

# Scoping Report for the Wirral Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal

March 2019

## Quality information

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## Revision History

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V1	7 <sup>th</sup> March 2019	First draft for client review	7 <sup>th</sup> March 2019	Ian McCluskey	Principle Consultant
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**LEGEND**  
 Wirral Borough Boundary



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Purpose of Issue **DRAFT**

Client **WIRRAL BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Project Title **SCOPING REPORT FOR THE SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL OF THE WIRRAL LOCAL PLAN**

Drawing Title **WIRRAL LOCAL PLAN AREA**

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Drawing Number **FIGURE 1.1** Rev

File Name: I:\5004 - Information Systems\505\96966 - Wirral Local Plan SA SFA02 - Maps\Figure 1 - Wirral Core Strategy Local Plan Area.mxd

# 1. Introduction

## Background

- 1.1 AECOM is commissioned by Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council ('the Council') to lead on Sustainability Appraisal (SA) in support of the emerging Local Plan. Plan making has been underway in Wirral for a number of years, though the emerging Plan remains at a relatively early stage of development.
- 1.2 Consultation on the outcome of a Development Options Review was undertaken in September and October 2018. The Local Plan timetable is currently under review but public consultation under Regulation 18 is anticipated by early 2020.
- 1.3 Once adopted, the Plan will establish a spatial strategy in relation to housing and employment growth up to **2035** (as well as dealing with other land uses, e.g. retail and community), allocate sites to deliver that strategy and establish policies to guide the planning application process. Once adopted, the Plan will replace the saved policies of the Unitary Development Plan (2000).
- 1.4 Wirral is part of the Liverpool City Region (LCR), together with the local authority areas of Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton and St Helens. The region has a combined population of around 1.5 million people, and is governed by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCR CA). The LCR CA was established in 2014 and in time will provide a Spatial Development Strategy for development in the Liverpool City Region, though there is not currently an adopted Joint Spatial or Joint Strategic Plan, other than the Joint Waste Local Plan for Merseyside and Halton, adopted in 2013.

## SA explained

- 1.5 SA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the likely effects of a draft plan, and alternatives, in terms of sustainability issues, with a view to avoiding and mitigating adverse effects and maximising the positives. The aim is to ensure that the plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development.
- 1.6 SA must be undertaken in accordance with specific procedural requirements, as established by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes ('SEA') Regulations 2004. Two key procedural requirements of the SEA Regulations are that:
  1. When deciding on 'the scope and level of detail of the information' which must be included within the key output report - namely the report published for consultation alongside the draft plan - there is a consultation with certain nationally designated authorities, namely the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England; and
  2. A report (the 'SA Report') is published for consultation alongside the draft plan (i.e. the draft Local Plan Review) that 'identifies, describes and evaluates' the likely significant effects of implementing 'the plan [i.e. the Local Plan Review], and reasonable alternatives'.

## This scoping report

- 1.7 This scoping report is concerned with item 1 above. It presents a suggested scope for the SA so that the designated authorities can provide timely comment. This report is also published for consultation more widely.
- 1.8 This scoping report should be read in conjunction with the **Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) of the Wirral Local Plan**, particularly in relation to the cross cutting themes of Economy and Employment, Health, Housing, Population and Communities and Transport. The SA and the EqIA are part of an integrated process and in this context the EqIA will inform the findings of the SA.

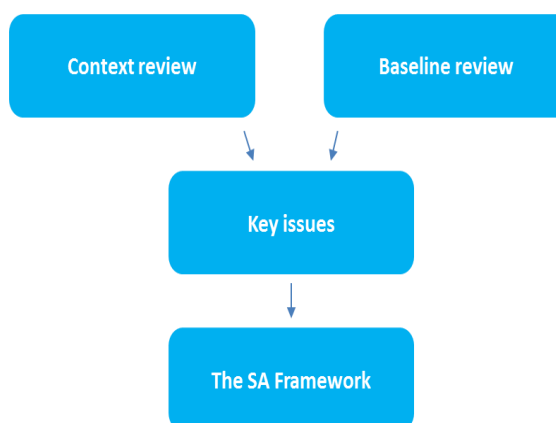
## Approach to scoping

1.9 Scoping essentially involves identifying a 'framework' of sustainability issues and objectives that should be a focus of, and provide a methodological framework for, the appraisal of the emerging plan (and reasonable alternatives).

1.10 In order to facilitate the identification of sustainability issues/objectives, scoping firstly involves review of the 'context' and 'baseline'. Scoping therefore involves the following steps -

1. Context review - a review of existing policy and issues/objectives established by Government, the Council and other key organisations.
2. Baseline review - a review of the current situation locally and a consideration of how this might evolve in the absence of the plan.
3. Key issues summary - a summary of the key (in the sense that the plan may have an effect) problems and opportunities identified through steps (1) and (2).
4. SA Framework development - a refinement of the key issues.

Figure 1.1: The scoping process



## Structure of this report

1.11 Scoping steps 1 to 4 have been completed, and the outcomes are presented for consultation within this report.

1.12 Rather than presenting the outcomes of steps 1 to 4 sequentially within this report, the outcomes of steps 1 to 4 are presented under the following thematic headings in turn -

- Air quality
- Biodiversity
- Climate change adaptation
- Climate change mitigation
- Economy and employment
- Health
- Heritage
- Housing
- Land and soils
- Landscape
- Population and communities
- Transport
- Water resources
- Water quality

1.13 These themes reflect the anticipated broad scope of sustainability issues/objectives likely to be of greatest relevance to the emerging Wirral Local Plan. It is intended that presenting the scoping information under these themes will help enable the reader to easily locate the information of greatest interest to them.

1.14 It should be noted that 'waste' has been scoped out as a discrete SA theme. Waste planning for Wirral is undertaken at a sub-regional level, and the emerging Local Plan will not affect the adopted Joint Waste Local Plan for Merseyside and Halton (2013) which will remain as part of the Wirral Development Plan once the Local Plan is adopted.

1.15 Additionally, it should be noted that Chapter 7 - 'Health' - of the SA scoping report fulfils the Health Impact Assessment (HIA) element of this integrated scoping exercise.

1.16 The discussion of scoping under each SA theme is presented in Sections 2 to 13. A final section then discusses 'next steps'.

## 2. Air quality

### Context

#### National

2.1 Key messages from the National Planning Policy Framework<sup>1</sup> (NPPF) include:

- Planning policies and decisions should sustain and contribute towards compliance with relevant limit values or national objectives for pollutants, taking into account the presence of Air Quality Management Areas and Clean Air Zones, and the cumulative impacts from individual sites in local areas.
- Opportunities to improve air quality of mitigate impacts should be identified, such as through traffic and travel management, and green infrastructure provision and enhancement. So far as possible these opportunities should be considered at the plan-making stage, to ensure a strategic approach and limit the need for issues to be reconsidered when determining individual applications. Planning decisions should ensure that any new development in Air Quality Management Areas and Clean Air Zones is consistent with the local air quality action plan.
- Significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. This can help to reduce congestion and emissions, and improve air quality and public health.
- New and existing developments should be prevented from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of air pollution.

2.2 The Air Quality Standards Regulations 2010 transpose into UK law the Ambient Air Quality Directive (2008/50/EC) which sets legally binding limits for outdoor concentrations of major air pollutants which impact public health.

2.3 The government published the 'UK plan for tackling roadside nitrogen dioxide concentrations' in July 2017.<sup>2</sup> This is the air quality plan for bringing nitrogen dioxide within statutory limits in the shortest possible time. The plan identifies that "*the link between improving air quality and reducing carbon emissions is particularly important*" and that consequently the UK government is determined to be at the forefront of vehicle innovation by making motoring cleaner.

#### Local

2.4 Local Planning Authorities are required to publish annual Air Quality Annual Status Reports (ASRs) to discharge their monitoring obligations under Part IV of the Environment Act (1995). Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 and Part II of the Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002 requires local authorities in the UK to review air quality in their area and designate air quality management areas if improvements are necessary. Where an air quality management area (AQMA) is designated an air quality action plan must then be put in place. In this context, Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council published its most recent ASR in August 2018.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> MHCLG (2018) National Planning Policy Framework [online] available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/728643/Revised\\_NPPF\\_2018.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/728643/Revised_NPPF_2018.pdf) [accessed 03/08/18]

<sup>2</sup> DEFRA (2017) 'UK plan for tackling nitrogen dioxide concentrations' [online], available from: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/633269/air-quality-plan-overview.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/633269/air-quality-plan-overview.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council (2018), 'Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR)' [online], available from: <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/sites/default/files/all/environmental%20problems/Pollution/Wirral%20ASR%202018.pdf>



## Baseline

### Current baseline

- 2.5 Monitoring in Wirral is undertaken to assess levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>), particulate matter and, in two locations, benzene. As at January 2018 NO<sub>2</sub> monitoring is carried out at 31 passive diffusion monitoring sites across the Borough. Particulate matter is monitored via two Automatic Urban Rural Network (AURN) sites. Benzene is monitored at sites in Eastham and West Kirby.
- 2.6 WBC has identified a number of traffic hot spots where there is considered to be a particular likelihood of elevated emissions. These hot spots are at Singleton Avenue and Arrowe Park, both in Birkenhead, and at the A41/Port Sunlight roundabout. No hotspots are associated with the Borough's motorway junctions, nor toll point of the Kingsway Tunnel, suggesting that the presence of significant strategic road network (SRN) infrastructure does not currently give rise to notable air quality concerns.
- 2.7 The 2018 ASR notes that "*the latest monitoring results indicate that there has been a gradual reduction in Nitrogen Dioxide between 2013 and 2017*" as well as a gradual reduction in particulate matter over the same period.
- 2.8 There are currently no active Air Quality Management Areas in the Borough.

### Future baseline

- 2.9 New housing and employment provision in the Borough has the potential to negatively impact air quality through increasing traffic flows and associated pollutants, particularly NO<sub>2</sub>. Although there are no AQMAs in the Borough, areas of particular sensitivity to increased traffic flows are likely to be the identified traffic hotspots in Birkenhead and Port Sunlight, and potentially in other areas likely to generate queuing or stationary traffic, such as pinch points in the major settlements or areas of speed restrictions in the smaller settlements.
- 2.10 New development will likely present opportunities to place increasing focus on sustainable means of transport, particularly development in more sustainable locations such as town centres and near transport hubs. Therefore, as new development is delivered in Wirral there could be associated opportunities to enhance the sustainable transport offer, both through green infrastructure provision and potentially improved access to existing public transport hubs. The significant Wirral Waters regeneration project at Birkenhead docklands presents a particular opportunity in this regard.

## Key issues and objectives

- 2.11 The following key issue emerges from the context and baseline review:
  - There are no AQMAs in the Borough and recent trends indicate key pollutant levels are decreasing.
  - Despite this, a number of traffic hot spots have been identified by WBC, suggesting that it will continue to be important to closely monitor air quality in the Borough.
- 2.12 In light of the key issue discussed above it is proposed that the SA should include the following objectives:
  - Seek to build on current air quality achievements by minimising air pollution more generally, such as through supporting or enabling the use of low emission technologies and encouraging sustainable modes of transport such as walking and cycling.
  - Locate and design development so that current and future residents will not regularly be exposed to poor air quality.

## 3. Biodiversity

### Context

#### National

3.1 Key messages from the National Planning Policy Framework<sup>4</sup> (NPPF) include:

- One of the three overarching objectives of the NPPF to ‘contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment’ including by ‘helping to improve biodiversity
- Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value [...], take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries.
- Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with the statutory status or identified quality in the development plan); and minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.
- To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:
- Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation; and
- Promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.
- Take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, considering the long-term implications for biodiversity.
- The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where development requiring appropriate assessment because of its potential impact on a habitats site is being planned or determined.

3.2 The Government’s 25 Year Environment Plan (2018) sets out a strategy for managing and enhancing the natural environment, embedding ‘net gain’ principles as key to environmental considerations.

3.3 The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) identifies priority species and habitats requiring conservation action. Although the UK BAP has been superseded, BAP priority species and habitats have been used to draw up statutory lists of priority species and habitats in England.

#### Regional

3.4 The Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service (MEAS) MEAS provides specialist technical advice to the six constituent authorities of the LCR in relation to contaminated land, ecology and biological recording, waste, Environmental Impact Assessment, Habitats Regulations Assessment, historic environment, minerals and low carbon issues.

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<sup>4</sup> MHCLG (2018) National Planning Policy Framework [online] available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/728643/Revised\\_NPPF\\_2018.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/728643/Revised_NPPF_2018.pdf) [accessed 03/08/18]

## Local

- 3.5 Wirral Biodiversity Action Plan (2003) reflects the broad objectives of the national BAP, aiming to conserve and enhance biological diversity in Wirral whilst contributing to the biodiversity conservation.
- 3.6 The Wirral Biodiversity Audit (2009)<sup>5</sup> combines a number of workstreams into one report with the aim of providing a biodiversity evidence base for the Development Plan and reviewing and updating Wirral's site selection criteria for Local Wildlife Sites.

## Baseline

### Current baseline

- 3.7 The Borough supports a rich and diverse range of species and habitats, particularly in relation to its coastal areas and wetlands but also in some areas further inland. As a result there are a wide range of protective designations in the Borough across international, national and local levels of designation. The high biodiversity value within these protected areas has sometimes been recognised at different levels simultaneously meaning a number of designations overlap.

### Internationally designated sites

- 3.8 The Borough lies on a peninsula and as such has an extensive coastline. In this context there is notable potential for wetland habitats, and this is reflected by the number of Ramsar sites in the area, nearly encircling the Borough's coastal boundaries. Three Ramsar sites fall partly within the plan area itself, with a further site in the immediate vicinity to the Borough's north. The Dee Estuary Ramsar site is the largest of these, covering the entire estuary area of the River Dee (the body of water between the Wirral peninsula and the north Wales coast) and following the western coastline of the Borough. The Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore Ramsar site follows the Wirral peninsula's northern coastline and wraps around the north east as far as Seacombe. The Mersey Estuary Ramsar site covers much of the mid-Mersey River estuary, though only a relatively small area of the Ramsar site at the shoreline at Bebington is directly adjacent to the plan area. Activities within the plan area could also have potential to affect the Ribble and Alt Estuaries Ramsar site at the shoreline of Bootle on the far side of the Mersey River to the north of the plan area.
- 3.9 There are four Special Protection Areas (SPAs) within or adjacent to the plan area, all of which follow the same extent as their namesake Ramsar sites. These are the Dee Estuary SPA, the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA, the Mersey Estuary SPA and the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA.
- 3.10 There are two Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) of direct relevance to the Borough. The Dee Estuary SAC covers the entire Dee Estuary area to the west of the Borough, and also wraps around the Borough's northern coastline. The Sefton Coast SAC is located to the north of the plan area across the Mersey River, and follows the coastline of the Metropolitan Borough of Sefton.

### Nationally designated sites

- 3.11 There are 11 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) either partially or entirely within the Borough. The Borough's coastal areas again attract significant coverage, though there are also a number of non-coastal SSSI designations as well. All of the Borough's SSSIs are listed in Figure 3.1 below, along with their condition as recorded by Natural England in 2018.

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<sup>5</sup> Penny Anderson Associates (2009), 'Wirral Biodiversity Audit' [online], available from: <https://democracy.wirral.gov.uk/ecSDDisplay.aspx?NAME=SD397&ID=397&RPID=193718&sch=doc&cat=13006&path=12848.13003.13006> ft

Figure 3.1 Sites of Special Scientific Interest in Wirral<sup>6</sup>

Coastal	Condition	Non-coastal	Condition
Dee Cliffs SSSI	Favourable (86.9%)	Dibbinsdale SSSI	Favourable (41.4%)
	Unfavourable – no change (13.1%)		Unfavourable – recovering (36.6%)
			Unfavourable – no change (22%)
Dee Estuary SSSI	Favourable (100%)	The Dungeon SSSI	Favourable (100%)
Mersey Narrows SSSI	Favourable (22.3%)	Heswall Dales SSSI	Unfavourable – recovering (100%)
	Unfavourable – recovering (77.7%)		
New Ferry SSSI	Favourable (100%)	Meols Meadows SSSI	Unfavourable – recovering (41%)
			Unfavourable – no change (59%)
North Wirral Foreshore SSSI	Favourable (100%)	Thurstaston Common SSSI	Favourable (0.7%)
			Unfavourable – recovering (99.3%)
Red Rocks SSSI	Unfavourable – recovering (71.6%)		
	Unfavourable – declining (28.4%)		

3.12 There are no Marine Conservation Zones (MCZ) within or adjacent to the plan area itself. The Fylde MCZ is nearest at around 40km to the north, off the coast of Southport. Marine Conservation Zones were established in 2009 as an additional mechanism for protecting marine species and habitats of national importance.

3.13 There are no National Nature Reserves (NNRs) within the plan area.

3.14 There are ten areas of designated Ancient Woodland within the Borough. All are clustered to south-east of the plan area. These are Eastham Wood, Plymyard Dale, Stream Wood, Thornton Wood, Intake Wood, Foxes Wood, Footpath Wood, Marsfords Wood, Railway Wood, Patricks Wood.

3.15 There are a broad range and distribution of Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitats within the Borough, summarised below:

- Large areas of coastal saltmarsh in the Dee estuary to the south-west and Mersey estuary to the south-east of the plan area.
- Two notable sites of coastal sand dunes along the northern coast of the borough.
- Large mudflat area in Mersey estuary, with a smaller mudflat area in the Dee estuary.
- Significant clusters of coastal and floodplain grazing marsh in the north of the borough.
- Scattering of lowland heathland, mostly towards the western border of the area plan.
- Scattering of deciduous woodland throughout the borough.
- Small, isolated pockets of woodpasture and parkland throughout.

### Locally designated sites

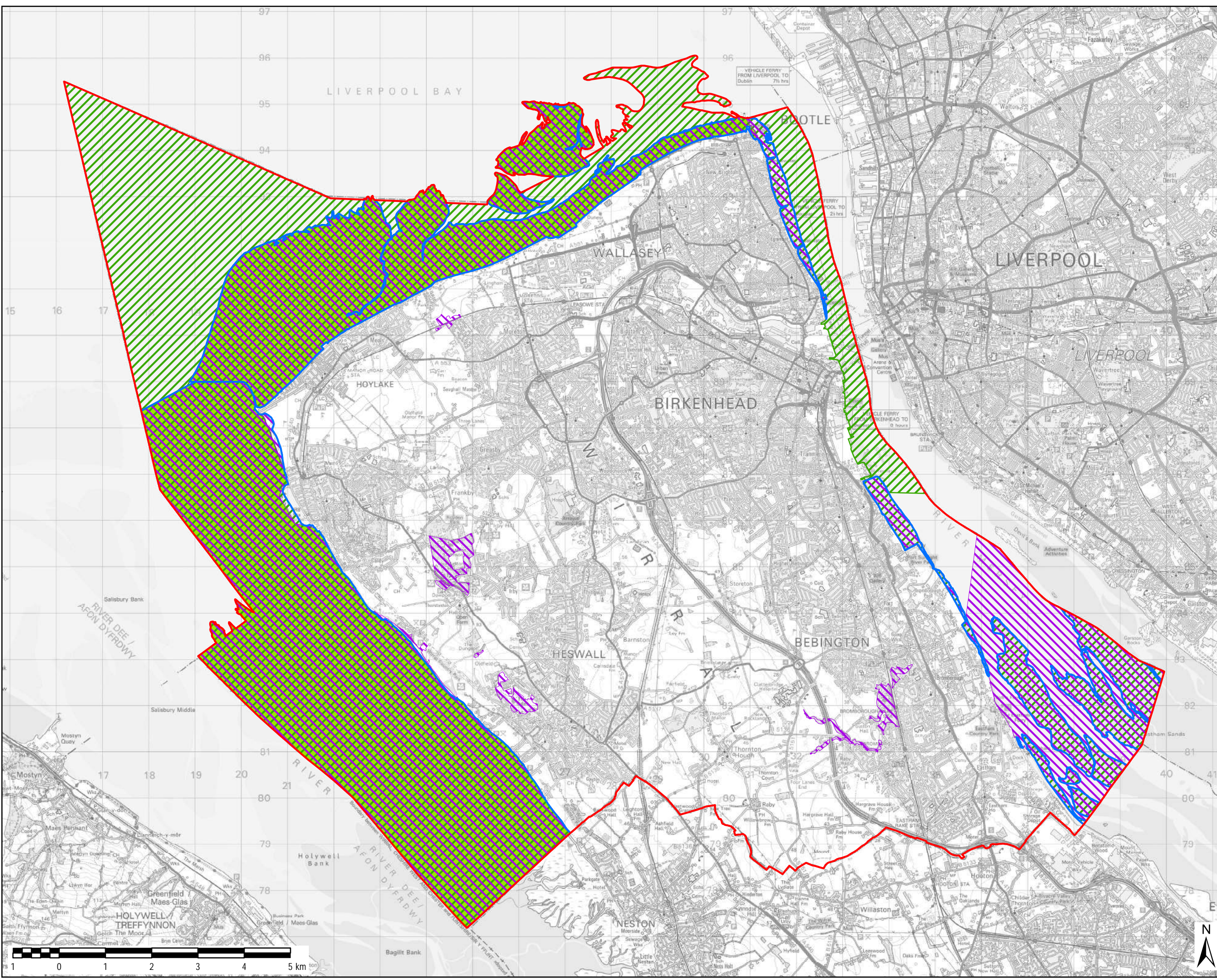
3.16 As at January 2017 there are 69 Local Wildlife Sites (LWS), referred to in Wirral as Sites of Biological Importance. The sites are monitored by the Wirral Local Wildlife Sites Partnership.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Natural England (2018) Designated Sites View, available from: <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteSearch.aspx>

<sup>7</sup> Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council (2017) 'Sites of Biological Importance' [online], available from: <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/local-plans/unitary-development-plan/sites>

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- LEGEND**
- Wirral Borough Boundary
  - Ramsar
  - Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
  - Special Protection Area (SPA)
  - Special Area of Conservation (SAC)



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Drawing Title **BIODIVERSITY DESIGNATIONS AND HABITATS (1 OF 2)**

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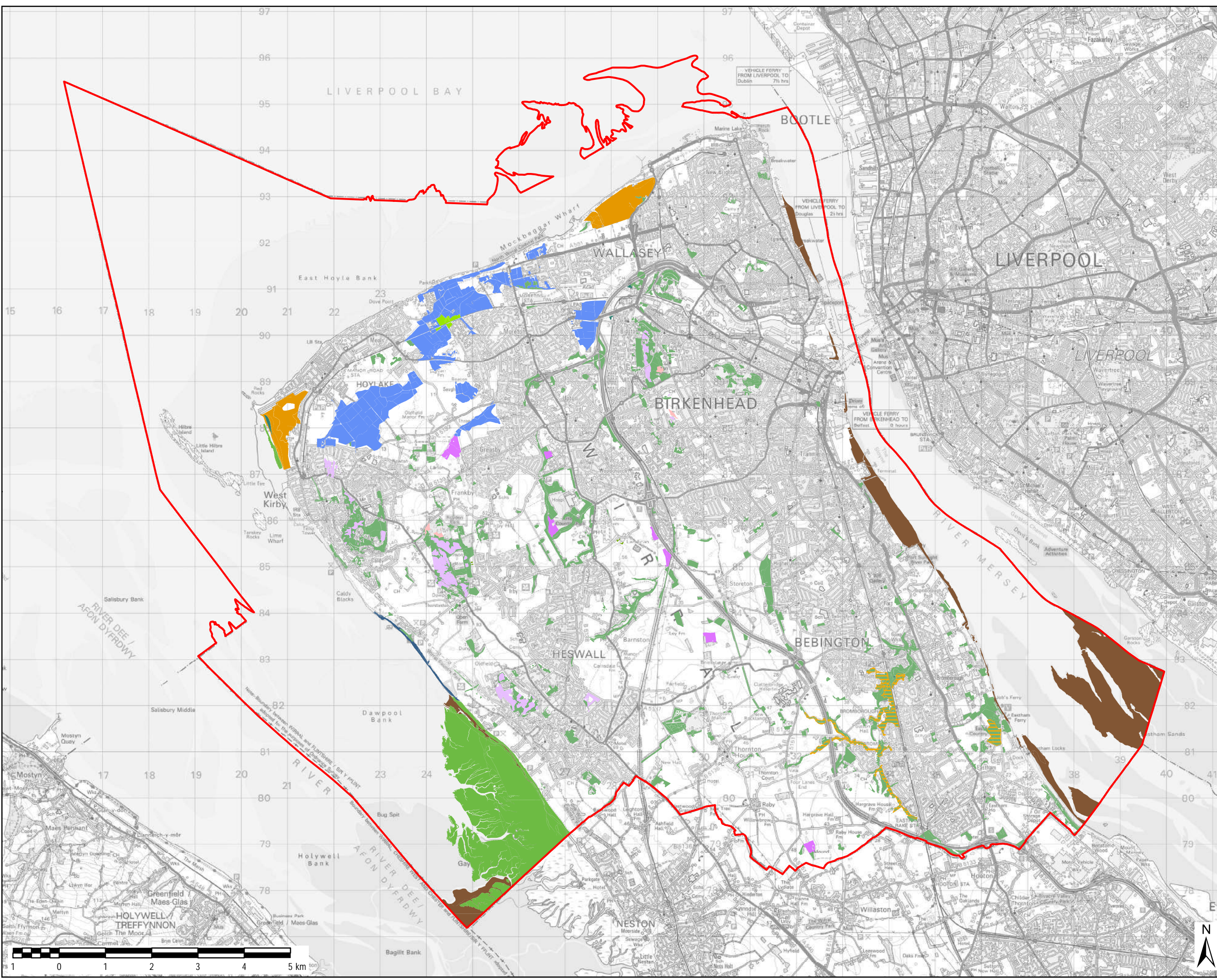
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- LEGEND**
- Wirral Borough Boundary
  - Ancient Woodland
  - Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh
  - Coastal saltmarsh
  - Coastal sand dunes
  - Deciduous woodland
  - Good quality semi-improved grassland
  - Lowland dry acid grassland
  - Lowland heathland
  - Lowland meadows
  - Maritime cliff and slope
  - Mudflats
  - Reedbeds
  - Traditional orchard



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Drawing Title **BIODIVERSITY DESIGNATIONS AND HABITATS (2 OF 2)**

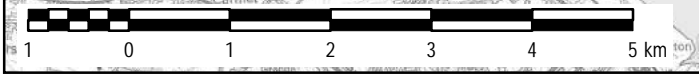
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## Future baseline

- 3.17 Habitats and species have the potential to come under increasing pressure from the provision of new housing, employment and infrastructure in the Borough, including at designated sites. This could include increased disturbance (recreational, noise and light) and atmospheric pollution as well as the loss of habitats and fragmentation of biodiversity networks. Habitat loss and fragmentation could be exacerbated by the effects of climate change, which has the potential to lead to changes in the distribution and abundance of species and changes to the composition and character of habitats.
- 3.18 However, future growth can also provide opportunities to increase understanding and integration of biodiversity habitats and networks into new development at a strategic scale. Therefore, new development could potentially unlock opportunities to protect and enhance important habitats and also enhance the connections between them, particularly through the provision and enhancement of green infrastructure.
- 3.19 The ongoing long term development at Wirral Waters represents both an opportunity to deliver significant green infrastructure, with potential to enhance connections between biodiversity networks and contribute to biodiversity net gain.

## Key issues and objectives

- 3.20 The following key issue emerges from the context and baseline review:
- Wirral's unique geography gives it particular biodiversity significance, reflected by the number of international, national and locally designated sites partially or entirely within the Borough, namely:
    - Three Ramsar sites, plus an additional adjacent site;
    - Three Special Protection Areas, plus an additional adjacent SPA;
    - Two Special Areas of Conservation;
    - 11 Sites of Special Scientific Interest; and,
    - 69 locally designated sites of biological importance.
  - Wirral also contains a variety of coastal and non-coastal BAP priority habitats.
- 3.21 In light of the key issues discussed above it is proposed that the SA should include the following objectives:
- Minimise, and avoid where possible, impacts to biodiversity, both within and beyond designated and non-designated sites of international, national or local significance.
  - Achieve biodiversity net gain including through the long term enhancement and creation of well-connected, functional habitats that are resilient to the effects of climate change.

## 4. Climate change adaptation

### Context

#### National

4.1 Key messages from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) include:

- Plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account the long-term implications for flood risk, coastal change, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes, and the risk of overheating from rising temperatures. Policies should support appropriate measures to ensure the future resilience of communities and infrastructure to climate change impacts, such as providing space for physical protection measures, or making provision for the possible future relocation of vulnerable development and infrastructure.
- Inappropriate development in areas at high risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas of highest risk (whether existing or future).
- Strategic policies should be informed by a strategic flood risk assessment, and should manage flood risk from all sources.
- Plans should take account of the effects of climate change in the long term, taking into account a range of factors including flooding. Adopt proactive strategies to adaptation and manage risks through adaptation measures including well planned green infrastructure.
- Plans should reduce risk from coastal change by avoiding inappropriate development in vulnerable areas and not exacerbate the impacts of physical changes to the coast.

4.2 The UK Climate Change Risk Assessment is published on a 5-yearly cycle in accordance with the requirements of the Climate Change Act 2008. It required the Government to compile an assessment of the risks for the UK arising from climate change, and then to develop an adaptation programme to address those risks and deliver resilience to climate change on the ground. For both the 2012 and the 2017 UK Climate Change Risk Assessment, the Adaptation Sub-Committee commissioned an evidence report<sup>8</sup> containing six priority risk areas requiring additional action in the next five years:

- Flooding and coastal change risks to communities, businesses and infrastructure;
- Risks to health, well-being and productivity from high temperatures;
- Risk of shortages in the public water supply, and for agriculture, energy generation and industry;
- Risks to natural capital, including terrestrial, coastal, marine and freshwater ecosystems, soils and biodiversity;
- Risks to domestic and international food production and trade; and
- New and emerging pests and diseases, and invasive non-native species, affecting people, plants and animals

4.3 The Flood and Water Management Act (2010)<sup>9</sup> sets out measures to ensure that risk from all sources of flooding, not just rivers and seas, are managed more effectively. This includes: incorporating greater resilience measures into the design of new buildings; utilising the environment in order to reduce flooding; identifying areas suitable for inundation and water storage to reduce the risk of flooding elsewhere; roll back development in coastal areas to avoid damage from flooding or coastal erosion; and creating sustainable drainage systems (SuDS).

<sup>8</sup> DEFRA (2017): 'UK Climate Change Risk Assessment Report January 2017', [online] available to download from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-climate-change-risk-assessment-2017> [last accessed 13/02/18]

<sup>9</sup> Flood and Water Management Act (2010) [online] available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/29/contents>  
Accessed Aug 2017



- 4.4 The Committee of Climate Change published a 2012 report entitled 'How Local Authorities can Reduce Emissions and Manage Climate Change Risk'<sup>10</sup> which emphasises the crucial role councils have in helping the UK meet its carbon targets and preparing for the impacts of climate change. It outlines specific opportunities for reducing emissions and highlights good practice examples from a number of local authorities.

## Regional

- 4.5 The North West England and North Wales Shoreline Management Plan SMP2 (2012) identifies sustainable long-term policies to protect coastal communities and environments through a range of measures and strategies ranging from actively intervening to protect built up areas to managing the natural erosion and change to coastlines in less populated areas. The SMP notes that the Borough's coastal location makes it vulnerable to flooding, though its extensive areas of sand dunes and sandy foreshore offer a degree of natural protection to settlements on the northern coastline, supplemented by extensive manmade defences spanning the whole north coast frontage.

## Local

- 4.6 The Wirral Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) (2009)<sup>11</sup> is a Level 1, or basic, SFRA. It provides a strategic overview of areas of risk and potential mitigations in the Borough, without descending to site specific exception and sequential testing. A replacement Level 1 SFRA is nearing completion and is expected to be published in spring 2019.
- 4.7 Wirral Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment Report (2011) provides an assessment of local flood risk across the Borough, including information on past floods and the potential consequences of future flood events. The study was updated via Addendum in 2017.
- 4.8 The Wirral Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (2016)<sup>12</sup> supplements the SMP by identifying how the strategic SMP policies might be best implemented locally. The Strategy splits the Borough into 14 'Strategy units' for the purposes of policy implementation.

## Baseline

### Current baseline

- 4.9 The Borough's coastal location and low lying landform make it potentially vulnerable to flooding, from rivers (the Birket, Fender and Dibbin and their tributaries) the sea (mainly along the north Wirral coast). Much of the low-lying areas of north Wirral fall within Flood Zone 3. The majority of the non-coastal areas of the Borough are in the lowest risk Flood Zone 1. In addition, however, surface water flooding can occur almost anywhere whenever short intense rainfall exceeds the capacity of the ground and the local drainage network to absorb it. This type of flooding is often localised and difficult to predict in advance. It can occur well away from existing watercourses and it can be exacerbated by local topography, impermeable ground.
- 4.10 The 2017 Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment Addendum which identifies six significant flood events in the Borough between 2012 and 2017:<sup>12</sup>
- 13<sup>th</sup> August 2012
  - 15<sup>th</sup> August 2012
  - 29<sup>th</sup> August 2012
  - 24<sup>th</sup> September 2012

<sup>10</sup> CCC (2012), 'How local authorities can reduce emissions and manage climate risks', [online]; available from:

<https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/how-local-authorities-can-reduce-emissions-and-manage-climate-risks/>

<sup>11</sup> Fauber Mansell (2009) Wirral Strategic Flood Risk Assessment [online], available from: <https://geosmartinfo.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/sfra/WSFRA-Final-Report.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council (2016) Flood Risk Management Strategy [online], available from:

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/sites/default/files/all/communities%20and%20neighbourhoods/Wirral%20Local%20Flood%20Risk%20Management%20Strategy.pdf>

- 5<sup>th</sup> December 2013
- August and September 2015

The flooding resulted from a combination of factors, including overtopping of coastal defences; and insufficient capacity within the public sewerage, the highway or land drainage systems to deal with what were sometimes extreme events.

4.11 The 2009 SFRA draws the following conclusion in relation to key areas of flood risk in the Borough:

*“The main flood risk locations on Wirral are at Leasowe (fluvial and potential tidal flood risk), Greasby (fluvial and surface water / sewer) and Birkenhead Docks. With regard to Birkenhead Docks ... there is significant fluvial flood risk from the outfall of The Birkett through the dock system. This issue warrants further analysis given the strategic importance of this location for development on Wirral”.*

In this context it will be important that strategic development at Wirral Waters is taken forward with flood risk management a key priority.

4.12 The Environment Agency maintains 97km of main rivers and any associated flood defences within the Wirral catchment: These are listed below:

- Arrowe Brook
- The Birket
- Birket Old Courses
- Carr Drain
- Clatter Brook
- Dibbinsdale Brook
- Dibbinsdale Brook Tributary
- River Fender
- Greasby Brook
- Newton Brook
- Perimeter Drain
- Prenton Brook

4.13 The Wirral Local Flood Risk Management Strategy references the network of ordinary watercourses for which Wirral Council is the relevant operating authority. There are 5.04km of ‘critical ordinary watercourses’ of which 3.89km are culverted (piped) and, although these are non-main river, they are considered critical due to their potential to put large numbers of people and property at risk of flooding should they not be maintained appropriately.

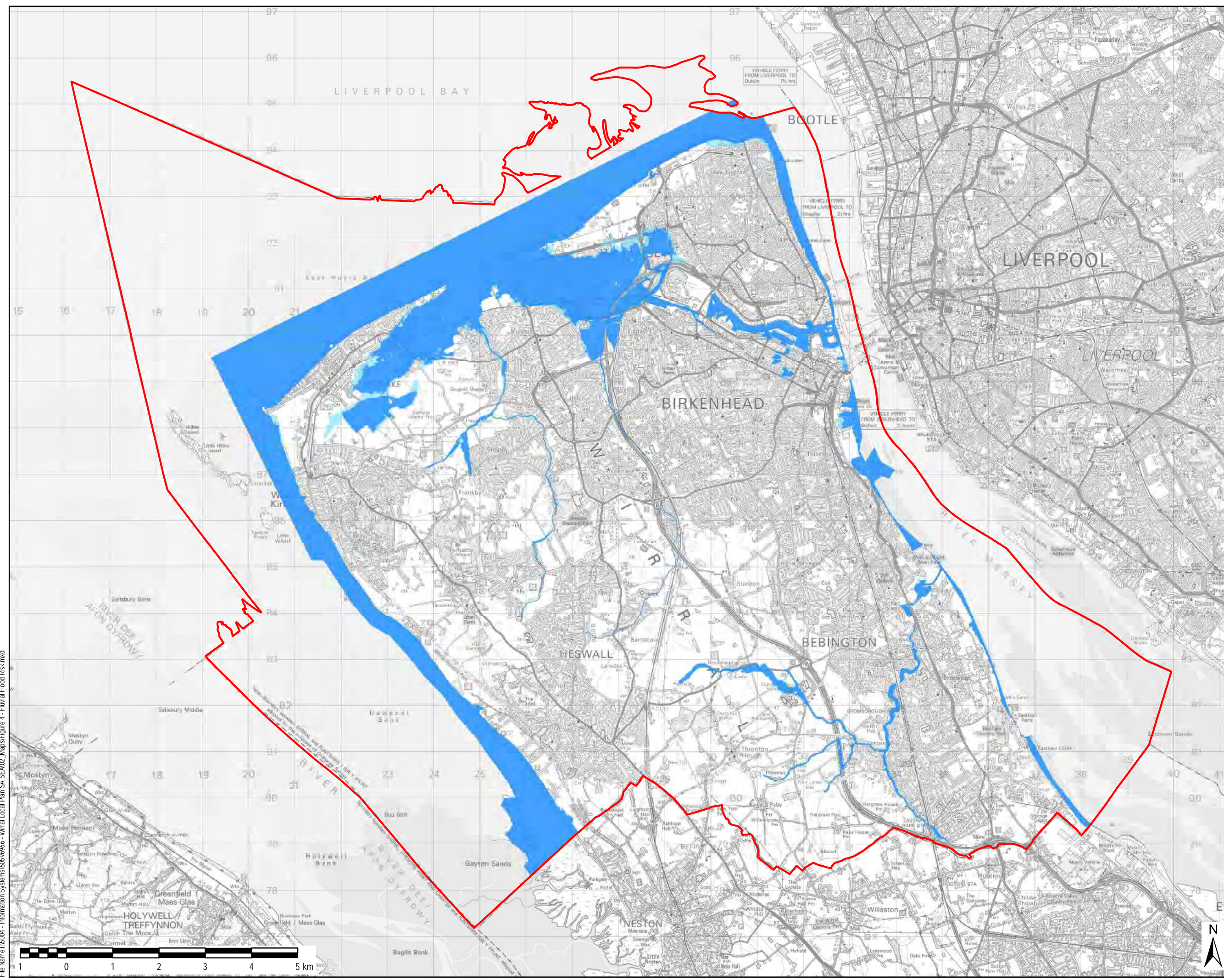
4.14 The Shoreline Management Plan splits the Borough into 14 ‘strategy units’ for the purposes of identifying where intervention is most needed to maintain existing flood defence protection. The Wirral Coastal Strategy has identified Preferred Management Options for each of the 14 Strategy units. The following four strategy units are targeted for priority intervention<sup>13</sup>:

Strategy Unit	Proposed Works	Timescale for Implementation
West Kirby	New flood prevention measures	2-3 years
Rock park Esplanade	Refurbishment works	3-4 years
Meols Parade	Sea Wall refurbishment	2-6 years
Wallasey Embankment	Embankment toe protection	11-20 years

<sup>13</sup> Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council (2016) ‘Local Flood Risk Management Strategy 2016-2019’ [online], available from: <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/sites/default/files/all/communities%20and%20neighbourhoods/Wirral%20Local%20Flood%20Risk%20Management%20Strategy.pdf>

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- LEGEND**
- Wirral Borough Boundary
  - Flood Zone 3
  - Flood Zone 2



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Purpose of Issue **DRAFT**

Client **WIRRAL BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Project Title **SCOPING REPORT FOR THE SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL OF THE WIRRAL LOCAL PLAN**

Drawing Title **FLUVIAL FLOOD RISK**

Drawn TD	Checked JW	Approved CM	Date 01/03/2019
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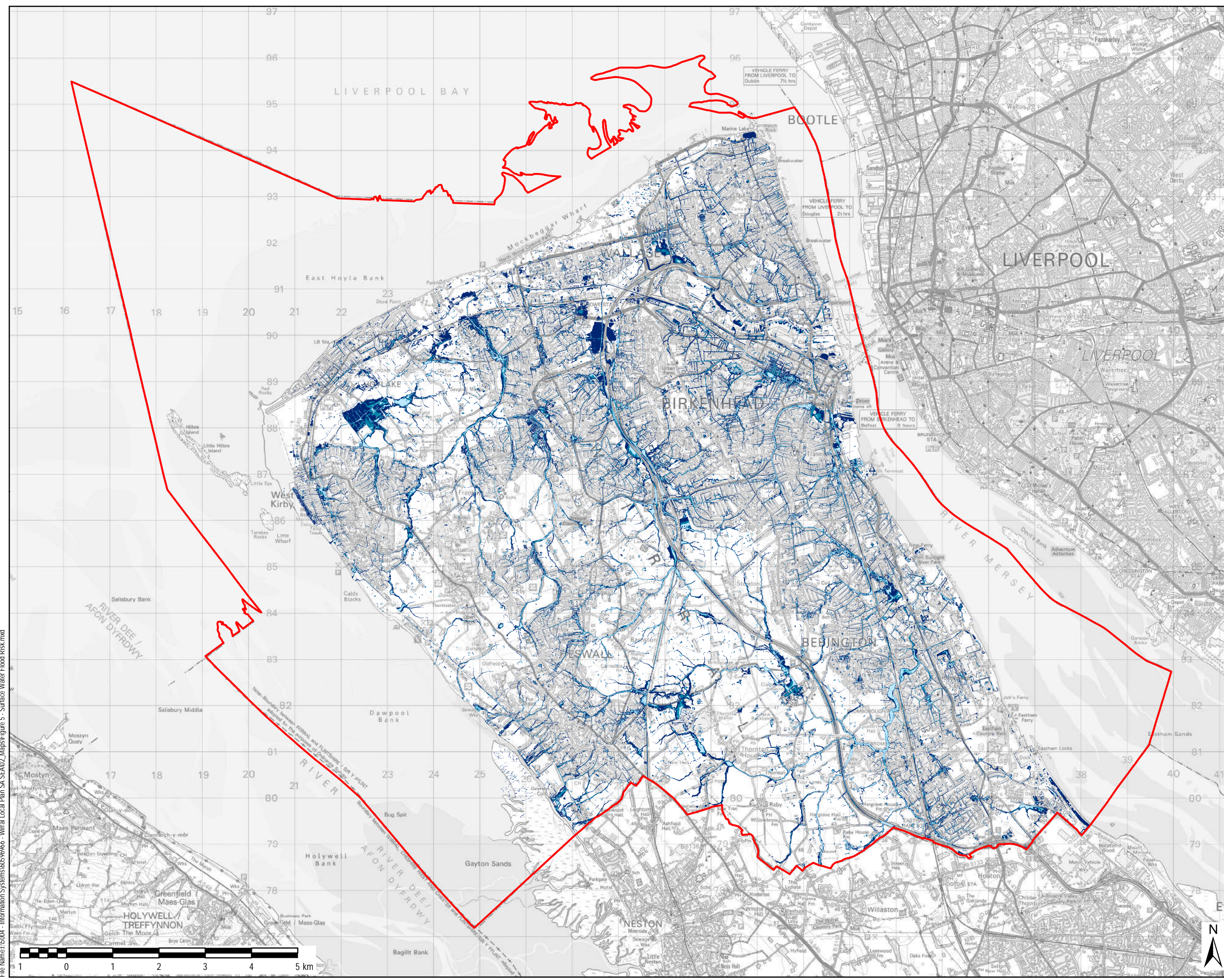
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- LEGEND**
- Wirral Borough Boundary
  - Surface Water Flood Risk Extent (1 in 30)
  - Surface Water Flood Risk Extent (1 in 100)
  - Surface Water Flood Risk Extent (1 in 1000)



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Purpose of Issue **DRAFT**

Client **WIRRAL BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Project Title **SCOPING REPORT FOR THE SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL OF THE WIRRAL LOCAL PLAN**

Drawing Title **SURFACE WATER FLOOD RISK**

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Drawing Number **FIGURE 4.2** Rev

File Name: I:\5004 - Information Systems\60596966 - Wirral Local Plan SA SEAN02 Maps\Figure 5 - Surface Water Flood Risk.mxd

## Future baseline

- 4.15 New development could have the potential to increase flood risk through factors such as changing surface and ground water flows, overloading existing inputs to the drainage and wastewater networks or increasing the number of residents exposed to areas of existing flood risk.
- 4.16 Coastal defences, both natural and manmade, will likely continue to provide a degree of protection for coastal communities, though it will be important to avoid increasing this risk by directing new development away from the most risk-affected areas of the Borough.
- 4.17 In the long term, climate change is likely to increase the level of coastal flood risk through sea level change, and there may eventually be a long term need to review the business and environmental case for maintaining flood defences in the face of changing risks. This is not considered likely over the plan period and maintaining flood defences will continue to be an important part of the flood defence strategy over the plan period.

## Key issues and objectives

- 4.18 The following key issues emerge from the context baseline review:
- Coastal parts of the Borough are potentially vulnerable to tidal flooding with the main sources of flooding being the Dee and Mersey estuaries and Liverpool Bay.
  - Tidal flood defences are in place to protect some particularly vulnerable areas of coastline, and there is a degree of natural protection from sand dunes and sandy foreshore.
  - Fluvial flood risk is present, and occasionally high, adjacent to a number of smaller watercourses which crisscross the Borough.
  - It is anticipated that climate change will increase sea levels and cause weather to become more variable. It is therefore likely that the flood risk from tidal sources in the Borough will continue to increase over time.
- 4.19 In light of the key issues discussed above it is proposed that the SA framework should include the following objectives:
- Adapt to current and future flood risk by directing development away from the areas of the Borough at the highest risk of flooding from all sources and provide sustainable management of current and future flood risk through sensitive and innovative planning, development layout and construction.

## 5. Climate change mitigation

### National

Key messages from the National Planning Policy Framework<sup>14</sup> (NPPF) include:

- 5.1 One of the three overarching objectives of the NPPF is an environmental objective to 'contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment' including by 'mitigating and adapting to climate change' and 'moving to a low carbon economy.' 'The planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change. It should help to: shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.
- 5.2 Local Plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account the long-term implications for flood risk, coastal change, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes, and the risk of overheating from rising temperatures. Policies should support appropriate measures to ensure the future resilience of communities and infrastructure to climate change impacts, such as providing space for physical protection measures, or making provision for the possible future relocation of vulnerable development and infrastructure.
- 5.3 Local planning authorities should support community-led initiatives for renewable and low carbon energy, including developments outside areas identified in local plans or other strategic policies that are being taken forward through neighbourhood planning.
- 5.4 The UK Climate Change Risk Assessment is published on a 5-yearly cycle in accordance with the requirements of the Climate Change Act 2008. It required the Government to compile an assessment of the risks for the UK arising from climate change, and then to develop an adaptation programme to address those risks and deliver resilience to climate change on the ground. For both the 2012 and the 2017 UK Climate Change Risk Assessment, the Adaptation Sub-Committee commissioned an evidence report<sup>15</sup> containing six priority risk areas requiring additional action in the next five years:
  - Flooding and coastal change risks to communities, businesses and infrastructure;
  - Risks to health, well-being and productivity from high temperatures;
  - Risk of shortages in the public water supply, and for agriculture, energy generation and industry;
  - Risks to natural capital, including terrestrial, coastal, marine and freshwater ecosystems, soils and biodiversity;
  - Risks to domestic and international food production and trade; and
  - New and emerging pests and diseases, and invasive non-native species, affecting people, plants and animals
- 5.5 The UK Climate Change Act<sup>16</sup> was passed in 2008 and established a framework to develop an economically credible emissions reduction path. It also highlighted the role it would take in contributing to collective action to tackle climate change under the Kyoto Protocol, and more recently as part of the UN-led Paris Agreement.
- 5.6 The Committee of Climate Change published a 2012 report entitled 'How Local Authorities can Reduce Emissions and Manage Climate Change Risk'<sup>17</sup> which emphasises the crucial role councils have in helping the UK meet its carbon targets and preparing for the impacts of climate change. It outlines specific

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<sup>14</sup> MHCLG (2018) National Planning Policy Framework [online] available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/728643/Revised\\_NPPF\\_2018.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/728643/Revised_NPPF_2018.pdf) [accessed 03/08/18]

<sup>15</sup> DEFRA (2017): 'UK Climate Change Risk Assessment Report January 2017', [online] available to download from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-climate-change-risk-assessment-2017> [last accessed 13/02/18]

<sup>16</sup> HM Government (2008): 'Climate Change Act 2008', [online] accessible via <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/27/contents> [last accessed 13/02/18]

<sup>17</sup> CCC (2012), 'How local authorities can reduce emissions and manage climate risks', [online]; available from: <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/how-local-authorities-can-reduce-emissions-and-manage-climate-risks/>

opportunities for reducing emissions and highlights good practice examples from a number of local authorities.

## Regional

- 5.7 The northwest renewable and low carbon energy capacity and deployment report (2010) was prepared by the then Northwest Regional Development Agency and sets a target of 10% of North West electricity requirements being met by renewable sources by 2010 (at least 15% by 2015 and at least 20% by 2020)<sup>18</sup>.
- 5.8 The Liverpool City Region Sustainable Energy Action Plan (2012) provides a coherent vision for all LCR authorities in relation to sustainable energy generation across the region, and sets out a programme to coordinate the implementation of sustainable energy projects.
- 5.9 Built Climate Resilience: Good Practice Case Studies in Liverpool City Region (2017) is a report prepared by the LCR CA highlighting existing best practice in the LCR and identifying opportunities elsewhere within the CA to apply this knowledge. Wirral Waters is identified as a key strategic opportunity to provide significant green infrastructure, including evaporative cooling and shading, flood attenuation, carbon storage, air pollutant filtration and walking and cycling options.

## Local

- 5.10 The Wirral Climate Change Strategy 2014-2019 sets out a strategy to encourage and co-ordinate action on climate change to achieve a substantial cut in climate pollution from Wirral and adapt Wirral to “unavoidable climate change”.<sup>19</sup>
- 5.11 Local Authorities are required to submit annual reports to the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (formally the Department of Energy and Climate Change) on greenhouse gas (GhG) emissions at Local Authority level. Wirral’s most recent report covers 2017/18, though the most recently published data nationally covers the period between 2005 and 2016.

## Baseline

### Current baseline

- 5.12 Reducing greenhouse gas (GhG) emissions is widely acknowledged as a key element of climate change mitigation. CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in particular particularly associated with a changing climate. In this context emissions are monitored and recorded at Local Authority level to enable high-emitting areas to identify and mitigate sources of emissions. These are presented in Table 5.1 below:

*Table 5.1 Local Authority CO<sub>2</sub> emissions estimates within the scope of influence of Local Authorities 2005-2016 (kt CO<sub>2</sub>)*

	Industrial and commercial (t CO <sub>2</sub> )	Domestic (t CO <sub>2</sub> )	Transport (t CO <sub>2</sub> )	Total (t CO <sub>2</sub> )	Emissions per capita (t CO <sub>2</sub> )
<b>Wirral</b>					
2005	650.3	823.3	366.9	1,840.5	5.8
2006	648.3	813.7	354.3	1,816.3	5.8
2007	645.3	780.4	354.5	1,780.3	5.6
2008	605.1	779.0	338.8	1,722.8	5.4
2009	507.7	704.3	325.4	1,537.5	4.8

<sup>18</sup> SQW (2010) Northwest renewable and low carbon energy capacity and deployment project report [online], available from: <http://www.sqw.co.uk/files/6813/8694/8765/40.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council (2014). 'Cool: Wirral Climate Change Strategy 2014-2019' [online], available from: <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/sites/default/files/all/About%20the%20council/climate%20change/Wirral%20Climate%20Change%20Strategy%202014-2019.pdf>

	Industrial and commercial (t CO2)	Domestic (t CO2)	Transport (t CO2)	Total (t CO2)	Emissions per capita (t CO2)
2010	540.8	744.2	319.6	1,604.7	5.0
2011	441.5	642.6	315.6	1,399.7	4.4
2012	501.2	692.5	310.0	1,503.7	4.7
2013	492.1	669.3	303.4	1,464.8	4.6
2014	387.5	551.4	307.2	1,246.0	3.9
2015	389.0	533.3	308.0	1,230.3	3.8
2016	372.4	506.9	312.9	1,192.2	3.7
<b>North West</b>					
2005	21,488.6	17,600.1	10,028.5	49,117.1	7.1
2006	21,316.4	17,501.3	9,843.6	48,661.4	7.1
2007	20,419.0	16,944.8	9,866.3	47,230.0	6.8
2008	20,024.3	16,901.3	9,497.3	46,423.0	6.7
2009	17,302.9	15,354.4	9,233.0	41,890.3	6.0
2010	18,620.1	16,323.5	9,071.3	44,015.0	6.3
2011	16,273.1	14,231.6	8,903.5	39,408.2	5.6
2012	18,234.8	15,211.8	8,732.6	42,179.2	6.0
2013	17,208.3	14,824.8	8,587.4	40,620.5	5.7
2014	14,591.3	12,306.2	8,698.5	35,596.0	5.0
2015	13,802.0	11,959.8	8,761.6	34,523.4	4.8
2016	12,539.9	11,323.1	8,884.6	32,747.6	4.5
<b>England</b>					
2005	149,948.8	126,263.7	87,123.2	363,335.8	7.2
2006	150,284.6	126,064.1	86,230.2	362,579.0	7.1
2007	144,513.2	122,073.0	86,814.8	353,401.0	6.9
2008	141,747.3	122,243.2	83,363.1	347,353.6	6.7
2009	124,384.5	111,289.5	80,680.7	316,354.7	6.1
2010	133,367.4	119,284.4	79,625.1	332,276.9	6.3
2011	118,644.9	104,279.7	78,137.6	301,062.1	5.7
2012	128,005.1	111,841.7	76,879.9	316,726.6	5.9
2013	122,403.9	109,226.3	76,009.2	307,639.4	5.7
2014	105,713.7	91,476.4	77,186.4	274,376.6	5.1
2015	99,155.3	89,165.3	78,224.6	266,545.3	4.9
2016	87,747.6	84,285.5	79,864.9	251,898.0	4.6



- 5.13 Table 5.1 illustrates that Wirral's CO2 emissions since 2005 have fallen in line with trends also evident at regional and national levels. It is notable that whilst total per capita emissions from the North West region are broadly aligned with those from England as a whole, total per capita emissions from Wirral are notably lower, though are decreasing at a slower rate.
- 5.14 The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy publishes annual statistics on renewable energy generation, disaggregated by Local Authority. The most recently published data is for 2017, and shows that Wirral has a total renewable energy installed capacity of **363.3 megawatts**. See Table 5.2 below:

Table 5.2 Renewable energy installed capacity (MW) in Wirral (2017)<sup>20</sup>

Photovoltaic	Onshore Wind	Offshore Wind	Sewage Gas	Landfill Gas	Total
9.0	0.1	349.0	0.5	4.7	<b>363.3</b>

- 5.15 Table 5.2 illustrates that over 96% of Wirral's renewable energy installed capacity comes from offshore wind, a remarkably high proportion. Consequently, Wirral ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> among UK Local Authorities in terms of offshore wind as a proportion of overall installed renewable energy capacity (behind only Worthing in the South East), and ranks 7<sup>th</sup> in the UK in terms of wind gross offshore wind installed capacity. By contrast, offshore wind represents just 17.2% of the UK's overall installed renewable energy capacity.
- 5.16 Although photovoltaic energy currently represents a small proportion of Wirral's overall installed capacity, there are indications that it is rapidly increasing in significance, albeit from a low base. The 2016/17 AMR reports that at December 2016 there were 2,257 domestic photovoltaic installations, an increase of over 150% from 2010.

## Future baseline

- 5.17 Climate change has the potential to increase the occurrence of extreme weather events in the Borough, with increases in mean summer and winter temperatures, increases in mean precipitation in winter and decreases in mean precipitation in summer. UK Climate Projections (UKCP09) estimate that under a medium emissions scenario, the central estimate of change in winter mean precipitation is an increase of 16%, while there is estimated to be an average drop in summer precipitation of 19%. This is likely to increase the risk of flooding in winter months and increase water shortages during summer months with an increased need for resilience and adaptation.
- 5.18 In terms of climate change mitigation, per capita emissions are likely to continue to decrease as energy efficiency measures, renewable energy production and new technologies become more widely adopted. This relates to issues such as transport, as increased take up of more energy efficient vehicles and electric vehicles takes place. However, increases in the built footprint of the Borough may lead to increases in overall emissions if efficiency measures do not keep pace.

## Key issues and objectives

- 5.19 The following key issues emerge from the context baseline review:
- Falling CO2 emissions in Wirral broadly reflect a UK-wide trend, though emissions per capita in Wirral are low in relation to those at regional and national level.
  - Offshore wind generation represents a very significant proportion of renewable energy installed capacity in Wirral. Whilst this demonstrates the Borough is almost uniquely well placed to take advantage of wind power, there could be potentially to increase additional sources of renewable energy generation, such as photovoltaic solar panels, to further reduce the Borough's reliance upon non-renewables.

<sup>20</sup> DBEIS (2018), Regional Renewable Statistics [online], available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/regional-renewable-statistics>

- Wirral Waters represents both good practice and an ongoing opportunity to utilise the potential of green infrastructure as a means of mitigating the effects of unavoidable climate change.

5.20 In light of the key issues discussed above it is proposed that the SA framework should include the following objectives:

- Continue to drive down CO2 emissions from all sources by achieving high standards of energy efficiency in new development, by providing attractive opportunities to travel by sustainable means and by protecting land suitable for renewable and low carbon energy generation, including community schemes.

## 6. Economy and employment

### National

6.1 Key messages from the National Planning Policy Framework<sup>21</sup> (NPPF) include:

- Planning policies should help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure.
- Local plans should:
  - a. Encourage sustainable economic growth within their clear economic vision and strategy.
  - b. Set criteria and identify sites for local investment to match the community needs.
  - c. Address investment barriers such as inadequate infrastructure, services/housing or poor environment.
  - d. Incorporate flexibility to account for unanticipated circumstances, allow new working practices and enable rapid responses to economic changes.

6.2 The Local Growth White Paper (2010)<sup>22</sup> notes that government interventions should support investment that will have a long-term impact on growth, working with markets rather than seeking to create artificial and unsustainable growth. The White Paper identifies that economic policy should be judged on the degree to which it delivers strong, sustainable and balanced growth of income and employment over the long-term. More specifically, growth should be: growth should be: broad-based industrially and geographically, ensuring everyone has access to the opportunities that growth brings (including future generations), whilst also focused on businesses that compete with the best internationally.

### Regional

6.3 The Liverpool City Region Growth Strategy<sup>23</sup> (2016) is published by the Liverpool City Region Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and sets out a strategy for economic growth, with specific focus on “*tak[ing] advantage of the opportunity presented by devolution*”. Of particular relevance to Wirral is the focus on regionally significant opportunities at the Wirral Waters Enterprise Zone (WWEZ), including hosting the Maritime Knowledge Hub and attracting associated future investment, along with the potential for an increased tourism offer at Wirral Waters as the redevelopment progresses.

6.4 The LCR Skills Strategy 2018 – 2023 recognises the importance of partnership between different institutions for unlocking economic growth, identifying the importance of “*working together across the Combined Authority Councils, the LEP, employers, colleges, training providers, universities, trade unions and public agencies*”.<sup>24</sup> The strategy aims to ensure that the necessary infrastructure and training is in place to enable employers to locally access the high quality skills they need for growth.

6.5 The draft LCR Strategic Housing and Economic Land Market Assessment (SHELMA) (2017) identifies a baseline need for employment land of 27.6ha of B1 floorspace and 29.1ha of B2 floorspace to 2033.

### Local

6.6 The Wirral Plan: a 2020 Vision (2015) is a non-statutory document which presents 20 ‘pledges’ to achieve over a five year period, with a key theme of driving economic growth.

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<sup>21</sup> MHCLG (2018) National Planning Policy Framework [online] available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/728643/Revised\\_NPPF\\_2018.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/728643/Revised_NPPF_2018.pdf) [accessed 03/08/18]

<sup>22</sup> Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2010, Local Growth: Realising Every Place's Potential [online] available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-growth-realising-every-places-potential-hc-7961> Accessed Aug 2017

<sup>23</sup> Liverpool City Region LEP (2016) ‘Building Our Future: Liverpool City Region Growth Strategy’ [online], available from: <https://www.liverpoollep.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/SGS-Final-main-lowres.compressed.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> Liverpool City Region CA ‘Skills Strategy 2018-2023’ [online], available from: [https://www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/LCRCA\\_SKILLS\\_STRAT.pdf](https://www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/LCRCA_SKILLS_STRAT.pdf)

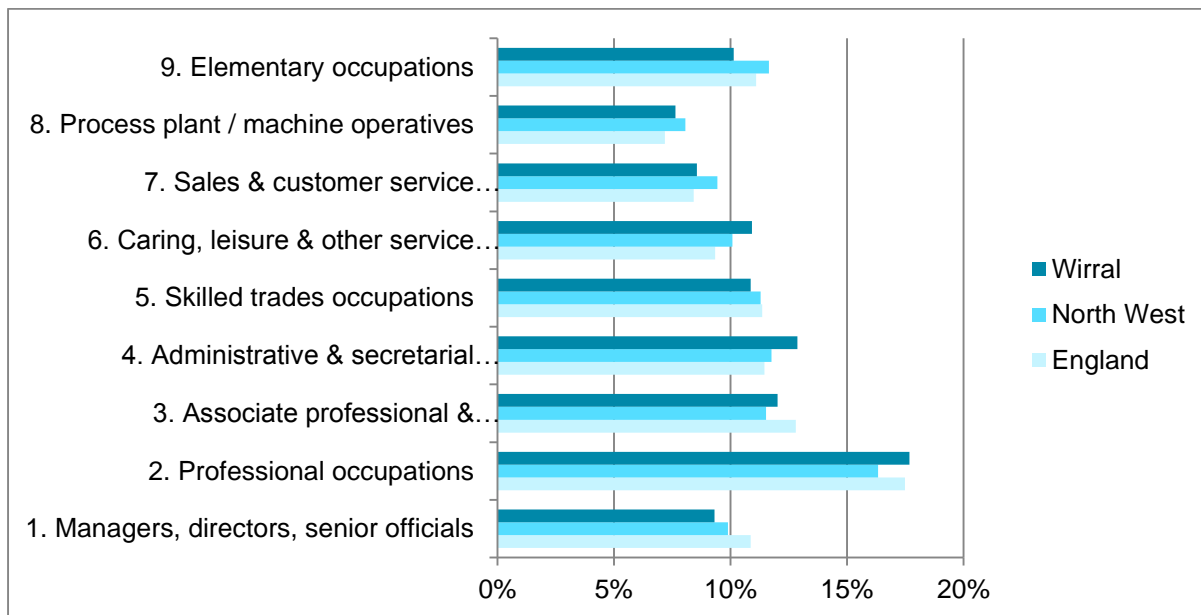
- 6.7 The Wirral Growth Plan (2016) sets out a five-year strategy for delivering this economic growth, identifying that the Borough’s “*maritime infrastructure and spatial opportunity*” can enable it to “*take advantage of emerging technologies in identified growth sectors*”.<sup>25</sup> The Growth Plan identifies significant potential for growth at Birkenhead town centre, Wirral Waters Enterprise Zone and the A41 corridor.
- 6.8 The Strategic Regeneration Framework (2017) builds on the Growth Plan, providing additional spatial details of economic growth opportunities and key assets in the Borough. (see Figure 6.2 below)
- 6.9 The Wirral Employment Land and Premises Study – Final Report (2017)<sup>26</sup> presents an assessment of employment land availability to meet the identified need in the SHELMA.
- 6.10 The Development Options Review (2018) proposes 35 sites across the Borough for allocation for B1, B2 and or B8 employment use in the emerging Local Plan.

## Baseline

### Current baseline

- 6.11 Wirral’s economy has traditionally been centred around the relatively industrialised Mersey coastline, with shipyards, docks, chemical works and manufacturing all key employers. This profile changed progressively over the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as heavier industry and manufacturing declined. Today, Wirral has a notably lower proportion of residents employed in elementary occupations, and a higher proportion of employment in professional occupations, than at regional and national level (as per Figure 6.1 below). This is likely to reflect a number of factors, such as Wirral’s strong transport links with Liverpool, where many skilled and professional employers are located, as well as a rebalancing of the local employment offer at former industrial sites to provide higher skilled employment locally.

Figure 6.1 Occupation of residents aged 16-74 in full time employment (2011 census)



- 6.12 The Wirral Waters development is the most significant example of the Borough’s redevelopment and it is an increasingly significant feature of the local economy. The site is part of the Mersey Waters Enterprise Zone, meaning businesses benefit from significant tax incentives for locating there, and the developer, Peel Holdings, has prepared a 30 year masterplan to deliver the development. The site itself is spread across 500 acres of former dockland in Birkenhead, and is intended to eventually deliver over 20,000 new jobs and 1.7m square metres of mixed use floor space.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> The Wirral Partnership (2016) ‘Wirral Growth Plan’ [online], available from: <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/sites/default/files/all/About%20the%20council/Wirral%20Plan/Wirral%20Growth%20Plan.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> Lichfields (2017) ‘Wirral Employment Land and Premises Study – Final Report’ [online], available from: <https://democracy.wirral.gov.uk/documents/s50048548/Main%20Report.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> Peel Land & Property, ‘Mersey Waters Enterprise Zone’ [online], available from: <https://www.merseywatersezone.co.uk/>

- 6.13 Key contemporary employment sectors include marine and maritime engineering as a result of Wirral's existing maritime infrastructure and renewable energy generation thanks to its proximity to offshore windfarms at Burbo Bank in the Irish Sea. Additional sectors include the automotive industry and high levels of small and medium enterprises (SME) employment.
- 6.14 There is also a strong visitor economy, with a key attraction centred on the Borough's 'Coast, Countryside and Golf' offer, including the world class golf course at Hoylake which has played host to the prestigious Open Championship.
- 6.15 Established industry remains a key sector, however, and major employers include Unilever, whose association with Wirral extends back to the foundation of the Lever Brother soap factory at Port Sunlight, as well as the Cammell Laird shipbuilding company, Vauxhall Motors (just outside the Borough boundary) and Typhoo Tea.
- 6.16 Key employment assets and opportunity areas are mapped in Figure 6.2 below:

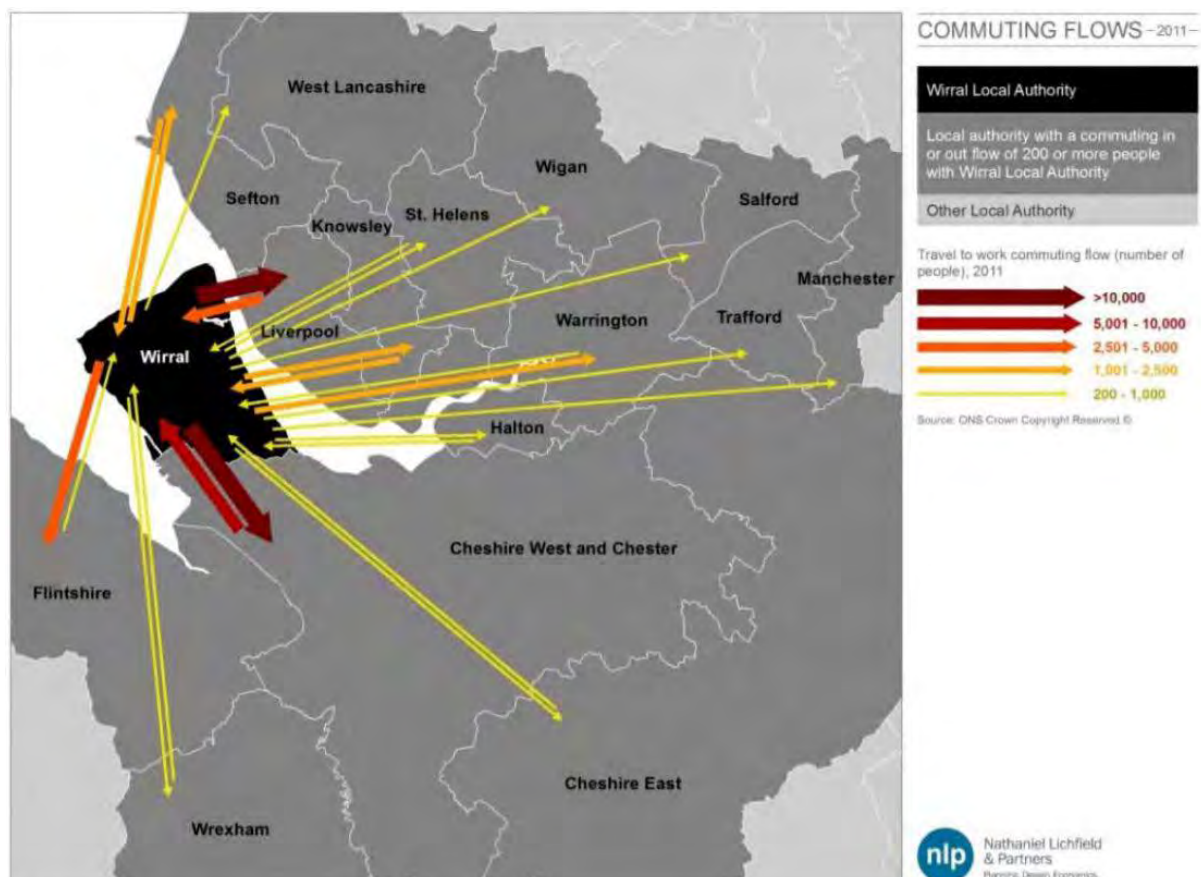
Figure 6.2 Growth Opportunities and Key Assets (from the Strategic Regeneration Framework [2017])



6.17 The Employment Land and Premises Study (2017) recommends 41 sites totalling 59.5ha (net) of B-class employment floorspace are suitable and available for potential allocation. The study notes that this excludes mixed use opportunities at Wirral Waters which could have potential to also include some additional B-class uses.

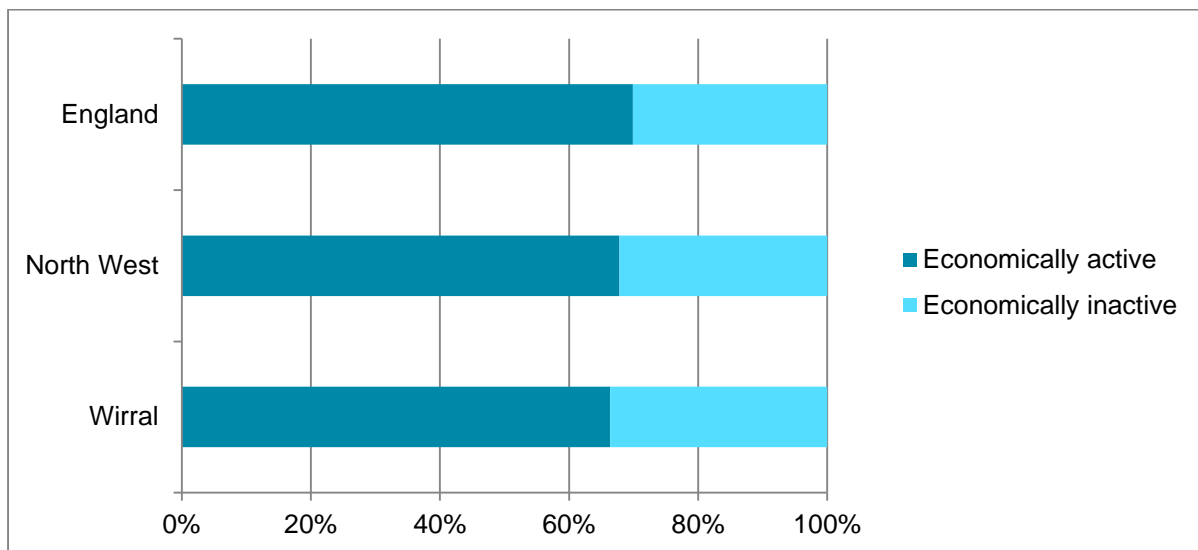
6.18 The Employment Land and Premises Study (2017) also identifies significant commuting flows to and from Wirral, revealing that the most significant travel-to-work patterns relationships are with Liverpool and Cheshire (see Figure 6.3).

Figure 6.3 Commuting flows to and from Wirral (2011)<sup>28</sup>



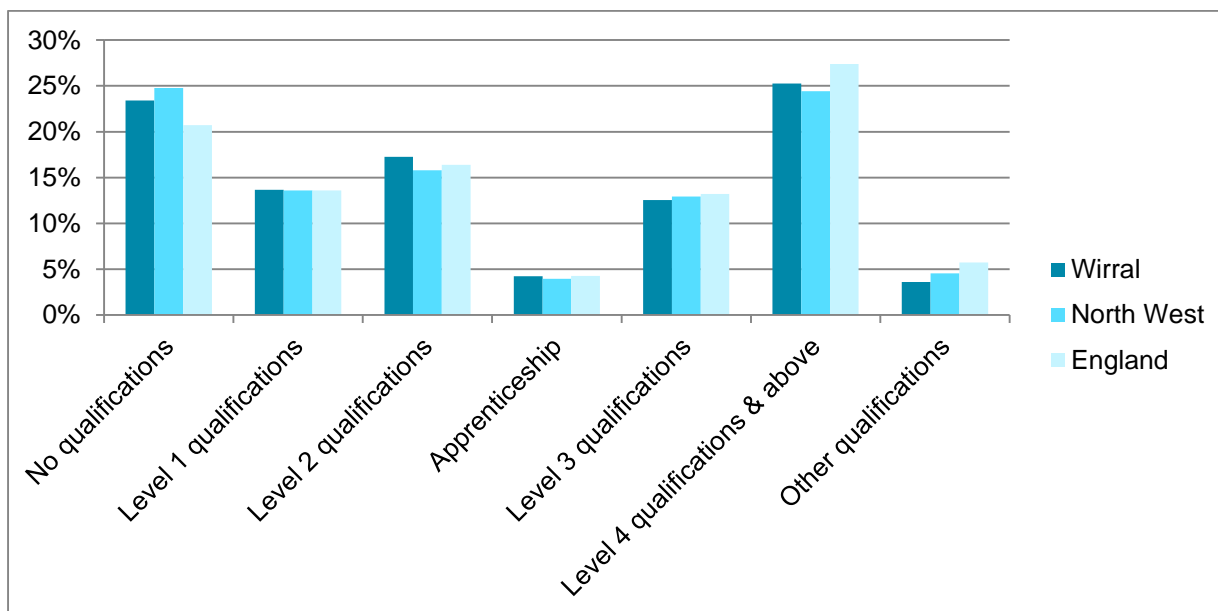
<sup>28</sup> Lichfields (2017) Ibid

Figure 6.3 Economic Activity Rates (2011 census)



6.19 Figure 6.3 illustrates the economic activity rate of Wirral's employment-age residents is lower than both the regional and national average at 66.4%, compared with 67.8% for the North West region and 69.9% for England as a whole.

Figure 6.4 Highest level qualifications (2011 census)



6.20 Skills and education are a key factor in driving economic growth. The 2011 census data indicates that Wirral has fewer residents with no qualifications and a greater proportion of residents with Level 4 qualifications than the average for the North West, though performance against both metrics is weaker than England as a whole. The LCR Skills Strategy identifies that in terms of school-level qualifications in isolation, Wirral (together with Halton) outperforms all other LCR authorities, with results better than the national average.

6.21 The most recognisable qualifications in England at each of the eight qualification levels are summarised below:<sup>29</sup>

- Level 1 includes GCSE grades 3 to 1 or D to G;
- Level 2 includes GCSE grades 9 to 4 or grades A\* to C;
- Level 3 includes AS levels and A levels;

<sup>29</sup> Excluding 'entry level' qualifications such as English for speakers of other languages

- Levels 4 and 5 include NVQs at Level 4 and Level 5 respectively;
- Level 6 includes bachelor degrees;
- Level 7 includes masters degrees;
- Level 8 includes doctoral degrees.

## Future baseline

- 6.22 The 2016 LCR Growth Strategy identifies a number of strategic growth sectors for the regional economy, including:
- Advanced manufacturing
  - Digital and creative
  - Financial and professional services
  - Health and life sciences
  - Maritime and logistics
  - Visitor economy
- 6.23 Off these regional growth sectors, Wirral has notable potential for economic growth in the 'maritime and logistics' and 'visitor economy' sectors related to the ongoing Wirral Waters regeneration. Major projects at Wirral Waters which have either commenced or are committed include the MEA Park waterside manufacturing campus and the Maritime Knowledge Hub project, and the Enterprise Zone is already attracting new maritime industry employers, such as the state of the art Stream Maritime Training facility. As the development progresses and matures it will continue to evolve into a significant employer, consolidating Wirral's diverse range of employment options and capitalising on the opportunities arising from emerging growth sectors.
- 6.24 Growth is likely to put additional pressure on the key transport arteries between Wirral and other regional centres, particularly Liverpool. It will be important that this growth is matched by associated infrastructure enhancements as necessary.

## Key issues and objectives

- 6.25 The following key issues emerge from the context baseline review:
- As traditional industrial and manufacturing employment declines, increasing opportunities are being found in key growth sectors, with particular strength evident in maritime and marine industries.
  - Despite the general decline in traditional industry, a number of significant long term employers remain, including Unilever and Cammell Laird.
  - The nationally significant Wirral Waters redevelopment, as part of the Mersey Waters Enterprise Zone, is anticipated to deliver significant new employment opportunities over the plan period.
  - There are significant commuting flows to and from Liverpool and Cheshire and this connectivity is a key part of Wirral's economic vitality.
  - SMEs and start-up businesses are notable employers, pointing to the vibrancy of small business in the Borough and the availability of the necessary skills and investment for the sector to flourish.
- 6.26 In light of the key issues discussed above it is proposed that the SA framework should include the following objectives:
- Ensure that education and skills provision meets the needs of Wirral's existing and future labour market and improves life chances for all, including by enabling older people and people with physical and mental health conditions to stay in employment.
  - Support a strong, diverse and resilient economy that provides opportunities for all, enhances the vitality of the Borough's town and local centres including through the identification of further regeneration opportunities, particularly in the most deprived areas. This could include support for the social enterprise, voluntary and community sectors.



## 7. Health

- 7.1 As noted in Paragraph 1.14, the Health chapter of the SA scoping report fulfils the Health Impact Assessment (HIA) element of this integrated scoping exercise.

### Context

#### National

- 7.2 Key messages from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) include that planning policies should:
- Enable and support healthy lifestyles through provision of green infrastructure, sports facilities, local shops, access to healthier food, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling.
  - Take into account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all sections of the community.
  - Help deliver access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity to contribute to the health and well-being of communities.

#### Regional

- 7.3 Green Infrastructure Framework for North East Wales, Cheshire and Wirral (2011) aims to “build healthier communities” in the region and highlights the important link between safe and attractive green spaces and increased levels of physical activity, with consequential benefits to both mental and physical health.

#### Local

- 7.4 The Wirral Local Health Profile (2018) is produced by Public Health England and measures outcomes in the Borough against national averages on a range of metrics including life expectancy and under-75 mortality, smoking status and childhood obesity.<sup>30</sup>

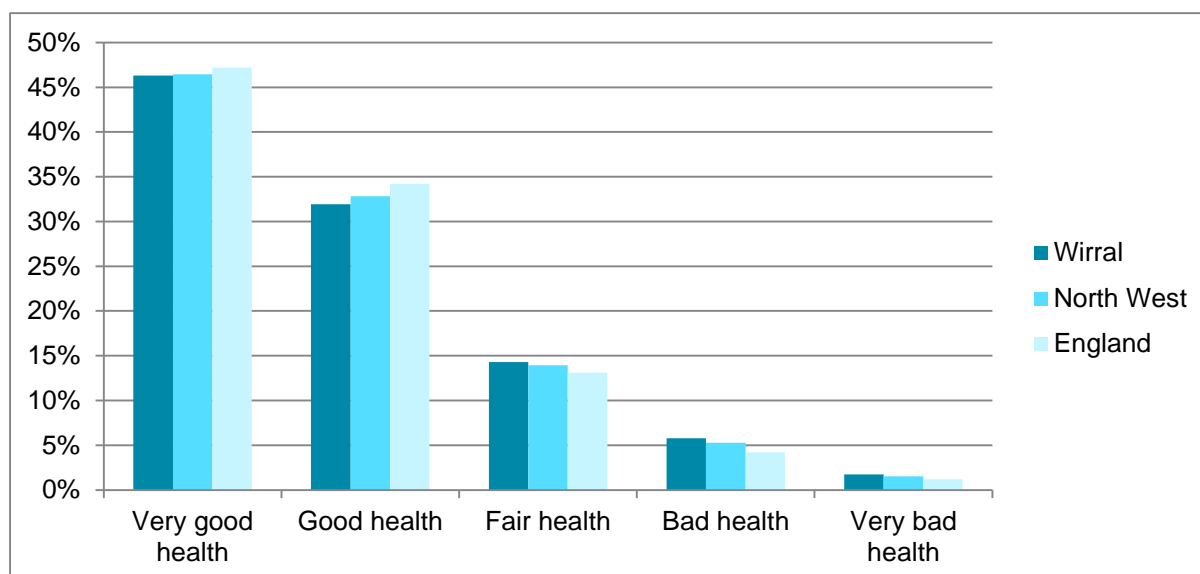
### Baseline

#### Current baseline

- 7.5 Health is a cross-cutting topic and there are natural synergies with other SEA themes including climate change mitigation, population and communities and transport. This is particularly the case in relation to green infrastructure, which is a key aspect of all these themes thanks to its multi-functionality.
- 7.6 There is an existing network of green infrastructure in the Borough, including long distance walking and cycling routes, including the Wirral Way, as well as urban parks, rural parks and gardens and sports pitches. The Wirral Waters development provides a strategic opportunity to deliver substantial new green infrastructure connectivity between established and emerging areas of the Borough via healthy, sustainable transport choices.
- 7.7 The strategic public healthcare assets in the borough are Clatterbridge Hospital in Bebington as well as Arrowe Park Hospital and Wirral Women and Children’s Hospital, which share a site at Upton, west of Birkenhead. A key dimension of the health SEA theme is accessibility, and it is therefore significant that both hospital campuses are located west of the M53 which partially severs them from the main built up area of the Borough. This could potentially make it difficult for some users to access the hospitals without a car - buses serve both sites though neither site is reasonable walking distance from a train station.

<sup>30</sup> Public Health England (2018) ‘Local Authority Health Profile 2018’, [online], available from: <https://www.wirralintelligenceservice.org/media/2468/wirral-local-health-profile-2018.pdf>

Figure 7.1 General Health (2011 census)



7.8 Figure 7.1 shows that on balance general health outcomes in Wirral are marginally below those at regional and national levels. Although there are slightly more people in the Borough in “fair health”, this is outweighed by lower proportions of the population being in “very good” and “good” health, and higher proportions being in “bad” and “very bad” health when compared with regional and national levels.

Table 7.1 Long term health category (2011 census)

	Wirral	North West	England
Day-to-day activities limited a lot	11.9%	10.3%	8.3%
Day-to-day activities limited a little	10.7%	10%	9.3%
Day-to-day activities not limited	77.4%	79.8%	82.4%

7.9 Table 7.1 shows that in terms of long-term health and disability, residents in the Borough have generally worse outcomes than at regional and national levels. In the 2011 census, 11.9% of Wirral residents reported long-term health significantly limits their day-to-day activities compared with 10.3% in the North West region and 8.3% in England as a whole.

7.10 Figure 7.2 (below) maps health deprivation in Wirral, revealing a contrast between the more affluent south and west and more economically deprived north and east. Health deprivation and disability statistics captures a range of data including likelihood of premature death, comparative illness and disability rates, acute morbidity and rates of mood and anxiety disorders.

7.11 Disparity of health outcomes in Wirral is vividly demonstrated by ward level data on life expectancy. The wards with highest and lowest life expectancies in Wirral are summarised in Table 7.2 below:

Table 7.2 Life expectancy in years at birth (2015-2017)<sup>31</sup>

	England	Wirral	Gresby, Frankby and Irby Ward	Bidston and St James Ward
Male	79.4	77.9	81.5	72.5
Female	83.1	82	87	78.3

<sup>31</sup> ONS (2017) via Wirral Intelligence Service, ‘Life Expectancy at Birth by Ward 2015-17’, available from: <https://www.wirralintelligenceservice.org/this-is-wirral/wirral-population/population-data/>

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**LEGEND**

- Wirral Borough Boundary

**Health Deprivation and Disability**

- 0 - 20% (Most Deprived)
- 20 - 40%
- 40 - 60%
- 60 - 80%
- 80 - 100% (Least Deprived)

**Note:**  
The IMD rankings displayed are based on the national rankings.

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Purpose of Issue **DRAFT**

Client **WIRRAL BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Project Title **SCOPING REPORT FOR THE SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL OF THE WIRRAL LOCAL PLAN**

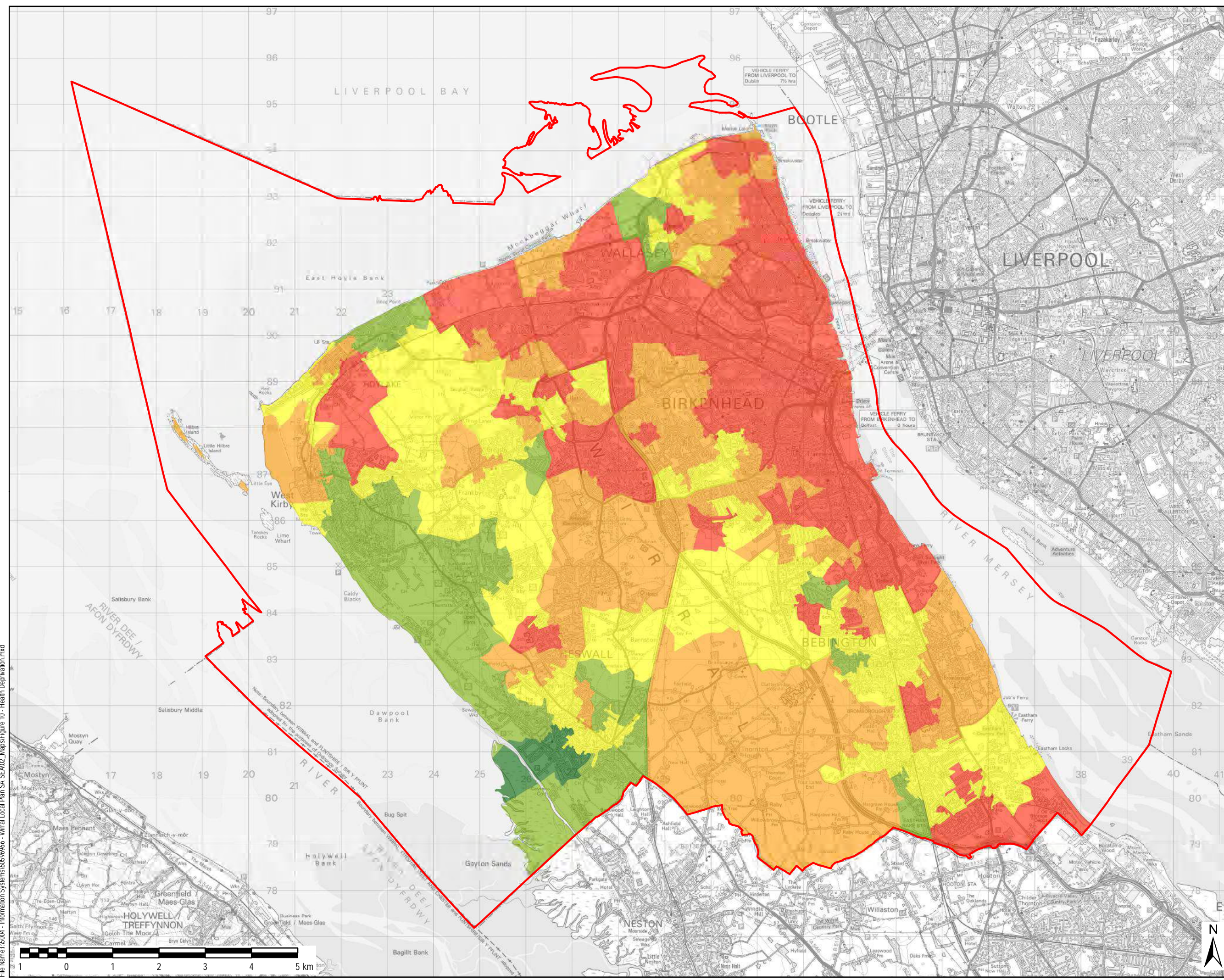
Drawing Title **HEALTH DEPRIVATION**

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Drawing Number **FIGURE 7.2**



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## Future baseline

- 7.12 Existing inequalities in health deprivation, particularly in areas of entrenched multi-generational deprivation, are unlikely to notably rebalance without intervention at both a strategic and targeted scale.
- 7.13 Wirral Waters will be delivered gradually over a 30-40 year time horizon and it will be important to take advantage of the opportunities this brings for integrating green infrastructure and healthy lifestyle choices into new development, particularly where the benefits of this can be extended to established areas of health deprivation.

## Key issues and objectives

- 7.14 The following key issues emerge from the context and baseline review:
- There are a range of green or open spaces within the Borough, serving both the urban core, such as Birkenhead Park, and the rural and coastal areas, such as North Wirral Coastal Park. Connectivity between these spaces is uneven in places.
  - Health deprivation is unevenly distributed, with areas of significant health deprivation evident in Birkenhead and the north east of the Borough whilst very low health deprivation is evident in the Borough's more affluent west and south.
  - This suggests that despite a number of strategic healthcare and green infrastructure assets in the Borough, access to or take-up of these services is uneven and accessibility could be enhanced for those most at risk of suffering poor health outcomes.
- 7.15 In light of the key issues discussed above it is proposed that the SA framework should include the following objectives:
- To improve the physical and mental health and wellbeing of Wirral residents and reduce health inequalities across the Borough and between local communities.

## 8. Heritage

### Context

#### National

8.1 Key messages from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) include:

- Strategic policies should set out an overall strategy making provision for ‘conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure.
- Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments ‘are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation of change (such as increased densities).
- Heritage assets should be recognised as an ‘irreplaceable resource’ that should be conserved in a ‘manner appropriate to their significance’, taking account of ‘the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits’ of conservation, whilst also recognising the positive contribution new development can make to local character and distinctiveness.
- Plans should set out a ‘positive strategy’ for the ‘conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment’, including those heritage assets that are most at risk.
- When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss of less than substantial harm to its significance.

8.2 These messages are supported by the national Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)<sup>32</sup> which itself includes the key message that local authorities should set out in their Local Plans a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment which recognises that conservation is not a passive exercise and that identifies specific opportunities for the conservation and enhancement of heritage assets.

8.3 Historic Environment for England (2010)<sup>33</sup> sets out the Government’s vision for the historic environment. It calls for those who have the power to shape the historic environment to recognise its value and to manage it in an intelligent manner in light of the contribution that it can make to social, economic and cultural life.

#### Regional

8.4 The Merseyside Historic Environment Record (HER) is maintained by the Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service, and is one of a network of 85 HERs nationwide. The Merseyside HER records details on local archaeological sites and finds, historic buildings and historic landscapes across the five traditional Merseyside authorities (i.e. excluding Halton). HERs provide a significant resource for informing planning decisions, at both a spatial and development management scale.<sup>34</sup>

#### Local

8.5 The Merseyside Historic Characterisation Project – Wirral Report (2011)<sup>35</sup> presents “broad brush” spatial data in relation to historic landscape character of Wirral. The project explores a broad spectrum of historic environment characteristics, including the period of origin and distribution of housing stock within the Borough, the type and distribution of historic field patterns and distribution and evolution of industrial and dockland activity in the Borough. This provides a “spatial historic environment framework” within which development decisions in the Borough at both a strategic and non-strategic scale can be made.

<sup>32</sup> Department for Communities and Local Government (2012) National Planning Practice Guidance [online] available at: <http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/> Accessed Aug 2017

<sup>33</sup> HM Government (2010) The Government’s Statement on the Historic Environment for England [online] available at: [http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference\\_library/publications/6763.aspx](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference_library/publications/6763.aspx) Accessed Aug 2017

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/chr/herdetail.aspx?crit=&ctid=90&id=4723>

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/mol/archaeology/historic-characterisation-project/Wirral-Part-1.pdf>

## Baseline

### Current baseline

- 8.6 Wirral has a large number of historic assets including:
- 26 conservation areas.
  - 8 scheduled monuments.
  - 4 registered parks and gardens.
- 8.7 The Borough also contains a large number of listed buildings. The WBC website notes that “Wirral contains over 1,900 buildings and structures listed by Historic England”, with a review of HE’s list itself indicating that of this total 722 are listed buildings. 31 of these are Grade II\* (buildings of special interest) and nine are Grade I (buildings of exceptional interest).
- 8.8 The majority of the Borough’s 26 conservation areas has a management plan. Historic England defines conservation area management plans as “*vehicles for reinforcing the positive character of a historic area as well as for avoiding, minimising and mitigating negative impacts identified as affecting the area. This may also outline opportunities to better reveal or enhance significance, possibly through the location or design of new development*”<sup>36</sup>. The following conservation areas do not currently have a management plan:
- Clifton Park
  - Hamilton Square
  - Lower Bebbington
  - Meols Drive
  - Mountwood
  - The Kings Gap
  - The Magazines
- 8.9 There is a broad distribution of listed buildings pepper-potted throughout Wirral, though with a natural concentration at the Borough’s more built-up eastern side. Substantial clusters of listed buildings are apparent at the historic Port Sunlight, Bromborough Pool and Rock Park areas of the Borough, as well as the Hamilton Square area of Birkenhead, with notable smaller clusters evident at the village of Thornton Hough to the south of the Borough, the New Brighton area of Wallasey in the north and village of Thurston in the Borough’s west.
- 8.10 Historic England maintains a nationwide Heritage at Risk register, updated on an annual basis. The 2018 HAR register records 14 features considered to be at risk within the Borough, including nine listed buildings (1 x Grade I; 2 x Grade II\*; 6 x Grade II), two registered park and gardens, two conservation areas and one scheduled monument. Of these, two features – the Church of St Peter and St Paul in New Brighton, and the Church of St Mary in Liscard – are recorded as Priority A, meaning they are at “Immediate risk of further rapid deterioration or loss of fabric”.<sup>37</sup>
- 8.11 The 19<sup>th</sup> century ‘model village’ at Port Sunlight, built to house employees of the Sunlight Soap factory, is a particularly notable historic feature, as recognised by WBC’s conservation area appraisal which notes the village’s “*unique place in the history of town planning*”.<sup>38</sup> Nearly every building in the village is Grade II-listed.
- 8.12 Also of note is the area of opportunity at the former dockland area of Wirral Waters, which, if fully realised, has potential to be one of the largest urban regeneration projects in England, revitalising over 200ha of historic waterfront with outline permission granted for around 13,000 dwellings and 20 million square feet of mixed use floorspace.

<sup>36</sup> Historic England (2019), ‘Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management’ [online], available from:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/conservation-area-appraisal-designation-management-advice-note-1/>

<sup>37</sup> Historic England (2018), ‘Heritage at Risk: North West Register 2018’ [online], available from:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/har-2018-registers/nw-har-register2018/>

<sup>38</sup> Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council

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- LEGEND**
- Wirral Borough Boundary
  - Listed Building
  - Conservation Area
  - Registered Park or Garden
  - Selected Heritage Inventory for Natural England (SHINE) Site
  - Scheduled Monument



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Client  
**WIRRAL BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Project Title  
**SCOPING REPORT FOR THE SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL OF THE WIRRAL LOCAL PLAN**

Drawing Title  
**HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT**

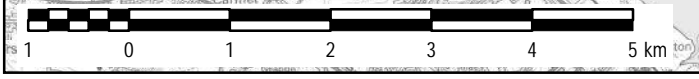
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**FIGURE 8.1**

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## Future baseline

- 8.13 New development within the Borough has the potential to impact heritage assets and their settings through inappropriate design and layout. The Borough has a wide range of built heritage ranging from individual structures through to the entire Port Sunlight village, and the range of historic contexts presents potential for a variety of negative effects from inappropriate development.
- 8.14 Equally, however, new development will offer opportunities for enhancing the quality of the Borough's historic environment, either through regeneration of a specific asset or through improvements to an asset's setting and wider environment. Development can also offer opportunities to improve access to or better reveal the significance of a heritage asset. Most significantly in this regard, the Wirral Waters project will deliver very substantial regeneration across around 500 acres of post-industrial waterfront, much of which will be within the plan period. This could have potential to act as a catalyst for wider regeneration efforts within the Borough and beyond over the plan period.
- 8.15 There are a relatively small number of historic assets at risk, though these could potentially deteriorate further without intervention or as a result of inappropriate development.
- 8.16 Existing historic environment designations and the policies of the NPPF will continue to offer a degree of protection to heritage assets and their settings.

## Key issues and objectives

- 8.17 The following key issues emerge from the context baseline review:
- There is a rich variety and distribution of designated heritage assets present within the Borough, including 8 Scheduled Monuments, 26 Conservation Areas and at least 722 nationally listed buildings.
  - There are 14 designated heritage assets identified by Historic England as being at risk ranging from gardens to churches to entire conservation areas.
  - The Wirral Waters project offers significant opportunities to enhance the historic fabric of the Borough and enhance understanding and appreciation of Wirral's industrial heritage.
- 8.18 In light of the key issues discussed above it is proposed that the SA framework should include the following objective:
- Protect, conserve and enhance heritage assets, including their setting and significance, and contribute to the maintenance and enhancement of historic character through design, layout and setting of new development.



# 9. Housing

## Context

### National

9.1 Key messages from the NPPF include:

- Support for strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural wellbeing.
- To support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of housing, strategic policies 'should be informed by a local housing need assessment, conducted using the standard method in national planning guidance. In addition to the local housing need figure, any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas should also be taken into account in establishing the amount of housing to be planned for.'
- The size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies. Where a need for affordable housing is identified, planning policies should specify the type of affordable housing required, and expect it to be met on-site where possible.
- Recognise the important contribution of small and medium sized development sites in meeting housing needs. Local Plans should identify land to accommodate at least 10% of their housing requirement on sites no larger than one hectare, and neighbourhood planning groups should also consider the opportunities for allocating small and medium-sized sites.
- In rural areas, planning policies and decisions should be responsive to local circumstances and plan housing development to reflect local needs, particularly for affordable housing, including through rural exception sites where appropriate. Authorities should consider whether allowing some market housing would facilitate the provision of affordable housing to meet local needs.

9.2 In February 2017 the government published the Housing White Paper entitled 'Fixing our broken housing market'.<sup>39</sup> Key points in relation to housing delivery include the proposed new standardised methodology for calculating housing need and a drive to increase densities in the most sustainable locations, particularly near transport hubs such as train stations.

### Regional

9.3 The Liverpool City Region (LCR) Strategic Housing and Employment Land Market Assessment (SHELMA) was published in draft for consultation in 2017, and identifies housing need at a regional scale, apportioning this need between the constituent LCR authorities. The SHELMA identifies an objectively assessed housing need (OAHN) for Wirral of **between 664 and 737** dpa. This document remains in draft and these OAHN figures should be viewed in that context.

### Local

9.4 The Wirral SHMA and Housing Needs Study (2016) identifies housing need for Wirral, including affordable housing and other specialist housing types. The 2016 SHMA identifies a higher overall OAHN for the Borough of **between 875 and 1,235** dwellings per annum (dpa).

9.5 The Development Options Review (2018) proposes 90 strategic and non-strategic sites with capacity for up to 2,403 homes for allocation in the emerging Local Plan.

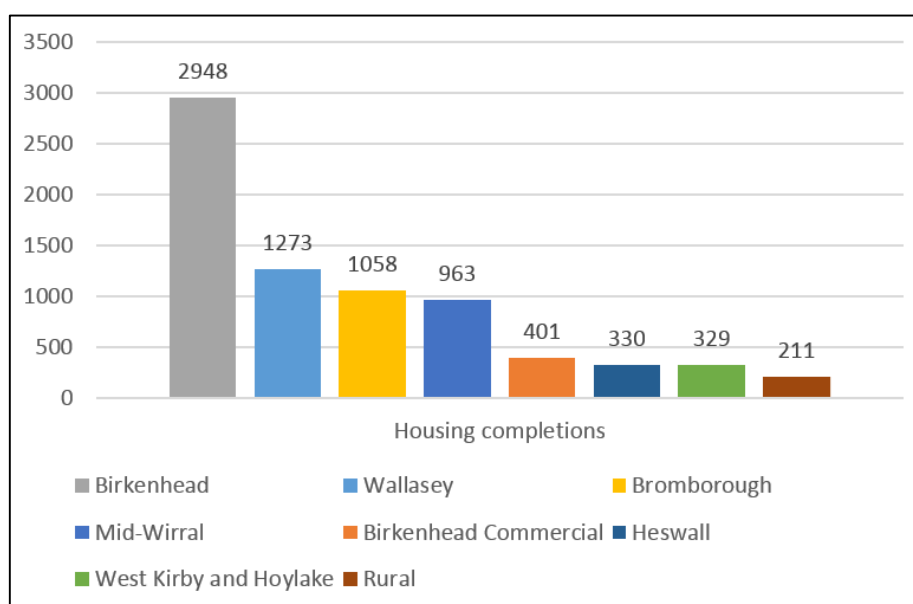
<sup>39</sup> MHCLG (2017), 'Housing White Paper' [online], available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/housing-white-paper>

## Baseline

### Current baseline

- 9.6 All OAHN calculations will likely be superseded by the Government's proposed standard methodology for calculating housing need, which produces an annual housing need figure of **803** dpa when calculated using the 2014 household projection data (as per current guidance).<sup>40</sup> However, the more recent 2016 household projection data returns a significantly lower housing need figure, potentially as low as **490** dpa.<sup>41</sup> It is noted that as at March 2019 the 2016 household projections should not be used to calculate housing need.
- 9.7 In this context, the 2017/18 Wirral Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) indicates that the average annual rate of dwelling completion over the previous 5 years was **474** dpa. The high level of development constraint in Wirral is reflected by the high proportion of completed dwellings which were delivered on brownfield land, with 83% of 2017/18 completions, 84% of 2016/17 completions and 92% of 2015/16 completions being achieved on previously developed sites.<sup>42</sup> Whilst this is positive in principle, it could suggest that housing supply from greenfield sites is being severely constrained by protective designations, particularly Green Belt.
- 9.8 The 2018 Housing Delivery Test (HDT) results record a total delivery over three years of 1,530 net new homes against a target of 2,093. This means the 2018 HDT measurement for Wirral is 73%.
- 9.9 Figure 9.1 (below) illustrates data from the 2016 SHMA on the distribution of housing completions within Wirral between 2003/4 and 2014/15, revealing that Birkenhead is by far the area of highest housing delivery.

Figure 9.1 Wirral housing completions by geographic area 2003/4 – 2014/15<sup>43</sup>



- 9.10 The 2016 SHMA suggests a 40% policy target for affordable dwellings on new development, subject to viability testing. The 2017/18 AMR says that affordable housing policy in Wirral applies to developments of 11 or more units, with 10% affordable sought in areas of greatest need and 20% elsewhere. The AMR records total gross affordable housing completions of 83 dwellings in 2016/17 which was policy compliant at 22% of overall housing delivery.

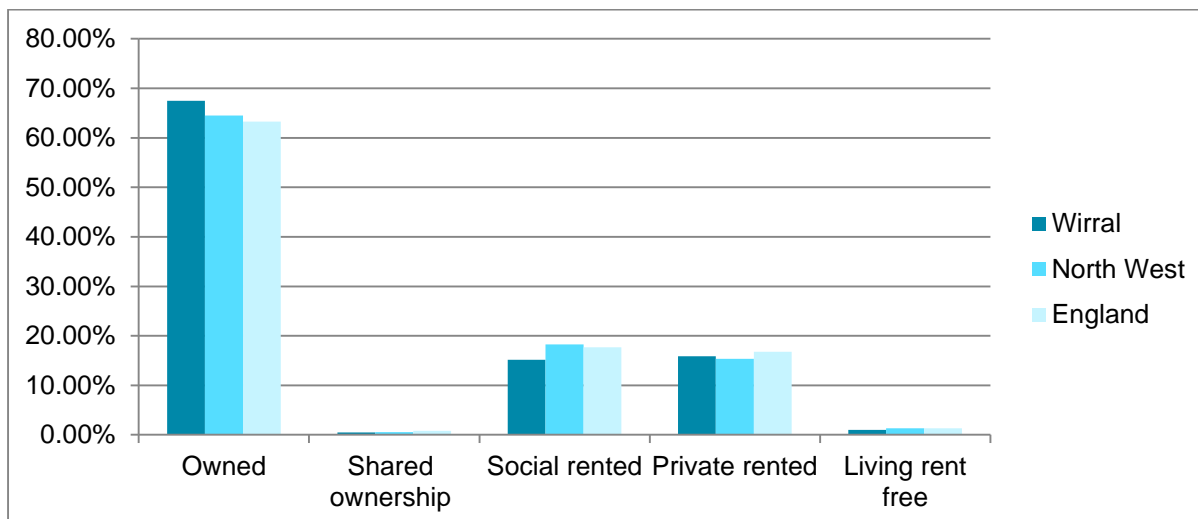
<sup>40</sup> MHCLG (2018) 'Technical consultation on updates to national planning policy and guidance' [online], available from: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/751810/LHN\\_Consultation.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/751810/LHN_Consultation.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> Lichfields (2018) 'The 2016-based Household Projections for England' [online], available from: [https://lichfields.uk/media/4495/lichfields\\_the\\_2016\\_based\\_household\\_projections.pdf](https://lichfields.uk/media/4495/lichfields_the_2016_based_household_projections.pdf)

<sup>42</sup> Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council (2018) 'Annual Monitoring Report 2018' [online], available from: <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/node/7980>

<sup>43</sup> Ibid

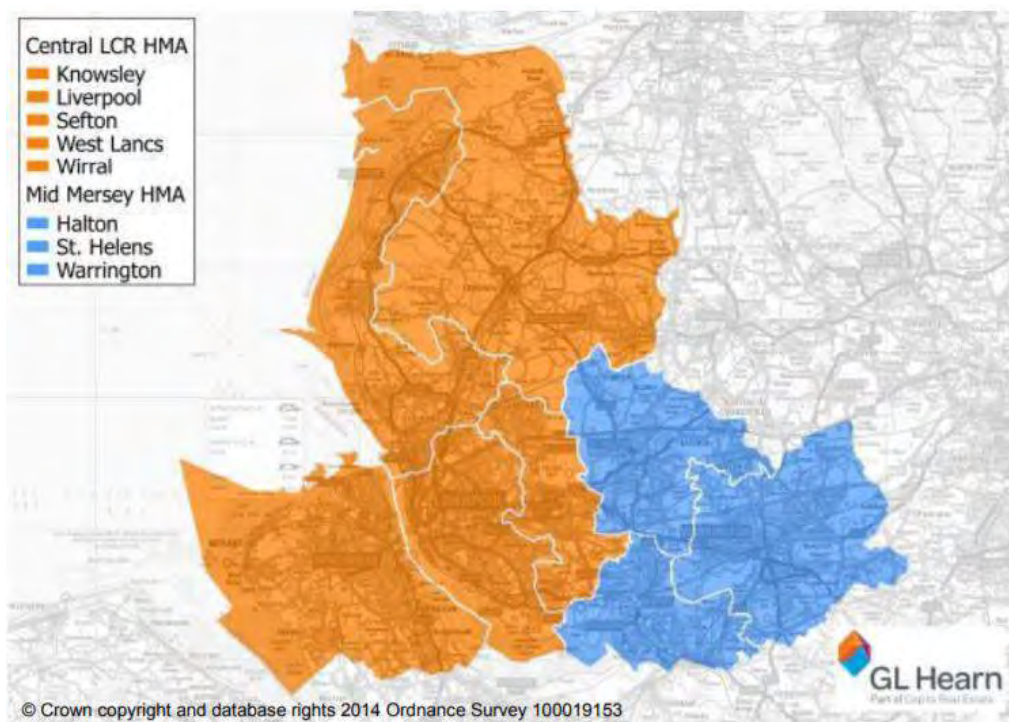
Figure 9.2 Housing tenure (2011 census)



9.11 Figure 9.2 illustrates that home ownership in Wirral is higher than regional and national averages. The private rental sector is broadly comparable to the national average but the social rented sector is notably lower than at both regional and national scale.

9.12 Wirral has strong functional linkages to other areas within the Liverpool City Region and beyond. Housing market geography is therefore complex, and a number of evidence base studies prepared by the individual authorities have produced slight variances when identifying housing market areas (HMAs) in the region. However, the 2017 LCR SHELMA includes a review of previous work on regional housing and economic geographies and locates Wirral within a ‘Central LCR’ HMA, along with Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, and West Lancashire (see Figure 9.3 below). This group of authorities are identified as having “a self-containment of around 90%”.<sup>44</sup> Within this HMA, Wirral is identified as having particularly strong flows to and from Liverpool.

Figure 9.3 Housing Market Areas in the wider Liverpool City Region<sup>45</sup>



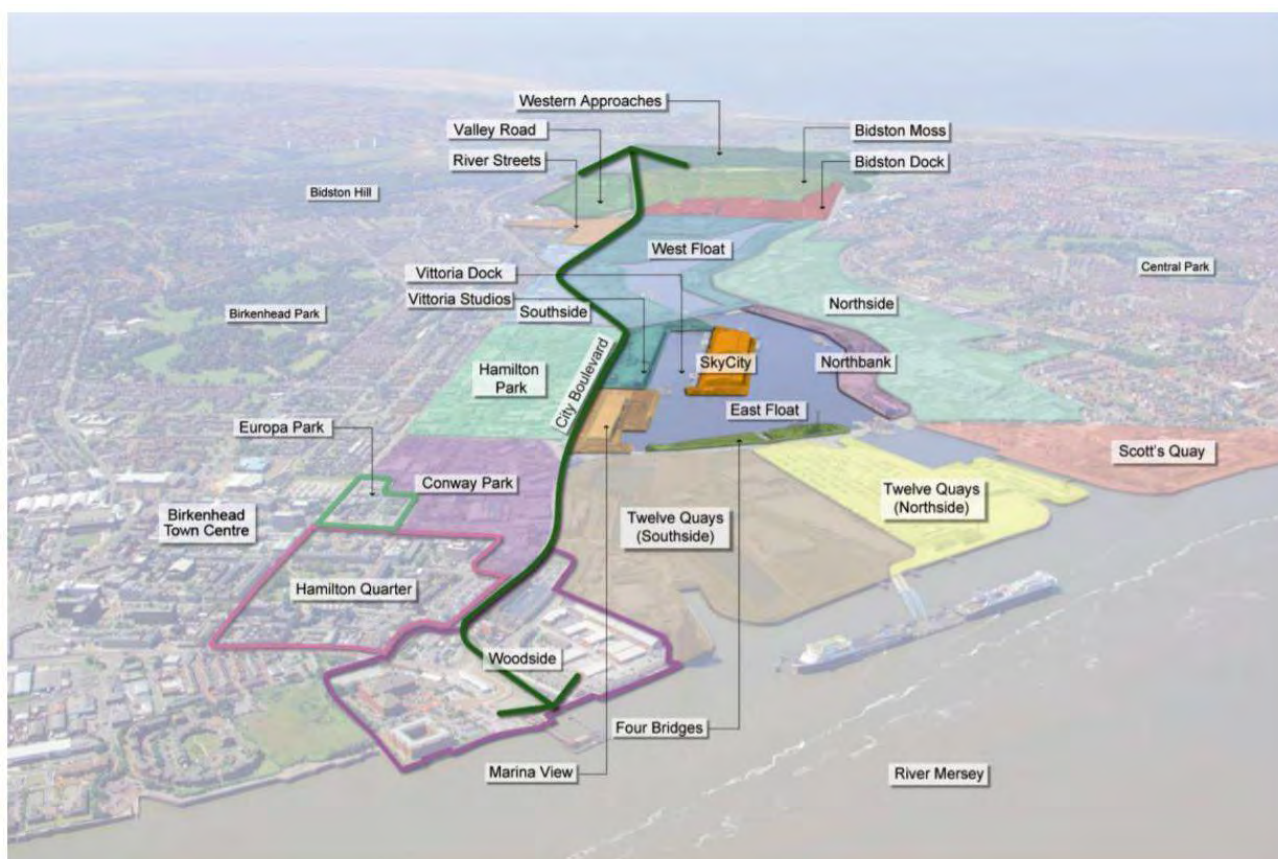
<sup>44</sup> GL Hearn (2017) ‘Liverpool City Region Strategic Housing & Employment Land Market Assessment (SHELMA) – consultation draft report’ [online], available from: [https://www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/SHELMA\\_Consultation.pdf](https://www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/SHELMA_Consultation.pdf)

<sup>45</sup> Ibid

## Future baseline

- 9.13 Significant policy and environmental constraints are likely to continue to heavily constrain housing land supply over time, particularly in terms of greenfield sites on the edges of settlements. A combination of very tightly drawn Green Belt boundaries and nationally and internationally significant biodiversity sites will naturally focus growth towards opportunities within the existing settlements, particularly in Birkenhead where the majority of housing completions are delivered. However, recent housing delivery rates suggest that there are simply not enough brownfield opportunities to meet housing need, and the gap between housing need and housing supply could increase over the plan period based on recent trends.
- 9.14 One notable exception to this is the nationally significant redevelopment opportunity at Wirral Waters, where over 13,000 dwellings have outline consent as part of a transformational mixed use scheme. The Wirral Waters site is therefore a very significant opportunity to dramatically boost housing supply in the Borough and realising its full potential over the plan period and beyond will likely be a key determinant in whether Wirral is able to meet its housing needs in full. However, the potential of the Wirral Waters scheme should be viewed in context. The November 2018 Planning Committee report on the Brownfield Land Annual Review notes that “as all matters are held in reserve, it has not been possible to identify a specific boundary for a minimum number of additional new housing units”<sup>46</sup> indicating just how early the project is in its delivery and the challenges involved in accurately forecasting phasing of delivery of such a complex scheme.

Figure 9.4 Aerial view of the Wirral Waters site showing different development opportunity areas<sup>47</sup>



<sup>46</sup> Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council (2018) Planning Committee Report November 2018 [online], available from: <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/sites/default/files/all/planning%20and%20building/Local%20plans%20and%20planning%20policy/Brownfield%20Register/2018/Planning%20Committee%20Report%20-%20Brownfield%20Land%20Register%20Review%2015-11-18.pdf>

<sup>47</sup> Wirral Waters Prospectus [online], available from: [https://www.merseyforest.org.uk/files/Setting\\_the\\_scene\\_for\\_Wirral\\_Waters\\_GI\\_Strategy.pdf](https://www.merseyforest.org.uk/files/Setting_the_scene_for_Wirral_Waters_GI_Strategy.pdf)

## Key issues and objectives

9.15 The following key issues emerge from the context baseline review:

- Wirral's 2016 SHMA identifies an Objectively Assessed Housing Need (OAHN) for the Borough of **between 875 dpa and 1,235 dpa**.
- The Government's proposed standardised methodology produces a housing need figure of **803 dpa** when using the 2014 household projection data, as per current guidance.
- The 2016/2017 Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) records an average delivery over the preceding five years of **383 dpa** meaning current rates of housing delivery will need to be significantly boosted to meet housing need.
- The SHMA indicates that current levels of affordable housing delivery are below need, though delivery in 2016/17 was policy compliant at 22% of overall housing delivery. Viability issues may suppress capacity to seek affordable housing at a more ambitious scale.
- The Wirral Waters regeneration offers a strategic long term opportunity for substantial brownfield housing delivery and 13,000 units have outline permission already.

9.16 In light of the key issues discussed above it is proposed that the SA framework should include the following objectives:

- Support timely delivery of an appropriate mix of housing types and tenures, including a focus on maximising the potential from strategic brownfield opportunities, to ensure delivery of good quality, affordable and specialist housing that meets the needs of Wirral's residents, including older people, people with disabilities and families with children.

# 10. Land and soils

## Context

### National

- 10.1 Key messages from the National Planning Policy Framework<sup>48</sup> (NPPF) include planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:
- protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils;
  - recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland.
  - Prevent new or existing development from being ‘adversely affected’ by the presence of ‘unacceptable levels’ of soil pollution or land instability and be willing to remediate and mitigate ‘despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate’.
  - Planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions. Strategic policies should set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously-developed or ‘brownfield’ land.
  - Encourage multiple benefits from both urban and rural land, including through mixed use schemes and taking opportunities to achieve net environmental gains.
  - Planning policies and decisions should ‘give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs’, and ‘promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings.’
  - Taking a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account the long-term implications for water supply.
  - Prevent new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of water pollution.
- 10.2 Since July 2017 the Government’s Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) requires Local Planning Authorities to publish a Brownfield Land Register, and review it at least once per annum, in order to identify all previously developed sites with potential for delivering new development. This is to help achieve maximum planning value and efficiency from available land, whilst avoiding unnecessary land take at greenfield sites.<sup>49</sup>
- 10.3 The Government’s 25 Year Environment Plan was published in 2018 and presents the ‘goals for improving the environment within a generation, and leaving it in a better state than we found it’.<sup>50</sup>
- 10.4 Safeguarding our Soils: A strategy for England<sup>51</sup> sets out a vision for soil use in England which includes better protection for agricultural soils, protecting stores of soil carbon, improving the resilience of soils to climate change and preventing soil pollution. The essential message in relation to development is that pressure on soils is likely to increase in line with development pressure and the planning system should seek to mitigate this.

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<sup>48</sup> MHCLG (2018) National Planning Policy Framework [online] available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/728643/Revised\\_NPPF\\_2018.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/728643/Revised_NPPF_2018.pdf) [accessed 03/08/18]

<sup>49</sup> MHCLG (2017) Guidance: Brownfield Land Registers [online], available from: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/brownfield-land-registers>

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan>

<sup>51</sup> Defra (2009) Safeguarding our Soils: A strategy for England [online] available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-our-soils-a-strategy-for-england> [last accessed 29/03/18]

## Regional

- 10.5 The Evidence Base for Minerals Planning in Merseyside – Final Report (2008) is not a minerals plan in itself, but it presents an evidence base “*to be used during the development of a minerals planning policy framework in Merseyside*”.<sup>52</sup> The report was prepared by Greater Manchester Geological Unit, and it identifies potentially viable mineral deposits along with potential constraints on the exploitation of these. It does not appear that either a regional or Borough-wide minerals plan has subsequently been prepared.

## Local

- 10.6 UDP Policy MIN2 (Safeguarding Mineral Reserves Strategic Policy) states that “*the local planning authority, where practical, will safeguard mineral reserves*”. However, the supporting text notes that “*mineral extraction is only of marginal importance within Wirral*”.
- 10.7 However, UDP Policy MIN1 (The Control of Clay Extraction) identifies that “*there are small reserves of winnable clay located at Carr Lane, Moreton*”, noting the importance of sensitive extraction as the reserves lie within the Green Belt and in close proximity to the Meols Meadow SSSI. The policy identifies 32ha of land at Carr Lane as an “identified reserve” though does not declare the area a Minerals Safeguarding Area (MSA).
- 10.8 UDP Policy MI4 (Sand, Gravel and Sandstone Extraction Policy) notes that there are small deposits of sand and gravel within the Borough, but “*all lie beneath best and most versatile agricultural land*” and therefore extraction of these deposits will not normally be allowed.

## Baseline

### Current baseline

- 10.9 The Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) classifies land into six grades (plus ‘non-agricultural’ and ‘urban’), where Grades 1 to 3a are recognised as being the ‘best and most versatile’ (BMV) land and Grades 3b to 5 are of poorer quality. The subdivision of Grade 3 into 3a and 3b has not been undertaken on a national scale, including within much of the Plan area, and Grade 3 land is therefore presumed to be best and most versatile unless and until evidence can be provided to demonstrate it is 3b, not 3a.
- 10.10 The ALC spatial data dates from 1988 and is of poor resolution, limiting its effectiveness at a detailed scale. However, it provides a high level indication of areas which are likely to support better or poorer quality land. It is anticipated that more detailed studies will be undertaken in due course on selected sites of significance to the emerging Local Plan.
- 10.11 A substantial proportion of Wirral is urbanised and therefore not agricultural, though much of the open space between settlements in the north, west and south of the Borough is in productive agricultural use. Small areas of Grade 2 land are present throughout the non-urban areas, with notable instances around Meols in the north, and around Thornton Hough and Raby in the south. The majority of the remaining undeveloped land in the Borough is recorded as Grade 3, though very little of this has been surveyed in detail to sub-divide into 3a (i.e. BMV land) and 3b (i.e. lower quality land). Small areas of poorer quality land are present in isolated instances, including Grade 4 land between West Kirby and Moreton in the north, and Grade 5 land at the Borough’s south west.
- 10.12 The 2008 Evidence Base for Minerals Planning identifies potential for a Minerals Safeguarding Area (MSA) in relation to clay deposits at Carr Lane, Moreton in the north of the Borough. The identified area includes the existing allocated minerals site. There are no other MSAs or winnable minerals deposits identified and no other minerals site allocations in the adopted Unitary Development Plan.
- 10.13 The Wirral Brownfield Land Register was most recently updated in December 2018. It identifies capacity for 900 new dwellings on previously developed site in the Borough which do not currently have planning permission, and capacity for a further 1,952 dwellings on sites with full or outline permission, or where permission is pending.

<sup>52</sup> Greater Manchester Geological Unit (2008), ‘The Evidence Base for Minerals Planning in Merseyside – Final Report’ [online], available from: <https://democracy.wirral.gov.uk/documents/s10524/MerseysideMineralsFinalv4260808.doc.pdf>

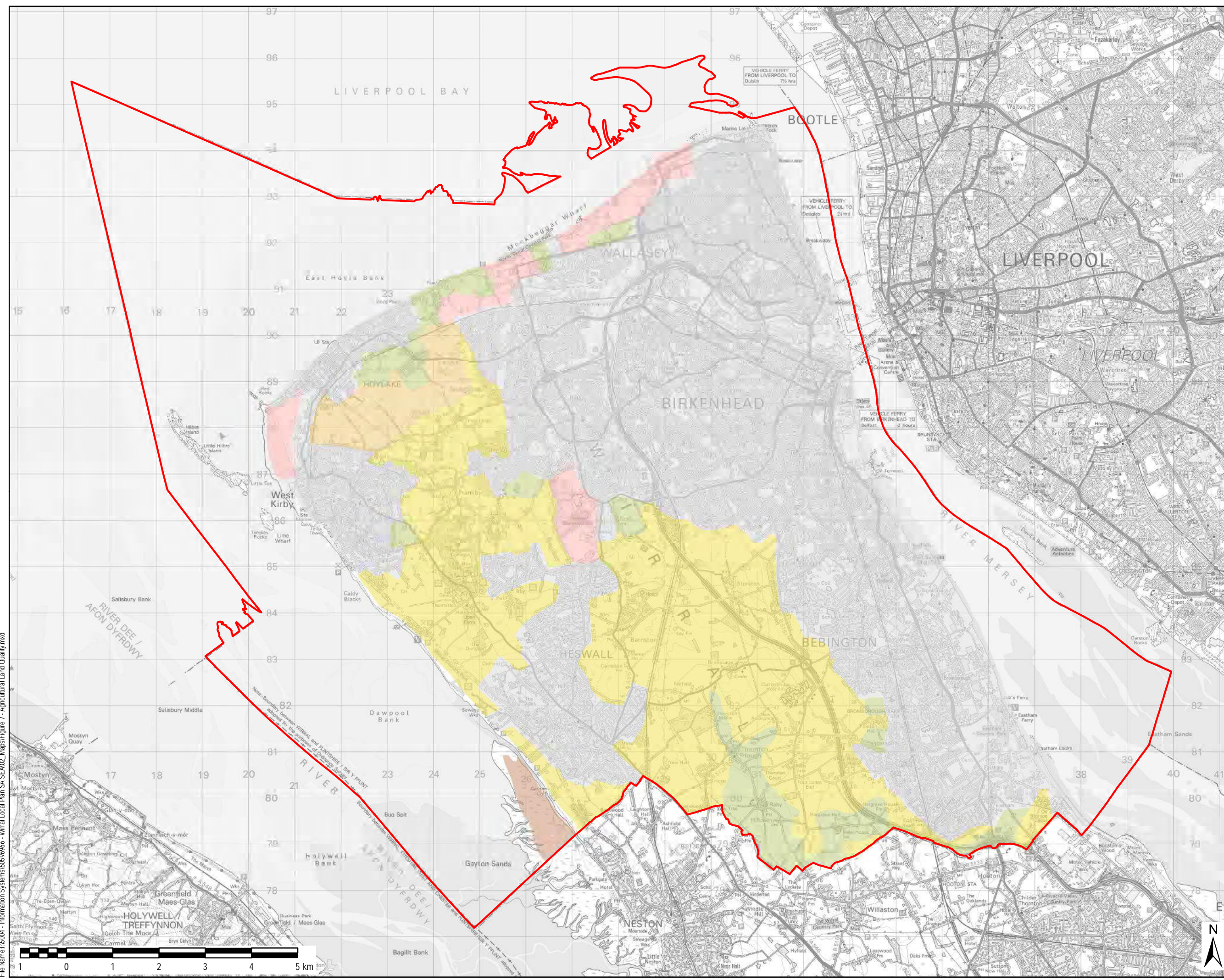
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**LEGEND**

- Wirral Borough Boundary

**Agricultural Land Classification**

- Grade 2
- Grade 3
- Grade 4
- Grade 5
- Non Agricultural
- Urban



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Purpose of Issue **DRAFT**

Client **WIRRAL BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Project Title  
**SCOPING REPORT FOR THE  
 SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL OF  
 THE WIRRAL LOCAL PLAN**

Drawing Title  
**AGRICULTURAL LAND QUALITY**

Drawn TD	Checked JW	Approved CM	Date 01/03/2019
AECOM Internal Project No. 60596966		Scale @ A3 1:75,000	

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## Future baseline

- 10.14 The widespread areas of Grade 3 agricultural land outside the main urban areas of the Borough means there is potential for future development to affect areas of BMV land, though areas of higher quality Grade 2 land are relatively limited and discrete. Localised survey work to differentiate between areas of Grade 3a and 3b could help ensure future development is directed away from areas of BMV land.
- 10.15 There are very few identified winnable minerals deposits within Wirral and the main potential for additional extraction is associated with the currently inactive operation at Carr Lane to the north of the Borough. Future development is therefore considered very unlikely to risk sterilisation of viable minerals deposits on the assumption that it is directed away from the existing identified minerals site at Carr Lane. Marine-won sand and gravel has previously been landed at port facilities at Birkenhead and Eastham.
- 10.16 Significant opportunities exist at brownfield sites within the Borough, and it is anticipated that these opportunities, particularly those with extant permission, will continue to come forward for development over the plan period. However, brownfield sites are a finite resource and there can be considerable challenges in bringing them forward, particularly in instances where sites require rehabilitation from prior uses such as heavy industry.

## Key issues and objectives

- 10.17 The following key issues emerge from the context baseline review:
- Land with potential to be 'best and most versatile' agricultural land is present across non-urban areas of the Borough including areas of Grade 2 and widespread areas of Grade 3, though this is largely not sub-divided into 3a and 3b. Development outside the existing urban areas is therefore likely to have potential to affect BMV land, though there could be potential to direct this away from areas of Grade 2.
  - There are opportunities to deliver some new development on brownfield sites within the Borough, though this is a finite resource and can be challenging to fully unlock.
  - There is very limited minerals-related activity within the Borough, and evidence suggests potentially winnable deposits are heavily constrained, aside from the existing Carrs Lane site.
- 10.18 In light of the key issues discussed above it is proposed that the SA framework should include the following objective:
- Promote the efficient and sustainable use of natural resources, including supporting development which avoids the best and most versatile agricultural land and development which makes effective use of previously developed land.

# 11. Landscape

## Context

### National

11.1 Key messages from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) include:

- Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty [...]. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads. The scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited.
- Strategic policies should set out an overall strategy making provision for 'conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure.
- Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments 'are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation of change (such as increased densities).
- Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:
  - a. protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils
  - b. recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland; and
  - c. remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.
- The government attaches great importance to Green Belts, whose fundamental aim is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The general extent of Green Belts is established and can only be altered in exceptional circumstances through preparation or review of a Local Plan.

11.2 National Character Area (NCA) Profiles are published by Natural England and divide England in 159 distinct natural areas based on their landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, historic, cultural and economic characteristics.<sup>53</sup> NCAs follow natural features in the landscape and are not aligned with administrative boundaries. NCA profiles describe the features which shape each of these landscapes, providing a broad context to its character.

11.3 The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan states the intention to work with relevant authorities to deliver environmental enhancements within all 159 NCAs across England.

### Local

11.4 The Wirral Landscape Character Assessment and Visual Appraisal (2009) provides an assessment of landscape character in the Borough intended to form part of the evidence base of the emerging development plan and to aid development management decisions. The document identifies five broad "*landscape character types*" within the Borough and further subdivides these into 13 "*landscape character areas*",<sup>54</sup> highlighting the diversity of landscapes in the Borough, the contrast between the coastal and non-coastal areas and the richness of the natural landscape.

<sup>53</sup> Natural England (2012) 'National Character Area profiles' [online], available from:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making>

<sup>54</sup> Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council and TEP (2009), 'Wirral Landscape Character Assessment and Visual Appraisal' [online], available from:

<https://democracy.wirral.gov.uk/documents/s10416/Wirral%20Landscape%20Character%20Assessment%20and%20Visual%20Appraisal.pdf>

- 11.5 The Development Options Review (2018) identifies 48 parcels and sub-parcels in the Green Belt for “further investigation” for potential release from the Green Belt, based on the findings of a technical Green Belt assessment exercise.

## Baseline

### Current baseline

- 11.6 Wirral is divided between two National Character Areas (NCAs) with the more urbanised eastern third of the Borough falling within the NCA 58 ‘Merseyside Conurbation’ character area and the remaining two thirds falling within the NCA 59 ‘Wirral’ character area. NCA profile 58 makes the notable observation that *“although the Merseyside Conurbation shares a peninsula with the Wirral NCA, it is physically separated from the pastoral landscape of the Wirral NCA by a dramatic sandstone ridge”* which *“provides a strongly contrasting setting for the two NCAs”*. The significance of the sandstone ridgeline in landscape character terms is also noted by NCA profile 59, though NCA 59 also identifies the additional severing effect of the M53 motorway which follows a similar alignment for much of its route through the Borough, further emphasising the separate character areas of the peninsula.
- 11.7 The Merseyside Conurbation NCA is characterised by its predominantly urban and suburban landscape, dense settlement pattern, large scale industry and its clear maritime heritage, though the notable natural feature of the Mersey Estuary and associated mudflats and coastal habitats injects natural influences into the urban landscape. The Wirral NCA is characterised by its rich pastoral landscape, natural coastal scenery, wooded sandstone ridges and the local distinctiveness of the peninsula’s settlements and villages.<sup>55</sup>
- 11.8 Although much of Wirral’s eastern third is urbanised in a largely contiguous built up area, much of the rest of the Borough is characterised by distinct settlements within a rural landscape, giving the gaps between these smaller settlements a key role in defining the Borough’s landscape character.
- 11.9 Currently, these gaps between settlements are protected by the Green Belt, which although a land use rather than a landscape designation, is an effective policy tool in maintaining characterful green spaces between the Borough’s smaller towns and villages.
- 11.10 Green Belt designation extends across 46.6% of the Borough, covering the overwhelming majority of non-urban land and ‘washing over’ a number of the Borough’s smaller settlements. In the context of the Development Options Review identifying 48 parcels and sub-parcels for potential release from the Green Belt it is important to note that Green Belt parcels which are found to be performing Green Belt objectives weakly or not at all may be appropriate to test for release through the preparation or review of a Local Plan<sup>56</sup>.
- 11.11 Although Wirral benefits from a variety of attractive natural landscapes, there are no Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) or National Parks within the Borough. The Borough is also sufficiently distant from any AONBs or National Parks as to be outside their setting or influence.

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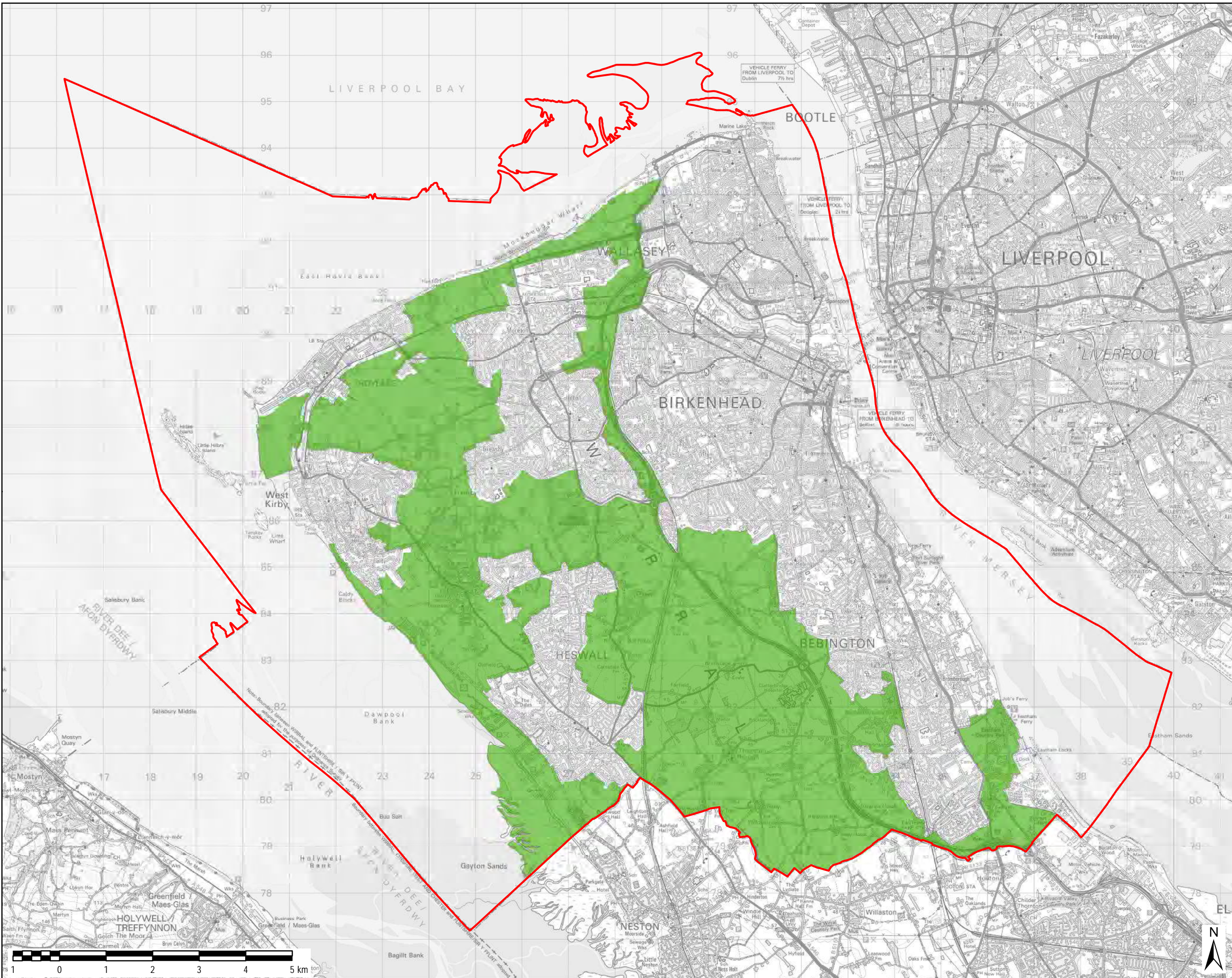
<sup>55</sup> Natural England (2014) ‘National Character Area profiles’ [online], available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making/national-character-area-profiles>

<sup>56</sup> As per Paragraph 136 of the NPPF.

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**LEGEND**

- Wirral Borough Boundary
- Green Belt



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Purpose of Issue  
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Client  
**WIRRAL BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Project Title  
**SCOPING REPORT FOR THE SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL OF THE WIRRAL LOCAL PLAN**

Drawing Title  
**GREEN BELT EXTENT**

Drawn TD	Checked JW	Approved CM	Date 28/02/2019
AECOM Internal Project No. 60596966		Scale @ A3 1:75,000	

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**FIGURE 11.1**

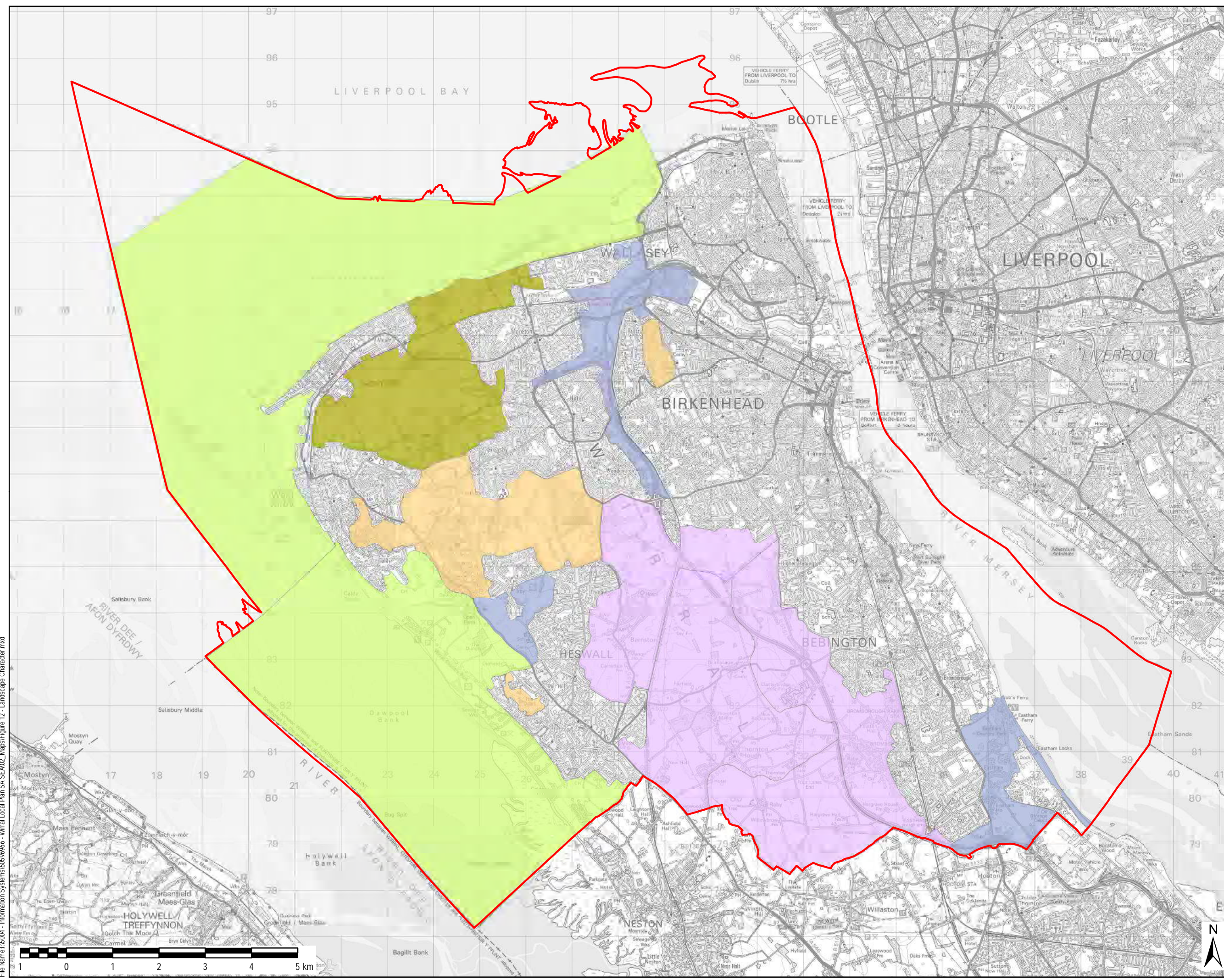
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**LEGEND**

- Wirral Borough Boundary
- Landscape Character Type**
- Coastal Farmland and Recreation
- Flat Floodplain Farmland
- Rural Farmland
- Sandstone Hills
- Urban Fringe



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Purpose of Issue **DRAFT**

Client **WIRRAL BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Project Title **SCOPING REPORT FOR THE SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL OF THE WIRRAL LOCAL PLAN**

Drawing Title **LANDSCAPE CHARACTER**

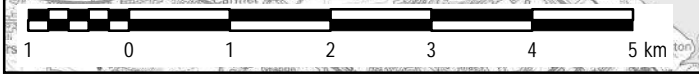
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Drawing Number **FIGURE 11.2** Rev

File Name: I:\5004 - Information Systems\60596966 - Wirral Local Plan SA SEA\02 - Maps\Figure 12 - Landscape Character.mxd



## Future baseline

11.12 New development within the Borough has the potential to lead to incremental changes in landscape quality in and around the Borough, particularly if located on greenfield sites at the edges of settlements. This could include the loss of landscape features, visual impact on existing features and the potential for incremental coalescence between settlements, though this would likely require some Green Belt release. There is recent precedent within the wider region for this, with Sefton Borough Council releasing 6% of its Green Belt and Cheshire East releasing 2.5% of its Green Belt in 2017/18. The relatively scarce supply of housing land in the Borough could potentially necessitate consideration of the release of weakly performing Green Belt parcels as a means of unlocking additional land supply. This could have associated effects on the landscape character through the potential erosion of gaps between settlements.

11.13 There could also be potential for new development to impact landscape quality in the vicinity of the road network, either via increased traffic flows impinging on tranquility or through works needed to add additional capacity to the road network.

## Key issues and objectives

11.14 The following key issues emerge from the context baseline review:

- A significant proportion of the Borough, over 46%, falls within the Green Belt, including the majority of non-urban land and a number of smaller settlements.
- There are no Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty within or near to the Borough.
- The Borough is split between two distinct National Character Areas, the Wirral NCA and the Merseyside Conurbation NCA.
- There is considerable diversity of localised character in the Borough with 13 landscape character areas identified by the 2009 Wirral Landscape Character Assessment and Visual Appraisal.

11.15 In light of the key issues discussed above it is proposed that the SA framework should include the following objectives:

- Protect and enhance the character, quality and diversity of the Borough's landscapes and townscapes through appropriate design and layout of new development, including the preservation of important open gaps between settlements, mindful of the need to make careful choices about Green Belt release.

# 12. Population and Communities

## Context

### National

- 12.1 Key messages from the National Planning Policy Framework<sup>57</sup> (NPPF) include that planning policies should:
- Provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship, whilst guarding against the unnecessary loss of community facilities and services.
  - Retain and develop accessible local services and community facilities in rural areas.
  - Ensure that developments create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion. Places should contain clear and legible pedestrian routes, and high quality public spaces, which encourage the active and continual use of public areas.
  - Enable and support health lifestyles through provision of green infrastructure, sports facilities, local shops, access to healthier food, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling.
  - Ensure that there is a 'sufficient choice of school places' and taking a 'proactive, positive and collaborative approach' to bringing forward 'development that will widen choice in education'.

### Regional

- 12.2 The Liverpool City Region and Warrington Green Infrastructure Framework (2013) provides an evidence base of the regional green infrastructure network to inform land use planning and development management decision making. The Framework "*advocates for green infrastructure to be planned and managed as a critical infrastructure that can and should be used to help tackle priority issues*".<sup>58</sup>

### Local

- 12.3 The Wirral Plan: a 2020 Vision (2015) is a non-statutory document which presents 20 'pledges' to achieve over a five-year period, with a key theme of protecting the most vulnerable in the Borough. To achieve this aim, the Plan seeks to ensure that:
- Older people in the Borough live well and feel valued
  - Children are equipped with the social and emotional skills to be ready for school
  - Young people are equipped with an education that adequately prepares them for work and adulthood
  - Vulnerable children reach their full potential
  - Child and family poverty is reduced
  - People with disabilities have the opportunity to live independently
  - A zero tolerance approach to domestic violence is embedded

---

<sup>57</sup> MHCLG (2018) National Planning Policy Framework [online] available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/728643/Revised\\_NPPF\\_2018.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/728643/Revised_NPPF_2018.pdf) [accessed 03/08/18]

<sup>58</sup> Mersey Forest (2013) Liverpool City Region Green Infrastructure Framework [online], available from: [https://www.merseyforest.org.uk/Technical\\_document.pdf](https://www.merseyforest.org.uk/Technical_document.pdf)

## Baseline

### Current baseline

12.4 Census data provides an important statistical baseline for understanding a population, presented below:

#### Population

*Table 12.1 Population growth 2001-2011*

Date	Wirral	North-West	England
2001	312,293	6,729,764	49,138,831
2011	319,783	7,052,177	53,012,456
Population Change 2001-2011	2.4%	4.8%	7.9%

12.5 At the 2011 census the population in the Wirral was 319,783, an increase of 7,490 people or 2.4% since 2001 (see Table 12.1) or a compound annual growth rate of 0.24% per annum. This rate of growth is significantly lower than that of the North West region (4.8%) or for England as a whole (7.9%).

*Table 12.2 Age structure (2001 census)*

Age Group	Wirral	North-West	England
0-15	20.6%	20.7%	20.1%
16-24	9.7%	11%	10.9%
25-44	26.4%	28.3%	29.3%
45-59	19.9%	19%	18.9%
60+	23.4%	21%	20.8%
Total population	312,293	6,729,764	49,138,831

*Table 12.3 Age Structure (2011 census)*

Age Group	Wirral	North-West	England
0-15	18.6%	18.8%	18.9%
16-24	10.6%	12.8%	11.9%
25-44	24.1%	26.4%	27.5%
45-59	21%	19.8%	19.4%
60+	25.7%	22.8%	22.3%
Total population	319,783	7,052,177	53,012,456

*Table 12.4 Age Structure (2016 mid-year estimate)*

Age Group	Wirral	North-West	England
0-15	18.7%	19%	18.0%
16-24	9.3%	11%	12.2%
25-44	23.1%	25%	26.5%
45-59	21.5%	21%	20.1%
60+	27.4%	24%	23.2%
Total population	322,900	8,640,700	55,268,100



12.6 Tables 12.2, 12.3 and 12.4 reveal some notable differences between the age structure of Wirral and that of the wider North West region and England as a whole. Significantly, though it is evident that there are signs of an aging population at all scales, the proportion of the Borough's population over the age of 60 was 27.4% at the 2016 mid-year estimate was notably high, 3.5% points higher than at regional level and 4% points higher than nationally.

*Table 12.5 Wirral population change 2011 – 2016*

Age group	2011 population (census data)	2016 population (mid-year estimate)	% change 2011-2016
0-15	59,285	60,300	+1.7%
16-24	33,843	30,000	-11.4%
25-44	76,931	74,300	-3.4%
45-59	67,018	69,500	+3.7%
60+	82,706	88,800	+7.4%
Total Population	319,783	322,900	+0.9%

12.7 Signs of an aging population in the Borough are again clear from the population change between the 2011 census and the 2016 mid-year population estimate. Table 12.5 shows that the 2016 mid-year estimate released by the ONS indicates the rate of population growth in Wirral has slowed, with annual growth rate to an almost-static 0.16% pa overall, though with a sharp 7.4% rise in the proportion of over 60s and a steep 11.4% fall in the proportion of 16-24 year olds.

12.8 An aging population presents challenges, such as ensuring sufficient provision of care and a shrinking economically active base, but also opportunities to better engage the knowledge and experience of older people.

## Household Deprivation

12.9 Census statistics measure deprivation across four 'dimensions' of deprivation, summarised below:

- Employment: Any person in the household (not a full-time student) that is either unemployed or long-term sick.
- Education: No person in the household has at least a level 2 qualification and no person aged 16-18 is a full-time student.
- Health and disability: Any person in the household that has generally 'bad' or 'very bad' health, or has a long term health problem.
- Housing: The household accommodation is either overcrowded (with an occupancy rating of -1 or less), in a shared dwelling or has no central heating.

*Table 12.6 Relative household deprivation dimensions (2011)*

	Wirral	North-West	England
Household not deprived	40.2%	40.5%	42.5%
Deprived in 1 dimension	31.7%	31.7%	32.7%
Deprived in 2 dimensions	21.1%	20.8%	19.1%
Deprived in 3 dimensions	6.4%	6.4%	5.1%
Deprived in 4 dimensions	0.5%	0.6%	0.5%

12.10 Table 12.6 illustrates that the Wirral has marginally higher proportions of deprivation overall when compared to England as a whole, but is broadly aligned with the North-West region. However, these headline figures conceal the fact that there are considerable contrasts within the Borough, where much of the most significant deprivation is concentrated at Birkenhead in the north east, whilst some of the eastern communities are among the least deprived in the country. (see map in Figure 12.1 below).

### Access to services and facilities

12.11 Figure 12.2 (also below) illustrates that there is a broad distribution of community facilities across the Borough, though spatial data alone is only part of the overall picture and does not show differences in quality, safety (or perception of safety) or cultural barriers to accessibility.

12.12 There are clear synergies between access to services, captured here, and the SEA themes of Health and of Transport, as a lack of green infrastructure or a poor public transport offer will have flow on effects on residents' ability to access key services.

12.13 In this context, it is noted that the main population centres of the Borough, and therefore the key services and facilities, are relatively well connected by public transport, particularly train. Equally, public transport connectivity with the higher tier service centre of Liverpool is strong, meaning facilities to meet needs which cannot easily be met within the Borough can potentially be accessed relatively easily by public transport.

12.14 The green infrastructure network in the Borough is mixed. There is good recreational provision in relation long distance cycle and walking routes, and notable leisure assets including four bathing beaches, world class golf courses and a network of urban parks and gardens. However, green infrastructure connectivity within and between built areas, particularly deprived areas, such as those in Birkenhead, appears mixed. The Liverpool City Region Green Infrastructure Framework identifies the Wirral Waters redevelopment scheme as a key opportunity for introducing new green infrastructure to Wirral to better link existing communities with key services at Birkenhead in particular, and to integrate the new development Waters into the existing community.

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**LEGEND**

- Wirral Borough Boundary

**Indices of Multiple Deprivation**

- 0 - 20% (Most Deprived)
- 20 - 40%
- 40 - 60%
- 60 - 80%
- 80 - 100% (Least Deprived)

**Note:**  
The IMD rankings displayed are based on the national rankings.

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**Client**  
WIRRAL BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Project Title**  
SCOPING REPORT FOR THE SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL OF THE WIRRAL LOCAL PLAN

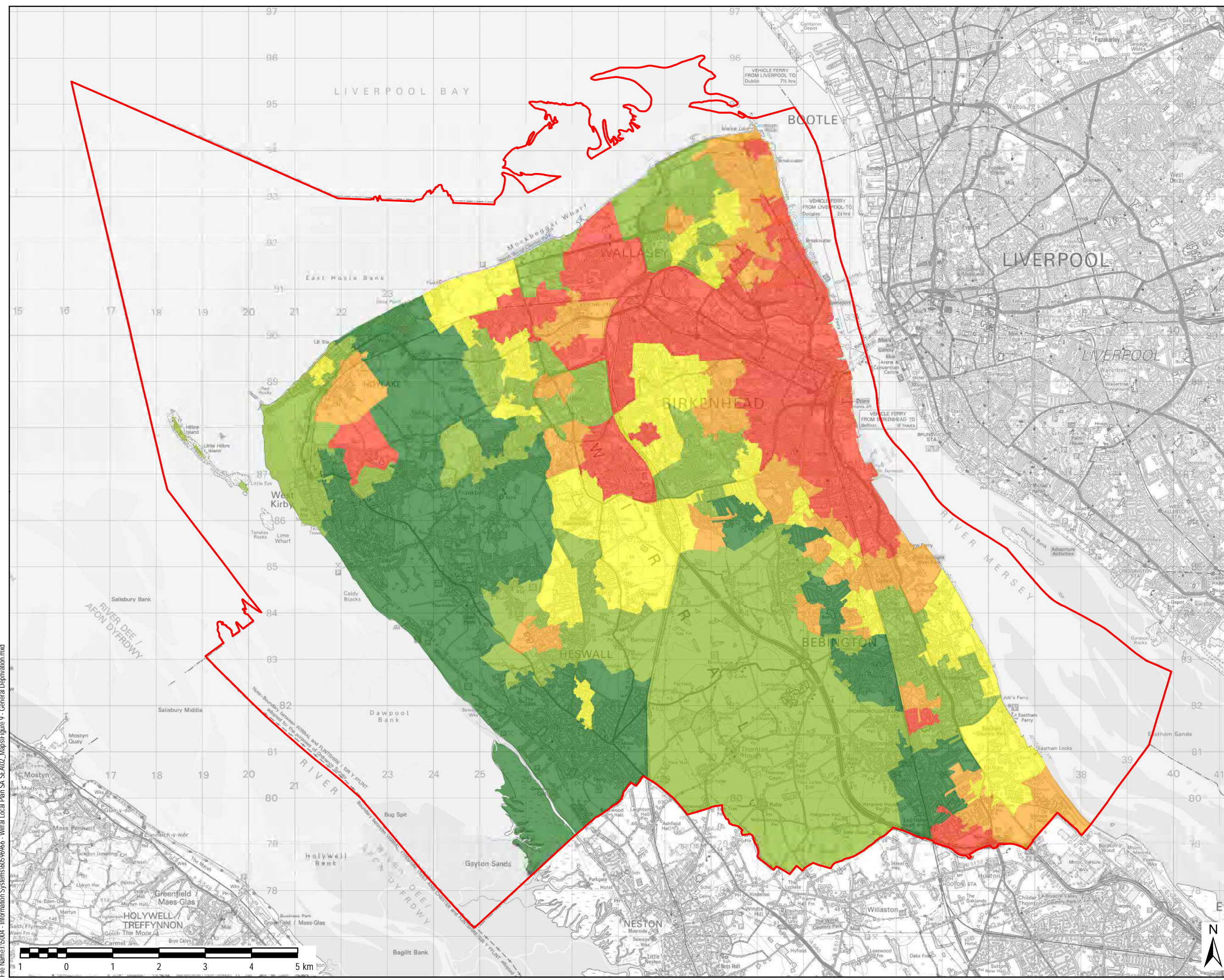
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GENERAL DEPRIVATION

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FIGURE 12.1



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**LEGEND**

- Wirral Borough Boundary
- GP
- ▲ Primary School
- ▲ Secondary School
- ▲ Special School
- Leisure Centre
- Allotments
- Amenity Green Space
- Cemeteries and Churchyards
- Golf Course
- Natural and Semi Natural Green Space
- Outdoor Sports Facilities
- Parks and Gardens
- Provision for Children and Young People
- Town/Local Centre

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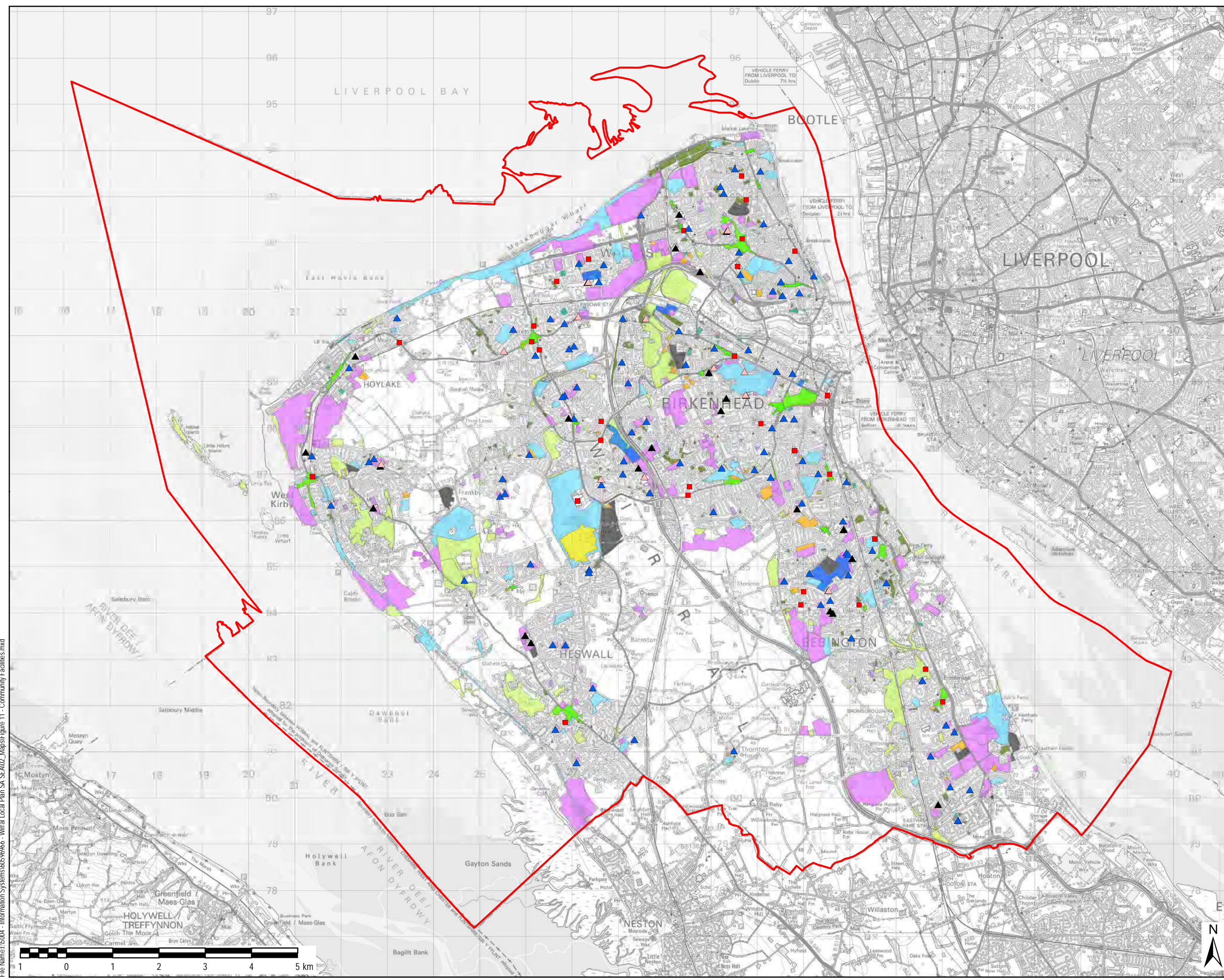
Drawing Title **COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

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Drawing Number **FIGURE 12.2**



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## Future baseline

- 12.15 The slowing rate of overall population growth has been sustained since at least 2001 and growth between 2011 and 2016 averaged 0.16% per annum. There could be a risk that overall growth becomes negative over the plan period should this trend continue, though planned regeneration and development schemes within the Borough may help stimulate population growth via internal and external migration.
- 12.16 The Borough's aging population is likely to continue given the sharp increase in the proportion of residents over the age of 60 since 2001. This will bring challenges associated with meeting the specialist needs of increasing numbers of elderly people, though there will also be opportunities to harness the knowledge and experience of older people through development which facilitates mixed-generational living.
- 12.17 Parts of the Borough experience significant and sustained deprivation, with multi-generational deprivation likely having been entrenched over time. There are significant challenges associated with addressing entrenched deprivation, but planned growth could also bring opportunities to lever-in investment which enhances existing infrastructure and services, enhances internal linkages and those with surrounding areas, and encourages opportunities for healthy lifestyle choices to be designed-in to new development.

## Key issues and objectives

12.18 The following key issues emerge from the context and baseline review:

- There are areas of both notable affluence and entrenched deprivation within the Borough, creating a complex and nuanced range of community needs.
- The Borough's aging population could mean that certain existing services and facilities, such as social care, will be placed under additional pressure over the plan period and it will be important that opportunities to enhance community service infrastructure through future development are fully realised.

12.19 In light of these key issues it is proposed that the SA framework should include the following objectives:

- Support good access to existing and planned community infrastructure, including green infrastructure, for new and existing residents, mindful of the potential for community needs to change over time.
- Improve perceptions of safety and fear of crime and to help remove barriers to activities and reduce social isolation.

# 13. Transport

## Context

### National

13.1 Key messages from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) include:

- Transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals, so that:
  - a. The potential impacts of development on transport networks can be addressed
  - b. Opportunities from existing or proposed transport infrastructure, and changing transport technology and usage, are realised
  - c. Opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use are identified and pursued
  - d. The environmental impacts of traffic and transport infrastructure can be identified, assessed and taken into account
  - e. Patterns of movement, streets, parking and other transport considerations are integral to the design of schemes, and contribute to making high quality places.
- Significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. This can help to reduce congestion and emissions, and improve air quality and public health. However, opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be taken into account in both plan-making and decision-making.

### Regional

13.2 The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority: A Transport Plan for Growth (2015)<sup>59</sup> sets out “*a strategic direction for transport which supports growth, regeneration and carbon reduction*” in the region. The Plan notes the central role that transport plays in unlocking economic growth, and identifies that delivering the necessary infrastructure to enable economic development at Wirral Waters is a regional transport priority. The Plan effectively absorbs the previously separate Transport Plans for Merseyside and Halton (both adopted 2011) as these were prepared prior to the establishment of the LCR Combined Authority which became the single transport authority for the region.

### Local

13.3 The Wirral Growth Plan (2016) recognises the critical nature of “efficient, well maintained and accessible transport networks” to the economy and to ensuring residents can meet their needs. No specific capacity problems are identified on the transport network, though the Plan notes that there is “*limited capacity of existing older infrastructure*” and therefore development “*will need to be carefully co-ordinated in line with the capacity of local infrastructure*”, particularly in the key A41 corridor.<sup>60</sup>

13.4 The Strategic Regeneration Framework (2017) presents a more detailed summary of transport capacity, noting that “*the A41 carries significant volumes of traffic and capacity issues are forecast by 2024*”.<sup>61</sup> The Framework states that in response to this a number of schemes are planned to improve capacity at several junctions, reducing congestion and improving reliability of journey times. These schemes include enhancing the A41/Green Lane roundabout and, notably, improving bus, cycle and pedestrian routes along the A4.

<sup>59</sup> Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (2015) ‘A Transport Plan for Growth’ [online], available from: <https://www.merseytravel.gov.uk/about-us/local-transport-delivery/Documents/8375%20Plan%20for%20growth%20WEB%20FINAL.pdf>

<sup>60</sup> Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council (2016) ‘Wirral Growth Plan’ [online], available from: <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/sites/default/files/all/About%20the%20council/Wirral%20Plan/Wirral%20Growth%20Plan.pdf>

<sup>61</sup> Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council (2017) ‘Strategic Regeneration Framework’ [online], available from: <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/sites/default/files/all/business/Regeneration/Strategic%20Regeneration%20main%20report.pdf>

## Baseline

### Current baseline

#### Strategic road network

13.5 The Borough is well connected to the Strategic Road Network (SRN). The key artery is the M53, which has five junctions in Wirral as it runs through key eastern settlements. The M53 connects with the M56 at Ellesmere Port, south of the Borough, whilst in the north of Wirral it flows into the A59 at Wallesey where the road continues into the Kingsway tunnel under the Mersey. This provides onwards connectivity via the SRN to Liverpool and the rest of the Liverpool City Region, whilst the connection with the M56 south of the Borough links with eastern Merseyside and Greater Manchester. In the Borough's west the A540 is the principle artery, running from Hoylake in the north west through all key western settlements and on to Chester to the south. East-west road connectivity within the borough is generally via the local road network, and there is a number of these more minor routes which criss-cross the peninsula.

#### Rail network

13.6 Wirral is connected to the national rail network via local services to Liverpool Lime Street, which is less than ten minutes from Birkenhead Central, and Chester. Travel time from Liverpool Lime Street to Manchester is about 35 minutes, to Birmingham is around 1 hour 45 minutes and to London is around 2 hours 15 minutes.

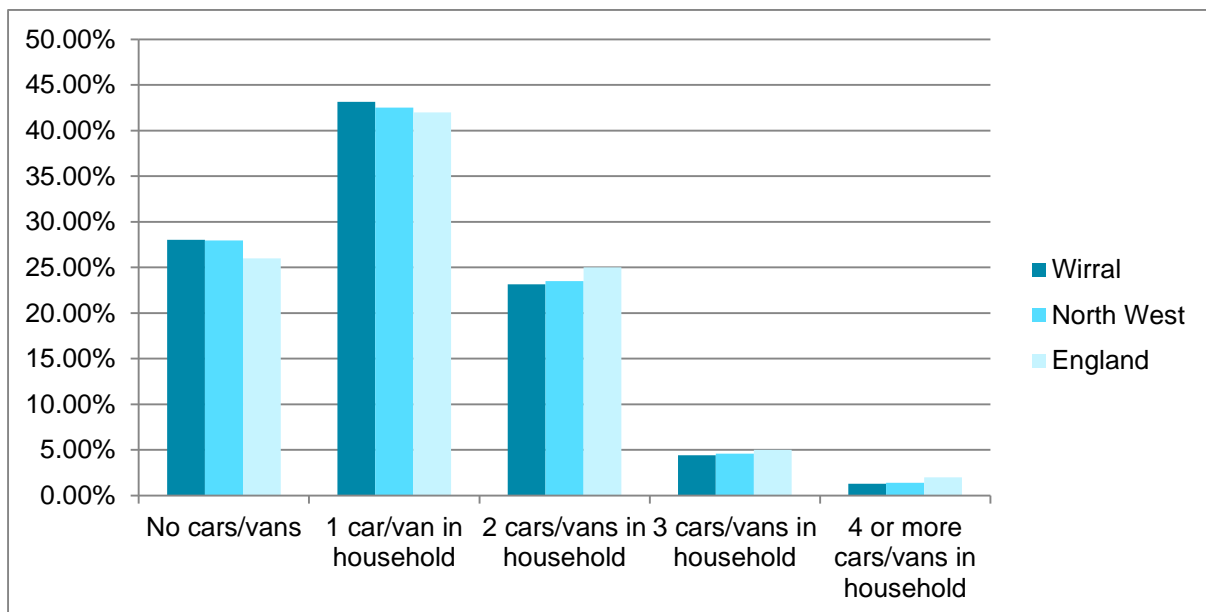
13.7 Wirral also has an extensive local rail network providing strong internal connectivity between the Borough's settlements, and external links to central Liverpool, north Wales and Cheshire. There are 25 stations in the Borough, 23 of which are served by Merseyrail via the Chester and Ellesmere Port branch line and West Kirby branch line. The remaining two stations, Upton and Heswall, are on the Borderlands branch line to Wrexham and are served by Transport for Wales.

#### Walking and cycling network

13.8 National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 56 is a 44 mile cycle route between Chester and Liverpool via the Wirral peninsula. Much of its route through the Borough is traffic-free, as it utilises a former railway line and the coastal path at points. The Wirral Way is a section of this route from West Kirby to Chester and is entirely traffic-free. The Wirral Way is also a picturesque coastal walking path.

#### Car and van availability

Figure 13.1 Car and van ownership<sup>62</sup>

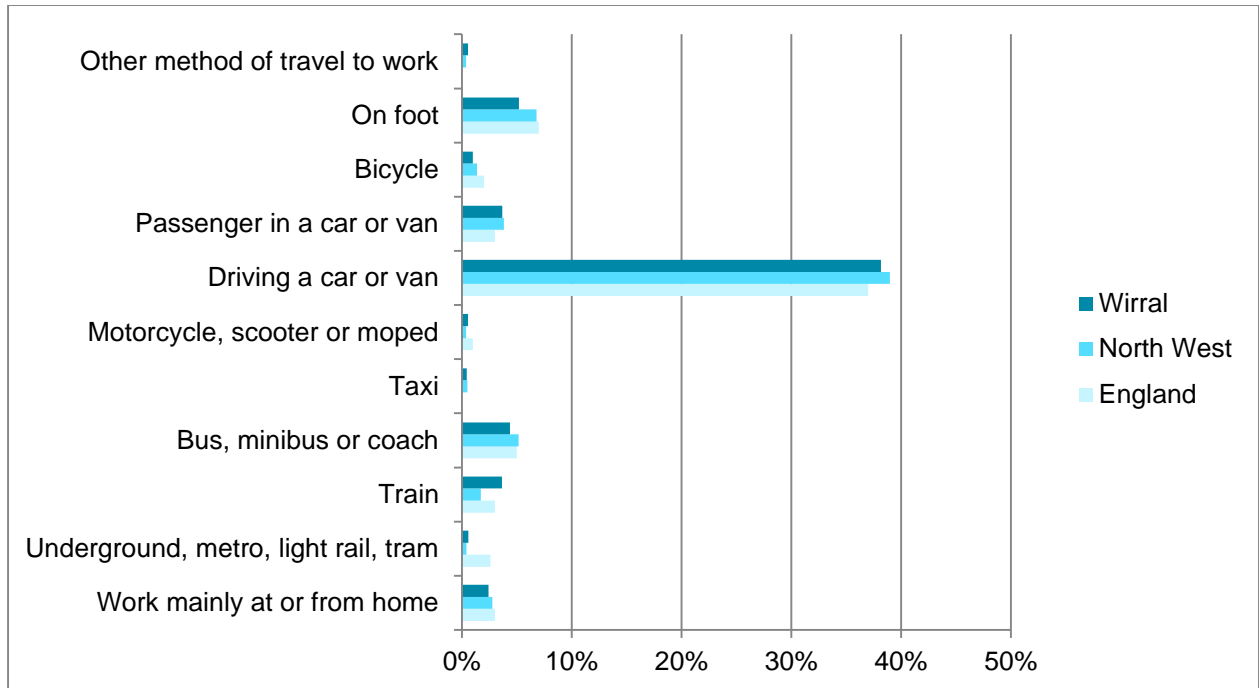


13.9 Figure 13.1 shows that at 28% the proportion of households in Wirral with no access to a car or van is aligned with the wider South East region, though higher than England as a whole (26%). Car ownership

<sup>62</sup> ONS (2011), Census 2011: 'Car or Van Availability 2011', (Table QS416EW)

overall in the Borough is therefore slightly lower than the national average, with multiple car ownership several percentage points lower than the national average. This may partly reflect Wirral's good public transport links, though is also consistent with the understanding that there are areas of significant deprivation within the Borough.

Figure 13.2 Method of travel to work<sup>63</sup>



13.10 A notable aspect of Wirral's travel to work data is that a significantly higher proportion of residents commute by train than elsewhere in the North West region, supporting the notion that train travel in the Borough is a viable alternative to driving for some commuters. Correspondingly, commuting by car or van is lower than the regional average, though remains higher than England as a whole. However, it is evident that driving remains by far the most popular method of travelling to work, at 38%. Bus travel is low, with notably fewer users than at regional and national level. Commuting by walking and cycling are also low in relation to the North West and England as a whole.

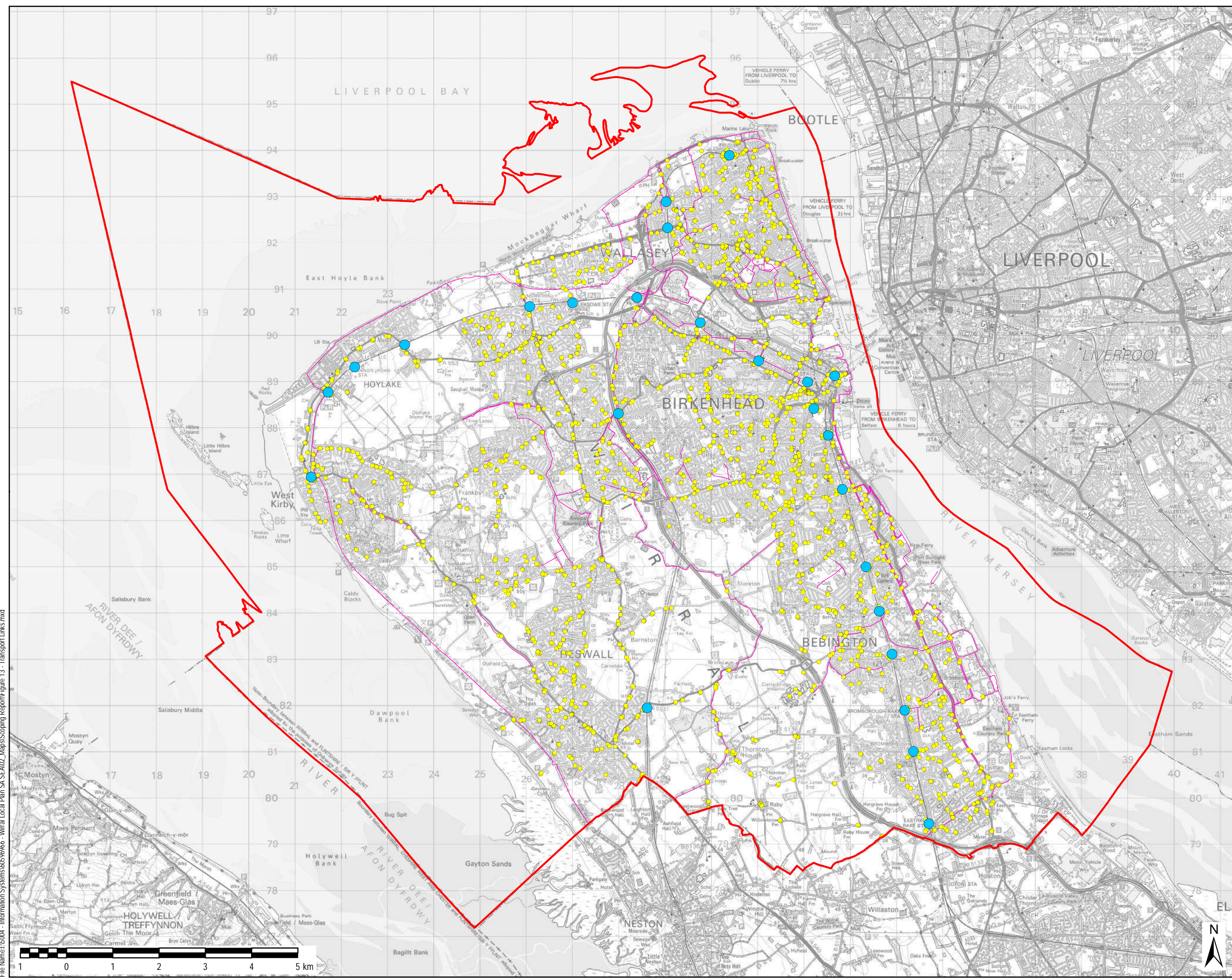
13.11 The 2016/17 Wirral Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) records that 98% of gross housing completions in 2016/17 were within 400m of a high frequency public transport service.

<sup>63</sup> ONS (2011), Census 2011: 'Method of Travel to Work 2011' (Table QS701EW)



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- LEGEND**
- Wirral Borough Boundary
  - Bus Stop
  - Train Station
  - Cycle Route



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Project Title **SCOPING REPORT FOR THE SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL OF THE WIRRAL LOCAL PLAN**

Drawing Title **TRANSPORT LINKS**

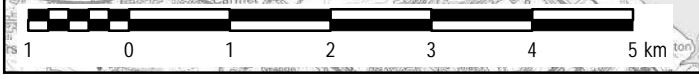
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Drawing Number **FIGURE 13.3**

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## Future baseline

- 13.12 The transport corridor formed by the M53, A41 and the Chester and Ellesmere Port branch line offers a natural focus for growth but projected capacity issues on the road network could constrain growth without enhancement over time.
- 13.13 Travel by train is likely to remain relatively popular given the strong links to local and regional employment hubs, there is a notably poor take up of other forms of sustainable transport and this is likely to continue without intervention.
- 13.14 However, there could be opportunities for future development to better integrate with sustainable transport networks by facilitating more travel to work by walking and cycling, through focussed infrastructure improvements. There could be scope to reduce dependence on car travel as a means of accessing work by enhancing the currently low levels of bus commuting in the Borough and building on the existing take up of train travel.

## Key issues and objectives

13.15 The following key issues emerge from the context baseline review:

- Around 72% of the population own a private vehicle and cars and vans represent the most popular travel to work method at around 38%. The next most popular method is by foot at just 5%, suggesting a relatively high level of car-dependency.
- Wirral has good internal and external connectivity to transport networks, and there is a clear transport corridor at the east of the Borough along the alignment of the M53, A41 and railway line.
- This corridor is already home to a concentration of services, employment and infrastructure and will likely provide some of the most sustainable locations for growth, though there could be a risk of pushing the existing infrastructure over capacity without enhancement where necessary.
- The A540 corridor could have potential to provide a focus for more limited growth in the west of the Borough. There is limited strategic east-west connectivity within the Borough.
- No significant or long standing congestion issues emerge in relation to the M53, though increasing traffic levels in the key A41 corridor are expected in result in issues over the plan period without intervention. A number of schemes are anticipated to come forward in response to this.
- The Borough's rail network is good and train travel represents a much higher proportion of travel to work than elsewhere in the North West. Despite this it remains a low proportion of people's travel choices overall, suggesting there could be opportunities to unlock further growth in sustainable travel to work.

13.16 In light of the key issues discussed above it is proposed that the SA framework should include the following objectives:

- Ensure that the provision of infrastructure is managed and delivered to meet local population and demographic change whilst helping to reduce congestion and travel times. This includes providing infrastructure that maximises accessibility for all and connects new housing developments to the public realm, including key services.

# 14. Water resources

## Context

### National

- 14.1 NPPF Key messages from the National Planning Policy Framework<sup>64</sup> (NPPF) include that Local Plans should:
- Take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account the long-term implications for water supply.
- 14.2 The Water Framework Directive (2000) requires a management plan to be prepared for water catchment areas to inform planning and help meet objectives and obligations in areas such as water efficiency and sustainable drainage.
- 14.3 The Water White Paper 2011<sup>65</sup> sets out the Government's vision for a more resilient water sector. It states the measures that will be taken to tackle issues such as poorly performing ecosystems, and the combined impacts of climate change and population growth on stressed water resources.

### Regional

- 14.4 Water Resource Management Plans (WRMP) are prepared by water companies to ensure supply continues to meet demand into the future, even under water stressed conditions. WRMPs cover 25-year planning periods to ensure that long term needs, trends and changes are considered appropriately at a strategic level. Wirral is covered by the United Utilities WRMP 2015–2040 and is located within the United Utilities Integrated Water Resource Zone (WRZ).
- 14.5 Wirral, Liverpool and Mersey Heartlands Water Cycle Study (2014)<sup>66</sup> explores projected impacts on water quality and water resources at a regional level, based on project growth as at 2014. The report builds on the earlier Wirral-specific Water Cycle Study outlined below.

### Local

- 14.6 The Wirral Water Cycle Study - Outline Study (2013)<sup>67</sup> identifies potential impacts of projected growth on water resources which serve the Borough, along with recommendations for potential mitigation.

### Current baseline

- 14.7 The River Mersey and The Dee represent the most significant watercourses in the Borough, bordering the Plan Area to the east and west respectively. A network of smaller rivers provides five main additional watercourses of varying degrees of significance. These include the River Birket, River Fender and Dibbinsdale Brook. Two of these watercourses are classed as “heavily modified”, and one as natural. The Wirral Operational Catchment comprises 42km of river in total.
- 14.8 The 2013 Wirral Water Cycle Study includes the finding that:

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<sup>64</sup> MHCLG (2018) National Planning Policy Framework [online] available from: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/728643/Revised\\_NPPF\\_2018.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/728643/Revised_NPPF_2018.pdf) [accessed 03/08/18]

<sup>65</sup> Defra (2011) Water for life (The Water White Paper) [online] available from: <http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm82/8230/8230.pdf> [last accessed 09/02/18]

<sup>66</sup> URS (2014), Mersey Heartlands Water Cycle Study [online], available from: <https://democracy.wirral.gov.uk/documents/s50016954/Appendix%204%20-%20Mersey%20Heartlands%20Water%20Cycle%20Study%20Outline%20Study%20-%20Main%20Planning%20Report.pdf>

<sup>67</sup> URS (2013), 'Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council Water Cycle Study' [online], available from: <https://democracy.wirral.gov.uk/documents/s50016952/Appendix%202%20-%20Wirral%20Council%20Water%20Cycle%20Study%20Outline%20Study%20Main%20-%20Planning%20Report.pdf>

*“The sandstone aquifer underlying most of the Wirral is at its limit of available resources without causing adverse impact on rivers and ecosystems that rely on it; hence further abstraction from this resource is unlikely in the future”,*

and consequently, that it will be:

*“...prudent to promote higher levels of water efficiency in new homes and commercial buildings to reduce water demand and achieve sustainable water supply”.*

14.9 The Borough’s potable water is supplied by United Utilities and is within the Integrated Water Resource Zone, the largest WRZ supplied by United Utilities.

14.10 The Borough is partially affected by source protection zones (SPZs). One SPZ covers approximately 50% of the plan area, including significant portions of both urban area and green belt. There are five inner protection zones (Zone I) within the Zone III area, surrounded by outer protection zone buffers (Zone II), arranged roughly laterally across the north of the plan area, with a sixth toward the southern border of the plan area contained within a separate, smaller area of Zone III SPZ.

14.11 SPZ1 is defined as the 50-day travel time from any point below the water table to the source. SPZ2 is defined by a 400-day travel time from a point below the water table. SPZ3 is defined as the area around a source within which all groundwater recharge is presumed to be discharged at the source.

## Future baseline

14.12 Water availability both within the Wirral and in the wider region has potential to be affected by projected growth and by an increased risk of drought as a result of climate change. Although the North West is not generally a water stressed region, poorly planned development could potentially lead to unsustainable pressure on water resources through intensifying demand without providing additional supply.

## Key issues and objectives

14.13 The following key issues emerge from the context baseline review:

- The Borough is supplied with water by United Utilities and falls within the Integrated Water Resource Zone, the largest WRZ supplied by United Utilities.
- The aquifer beneath the Wirral peninsula is approaching abstraction capacity, meaning that increased efficiency in new homes will be an important part of ensuring stable and safe supply over time.

14.14 In light of the key issues discussed above it is proposed that the SA framework should include the following objectives:

- Promote sustainable forms of development which minimises pressure on water resources, water consumption and wastewater flows, including the use of innovative features and techniques where possible, to maintain and enhance water quality consistent with the aims of the Water Framework Directive.

# 15. Water quality

## Context

### National

- 15.1 NPPF Key messages from the National Planning Policy Framework<sup>68</sup> (NPPF) include that Local Plans should:
- Prevent new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of water pollution.
  - Ensure that, wherever possible, development helps to improve local environmental conditions including water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans.
- 15.2 The Water Framework Directive (2000) requires a management plan to be prepared for water catchment areas to inform planning and help meet objectives and obligations in areas such as water efficiency and sustainable drainage.
- 15.3 In this context, River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) set out a framework for how all river basin stakeholders, including water companies and local communities, can help improve the quality of the water environment. There are eight RBMPs in England which all have a harmonised plan period of 2015-2021. Wirral falls within the North West River Basin District (RBD).

### Regional

- 15.4 Wirral, Liverpool and Mersey Heartlands Water Cycle Study (2014)<sup>69</sup> explores projected impacts on water quality and water resources at a regional level, based on project growth as at 2014. The report builds on the earlier Wirral-specific Water Cycle Study outlined below.

### Local

- 15.5 The Wirral Water Cycle Study - Outline Study (2013)<sup>70</sup> includes an assessment of potential capacity constraints at receiving waste water treatment works (WwTWs) in the Borough from projected growth at the time of the study in 2013.

## Baseline

### Current baseline

- 15.6 Wastewater and sewage services for the Borough are provided by a combination of United Utilities and Dŵr Cymru/Welsh Water. There are four wastewater treatment works (WwTWs) in the Borough, three served by United and one by Dŵr Cymru/ Welsh Water. WwTWs at Birkenhead and Bromborough on the east coast discharge into the River Mersey, the WwTW at Heswall on the west coast discharges into the River Dee whilst North Wirral/Meols WwTW discharges directly in to Liverpool Bay. See Figure 15.1 below:

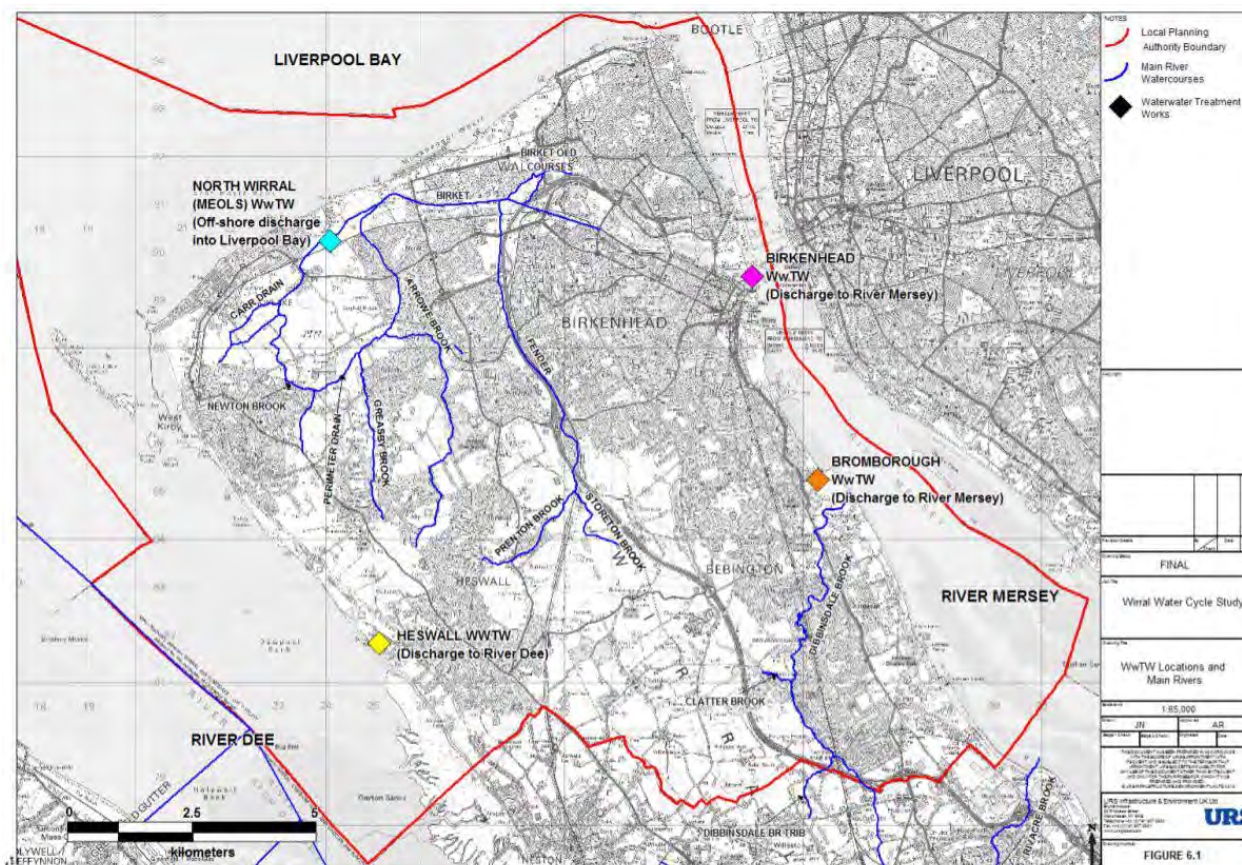
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<sup>68</sup> MHCLG (2018) National Planning Policy Framework [online] available from: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/728643/Revised\\_NPPF\\_2018.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/728643/Revised_NPPF_2018.pdf) [accessed 03/08/18]

<sup>69</sup> URS (2014), Mersey Heartlands Water Cycle Study [online], available from: <https://democracy.wirral.gov.uk/documents/s50016954/Appendix%204%20-%20Mersey%20Heartlands%20Water%20Cycle%20Study%20Outline%20Study%20-%20Main%20Planning%20Report.pdf>

<sup>70</sup> URS (2013), 'Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council Water Cycle Study' [online], available from: <https://democracy.wirral.gov.uk/documents/s50016952/Appendix%202%20-%20Wirral%20Council%20Water%20Cycle%20Study%20Outline%20Study%20Main%20-%20Planning%20Report.pdf>

Figure 15.1 Location of WwTWs in Wirral<sup>71</sup>



15.7 The 2013 Wirral Water Cycle Study found that whilst the Birkenhead, Bromborough and Heswall, WwTWs all had capacity to accept wastewater generated by projected growth, the North Wirral WwTWs at Meols had “*limited capacity to accept and treat any further wastewater from growth*” at the time of the study.<sup>72</sup>

15.8 Much of the rural area in the south of the Borough is within a designated Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ). NVZs are areas designated as being at risk from agricultural nitrate pollution, in accordance with the Nitrate Pollution Prevention Regulations 2015. Waters are defined as polluted if they contain nitrate concentrations greater than 50mg/l. There are two NVZs in Wirral. NVZ S631 covers most of the Borough’s south central area between Heswall and Bebington and is designated in relation to surface water. NVZ G3 covers a much smaller area at the far south west of the Borough at the coastal area south of Heswall and is designated in relation to groundwater.

15.9 Drinking Water Safeguard Zones are protected areas where the use of certain substances must be carefully managed to prevent the pollution of raw water sources that are used to provide drinking water. The Borough has a single Drinking Water Safeguard Zone, designated in the predominantly non-urban area between Heswall to the west, Bebington to the east and Birkenhead to the north. This designation is in relation to nitrates and solvents.

15.10 The Environment Agency (EA) has designated four areas of bathing waters in the Borough. All are situated along the Borough’s northern coastline at West Kirby, Meols, Moreton and Wallasey. The EA measures water quality at designated bathing water sites and issue annual ratings on a scale of excellent, good, sufficient or poor based on results over the preceding four years.<sup>73</sup> The most recent 2018 ratings for the Borough’s bathing waters are:

- West Kirby: Excellent
- Meols: Excellent

<sup>71</sup> URS (2013) Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council Water Cycle Study [online], available from: <https://democracy.wirral.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=2680>

<sup>72</sup> Ibid

<sup>73</sup> Environment Agency (2018) Bathing Water Quality [online], available from: <http://environment.data.gov.uk/bwq/profiles/>

- Moreton: Excellent
- Wallesey: Good

## Future baseline

- 15.11 Future growth will likely add additional pressure to the Borough's four WwTWs from increased demand. The 2013 Water Cycle Study found there is capacity within the Borough as a whole, though the North Wirral WwTWs is approaching capacity and is therefore less well placed to service growth in areas which flow to it.
- 15.12 Future development is unlikely to directly affect the designated NVZs and Drinking Water Safeguard Zone in the Borough on the basis that much of the respective designated areas are within the Green Belt where there is already a presumption against development.
- 15.13 The Borough's designated bathing water areas have demonstrated consistently good or excellent quality water over a four-year period, indicating that existing quality safeguards are effective. There is no specific reason to expect this to change in the short to medium term.

## Key issues and objectives

- 15.14 In light of the key issues discussed above it is proposed that the SA framework should combine the water resources and water quality SA themes under a single comprehensive 'Water' objective.

## 16. Next steps

### Subsequent steps for the SA process

16.1 Scoping is the first stage in a five-stage SA process:

- Scoping (NPPG Stage A)
- Appraising reasonable alternatives, with a view to informing preparation of the draft plan, and subsequent assessment of the draft plan (NPPG Stage B)
- Preparation of the SA Report with a view to informing consultation (NPPG Stage C)
- Consultation on the SA Report (NPPG Stage D)
- Publication of a statement at the time of plan adoption which ‘tells the story’ of plan-making/SA (NPPG Stage E)

16.2 Accordingly, the next stage will therefore involve the development and assessment of reasonable alternatives for the Local Plan. An SA Report will accompany a Local Plan Issues and Options Document for public consultation in due course.

### Consultation on the scoping report

16.3 Public involvement through consultation is a key element of the SA process. At this scoping stage, the SEA Regulations require consultation with statutory consultation bodies but not full consultation with the public. This report is, however, also being published for public consultation more widely.

16.4 The statutory consultation bodies are the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England. The Scoping Report will be released to these three statutory consultees for comment on the content of this Scoping Report, in particular the evidence base for the SA, the identified key issues and the proposed SA Framework.

16.5 All comments received on the Scoping Report will be reviewed and will influence the development of the SA where appropriate.



# Appendix A – the SA Framework

Topic	SA objectives
Air quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek to build on current air quality achievements by minimising air pollution more generally, such as through supporting or enabling the use of low emission technologies and encouraging sustainable modes of transport such as walking and cycling.</li> <li>• Locate and design development so that current and future residents will not regularly be exposed to poor air quality.</li> </ul>
Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimise, and avoid where possible, impacts to biodiversity, both within and beyond designated and non-designated sites of international, national or local significance.</li> <li>• Achieve biodiversity net gain including through the long term enhancement and creation of well-connected, functional habitats that are resilient to the effects of climate change.</li> </ul>
Climate change adaptation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adapt to current and future flood risk by directing development away from the areas of the Borough at the highest risk of flooding from all sources and provide sustainable management of current and future flood risk through sensitive and innovative planning, development layout and construction.</li> </ul>
Climate change mitigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to drive down CO2 emissions from all sources by achieving high standards of energy efficiency in new development, by providing attractive opportunities to travel by sustainable means and by protecting land suitable for renewable and low carbon energy generation, including community schemes.</li> </ul>
Economy and employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that education and skills provision meets the needs of Wirral's existing and future labour market and improves life chances for all, including by enabling older people and people with physical and mental health conditions to stay in employment.</li> <li>• Support a strong, diverse and resilient economy that provides opportunities for all, enhances the vitality of the Borough's town and local centres including through the identification of further regeneration opportunities, particularly in the most deprived areas. This could include support for the social enterprise, voluntary and community sectors.</li> </ul>
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To improve the physical and mental health and wellbeing of Wirral residents and reduce health inequalities across the Borough and between local communities.</li> </ul>
Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect, conserve and enhance heritage assets, including their setting and significance, and contribute to the maintenance and enhancement of historic character through design, layout and setting of new development.</li> </ul>
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support timely delivery of an appropriate mix of housing types and tenures, including a focus on maximising the potential from strategic brownfield opportunities, to ensure delivery of good quality, affordable and specialist housing that meets the needs of Wirral's residents, including older people, people with disabilities and families with children.</li> </ul>
Land and soils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the efficient and sustainable use of natural resources, including supporting development which avoids the best and most versatile agricultural land and development which makes effective use of previously developed land.</li> </ul>
Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect and enhance the character, quality and diversity of the Borough's landscapes and townscapes through appropriate design and layout of new development, including the preservation of important open gaps between settlements, mindful of the need to make careful choices about Green Belt release.</li> </ul>
Population and communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support good access to existing and planned community infrastructure, including green infrastructure, for new and existing residents, mindful of the potential for community needs to change over time.</li> <li>• Improve perceptions of safety and fear of crime and to help remove barriers to activities and reduce social isolation.</li> </ul>
Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that the provision of infrastructure is managed and delivered to meet local population and demographic change whilst helping to reduce congestion and travel times. This includes providing infrastructure that maximises accessibility for all and connects new housing developments to the public realm, including key services.</li> </ul>
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote sustainable forms of development which minimises pressure on water resources, water consumption and wastewater flows, including the use of innovative features and techniques where possible, to maintain and enhance water quality consistent with the aims of the Water Framework Directive.</li> </ul>

# Appendix B – Site Assessment Criteria

SA Topic	Relevant Criteria (i.e. location in relation to...)	Assumptions
Air quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Air Quality Management Area (AQMA)</li> </ul>	<p>There is only the potential to measure proximity to an AQMA and an indication of potential effects given the nature (i.e. is it HGV generating?) and the scale of development</p> <p>There is not potential to model traffic flows as part of the site assessments.</p>
Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Special Area of Conservation (SAC)</li> <li>Special Protection Area (SPA)</li> <li>Ramsar site</li> <li>National Nature Reserve (NNR)</li> <li>Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)</li> <li>Site of Special Scientific Interest Impact Risk Zone (SSSI IRZ)</li> <li>Ancient Woodland</li> <li>BAP habitat</li> <li>Woodland</li> <li>Locally Wildlife Sites (LWS)</li> <li>Tree Preservation Orders</li> <li>Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA) / Conservation Target Area (CTA) etc.</li> <li>Any other dataset showing areas of local constraint/opportunity</li> </ul>	<p>There is a need to consider intersect and also proximity in most instances, given the risk of impacts e.g. from recreational pressure, disturbance from noise and light, construction activities etc.</p>
Climate change adaptation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fluvial flood risk zone</li> <li>Surface water flood risk</li> <li>Other flood risk (e.g. groundwater)</li> </ul>	<p>Degree of constraint to be determined based upon degree of overlap with Flood Zones 1, 2 and 3, and the potential for on-site mitigation.</p> <p>Degree of constraint to be determined based upon the relative risks and ability to mitigate impacts.</p>
Climate change mitigation	<i>Spatial data unlikely to be available</i>	
Economy and employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing strategic employment areas</li> <li>Committed strategic employment areas</li> </ul>	<p>There is a presumption that employment sites that are located within close proximity to existing strategic areas can benefit from established services. There is also a presumption that sites</p>

		with good access to strategic transport routes and hubs ought to be marked as particular opportunities.
		A loss of employment land is presumed to be negative unless there is evidence that the site is poor quality / not attractive for modern business.
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GP surgery</li> <li>• Other healthcare facilities</li> </ul>	
Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Registered park or garden</li> <li>• Scheduled monument</li> <li>• Listed building</li> <li>• Common land</li> <li>• Conservation area</li> <li>• Locally listed buildings</li> </ul>	There is a need to consider intersect and also setting for all of these constraint features to establish the potential for negative or positive effects.
Housing	<p><i>Spatial data unlikely to be available. It would not be appropriate to suggest that a large site performs better than a small site simply because there is the potential to deliver more homes. Housing objectives could potentially be met through the delivery of numerous small sites, or through delivery of a smaller number of large sites (albeit it is recognised that financial viability, and hence the potential to deliver affordable housing, can be higher at large sites).</i></p>	
Land and soils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agricultural land quality<sup>74</sup></li> <li>• Contaminated land</li> <li>• Minerals safeguarding areas</li> </ul>	<p>Limited data is available to inform the appraisal. The only dataset available for the whole plan area is the national 'provisional agricultural land quality' dataset, which is very low resolution and does not differentiate between grades 3a and 3b. Nevertheless, it is presumed that a higher intersect with Grade 2 and 3 land is less favourable.</p> <p>There is a need to ensure consistent data. Past and current landfills are potential sources of contamination. Hazard sites/lines are also helpful.</p> <p>Overlap with MSAs will be identified. The nature of effects is dependent upon locational factors and so an overlap is not necessarily a constraint.</p>
Population and communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary school</li> </ul>	

<sup>74</sup> Agricultural land is classified into five grades, with grade one being of the best quality. High quality agricultural land is a finite resource, in that it is difficult if not impossible to replace it.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secondary school</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designated green space / open space</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Index of Multiple Deprivation</li> </ul>	There is a presumption that employment development that is accessible to deprived communities should be marked as a potential opportunity.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Nature Reserves<sup>75</sup></li> </ul>	
Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National character areas</li> </ul>	Useful to have; however, limited potential to use for analysis, unless areas are classified according to capacity/sensitivity. It is presumed that a landscape sensitivity study will be commissioned to allow for the sensitivity of difference land parcels / sites to be established.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local character areas</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Green Belt</li> </ul>	Classified according to sensitivity by a local Green Belt Review. Contribution towards the function of the Green Belt can also be utilised.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local landscape designations / areas of known sensitivity</li> </ul>	Need to ensure that they are extant / evidenced and identified on a consistent basis across the plan area.
Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bus stops</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train stations</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cycle routes</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other transport features (e.g. ferry terminal)</li> </ul>	
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Groundwater Source Protection Zones (SPZ)</li> </ul>	It is acknowledged that in practice the presence of a groundwater source protection zone or aquifer does not represent a major constraint for most (non-polluting) types of development.
Other	Watercourses	
	PROW	
	Settlement boundary	
	Aviation zones / noise contours	Useful to have data on where possible.
	Waste water treatment works	
	Publically owned land / MOD land	
	Article 4 Direction	

<sup>75</sup> Sometimes known by alternative names, e.g. site of importance for nature conservation.