining in the UK. This is an industry which remains important to Winsford today.

Winsford was expanded as an 'overspill' town in the 1960s, with new residents arriving from Manchester and Liverpool. Further expansion was planned in the late 1960s, when a masterplan to expand the population of the town to 60,000 was produced. However the masterplan was not fully realised and Winsford's current population is approximately 31,000. More recently, Winsford and the surrounding area has seen new housing development and dedicated employment sites being created in the town, including Winsford Industrial Estate and Woodford Park. These areas have attracted new industry and business to the area.

A full background to the town is set out in the Evidence Base Summary Report that accompanies the Winsford Neighbourhood Plan.

### Stages 1 and 2: Inception and Appraisal Report

- raise awareness of the opportunity
- agree on the Neighbourhood Forum
- make a project plan
- agree a communication strategy

### Stage 3: Establish a Vision and Objectives

- capacity building within the community (informing and training)
- collect community and business views and ideas on the key issues
- map constraints and opportunities
- understand the policy context
- establish priorities

### Stage 4: Produce a Draft NP and Test with Community

- develop ideas and options with the community
- discuss and refine the vision
- evolve and assess proposals
- develop the content of the Neighbourhood Plan, making robust and well evidenced proposals for the future
- there is no set form or structure for the document: it is up to each Neighbourhood Forum to decide
- document all community engagement

### Stage 5: Produce final Draft NP

- present and review the plan with the community, businesses, local authority and landowners
- achieve consensus on issues, ideas and vision
- agree and make amendments to the final Draft Neighbourhood Plan

Fig 1.3 Stages in the Neighbourhood Plan Process

## The different stages in the SA process

**Stages 1 and 2:** Inception and Appraisal Report

### Stage A: Setting context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope

- A1 Identifying other relevant policies, plans and programmes, and sustainable development objectives
- A2 Collecting baseline information
- A3 Identifying sustainability issues and problems
- A4 Developing the SA framework
- A5 Consulting on the scope of the SA

**Stage 3:** Establish a Vision and Objectives

**Stage 4:** Produce a Draft NP and Test with Community

### Stage B: Developing and refining options and assessing effects

- B1 Testing the NP objectives against the SA framework
- B2 Developing the NP options
- B3 predicting the effects of the draft NP
- B4 Evaluating the effects of the draft NP
- B5 considering ways of mitigating adverse effects and maximising beneficial effects
- B6 Proposing measures to monitor the significant effects of implementing the NP.

### Stage C: Preparing the SA report

- C1 Preparing the SA report

**Stage 5:** Produce final Draft NP

### Stage D: Consulting on the draft NP and Sustainability Appraisal report

- D1 Public participation on the SA report and the draft NP
- D2 Assessing significant changes

ADOPTION OF NP

- D3 Making decisions and providing information

### Stage E: Monitoring the significant effects of implementing the NP

- E1 Finalising aims and methods for monitoring
- E2 Responding to adverse effects

Fig 1.4 SA and Neighbourhood Plan process diagram



## Neighbourhood Planning and Policy Context

Neighbourhood Plans are a relatively new type of planning policy document which came into force through the Localism Act. Their purpose is to allow local people to have more of a say on planning matters within their local area.

Neighbourhood Plans must accord with higher level planning policy. The CWACC Local Plan is being prepared at the same time as the Neighbourhood Plan thus enabling the work that is carried out as part of the neighbourhood planning process to inform the Local Plan and vice versa.

The Local Plan has been subject to a 10 week formal consultation on preferred policy directions. The next steps are:

- Summer 2013: publication of a submission document for public consultation
- Autumn 2013: submission to the Secretary of State;
- Early 2014: public examination; and
- Spring 2014: adoption.

The Neighbourhood Plan the strategic policies of the emerging Local Plan, in particular:

- it allocates land up to 3,300 new homes; and
- it allocates land for 35 hectares of new employment land.

## Methodology

This SA Report has been undertaken by the project team that is producing the Winsford Neighbourhood Plan, thus ensuring that there has been an iterative process between the Plan's production and issues that arise as a result of the SA process.

The SA Report has been undertaken using published government guidance "Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents" published by the then Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2005).

## Structure of the SA

This document is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 introduces the Winsford Neighbourhood Plan vision and key themes and tests them against the SA Framework established in the Scoping Report.
- Chapter 3 explains the development of the spatial vision for Winsford, the different options for growth that have

been explored and how these have been assessed during the process.

- Chapter 4 appraises the different locations for growth within the preferred spatial vision, helping to make inform the development of the final spatial vision.
- Chapter 5 sets out the final spatial vision; and
- Chapter 6 concludes the SA report and outlines the next steps in the process and ongoing monitoring.

## Scoping report consultation

The Winsford Neighbourhood Plan SA Scoping Report went out for consultation in May-June 2012. The report was sent to the statutory consultees:

- English Heritage;
- Natural England; and
- Environment Agency

The following comments were received:

English Heritage (EH) noted that no review or appraisal of the St Chad's Conservation Area has been undertaken. The Conservation Area was designated in 1979 and EH highlighted the importance of having up to date information regarding the historic environment in order to assess the effect that new development may have upon it. As part of the evidence base, an appraisal of the conservation area has now been undertaken by the landowners. As the Neighbourhood Plan is a community-led document, EH also felt that the consultation events should take the opportunity to speak to residents about the aspects of the historic environment that are important to them. This is also important as previous consultations noted that the town is currently perceived as having a negative image in the local community.

As part of the public consultation on the preferred spatial vision, views were sought on areas identified as having 'special character'. This has helped shape policies in relation to heritage in the draft Neighbourhood Plan.

The Environment Agency (EA) noted that the SA should consider water quality, specifically in terms of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) through the North West River Basin Management Plan (RBMP). The EA highlighted the importance of development not causing the deterioration of waterbodies to achieve WFD targets. This has been noted and considered during the development of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Natural England approved of the Scoping Report and the SA Framework within it and had no further comments

## 2. SA Framework and Neighbourhood Plan Key Themes

The SA Framework was formulated as part of the SA scoping process (Stage A in the diagram in Figure 1.4). It is based on the framework used in Cheshire West and Chester's Core Strategy Issues and Options report as this remains relevant for Winsford. A number of sub objectives which make the framework more specific to Winsford have been added where these are of relevance.

In order to accord with the SEA regulations, the environmental effects of options and the spatial vision also need to be tested for their significance against the criteria contained within Annex II of the regulations which are as follows:

The criteria for determining the likely significance of effects referred to in Article 3(5) are:

1. The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to

- the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources,
- the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy,
- the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development,
- environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme,

- the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste-management or water protection).

2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to

- the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects,
- the cumulative nature of the effects,
- the transboundary nature of the effects,
- the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents),
- the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected),
- the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:
  - special natural characteristics or cultural heritage,
  - exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values,
  - intensive land-use,
- the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.

### The SA Framework

1. Address the need to mitigate and adapt to climate change.	<p>Does the Winsford NP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ locate new development in places that are accessible on foot, by bicycle and by public transport?</li> <li>■ identify ways of improving the provision of and access to public transport:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- within the Town, by improving links to the Town Centre, edge-of-town employment areas and Winsford Railway Station?</li> <li>- to the wider area, in particular bus services to the hospital and nearby service centres such as Crewe and Chester?</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ for flooding, see sub-objectives under Sustainability Objective 4 below</li> <li>■ enhance existing areas of green open space, especially The Flashes?</li> <li>■ require new green infrastructure as part of new development?</li> <li>■ require the new green infrastructure incorporate SUDs and encourage biodiversity and wildlife?</li> </ul>
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2. To reduce energy consumption, promote energy efficiency and increase the use of energy from renewable resources.	<p>Does the Winsford Neighbourhood Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ promote energy efficiency in new development with clear requirements and targets?</li> <li>■ identify and promote opportunities for greater energy use from renewable resources?</li> </ul>
3. To protect and enhance biodiversity and wildlife habitats.	<p>Does the Winsford Neighbourhood Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ protect existing areas of ecological importance within the NP area by incorporating them appropriately within the spatial plan for growth?</li> <li>■ take into account potential impacts of new development on areas of ecological importance outside the NP area, particularly the Oak Mere and West Midlands Mosses SACs?</li> <li>■ encourage the creation of new green infrastructure that encourages biodiversity and wildlife?</li> <li>■ coordinate existing and new green infrastructure to create a connected network?</li> <li>■ maintain, enhance and increase tree cover and woodlands?</li> </ul>
4. To minimise the risk of flooding.	<p>Does the Winsford Neighbourhood Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ minimise the impacts of flooding by minimising development adjacent to the River Weaver in north Winsford?</li> <li>■ minimise the impacts of flooding by requiring sustainable urban drainage systems within new development?</li> </ul>
5. To protect, maintain and improve the quality of water resources, minimise the risk of pollution and improve water efficiency.	<p>Does the Winsford NP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ encourage the efficient use of water in new development (for example, through the use of rainwater harvesting)?</li> <li>■ locate development so that it can connect efficiently to the existing sewage treatment works?</li> </ul>
6. To protect air quality where it is of a high standard and to improve it elsewhere.	<p>Does the Winsford NP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ investigate ways of reducing the amount of through traffic?</li> <li>■ encourage a shift to walking and cycling from private cars by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- locating new development in accessible places?</li> <li>- reducing the 'barrier effect' of the A54?</li> <li>- connecting new and existing parts of the Town together with new pedestrian and cycle routes, and improvements to existing routes?</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ encourage the use of clean technologies?</li> </ul>
7. To reduce the consumption of natural resources.	<p>This objective is difficult for the Winsford Neighbourhood Plan to influence directly, and so we have not developed a Winsford-specific sub-objective.</p>
8. To protect land and soil quality.	<p>Whilst the majority of the land available for development within the area is Grade 3 agricultural land, does the Winsford NP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ minimise the amount of agricultural land allocated for development?</li> </ul>
9. To optimise the re-use of previously developed land and buildings.	<p>Although there is relatively little previously developed land in the town, does the Winsford NP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ maximise the amount of previously developed land in allocations for development?</li> </ul>

## The SA Framework continued

10. Achieve sustainable waste management by reducing the production of waste, increasing opportunities for recycling and reducing the amount of waste being sent for final disposal to landfill.	<p>Does the Winsford NP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ encourage the provision of recycling facilities in both existing places and new development?</li> <li>■ require bin and recycling storage to be designed into residential developments?</li> </ul>
11. To preserve and enhance sites, features, areas and settings of archaeological, historical and cultural heritage importance	<p>Does the Winsford Neighbourhood Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ preserve and enhance the St Chad's Conservation Area?</li> <li>■ preserve and enhance the Town's listed buildings?</li> <li>■ make the most of the cultural heritage of the salt works?</li> <li>■ make the most of the cultural heritage of The Flashes and the Weaver Valley?</li> <li>■ provide the infrastructure and settings needed for Winsford's festivals and events?</li> </ul>
12. To protect, enhance and manage the character and appearance of the landscape and townscape, maintaining and strengthening local distinctiveness and sense of place	<p>Does the Winsford NP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ make the most of The Flashes and the Weaver Valley?</li> <li>■ enhance key areas that contribute to local distinctiveness?</li> </ul>
13. Improve health and social inclusion, whilst reducing inequality, and valuing diversity and equality.	<p>The key social inclusion issues in Winsford are related to education and social and community facilities. Does the Winsford Neighbourhood Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ support existing social and community activities?</li> <li>■ encourage the provision of new leisure facilities for all sectors of the population, including a diverse evening economy?</li> <li>■ support the continued improvement of schools?</li> <li>■ support the provision of high quality education opportunities for all, including apprenticeships?</li> </ul>
14. To provide sufficient housing to meet identified needs including affordable housing, and specialist groups.	<p>Does the Winsford NP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ provide enough new housing to meet the needs of the Town and the Borough?</li> <li>■ encourage a range of housing types to meet the needs of a range of different households, so helping to create a sustainable and mixed community?</li> <li>■ require new housing to meet Lifetime Homes Standard?</li> </ul>
15. To create a safe environment to live in and reduce the fear of crime.	<p>Does the Winsford Neighbourhood Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ require the design of all new development to accord with 'Secure by Design' principles?</li> <li>■ promote opportunities to improving the safety of existing places, especially pedestrian and cycle routes?</li> <li>■ improve road safety and reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured on the roads?</li> </ul>

16. To support sustainable economic growth and competitiveness, and provide opportunities for ongoing private sector investment.	<p>Does the Winsford Neighbourhood Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ support and strengthen the local employment base by protecting and providing employment land?</li> <li>■ support and strengthen the local employment base by improving access and infrastructure?</li> <li>■ help attract a wide variety of businesses to Winsford?</li> <li>■ support ways of reducing the skills gap?</li> </ul>
17. To develop and enhance the visitor economy/tourism.	<p>Does the Winsford Neighbourhood Plan improve the image and attractiveness of the town as a whole by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ positively marketing the town?</li> <li>■ improving existing buildings, streets and spaces?</li> <li>■ creating new high quality buildings, streets and spaces?</li> </ul>
18. To promote regeneration of deprived areas and deliver urban / rural renaissance and improve image.	<p>Improving the image of Winsford is addressed in Objective 17 above. Does the Winsford Neighbourhood Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ support the regeneration of the town centre? (see Objective 19 below)</li> <li>■ support the regeneration of deprived parts of the town?</li> </ul>
19. To maintain and improve the vitality and viability of City, town and local centres.	<p>Does the Winsford NP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ encourage the improvement or redevelopment of the shopping centre to attract a better range of shops?</li> <li>■ improve and enhance the old High Street in its role of connecting the shopping centre to the riverside?</li> <li>■ better integrate the market into the town centre?</li> </ul>

## Testing the Plan's key themes

The first stage of the SA testing process is to make sure that the broad aims of the Neighbourhood Plan are compatible with the principles of sustainable development. This is done through testing the vision and key themes against the Sustainability Framework. Each key theme is tested against each sustainability objective by predicting whether implementing the key theme will have a positive, negative or neutral effect on the sustainability objective.

## Vision and broad themes

The vision and broad themes for the Winsford Neighbourhood Plan are based on the issues raised in discussions with local people at various consultation events. They have been shaped by the Steering Group and form the heart of Winsford's Neighbourhood Plan. The Vision is as follows:

- Winsford is a place full of community spirit and an active community life, set around a lively programme of town events. Local residents and businesses will continue to be actively involved in shaping their town.
- People will think positively of Winsford. Access to the countryside and its many walking and cycling routes will be easy and visitors and residents will enjoy the high quality environment and leisure activities set around the Flashes and Weaver Valley.
- Winsford will have a vibrant and attractive town centre, with a larger and better range of shops, including a mix of independent and national retailers. The market will be an integral part of the town centre, attracting many visitors. The town centre will be easily accessible for all residents and it will have direct links to the Weaver Valley and the town's leisure opportunities.
- Winsford will be proud of its history and heritage. Winsford will become a tourist destination and many visitors will visit the attractions developed around the salt mines, the Flashes and the Weaver Valley. The potential of the town will be recognised and appreciated, and its historic buildings, such as the former Verdin Comprehensive School buildings will be preserved and enhanced.
- There will be a wide range of new houses and flats providing a sustainable and varied community with a choice of high quality housing.
- A variety of new employment opportunities will be provided to meet local needs and to support the local economy. New employment will attract additional people into the town and provide local job opportunities for existing and new residents. Businesses will take an active role in improving local skill levels and reducing local unemployment.
- Winsford will be a town that has a growing population and employment opportunities and will be in control of its own future. It will be a vibrant and prosperous town where people enjoy living, working and spending their leisure time. The growing population will support a vibrant town centre, good local facilities, local schools and a diverse leisure and cultural offer.
- Public transport within Winsford and to surrounding towns will be improved to create better links, providing local residents with access to job opportunities and shopping and leisure facilities in other places.
- Children of all ages and abilities will have access to good quality schooling.

The broad themes are:

### Theme 1: Improve the image and attractiveness of the town as a whole

- Positively market the town.
- Improving existing buildings, streets and spaces.
- Creating new, high quality buildings, streets and spaces.

### Theme 2: Promote and diversify the use of the Flashes and the Weaver Valley

The River Weaver and Flashes are Winsford's best assets and they are highly valued by the local population. The key aim under this theme is to create a new 'heart' for Winsford set around the Flashes and the river.

### **Theme 3: Improve the attractiveness and vibrancy of the town centre**

The continuing decline of the town centre was the key concern at the consultation. There was an unanimous view that it is vital for Winsford to improve the shopping and leisure facilities in the town centre and to secure its long term viability and vibrancy. This includes the market, the shopping precinct and the existing High Street.

### **Theme 4: Support and strengthen the local employment base and attract a wide variety of businesses to Winsford**

Supporting existing businesses and providing for new employment are both important to securing a sustainable future for Winsford.

### **Theme 5: Encourage sustainable growth**

This theme aims to provide the basis for Winsford to grow in a sustainable form.

### **Theme 6: Improve social, community and leisure facilities**

This theme relates to services that are available to Winsford's residents. Particularly strong is the concern about the lack of leisure facilities for all sections of the population, evening economy for adults, activities for youth and play areas for children.

### **Theme 7: Improve movement around town and the region.**

This theme draws together a number of different issues in relation to vehicular, pedestrian and cycle movement as well as public transport.

Broad vision and themes	Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3	Theme 4	Theme 5	Theme 6	Theme 7
1. Address the need to mitigate and adapt to climate change	0	0	0	0	√	0	√
2. Reduce energy consumption, promote energy efficiency and increase the use of energy from renewable resources	0	0	0	0	√	0	√
3. To protect and enhance biodiversity and wildlife habitats	0	√	0	0	√	0	0
4. Minimise the risk of flooding	0	√	0	0	√	0	0
5. To protect, maintain and improve the quality of water resources, minimise risk of pollution and improve water efficiency	0	√	0	0	√	0	0
6. To protect air quality where it is of a high standard and to improve it elsewhere	0	0	0	0	√	0	√
7. To reduce the consumption of natural resources.	0	0	0	0	√	0	√
8. To protect land and soil quality.	0	0	0	0	√	0	0
9. To optimise the re-use of previously developed land and buildings.	0	0	√	0	√	√	0
10. Achieve sustainable waste management by reducing the production of waste, increasing opportunities for recycling and reducing the amount of waste being sent for final disposal to landfill.	0	0	0	0	√	0	0
11. To preserve and enhance sites, features, areas and settings of archaeological, historical and cultural heritage importance	√	0	√	√	0	0	0
12. To protect, enhance and manage the character and appearance of the landscape and townscape, maintaining and strengthening local distinctiveness and sense of place	√	√	√	0	0	0	0
13. Improve health and social inclusion, whilst reducing inequality, and valuing diversity and equality.	0	√	0	0	√	√	√
14. To provide sufficient housing to meet identified needs including affordable housing, and specialist groups.	0	0	0	0	√	√	0
15. To create a safe environment to live in and reduce the fear of crime.	√	√	√	0	0	0	0
16. To support sustainable economic growth and competitiveness, and provide opportunities for ongoing private sector investment.	0	√	√	√	√	√	√
17. To develop and enhance the visitor economy/tourism.	√	√	√	√	0	√	√
18. To promote regeneration of deprived areas and deliver urban / rural renaissance and improve image.	√	√	√	√	√	√	0
19. To maintain and improve the vitality and viability of City, town and local centres.	√	0	√	√	√	√	√

√	Positively compatible
0	Neutral / no effect
X	Negatively compatible

Table 2.2: Testing the Key Theme against the SA Framework Objectives



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## Conclusions

The majority of the Winsford Neighbourhood Plan's Key Themes are positively compatible with or have a neutral effect on the SA Framework. A key focus for the Winsford Neighbourhood Plan is the regeneration of the Town Centre. For this reason the vision and themes of the plan are particularly compatible with the Objectives 16, 17, 18 and 19 which are the objectives that relate to the regeneration and economic development. The Vision and Key Themes do not specifically mention environmental impact and reduction of carbon emissions and as such have a neutral impact on the objectives that relate to this, such as objectives 1, 2 and 10.

The reason for testing the Vision and Key Themes is to help identify areas where the contents of the Plan can be made stronger. For example although mitigation against climate change is not one of the Key Themes of the Plan, this exercise identifies that the Plan could have a more positive impact on sustainability if the contents of the Plan addressed the need to mitigate against climate change.

## 3. Developing the spatial vision for Winsford

### Introduction

The Winsford Neighbourhood Plan has been developed from local people's views of Winsford as it is today and how it could be in the future. Extensive consultation has been undertaken as part of the development of the Plan. Views were sought using a variety of different consultation techniques including: interactive exhibitions, publicity via Facebook and Twitter, workshops with small groups and projects with schools. Consultation has been ongoing throughout the neighbourhood planning process and has been focussed in two key stages:

- at the early stages it was used to establish a clear vision for the future of the town that forms the basis for the Neighbourhood Plan as a whole, and the Key Themes that support the Vision; and
- in the development of the spatial vision, where the location and type of development was discussed and debated.

### Developing initial spatial options for growth

There are three issues that were explored in order to identify alternative scenarios as to how and where Winsford may grow in the future. These were:

- the technical and environmental constraints and opportunities that affect where new development may be located;
- the availability of land for development - that is, who owns it and does the owner wish to bring it forward for development; and
- what locations may best support the Vision and Key Themes?

The first stage of developing the initial spatial options for growth was to undertake an in-depth analysis of the whole of Winsford, drawing on information in many background reports. This analysis is set out in the Evidence Base Summary document and broadly sets out:

- land that is not suitable for development - for example, it is a protected landscape or ecology designation;
- land where development potential is constrained by issues such as heritage;

- land where certain land uses are restricted - e.g. the flood zone, where uses vulnerable to flooding (such as residential) should not be located;
- land where development must have regard to sensitivities - e.g. visual impact; and
- land that is unconstrained and development may take place.

This exercise results in a quantum of land that is far greater than is needed to provide new homes and employment to 2030. Other considerations to do with land availability, its ability to support the Vision and Key Themes and the Sustainability Appraisal become important tools in deciding where new development should go.

### Initial spatial options

Two initial spatial options were developed, and the process is set out in the Neighbourhood Plan. The two options are shown opposite and are:

#### *Option A: Create positive new gateways.*

This option focuses on improving the 'gateways' to Winsford on the south-east and north-west of the town by:

- Maximising development around the rail station, where there are good opportunities for sustainable transport links;
- responding to existing market pressure from housebuilders with large-scale development to the north-west ; and
- including some new development within the town centre.

#### *Option B: Maximise support for the town centre*

This option focuses on creating a 'heart' to Winsford by:

- concentrating as much new development as possible within the middle of the town;
- maintaining Option A's development around the rail station; and
- reducing development on the western edge of town.

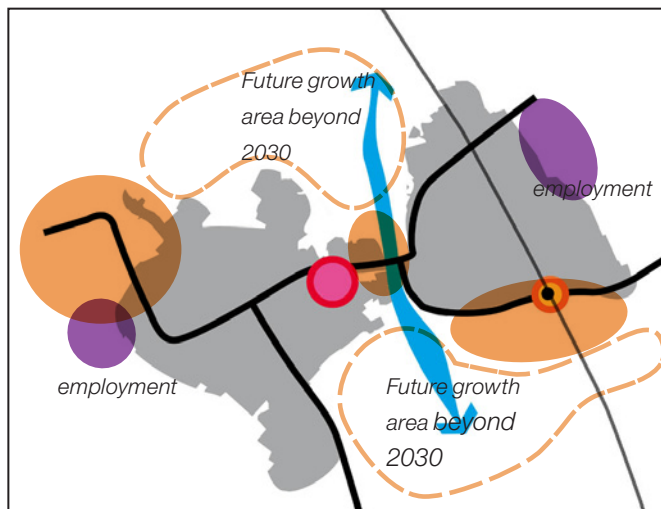


Fig 3.1: Option A

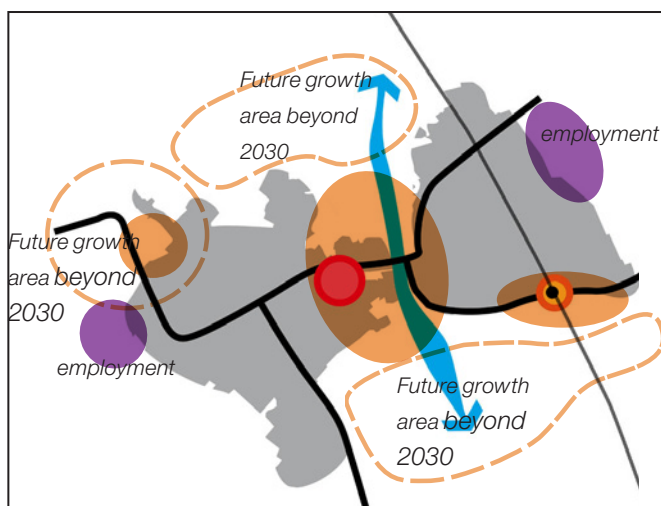


Fig 3.2: Option B

These spatial options were tested in two ways:

- they were tested against how well they support the 'Key Themes' - this testing is set out in the Neighbourhood Plan; and
- they were tested in this Sustainability Appraisal against the SA Framework objectives. This SA testing is set out in Table 3.1 overleaf.

### Selecting the preferred spatial option

The testing of the two spatial options against the Sustainability Framework clearly demonstrates that Option B performs much better in terms of sustainability. Locating more development close to the Town Centre gives a much stronger positive outcome for a number of the objectives.

The two spatial options were also tested against the 'Key Themes' at this stage to ensure that the options have the ability to deliver the Vision for Winsford. The testing matrix for this can be seen in the main body of the Neighbourhood Plan in section 4.3, and this shows that Option B again performs much better than Option A.

Option B was therefore selected as the preferred spatial option to take forward. This option was worked up in more detail to refine it and ensure that it maximised the opportunities to deliver the Vision and also to deliver the most sustainable outcome for Winsford. This 'preferred spatial vision' was the subject of public consultation in July 2012.

Positive		Negative		Uncertain		No effect
++	+	--	-	+ / -	?	/
Significant positive effect on the objective	Positive effect on the objective	Significant adverse effect on the objective	Negative effect on the objective	Positive and negative effects on the objective	Uncertain effect on the objective	No effect on the objective

Scenario	Scenario A	Scenario B
1. Address the need to mitigate and adapt to climate change	-	+
2. Reduce energy consumption, promote energy efficiency and increase the use of energy from renewable resources	+	+
3. To protect and enhance biodiversity and wildlife habitats	-	+
4. Minimise the risk of flooding	+ / -	+ / -
5. To protect, maintain and improve the quality of water resources, minimise risk of pollution and improve water efficiency	?	?
6. To protect air quality where it is of a high standard and to improve it elsewhere	-	+
7. To reduce the consumption of natural resources.	?	?
8. To protect land and soil quality.	-	+
9. To optimise the re-use of previously developed land and buildings.	-	++
10. Achieve sustainable waste management by reducing the production of waste, increasing opportunities for recycling and reducing the amount of waste being sent for final disposal to landfill.	+	+
11. To preserve and enhance sites, features, areas and settings of archaeological, historical and cultural heritage importance	?	+
12. To protect, enhance and manage the character and appearance of the landscape and townscape, maintaining and strengthening local distinctiveness and sense of place	+ / -	+
13. Improve health and social inclusion, whilst reducing inequality, and valuing diversity and equality.	+ / -	+
14. To provide sufficient housing to meet identified needs including affordable housing, and specialist groups.	++	++
15. To create a safe environment to live in and reduce the fear of crime.	+	+
16. To support sustainable economic growth and competitiveness, and provide opportunities for ongoing private sector investment.	-	++
17. To develop and enhance the visitor economy/tourism.	?	++
18. To promote regeneration of deprived areas and deliver urban / rural renaissance and improve image.	?	++
19. To maintain and improve the vitality and viability of City, town and local centres.	?	++
Total no. of positives:	5	22

## 4. Testing the preferred spatial vision

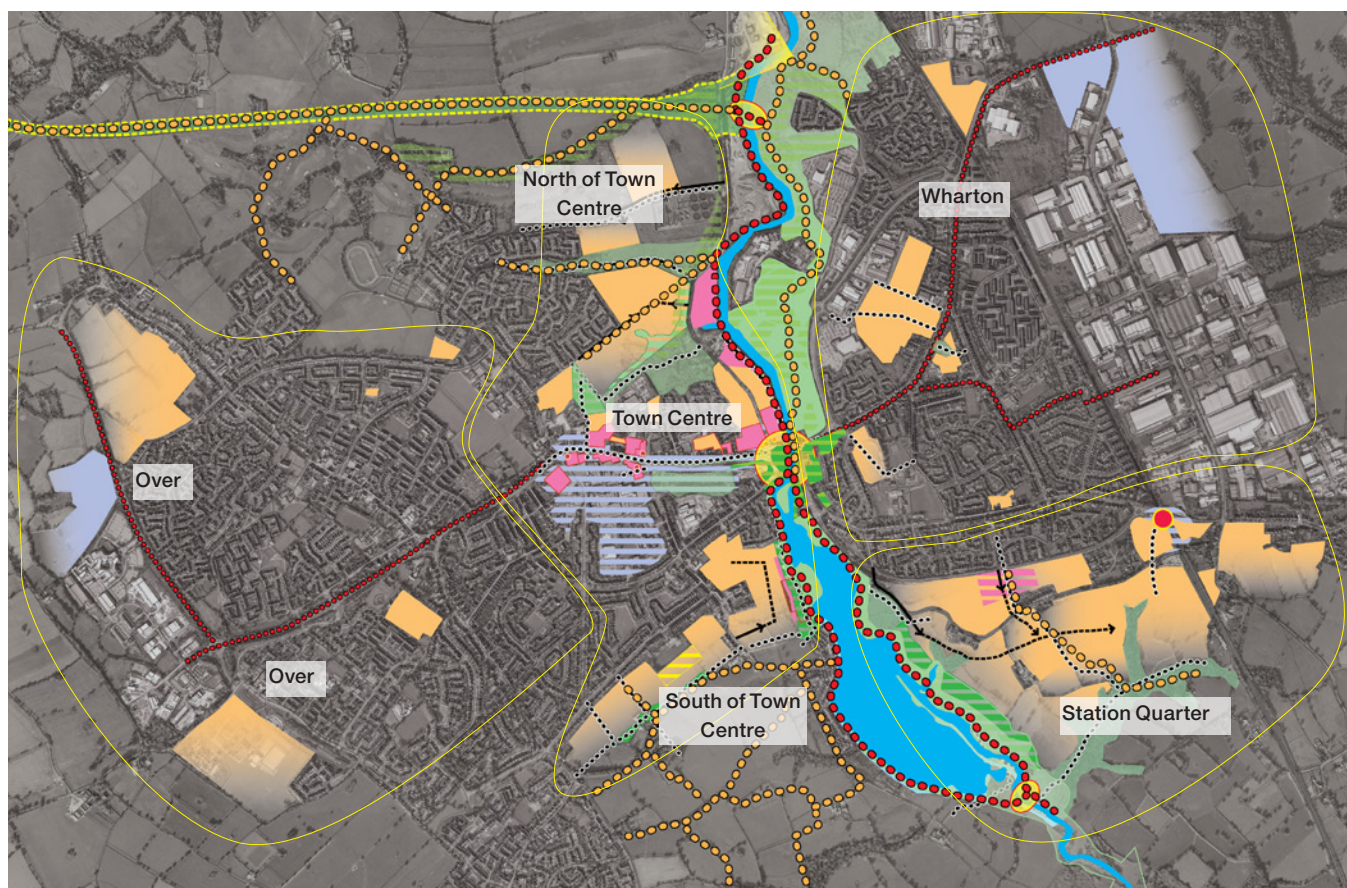


Fig 4.1: The preferred spatial vision

### Methodology

The 'preferred spatial option' taken to public consultation included sufficient land for around 4,000 new homes. In order to comply with the Core Strategy, land for a minimum of 3,150 new homes must be allocated in the Neighbourhood Plan. To allow for a degree of flexibility, the Steering Group has decided to allocate land for up to 3,300 new homes.

The preferred spatial option is shown in Figure 4.1 above. New homes are proposed in six locations, which are:

- North of Town Centre sites
- Town Centre sites
- South of Town Centre sites
- Station Quarter site
- Sites in Wharton
- Sites in Over

The next step was to test this preferred spatial vision so that a final spatial vision could be developed. This testing allowed decisions to be made as to which areas of land

should be removed from the spatial vision or reduced in size. This testing comprised:

- assessing each of the locations against a matrix of planning, urban design and public consultation considerations. This assessment is summarised in the Neighbourhood Plan; and
- assessing each of these locations in this Sustainability Appraisal - this is set out in this section.

The six locations are assessed for the impact development would have on the objectives within the Sustainability Framework. Where the development of the location would result in little or no change to the existing situation this was recorded as having no effect on the objective. Where the development of the location would result in a change to the existing situation the effects were assessed in terms of the nature of the impact (positive / negative / neutral / uncertain) and of its relative magnitude. These criteria were used to then judge whether the resulting effect would be minor or significant.

This process means that the six locations can be ranked in terms of their sustainability, thus informing the decision-making in relation to the final spatial vision.



Development location	North of Town Centre site	Town Centre sites	South of Town Centre sites	Station Quarter sites	Sites in Wharton	Sites in Over
1. Address the need to mitigate and adapt to climate change	+	++	++	++	+	+
2. Reduce energy consumption, promote energy efficiency and increase the use of energy from renewable resources	+	+	+	+	+	+
3. To protect and enhance biodiversity and wildlife habitats	+	/	+ / -	+ / -	+	+ / -
4. Minimise the risk of flooding	?	++	?	++	++	++
5. To protect, maintain and improve the quality of water resources, minimise risk of pollution and improve water efficiency	+	+	+	+	+	+
6. To protect air quality where it is of a high standard and to improve it elsewhere	+	++	+	++	+ / -	+ / -
7. To reduce the consumption of natural resources.	?	?	?	?	?	?
8. To protect land and soil quality.	+	++	+ / -	+ / -	+	+
9. To optimise the re-use of previously developed land and buildings.	+/-	++	-	-	+ / -	+ / -
10. Achieve sustainable waste management by reducing the production of waste, increasing opportunities for recycling and reducing the amount of waste being sent for final disposal to landfill.	+	+	+	+	+	+
11. To preserve and enhance sites, features, areas and settings of archaeological, historical and cultural heritage importance	+	++	+	/	/	/
12. To protect, enhance and manage the character and appearance of the landscape and townscape, maintaining and strengthening local distinctiveness and sense of place	+	++	+ / -	+ / -	+	+ / -
13. Improve health and social inclusion, whilst reducing inequality, and valuing diversity and equality.	++	++	++	++	+	?
14. To provide sufficient housing to meet identified needs including affordable housing, and specialist groups.	+	+	+	+	+	+
15. To create a safe environment to live in and reduce the fear of crime.	+	+	+	+	+	+
16. To support sustainable economic growth and competitiveness, and provide opportunities for ongoing private sector investment.	+	++	+	+	++	+
17. To develop and enhance the visitor economy/tourism.	++	++	++	++	?	?
18. To promote regeneration of deprived areas and deliver urban / rural renaissance and improve image.	++	++	++	+	+	+ / -
19. To maintain and improve the vitality and viability of City, town and local centres.	++	++	++	+	+ / -	+ / -
Total no. of positives	20	29	17	17	15	10



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## Outcome of testing

Each location has advantages and disadvantages, but broadly the scoring shows that the most sustainable outcome for Winsford is to focus development within and close to the Town Centre. The following section describes each location's advantages and disadvantages and suggests ways to mitigate against any potential negative impacts and to make the most of any positive outcomes.

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### North of Town Centre sites:

- The sites are close to the Town Centre meaning that good cycle and pedestrian connections can potentially be delivered as part of development on these sites. The sites are also served well by buses which serve the wider town. This means that development in this location would have the potential to reduce energy consumption by encouraging more sustainable forms of transport. This will have a positive effect on issues such as air pollution and adaptation to climate change. New development in this location has the potential to support the Town Centre's regeneration and the more economic focussed objectives by having people living close to the town centre. The Neighbourhood Plan Must require that connections to the Town Centre are delivered as part with development.
- There is an uncertain impact on flooding. Some sites are located within the flood zone and as such special care will need to be taken over the type of development on these sites and the design of drainage from the sites.
- A large percentage of the sites in this area are brownfield land meaning that the efficient use of land is being promoted through the Plan. There are some sites that are currently agricultural land, these sites are not of the highest quality rating and as such development should not have a negative effect on this objective.
- Development in this location has the potential to include new open space and green corridors which lead down to the River Weaver.

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### Town Centre sites

- The Town Centre sites have the potential to provide mixed use development within the context of the existing Town Centre. This will help to improve the vibrancy of the Town Centre and help to regenerate the area.
- The Town Centre sites adjacent to the roundabout present an opportunity to improve the townscape around this area and provide a more positive connection between Over and Wharton. These sites also present the opportunity to improve access to the River Weaver and the Flashes.
- Sites in the Town Centre can be of a more urban typology than sites on the edge of town. This presents the opportunity to provide denser residential development which could have taller elements than elsewhere. It also means that a variety of typologies can be delivered through the Plan e.g. more flats and smaller units in the Town Centre.
- Overall these sites produce the most sustainable outcome when tested against the Sustainability Framework. For this reason it is important that development in this location is strongly supported by the Neighbourhood Plan.

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### South of Town Centre sites

- The South of Town Centre sites present the opportunity to increase the accessibility to the Flashes and hence provide better access to public open space, and potentially more leisure opportunities.
- Some of the sites are located within the St Chads Conservation Area. The Neighbourhood Plan must ensure that any land allocated for development in this area is located sensitively in relation to the Conservation Area, and that any development is required to preserve and enhance the character of the Conservation Area.
- The proposed sites have not been previously developed and therefore have a negative impact on the objective concerned with the reuse of land and buildings.

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### Station Quarter sites

- The Station Quarter Sites present a good opportunity to provide a large number of new homes with access to sustainable transport links by being close to the railway station. A large quantum of development is proposed for this area meaning that the opportunity for further improved transport links to the town centre is increased. For example improvements to existing bus routes or diversions to existing routes could be made to incorporate the new sites would be appropriate given the amount of development proposed in this location.
- The majority of the proposed sites have not been previously developed and therefore have a negative impact on the objective concerned with the reuse of land and buildings.
- The sites present the opportunity to provide a new gateway into Winsford meaning that perceptions of the town could be improved. In order for the most to be made of this opportunity, the Neighbourhood Plan must include requirements for a positive gateway.
- The sites are located well away from the flood zone.

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### Sites in Wharton

- Some of the sites in Wharton are located on the edge of town and as such present a number of challenges in order to meet the Vision and address the Key Themes.
- The main negative outcome of development in Wharton is that it is less likely to support the economic viability of the Town Centre. In order to try and maximise its potential to support the town centre the importance of strong transport links must be emphasised.
- Some of the sites in Wharton are within the built up urban area despite being further from the town centre. This means that there is a good opportunity for development in these locations to be integrated well into the existing town. It is important that the plan stipulates that the sites must be designed to respond to their context.
- To ensure that the Wharton sites can deliver the most sustainable outcome it is vital that these sites are designed to connect into the strategic walking and cycling routes to the Town Centre

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### Sites in Over

- Sites in Over are located on the edge of the town and as such present in a difficult location to support a number of challenges in order to meet the Vision and address the Key Themes.
- The sites are not well located for the existing town centre and as such the likelihood of new residents using these facilities is restricted due to low accessibility.
- The links to public transport and easily accessible walking and cycling routes are challenging in this location. There is a risk that people will use their cars more frequently and drive to other facilities rather than use those located within Winsford Town Centre.
- The edge of town location means that physical and social integration with the existing town will be harder to achieve than in other locations.
- Development in this location provides the opportunity to improve local facilities such as The Edge and the skate park.

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## Conclusions

The SA demonstrates that all sites have the ability to deliver development that will positively impact the sustainability of Winsford. The sites can do this to a varying degree, with some sites having a much stronger opportunity than others.

This means that where possible development should be focused on the more sustainable locations in the town in the following order:

1. Town Centre sites
2. North of Town Centre sites
3. South of town centre sites or Station Quarter sites
4. Sites in Wharton
5. Sites in Over

## 5. The final spatial vision

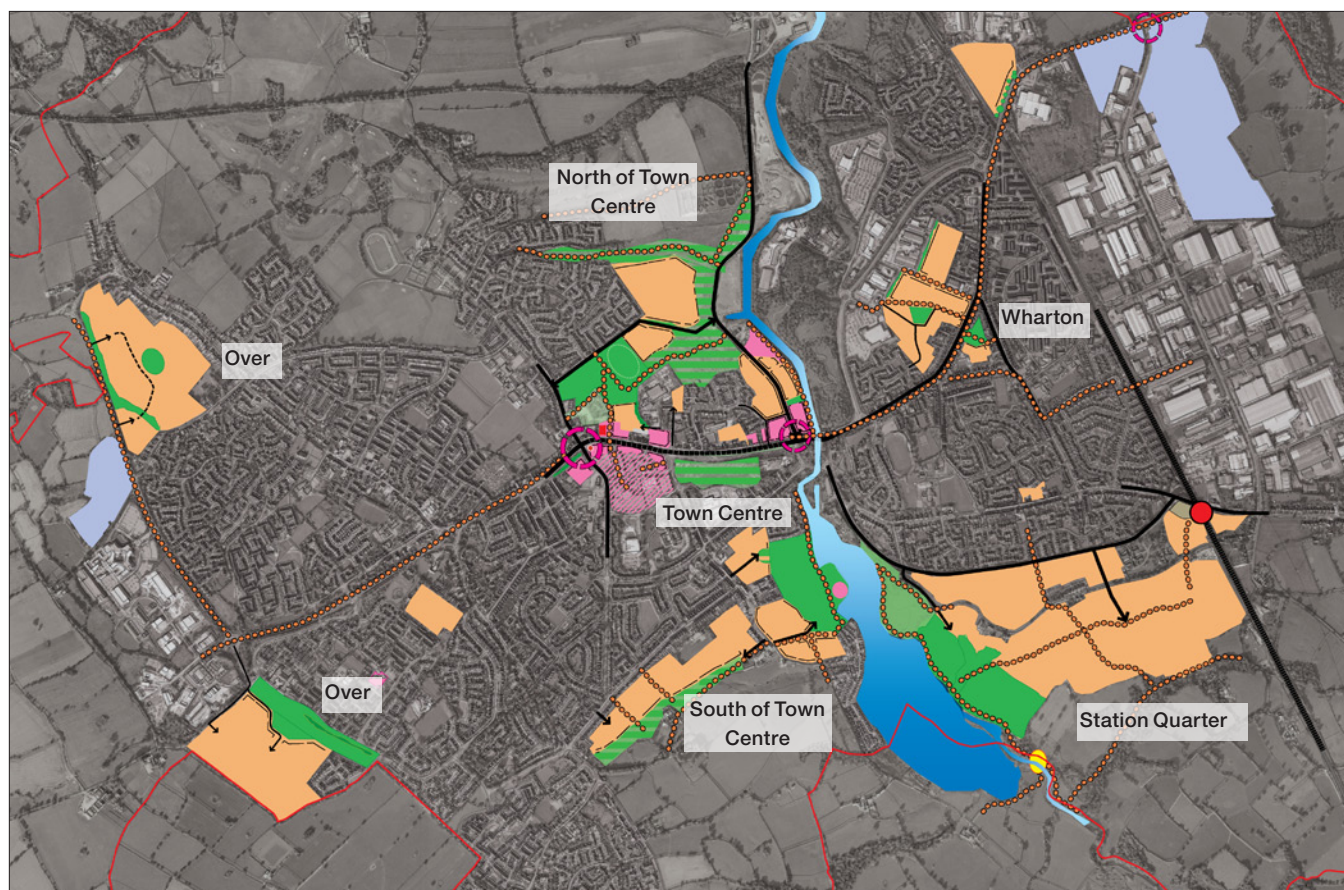


Fig 5.1: The consultation draft spatial vision

### The Regulation 14 spatial vision

Changes were made to the preferred spatial vision in order to produce the final spatial vision for the Statutory Regulation 14 Consultation. This is shown in Fig 5.1 above and the key changes were:

- omission of the majority of sites east of the railway, because they are less successful in meeting the vision. They were small sites on the fringe of the existing town and neither very well integrated nor did they benefit the overall vision. The exception are sites that are immediately adjacent to the station as these can help in improving the station environment;
- firming up and increasing the requirement for public open space alongside the Bottom Flash in response to comments raised; and
- reduced the amount of development on and around the Verdin Playing fields and retained a substantial amount of open space to accommodate the Town Fair and important community events.

In addition we revised all the identified sites to bring the land allocation in line with the emerging Local Plan and reduce the allocation in the Neighbourhood Plan to 3,300 new homes. This number is derived from the Local Plan requirement of 3150 less 39 dwellings that have already been delivered within the Plan period, along with an allowance of 389 dwellings to provide flexibility.



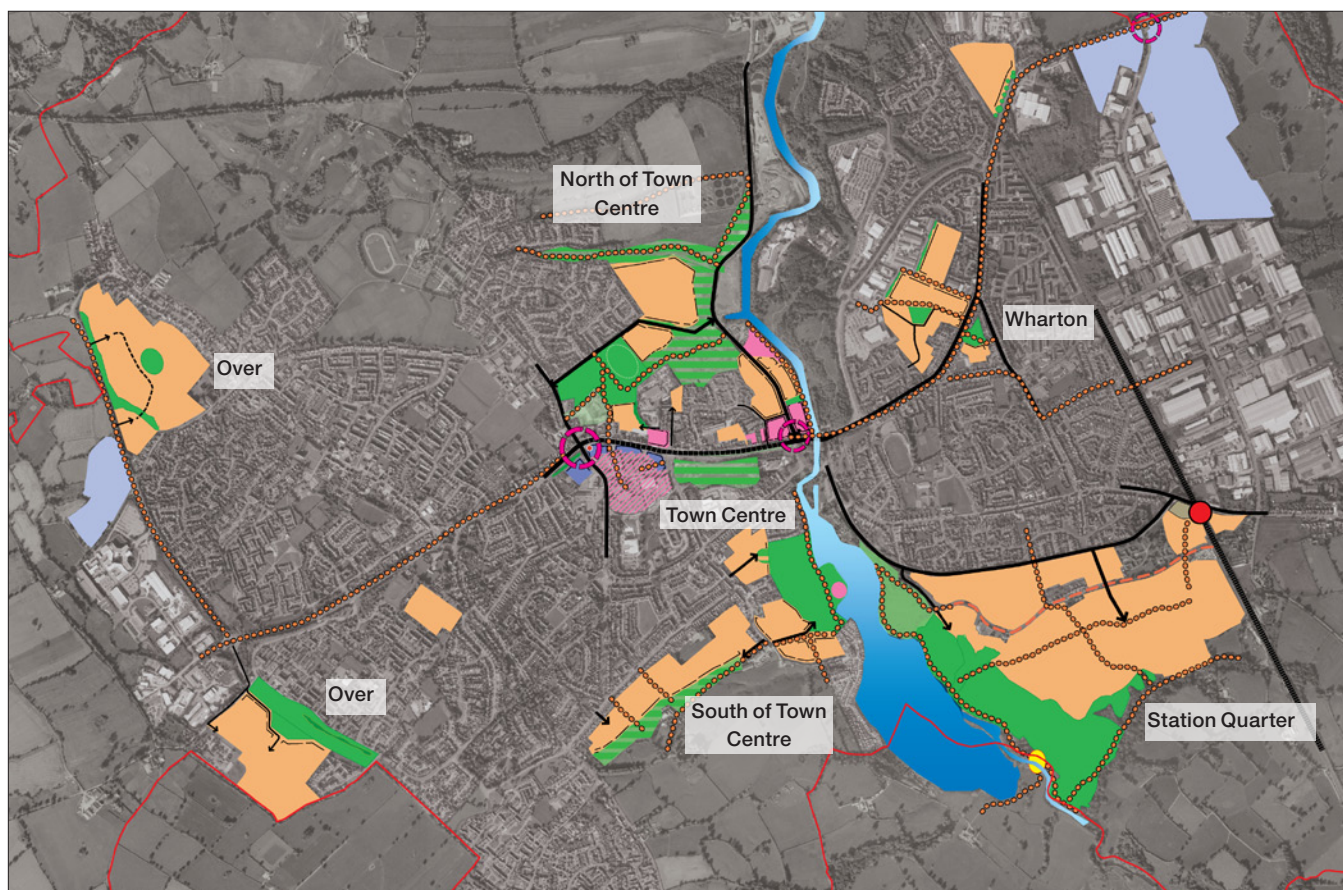


Fig 5.2: The final spatial vision

## The final spatial vision

We reviewed the comments made in response to the Regulation 14 consultation and continued with discussions with key landowners. The following changes were made to the spatial vision to produce the final plan for the Examination Version of the Neighbourhood Plan:

- The Hebden Green School and the Neuromuscular Centre have been taken out of the Woodford Lodge (O3) site;
- The shading on STC 2 has been corrected to omit properties at the corner of Ways Green;
- The boundary of S1 has been amended to reflect land ownerships which leads to an allocation of more public open space and a slight increase in development area;

- Sites NT4 and TC 6 have been taken out of the Neighbourhood Plan as these are in current use and not available for development; and
- The Ford Garage site on Station Road (formerly referred to as W1) has been omitted.

As these changes are minor in nature, we have not undertaken a further round of appraising the sustainability of the Neighbourhood Plan.

## ■ 6. Next steps and monitoring

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### Next steps

The Examination Version of the Winsford Neighbourhood Plan will be submitted to CWACC to begin the examination process. Subject to successful examination, it is hoped to take the Plan to referendum in Autumn 2013.

The independent Examiner can recommend three courses of action as a result of the examination:

- the Neighbourhood Plan can go forward to referendum with no changes;
- the Neighbourhood Plan can go forward to referendum subject to changes; or
- the Neighbourhood Plan is not suitable for taking forward to referendum as it does not meet the Localism Act's 'Basic Conditions'.

Should changes be required to the Plan before it can proceed to referendum, they must - by definition - be minor in nature. If changes are major, then further public consultation would be required prior to the Plan proceeding to referendum. In this scenario, it is therefore likely that no further work on the SA would be required.

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### Monitoring

Cheshire West and Chester Council's Sustainability Appraisal of its emerging Core Strategy includes proposals for developing a monitoring scheme for the SA. This will be included in CWACC's Annual Monitoring Report (AMR).

The monitoring of the Winsford Neighbourhood Plan SA will be undertaken by CWACC, and a monitoring scheme that dovetails with the proposed approach to the Core Strategy will be developed by CWACC.

